Pandemic Kinship

Families, Intervention, and Social Change in Botswana's Time of AIDS

Koreen M. Reece

INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN LIBRARY

Pandemic Kinship

Shaped around the stories of one extended family, their friends, neighbours, and community, *Pandemic Kinship* provides an intimate portrait of everyday life in Botswana's time of AIDS. It challenges assumptions about a 'crisis of care' unfolding in the wake of the pandemic, showing that care – like other aspects of Tswana kinship – is routinely in crisis, and that the creative ways families navigate such crises make them kin. In Setswana, conflict and crisis are glossed as *dikgang*, and negotiating *dikgang* is an ethical practice that generates and reorients kin relations over time. Governmental and non-governmental organisations often misread the creativity of crisis, intervening in ways that may prove more harmful than the problems they set out to solve. Moving between family discussions, community events, and the daily work of orphan care projects and social work offices, *Pandemic Kinship* provides provocative insights into how we manage change in pandemic times. This title is available as Open Access on Cambridge Core.

KOREEN M. REECE is Assistant Professor in Social Anthropology at the University of Bayreuth. She has over 18 years' experience working in Botswana, first as an adviser to NGO and government responses to the AIDS epidemic, and later as an anthropologist.

THE INTERNATIONAL AFRICAN LIBRARY

General Editors

LESLIE BANK, *Human Sciences Research Council, South Africa*
HARRI ENGLUND, *University of Cambridge*
DEBORAH JAMES, *LSE, University of London*
ADELINE MASQUELIER, *Tulane University, Louisiana*
BENJAMIN SOARES, *University of Florida, Gainesville*

The International African Library is a major monograph series from the International African Institute. Theoretically informed ethnographies, and studies of social relations 'on the ground' which are sensitive to local cultural forms, have long been central to the Institute's publications programme. The IAL maintains this strength and extends it into new areas of contemporary concern, both practical and intellectual. It includes works focused on the linkages between local, national, and global levels of society; writings on political economy and power; studies at the interface of the socio-cultural and the environmental; analyses of the roles of religion, cosmology, and ritual in social organisation; and historical studies, especially those of a social, cultural, or interdisciplinary character.

For a list of titles published in the series, please see the end of the book.

Pandemic Kinship

Families, Intervention, and Social Change in Botswana's Time of AIDS

Koreen M. Reece

University of Bayreuth

International African Institute, London

and

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS

CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

For my parents,
who gave me that magical, awkward combination of roots
and wings.

Contents

vii

Figures

ix

Acknowledgements

The journey that this book traces has been a long, sometimes perilous, transformative one. Like any journey, it would have proven impossible without the guides, companions, and innkeepers I met along the way. There are far too many people who have contributed to this project since its inception to thank them all; I focus here on those whose influence has been most marked. The faults and shortcomings of this book are, of course, my own.

The images in this book were taken during my time in Botswana and do not correspond to specific people, events, or locations discussed in the text unless noted otherwise. All photographs are my own, unless indicated otherwise.

The Department of Social Anthropology at the University of Edinburgh provided an intellectually well-furnished and comfortable home to this project, from start to finish. I am especially grateful to the community of scholars with whom I shared the tumultuous PhD journey. My thanks go to fellow students who read drafts and worked through ideas from their very first confused stages, including Sebastien Bachelet, Resto Cruz, Don Duprez, Daisy Fung, Luke Heslop, Heid Jerstad, Jenny Lawy, Laura Major, Diego Malara, Fauzia Malik, Hannah McNeilly

x

(née Lesshaft), Gilda Neri, Katarina Ockova, Ting-Ting Shum, Leila Sinclair-Bright, Mart Viirand, Chrissie Wanner, and Laura Winterton; and, farther afield, Arie Molema, Kasia Puzon, and Michele Wisdahl. I am also grateful to have had the guidance, collegiality, and engagement of Tom Boylston, Magnus Course, Ian Harper, John Harries, Naomi Haynes, Laura Jeffery, Lucy Lowe, Rebecca Marsland, Maya Mayblin, and Jonathan Spencer. I had great good fortune in my examiners, Tony Good and Deborah James, whose intellectual curiosity, rigour, and dexterity helped me see my work in a new light. The Global Anthropology of Transforming Marriage (AGATM) research team has provided fresh inspiration since we began our collaboration in 2017; my thanks to Hsiao-Chiao Chiu, Siobhan Magee, and Eirini Papadaki for giving me new ways to think of things I thought I knew. As both the Principal Investigator of AGATM and my doctoral supervisor, Janet Carsten has been a limitless source of astute insights, gentle provocations, perspective, encouragement, mentorship, and (mostly) patience – a personal, professional, and intellectual debt I cannot hope to repay but to which I hope this book does some justice.

Many of the arguments in this book were initially fledged in seminars, workshops, and conferences, and crucial refinements were inspired in those contexts. I would especially like to thank Andrew Beatty, Isak Niehaus, and seminar participants at Brunel; Julia Pauli and seminar participants at the Institut für Ethnologie, Universität Hamburg; seminar participants at the University of Toronto's Centre for Ethnography, and for fruitful discussions thereafter, Sandra Bamford, Mark Hunter, Seth Palmer, Letha Victor, Holly Wardlow, and Donna Young; and the panellists and audiences for the panel 'Kinship and Crisis' at the ASAUK conference in 2015 and its reboot at the AAA in 2016. Conversations with Perveez Mody and the participants of the 'Spaces of Care' workshop were particularly helpful in refining my ideas about care; and the AGATM advisory board and workshop participants, especially Ammara Maqsood, Susan McKinnon, Perveez Mody, Evythmios Papataxiarchis, and Julia Pauli, have supplied welcome new perspectives and inspiration. I am thankful above all for ongoing conversations with Deborah Durham, Fred Klaits, Jacqueline Solway, and Rijk van Dijk, who have all encouraged, challenged, pushed, and inspired me in ways only those with long experience and deep understanding of Botswana can. For their deft shepherding of the text that brings all these influences together, I would like to thank Stephanie Kitchen, Stephanie Taylor, Atifa Jiwa, and the production and design teams with the International African Library at Cambridge University Press; Divya Arjunan at Straive; Rohan Bolton for her indexing work, and Judith Forshaw for her precise

and patient copyediting. I am also deeply grateful to the book's anonymous reviewers, who were thorough, fastidious, and constructive, and who will, I hope, find that their investment has greatly improved the manuscript.

In Botswana, former colleagues from the Department of Social Services (DSS) and the NGO community were exceptionally helpful with my research and have welcomed me back with warmth and friendship on repeated occasions. Kennie Ralekgobo first inducted me into social work in Botswana, and her laughter and Five Roses tea never failed to rejuvenate me when I needed it most. I am particularly grateful for the generosity and support of Magy Mokgachane at DSS, as well as Ruth Radibe and Ookame Mokabathebe. Among the many social workers around Botswana from whom I have learned so much over the years, special mentions go to Felicity Nyoni, Dineo Segobai, Ben Semmomung, and Sister Tsepho Sengwatse for their support, guidance, and friendship. Masego Katisi and her team at Ark 'n' Mark have long been trusted collaborators, and they continue to inspire me with their innovative programmes for and dedication to children and families in Botswana. More recently, I have been delighted to find new inspiration and collegiality at the University of Botswana's Department of Social Work, including from Gloria Jacques, Keitseope Nthomang, Dolly Ntseane, and the rest of the academic staff; and from Senzokuhle (Doreen) Setume in Theology and Religious Studies. I look forward to the collaborative work that awaits us. *Le kamoso, bagaetsho*.

Fieldwork was a challenging undertaking, despite my lengthy previous experience of Botswana. I am deeply indebted to friends and colleagues in-country who helped me to navigate its perplexities, and whose companionship kept me grounded throughout. Bianca Dahl, Melissa Godwaldt, Lyon and Boitumelo Itshekeng, Mareile Kroenig, Jenny Lawy, Brian and Lynette LeRoux, Gobona Mantle and family, Tim Race, and Tumi Sejoe sustained me with tea, chat, perspective, laughter, and kindness – and in some cases housed me. I could not have managed the fieldwork process without them.

Finally, and most importantly, my greatest debt of gratitude goes to the two families who, between them, have turned me into a kinship scholar: my own family in Canada and the 'Legae' family in Botswana. Both have shown me unstinting support and unbounded patience, and between them they have taught me the critical lessons that inform this book. I hope that it does justice to the lives we have shared and that it honours the relationships we have built.

This book is dedicated to the memory of Michele Wisdahl (1977–2021). While I cannot name them without compromising their anonymity, it is also dedicated to the memory of two others gone too soon: 'Tumi', with her laughter, and 'Kagiso', who was a brother to me.

Characters

The Legae Family

Mmapula	matriarch of the Legae family; wife of Dipuo and mother to the Legae siblings
Dipuo	patriarch of the Legae family; husband to Mmapula, father to the Legae siblings
Modiri	eldest of the Legae adult brothers and of all the siblings; runs his own small transport business, predominantly responsible for the family's cattle
Keitumetse	eldest of the Legae sisters; mother to Lorato; deceased
Khumo	third of the Legae siblings and second eldest sister; mother to Boipelo, Tshepo, and Thabo; live-in partner of Mosimanegape
Moagi	fourth of the Legae siblings and second eldest brother; a soldier; father of Kopano
Kelebogile	fifth of the Legae siblings and third of the sisters; employed at a local NGO; mother of Tefo
Kagiso	sixth of the Legae siblings and third of the brothers; preacher, driver, and shop owner
Oratile	seventh of the Legae siblings and youngest of the sisters; mother of Lesego and Kenosi
Tuelo	youngest of the Legae brothers and of all the siblings
Lorato	eldest granddaughter of Mmapula and Dipuo; only daughter of Keitumetse
Boipelo	eldest daughter of Khumo and Mosimanegape; older sister of Tshepo and Thabo
Tshepo	second eldest daughter of Khumo and Mosimanegape; younger sister of Boipelo
Kgosiemang	eldest son of Khumo and Mosimanegape; in his mid-teens

Lesego	eldest daughter of Oratile; in her early teens
Letlhogonolo	second eldest son of Khumo and Mosimanegape
Kopano	only son of Moagi; in his early teens
Tefo	only son of Kelebogile; in late primary school
Mompati	second-youngest son of Khumo and Mosimanegape; in late primary school
Thabo	youngest son of Khumo and Mosimanegape; younger brother of Boipelo and Tshepo
Kenosi	youngest daughter of Oratile; in late primary school
Mosimanegape	live-in partner of Khumo; father to Boipelo, Tshepo, Kgosiemang, Letlhogonolo, Mompati, and Thabo

Neighbours and Friends

Rra Ditau	neighbour of the Legaes and builder; married to Mma Ditau, a distant maternal relative of Mmapula
Pono	young woman; neighbour to the author and the Legaes
Mpho	Pono's older sister; resident in Maropeng
Lesedi	friend of the Legaes; cousin (mother's sister's child, *ngwana a mmangwane*) to Tumi
Tumi	cousin (mother's sister's child) to Lesedi
Bonolo	young man from Dithaba; moved to stay with the Legaes
Mma Dineo	distant relative of Mmapula's; grandmother to three boys involved in the first formal fostering arrangement made in Dithaba
Mmabontle	staff member from the local orphan care project; daughter of Tharo's grandfather
Tharo	young man from Dithaba initiated into the *Matsosangwao mophato*; grandson of Mmabontle's father

Key NGO and Government Figures

Thapelo	founder and coordinator of national non-governmental organisation specialising in retreats for orphaned youth
Tsholo	coordinator of local non-governmental orphan care project
Tumelo	village social worker for Dithaba

Introduction

'*Ao*!' the elderly woman exclaimed, squinting with contempt. 'Does this person have no manners? Doesn't she know she should greet us by saying *dumelang, batsadi* [hello, my parents]?'

It was early evening and shadows were lengthening across the dusty *lelwapa*, the low-walled courtyard huddled between the small houses of the yard. The old woman sat on stitched-together sacks laid on the smooth cement *stoep*, her back against the wall of the main house, where the shadows were deepest and coolest. I had a passing familiarity with the yard from beyond its fence line, but had just entered it for the first time, mumbling a shy *dumelang* – hello. The simple greeting was about the limit of my Setswana; I could scarcely understand the old woman's reprimand. But I could tell I'd already messed up somehow. I stood there, bewildered, and said nothing.

'*Hei*! You, old woman, do you speak English?' A woman about my age, perched on the low courtyard wall, came unexpectedly to my defence. 'Why should you expect this one to know Setswana?' The elderly woman looked grudgingly at the younger – her daughter, it later turned out. Then she shot me a surly look and harrumphed. A child emerged from the house, carrying a plastic chair, and set it down next to me, her eyes wide. I glanced around, uncertain what had been said; I hadn't planned to stay. The woman who had defended me nodded at the chair. I sat down. We all remained silent.

I had come on an awkward errand. I knew the older woman's teenage granddaughter, Lorato,[1] from the local orphan care centre, where I was a volunteer. I knew her son Kagiso, who worked at the project, too. I had often walked Lorato and her friends home from the centre as far as their respective gates, and they frequently came to visit me when the project was closed, sometimes staying to eat or to help around the house. Lorato and her friends had helped make me feel at home in the village in those

---

[1] All of the names in this book – including the names of villages – are pseudonyms, unless noted otherwise.

1

first months of my life there, showing me its shortcuts, sharing its rumours and dramas, laughing at my confusions and mistakes. But I knew very little about their families. Generic stories circulated at the centre: accounts of caregivers making their orphaned charges take on unfair amounts of work around the house, refusing to buy them clothes or toiletries, treating them differently from the other children of the yard. My visit that day was the first time I had met one of these families in person – and the circumstances did not seem to bode well.

A few days previously, I had seen Lorato's grandmother standing outside the tall fence that surrounded the centre, yelling across its open playing areas at some volunteers in the yard. She had sounded aggrieved and angry. I asked someone what she had said, and was told that she was insisting that the lot of us were attempting to ruin her family. No one responded to her directly, nor did they invite her in or ask about what had happened or what her specific concerns were. They stood where they were, listening but not getting involved, until she finished what she had to say and went home. But the allegation had been serious.

'*Haish, ke kgang*,' a friend at the project commented wearily, telling me about the incident afterwards: this is a problem. He had a degree in social work, and explained that her complaint was the sort that could have the organisation called in front of the *kgotla*, the village tribal administration and customary court. It wasn't the first time the organisation had fallen foul of families in the village. But the management was haphazard in its approach to such misunderstandings, often leaving it to staff and volunteers to orchestrate compromises. My friend suggested that, as the volunteer closest to Lorato, I should pay her family a visit. 'Get inside the gate,' he specified. 'Otherwise that old woman will be even more insulted.'

That first visit, in the gathering summer of 2004, was brief and uncomfortable. When Lorato translated the exchange for me later, I thought it odd that her grandmother – whom I call Mmapula – should insist that I call her 'parent', especially given her evident displeasure with me and the organisation in which I worked. I assumed it was a generic means of demanding respect from one's juniors. But in the years that followed, no one else ever required it of me quite the way Mmapula had. She was being both deliberate and literal in ways I could not have anticipated.

A few days after my initial visit, Mmapula visited the centre in person to request my help in guiding Lorato's behaviour there and at home, where she had begun to shirk her responsibilities. I was taken aback by the request, but agreed to have a talk with the young woman. Thereafter, I began to visit the family – the Legaes – on occasion, at first just to sit awkwardly with them, later to chat a little or play with the children.

Then Lorato's aunts began visiting me, often bringing the children with them, especially on their way out to or back from 'the lands', as they called the fields the family ploughed outside the village. In time, I was invited to go with them and help with the harvest. Later, we would venture farther afield, as they invited me to attend weddings and funerals with them. The older children were sent to stay with me during their exams or to help me at home. I began to wonder whether, at our first meeting, Mmapula had been making a specific claim on me: whether she was demanding acknowledgement and respect as Lorato's parent in her own right, but also drawing me into a web of obligations by claiming recognition as *my* parent, too. Either way, we both gradually came to take that claim seriously – and it defined the terms on which I was drawn into social life in Botswana.

In late 2005, I moved from the orphan care project to a job with Botswana's Department of Social Services, coordinating non-governmental organisations (NGOs) that served children orphaned by Botswana's AIDS pandemic around the country. At the same time, drawing on my time with the Legaes, I began to question the discourses that dominated the NGO and government spheres in which I worked: of the neglect and abuse of orphaned children, and of inevitable family breakdown in the face of AIDS. My experience with the Legae family – unquestionably impacted but by no means destroyed by the epidemic – made me question the effects of AIDS on families, as well as the rationales and legacies of government and non-governmental interventions launched in response. Those questions shaped my personal and professional life until I left Botswana in 2008, and they took me back three years later to undertake the research project on which this book is based.

This book gives an ethnographic account of Tswana family life in a time of rapid socio-political change, epidemic disease, and unprecedented intervention on the part of governmental and non-governmental agencies. It is grounded in the everyday experience of one family – the Legaes – but draws in the interlinked lives of neighbours, friends, workmates, and churchmates, as well as the social workers, NGO staff, and volunteers who live and work among them. It traces the dense, shifting relationships of a single extended household, but also the unexpected ways in which these relationships entangle and bind together a village and a district, and extend right across the country. It also challenges the widespread assumption – common to humanitarian, development, and public health interventions in Botswana, to government and non-governmental programmes, and to representations in the country's media – that AIDS has destroyed families by showing how crisis *creates*, recalibrates, and reproduces kin relations among the Tswana. And it

argues that government and NGO agencies that intervene in families during times of crisis – often in relevant, culturally appropriate ways, but with quite different notions of crisis and how it ought to be addressed – may be having more lasting, deleterious effects on families than the epidemic itself.

Each of the following chapters engages with ways in which the Tswana make family: from living, eating, and working together to managing a household and contributing to one another's care; from forming intimate relationships to bearing and raising children and negotiating marriage; from coming of age to holding parties and burying the dead. I argue that every one of these processes simultaneously produces risk, conflict, and crisis, which I have glossed with the Setswana term *dikgang* (sing. *kgang*). These *dikgang* need constantly to be addressed in the right ways by the right people; who ought to address what and how is not simply prescribed by age, generation, and gender, but establishes relative authority and reworks familial relationships. *Dikgang* are seldom, if ever, fully resolved; negotiations are fraught and uncertain and may escalate misunderstandings or introduce new conflicts, while solutions are often tacit or suspended. But their aim is not to resolve problems so much as to engage those involved in an ethical process of reflecting on the ways they affect one another, the quality and history of their relationships. Tswana kinship, in other words, is generated and experienced as a continuous cycle of conflict, mediation, and irresolution; it creates crisis – and to some extent thrives on it. In this sense, *dikgang* do not mark breakdowns in or failures of kinship; they are a critical means of constituting and sustaining family. In a structurally fluid kinship system like that of the Tswana (to which I return below), the ongoing negotiation of *dikgang* charts the limits of kin relations, defines different modes of relatedness within those limits, and establishes specific interdependencies and distinctions between the familial and the extrafamilial as well.[2] *Dikgang* draw our attention to the surprisingly effective ways in which families respond to crises like the AIDS epidemic, creatively accommodating the change crisis brings while simultaneously asserting continuity.

The unexpected family-making effects of crisis among the Tswana encourage us to rethink kinship broadly, as an ideal and in practice. I suggest that kinship may be best understood as something that straddles

---

[2] I use 'kinship' and 'family' more or less interchangeably throughout this book. I take both to involve abstract ideals, structural dynamics, and moral codes as much as the concrete practices and processes of everyday lived experience. By taking them together, I hope to challenge latent associations between kinship and 'small-scale', 'pre-modern' societies, implying that families are somehow more modern – allowing us to trace connections and patterns of influence across social domains, and globally, with greater ease.

a series of competing – even opposed – relational, ethical, and practical imperatives. In Botswana and beyond, families are expected to persist indefinitely, while accommodating both massive socio-political change and the tumultuous upheavals involved as family members attain new roles or new status, as new relationships are incorporated, or as generational roles and responsibilities shift over time. In many contexts, families are idealised as sources of intimacy and belonging – although that intimacy brings unique risks and there is danger or flux in that belonging. At the same time, families must find ways to create distance sufficient to reconfigure their relationships and incorporate their own growth and reproduction. Families work to include and exclude (sometimes the same people), to share and separate, to display and conceal; they are oriented simultaneously to histories and futures that are both domestic and political, public and private. Being family requires a delicate balance to be sought between these and many other contradictory and mutually unsettling demands; but that balance is elusive and easily upset, and needs continuous recalibrating. Conflict and crisis, I argue, emerge when the balance is off-kilter and the paradoxes most prominent; reflexive efforts at negotiating and addressing conflict are one ongoing means of recalibration. Conflict, in this sense, is not simply an unfortunate exception to a general rule of kinship harmony; it is a key factor in the flexibility, persistence, and specificity of kinship as lived experience. While this book explores the unique tensions arising in Tswana kinship structure and practice, it also invites comparison with similar tensions in other contexts; and it proposes conflict as one way of rethinking kinship in potentially global, comparative terms.

My appearance in the Legae household in response to *kgang*, and as an object of *kgang* myself, foreshadows a linked trend with which this book is concerned: the widespread involvement of governmental, non-governmental, and transnational agencies in the Tswana family, an involvement that has increased sharply since the start of Botswana's AIDS epidemic. *Dikgang* mark the points at which, and shed light on the rationales and ethics by which, organisations intervene in families. The programmes these organisations run – commonly conceptualised and delivered by Batswana, if often funded by foreign donors – are frequently well-aligned with the needs and practices of the families they serve, partially embedding institutions and practitioners in networks of kin. But their dominant approaches to *dikgang* – as problems requiring definitive solutions, best offered by professionals – diverge significantly from familial logics. This divergence creates new, volatile *dikgang*, involving a wider and more unpredictable range of actors, and novel, opaque frameworks for the reflexive assessment of what *dikgang* mean.

In their scope, complexity, and ethical repertoire, these new *dikgang* often complicate and undermine the family's usual means of response. The partial embeddedness that makes agencies effective, then, also makes them a risk – and the sort of risk they present exacerbates the conflicts and crises families already face, undermining the support these agencies seek to provide. Gradually, these new *dikgang* rework relationships among kin and between the home, the village, and the *morafe* (tribal polity). *Dikgang*, in this sense, mark key ways in which the spheres of kinship and politics are linked, and describe the work by which they are distinguished and their relationships managed by families and agencies alike.

Families in Botswana interact with a vast array of organisations, ranging from the governmental through the non-governmental to the informal: from clinics and schools to police and the customary court or *kgotla*; from government agencies for water, agriculture, or land to churches of many denominations; from support groups and home-based care projects to rights advocates and development projects; from burial societies and small-scale savings groups to choirs and dance or drama groups. The breadth of government programmes is substantial, and they play a significant role in many people's lives – whether by providing local development opportunities or old-age pensions, agricultural subsidies or destitution relief, pre-school places or post office-based banking services. NGOs offer nearly as wide a range of services, sometimes in partnership with government. While the arguments I set out about *dikgang* could be made for any of these programmes or interventions, I focus on two that have become especially influential in Botswana's time of AIDS: orphan care projects (run by NGOs) and social work offices. I spent over four years working with both types of organisation before undertaking this research. In that time, I became sharply aware of how unpredictable their programming could be in its effects – much to the frustration of the highly qualified, experienced, and dedicated Batswana who deliver it. In this book, I trace those mixed results: first, to divergent understandings and interpretations of *dikgang*; and then to a subtler but deeper tension between conflicting expectations, experiences, and practices of kinship that animate the work of these agencies. I suggest that NGOs and social work offices working with families operate with specific, conflicting, and inexplicit visions of what families ought to be like; and, in many ways, they work like conflicted families themselves. They also work within larger political projects for which these kinship orientations are crucial means of depoliticising, naturalising, and reproducing power. But the family-like processes and ideals by which these organisations are animated are simultaneously Tswana, British, American, European, and so

on – reflecting the range of family models that underpin professional training, benchmarking, 'best practice', international guidelines, and donor funding regimes. This profusion of kinships – mutually recognisable but disparate and carefully obscured – complicates the effects of practitioners' everyday work and undermines the political projects within which they are embedded. In the following chapters, I give an account of orphan care centres and social work offices that draws out the 'persistent life of kinship' (McKinnon and Cannell 2013) in their work and traces its effects as an unruly, disruptive force that collapses distinctions between the familial and the political in unpredictable ways.

In this introduction, I situate these arguments first in the context of Botswana, and then in broader anthropological conversations around kinship and crisis, humanitarian and development intervention, and HIV and AIDS. I then explore the ethical and methodological questions that emerge in studying *dikgang*, both by being family and in NGO and governmental interventions. Finally, I provide a summary of the chapters to follow.

Botswana: A Potted History

Botswana is a landlocked, sparsely populated country in the heart of Southern Africa, which takes pride in an international reputation for peace, stability, and good governance. It has become commonplace to describe the country as 'Africa's miracle', especially in light of its rapid rise to prosperity after achieving independence from Britain in 1966 and the discovery of diamonds (see Mogalakwe and Nyamnjoh 2017: 2 for an overview of the case made for its exceptionalism). And yet Botswana has struggled persistently with some of the highest rates of HIV infection in the world (UNAIDS 2021) – an apparent anomaly in its otherwise auspicious record. The unusual combination of a stable government and economy, evident political will, and a disastrous epidemic has drawn floods of resources into the country for over three decades: funds, personnel, infrastructure, organisations, and programmes of every stripe. In that time, Botswana has produced responses to AIDS that are globally recognised as 'best practice', including the free public provision of antiretroviral treatment (UNAIDS 2003). Still, new infection rates remain high for the region, and the prevalence of HIV among adults remains near 20 per cent (UNAIDS 2020). In this section, I provide a brief historical background to contextualise this ostensible conundrum, and set the scene for the analytical themes through which I approach it.

Botswana's relative success is often linked to the unique circumstances of its colonisation. Aware of Cecil Rhodes' ambitions in the region, the dispossession of chiefs, and the violent maltreatment of their people that occurred under the auspices of the British South Africa Company (BSAC) in South Africa and Rhodesia, the paramount chiefs of the three most powerful *merafe* (tribal polities) in what is now Botswana chose a novel approach. In 1895, the Three *Dikgosi* (chiefs), as they were to be known later, travelled to England in the company of missionaries from the London Missionary Society. They made a request to Joseph Chamberlain, then Colonial Secretary, that Bechuanaland be made a protectorate of the British Empire, governed directly from London rather than by Rhodes' BSAC. When Chamberlain refused, the chiefs undertook a highly successful tour of England, campaigning in churches and at public events. They garnered the support of temperance, anti-slavery, and humanitarian groups and of many of the churches, which in turn lobbied Chamberlain to reconsider his position. Concerned that it might become an election issue, he did reconsider – on the condition that the chiefs cede the land necessary for Rhodes' railway and that they accept the introduction of taxes (Sillery 1974; Tlou and Campbell 1984).

Bechuanaland was ruled indirectly, from Mafeking in present-day South Africa, and was governed in large part as a labour reserve for its southern neighbour (Parsons 1984) – a role it continued to play well beyond its eventual independence in 1966. The British colonial government invested minimally in administering the protectorate and famously left the country with only seven kilometres of tarred road and a capital – Gaborone – with little more than a railway station. And yet the legacy of colonisation, and of the ambitious missionisation that preceded it, is evident everywhere: in Botswana's government structures, in its parallel systems of customary and common law, in the disappearance of initiation rites, in changes to bridewealth payments, and in much of its education, health, and social welfare provision (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; Griffiths 1997; Schapera 1933; 1940; 1970). Nonetheless, the strategic foresight of the Three Chiefs, combined with the impression that Bechuanaland was little more than an arid desert, spared the nascent nation some of the more egregious violence, rapacious resource stripping, and racist political landscaping that characterised the experience of other colonies in the region. Batswana generally hold the intervention of the Three Chiefs as a defining moment in the history of the nation; one of the country's few monuments, *The Three Dikgosi*, was raised to them. The influential role of churches and humanitarian groups in this tale speaks to the long-term involvement of international civil society in the

country's political and social life, dating back to a period well before the current spate of NGO programmes.

At independence in 1966, Botswana was one of the poorest countries in the world, considered a 'hopeless basket case' (Colclough and McCarthy 1980). However, diamonds were discovered within a year, and the country's fortunes changed rapidly. Botswana is currently the world's largest producer of diamonds by value (Krawitz 2013) – although it is only in recent years that the value-added aspects of sorting and polishing have been kept within the country. The diamond industry, overseen by the government in partnership with De Beers, has allowed Botswana to take a strongly state-led – and highly successful – approach to development (Taylor 2004: 53–4). Roads, schools, and clinics have been built and staffed countrywide, and a wide range of social welfare schemes have been introduced, from old-age pensions to drought relief. Until the global economic downturn of 2007–2009, Botswana's diamond revenues were sufficient for the country to avoid dealings with the World Bank or International Monetary Fund altogether, and thereby sidestep the economic and political legacies of insupportable debt and structural adjustment that have plagued many other African countries since the 1980s. Botswana is currently ranked a middle-income country by the World Bank.

At the same time, for decades Botswana has routinely been in the top echelon of countries globally for income inequality. In 2020, it was listed as the fourth most unequal country in the world in terms of income distribution (World Population Review 2020). Domestic rates of employment have improved since the era of labour migration, but job opportunities remain limited, with unemployment rates averaging around 18 per cent over the past three decades (CEIC 2019). While the economy has diversified around tourism and beef exports, it remains heavily dependent on diamonds – a fact brought home during the financial crisis, when diamond markets collapsed. Many Batswana – including the Legaes – continue to rely on subsistence farming, a tenuous business in a place that faces increasingly frequent and devastating droughts as the global climate emergency progresses (Solway 1994). At the latest count, nearly 20 per cent of Botswana's population still live in poverty, although the rate is significantly higher – nearly 50 per cent – in a number of remote districts, and poverty disproportionately affects Botswana's indigenous peoples, the San (World Bank 2015).[3]

---

[3] See Mogalakwe and Nyamnjoh (2017) and Mogalakwe (2008) for detailed analyses of Botswana's other underexamined challenges and shortcomings as a liberal democracy.
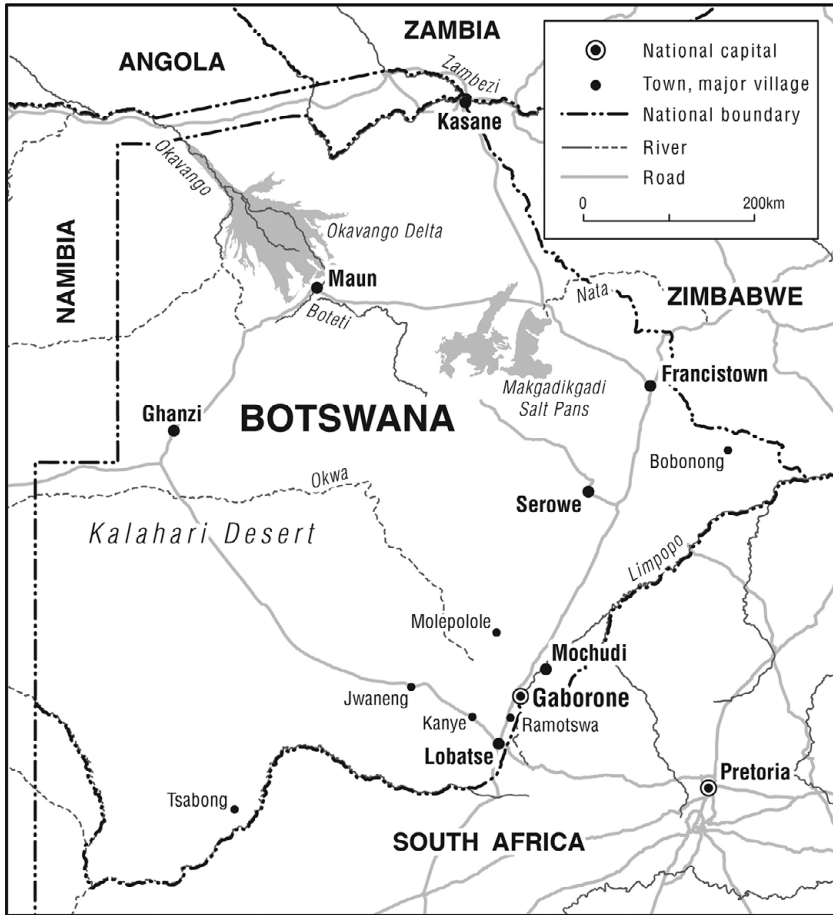
Figure 1 Map of Botswana.

The major thoroughfares of Botswana, built on the proceeds of the diamond trade, trace a rough diamond between larger settlements scattered sparsely around the edge of the country, avoiding for the most part the driest expanses of the Kgalagadi (Kalahari) desert at its heart (Figure 1). The building of roads and opening up of trade routes were key to the wide distribution of the state's resources and services (Livingston 2019) but also stimulated what seemed, on the face of it, to be a major urbanisation of the country. Gaborone, Botswana's capital, was one of the fastest growing cities in Africa when I first arrived there in 2003 (Cavric et al. 2004). And yet, at month ends and on major holidays,

the city would become a ghost town. 'No one is *from* Gaborone,' friends and colleagues would commonly remark. The capital city had the best opportunities for work, and people might live and even raise families there, but their home villages were the places to which they returned, in which they had rights to free residential plots where they could build, near which their livestock and farms were kept, and in which they made the bulk of their investments and plans for the future. While census statistics show a trend towards urbanisation in Botswana (see table 1.6 in Republic of Botswana 2015) – much as they do elsewhere in Africa – and while cities, towns, and even 'urban villages' have grown rapidly, the numbers belie the mobility and multiplicity of residence that most Batswana take for granted, as well as the ways in which both change over the life course. Both urbanisation and mobility, of course, have figured heavily in mainstream public health explanations for the spread of AIDS, in Botswana and elsewhere (e.g. UNAIDS 2001) – although, as I will suggest in this book, contemporary Tswana patterns of residence and movement may echo historical ones in absorbing crisis, as much as producing it.

My work with the Department of Social Services took me to all corners of the country, including many of the villages my urban-dwelling contemporaries called home, and to some of Botswana's most remote locations. Far from the main highways, Botswana's yawning income gap was most evident; so, too, was the government's role in providing for virtually all of a community's needs, from health and education to water, housing, and food. Notwithstanding the government's long-established political agenda of asserting and promoting a unified 'Tswana' nation (Gulbrandsen 2012), my travels around the country also made clear the significant diversity of the *merafe* of Botswana – eight major tribes are recognised, although there are many smaller polities as well (Nyati-Ramahobo 2009) – in everything from language to housing and historical links with groups now separated by national borders. The intersections between these downplayed tribal differences and the country's inequalities were palpable (on the racialised politics of citizenship, see Durham 2002b; Motzafi-Haller 2002). The stories that follow are tied most closely to the situation in one part of the country, the south-east, and to one *morafe* – the Balete – but are bound in many ways with these wider realities, and they draw on the insights I took from these diverse, unequal contexts.

Kinship, Selves, and *Dikgang*

'You know, it's funny,' my mother mused, her voice thin and distant over the phone. I had been pacing aimlessly up and down behind the house in

the dark, trying – and mostly failing – to make sense of the confusions of fieldwork for her. She cut straight to the chase: 'You went there to study care, but it's like all you ever talk about is conflict.' I stopped pacing, dumbstruck. 'Hello? Can you still hear me?' she called down the line.

My mother's observation was an expression of concern, but was nonetheless an entirely apt summary of my experience of family life in Botswana. And it gave me a sudden and unexpected way of radically reframing what was going on around me, as something not just frequent but usual, a crucial practice of Tswana kinship in its own right. This book is a response to her observation and an exploration of the extent to which we might understand Tswana kinship in terms of conflict and crisis – which I have glossed as *dikgang*.

Tswana kinship posed an anomalous case for Southern Africa, and for the descent-based models of kinship that dominated early anthropological work there, from the outset. Drawing on Schapera's work, A. R. Radcliffe-Brown concluded that the Tswana were 'decidedly exceptional in Africa' (1950: 69). Inheritance and succession to office seemed to fit a patrilineal model of descent, and village wards were roughly patrilocal. But Batswana were endogamous; marriage between parallel cousins – that is, *within* a given patriline – was permitted, even desirable (although sibling terms were used for these relationships; see Schapera 1940: 41–3; 1950: 151–2). Over time, the preference 'produced a field of contradictory and ambiguous ties' that may be '*at once* agnatic, matrilateral, and affinal' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 138, emphasis in original). Patrilateral relationships – expected to be fraught with competition and rivalry – were thereby conflated with matrilateral relationships, supposed to be characterised by affection and support. Lineages became tangled and ambiguous, and relationships could be entirely realigned through marriage (Kuper 1975) – a process that was itself highly indeterminate, changeable, and even reversible (Comaroff and Roberts 1977). John and Jean Comaroff have extended this argument to suggest that, rather than structural relationships determining status and behaviour, it worked the other way around: status and behaviour determined one's relationships. Families or individuals with whom one was on a more equal footing and with whom one was in competition were *therefore* patrilateral kin; those on a more unequal and non-competitive footing were *therefore* matrilateral kin, in a highly pragmatic – and implicitly flexible – 'cultural tautology' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 140). I suggest that it is these profound ambiguities – emerging not from structural contradictions (cf. Gluckman 1956; Turner 1957) but from the interchangeability and fluid multiplicity of kin relationships – that make Tswana kinship so fraught and highly contested, and therefore subject to *dikgang*.

The pragmatic, tautological dimension of Tswana kinship also points to the crucial importance of personhood in producing it and to a unique understanding of what personhood might mean and how it is achieved in this context. In his ruminations on consciousness, mind, and self-identity among Batswana, Hoyt Alverson (1978) describes Tswana personhood in terms of *go itirela* – 'doing-for-oneself' (ibid.: 133), working or making (for) oneself (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 141) – a framing that emphasises the processes and practices of making persons rather than personhood as a category of thought or being (see also Comaroff and Comaroff 1991; 2001; Durham 1995; 2002a; Klaits 2010; Livingston 2005; 2008; contrast Carrithers et al. 1985). Tracing the linguistic root of *itirela*, Comaroff and Comaroff (1991: 140–4) gloss these practices as *tiro* or work – not in terms of alienable labour, but as a creative process of building up the self by 'producing people, relations, and things' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 143; see also Durham 2007: 117).

Tiro, according to this model, could involve everything from the acquisition and care of cattle, houses, agricultural land, or material goods to negotiating marriage and the daily work of sustaining it, and to providing care for others. Its central purpose was the establishment of a wide range of social relations. *Go itirela* – which I have glossed as 'making-for-oneself' or occasionally as 'self-making', and by which I mean making the self as a social person[4] – draws together these processes of personhood, which I explore in this book. It emphasises building and accumulation, it is preoccupied with work and with care, and it takes in the material, relational, and moral dimensions of that accumulation and work as well.[5] *Go itirela* describes personhood in terms of becoming rather than being, through specific sorts of everyday practice rather than fixed terms of status or office, as practices that are for the self but also extend the self through a wide series of interdependencies (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; cf. Fortes 1973). At the same time, its perpetually processual nature means making-for-oneself is prone to attack, blockage, and even reversal, whether by misfortune or witchcraft; as a result, Batswana must conceal, 'fragment and refract the self' in defence (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 275–6; see also Durham 2002a; Klaits

---

[4] I mean this phrase in terms of its emic usage, and not to suggest Michel Foucault's techniques of the self (Foucault 1997); although, as we will see, it bears similarity to his notion of 'subjectivation' – not so much in terms of cultivating the relation of the self to the self, but in terms of 'how the self is invited or incited to become a moral subject' (Das 2015: 135) in relations between the self and others (see also Laidlaw 2014).

[5] See Livingston (2008) for an insightful discussion of *botho* – which literally means 'humanity' or 'personhood', but is understood as a powerful moral obligation, an intersubjective ethic, and a practice of humaneness.

2010; Livingston 2005; compare Strathern 1988; Wagner 1991). In other words, the practice of making-for-oneself echoes the multiplicity, fluidity, and indeterminacy of Tswana kinship; and, like kinship, I argue that it is inherently characterised by risk and potential crisis, or *dikgang*. To make-for-oneself requires the acquisition and successful negotiation or management of *dikgang*; it is a moral process as well as a social one, involving the accumulation of skill and experience in mediating the crises to which relationships are prone. In this book, I explore the ways in which kinship is both produced in and constrained by making-for-oneself, and the ways in which the imperative *go itirela* both relies on and disrupts kinship. The fact that the making of families and of selves is simultaneously complementary and oppositional generates *dikgang*, and *dikgang* are a key means of navigating and negotiating those tensions and interdependencies. Taking kinship and self-making together, in their tense interdependency, offers critical means of understanding the generativity of *dikgang*.

Dikgang*: Conflict, Ethics, and the Domestication of History*

'*Dikgang*' is a far-reaching and ambiguous term in Setswana. It covers a full range of interpersonal and situational conflicts and problems, but it also means simply 'news': the government daily newspaper is called *Dikgang tsa Gompieno*, the Daily News. In this sense, *dikgang* can be mundane or calamitous, incidental or imperative; they are volatile and unclear, require interpretation and provoke debate. The *dikgang* I describe in this book range from minor misunderstandings to heated arguments over neglected responsibilities, to grudges and jealousies; from transgressions of accepted norms to negotiating fines or, to managing the risks of bewitchment. They stretch from problems foreseen in the future to those left hanging from the past. They are frequently events, sometimes acts, but also situations and processes; they are moments of crisis, with lengthy histories and ongoing legacies of attempted resolution that make them chronic. Like *puo* – which means 'discussion' or 'conversation' but connotes conflict and discord – *dikgang* are normal, everyday interactions with an inherent potential to spill into something more dangerous. They are prolific and self-reproducing; inevitably, engaging *dikgang* risks bringing further *dikgang* into being.

But '*dikgang*' is not, of course, an undifferentiated category of trouble. Batswana use several terms to distinguish among *dikgang*, and, as we will see, several more distinctions emerge in the ways *dikgang* are assessed and addressed. *Dikgotlhang*, for example, are outright interpersonal conflicts; *dikwetlo* are situational challenges that may be shared and faced

together by certain people but are not problems between them. A *molato* is the transgression of a rule or a law; sometimes translated into English as a 'crime', it takes in a range of culturally inappropriate behaviour, including acts that could be redressed in the *kgotla* (although it can also be used informally, like *mathata* or *bothata*, for problems). *Go seeba batho*, to whisper about others or gossip, is a *kgang* that can create misunderstandings and bad feeling; *go gana*, to refuse, is a mark of wilfulness and potentially of disrespect that can also undermine relationships. *Lefufa*, or jealousy, and *sotlega*, or scorn, are sentiments and behaviours often traced as sources of the problems above – and, worse, of *boloi*, or witchcraft, and of illness (see Klaits 2010: 4–7 for a detailed analysis). Any of these issues might beset or implicate intergenerational relationships, siblingships, and intimate and conjugal relationships, as well as marking threats that men and women pose to each other and that the home poses to the polity (and vice versa). All threaten unpredictable repercussions for self-making. They also beset relationships between friends, neighbours, workmates, churchmates, and others.[6] I will argue, however, that the sorts of *dikgang* that arise, the risks they pose, and the ways in which they are interpreted and negotiated differentiate kin from non-kin, and are a key way in which the spheres of the family and the community are both connected and distinguished.

   Potential responses to *dikgang* are as varied as *dikgang* themselves. They range from formal negotiations to stillness and personal reflection, from recuperative acts of care to gossip, and even to direct, sometimes explosive confrontations. They may be embodied, materialised, or ritualised; they often cast into the past for insights and lessons and anticipate problems that may emerge in the future. Like news, *dikgang* are circulated and take different narrative forms in different contexts, which both express and shape relationships over time (compare Werbner 1991 on 'quarrel stories' among the Kalanaga, to which we will return). Perhaps the most common responses involve consultation – which itself may range from informal discussion and advice seeking among the members of a household or beyond to formal, mediated discussions for which advisers are called. Who responds, and how, to any given *kgang* matters:

---

[6] Following Deborah James (1999: 78), who in turn references Abner Cohen (1969), I take it that these relationships are 'intrinsically interconnected rather than optional and unrelated alternatives' to kinship, deeply linked to family membership and, as we will see, animated by kinship ideologies. That interconnectedness can be either emphasised and mobilised, as in the case of the Sotho women migrants from the northern Transvaal that James profiles, or carefully contained and downplayed. I suggest that the differential management of *dikgang* is a prominent means of making and marking those interdependencies and distinctions.

it expresses, structures, and modulates power, and gendered and generational hierarchies in particular. As we will see in the chapters that follow, men and women of different ages may have different responses available to them depending on their generational position, marital status, and personal predilections, skills, and experience. Those able to offer incisive interpretations, to successfully mobilise others, or to mediate relationships in discreet, even-handed ways accrue respect and deference – important means of self-making.

While these undertakings are often the purview of senior men – especially fathers and mothers' brothers – senior women also bear similar responsibility to and power over their juniors; with some *dikgang*, younger men and women, too, may exercise their discretion on their own. *Dikgang*, in other words, are a key means of producing and reproducing the gerontocratic patriarchy that structures Tswana sociality (Wylie 1991), if also perhaps a key means by which it has been unsettled over time. In intransigent, worst-case scenarios, *dikgang* may be escalated to institutions for response – primarily the *kgotla* or customary court, but also the police, social work office, or common-law courts. While such escalations may provide a final resolution, they tend to be avoided where possible, in part because they close off the generative possibilities of *dikgang*, the relationships and self-making projects implicated in them, and the power accrued through them.

Dikgang may be described loosely in these terms, but they resist simplification into discrete categories of conflict. Many *dikgang* involve combinations of the above characteristics and responses, which may change over time. Situational struggles shared by people and on which they can advise each other, for example, may create interpersonal conflict between them that requires mediation. Something that begins as a *kgang* between siblings may, in a process of negotiation, be reframed as an intergenerational *kgang*, or vice versa, thereby exploiting the generational fluidity of Tswana families to address it (to which we return in Part II). A *kgang* between spouses may also be read as a conflict among siblings or between generations, absorbing conjugal kin relationships into natal ones (Part III), and in turn shifting the appropriate response from one that involves two families to one that requires only the intervention of the husband's kin. It is not always immediately evident what sort of problems *dikgang* are when they arise, who they might involve, what might be at stake, or how they ought to be addressed; there is no hard and fast rule as to which response is best suited to which problem. These are all questions that require sustained reflection and interpretation over time.

It is in this sense that *dikgang* are, above all, ethical undertakings. As Richard Werbner notes, glossing James Laidlaw (2014) and Webb Keane

(2014), '[ethical] reflection almost always has to be understood in the light of engagement with ambivalence, conflict, and contradiction' (Werbner 2016: 82). If, as I have suggested, kinship is a series of paradoxes, it stands to reason that misunderstandings that trigger moral reflection and enable a 'thinking again about paradoxes and contradictions' (ibid.), drawing out hidden tensions and helping strike the balances required to navigate them, would be defining features of kinship. *Dikgang* foreground this process of ethical reflexivity and interpretation, in which those involved are encouraged to reflect on the sources and significance of the issues at hand, and in turn on the quality and history of their relationships: on who has done what for whom, and how, with what effects. The efficacy of the response in solving the issue is somewhat beside the point; much of the work of addressing *dikgang* ultimately suspends or brackets them as passing symptoms of deeper problems, and they will linger, shapeshift, and produce new *dikgang* in their turn. What matters more is the collective interpretation of the problem, consensus building around the response, and the right reordering of relationships.

Dikgang are thus perpetual; any given *kgang* bears specific relationships to the problems of the past and the ways in which they were interpreted, and it will set precedents for the future, although initial interpretations may be resisted and recast. In many ways, the navigation of *dikgang* connotes the practice of wisdom divination (*bongaka jwa Setswana*), described by Werbner among the Tswapong as 'the moral imagination in practice' (Werbner 2016: 86). But among kin, the moral registers against which these assessments are made are also subject to reflection, contestation, and flux – not least in a context where Christian ethics have become so prominent, particularly in connection to development initiatives (Bornstein 2005; Klaits 2010; Scherz 2014). It is in this layered and perpetual reflexivity, I suggest, that *dikgang* prove generative: they continuously forge, recalibrate, and sustain a shared, collective ethics.

Batswana do not generally court *dikgang*. Instead, they tend to avoid conflict explicitly, frequently commenting '*Ga ke rate dikgang*' or '*Ga ke rate puo*' (I don't like conflict/discussion). This reflexive position towards *dikgang* as a dangerous and undesirable undertaking is an ethically righteous one, intended to contain and ameliorate the risks of conflict. As an ethical field in which 'sentiment and mutuality are enacted, disputed and struggled with' (Durham and Klaits 2002: 780), *dikgang* pose special risks in certain contexts – including funerals, of which Durham and Klaits were writing – where imperatives of civility, manners (*maitseo*), and peace (*kagiso*) are necessary to 'prevent differences or enmities' (ibid.: 779; see also Durham 2002a). And these risks are perhaps most prominent among kin, whose intimacy and dense interconnectedness

make them especially dangerous to one another (see Lambek and Solway 2001 on *dikgaba*, illnesses brought upon children by ancestors angered over familial disputes). I suggest that this pronounced risk emanates from the fact that *dikgang* trace the deep, discomfiting links between the key intersubjective sentiments of love and care, jealousy and scorn (Klaits 2010: 4–7), the threatening ease with which one can slip into or produce the other, and the imperative of managing their meanings and distinctions. Handled well, *dikgang* involving scorn or jealousy may create and sustain love or care. But in their irresolution, *dikgang* frequently have more ambivalent, unpredictable effects. As processes that may falter, fail, and later recover, *dikgang* may generate care *and* scorn, love *and* jealousy, reproducing the problematic indeterminacies they set out to tackle. Understood thus, *dikgang* make it uncomfortably apparent that scorn and jealousy may be just as intrinsic to kinship as care and love – one reason, perhaps, why the risk kin pose to one another is so much greater and more dangerous than that posed through any other relationship.

Dikgang are not ahistorical features of Tswana social life, of course. The specific sites, subjects, and terms of *dikgang* intersect with and reflect political-economic trends and have mapped broader socio-political change – to which the rich ethnographic record of Tswana disputes since the colonial era bears ample witness. Indeed, it is in *dikgang* – particularly the *dikgang* of kin – that the effects of these changes are most often described. From the disintegrating forces of labour migration (Schapera 1940: 352–3) to growing inequality and the sharp rise in woman-headed households with absentee fathers (Townsend 1997: 405–6), to the mortality rates of AIDS and the spectre of child-headed households (e.g. Wolf 2010), the socio-political flux of Southern Africa for over a century has been charted through the changing crises of the family. In her description of how elder women sustain dependencies, Julie Livingston (2007b) supplies a concise historical overview of how these changes have expressed themselves in major intergenerational patterns of dispute:

fathers and sons had struggled since precolonial times for control over cattle, political status, and labor, and colonial-era wage earning refocused these struggles … Mothers-in-law and daughters-in-law experienced a similar refocusing of long-standing tensions around labor, sexuality, and resources in the colonial era, wrought by male labor migration and wage earning. But strained relations between mothers and daughters are a relatively new phenomenon, born of the unprecedented economic and social autonomy possible for single women in the post-colonial economic boom, and the simultaneous pressures to earn cash and support children. (Livingston 2007b: 174)

To these we might add the new conflicts that have arisen with urbanisation and growing inequalities, where 'close relatives, often siblings and in-laws, who grow up in the same conditions, may end up later in very different environments and economic situations' (Alber 2018: 241, on Benin), as well as many others explored in this book.

And yet many of these accounts of the impact of social change on the family miss the ways in which the family manages that change. *Dikgang*, I suggest, domesticate these shifting histories and political economies – much as Klaits (2010: 82–121) describes the domestication of inequality, in terms of both experiencing its effects in domestic and kin relationships, and reflexively identifying, assessing, and ameliorating those effects. *Dikgang*, in some ways, are the mundane equivalent of what Marshall Sahlins called 'revelatory crises' (1972: 124, 143; see also Solway 1994, on drought as a revelatory crisis in Botswana). They expose structural contradictions and unjust or worsening socio-economic and political conditions, while also concealing them – not, here, by attributing them to the crisis itself, but by attributing them to failures in interpersonal relations, and absorbing them into that sphere.

It is in this process of domesticating history that families seem to run the highest risk of collapse – but also prove most resilient. While 'the extended family institution has been under assault for at least the past 50 years, if not more' (Madhavan 2004: 1452, on South Africa), and while these compounding crises have had a tremendous impact on Tswana family life, that impact is perhaps more ambiguous than straightforwardly destructive (see Ørnulf Gulbrandsen 1986: 24 for a similar point regarding labour migration). Rather than seeing 'HIV as an additional destabilising mechanism to an already fragile system' (Madhavan 2004: 1452), I suggest that Tswana kinship's long acquaintance with upheaval and socio-political crisis points to resilience – and that this resilience has its roots in the management of *dikgang*. As Alber notes of Benin, when social contexts are in a 'state of transition … disputes tend to arise not only over concrete cases, but also over the norms on which they are based' (Alber 2018: 134). These conflicts not only 'indicate a general process of ongoing change' (ibid.: 146) but provide a means of engaging it directly, navigating it, and recalibrating relationships in response to it. While Batswana themselves have long had misgivings about kin ties and their ability to weather crisis (Klaits 1998), such continuous doubt and questioning is also a crucial aspect of sustaining collaboration (Klaits 2016: 417; see also Dahl 2009b), of navigating *dikgang*, and of absorbing the socio-political shocks of history.
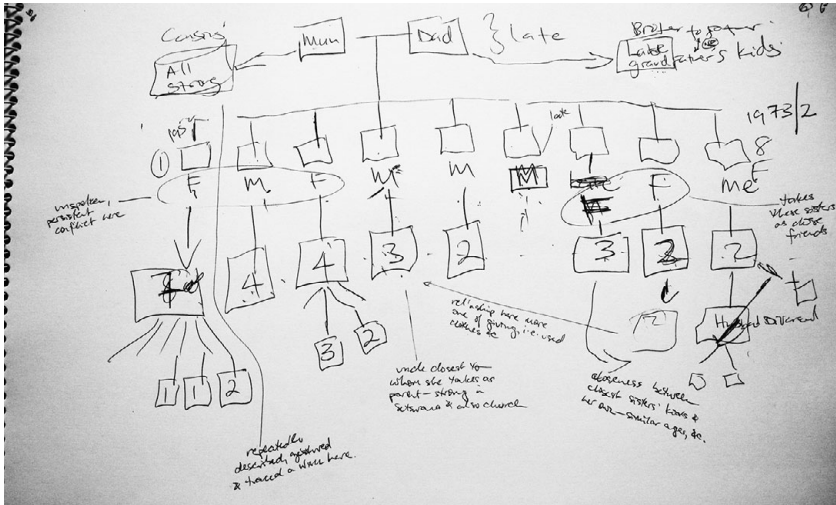
Figure 2 Charting kinship and conflict. A friend and social worker drew this chart while describing her extended family, which quickly became a map of specific conflicts (noted in my hand afterwards).

The *dikgang* described in this book reflect a particular period of Botswana's history, which I have glossed as its time of AIDS. But they draw in the histories described above as well – and anticipate possible futures, too. *Dikgang* do not necessarily map their own historical contexts, but they often recount the process of their navigation over time and the relational histories of those who engage them, using these factors to assess and respond to contemporary crises. If families are 'caught in the very fine webs of quarrel stories, woven and rewoven in each generation around one misunderstanding after another' (Werbner 1991: 67), so too are the shifting socio-political sands of history, families' reactions to them, lessons of success and failure. In this sense, *dikgang* might be best understood as cumulative, living responses to the experience of crisis across generations, as well as to the crises of particular moments.

Dikgang, *Kinship, and Care*

By choosing to focus on *dikgang*, I have sought to question the often subtle but persistent tendency to theorise kinship, as an abstract concept, in ways that echo its idealisation: in terms of harmony, unconditional affection, reciprocity, mutuality, and care. This tendency emanates from projects not unlike my own: those that trace interdependencies between

the analytical and social domains of kinship, politics, and religion, while struggling with the question of where and how the limits are drawn in practice; and those that attend to the moral and ethical underpinnings that characterise the lived experience of being kin. The conclusions, however, either lose the specificities of kinship or substitute its moral underpinnings for theory. They also gloss over an ethnographic record – particularly in Africa – that is thick with examples of conflict, inequality, tension, and even violence in family life, rendering these accounts exceptions to the rule rather than constituents of it. I pose conflict and crisis not only as 'vital element[s] of kinship life', 'as inherent to kinship life as intimacy, solidarity and emotional warmth' (Alber et al. 2013b: 9) but as *defining* attributes of kinship: of its lived experience, of its gendered and generational relationships, of the ways in which its interconnections with and distinctions from other domains are forged and contested, and of its moral underpinnings put into practice.

The analytical tendency I describe traces its roots to Meyer Fortes (1969), whose understanding of the imbrications of kinship with politics is a critical antecedent to current ethnographic work on the overlaps and distinctions between these domains, including my own. In identifying the moral criteria of kinship, he proposed an 'axiom of amity' based on an 'ethic of generosity' that generated a 'prescriptive altruism' (Fortes 1969: *passim*). Kinsfolk, he noted, 'are expected to be loving, just, and generous to one another' (Fortes 1969: 237). Of course, in practice, kinsfolk did not always live up to these expectations – or the expectations proved to be so onerous that many would seek to escape them, especially as they saw their lots in life improve. And the same axiom and ethics might also apply to other relations, which were kin-like but also different from kin, from blood brotherhood to neighbourliness. Fortes no doubt succeeded in identifying the guiding principles of kinship among the Ashanti and others, as a matter of ethnographic fact. But as a matter of defining 'kinship' analytically, in ways that adequately accounted for its lived experience, his account simultaneously fell short of and overshot the mark: it didn't quite account for how kin treated each other or experienced their relationships in practice, and it cast the net of kinship around relationships that might not otherwise be considered kin.

David Schneider took these conundrums one step further. Having unsettled latent assumptions that blood or biology formed the universal glue of kinship bonds in his work on American kinship, he identified 'enduring, diffuse solidarity' (Schneider 1980: 50) as its crucial code. But, like Fortes, he noted that this moral disposition was not unique to kin. Schneider determined that these were qualities that kinship held in

common with nationalism and religion – the ethnographic evidence of interdependencies between domains runs deep – but that nothing else distinguished kinship in itself, that it had 'no specific properties of its own' (Sahlins 2013: 7), leading him to argue for the elimination of kinship as an analytical category altogether. While this somewhat apocalyptic conclusion certainly affected the fortunes of kinship as an area of anthropological research and analysis, it did little to explain away the prevalence and importance of something previously known as kinship in virtually every place studied by anthropologists.

Most recently, Marshall Sahlins has trawled through the vast literature of kinship studies to pose 'mutuality of being' (Sahlins 2013: *passim*) as the defining, distinguishing, and universal quality of kinship. Mutuality of being fits the intersubjective experience of family and selfhood among the Tswana exceptionally well – and precisely describes the risk that kin pose to one another in many African contexts too, as a vector for witchcraft. But in Sahlins' explication of mutuality, witchcraft, violence, and other forms of familial volatility and instability mark 'failures' of kinship, or even 'negative kinship' (ibid.: 59), rather than being constituent elements of it. It is a curious conclusion to draw from an ethnographic record, spanning Africa and Melanesia, in which kinship and witchcraft are not just correlative, but witchcraft inhabits kin relations *to the exclusion of* other relations (Strong 2016) – that is, in which witchcraft proves a unique and defining characteristic of kinship. Likewise, Sahlins excludes the making of hierarchy among kin from 'what kinship is' (2013: 60) – although, as Robert Brightman points out in response, 'it is no less intrinsic than sameness' to the experience of kinship globally (Brightman 2013: 265). 'Positive', 'successful' kinship remains unremarked.

As Marilyn Strathern notes when looking back over this theoretical history, 'Mutuality, amity, solidarity: the positive resonances are clear. Unqualified, kinship – like relation – is in English usage a motivated concept' (Strathern 2014: 5). 'Kinship' is a term and concept with histories, connotations, and assumptions of its own. Relations – here, kin relations – are implicitly assumed to be a good thing to have (ibid.: 3), and anything that complicates that understanding is excluded from it. This tendency to sentimentalise kinship as an analytical category (Edwards and Strathern 2000: 152; see also Stasch 2009: 6) tends to downplay the theoretical relevance of gendered dynamics of power, hierarchy, and control; violence, witchcraft, and abuse; and, as I hope to show here, conflict and crisis. To the extent that it does recognise these latter dynamics, the sentimental tendency tacitly assumes that they are the result of a structural flaw (e.g. Gluckman 1956; Turner 1957) and that kinship should be structured and practised explicitly to avoid or

circumvent them (e.g. Stasch 2009: 2). Alternatively, it treats them as a reversal, inversion, 'dark side' (Geschiere 2003), or 'negative' aspect of proper kinship, something connected but distinct and opposed.

I suggest that part of the challenge here might be traced to the fact that the anthropology of kinship has tended to focus on figuring out *what binds people together*, in spite of the hierarchies, conflicts, and fissive pressures that the ethnographic record describes. This focus was explicit in structural-functionalist work on kinship in Africa, which sought the principles of 'social order' that might organise so-called stateless societies (and through which they might be governed and reordered by colonial powers); but it has persisted since then, through the expansive frameworks of relatedness (Carsten 2000) and kinning (Howell 2007) as well as Sahlins' 'mutuality of being'. It is, however, a preoccupation based on a set of subtle assumptions about personhood: namely, that persons are fundamentally discrete, and that bringing and keeping them together is the central challenge of sociality and relationships. In a context such as Botswana – and, indeed, much of Africa – where personhood is understood as fundamentally intersubjective, the problem of relating is equally one of how to keep people *apart* – of how to manage and ameliorate that deep interdependency and the risks it presents (a problem Roy Wagner (1977) described for Papua New Guinea). What these contexts share with others, however, is the rather paradoxical imperative of being together and being apart simultaneously – an imperative that creates tensions. Approaching kinship from the vantage point of these tensions allows us to accommodate diverse modes of personhood, and to establish one possible comparative perspective, without falling back on models that conflate what kinship is with what it should be.

Not only do we see 'the truth of social relations in events of disruption' (Stasch 2009: 17) but those disruptions create opportunities and imperatives for ethical reflexivity – that is, for getting at the moral underpinnings of kinship as they are practised, negotiated, contested, and innovated, rather than as ideal forms. The ways in which conflict and crisis are addressed provide crucial opportunities for generating, recalibrating, and sustaining specific social relations – kin relations – in their turn. In other words, conflict and crisis are not simply unfortunate but anomalous things that happen to families; they are continuously *produced by* and *produce* kinship, proving to be crucial elements in its resilience. And they include dynamics unique to kinship that define and delimit the family, differentiating it from other social relationships and domains, as well as those that trace its interdependencies. *Dikgang* are, for better or for worse, what make families family, and not something else.

Perhaps counterintuitively, I suggest that *dikgang* also provide some unique and complementary perspectives on care, which has formed such a prominent and rich anthropological analytic in understanding Botswana's response to AIDS (Dahl 2009a; Durham 2002a; Klaits 2010; Livingston 2005). In the wake of the widespread government-sponsored provision of antiretroviral treatment (ARVs), dominant public health and interventionist narratives in Botswana refocused on the 'crisis of care' AIDS represented for families – picking up on a long-standing trope in which the failures of kinship are often cast. When I first visited Botswana in 2003, the slogan 'I Care, Do You?' dominated government public health campaigns, appearing everywhere from flyers distributed at health fairs to roadside billboards countrywide (many of which still remain). In the 'crisis of care' narrative, intolerable burdens of care weigh on those looking after the ill and the orphaned, who are often recast as 'caregivers' (or *batlhokomedi*) rather than family members. Government policy targets 'children in need of care' (RoB 2005a); NGOs provide 'supplemental care' and sometimes call their staff 'carers' as well. The discourse has become so pervasive that it is often difficult to talk about family and care in ways that don't assume both to be objects of concern, requiring intervention (see Dahl 2009b). At the same time, care was neither the defining problematic nor the most striking experience of my time in the Legae household – although, of course, the family expended great energy caring for one another, for their joint property, and for their life projects. Rather, care – like almost every other defining expectation, responsibility, or experience of kinship – was a fraught, open, ethical question, one that produced conflict and crisis; more than that, it was negotiated through conflict and was accessed and even achieved in conflict. It struck me that it might be conflict and crisis, rather than care, that analytically precede the full range of kin-defining dynamics with which this book deals. And this framing provided an apt way of connecting to, but defamiliarising, the 'crisis of care' that AIDS is assumed to represent – by presenting the possibility that care is routinely subject to and productive of crisis, if in different ways at different times. I revisit these possibilities in more detail in Part II.

In this sense, care and *dikgang* are deeply intertwined and unexpectedly generative, each reproducing the other as well as the families they define. To the extent that perceived crises of care motivate a vast range of governmental and non-governmental interventions into the family, they also provide unexpected ways of tracing interdependencies between spheres that anthropologists are accustomed to differentiating as 'kinship' and 'politics' – a theme to which I turn next.

Intervention

> Far from being the basis of the good society, the family, with its narrow privacy and tawdry secrets, is the source of all our discontents.
>
> Edmund Leach, 'A runaway world?' (1967)

Five women stood around the boardroom table, leaning their heads together over several scraps of paper spread across its surface. Each bore a word or phrase in block-lettered marker pen. 'CHILD ABUSE', said one. Others read 'HIV/AIDS', 'ECONOMIC CRISIS', 'JUVENILE DELINQUENCY', 'WOMEN'S RIGHTS', 'UNEMPLOYMENT', 'ORPHANHOOD', and 'PASSION KILLINGS'. The women arranged and rearranged the papers in a loose web, placing some together in a line, shifting others across the table. 'HIV/AIDS' was particularly peripatetic, moving from the centre of the web out to its margins and travelling right round its edges. Finally, one of the women moved a paper marked 'FAMILY BREAKDOWN' to the centre of the web; the others nodded and murmured their approval.

The women were all Batswana and were all professional social workers, the staff of a highly reputable NGO that ran therapeutic wilderness retreats for orphaned children, modelled on the Tswana tradition of initiation. I had met the founder and head of the organisation, Thapelo, several years earlier, while conducting a rapid assessment of NGOs offering services to orphaned and vulnerable children. As it happened, the organisation had been working for years with children from Dithaba – including Lorato and several others I knew from the orphan care project – and so Thapelo and I knew many young people and families in common. In time, we negotiated a formal partnership between the NGO and the Department of Social Services, which involved training government social workers in roughly half the districts across the country to replicate the retreats as part of their orphan care programming. The district in which I lived had been involved in this replication as well; Tumelo, our village social worker, had been among the trainees. Thapelo and her organisation had been thoroughly bound up in my professional, community, and personal life in Botswana for years – an entanglement not uncommon in this sparsely populated and densely interconnected country.

When I returned to Botswana for my fieldwork, Thapelo asked me to assist her organisation in developing a strategic plan. As part of the process, I asked her and her staff to identify what they felt were the major social issues facing Botswana, and to experiment with arranging them in terms of cause and effect, as a 'problem tree'. Their collective decision to situate family breakdown at the heart of the wide range of issues they had

identified resonated with the rhetoric of politicians' speeches and government policy, the content of campaigns run by agencies such as UNICEF, and the ruminations of village leaders – all of which the social workers weighed up explicitly as they repositioned the scraps on the table. The confusion they faced in terms of where to situate 'HIV/AIDS' – as a cause of family breakdown, or an effect, or both – also mirrored that array of discourses. It was a logic and rhetoric in which I, too, had framed my understandings of the epidemic, its effects, and appropriate responses for years; and, like my colleagues, I had come up against the contradictions, frustrations, and dead ends of that logic repeatedly.

The epidemic still fuels popular and professional concern about over-burdened systems of care and the purported breakdown of the extended family. Hundreds of local and international NGOs, international agencies, foreign governments, and public and private donors have rushed into this supposed vacuum of care and kinship over the past two decades, with the support and encouragement of the Botswana government. The government itself runs wide-reaching programmes in treatment, home-based care, and orphan care; parallel NGO initiatives in the same areas have mushroomed. During my time at Social Services, I identified over 200 NGOs working with orphaned and vulnerable children alone.

A highly active and influential non-governmental sector is not entirely new to Botswana, nor is an interventionist model of governance. Both have long been bound up with transnational political projects, of colonisation and missionisation specifically, and both have targeted families as critical sites of power and social change. Nor is this project unique to Botswana. Erdmute Alber, Jeannett Martin, and Catrien Notermans describe 'an irreversible process', beginning in the colonial era, 'in which the state, global institutions and non-governmental organisations have increasingly intervened in matters of kinship, family and childhood' in West Africa (Alber et al. 2013b: 16; see also Stoler 2002 on Indonesia). Jacques Donzelot's account of eighteenth-century France suggests that interventionism in the family stretches back even further in the colonial imagination: he describes it in terms of 'policing', the aim of which 'is to make everything that composes the state serve to strengthen and increase its power, and likewise serve the public welfare' (Donzelot 1979: 7). Alongside public education and psychiatry, he identifies social work and philanthropy as key elements of this project – underscoring the fact that changing modes of intervention are more than technical mechanisms of power, but have long been animated by ethical (and often specifically Christian (Bornstein 2005; Scherz 2014)) imperatives.

Nonetheless, the advent of AIDS and its logics and rhetorics of familial collapse have motivated government and NGOs alike to pursue a degree

of access to the family that is perhaps unprecedented. In the context of successful treatment efforts, perhaps the greatest effects of the epidemic on families lie in these interventions. The fact that they produce such mixed and unpredictable results, are so prone to frustration, and have had such apparently limited influence on the trajectory of Botswana's epidemic suggests that they have also misread the apparent conundrum of Botswana's epidemiological situation and continue to be stymied by it. While I do not pretend to offer a conclusive answer to Botswana's AIDS riddle in this book, I do hope to offer a slightly different means of framing it: as an 'ordinary' crisis, with ample precedent – and perhaps overlooked resources of resilience – in Tswana kinship practice and family life.

While the family is a prominent site of intervention for humanitarian and development programmes globally, anthropological analyses of these spheres have generally overlooked it – focusing instead on institutional actors, the production of human universals and futures, and emergent forms of governance (Fassin 2012; Ticktin 2014). The tendency to avoid families and the micro-processes of relatedness as objects of study suggests an uncanny echo of development and humanitarian organisational practice and discourse itself, in which kin relations have been viewed as encumbrances, threats, and even causes for suspicion (Redfield 2012: 362). And yet the notion of family, like that of humanity, remains 'meaningful across political, religious, and social divides' (Ticktin and Feldman 2010: 1) – a key trope in imagining human universality, vested with a variety of shifting, unstable meanings that are nonetheless effectively deployed to a wide range of political ends (Tsing 2005: 8). The humanitarian imperative to provide care for strangers (Redfield 2012; Redfield and Bornstein 2011), for example, is underpinned by the conviction that when those who should ordinarily care for people – namely, their families – can't or won't, 'society, either through philanthropy or the state, [is] obliged to stand in' (Fassin 2013: 118). In this sense, the principles of humanitarian intervention and government are subtly but deeply informed by expectations, ideologies, and practices of kinship. Like humanitarianism, kinship marks 'a particularly charged terrain between politics and ethics' (Redfield and Bornstein 2011: 25), drawing together affect and value, rights and obligations, the moral and the political, and bridging the paradoxes they present in similar ways (Fassin 2012: 3). On this reading, the family itself emerges not only as a target but as a sphere of humanitarian governance (see Fassin 2012).

To tease out the connections between family, governments, and NGOs embarking on humanitarian and development projects, I follow the lead of Susan McKinnon and Fenella Cannell (2013; see also Lazar 2018; Yanagisako and Collier 1987; Yanagisako and Delaney 1995), who

call attention to the 'persistent life' of kinship in the economic, political, and religious projects of 'modern' states, corporations, churches, and other agencies. They argue that the social sciences have tended not only to differentiate spheres of analytical concern, or 'domains' (kinship, politics, economics, religion), somewhat arbitrarily and artificially, but to assume the natural distinction of those domains in social life, inferring the relative priority of some over others – and rendering the family in particular inconsequential. I attempt to shake off these prejudices by interrogating the extent to which Tswana kinship ideals and practices are discernible in the internal workings of government and NGO offices, or in their interactions with one another, and by asking whether other kinship values may be found in those spaces as well. Finally, I question whether government and NGO programmes that attempt to encompass the family may in fact be generated, permeated, and animated by it.

The notion that Tswana politics might be linked to – and even have its roots in – Tswana kinship practice is not, in itself, new. Nor is the notion that both spheres might be affected by larger global political processes. Schapera (1970) provided a thorough analysis of the genealogies of the Kgatla chiefs' kinship affiliations, which he took to be the backbone of village community politics. He drew connections between social roles, kinship terms, and status, and directly linked the supportive closeness of matrilineal relatives, as well as the competitive antagonism among patrilineal relatives, to strategies for accessing power within the chieftainship. And he questioned how the advent of indirect colonial rule might rework these dynamics. In this approach, he aligned himself with the bulk of anthropological literature on kinship in Africa at the time: reading kinship as a stand-in for politics in small-scale societies. By focusing on powerful families, Schapera's work on the Kgatla chiefs went some distance in establishing the family as a political entity (Schapera 1970) – although it didn't go so far as to recognise kinship itself as fundamentally political. Here, I seek to broaden and invert his project, by exploring the extent to which organisations we understand to be political entities – government, NGO, or transnational agencies – work in familial ways.

In drawing together the realms of kinship and the political, I do not seek to return to understandings of African societies as 'small-scale' or 'pre-modern'; nor do I aspire to the corollary notions of African politics as fundamentally kin-based. Rather, I suggest that we might reconceptualise *all* political institutions and work – including those we are accustomed to exceptionalising as 'Western' and 'modern' – as being fundamentally informed and animated by kinship ideals and practices, and in constant negotiation with both. The practice of politics and

governance does not simply arise out of kin practice (Schapera 1940), but neither does it simply act on families (Kuper 1975). It does both, describing a deep interdependency between the state and home, kinship and politics; and this interdependency has taken on transnational implications, brought into sharp relief in the era of AIDS intervention.

The Time of HIV and AIDS

> For they had lived together long enough to know that love was always love, anytime and anyplace, but it was more solid the closer it came to death.   Gabriel García Márquez, *Love in the Time of Cholera* (1989: 345)

This is not a book about AIDS. But it is not a book that eludes or ignores AIDS either. And, in this sense, I hope it will resonate with daily life in Botswana, which was also not about AIDS but was lived in the epidemic's omnipresence.

Botswana's first case of AIDS was reported in 1985. By the early 1990s, the spread of the disease had reached epidemic proportions (UNAIDS 2020). In its first stages, AIDS was often framed as a threat to the survival of the nation, in terms of both reversing its developmental gains and facing its citizenry with extinction (e.g. LaGuardia 2000; RoB 2005b: 2). The fear of devastation was not altogether unfounded: shortly after I first arrived, in 2004, infection rates were estimated at 37.9 per cent among adults, and in a country of 1.6 million people, 33,000 people are thought to have died of AIDS in that year alone (UNAIDS et al. 2004). In the same year, the number of orphaned children grew so high that a national 'orphan crisis' was declared (ibid.).

The introduction of testing centres in 2000 and publicly funded ARV treatment in 2002 – which now reaches 87 per cent of those who require it nationwide – significantly reduced mortality rates (NACA 2014: 23; UNAIDS 2020). Prevention of mother-to-child transmission initiatives were introduced as early as 1999 and now enjoy over 98 per cent uptake and a success rate of nearly 98 per cent (NACA 2014: 22, 26; UNAIDS 2020). In spite of the enormous success of these interventions, the prevalence rate has declined only moderately, to roughly 20 per cent of the adult population (UNAIDS 2020) – and even this reduction can be partly attributed to changes in statistical collection methods (compare UNAIDS et al. 2004: 2 with NACA 2014: 10). The rate of new infections has dropped by a third since 2010, but continues to run high for the region (UNAIDS 2020).

Botswana's responses to AIDS have been proactive, ground-breaking, and sustained by strong political will, making it exemplary among

nations confronting the epidemic. And yet, its AIDS epidemic has remained one of the world's worst for over 30 years. Botswana presents an intransigent and important exception to epidemiologies of AIDS that have tied it to poverty, political instability, or lack of political leadership – requiring us to imagine both the disease and the epidemic differently.

Botswana's official responses to the epidemic have imagined it primarily as a crisis of the family, which is one reason AIDS is so salient to the contemporary lived experience of kinship – and why an analysis of kinship might prove salient to reimagining AIDS. Envisioning a 'lost generation' of sick, dying, or dead adults, their elderly parents left with the burden of their orphaned children, government and non-governmental organisations alike have cast AIDS as a crisis of kinship and social reproduction, requiring the intervention of specialist agencies and the state. As we saw in the previous section, this inexorable logic has motivated a vast range of responses from within Botswana and around the world, from major foreign government and philanthropic funding initiatives to community-based projects. Botswana's AIDS epidemic provides a specific field in which local and global logics, ethics, economies, and practices of both kinship and care have been tested, contested, and negotiated for decades, in ways no other illness has.

By foregrounding families, I seek a perspective on AIDS that unsettles the assumptions of dominant AIDS discourse and re-domesticates our understanding of the epidemic. In a context where sex makes people of the same blood (Durham and Klaits 2002: 785), extending the possibilities of relatedness chaotically without determining its degrees or limits, AIDS traces long-standing problems of kinship and is drawn into long-established means of navigating kin risk. This book seeks such unexpected continuities in the cataclysms of the epidemic and unexpected sources of resilience that have been generated in its wake, in part by looking at AIDS from the perspective of the daily lived experience of family, rather than by looking at the family through the filter of AIDS.

As well as foregrounding families, I attempt to excavate these alternative possibilities by deliberately moving HIV and AIDS to the background – not erasing them, nor ignoring them, but setting them as context rather than cause or explanation. Partly, I want to defamiliarise the powerful assumptions about the sources and effects of AIDS that have inhibited academic analysis of the epidemic, as much as they characterise folk discourse around it. But mostly I want this account to be true to the lived experience of the pandemic, as I have understood it from friends, colleagues, and family in Botswana over the past 18 years. Since the Botswana government made ARV treatment freely and widely available, AIDS has become a chronic and manageable disease; devastating

illness and death are no longer the only, nor primary, lenses through which Batswana view AIDS – although both remain common experiences of the epidemic. I suggest that Batswana have actively rendered AIDS something peripheral to day-to-day life – even when it is central to the discourses and programming with which they are engaged professionally, as it is with social workers or NGO volunteers; and also when they have had direct experience of it, either themselves or among family and friends, as most have. During my fieldwork, HIV and AIDS struck me as curiously insignificant factors in those situations for which one might expect them to be most important: in managing relationships, intimacy, and sex, for example; in managing pregnancy; or in caring for the ill. In the context of widespread public education and well-funded programming that emphasised its urgency, risk, and danger, AIDS had become almost banal. But its banality was not accidental: it was the result of the creative, effective work of Batswana themselves in finding ways to live with the epidemic.

I use the now commonplace phrase 'the time of AIDS' to relegate the epidemic to context, as it was lived by my friends and colleagues. But I also use it in a slightly different way: to suggest Gabriel García Márquez's *Love in the Time of Cholera*, a novel about love and death set in the nineteenth-century Caribbean but written in the early 1980s, just as HIV and AIDS were first identified. The novel backgrounds the sociopolitical imperatives of the cholera epidemic, but by doing so it invites us to rethink it altogether, from the perspective of those living – and loving – through it, in spite of it, and because of it. Márquez invites us to recognise love itself as a disease, and, by extension, to imagine disease as something that traces and signifies love. But, as Márquez surmises, love may also be the only palliative available, the only means of living with that disease – which means, of course, that the disease is inevitably perpetuated. It is an insight at once wholly apt in the context of AIDS and deeply unsettling to dominant epidemiological paradigms.

Taking the novel's cue, I suggest that pandemics of infectious disease are often read – by public health and the social sciences alike – not as traces of love but as indicative of a fundamental pathology in the relationships or sociality through which the disease moves. The presence of the disease implies that the relationship by which it is transmitted is also sick and must be healed. To the extent that transmission frequently marks sharp inequalities – of wealth, gender, age, power, and so on – this observation is, of course, partly true. But to the extent that transmission also transgresses and collapses the boundaries of unequal social strata (Comaroff 2007) and traces relationships of love, care, and kinship (e.g. Henderson 2011; Hirsch et al. 2009; Hunter 2010; Klaits 2010), it

is also partly myopic. Certain responses to infectious disease, on the first reading, consider it a matter for quarantine, for containing or blocking those pathological relationships, and for reasserting the social boundaries the disease has transgressed. But such responses often undermine the most effective means people have for addressing and living with the disease – and may, indeed, create circumstances that *increase* the risk of ill health while interfering with access to care and support.

I want to suggest that an epidemic of infectious disease such as AIDS traces necessary, generative relationships, not simply pathological relationships, and that it is those relationships that have made AIDS devastating in its reach – while equipping us to live with its devastations. As Frederick Klaits argues, the problems AIDS presents are fundamentally '*problems of love*' (Klaits 2010: 3, emphasis in the original; see also Durham and Klaits 2002; LeMarcis 2012). Much as Márquez implies for cholera in the Caribbean, the innovative ways that Batswana have found to live and love in a time of AIDS may also perpetuate the epidemic, but that possibility requires us not to dismiss their strategies so much as to rethink our assumptions about epidemics and infectious disease. None of this is to say, of course, that HIV and AIDS are harmless, or that no intervention is required; but it does suggest that interventions that seek to contain the disease through behaviour change are likely to be much less effective, and potentially more damaging, than those focusing on treatment and cure.

In using the everyday, lived experience of family life to reinterpret the unique characteristics of Botswana's AIDS epidemic, I hope that this book will speak to a common source of frustration among my former colleagues who have worked for years fighting the AIDS epidemic: the apparent disconnect between widespread understanding of the causes and repercussions of the disease among Batswana, and persistently high rates of infection. Batswana do not contract HIV out of ignorance or wilful self-harm, nor out of a lack of concern for the future, nor an inability to practise or negotiate safe sex (as some public health discourse in the country supposes); they take the risk of contracting HIV as one of many, equally profound risks in pursuing love, care, and intimate relationships with the potential to produce kinship and personhood. All of these potential risks – or *dikgang* – affect both individuals and their kin, who must work to ameliorate them on a regular basis, with greater and lesser success, producing an inevitable legacy of further risks, difficulties, and *dikgang* in their turn. But in this cycle of risk, they continuously produce and reproduce themselves and their families – not simply in spite of AIDS, but through it.

Fieldwork

Dithaba

I conducted my fieldwork in a village I have called Dithaba, one of many small but quickly growing settlements in Botswana's south-east, huddled along the railway and highway that were the country's first arterial transport routes. It stands within an hour's commute of the capital city, Gaborone, and two other medium-sized towns. The border with South Africa is just a few kilometres distant, unmarked among the farmlands and cattle posts that extend around the village.

Not everyone who appears in this book is from Dithaba or lives there now, but they are all connected to one another, and to me, through the village, which is why I take it as my starting point. Dithaba was something of a crossroads, a place of strangers. With three large NGOs, a clinic, and four schools, it drew a surprising number of government professionals, NGO staff, and foreign volunteers for a village of its size – which was perhaps 5,000 people. One of the schools was a boarding school, housing students from as far away as the western Kalahari. But its heterogeneity ran deeper than that. Elders sometimes referred to well-established neighbourhoods in the heart of the village as 'the place of the Xhosa', for example, although their children might have no memory of any Xhosa ever living there. While digging through the archives in Gaborone, I came across records that described Dithaba as a settlement granted by the local *morafe*, or tribal polity, to people of another *morafe* altogether – an account that surprised and perplexed my friends in the village, although they didn't reject it outright, musing whether differences in the layouts of their houses and yards were possible indications. It didn't unsettle their certainty of being part of the same *morafe* now.

Dithaba also had a reputation as a village particularly hard hit at the onset of the AIDS epidemic. 'Ten years ago, you wouldn't believe,' one social worker who had worked there at the time confided, 'there were funerals every weekend, and many. People were dying, *wena*.' It was the main reason both the orphan care project and the home-based care project in the village had been established and were so well funded. And so AIDS was also, in a roundabout way, the main reason I had come to the village when I first moved there to volunteer with the orphan care centre in early 2004.

In some ways, the epidemic shaped the relationships I formed there and the trajectories they followed. The first people I knew, and those to whom I became closest, had either been orphaned by AIDS or worked

with children who had; theirs were also the first families I knew. By the time I arrived, ARV treatment was free and widely available; the worst of the dying had passed, although AIDS was by no means a closed chapter. It was still common enough to see funerals every weekend, especially in winter; many were linked to the disease, although the official cause of death was often carefully obscured and seldom discussed. Friends and family have been infected, have fallen ill and recovered, have fallen ill and died; for the survivors and their families, the daily difficulties of providing for children, accessing NGO and government services, negotiating intimate relationships, securing and retaining work, eating properly, and staying well all weigh heavily – and even more heavily under the shadow of the disease.

At the time of writing, I have lived in Dithaba for seven years, spread over the past 18 years. I have lived on-site in one of its non-governmental projects and in houses in five of its neighbourhoods. I have worked in local NGOs, commuted to government work in the city, and advised on small business proposals and funding for agricultural projects; I have planted gardens and helped with the harvest in the fields. I have helped raise children, celebrate weddings, visit the ill, and bury the dead. And then I became an anthropologist. One family in particular guided and accompanied me on these journeys, and ultimately shaped my major method of research.

On Being Family

It was a bright, hot afternoon by the time we arrived at *masimo*, the farmlands, hoping to surprise Mmapula with a visit. She was nowhere to be found in the narrow, fenced yard; the one-room corrugated iron house was empty, as was the lean-to kitchen and the roughly trellised patch of shade that stood outside it. Nor was she out in the adjacent fields, green and tangled with sorghum and beans and watermelon, on which the sun beat mercilessly.

Lorato wandered out beyond the fence, studying the ground. Before long, she found her grandmother's tell-tale footprints in the sand – the small, tennis-shoe tread of the right foot and the long drag of the left, affected by a stroke years before. We followed the tracks down the sandy road, and then along a narrow lane, until we arrived at the clean-swept yard of a neighbour. The two elderly women sat on low benches in the shade of the yard's single tree, chatting.

They looked up as we approached, and we greeted them deferentially. 'These are my children,' explained Mmapula, by way of introduction. 'Ah,' said her neighbour, looking me up and down, taking in my white,

sunburned features. Her eyes were milky with cataracts. She paused a beat. 'I gather this one takes after her father,' she added, nodding at me. We all looked at one another for a moment, and then burst out laughing.

By the time I began my fieldwork in late 2011, I had already known the Legae family for over seven years. The spirit in which Mmapula introduced me to her neighbour at the lands was a far cry from our first meeting many years earlier. In the interim I had helped with her grandchildren's schooling, she had met my family, and we had stayed together. My absorption into the Legae family was slow but consuming, requiring a great deal of work by a great many people, creating a dense web of shared history and mutual obligation. It was demanding, fraught, and never quite complete. But it was in that often awkward trajectory that I learned most about the principles, practices, contradictions, and limits of Tswana kinship.

While I had stayed with the Legaes in the past, the first time I lived with them full time was during my fieldwork. As the family settled around my presence, I came to occupy several overlapping and apparently contradictory roles. Much of the time, I was taken as *mma go Lorato*, Lorato's mother. Lorato had taken me under her wing from the beginning, showing me the footpaths and back ways of the village and letting me in on its gossip and secrets. She had played a crucial role as my guide when I first lived in the village, a role she reprised during my fieldwork. Much as she had when we went looking for her grandmother at the lands, she was able to recognise the signs in the sand, to connect them to the people who made them, and to lead me along the necessary paths to find what I sought. And, of course, it was Lorato who had brought me into her family in the first place. Mmapula usually introduced me as *mma go Lorato* at funerals and weddings, occasionally adding that my mother had come to Botswana to give me to her as a replacement for her own lost daughter. Lorato's mother, Keitumetse, had died perhaps three years before I met Lorato at the local orphan care centre. I was distinctly uncomfortable with the sense of substitution the title implied, until I came to understand that Batswana typically recognise multiple mothers, and that it was more a means of situating me in the family in a way that recognised the responsibilities I had taken on, the relationships I had built, and – perhaps more importantly – the relationships that had been built with me.

Mmapula's children, the adult siblings, took me as a sister accordingly, although where I was situated varied. Sometimes they treated me as an elder sister, the role Keitumetse had occupied; more often, they repositioned me according to my own age. Likewise, the children with whom Keitumetse had developed especially close relationships adopted a sense

of ease with me, while others became close to me based on our inter-
actions or my relationships with their parents. At the same time,
Mmapula took Lorato as her own child and would put us both on an
equal footing with her other children – much as she did when making the
introduction to her neighbour above. My role, in other words, was
sometimes interchangeable with Keitumetse's and sometimes distinctly
my own. Lorato's role and mine, too, were sometimes interchangeable –
as indeed her role had become interchangeable with her mother's on the
latter's passing – and sometimes markedly distinct.

The youngest children of the yard found this shifting array of relation-
ships almost as bewildering as I did, and questioned them constantly –
getting slightly different answers every time. When she was about seven,
Kenosi asked her grandmother who the elderly woman's children were,
and Mmapula named them all, including both Lorato and myself. Not
long after that, Kenosi asked Lorato who her mother was, and Lorato
indicated me. 'Koreen, who doesn't beat?!' Kenosi exclaimed – referring
to my unwillingness to use or threaten physical violence against any of the
children at home. '*Nnyaa*, she can't be a parent, not beating,' she added,
to everyone's merriment. Kenosi never came to a satisfactory conclusion
about my appropriate role, but as soon as she learned to write, she
practised inscribing 'Koreen Legae' on every scrap of paper she could
find in my room. The generic inclusion in the family that her naming
bestowed was perhaps most apt: it left room for a multiple and fluid role,
part surrogate and part custom-made, changing with the responsibilities
I undertook and the work the other members of the family and I did to
relate to one another. In this sense, as we will see in the chapters that
follow, my role was not so different from those of the others at home,
which were equally multiple and shifting – although, by the same token,
they were never quite the same.

Being embedded in one family, of course, raises questions of generalis-
ability and scale. The chapters that follow do not set out to provide an
exhaustive account of Tswana kinship: I do not, as Schapera (1940) did,
try to account for every stage in the domestic cycle; nor do I attempt to
speak to every sphere of kinship theory, as productive as perspectives on
bodies and substance, memory or affect (for example) might have been in
answering the questions I have posed. Instead, I trace the lived experi-
ence of the Legae family as I have experienced it with them over the time
I have known them; and I aim to be as true to what mattered in that
experience as I am able. It is clear to me that I would have had limited
access to the experiences, narratives, and dynamics of conflict on which
this book is based without being thoroughly embedded – over a signifi-
cant period – in a single family. *Dikgang* are frequently subtle, often

carefully hidden and contained, and seldom volunteered or discussed; and they unfold over long periods of time. Unless one is directly affected, has been witness (or party) to the issues unfolding, or has something to offer in the process of resolution – that is, unless one is a particular sort of kin – it is quite possible to overlook many of the *dikgang* a family face altogether. Embeddedness in one family was, in other words, the only way I could come to understand the role of *dikgang* in kinship.

A family is never a singular entity in any meaningful sense. Multiple alignments of people, each of which is 'family', defined by varying and changing degrees of relatedness, are subsumed within the wide-ranging sphere of kin. And they are connected to an endless variety of other families as well, as neighbours or co-workers, churchmates or friends, who may also be considered 'those of my home' (see James 1999: 78). To be a member of 'a family' is to be a member of many sorts of family at once, and also to be connected to many other families besides. While being a member of the Legae household, I was, of course, doing research among many other families as well – those of neighbours, friends, and old colleagues, and even those of the other families they spoke about, many of which feature in this book. In all of them, comparable dynamics of *dikgang* figured strongly.

The range of connections one can build with people and their families in Botswana relies on being a recognised member of a given family. The ways in which people from outside my Dithaba family related to me were in many respects made possible and mediated by my inclusion in the Legae household, with which they could often establish some pre-existing connection. (Similarly, the Legaes related to me with much greater ease and confidence once they had spent some time with my parents and brother.) Even where pre-existing connections were hard to come by, being part of a Tswana family made me a different sort of person in the eyes of friends, colleagues, and even strangers; it provided a grounding and framework for our relationships and more nuanced possibilities for shared experience and understanding. The dense interlinkages produced through families – and the constant work that goes into separating, realigning, prioritising, and refashioning them – are one clue to the conceptual and experiential interdependencies of kinship, politics, economy, and religion (McKinnon and Cannell 2013), a theme to which I will return throughout this book. Methodologically, they also suggest that embeddedness in a family *enables* access to the widest possible range of social connections, rather than constraining it; and that it may therefore be among the best positions from which to produce wide-ranging and generalisable research.

At the same time, being part of a family while researching family presents an ethical dilemma – particularly when speaking of the conflicts

and crises that define family in part by being exclusive to it. If one narrative form of *dikgang* is gossip and rumour, shrouded in secrecy, committing them to print and publication deepens that dilemma. Michael Lambek speaks of something similar when he describes 'stealing kinship' (2011: 6), noting that the intimacies of both kinship and ethnography provoke betrayals, and that the 'betrayal is double when the ethnography presented is about the intimacy of kinship itself' (ibid.). I suggest that *dikgang* are not only examples of the sort of intimacy Lambek has in mind but also potentially dangerous forms of it – making their betrayal doubly dangerous as well. By the same token – as I hope to show – both the intimacy and potential for betrayal that *dikgang* evoke are singularly meaningful ways of *continuing* to be kin. Being an ethnographer and being family both presuppose and subsist on that betrayal, in uncanny and uncomfortable ways.

On Being Part of the Problem

I did not set out to study conflict, much less to use conflict as a method of understanding families. But my mother had been right: it was the major preoccupation of everyday life at home. To think of conflict as a 'method' requires an awkward revisionism and inaccurately implies intent. But an analytical focus on conflict draws on specific methodological precedents in Botswana, and raises specific methodological questions.

Disputes of all kinds have figured strongly in ethnographic accounts of the Tswana since Isaac Schapera's *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom* (1955 [1938]) was published in the colonial era. The *kgotla*, or customary court, from which the *kgosi* (chief) oversees village administration and hears cases brought by villagers under customary law, has been perhaps the primary, though not the only, site for the study of conflict. The resulting accounts have proven to be a rich wellspring for legal anthropology in particular. They have been equally generative for understandings of Tswana kinship and gender: the majority of disputes heard in the *kgotla* are bound up with questions of kinship, especially marriage, responsibilities for pregnancies and children, and inheritance (e.g. Comaroff and Roberts 1977; Griffiths 1997; Schapera 1955 [1938]). But taking the *kgotla* as a point of access means that it is harder to access the genesis and management of these disputes at home, and familial strategies to navigate them before they arrive at the *kgotla* and after they have left. Comparatively little consideration has been given to how such disputes might figure in *making* family, in spite of their prevalence in connection with family-making activity. Anne Griffiths notes the importance of contextualising disputes in other social processes and

warns against taking them as either timeless types or one-off events (1997: 31–2) – and this book is an attempt to heed her advice.

Tracking *dikgang* in the home is a methodologically – and ethically – thorny task. Conflict is carefully hidden and contained within families; it is not easily investigated by asking questions or paying visits. To come to understand the range of problems families face, and the ways in which they cope with them, I had to be part of the problem – a positionality that flew in the face of the problem-solving roles I had taken while working in NGOs and at Social Services. I had to attempt to be and make family in the same ways as everyone else in the Legae household – by living together, contributing, building, planning, attending negotiations and events, and so on – over a sustained period of time. While a family's *dikgang* may form the subject matter of neighbourhood gossip or speculation, the details and context of *dikgang* will seldom be shared or discussed unless one is already somehow embroiled in them, usually by being involved in the daily responsibilities and intimacies of being kin – and, even then, much is left unsaid.

Having come into the Legae family as an object of *kgang*, I frequently found myself entangled in *dikgang*, whether I was being called as a witness or mediator, whether I was being upbraided for the behaviour of children in my charge or had accidentally misspoken or misbehaved myself (as happened frequently). That entanglement and my responses to it were key to my shifting, multiple roles in the family. Being part of the problem, as I understand it, does not mean deliberately provoking conflict – which would be ethically unconscionable, while presupposing its own conclusions. It means participating in, paying attention to, and theorising the socially creative dynamics of conflict, rather than avoiding them based on the supposition that they represent an anomaly, failure, or breakdown in otherwise naturally harmonious interpersonal relations. It is perhaps best understood as the consequence of a deep commitment to love as a method (Klaits 2010: 7) and stands to offer an equally counterintuitive, humane, and multidimensional understanding of how families face crisis.

There was, of course, another important way in which I might be seen as 'part of the problem' that this book explores: I worked extensively with non-governmental agencies and the Government of Botswana, in programmes targeting children and families affected by AIDS. From 2003 to 2008, I worked first in a national NGO advocating on HIV and AIDS and human rights; then in a prominent orphan care project; and then at the Department of Social Services, where I established a unit that oversaw the coordination, training, and funding of NGOs working with orphaned and vulnerable children, and facilitated links with community-level social workers. While I spent time during my fieldwork

in social work offices at village, district, and ministry level, and while I visited NGOs working with orphans, much of the material I draw from in this book is bound up with my previous work: with my long-standing relationships among these organisations and with my own experiences and insights from that time. Those insights, and perplexities, shaped and motivated this research, but they also presented a methodological and ethical problem: how does one incorporate a pre-fieldwork past into the time of fieldwork?

As it happens, my former colleagues solved that puzzle for me. Recollections of and sustained reflection on past programme initiatives, events, and shared experiences were the usual foundation of our conversations, and formed a critical dimension of my research with social workers and NGO staff and volunteers. Our recollections ranged over a period stretching back five to six years before my field research, and had the added advantage of allowing us to assess the legacies of events and initiatives together. As the opening vignette of this chapter demonstrates, reflections have proven to be an equally important dimension of my research among family, too: not only were they a major means of partially filling in the gaps in family stories for the years when I was away, but they were also a means of constantly reassessing the repercussions of events for which I had been present, and of linking the two. The process of recollecting reanimated and built on my past relationships, and simultaneously made the influence of my past experience in Botswana on my present research explicit instead of implicit – a reflexive contextualisation I have tried to bring out clearly in the chapters that follow.

Of course, these recollections frequently – if not exclusively – dwelt on past problems, challenging events, and major contemporary social issues: they were primarily about *dikgang*. Recollecting is part and parcel of the process of ethical reflexivity that underpins relationships in Botswana. As such, recollections provide especially apt insights into the ways in which *dikgang* emerge in and shape relationships at work and at home over time, and the legacies they have left. Appropriately, they also demand critical reflexivity around my own fraught involvements in NGOs, government offices, and families, and my movements between these spheres. Recollections do not and cannot account for all of the key details of any given event or topic, nor are they fail-safe. Where recollections have formed an important dimension of my ethnographic data on a given subject, I have done my utmost not to make claims beyond what that material can support, or what comparable experiences contemporary to my research might corroborate. But they do give an accurate sense of how events and topics are continuously reconsidered and reframed, with attention to what they mean for selves and relationships.

On Telling Tales

> The only thing truer than the truth is the story.   Jewish proverb

The method of writing has proved to be nearly as important to the arguments this book makes as the method of research – if the writing could be said to have had a method. I began the work as a whole, and then each chapter, by writing those stories that bubbled to the surface, that seemed to demand to be told. Once I had found a way of telling them, I looked for what they seemed to say together, in the shapes they had taken and their unexpected juxtapositions. '[S]tories are incipiently analytic, and … analysis has a narrative form' (Narayan 2012: 8); for me, stories provided both the most natural means of attempting to come to grips with the messy realities of fieldwork and the most likely means of communicating those realities – even if only in part – to others.

And so this book is structured around stories: accounts of one-off events, tales others told me, snippets of life stories, and, in the resulting knots and tangles, the story of a family's life together. Stories help contextualise the events around which they are built; they accommodate subtlety and contradiction in the ways they are both lived and told – thereby illustrating tensions critical to understanding social scenarios in general, and the tensions of kinship I have set out to describe in particular. Stories are situated in specific places and unfold over time, simultaneously emplacing the material they convey and emphasising its temporality, history, and trajectory. They encourage their readers to suspend disbelief and enter into the narrative – providing a unique space in which reader, author, and (here) interlocutors can enter into conversation around a scene, often in surprising and unexpected ways. By requiring the reader's active participation, stories leave maximum room for readers to engage, and perhaps more importantly to object (Mosse 2006) – providing an interpretive flexibility that is crucial in postcolonial contexts (Clifford and Marcus 1986), particularly when they are subject to continuous and often problematic re-imaginings of social practice by a proliferation of intervening transnational agencies.

Of course, Tswana families have their own ways of telling tales. I have argued (Reece 2021b) that Tswana families construct stories of life, illness, and death in ways that allow them both to produce and to manage the potential for crisis presented by AIDS, in a context where language poses threats much like those posed by intersubjectivity (Comaroff and Comaroff 1989; see also Niehaus 2013). *Puo* means both 'conflict' and 'discussion', indicating how closely related the two acts are, and how easily one may provoke the other. Where words present risk, talk presents risk; and while talk is a key means of addressing *dikgang*, too much talk

may drastically exacerbate them. Dispersed among family members in specific ways, expressed in discontinuous fragments and in marked silences over extended periods of time, and mediated through everything from photographs to houses, family tales are oriented towards the future as much as the past, and towards preserving possibility over articulating knowledge. And, perhaps unsurprisingly, they are most carefully managed around *dikgang*, which form a sort of genre or narrative form of their own, key to the reflexive process by which they make kin.

Narratives of *dikgang* often split into formal and informal registers, scripted and unscripted. Formal interventions and mediations, as we will see in the chapters to come, are often dialogic, even call and response: participants may each be asked direct questions, or invited to give their own complete account of the issue at hand, and their thoughts on how it should be addressed, after which a mediator will reflect on the answers and offer a synopsis, consensus, or judgement. Informal narratives include gossip and speculation, and even commentary on the more formal tales. Crucially, both formal and informal narrations of *dikgang* create opportunities for people to consider the ethical dimensions of the issue at hand, what it suggests about their relationships and behaviour, and what would make for an appropriate response. The telling of *dikgang* in Dithaba was more circumspect and less complete than the 'quarrel stories' Werbner describes for the Kalanga, although more detailed tales occasionally emerged, by way of reflecting shared histories or aspects of their character back to participants, or reminding them of relevant backstories. On such occasions, as among the Kalanga, they 'were as much a force in creating the very tissue of family life as they were an expression of it' (Werbner 1991: 67). In the stories that follow, I attempt to tell *dikgang* across these different registers, in ways that echo how Tswana families tell them: 'foreground[ing] … the imbalance and the problematic', adumbrating a 'moral, a caution or warning, only without the narrative closure of a welcome ending' (Werbner 2016: 88). In telling tales of *dikgang*, much as in the act of divination, '[w]hat is heightened is consciousness' (ibid.); judgement is suspended and no resolution is offered, but the imperatives and possibilities of practical, ethical action are opened.

Stories, after all, are crafted (Geertz 1973). The stories that follow have been deliberately told in ways that both illustrate and obscure: to demonstrate the dynamics with which this book concerns itself, but also to create a degree of anonymity for the people who populate it (beyond changing their names, which I have also done), and to echo the partialities and gaps of their own tellings. Different aspects of different accounts have been drawn together in the telling, or pulled apart, and I have

honoured silences around things that were not told. In other words, I have fragmented and concealed aspects of the life stories of characters in this book in a way that mirrors the fragmentations and concealments of Tswana personhood (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). I have made some conflations, divisions, and re-orderings of the agencies I describe and the people who staff them, drawing together my experience of dozens of NGOs and social work offices from around the country into two NGO projects and a single Social and Community Development (or social work) office, which I have situated in Dithaba. Similar projects and offices exist in the village, but they do not answer strictly to the descriptions I have provided here, and nor are they meant to do so. These choices have been made with an eye to covering the footprints of my friends, family, and colleagues in the sand, and to defusing the potential dangers inherent in laying bare their personal trajectories and conflicts with kin – but, at the same time, with an eye to rendering their experience as accessible as possible, by drawing them into a narrative frame.

I have also included stand-alone stories as brief interludes between the five parts of the book, stolen moments that stood out because they helped me make sense of something, or unmade the sense I had. They speak to the broader stories and themes of this book, but I have not attempted to weave them into those stories or arguments. They are suspended without analysis, to make room for my readers to come to their own conclusions – and because explaining them felt more likely to interfere with their meaning than evoke it. They draw out some – though not nearly all – of the undercurrents that run through this book: the bewilderments, the imperatives, the delights, and the tragedies that charged my life in Botswana, that have shaped my limited insights as an anthropologist, and that have also irrevocably altered my way of being in the world in ways I still cannot grasp fully.

The focus on telling an apt story involves some sacrifice in ethnographic breadth for the sake of greater depth – much as my embeddedness in one family did. The chapters that follow do not purport to provide a statistically broad sample of cases, nor an exhaustive account of all the permutations in which kinship is experienced across Botswana. I do not aim to provide a complete ethnographic picture of any of the themes I tackle here. The creative amalgamations described above, however, do involve the drawing together of a wide range of experiences and tales, such that one story not only reflects but actually *is* many stories. Stories, in this sense, are something like families: they not only incorporate a multitude of different sorts of stories within them, but also connect to an endless series of other stories besides. In my choice of stories, and in the range of stories subsumed within them and linked to them, I hope to have

provided a compelling likeness of contemporary Tswana kinship experience with a resonating familiarity for those who know it – and an accessible and engaging insight for those who don't.

Finally, in building this book around stories, I seek to do justice to a Tswana notion of truth as much as to those models of truth that underpin anthropological research. Klaits (2010), drawing on Hoyt Alverson (1978), points out that, for Batswana, truth is performative: '"speaking truth" involves speaking in such a way as to do true things for other people' (Klaits 2010: 25). I trust that the ways in which I have told the stories that follow evoke the complexity of lived experiences of intimacy and danger, conflict and kinship – while shielding the people with whom I have shared these experiences from further dangers in the process. I believe that this sort of storytelling also allows for radically different understandings of kinship in a time of AIDS than those formulated in dominant social work, humanitarian, and academic discourse (a point ably demonstrated in novels and short stories; see Dow 2002; 2004; Dow and Essex 2010; Gordimer 2004). The stories I have woven through this book are, by necessity, partial truths (Clifford 1986). But, in keeping with the proverb at the start of this section, I take it that they nonetheless convey a more insightful, resonant, and nuanced perspective – that is to say, a truer truth – than a bare-bones account of events might do. I hope that, as a result, this book will speak in a way that is true to my friends' and family's experience, and that it does something true for them – and for others who read it, be they anthropologists or practitioners, Batswana or non-Batswana.

The Parts of the Book

This book moves between and draws together two apparently different worlds: the world of the home, and the world of NGO and state interventions that take the home, and the family, as their object. Disparate as these worlds seem – and in some ways are – they are also intricately intertwined, perhaps never more than during Botswana's time of AIDS. In the chapters that follow, I describe their entanglements, overlaps, divergences, and contradictions, and the work that Batswana do to bring them together and to keep them apart.

Each of the following parts explores a key way in which Batswana make family, from three perspectives. The first perspective is taken from within the home, among *balwapeng* – family who stay together in the same *lelwapa*. The second comes from beyond the *lelwapa*, from between households, with special attention to self-making. And the third is the perspective from the epidemic, and the NGO and government

intervention programming launched in response. Each perspective has its own chapter, and, in each, I examine the *dikgang* that emerge, the different ways in which they are addressed, and the ways they make families, selves, and organisations.

Part I maps out the geographies of Tswana kinship, beginning in Chapter 1 with the Tswana *gae* or home. The *gae* is a multiple, scattered place, centred around the *lelwapa* in the village, but stretching to include the often far-flung *moraka* (cattle post) and *masimo* (farmlands) as well. I follow the Legae family as they move between, stay in, and undertake the care work that integrates the spaces of their *gae*, while linking it to and distinguishing it from others. Both closeness to and distance from each other present risks, however; while continuous movement enables a balance to be struck, 'going up and down' produces tensions and dangers of its own. In Chapter 2, the building of new houses – a critical means of *go itirela* or making-for-oneself – presents similar problems, requiring the mobilisation of resources and strong relationships among family in order to establish distance from them. When resources or help are refused, or when they are called on too early, the *dikgang* generated are often enough to stall building and self-making alike. These risks are especially marked in an epidemic era, when orphaned children may inherit property early, and where NGO and government programmes may provide them with access to resources or relationships they might not otherwise have. Chapter 3 describes the spatial practices of these NGO and social work programmes in the village; they show surprising similarities to the spatial practices of family, but also invert those spatialities and knock them out of sync, producing problematic alternatives to the *gae* and new *dikgang* for which appropriate responses are unclear.

Part II explores the economies of care among kin – a subject at the heart of the most heated exchanges and protracted grudges that we navigated during my time with the Legae family. In Chapter 4, I draw on a rich anthropological record for understanding care in Botswana (Klaits 2010; Livingston 2005; 2012), which describes it as a combination of sentiment, material provision, and work, affecting the physical and social well-being of others. I add the observation that care is crucial to the contribution economies of Tswana kinship – but that the things, work, and sentiment that constitute care can be disarticulated, and are subject to competing claims. The very same things, work, and sentiment that one's family expects are expected by one's partners and friends as well, and all figure crucially in the project of self-making. Chapter 5 examines the tensions that arise between these obligations to contribute care and the uncertainty about whether people will contribute what they ought, to whom, and for how long, tensions that make contributions of

care a volatile source of *dikgang*. Care, in these terms, is perpetually subject to crisis. The dominant public health frameworks that cast AIDS as a 'crisis of care' overlook the ways in which the Tswana family routinely faces and copes with such crises – and is even reproduced through them. Chapter 6 concludes with a consideration of the ways in which NGO and government interventions frame and supply care in the provision of food baskets and feeding programmes, and explores the new crises that they inadvertently produce in families by doing so.

Part III pursues the *dikgang* of reproducing kinship in a time of AIDS, specifically around pregnancy and marriage. In Chapters 7 and 8, I argue that, for the Tswana, intimate relationships are made into kin relationships through a gradual and carefully managed process of recognition, whereby they become visible, speakable, and known. Every stage of emergence into recognition is marked and achieved by *dikgang* – the collective reflection on and negotiation of which involve wider and wider circles of kin. Their relative success in managing these *dikgang* affects not just whether and how families might relate to one another but also the viability of the relationship their recognition shapes. Accumulating and successfully navigating these *dikgang* also feature as key factors in self-making – primarily in the context of pregnancy for women, and of marriage for men. These processes of addressing *dikgang* are especially fraught, risky, and prone to failure to the extent that they are beset by the legacies of previously unresolved *dikgang* that echo across circles of kin and between generations. Chapter 9 argues that, much as thinking of AIDS as a 'crisis of care' overlooks the ordinary crises care provokes, thinking of HIV and AIDS strictly in terms of risk overlooks the extent to which intimate relationships are ordinarily beset by risk. It also ignores the critical ways in which the management of such risks makes relationships meaningful, makes selfhood, and makes kin. If AIDS raises the stakes of such risks, I argue, it may do so more in terms of its potential effects on negotiating recognition than in terms of life and death – a possibility that goes some way in explaining Botswana's persistently high rates of new infection.

Children and their circulation are the focus of Part IV. Chapters 10 and 11 describe how children in Botswana are frequently sent – or send themselves – to be looked after, for greater or lesser periods of time, by extended family and occasionally by non-relatives. While anthropologists have often read similar practices elsewhere as a means of binding families together and producing or strengthening closeness among kin, for Batswana, I suggest, it serves to differentiate and distance kin and to assert limits and boundaries on kinship. The circulation of children experimentally extends the practices of movement, staying, and care

work explored in Part I; the economies of care and contribution explored in Part II; and the kin-forming recognition of relationships discussed in Part III. As such, it attracts the *dikgang* connected to all three – the management of which tends to reproduce relationships of closeness or distance among kin, rather than reworking them. These informal practices of child circulation stand in stark contrast to government initiatives around formal fostering (Chapter 12), which promote relationships of mutual care, responsibility, and love among non-kin – and thereby seek to produce alternative families for children, and permanent fixes to the *dikgang* that affect them. In other words, formal fostering collapses the appropriate distances and boundaries among and between families that child circulation would otherwise reinforce; it removes kin from their roles in negotiating *dikgang* involving their children; and it draws non-kin into *dikgang* from which they would ordinarily be excluded. In these ways, interventions seeking to strengthen families and reproduce kin practices through fostering instead disrupt and displace them.

Part V tests these limits of kinship, exploring the work Batswana do to manage the interdependencies and distinctions between the Tswana home and village, and between the spheres of kinship and politics on local, national, and transnational levels. It takes in three major events: in Chapter 13, a family party, held to appreciate the success of the Legae elders as parents; in Chapter 14, a homecoming celebration for the first *mophato*, or age regiment, to be initiated in a generation; and in Chapter 15, an opening event held by a respected national NGO, with government officials, visiting donors, and the local community in attendance. Chapter 13 argues that family celebrations are catalysts for conflict, actively inviting *dikgang* into the yard and performing familial success – while distinguishing family from community – by demonstrating the ability to contain and manage them. In Chapter 14, families, in turn, prove pivotal to regenerating the *morafe* (tribal polity) through initiation, just as the initiation proves to be one crucial means by which Tswana law is re-embedded in Tswana families – equipping them to better engage *dikgang* and preserving both their distinction from and imbrication in the *morafe*. NGO, government, and donor performances of success, too, rely on the performance of kinship; in Chapter 15's opening ceremony, idioms and ideals of kinship are deployed to naturalise and legitimise the work of government and civil society agencies, to negotiate relationships among them, and to establish their precedence and power over the families they serve. But their institutional frameworks, programmes, and everyday work are themselves saturated with kinship values and practices – of a familiar Tswana kind and of an unexpected Euro-American kind as well. Whereas these local, national,

and transnational political projects might expect to encompass and encapsulate families in their performances, they instead prove to be permeated, animated, and even generated by kinship dynamics. As a result, both NGOs and government agencies are left in ambivalent positions, simultaneously powerfully present in and absented from the family, marginal and yet crucial to it, defined by and attempting to redefine it. This ambivalence unsettles both the necessary interdependencies and the distinctions Batswana customarily make between kinship and politics, and, I argue, may pose more profound challenges to Tswana families than the AIDS epidemic itself.

PONO'S DIRECTIONS

'Koreen! You don't look the bumps,' she said, as I tripped over another swell in the uneven dirt road, the weight of her on my back sending me veering off course as if I were drunk.

'I can't see them, *akere*,' I responded, in half-hearted self-defence.

'You can't see??' Pono was incredulous; at only six years old, from her perch on my shoulders, the road was plain as day to her, although it was already night.

'It's dark, *akere*. I can't see anything when it's dark like this,' I tried to explain.

There were no streetlights in the village. On the road between our houses, there weren't even any security lights that people might leave switched on over their front stoeps or back doors. There was no moon. The road was a more or less even, more or less straight, low sweep of rocky darkness, hedged by leafy bush-like darkness, and higher, tangled tree shapes of darkness, with the looming dark spaces of houses suggested behind. The only light came from the stars, and they were still unfamiliar to me, scatterings of light for which I had no constellations or stories. I stumbled again.

'It's because your eyes blue,' Pono decided, finally.

'What?'

'*Akere* your eyes blue. It's good to see in day, but in night …! *Owai* … you can't see anything!'

I laughed. Her logic was as precocious as her English. 'So because your eyes are black, you can see better at night?'

'Ee! I can see anything,' she responded, seriously.

'So what do you do when the sky is blue in the day?' I asked, provoking her.

She just laughed and clutched me round the neck, her thin arms crossed below my chin. 'Let's go that road there,' she said, pointing out the small path that wound into the thickets around her yard. 'Be careful bumps.'

'Where Are You From? Where Are You Going?'

The Geographies of Tswana Kinship

Matlo go sha mabapi.

Neighbouring houses burn together.

'Welcome home!' Lorato and Oratile burst out simultaneously, in English, chuckling to themselves.

We had just pulled into the Legaes' yard after the hour-long drive from the airport in the capital. It had been a quiet trip; the family seldom spoke when they were in a car together, and I had a great deal to take in, travelling down the familiar highway and winding back into the village after two years away. The women's spontaneous welcome burst the bubble of silence. As if on cue, children came tumbling out of doors, the youngest running full tilt for the car, the teenagers sauntering with studied nonchalance.

The yard had changed little since my last visit. It was an expansive plot, with a huddle of structures at its centre, gravitating around a square, paved courtyard behind a low wall – the *lelwapa*. Oratile's older sister, Kelebogile, was seated there on a plastic chair, grinning affably as we arrived. A rectangular two-and-a-half-roomed house stood on one side, perpendicular to its predecessor, the main six-room building. In front of the larger house, and across from the smaller one, stood the *isong* or outdoor kitchen, also framed by a low brick wall and covered by a roof of corrugated iron perched on wooden stilts cut for the purpose. Oratile's and Kelebogile's eldest brother, Modiri, sat on a low wooden chair near the fire there, tending an enamel teapot in the coals – he was famously fond of Five Roses tea, a predilection we shared. The fourth side of the *lelwapa* faced the road, and we parked in front of it. The space had been roughly paved in rescued chunks of concrete for the cars of the yard; the cars themselves had multiplied, and grown more dilapidated, since my last visit.

The yard sat near a dried-up riverbed, not far from the centre of the village. The neighbourhood, or ward, was known and named for the tendency of springs to burst suddenly out of the clay earth. The shallow

49

village dam was a short walk away, just near the village *kgotla*, or customary court; two primary schools and a junior high stood within ten minutes' walk. The train tracks threaded through the village nearby, paralleled by the highway a little farther on; behind them stood the modest, craggy hills from which the village took its name.

By the time I arrived for fieldwork in late 2011, I had been a visitor to this yard on and off for seven years – dating back to the times I walked Lorato and her neighbours 'halfway' from the orphan care project nearby. I planned to stay briefly, mostly out of courtesy, while I found my feet. Little did I know that I would be spending most of the year in this yard, or that – for all its unanticipated frictions – it would become home.

In Part I, against this backdrop, I sketch the geographies of Tswana relatedness. I begin with the matrix of places that constitute the Tswana *gae*, or home – a common framing of kin space largely underplayed by ethnographic work on the Tswana household (see, e.g., Klaits 2010: 102; Morton 2007) – and the practices of staying, movement, and work that identify and integrate those spaces over time. In Chapter 1, I explore the ways those practices produce, delimit, and refigure kinship, in part by producing *dikgang* – issues, conflicts, and crises – around the relative nearness and distance of kin. In Chapter 2, I look at building and the spatio-temporalities of making-for-oneself (*go itirela*), which requires navigating similar *dikgang*, the acquisition and successful management of which prove crucial to personhood. And finally, in Chapter 3, I examine the spatio-temporal dynamics of governmental and non-governmental programming launched in response to AIDS, and analyse the effects these programmes have had on the space and time of kin-making and self-making alike.

Ko Gae: House and Home

I seldom slept in. It was usually impossible. There were chickens crowing, cars starting, children shouting, and buckets clattering from early in the morning. But one Saturday morning, not long after my arrival in the field, my sleep went uninterrupted until the gathering heat set the corrugated iron roof ticking as it stretched, sometime past nine o'clock. I woke in what was otherwise an uncanny silence.

I emerged from my room, stretching and curious, into the *lelwapa*. It was not yet mid-morning, but the low-walled courtyard had already been swept, and the stitched sacks and blankets that had been dragged out for the children to sleep on the night before tidied away. Morning tea had already been boiled and drunk, its dregs left in cups scattered around the stoep, the sheltered veranda by the front door of the main house.

It was no small feat for the yard to be so thoroughly unpeopled. Four generations were intermittently in residence, from the elderly couple who had founded the household to their seven children, 11 grandchildren, and one greatgrandchild, making a total of 21 (plus me) – usually between 11 and 18 of us were there at any one time. It was a large household, but then most of the yards in the village housed three generations. Typically, the house was teeming: with children playing or cooking, people sitting and chatting in the *lelwapa*, the men tinkering with vehicles in the yard, the women sweeping or mopping or laundering. But that morning, there was no one to be seen.

I was perplexed. I stuck my head in the door of the main house. Usually at least a few children could be found on the cement floor of the sitting room, watching the fitful signal on the old TV; but the room was empty. The three adult brothers who lived at home – Modiri, Kagiso, and Tuelo – each had spartan rooms of their own opening off the sitting room, but their doors all stood open, the rooms silent. The three brothers were as different as brothers could be. Modiri, the eldest, by then in his late forties, was a lean, responsible man who kept his own counsel. He had worked in the mines and now ran his own small business, but he was unschooled and illiterate; his great passion was for cattle, and he was skilled at overseeing the family herd. Kagiso was more gregarious and charismatic, and he loved to preach and advise, slipping easily between English and Setswana as he did so. He was always sharply dressed with matching accessories, and had several projects either fledging or failing at any given time. Tuelo, the youngest, was the most hot-headed and irresponsible; he struggled to hold down work and seemed constantly to be pushing people to their limits, although he could also be shy and diffident. He depended on his older brothers, especially Kagiso, whom he took as a sort of mentor. But that Saturday, all three were out. Then again, it was not unusual for them to be absent: they were often away during the week, working or on business of their own, and only really came into the house to sleep.

I passed through to the kitchen at the back of the house, where sometimes the older girls might be found cooking, but there were only empty plates scattered over the rickety cupboard unit, and a tin of sugar standing open on the plastic table.

I left through the back of the kitchen to check the backyard. The *segotlo* (backyard) of colonial-era Tswana households was customarily a place of safety, refuge, and protection (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 135) – but also of hiding or shame (Livingston 2005: 71, 184) – overseen by the mother of the house. The backyard at home, however, like its neighbours, and like the front yard, opened through a large gate onto the

street. It was used for impromptu mechanics' interventions with family cars and for mixing and storing building materials, and it struck me as the men's space – although the children sometimes played there, and on hot days we all took advantage of the shade offered by the enormous acacia in the back corner. But there was no one there, either.

I headed back to the two-and-a-half – named for the two bedrooms that stood out on either side of a much smaller, recessed 'half' room, each with its own door leading in from a narrow stoep – from which I had emerged, and tapped gently on Kelebogile's door. Kelebogile was my age-mate, a reserved woman who could be stern and unforgiving when angry but had a quiet generosity and kindness about her too. She was deeply pious and sometimes withdrawn, but could be unexpectedly funny and even playful with me. She stayed just across from the room I shared with Lorato, with her son Tefo, whom I had known since he was an infant. But there was no answer, and her door was locked.

I had been struck by the fact that the women and children were situated around the margins of the houses, with the men – who spent rather less time at home – in the centre; but, at the same time, the women were closer to the *lelwapa*. Although the colonial-era *lelwapa* was often linked to the *kgotla* as a male space (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 137; Kuper 1980: 17), at home it was the women who occupied, used, and oversaw it most frequently – although everyone in the yard used it freely.

Gazing from our shared stoep across at the *isong*, I finally noticed two enormous cast-iron, three-legged pots steaming over a low fire. The whole family spent a lot of time in the small, ramshackle *isong*; the children cooked, served, and cleaned dishes there, and we all warmed bathwater, made tea, or just tended the fire and sat around talking on cold nights. But given a cooking project as big as this, someone – probably Mmapula, the elderly matriarch we all called *Mma* – had to be about. A small, wiry, resilient woman in her sixties, Mmapula was respected as an experienced, fair, and insightful elder, and not only by her family. She was a churchgoer, was widely connected across the village, and was generous of time, energy, and spirit. She also had a sharp, irreverent sense of humour and liked to offer a running commentary of everyone's shortcomings and her consequent disappointments – usually in a teasing and light-hearted tone, even if there was an edge of truth to it. The door to her room – an extension that opened directly off the stoep, which she shared with rotating sets of her grandchildren and occasionally her youngest daughter as well – was slightly ajar. I pulled up a chair in the *lelwapa* and waited for her to emerge.

The *lelwapa*, where I had taken up my waiting, was the geographical centre of the yard and heart of the house, and the space in which much shared family life unfolded. *Lelwapa* also signifies 'family' in Setswana: *tlogo ya lelwapa*, the head of the *lelwapa*, is the head of the family; *go aga lelwapa*, to build a *lelwapa*, is both to build a house and to build a family. Family members may introduce or refer to one another as *ba lwapeng*, the people of one's *lelwapa*. Many terms that describe family, in other words, are explicitly spatialised from the outset; and they are explicitly located in, or in relation to, the *lelwapa*. And, as we will see, the *lelwapa* plays an important role in a variety of events and everyday practices that define, constitute, and delimit family. It is not only the space where family members eat, socialise, and sometimes sleep; it is also where important discussions are held, where visitors are welcomed and fed, where marriage negotiations are conducted, around which parties and weddings are celebrated or funerals observed – and even, in some cases, where people are buried. It is also a space in which grain is dried, laundry washed, games played, and homework finished, and in which long hours are spent braiding hair, gossiping, or simply sitting together. The *lelwapa* is interchangeably – sometimes simultaneously – public and private; it marks the overlap and indeterminacy between those two categories, and is the space in which they are navigated and distinguished. It is at the heart of the compound, but also in full view of the street; it hosts both the formal greeting of visitors and everyday acts of personal and household hygiene; disagreements internal to the family are settled there, but with dimensions of formality and display that encourage shame. Crucially, it is a space *in between* – in between the houses and other places of the yard, in between the family and its visitors or passers-by – and it is in this in-between space that most living at home happens. Staying around, crossing, and dwelling in the *lelwapa* together is one important way of being kin.

At the same time, Batswana are remarkably mobile in their residential patterns, frequently moving long distances to attend school, to stay with and help distant family, or to find work (see Townsend 1997 on men's migrations over their life courses). In these cases, they might refer to the places they are staying as *ko lwapeng* – at the *lelwapa* – even when they have no particular kinship with others living there. Especially when they are away from their natal families, Batswana designate their place of origin as *ko gae* – loosely, 'at home' – a term that might equally refer to a village, a neighbourhood, or a specific yard. The qualitative difference between the terms *lelwapa* and *gae* might be understood roughly as the difference between the English terms 'house' and 'home' – although

each is constituted differently from its English counterpart. The primary importance of the *lelwapa* to Tswana experiences and understandings of kinship comes from the role it plays in anchoring the *gae* (cf. Morton 2007).[1]

As I was contemplating these possibilities from the *lelwapa*, Mmapula came out of her room, wrapping a heavy wool blanket around her waist. I sat up to greet her, asking where everybody had gone. 'They've gone to the lands. I'm going out to check someone,' she said, without further explanation. My Setswana was still too childlike for her to bother with long sentences. 'Watch these pots. Look, like this,' she added, lifting the heavy lid from one with a wire loop. It was full of broth and bones, a toothy cow jaw and socketed skull having floated to the surface. She slid a long, heavy stick with a short fork at one end into the pot and showed me how to lift and stir. The smell of boiled marrow and rancid flesh was overpowering. 'I'm coming,' she added – as Batswana usually say when they are going. And so, shuffling out of the yard, she left me alone with my stinking, bubbling cow heads.

It was already early evening by the time everyone started to filter back into the yard. Mmapula had generalised a little in her description of their whereabouts. Like Mmapula, Kelebogile and Lorato had gone out visiting friends in the village; they came home by mid-afternoon – in time, at any rate, to relieve me of cow head-stirring duty. The brothers Modiri, Kagiso, and Tuelo, and a couple of the boys, had gone out to the cattle post (*moraka*), three hours' walk north-west of the village along rough, sandy roads. The family's cattle roamed widely in search of water and good grazing, the lands they covered being shared and unfenced. The work of finding the herd, watering them, and checking their health was onerous. Kagiso and Tuelo returned at nightfall; Modiri and the boys stayed out for the weekend.

Oratile had gone out to *masimo* – the lands – with her two girls and her eldest sister's two sons. *Masimo*, too, was a three-hour walk away, in roughly the opposite direction from the cattle post, and was a place I had

---

[1] As noted above, *ko gae* can also refer more broadly to one's place of origin, including wards, villages, or even broader categories of belonging – particularly when one is away from them (cf. James 1999 on how migrant Sotho women in South Africa constructed the *gae* in language, dance, and music, for example). This extensibility may be linked to the movement among *lelwapa*, cattle post and lands I describe in the chapters that follow, which tracks from the heart of the village to its peripheries, passing through and linking the spaces of a community in ways that encompass it, while also being encompassed by it. Equally, it may be linked to the interconnected jural and land rights one retains in one's home village, even as an out-migrant (Townsend 1997: 408) – a recognition both of long familial histories connected to the land (Griffiths 2013) and of the right to found one's own *lelwapa*, cattle post, and lands there in the future.

visited frequently. Dipuo, the elderly patriarch of the family, lived there for much of the time I was on fieldwork. The yard at *masimo* was more developed than at the cattle post; the two dilapidated rondavels facing a rough courtyard had been the family's primary residence before they built in the village. A covered cooking area nestled against a stout barbed-wire fence anchored by upright logs dug in around the perimeter. Its layout was roughly similar to that of the village residence. A small, thorn-fenced kraal stood just next to the yard, with a larger, more complex one for the goats perhaps 20 metres away. The farmland itself was a ten-minute walk, across a dry riverbed; it generated much of the family's staple maize or sorghum and beans for the year, plus some to sell besides. Oratile, her eldest daughter Lesego, and Khumo's eldest son had stayed out there for the weekend, having been called by Dipuo to help him with the goats. The younger two, who had tagged along for company and to help with cooking and in the fields, found their way back well after dark.

This family migration turned out to be typical of weekends, but it was not unchanging. Not everyone left the yard every Saturday, and it wasn't always the same people going to the same places. Both the men and the women might stay at home to spend a morning doing their laundry; the women might put their efforts into cleaning the house and yard, the men into fixing vehicles, and children might stay home to study or help with these chores. If there were a funeral, wedding, or party to attend and help out with, it would be the focus of the weekend's journeys, residence, and work.

The family's movements were not simply interpretable in terms of gender or age, either, although certain patterns were evident. *Moraka*, for example, was a place primarily for the men and boys. In principle, everyone was welcome, but the women and girls in the yard, including myself, seldom tagged along. (In contrast, my brother – who visited the village once, for a week – was insistently invited out and eventually drawn into helping castrate the young bulls.) Modiri, as the eldest son, went there weekly without fail and was not expected to go anywhere else. *Masimo*, on the other hand, was the purview first of the elders, and second of the women. In fact, the family owned two *masimo*, the second over two hours' drive (or several hours' bus journey and walk) to the south-west of the village. Mmapula at stayed the distant lands for most of my time with the family. The women, boys, and girls were expected to help at both *masimo*, and they stayed there at length when they could.

There was also a seasonal aspect to these movements (not unlike that described by Schapera 1940: 27). In months of drought, and through much of the winter, Modiri and any of his available brothers would be out at *moraka* daily, taking extra food to the cattle and ensuring that the

weaker ones had not become bogged down in the viscous mud surrounding their dried-up watering holes. Similarly, throughout the growing year, from the times for sowing through weeding and harvest, the women and children would be expected to attend *masimo* as often as possible. The children were frequently called by Mmapula to join her at the lands for the duration of their school holidays; during quieter periods, the adult siblings would send out their children on their behalf. There was perhaps never a weekend when no one went either to the lands or to the cattle post; movement out and back was as constant as the work was unrelenting, and everyone at home routinely undertook both (see also Griffiths 2013: 216–17; Townsend 1997: 420). As a result, family members were often apart, separated and brought together in shifting patterns depending on age, gender, and the work of the season; and the people they stayed and worked with shifted too. In other words, it was not simply through staying and working together in the village *lelwapa* that the Legae family experienced kinship, but also through staying and working with different subsets of kin at the lands and cattle post, and through being sent to and called for among all three places.[2]

Of course, movement is not only an experience of home or kinship for Batswana. It is a critical element of sociality, and of personhood. It is no coincidence that the informal way of greeting someone in Setswana is to ask '*Le kae*?' or '*O kae*?' – 'Where are you?' (connoting 'How are you?') – often followed by questions about where you are coming from and where you are going (*O tswa kae*? *O ya kae*?). Visiting and accompanying people (the latter often described as 'taking halfway') and attending events are all major features of Tswana relationships, as we will see in the coming chapters; and each requires movement (Klaits 2010; Livingston 2005; 2012; Schapera 1940: 168). And this is to say nothing of the frequency with which Batswana – especially, but not exclusively, men – may also work or attend school far from their homes, making mobility a critical feature of self-making and the life course. Even now, it is not unusual for a man's '[c]attle, job and family [to be] in three different places' (Townsend 1997: 416).

---

[2] This pattern of movement may indicate changes from the precolonial-era patterns surmised by the Comaroffs, in which '[l]eaving their houses, women moved out seasonally to the fields, bringing back the harvest, while men moved daily inward to the ward and chiefly courts … spelling out the connection between the communal centre and the domestic periphery' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 137). At the same time, the Comaroffs' interpretation may be rather too neat – eliding the movement of men and boys to the peripheral cattle posts, for example, and downplaying gendered habits of movement and changes over the life course (Griffiths 2013; Townsend 1997).

However, the sort of movement undertaken between *lelwapa*, *moraka*, and *masimo*, its specific temporalities, and the work undertaken in each place integrate them into a specifically familial space – and simultaneously define who and what makes family. The frequency of movement, as well as its regularity, is the first characteristic that sets it apart. There are no other similarly distant spaces to and from which all (or most) members of a family customarily move as often as weekly or in season-specific cycles. The paths between all three places are well worn and the journeys back and forth frequent enough to take on an almost continuous, perpetual quality. This sense of constancy is enhanced by the fact that family members frequently stay at either *masimo* or *moraka* (as well as *lelwapa*) for short, long, and even semi-permanent stretches of time. Batswana organise geography through people and relationships: lands and cattle posts, like yards in the village, are known by the names of the people who stay there – in our case, as *kwa ga boLegae*, the place of the Legae family.[3] Staying, with its associated ease of coming and going (both in the vicinity of each place and back and forth to the others), is very rare for anyone but people who are family members, and works to make people kin.

The ways in which these movements and 'stayings' are mobilised are also critical to their unique kin orientation. As we have seen above and will see in greater detail in Chapter 1, parents are able to call for and send their children and grandchildren – often over long distances, and even when those children have become adults – among these places, thereby establishing and responding to claims upon one another that reproduce the hierarchies and reciprocities of their relationships (see Klaits 2010: 107, 119). These practices of movement and its mobilisation are linked to the reasons for that movement: namely, obligations to contribute to the family's work and care. This rationale distinguishes movement among places of the *gae* from other sorts of work or care undertaken for friends, neighbours, and more distant relatives. While it is certainly deeply linked to kin spatialities (see Klaits 2010: 31–3; Chapter 2), we will return to the question of contributing care in more detail in Part II. For our present purposes, it suffices to say that, taken together, the spatial habits described draw the courtyard the cattle post, and the lands into a coherent space that both defines and is defined by family – the *gae*.

---

[3] Alternatively, the names of age-mates of the speaker from among the family would be substituted. See Griffiths (2013) for the ways in which Tswana life histories chart links between families and land over generations, thereby creating a shared understanding of 'the local' – yet another way, perhaps, of understanding what I describe here as the *gae*.

Many Batswana in the southern areas of the country hold lands and cattle posts (contrary to the account of the north in Morton 2007: 165). This landholding is not necessarily a sign of special wealth, although it has ramifications for family prosperity.[4] Even before the colonial era, Batswana men who married expected to acquire not only a residential plot in the vicinity of their own relatives, but also *masimo* for their wives to plough and land to graze their cattle; these acquisitions were arranged through ward headmen and chiefs (Schapera 1940: 95, 105). Virtually every family I knew in Dithaba had both lands and a cattle post, as did friends and colleagues elsewhere around the country. Those who didn't enjoyed – in principle at least – the government-assured right to acquire them for free, much as individuals have a right to free residential land (see also Townsend 1997: 408). Since independence, district land boards and *kgotlas* have worked together to ensure that citizens can secure residential plots in their home villages and *masimo* nearby, as well as access to shared grazing on which *moraka* may be situated. In practice, residential plots have become harder to acquire as the government allows people to apply for plots anywhere in the country, and ameliorates demand by privileging applicants most likely to develop them quickly (a point to which we will return). Plot owners have also begun selling their property privately (see Griffiths 2013 for more on these trends). However, the ongoing political commitment to protecting access to *masimo*, *moraka*, and residential plots underscores the extent to which all are considered basic constitutive elements of the Tswana home.

Property beyond the *lelwapa*, lands, and cattle posts enjoys no such privilege or integration, in terms of either care or movement. Over the years, Mmapula and Dipuo had built a small house in a nearby town, which they rented out; but neither they, nor anyone else in the family, ever went to visit it, tend to it, or otherwise check on it. Many of the family members were unsure where exactly it was, and I never saw it. While it did generate a meagre, sporadic income, the rental property did not constitute a part of the family's lived experience of home.

---

[4] I have deliberately avoided attempting to describe the Legae household in terms of class. As Deborah Durham (2020) notes, class categories – and especially the category of 'middle class' – are a rather poor fit for Botswana, particularly when 'theorised through the individual (income) or nuclear family', because they miss the common processes of sharing, gifting, circulation, and redistribution of resources by which Batswana achieve a 'wider participation in the "middle income" of the country' (ibid.). While access to and participation in the country's middle-income status remains highly unequal, it is also shared out in ways that confound categorisation in class terms. The Legaes, like other friends in Dithaba, also struggled with the question of what class they understood themselves or others to be in – and usually rejected the question as irrelevant.

The *gae*, then, is a divided, multiple, scattered yet bounded place, defined and integrated by the movement, staying, and care work of kin. Regardless of the other places in which one might work, live, or even build, the *gae* is the place in which one remains and to which one is inevitably drawn back (Geschiere 2003). But it is not changeless. As we have seen, there may well be more than one *masimo* or *moraka*; they are usually far removed from each other, and from the *lelwapa*; they may be used continuously, infrequently, or perhaps not at all; and, indeed, they may be swapped, sold, acquired, or given away with relative ease. They are also constantly being built and rebuilt (a point to which we will return; see also Morton 2007). In this sense, the *gae* is not only multiple but mutable. The continuous movement of kin between and among the spaces of the *gae*, to work and stay, therefore becomes critical to sustaining and integrating them over time. And this movement simultaneously binds people and places together and keeps them apart – articulating a tension between closeness and distance that defines not only the *gae*, but the Tswana family itself.

This tension becomes even clearer in light of the ways that *gae* are connected and reproduced. By custom, a Motswana has only one *gae*: either one's parents' home (including their *lelwapa*, *masimo*, and *moraka*); or, in the case of a married woman, her husband's parents' home. In practice, however, even married women often speak of their parents' home as *ko gae*, emphasising its link with their place of origin. When Mmapula took us to visit the yard in which she grew up, now uninhabited, she explained simply, '*Ke ko gae*' – this is home. Mmapula's identification with two *gae* suggests the ways in which the movement of women in particular serves to connect different *gae* with each other, while also keeping them apart (even now, married women are often discouraged from returning to their natal homes). Rather than simply splitting or fragmenting, the *gae* slowly but surely multiplies and expands. And in this expansion, as new *malwapa* (courtyards/families) are built and *magae* are both entangled with and separated from each other, the spatialities of wards and villages are structured, sustained, and extended – which is perhaps one reason why *ko gae* can also refer to wards and villages.

In his colonial-era account, Schapera warned of the 'disintegrating tendencies of frequent separation' (1940: 178) – here, in the context of labour migration – and suggested that 'real intimacy and sympathetic understanding are often lacking' as a result, such that 'home life … does not really exist' (ibid.: 173). In many ways, similar conclusions are echoed in contemporary discourse around AIDS and family breakdown. I suggest, however, that separation and movement are as much integrative as disintegrative. Tswana kinship spatialities generate *dikgang*

Figure 3 *Masimo* – rondavels at the lands.
Source: D. S. Reece

('issues' of risk, conflict, and irresolution); but rather than destroying home life, these *dikgang* seem to enable the negotiation of balance between closeness, distance, and movement that sustains and reproduces the Tswana family, especially its intergenerational relationships. In Chapter 1, I examine this possibility and its gendered dimensions.

1   Going Up and Down

Tefo's Beating

Tefo's voice came in a sudden and surprised cry from behind the closed door, followed by steady sobbing. From the broad slapping sound that punctuated his wailing, I gathered that his mother Kelebogile had taken a *pata-pata*, or flip-flop, to him. As she beat him she challenged him with scarcely controlled fury: 'Why do you like to go up and down so much, eh? Why don't you listen?'

I sat uncomfortably in the *lelwapa*, trying not to wince. Everyone else in the yard went about their usual business: Modiri sat drinking tea, leaning back in his wooden chair; Mmapula sat on the stoep with her feet out, chatting with Oratile. Lesego and Tshepo darted efficiently between the pot on the fire outside and the kitchen in the back of the house, carrying chopped vegetables or maize meal or utensils, moving with a little more alacrity than usual. There was a studied avoidance of the beating happening behind the thin door of Kelebogile and Tefo's room.

I leaned over to Boipelo, Tefo's older cousin,[1] and asked what had happened. 'Ah, Tefo is always going up and down, his mother's been telling him for days that it's not okay,' she explained. 'Every afternoon he takes long to come home from school, then goes out to play with the neighbours, or he goes to the shop. He comes late. When she calls him he is far, she can't send him for things.'

'But a shoe?' I asked, discomfited.

Boipelo laughed self-consciously, as she often did when I said or asked things that were inadvertently naïve or eccentric. 'Tefo doesn't listen. It's a problem [*kgang*]. It's not good that she's beating him in the room,' she said, reflecting a moment. While the children were not beaten often, when they were, it was almost always out in the *lelwapa* or the yard. 'But

---

[1] Boipelo is the eldest daughter of Kelebogile's older sister; to Tefo, she would be *ngwana a mmamogolo*.

61

you see that she didn't lock the door. So it's safe. Any of us could go in at any time.' The *pata-pata* didn't seem to be of concern.

'Why doesn't he run away, if the door's unlocked?' I asked, with Tefo's cries beginning to wane with exhaustion.

'He can't,' she answered simply, as if it were an obvious impossibility.

Not yet ten, Tefo was clever and a little shy, and when no one was looking, he delighted in quietly showing off to me things he had learned or skills he had picked up. He was close to and protective of his mother, and was generally quick to do as he was bidden. But he was restless, too, and gregarious, with a mischievous streak; he had an ample share of the stubborn contrariness so familiar to me from his mother and her siblings (a trait we had in common and which we jokingly referenced as evidence of our relatedness). Tefo was not the only child to be beaten for 'going up and down'; it was an accusation frequently levelled – both jokingly and disparagingly – among the adults at home as well. In Botswana, movement presents the possibility of both mundane and mystical danger: car, bus, and combi-van accidents are frequent and often fatal (MVA 2018; see also Livingston 2019), and witchcraft can be worked on the traces of people's movements, including their footprints (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 275). But beatings and chastisements were seldom framed explicitly in terms of concern for safety. More often children were scolded, and adults teased, either for moving too much in the wrong ways or for being in the wrong places at the wrong times.

On the way home from school, Tefo often went to play football with friends for a while, or he would pass by Kagiso's shop, or stop to play at the neighbours' house – instead of coming home directly to change out of his school uniform, so that it could be washed for the following day. Uniforms were expensive, and generally the Legae children had only one or two changes of uniform for the week; they had to be washed daily and kept carefully so as not to wear out. Tefo's peregrinations not only delayed the laundry but ran extra risk of putting holes in his already faded trousers and shirt. Even if he did come home to change his clothes, he often roved so far afield afterwards that his mother could not call him back to send him for anything – mobile phone units, bread, things from the neighbours, or other simple items she might need. Calling (*go bitsa*) and sending (*go roma*) are crucial means of expressing intergenerational relatedness and hierarchy for Batswana: adults frequently exercise the right to call children for help, or to account, and to send them on errands; and children are expected to (and mostly do) respond immediately and without complaint.[2] Indeed, the two words perhaps most

---

[2] See Durham (2004: 595) for an evocative description of the combination of fear, physical threats, and love with which Batswana children are raised.

commonly used by adults when speaking to children were *tlakwano* and *tsamaya* – come here, and go. The phrase *o a bidiwa*, you are called, was commonplace, and children were often sent to others with that message. These instructions were less common among peers and inappropriate for use with elders, but were commonplace with children and adults younger than the speaker; they served to articulate a relationship of power and responsibility in which elders were entitled to direct the movement of their juniors. In this sense, Tefo's absences challenged his relationship with his mother – by making it difficult for her to look after him (keeping him well dressed and clean) and by making it difficult for him to be called for and sent by her, as befitted his responsibilities as her child. It was this risk of destabilisation – a *kgang* that unsettled appropriate intergenerational relationships, rather than one of personal safety – that Tefo ran when 'going up and down'.

Tefo followed his mother around like a shadow for perhaps two days after the beating. He sat on the ground next to her chair, went in and out of the bedroom whenever she did, and followed her around the yard. By the second day she had become annoyed. She snapped at him: '*Hei*! What do you want here [*mo go nna*, lit. in my place]? Go!' She raised her hand at him threateningly. Initially he refused to budge, but soon he was moving around the yard more freely; within a day or so, he was playing with the neighbours in the lane again.

In this episode, I suggest, Tefo and his mother were negotiating the central difficulty presented by competing imperatives of closeness and distance in the spatialities of the Tswana family: finding the appropriate *balance*. Strain, tension, and outright conflict – *dikgang* – emerged when this balance was upset, either because kin were too far from or too close to one another, were not moving (or available to be moved) in the right ways at the right times, were in one another's spaces at inopportune moments, or were otherwise 'out of place'. It was a *kgang* that beset and threatened appropriate intergenerational relationships and hierarchies in particular, and through which intergenerational relationships were mediated in turn. This disordering of people, place, and generational relationships could be managed only by drawing closeness, distance, and movement back into appropriate balance – often with the threat of violence. It was a similar process of disordering and reordering space, and the intergenerational roles attached to it, that was at work when Mmapula's husband Dipuo's feet swelled up.

Mending *Ntate*'s Ways

It was early evening, and Dipuo had come in from the lands unexpectedly. He sat on the low wooden chair in the corner of the *lelwapa* he

favoured, near the room where the old woman and the children slept. He hung his hat on the back of the chair, pulled off his shoes and socks, and was rubbing one foot absent-mindedly. His feet and ankles were swollen, thick and round – unsurprising for a man in his mid-seventies having just walked several miles in the heat, I supposed. Then he stretched back into the hard chair and spent the rest of the evening calling and sending the boys on various errands, or upbraiding them for some overlooked chore or some ill-mannered comment.

He stayed at home for a number of days, which was decidedly unusual. We seldom saw him at home for longer than a day and a night, maybe two, generally at the beginning of the month when he would come to collect his meagre pension from the post office. Otherwise he was almost always at the lands. It was an arrangement that suited everyone, as he had a cantankerous streak and a penchant for provoking trouble. But for the time being, one of his sons had been sent out in his place, and Dipuo – whom we all called *ntate*, father – remained in the village.

Things had been particularly bad with Dipuo for several months. First, Mmapula had discovered that he had taken up with a local woman who had been widowed the year before. While his wife was ploughing and tending several acres at the family's other, far distant farm on her own, the old man stayed at the lands near the village and became more and more unwisely entangled. He diverted dribs and drabs of money and part of his harvest to the widow and her family; and he began to opt out of settling disputes or engaging in ongoing issues at home. In the most dramatic incident, shortly before my arrival, he had unilaterally decided to sell most of the family's donkeys and give the money to the widow for some expense she had complained about. Mmapula suffered much of this ignominious treatment stoically, muttering to herself and occasionally attempting to talk sense into him. When she found out about the donkeys, however, she rebuked her husband roundly and damningly in front of their children, and spoke of her contempt for his behaviour openly at home. '*Haish, ke kgang e tona,*' Lorato noted of the situation as she updated me afterwards – it's a big issue.

Dipuo's ill-advised liaison had created any number of awkward situations for his children, and for their children as well. Some months before my return, he had been in the widow's yard and had heard an accusation from one of the younger children there about an exchange of threats and insults with one of the young children from his own yard. Immediately, he had summoned the accused child and his eldest grandchild, Lorato, as well, asking her to act as mediator in resolving the dispute. She had been appalled – and was still appalled, judging from the incredulity with which she recounted these tales to me. 'Imagine!

Calling his own children to *someone else's yard*! And what did he want me to do there?' While there was no question that Dipuo's behaviour towards his wife was indefensible, it was in incidents like this – when the issue became explicitly intergenerational – that the *kgang* became pressing, and that subtle means of addressing it emerged.

Adults in Botswana are generally free to discipline the children of their friends, neighbours, or even strangers, and will do so without compunction. I often saw children respond to such discipline with humility and respect. But such situations only really arise in public places, or in the disciplining adult's own yard. By calling his grandchildren into the widow's yard, Dipuo was behaving as if he was *of* that yard and had assumed the role of disciplinarian in it. Indeed, it was as if he had decided to take the widow's children as his own, and his own children as if they were simply neighbours. This confusion of places and the swapping of roles and allegiances it connoted was distasteful and hurtful in its own right. But what made it ridiculous to Lorato was that, having adopted this new position, the old man could not engineer a reconciliation without relying on his previous position in his own yard, and the claims to which it entitled him. By calling both the accused child and Lorato as the mediator, in other words, he was calling himself out: emphasising his inability to discharge a basic role in mediating *dikgang* and meting out discipline among his experimentally assumed kin, by having to rely on his established kin to pull it off. The physical distance from family created by his living at the lands made room for an upending and rearrangement of relationships, and for confusion about Dipuo's 'proper place' to emerge. But, at the same time, that distance had its limits; it could not create a total break from his family, and so his connection to and reliance on them was reasserted.

As his feet swelled up, Dipuo's behaviour began to change. The change was out of necessity rather than choice: he couldn't walk without pain. And so, for a short time, he stayed at home, did not go to the lands, and made only brief visits out of the yard. But then he went to visit his *ngaka ya Setswana*, or traditional healer. The visit was conducted quietly, perhaps in acknowledgement of the fact that Mmapula was a churchgoer and disdained the practice; but it was nevertheless subject to gossip and speculation among the siblings, one of whom had accompanied him. We heard that he had been advised that his feet were swelling up because of his inappropriate dalliances, and that they would continue to do so until he stopped. None of the siblings made any claims about the causality at work, but Schapera (1940: 195) recorded the attribution of various afflictions to liaisons with widows whose blood was still 'hot' (a marker of dangerous sexuality due to their closeness to death). Regardless,

Dipuo's children had a clear sense of the justice in the situation. He had been going up and down in ways he shouldn't have done, ways that were hurtful to his family; an illness that curtailed his movement and forced him to behave appropriately had therefore afflicted him, and it would resolve itself when he both literally and figuratively mended his ways. Indeed, the siblings' response reminds us that Batswana trace various types of illness to disruptions in appropriate intergenerational relationships – including with the ancestors – such that the management of illness often amounts to the management of intergenerational *dikgang* and vice versa (Livingston 2005: 10; see also Lambek and Solway 2001 on *dikgaba*).

Whatever had actually transpired during Dipuo's visit to the *ngaka*, what the siblings heard from each other explained and resolved the issue to their satisfaction. In this case, the siblings' gossip and speculation were an opportunity for them to engage the *kgang* at stake meaningfully. Reflecting on Dipuo's illness and treatment allowed them to participate in diagnosing the underlying issue – his inappropriate dalliances and their knock-on effects for his relationships with his children and grand-children – and to collectively assess what it meant about each of their parents, the relationship between them, implications for the siblings, and the wider relations of the family as a whole. Intergenerational *dikgang* present especially tricky situations: any attempt at confrontation or mediation would have exacerbated the existing difficulties drastically, further upending appropriately hierarchical relationships, and playing havoc with the mediatory roles the elder Legaes were expected to play both at home and among their wider kin. But they also present opportunities for those of more junior generations[3] to subtly participate in and address the problems of their parents. While Dipuo had experimentally abandoned his rightful place, the indirect engagement of his children left room for him to reoccupy it.

Perhaps a week after his diagnosis, Dipuo was back out at the lands, his feet improving. And it seemed that he had abandoned his extramarital fling. While he would continue to distress and confound his family in other ways, there were no more stories told of ongoing improprieties with the neighbour. And on the rare occasion when they both found themselves at home from the lands, he and his wife would sit up late with their heads together by the fire, sharing news, apparently reconciled.

Following Schapera (1940: 173, 178), we might associate Dipuo's *kgang* with distance, continuous movement, and staying apart. Dipuo's

---

[3] Generations, like most other kin structures among the Tswana, are highly fluid – a topic to which we return in greater detail in Part II.

transgressions and the familial conflicts they sparked emerged from the time he spent away. But Dipuo's indiscretions were not met with attempts to collapse or erase those distances. He was not called upon to stay at home; neither his wife nor anyone else in his family moved to stay with him. Nor was he excluded or cut off from his family's usual visits to work and help. Rather, his relative distance was carefully maintained. Any attempts to 'solve' the problem of Dipuo's waywardness by bringing him closer, I suspect, would have upset a delicate balance between distance and closeness that made it possible for him and his family to relate. The necessity of maintaining distance suggests that intimacy and proximity present risks of *dikgang* that distance helps ameliorate. (These risks, of course, are not simply spatial, but also draw in other dynamics that create intimacy and mutual dependence, to which we will return in Parts II and III.)

As much as it helps alleviate *dikgang*, then, the continuous work of keeping familial closeness and distance in appropriate balance – and the specific measures required to do so, from beatings and reprimands to visiting traditional doctors – is often a source of further anxiety, strain, and conflict within families. As we will see in the next chapters, the work of coping with these strains presents further issues and requires further management, creating a cycle of conflict and irresolution that, I suggest, is constitutive of the Tswana family. Out of this cycle and the variety of tensions that generate it, a dynamic develops in which individual family members feel simultaneously compelled to stay and driven to leave. The attempt to balance this need for simultaneous nearness and distance from one's family is perhaps best understood spatially and temporally in the process of *building* – which is as critical to the development of Tswana personhood as it is to reworking kin relations.

2   '*Ke a Aga*'
Lorato, Building

Go nna le lewapa go monate
O ja dijo o kgobile
O ja dijo o sa shebeshebe

It's nice to have your own house
You eat until you're full
You eat without looking over your shoulder   '*Kuweletsana*', Culture
Spears[1]

Lorato and I leaned against our square-edged spades, looking out across
the dry, yellowed patches of farmland to the brick-red hills beyond. The
afternoon heat was merciless and the landscape shimmered with it. We
had been clearing a rocky, steep slope at the top of Lorato's plot of the
plant life that had colonised it over the years, in preparation for digging
the foundation of the house she would build there.

The plot sat high on the slope of a hill that separated it from much of
the rest of the village, and it commanded a rare view. It had belonged to
Lorato's mother Keitumetse, who had begun developing it years previ-
ously, not long before her death. Close to where we stood, the contours
of a foundation trench could be discerned in the tall grass, partly back-
filled over the years with gravel and stone swept down the hillside by the
rains. After Keitumetse's death, Mmapula had made a point of transfer-
ring the plot into Lorato's name – an uncommon gesture at a time when
family squabbles over the inheritance of land and property were rife.
Meanwhile, a few stacks of unused cement bricks, window frames, and
other material that Keitumetse had acquired for building had been taken
back to the family plot – a 20-minute walk away – and incorporated into
its continuous building projects.

Several years had passed, and, as Lorato entered her mid-twenties,
the local land board had begun to put pressure on her to develop the

---

[1] A video of Culture Spear's '*Kuweletsana*' is at www.youtube.com/watch?v=CdgdkzYQ6-4.

land – or lose it. The Ministry of Lands and Housing oversees land boards in every district; their role is to manage the land of the local *morafe*, or tribal polity. Historically, this role had been undertaken by village chiefs, who apportioned land to their headmen, who in turn distributed plots so that recently married men could settle among their paternal kin (Schapera 1940: 95). After independence, this function was centralised at district level, and land tended to be apportioned in a more geographically arbitrary way than before, depending on which areas of the village the land board had marked for expansion and development. Currently, both men and women, married or otherwise, can apply for plots, and Batswana can apply for plots anywhere in the country, regardless of *morafe*. Building, in turn, is no longer simply about establishing a marital home near the husband's kin; it is also about opportunities to move *away* from one's parents and siblings, whether one is married or not, to live independently, and even to generate income through rentals or resale (see Griffiths 2013 for further detail on these trends).

When I first lived in Dithaba, new plot owners bore the responsibility to mark the corners of their plots with fenceposts (an echo of precolonial practices of marking off land with 'doctored' pegs; Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 134). Then, within five years of taking possession, they had to fence their plots fully and build at least one structure – even an outhouse. But demand for plots skyrocketed in the village, especially as people from around the country sought places to live, rent out, or develop and resell within commuting distance of the capital. The growing availability of mortgages sped up the hitherto slow process of building, and also drove the commoditisation of land. The standards of what constituted 'development' accelerated proportionately. By the time Lorato started her building project, the plot had to be fenced and a full house had to be under construction to prevent the land board from simply reassigning it to someone else when her five-year window of opportunity expired.

Mmapula was quite concerned that Lorato should retain the plot and had set aside a small amount of money from her farming income – an amount roughly equivalent to the building supplies she had acquired at the time of Lorato's mother's death. It was unlikely to go far. Lorato herself was equally concerned. 'It is the only thing I have left of my mother,' she reflected, with a note of discomfort at her admission, a brief and rare articulation of her loss.

The situation had started to come to a head while I was staying with the Legaes. The unspoken request in Lorato's and Mmapula's accounts of the plot was no less plain for its omission. After much weighing up of options, reflection, and consultation, I offered to help finance the

building through a series of loans, partly sourced from family and friends. Once built, we agreed, the house could be rented out until the loans were repaid. Having recently landed a short contract post with the government, Lorato committed to contributing a significant proportion of the funding. The money available, however, was still not a great deal, and the only way to build the house affordably was to do as much of the work as possible ourselves. By the time we stood taking in the view, we had already been digging and hauling truckloads of river sand for making bricks at home, and we would spend much of the coming months lugging cement, quarrying dense pit sand, ferrying water, and backfilling concrete as the house progressed. We were sometimes helped in these heavy tasks by the Legae sisters and often by the children of the yard; of the brothers, only the youngest, Tuelo, assisted – and only on condition of being paid.

We commissioned a neighbour, Rra Ditau, with the building of the house, and he saw it from its design stages through to the finished structure. Already well into his fifties, he lived close to the Legaes and had built the house I stayed in. In his gnarled, worn-out work boots, his green workman's trousers, his torn shirts, and the soft hat slung back on his forehead, he looked like any other piece labourer in the village. But he had a contemplative gaze, a habit of speaking in riddles, and a sideline as a poet and musician, which gave him an air of philosophical wisdom. He was fond of asking imponderable questions, looking askance at his befuddled listeners, and laughing heartily before changing the topic.

Lorato retreated into the shade of two stunted trees, and I followed. Rra Ditau, who had accompanied us for the clearing, resumed his fight with the recalcitrant weeds, his spade clanging and jarring against the stones.

'You think I can get married now, if I have my own house?' Lorato asked, pensively. She enjoyed surprising and provoking people with such questions, but this time she sounded contemplative, as if she had surprised herself. I didn't see the connection, and asked why it would matter.

'Ah, you know these men,' she said, partly contemptuous, partly resigned, as she gazed out at the lands. 'They want to be the ones who give you everything. They don't like this idea of women having their own things, their own jobs, their own money. And imagine, a house! Actually, I might not even live here. A man would want me to live at his place.'

I was quiet, puzzling over whether I had inadvertently created a problem by trying to help (a niggling doubt familiar from years of work in the development sector). It was traditional practice for a man to take his wife to live in his natal neighbourhood or village; Batswana are customarily

virilocal, and the administrative subunits of villages – wards – had historically marked off extended virilocal families (Schapera 1940: 95). At the same time, in historical practice, a substantial proportion of couples stayed with the wife's family while waiting to build for themselves (ibid.: 97). Marriage preferences for parallel as well as for cross-cousins, at least in principle, created the possibility of such an entangled field of relationships that a man and wife (and their families) might be related in several different ways at once in any case – making the question of whether they were living virilocally or uxorilocally potentially unclear and prone to variation (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 132).

These days, of course, it is common for a married couple to settle away from both of their natal homes, depending on where work and opportunity can be found. And the practice of settling and building elsewhere is not altogether new: Mmapula and Dipuo had settled away from their natal homes in a nearby town, after all, first at the lands and later in Dithaba itself. Indeed, most of the married couples I knew lived away from both spouses' natal homes, and many lived apart – even on opposite sides of the country – depending on where one or the other was posted for work. But regardless of where married couples lived for work, they generally still built in the husband's home village – *ko gae* – as well.

Many people I knew – men and women alike – had not yet married by the time they began building, although most of them had had children (something we'll return to in Part III). A house was an asset against hard times, I reasoned to myself, a place to begin a family, a potential source of independence and income; but did these things in themselves inhibit marriage?

The unanticipated social repercussions of building didn't end with marriageability. A few nights later – helping us offload a truckload of river sand, down to the last grains caught in the ridges of the truck bed – Rra Ditau put his finger on another. We had been discussing a growing unwillingness among the adults at home to loan us the truck for building work, in spite of our having borne much of the cost of its maintenance and upkeep. Unusual claims had been made, including the suggestion that various items we had to buy in town wouldn't fit in the truck bed (although we had transported similar items before). 'How do you think they feel,' Rra Ditau asked Lorato, in his quasi-rhetorical way, 'about the fact that you are building first, before they do?' '*Haish*! *Ke kgang akere*,' she had answered, shaking her head – it's a problem, isn't it? Only Moagi, Lorato's mother's younger brother, had already finished building a small house of his own, as well as the one in his parents' yard in which we stayed. The eldest brother, Lorato's *malome* Modiri, had swapped his plot for a combi-van; another of the younger brothers, Kagiso, was on the

endless waiting list for new plots. In fact, Kagiso had exerted some pressure on Lorato to give him her plot to build on not long before. Oratile and Kelebogile, Lorato's mother's younger sisters, had plots of their own but no houses yet. When Kelebogile had tagged along with us to see the progress of Lorato's house, she had been disparaging: 'You're only at window height! You still have so far to go!' Reflecting on these tensions, Rra Ditau laughed his philosophical laugh. 'Well,' he said in a non-committal way, 'I guess you're killing them at home. But you have to build for yourself.'

We dropped Rra Ditau back at his yard that evening and went in to greet his wife, who was cooking fat cakes in a deep pot of oil over the fire. We sat on one of the long benches against the stacks of old four-and-a-half-inch bricks that gave rough, low walls to their *isong*. Mma Ditau was congratulatory about the building project. 'You are becoming a woman now,' she affirmed to Lorato, smiling. 'You are becoming a person!' Lorato was sceptical and asked why building conveyed such sudden status. 'To have your own yard where you decide what to eat, people take you seriously!' Mma Ditau explained, bending to examine the fat cakes in the hot oil. Lorato herself – like many others I knew who had begun to build – had often framed her dreams of having her own house in such terms: being grown up, being free of the constraints and conflicts of home, and being able to eat what she liked. When she wanted to illustrate to people just how adult, independent, and self-directed she was, she often said, '*Ke a aga*' – I'm building – which invariably earned her reactions of surprise and respect.

But it was a burdensome dream. 'I'm too young to be taken seriously. I don't want people to take me too seriously!' Lorato exclaimed, looking dismayed. Mma Ditau laughed generously.

Building a house is a considerable achievement: a testimony both to the material resources and to the personal relationships that one can mobilise for the task. Batswana have long considered it an achievement fundamental to developing as a person, independent of – if still bound to – one's natal family (Schapera 1940: 103), and to founding a family of one's own. *Go aga lelwapa* means to build a house and to build a family, after all. The Setswana verb for building, *go aga*, echoes etymologically in the words for peace, harmony, and reconciliation (*kagiso*, *kagisanyo*, *agisanya* – see Klaits 2010: 31), each of which in turn connotes helping one another to build. Building relies heavily on a range of relationships and materially instantiates and perpetuates them (Morton 2007). Indeed, building is in many ways symbolic of living; as an interlocutor of Julie Livingston's pointed out, 'without building there is no life'

(Livingston 2005: 15; see also Klaits 2010: 85). But like most such achievements, it is fraught and generates *dikgang*; and these *dikgang* derive from a new uncertainty in the very relationships the builder has put to work in constructing her *lelwapa* in the first place – or that she might call upon in the ongoing process of building in the future. These uncertainties, in turn, are exacerbated by the new distance the builder is establishing between herself and the people she has relied on – largely family – by building apart. I would argue that it is this production, acquisition, and management of *dikgang*, beyond the work of mobilising relationships and materials for construction, that gives building its salience for Tswana self-making and personhood – and also for Tswana kinship.

But Lorato's story also underscores another critical dimension of building, of the spatialities of kinship and personhood, and of the *dikgang* these produce: their temporality. In all three of the exchanges described above, the problem was not simply that Lorato was building a house, or where or how it was being built; the problem was with *when* it was being built. Lorato was building not only before marriage but before having children – a time when her major responsibilities were still to her natal yard (especially since she had landed a steady job). She was building before most of her mother's siblings, including Modiri, her mother's brother or *malome*. She was building for herself before she had built for her parents – something many of her mother's siblings had done (as well as the two-and-a-half that Moagi had built, Kelebogile and Kagiso had tiled the house, installed plumbing, and made various other major infrastructural additions; see also Livingston 2005: 15). And, as neighbours frequently commented, she was building fast; most of the house was completed in under a year (although, importantly, it was never entirely finished). Lorato was building out of sync, out of turn, and out of time; and these distemporalities were all potential sources of *dikgang*, especially with her mother's siblings.

Like the *dikgang* explored in Chapter 1, the potential *dikgang* posed by Lorato's building distemporalities were framed and anticipated in terms of intergenerational disruption. Inheriting her mother's plot and beginning to build was part and parcel of a gradual process in which Lorato was both becoming an adult and shifting to occupy her mother's familial role (as described in the Introduction), both of which were fraught intergenerational transitions. But, whereas her mother had been the eldest Legae daughter, Lorato's relative youth and inexperience meant that she was drawn into her mother's generation as a younger sibling. As we will explore further in Part II, Tswana sibling relationships are often

cast in parent–child terms – as, too, are marriages. Part of Lorato's transition was eased by the fact that, in these terms, she remained the child of her mother's siblings. But by building in advance of her *malome* and her mother's other siblings, and in advance of a future potential husband as well, Lorato was upending those relationships – a child become parent. Building before having a child of her own (and therefore still a child herself), but also before building for her parents, exacerbated her uncanny position, to the extent that she herself was uncomfortable with it.

These temporal and intergenerational dilemmas had a number of sources. First, there was the matter of early inheritance: Lorato was only 14 years old when her mother died. Inheriting property so young is unusual among Batswana and is a possibility that only really began to arise with the advent of the AIDS epidemic. In fact, Lorato might not have inherited the plot at all; Mmapula might have retained it, sold it, or given it to another of her children, and she would have been well within her rights to do so. Given that both Mmapula and her other children were, at the time, favourably situated with plots – and in a context where complaints of property grabbing from orphans had become a hot topic of discussion everywhere from the *kgotla* to social workers' offices and in the popular media – Mmapula made the decision to transfer the plot to Lorato. Both the orphan care NGO in which Lorato was registered and the local social worker's office assisted in the process. But formalising the inheritance wasn't sufficient to normalise its distemporality; as Kagiso's pressure demonstrated, for as long as the plot was undeveloped, it remained potentially subject to claims from older kin – in the Tswana sense, Lorato's parents – who were ready to build, as well as from the land board itself.

In consultation with other arms of government, the land board had suspended its usual development requirements in cases like Lorato's. No specific new deadlines for development were given, although it was rumoured that inheritors such as Lorato might have only five years to develop from the age of majority (18). Given the scarcity of jobs and the expense of building, even this apparent leeway was insufficient – especially as applications for plots in Dithaba began to outstrip the availability of gazetted land, and the land board began reclaiming and reassigning plots that had not been suitably developed. Government-linked charitable organisations such as the Masiela (Orphans) Trust Fund got into the building game in anticipation of these scenarios, mostly where orphaned children in destitute families had inherited land (Masiela Trust Fund 2015); NGOs also built houses ad hoc for child clients in difficult circumstances (as we will see in Chapter 3). People like Lorato and her

family had few options beyond their connections to someone like me, whom they had met through their involvement with NGOs.[2]

Charitable organisations, NGOs, and associated individuals were all able to mobilise much larger immediate capital than many builders could, a situation that – in concert with land board pressures – could speed up a building process that was otherwise undertaken over years, as and when materials and labour were available. Whether because they needed to prove the timely disbursal of funds to donors (as many NGOs did), or whether they had only a limited time to be involved in the work (as I did), these additional figures were all working on different clocks – and therefore knocking builders like Lorato out of their proper time. In this sense, the untimely death of Lorato's mother inserted Lorato and her family into what could be glossed as a transnational humanitarian project on the one hand, and a national development project on the other, in some unpredictable ways – thereby introducing unprecedented influences on the spatio-temporalities of her family, their intergenerational relationships, and her own self-making trajectory.

Several months later, Lorato's house was nearly finished – a state that turned out to be perpetual, as most building in Botswana is – and we sat on the wide stoep, taking in the view. Her neighbour immediately down the hill had recently finished a small two-and-a-half of his own, and its clean corrugated tin roof glared in the sun. I asked whether she had ever spoken to him.

'He's late,' she said, using the sensitive Setswana idiom for death.

I was taken aback. The house had been finished less than a month. The neighbour had only recently moved in, having never really stayed at the plot before, although it had a pre-existing structure. She explained that he had died in his sleep. It was several days before his body was found.

I asked what had happened – whether it might have been witchcraft born of jealousy, on account of the new house. But Lorato shrugged and shook her head, unconvinced. '*Gareitse*,' she said – we don't know. 'But that's why I don't like the idea of staying alone.' As much as she had dreamed of building for herself as an escape from the pressures of staying at home, to stay alone – and therefore to be seen to have been building for herself (Klaits 2010: 86) – was not only unconscionable, but also potentially dangerous. In her case, the risk was greater because of the intergenerational tension it threatened. 'They are going to want to teach me a lesson, you know, at home,' she added, almost as an afterthought. While

---

[2] At the time of this building project, mortgages were still vanishingly rare. They have since become much more common and have significantly hastened the customarily drawn-out temporality of building – if mostly for well-off professionals.

Lorato's situation was in many ways unique, she could nevertheless predict the *dikgang* that would emerge and the way in which they would be interpreted: as a lesson to her about her proper place, generational role, and claims to self-making.

Lorato did stay in her house for a short while, almost experimentally – not alone, but with Lesego and Tshepo, two of her teenage cousins,[3] who came to help and who were similarly eager for some space away from the family. The adults at home accepted this arrangement in principle and for the time being, but they were insistent that all three girls should make themselves available to help at the lands and at home as usual. They lasted less than two months. Partly, it was too difficult to keep everyone fed on Lorato's meagre income; partly, all three missed being in the bustle of home. But, above all, juggling obligations at their natal yard with piece jobs and the work the new place required was too onerous for the distances and time involved. The situation had created an ongoing battle with the family, who continuously berated all three girls for neglecting their duties at home – teaching Lorato a lesson, as she anticipated they might. The distemporalities of Lorato's building project, the profusion of overlapping, ongoing – and gendered – obligations in disparate places they entailed, the instability of the relationships that might have supported her, and her own indeterminate and tenuous generational position made staying away ultimately too difficult to manage. While the new house had seemed to present an opportunity to escape the burdens and *dikgang* of living at home, in fact it simply added to them and made them more difficult – eventually impossible – to navigate. Lorato was as yet unable to sustain, through space and over time, the relationships, responsibilities, and *dikgang* that living apart entailed.

Deborah Durham notes that Batswana link 'the inability to manage people and relationships' (2004: 594) with childhood, while David Suggs notes that women's adulthood depends on others' 'believing they have competence … [in] the establishment of managerial household independence' (Suggs 2001: 108). I would connect the management of people, relationships, and household independence to the management of *dikgang* arising from the relationships on which households rely. If self-making is, in part, the continuous acquisition, navigation, and successful negotiation of *dikgang* – a process that the perpetuity of building might be said to symbolise – then Lorato's failed attempt to set up house for herself marked a setback in making for herself and in making the generational

---

[3] Specifically, Oratile's eldest daughter and Khumo's second – *bana a bommangwane*, children of one's mother's younger sisters. Lorato treated both like younger siblings.

transitions that implied. Lorato returned home, and the house remained empty.

Lorato's frustrated experience suggests that the spatio-temporalities of humanitarian and development projects, whether undertaken by government or by NGOs, have unexpectedly important roles to play in the spatio-temporalities of Tswana personhood and kinship. In the final chapter of this Part, I trace the spatialities of organisations in Dithaba that work directly with families like Lorato's, and examine the ways in which they both echo and subvert the spatialities of the families they serve.

Figure 4 Lorato's house.

3   Geographies of Intervention

Tsholo filled me in as we bumped our way along a meandering red dirt road to the outskirts of the village in her NGO's spacious, logo-plastered combi-van. 'The girl's parents died,' she began.

So she left their home village and came here looking for work, maybe as a maid for somebody. At first it was fine, she was living with a family, cooking for them, caring for the children. They didn't pay her much but she had a place to stay, and food. But then her younger sister came looking for her. After some time the family felt it was too much and kicked them out. When we found them they were just staying under a tree.

The yard to which we were making our way was the last stop in the NGO's grand tour. We had begun at the orphan care centre, as they called it, which stood in the heart of the village behind a high perimeter fence. The centre comprised several modern, custom-designed build-ings: an office block, an impressive kitchen and hall, and a set of class-rooms, all set around an open, paved area in the middle of the plot – not unlike the buildings of a household, set around a *lelwapa*. I was intro-duced to some of the children who attended, and I participated in some group singing and play in the hall, which spilled out after us into the open area as Tsholo led me round the classrooms to see the large garden tucked away behind the buildings. As we walked, Tsholo described how the organisation was helping the children with their schooling and life skills, and providing opportunities for developing their talents, as well as feeding them and letting them 'just be children'.

After the centre, Tsholo showed me to a café and shop a short drive away, freshly painted and still boarded up but soon to be opened by a group of parents as income-generation ventures. The project as a whole had been conceived and founded by a European citizen now resident in Botswana, was heavily funded by European development agencies, and was supported by many resident expatriates from Europe, the UK, and the USA. But, on a day-to-day basis, Tsholo and her husband – both from the village themselves – ran the show. Throughout the tour, Tsholo

78

spoke about the centre's clientele as 'our children'. Having known the organisation since its inception, I was struck by the rapidity of its growth and the reach it had achieved; but the model, and even the structure of the tour, was familiar to me from dozens of other NGOs I had visited around the country. Indeed, I had led similar tours myself. Whether because she acknowledged that shared experience, or whether it was part of the tour, Tsholo was frank about the family we were visiting last.

'The social workers had heard about them but weren't doing much,' she continued. The NGO fell under the auspices of the local Social and Community Development (S&CD) office, and the two agencies held the majority of their orphaned clients in common. They sometimes worked together on cases, but they also shared a certain mutual suspicion and distrust, which was not uncommon in similar settings around the country. 'S&CD found them a place at school, but you know they were hardly eating, only the meal they got at the centre,' Tsholo went on.

The social workers were looking for a plot for them but not managing. You know Tumelo at S&CD, we worked together with her on that one, going to land board. Then they found this plot, but *hei*! You see how far it is, how are the children supposed to get to school? Tumelo couldn't find transport for them, so for a long time we were coming here to pick them to school ourselves.

By now we were already at the outskirts of the village. Patches of dusty scrub stretched between intermittent cleared yards. Where people had built, their houses were clearly newer: many were still unpainted or not yet plastered, and some had reached only window level. Children stopped their play to watch us pass.

'At least we managed to find some money for building,' Tsholo continued. 'S&CD managed with some, and then there was this volunteer with us who did a lot of fundraising for it. But when the house was finished! *Owai* … Relatives started pitching up from everywhere.' I admitted I had been wondering about them; previously unexpected family members had a habit of gradually overpopulating such tales. I asked whether anyone had tried to find the girls' extended family in their home village before the building had begun. Tsholo shrugged.

We didn't know anything about them. But as soon as the house was there … *Ija*! This other uncle, the mother's brother, came with the wife, they have two children; then the child for the mother's sister; plus the three children that were here already. Now there are eight people in a little two-and-half, and lots of others coming and going. Nobody is working, you know, and the food basket from S&CD is not enough. We took the older girl back to school but then she fell pregnant, imagine … She is still *motsetse* [confined] in the house by now.

She gestured up ahead a little, where the house had come into view. It was a neat, peach-painted two-and-a-half. The stoep had black iron burglar bars across its front, a security measure only well-employed people could generally afford. The house sat in the back corner of the fenced, cleared yard, which had been swept smooth and featured a few decorative flowers in broken water jugs near the standpipe.

We turned in at the gate and one of several small children in the yard ran up to open it for us. We drove through and turned in front of the house, Tsholo leaning over me to shout a greeting at the small group of women and children washing clothes under a tree in the back corner of the yard, opposite the house. 'I don't know those ones,' she commented, suspicious. She came to a halt in front of the stoep, where a young woman looked up from her sweeping and smiled at us shyly.

We didn't get out of the combi-van. Tsholo explained to the young woman that we were just passing by, and then asked after the girl who had just given birth. The young woman chatted readily but apologetically, casting me uncertain smiles throughout – we had not been introduced, which made us both hesitant. The new mother was fine, and the baby was healthy. They were hoping she could go back to school for the next term. The younger siblings were at school. The young woman herself still hadn't found work. A half-dressed toddler came waddling out of one of the rooms onto the stoep, uncertainly; Tsholo called teasing, affectionate greetings to him and the young woman smiled broadly and encouraged him to greet us. Shortly afterwards, we headed out again, on our way back to the centre, saying goodbye to everyone we had greeted on the way in. Their expressions were studiously impassive.

The epidemiology of HIV and AIDS has focused on spatiality from the outset, and on the pathological potential of mobility in particular. The rapid transmission of HIV has been traced along transport and migration routes, linked with imperatives to move away from home for work or other opportunities, and to return home for care, or to die (see, e.g., Dilger 2006; 2010; Dilger et al. 2012; Farmer 1992; Klaits 2010: 40–5; Thornton 2008: 74–6). In many ways, these are contemporary reformulations of long-standing concerns: Schapera's colonial-era assessment of the effects of labour migration from Botswana to neighbouring South Africa was similarly devastating, as we saw above (Schapera 1940: 178). In both cases, mobility is understood simultaneously to create and to reflect social crisis, specifically in the form of family breakdown – an understanding that fits neatly within the broader logic of the AIDS narrative. And these spatialised assumptions are implicit in many programmes designed to address the epidemic, including those run by

orphan care projects such as Tsholo's and by government social work offices.

The pathologised spatialities of HIV and AIDS epidemiology map the spatialities of kinship described in Chapters 1 and 2, echoing their risks and amplifying their stakes. But the creative dimensions of distance, multiplicity, and mobility for the Tswana family, and the responsiveness to crisis that kin spatialities enable, are largely overlooked in formulating responses to the epidemic. NGOs and social work offices providing supplemental care to orphaned children and their families often organise space much as it is organised in the *gae*, allowing them to engage both families and the epidemic in unique and constructive ways. But the imperative to contain the epidemic underpins certain exceptions and inversions made in the spatial organisation of these agencies, in new patterns of staying, building, and movement, which in turn refigure kin spatialities. The spatial practices that provide strategies for families managing *dikgang* are also disrupted by these interventions, which attempt to encompass families and create alternative spaces to the *gae*. These new configurations generate new *dikgang* in turn, but they simultaneously constrain families' means of addressing them – generating unintended effects that may prove more significant than those of the epidemic itself.

An impressive variety and number of NGO interventions target children and their families in Botswana. I established a unit to liaise with and coordinate them in Botswana's Department of Social Services in 2005; a rapid assessment I conducted uncovered no fewer than 220 orphan care projects – as most called themselves – nationwide. They ranged from preschools to therapy camps, from weekly 'life skills' and abstinence programmes to residential places of safety, from community mobilisation programmes to income-generation projects. Some involved one person handing out donations; others, a committee of local volunteers conducting events, or a group of professional social workers creating training curricula. Many communities – including Dithaba – had several such projects, targeting the same children, and their initiatives frequently overlapped and competed with one another. These projects filled important gaps in government programmes and helped clients navigate government bureaucracies and access resources. Their relationships with local S&CD offices were alternately collaborative and combative, but both agencies were deeply interdependent. Among NGOs, the sought-after ideal, often the best-funded and most respected projects, operated on the model of the drop-in centre, like Tsholo's. Despite the prohibitive costs involved, NGOs right across Botswana were quite insistent about building their own centres rather than working through existing (and often empty) government buildings or in an exclusively home-based manner.

Once built, some centres ran all-day preschools, but most were set up for after-school care; they usually welcomed orphaned children and youth of school-going age for several hours every afternoon.

As Tsholo's tour demonstrated, the spatialities of orphan care centres are strongly and deliberately reminiscent of the *gae*. Tsholo's centre, like many others, had been designed with its buildings set around a paved, open area that explicitly referenced and resembled the *lelwapa*. Offices, classrooms, and kitchen/hall each occupied different structures, for use by different people (the children hardly ever ventured into the offices, the office workers seldom into the classrooms, but all might gather together in the hall or in the open area outside, for example). The open area was used by the children for play, by the staff to sit out and bask in the sun, and sometimes for eating meals, as well as for welcoming guests and, on special occasions, hosting celebratory events – much as a *lelwapa* would be. Indeed, some centres I have visited were set up in rented yards, originally built for residential purposes around a *lelwapa*, or even in the founder's own *lelwapa* – particularly at the start of new programmes. To many centre coordinators, these were key measures in helping the children they served feel 'at home'.[1]

The NGO's layout was reminiscent of the *gae* in other ways, too. Tsholo's tour took us to affiliated income-generation projects and building sites that bore a geographical relationship to the centre not unlike the relationship between the lands, cattle post, and the anchoring *lelwapa*. All, notably, were sites where NGO staff and clients might be based (or 'stay'), among which they would frequently be called and sent, and where they might be seen to be doing care work (cooking, for example, gardening, building, or looking after children) – characteristics that echo those of the *gae*. Indeed, as in Tsholo's case, many NGOs were managed by couples; frequently their children were in attendance and extended kin were tapped to help with the day-to-day running of the project, making the spatial work undertaken by the NGO a sort of extension of their familial movements. As well as being actively engaged in building at the centre's main site, these projects frequently undertook building for clients, such as the young girl Tsholo described above – creating room for their self-making projects while binding them in new ways to the NGO itself.

---

[1] Government social work offices that oversaw the licensing of preschools often resisted this conflation of school and personal *lelwapa* as inappropriate, in line with the detailed policy and licensing guidance available for preschools and places of safety. Orphan care centres had no such clear-cut guidelines, however, and many took advantage of the perceived urgency of orphan care to make cases for a range of alternative set-ups.

But there are, of course, clear distinctions to be made. Agencies in which children and staff are resident full time are comparatively uncommon in Botswana, and residential orphan care has been scrupulously avoided in government policy responses to AIDS (although the few institutional places of safety offered by NGOs and government are becoming oversubscribed, with many social workers suggesting that more such institutions are required). The patterns of movement undertaken by agencies also differ sharply from those undertaken by kin, especially in terms of their direction. As we have seen, kin move more or less constantly among the spaces of the *gae* in ways that gravitate centripetally around the *lelwapa*. Tsholo's movement among the NGO's sites also mimicked this directionality. However, NGOs and S&CD both specialise in moving their clients outwards, or centrifugally, in directions expanding away from the family *gae* and the pseudo-*gae* of the centre – a directionality key to their agendas of social change. NGOs that take children out on therapeutic retreats are an obvious example of this tendency, but trips to events and workshops, or social worker subsidies for transport to school, follow the same pattern. Referrals to additional NGOs or government offices, which constantly expand a client's responsibilities for movement, are another onerous dimension of this tendency. These movements rarely take in the *lelwapa* of clients at all – unless, as in the case above, it has been built by the NGO for them, often away from the client's *gae*.

This apparent avoidance distinguishes government and NGOs not only from kin but also from neighbours and friends, for whom visiting is critical to maintaining relationships. It was not uncommon for Batswana to reflect disparagingly on both NGOs and social workers in these terms, complaining that they stay in their offices or are always away at workshops and events when they should be moving around the village (a topic we will return to again in Part V). To some extent, the types and directions of movement undertaken by agencies are reminiscent both of the problematic aimlessness of 'going up and down' and of building: they involve moving and drawing others away from the familial *lelwapa*, partly as a means of establishing and entrenching an alternative base. In both ways, distance is continuously produced and becomes a defining spatial characteristic of the relationship between agencies, clients, and their families. In turn, this extending distance unsettles the careful balance Tswana families manage between closeness and distance.

But perhaps the critical spatial features of both NGOs and government offices are the boundaries they establish and destabilise. Like every yard, shop, or business, both government offices and NGOs were marked off with fences and gates, some of them quite intimidating. But these

agencies also created bureaucratic boundaries: one could not access them without appropriate referrals, without proof of claims (in appropriate paperwork), without registering, without waiting and often being turned back, and in some cases without being accompanied by appropriate advocates. Even once these requirements had been met, access was controlled: children's family members were seldom allowed in past the office of the orphan care centre, except for invitation-only special events; they would not be taken along on the children's retreat camps, nor see the offices of the NGOs that ran them. The boundaries of each of these agencies, then, created differential claims of access that distinguished them from each other, and from the families they served. Combined with their centrifugal tendencies, these spatial practices mark a gradual inversion: the NGO becomes increasingly exclusive and the family *lelwapa* increasingly accessible to a new range of agencies and institutions, the boundaries between them blurred and realigned.

Of course, homes also have boundaries: fence lines at the edge of the yard, the low wall that distinguishes the *lelwapa*, the walls of the house that define spaces of sleeping, bathing, and intimacy. And each boundary works to exclude specific groups: suitors may not pass beyond the yard's fence; visitors must announce themselves when entering the *lelwapa* and will not usually pass beyond it; and the interior spaces of the house are reserved for immediate family, close friends, and occasionally neighbours, with the bedrooms of adults usually off limits even to these. In this sense, we might see the boundary-making work of NGOs and government offices – like others of their spatial practices – as a process of creating a similar, but alternative, family-like space by establishing both alternative sorts of boundaries and alternative patterns of movement. And that may be one reason why the appearance of the girl's unexpected family in her new house seemed transgressive to Tsholo, much as our appearance in the yard seemed to be transgressive for her family.

Limiting access to these alternative spaces has profound implications for the relationship of family to organisation, and for relationships within the family as well. In Chapter 1, as we listened to Tefo's beating, Boipelo made an important point in this regard. Tefo's mother had left the door open, enabling the entire family to enter, should it prove necessary. While no one went in, the fact that anyone *could* enter held her accountable and kept Tefo safe. In other words, it kept the beating within the family's sphere of access and therefore subject to its oversight – and to its ethical reflexivity as well. Where the family cannot enter – or where one member of the family can, as a client, and the others cannot (or their rights are suspect, as in the case of the NGO house above) – its relations

of authority and responsibility are challenged, even potentially suspended. Notably, as in the case of Lorato's house, the threat posed is to intergenerational relationships: a child who can move freely in and out of an orphan care centre, or even a house built on her behalf, supplants a parent who must wait to be called or invited to enter, generating new freedoms of movement for the former and new constraints on the latter. As we have seen in Chapters 1 and 2, these inversions threaten new *dikgang* – a likelihood already apparent in the simmering mutual suspicion I noticed on Tsholo's tour to her client's newly built house.

Places of intervention also lack the integration – either with one another or with the *malwapa* of their clients – that is characteristic of the *gae*; they are arguably characterised more by their fragmentation. Of course, government social work offices and NGO programmes are not necessarily intended to integrate with one another, or with the homes of families they serve; while this fragmentation may distinguish them, it is unsurprising. At the same time, the spatialities of the *gae* and of intervention are not simply distinct. The similarities that intervention spatialities bear to kin spatialities link the two, enough for the fragmentation of intervention practices to disrupt the spatial practices and integration of the *gae*. During my time in Dithaba, children and teenagers returning home from the orphan care centre frequently chose to take their friends halfway, to stop and hang about on the train tracks, or to go off for illicit meetings, not returning until after dark. The centre, already shut, took no responsibility for these situations (and it could hardly track 70 children across the village in any case); the families, uncertain whether special events at the centre might be taking place and whether their children had or hadn't been sent home, did not know when to expect them. Arguments became frequent between the adults at home and the children dallying en route: about missed chores, unwashed school uniforms, missed meals, their unavailability, and undesirable goings up and down. Children resisted and avoided these confrontations, spending even more time away, adeptly deploying the sheer variety of possible excuses to do so (Dahl 2009a). They developed a reputation in the village for being children who didn't listen (*ga ba utlwe*),[2] who were disrespectful, lazy, and contrary, and even for frequenting bars and being otherwise 'out of place'. They were closely watched and often beaten at school and at home accordingly. A cycle of worsening tension and conflict, of serious *dikgang*, emerged. While this situation was perhaps an extreme example,

---

[2] As one reviewer points out, this was a description often disparagingly attached to all children – but also perhaps more quickly deployed against children fostered into a home than those born there (a distinction we will return to in Part IV).

it demonstrates the risk such fragmented interventions present, in the proliferation of 'in-between' spaces they create – which compete with the anchoring 'in-betweenness' of the *lelwapa*.

Notably, the *dikgang* arising out of these situations were primarily intergenerational – much like the *dikgang* that attach to the familial management of space and time we saw in Chapters 1 and 2. And they were addressed in similar ways: with confrontations, beatings, and disparaging gossip. These *dikgang* were borne primarily by clients and their families, but also escaped them and spilled into broader concern, among neighbours, at schools, and in the village at large. As people reflected and speculated on the causes of these problems and what they meant about the children and their relations, the families' *dikgang* were compounded in ways they could neither control nor adequately engage. The organisations that had inadvertently generated these prolific *dikgang* and brought them into these wider discussions, however, were markedly absent from the processes of addressing them. While I saw NGO staff and volunteers reflect on and consider the undesirable aspects of their clients' behaviour among themselves, and even speak to the children about it, such discussions and reflections were generally not undertaken with families, nor in community venues. In NGO interpretations, the source of and responsibility for the issues at hand were invariably situated at home, among kin. Unlike Tefo's beating, Dipuo's illness, or Lorato's return home, the spatio-temporal *dikgang* produced by orphan care interventions presented no obvious means of management. The new risk they represented was not simply a matter of people being in the wrong places at the wrong times, or being unavailable to be moved as they should (although it included these things as well); it was produced in the assertion of a spatiality that competes with and disrupts that of the family, simultaneously exposing it to intense scrutiny and ethical assessment on the part of others, and isolating it from engagement in those processes in ways that might address the issues involved. And, as we saw in Chapters 1 and 2, these exacerbated *dikgang* carry the threat of particularly dire consequences for intergenerational relationships – the very relationships that orphan care interventions are designed to reinforce for children who have lost parents to AIDS.

Conclusion: Part I

In reflecting on 'housing activities' and the emplacement of sentiment, Klaits offers a pithy explication of the double meaning implicit in the greeting '*Le kae*?' or '*O kae*?' (lit. Where are you?): '*where you are* affects *how you are*, both in terms of your relationships to others, and … your physical well-being' (Klaits 2010: 120, emphasis in original). To this observation, I would add that the questions that often follow and that head this Part – *O tswa kae*?, *O ya kae*? (Where are you from?, Where are you going?) – not only suggest the Tswana proclivity for constant movement, but are also a sort of shorthand assessment of relationships to home and family, and of progress in making-for-oneself, of which stayings and movements are emblematic. Both are subject to constant negotiation and significant uncertainty, and both perpetually produce *dikgang* – the management of which involves striking the right balance between closeness and distance, mobility and presence, scatteredness and integration, delimiting and ensuring both the coherence of intergenerational relationships over time and the possibility of independent personhood in the process.

AIDS – an epidemic in which movement, closeness, and distance have taken on pathological dimensions – might be understood as just this sort of *kgang*, suggesting that long-standing practices of managing space among kin might be better suited to dealing with the epidemic than popularly assumed. However, to the extent that government and nongovernmental responses to the epidemic have misread the dangers in kinship spatialities – and have introduced new spatial logics and practices that invert and transgress them, on new timelines – their coping potential has been unintentionally undermined.

Of course, the ways in which families and intervening agencies manage space over time are not the only ways in which they negotiate their relationships. As Dipuo's example suggests, the work one is doing and the things one is contributing or withholding, in the places in which one stays and among which one moves, have similarly fraught and contradictory implications for both kinship and personhood. In Part II, I examine Tswana practices and understandings of care in terms of contribution,

87

the *dikgang* they generate, their implications for kinship and self-making, and the effects on these dynamics of AIDS-era programmes and interventions.

<div align="center">★★★</div>

INTERLUDE: EAR WIGGLE

'Koreen, *mpona*,' insisted Thabo, tugging at my arm. We were both sitting on our heels in the sparse shade of a brambly bush, taking a rest. Around us, the children continued digging, shovelling the loose river sand into buckets and hauling it up to the truck. The sun blazed and the sand was hot on our bare feet; but below its surface it held the cool, moist memory of the river. Frogs exposed by the children's shovels tried to wriggle deeper into the riverbed or else shook themselves and hopped past us into the deeper shade, granular in their coats of sand.

'Koreen! *Mpona*!' When I finally turned to look at him, Thabo was wearing his characteristically serious expression. It gave him an uncanny air of wisdom for a six-year-old. Still, I couldn't tell what he wanted me to see.

'What am I looking at, *kgaitsadi*?' I asked. I usually called him 'brother', although he found the term a bit dubious and would furrow his eyebrows at me when I did.

'Look!' he repeated, impatiently, turning his head sideways just a notch. I realised his ears were moving, wiggling back and forth. He kept his face still but watched me carefully from the corner of his eye, waiting for a reaction.

I laughed with delight and pointed at his ears, unsure how to say 'wiggling' in Setswana. He cracked a mischievous, satisfied smile in response, still wiggling his ears. 'Now you watch me!' I said, doffing my broad hat and wiggling my ears as vigorously as I could.

Thabo's look changed back to one of total seriousness. He stood up and put his hands on the top of my head and over my eyebrows to make sure I wasn't cheating by wiggling some other part of my face. He had been showing his siblings this trick for days, and none of them had been able to replicate it. My ears kept wiggling.

Satisfied, Thabo sat back down on his heels and propped his chin on his hands, looking at me thoughtfully. 'So that's why I'm your brother,' he remarked, conclusively.

'Who Is Taking Care of Your Things?'
Care, Contribution, and Conflict in the Economies of Kinship

Kgetsi ya tsie e kgonwa ke go pataganelwa.

A full bag of locusts is gathered when everyone works together.

'If something like this happens, about something we agreed upon as a family, you don't just keep it to yourself. You call a meeting to hear everyone's opinion on the matter, because everyone has a part to play and we all have things that need to be taken care of,' insisted Kagiso, speaking quickly and earnestly. His voice carried across the yard.

It was a clear night in early winter, and the sky was thick with stars. All the adults at home were gathered around the fire, packed tightly into the *isong*, but it was hardly a convivial scene. Dipuo had recently come from the lands, and Mmapula had alerted him to a growing dispute between two of his sons, Modiri and Kagiso, over a herdsman who had been hired to help tend the cattle. Dipuo had called the two men and their sisters together. Resin seeping from the wood on the fire hissed and sparked inauspiciously, a sign of coming conflict.

'What I want to know is whether you have consulted Moagi,' Kagiso picked up from where he had left off. Moagi was the second-oldest brother after Modiri and lived on the other side of the country, although his son stayed at home in Dithaba. 'You cannot consult some siblings while others are left aside. We all stay here. And what about Tuelo?' he added, drawing in his youngest brother. 'Tomorrow, if Lorato isn't working, will you keep her out of these meetings because her contribution doesn't matter?' He swept his arm around the half-circle of his siblings, indicating each in turn, attempting to bring them all into the fray.

'Let's not talk about people who are not here,' his older brother Modiri deflected. 'Moagi stays far away. We can't stop this issue [*kgang*] because of him. If I see your cow straying I won't say it doesn't belong to me, I'll just take it back to the kraal.'

'Kagiso is just being difficult. He keeps saying he wants Moagi, but he can see he is not here. He should focus on what belongs to him,' asserted Dipuo.

89

'Is it me who's provoking this fight?' Kagiso challenged. 'You hired this man, but I don't know anything about him. I just want to know, has Moagi been informed?' Kagiso repeated.

Some months previously, the brothers had all agreed that it was time to hire a herdsman to look after their cattle. Modiri, the eldest, had borne the burden of the work up to that point; but as his small transport business began to get off the ground, it became difficult for him to spend extended periods at the cattle post. The cattle post was unfenced, and the cattle had a habit of wandering off if they were left for too long, making for several days' work in finding them. They needed regular attention. Most of the brothers were employed and could not pick up the slack – and none of them trusted the youngest, Tuelo, with the work, since he had lost the entire herd once before. A herdsman was the only sensible option.

After the brothers had taken the decision, Modiri identified and employed a herdsman on his own initiative. Since then, Modiri had been paying the man's modest wages and giving him food. He had become increasingly angry about his brothers' refusals to help. Kagiso took the position that he had not been consulted on the choice of herdsman, the amount of his wages, or the terms of his employment; and, in the absence of this proper consultation, he refused to contribute. It had become a *kgang*, and it quickly drew in a wide range of other *dikgang* the family had been grappling with – most of which concerned the balance to be struck between consulting one another and working together, on the one hand, and looking after individual interests, on the other.

'Kagiso, stop arguing. You are talking nonsense,' his mother Mmapula rejoined. 'A long time ago we all worked together [*re ne re dirisanya mmogo*]. Girls would look after cattle, not just boys. There were no disputes [*medumo*: lit. noise] like this. I am very disappointed…' Mmapula trailed off.

'I don't really understand where we are right now,' noted Lorato, entering cautiously into the fray. 'I feel like I've come into the middle of something. But I've observed that in this family we don't talk, we are scattered. When anyone wants something they do it on their own without consulting anyone. That's why you see everyone wanting to take what's theirs. There is nothing that belongs to all of us as a family. We don't work together [*tirisanyo mmogo*].'

'When these arguments started I took them lightly,' said Dipuo. 'I thought, as they are siblings [*bana ba motho*: lit. children of a person] they will resolve it on their own. I was just telling Modiri that for a long time you have not been talking through things together as a family. He said he doesn't like discussion [*puo*]. What ties do you have?' he mused rhetorically, the question damning in its simplicity.

'When Kagiso says he's buying food here, I thought someone would ask him if he knows about the cooking,' Modiri intervened. 'The pot is cooking at the cattle post,' he added, meaning both that the herdsman was being fed there and that the cattle were being taken care of. 'The problem is that someone has been buying food at the cattle post,' he said, indicating himself, 'while someone was buying for the village,' indicating Kagiso dismissively.

'Oratile, have you heard what your brother is saying?' asked Mmapula, trying to draw her daughters into the discussion.

'I hear him,' responded Oratile carefully. 'I won't say if he is wrong or not, but I feel it's not fair on others to contribute while others don't. Whether you work or not, if you have something that needs looking after, you have to take responsibility.' Her older sister, Kelebogile, gave her an arch look.

'This issue could have been resolved long ago,' Kagiso replied curtly. 'I also said if Tuelo was not here I won't sit for the talks. And here we are, he's not here.'

'Let's leave that issue – those who are not here will be told.' Dipuo was growing impatient. 'What kind of a person are you, Kagiso?' he added, provocatively.

'I want this issue to be over,' Kagiso answered simply. 'I don't have any problems. If this is how it is, I will just take my cattle.'

'Kagiso!' Mmapula was exasperated. 'If this issue finishes the way you want it to end, does that mean you'll just be there on your own?'

'I'm just taking my cows, but anything else that needs discussing as a family, I'll be part of it,' he replied, trying to sound nonchalant.

'No, if you've been used you've been used [*ga o jelwe o jelwe*: lit. if you've been eaten, you've been eaten],' Modiri interjected bitterly. 'This issue will never finish. Kagiso can take what belongs to him, it's no problem. I looked after his cattle; if that's how he thanks me, it's fine. Now he should just tell us when he is going to take what is his so that I can be there.'

'I'll tell you when I decide,' answered Kagiso evasively.

'And who will be taking care of your things? They're in my kraal, eating my food, being looked after by me. You want to take them, you should say when,' insisted Modiri. 'And the cow I gave him is not going any-where. I'm taking it back,' he added, becoming livid. He had gifted Kagiso a cow earlier in the year.

'No, don't do that,' their mother admonished him. 'He is your child, just give it to him. Tomorrow he will come back to you when things are not going well, leave him.'

Modiri snorted. 'I want to do my work,' he said, standing abruptly and stalking off into the night.

This section explores the Tswana understanding of care, or *tlhokomelo*, and the crucial role it plays in constituting both family and personhood, through the lens of contribution. I draw on the work of Frederick Klaits (2010; see also Livingston 2003a; 2005) to examine *tlhokomelo* in emic terms: as a sentiment that generates and is generated by specific material resources, and the work involved in producing, acquiring, and looking after those resources, or using them to look after others (see also Klaits 2010: 4–7). This combination of things, work, and sentiment is a critical means of cultivating mutuality (Sahlins 2013) and has powerful inter-subjective effects, including by building and evoking love and producing well-being in and through others' bodies (Klaits 2010: 4–7). It also poses significant risks, however: where care breaks down, threats of scorn and jealousy emerge, with intersubjective effects of their own – including illness and suffering (Klaits 2010; see also Durham 2002a: 159; Livingston 2005; 2008). The ways in which Tswana families in particular are bound up with one another are sharply affected by their management of work and senti-ment around the things that belong to them, individually and collectively.

Taking cues from the discussion above, and from other similar con-versations, I suggest that this collective management of care is under-taken and reflexively assessed in terms of an ethic of contribution. Kin roles set out expectations for these contributions, by gender and age; but, as we will see, contributions are subject to contestation and refusal, even revers-ibility, as well as continuous reflection, commentary, and reinterpretation – that is, to *dikgang* – which reshape and recalibrate those roles in turn. These contestations emerge most markedly among siblings, in the paradox of expectations that they should be simultaneously unified and separable, equal and hierarchical. Sibling *dikgang* are negotiated by deploying a fluid and multiple framing of generations and intergenerational relationships – demonstrating how 'sibling relations are significant in creating and sustain-ing ties across generations' (Alber et al. 2013a: 7) and over time. In this sense, contribution provides a novel perspective on the economies of kinship.

But there is a second dimension to these *dikgang*. The specific things, work, and sentiments that constitute care are divisible and bound up in broader economies of contribution that link kin to their wider commu-nities – which, in turn, are crucial contexts *go itirela*, to do or work for oneself (Alverson 1978: 133), make-for-oneself (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 141), or produce oneself as a social person (Durham 2007: 117).[1]

---

[1] Historically, Batswana explicitly differentiated between 'making oneself' – which connotes the risk of antisocial egocentrism – and 'making for oneself', which is a moral project that conceives of personhood as fundamentally relational (Comaroff and

To this end, the things, work, and sentiment that constitute care must be disarticulated and contributed to others, in different ways and in different configurations for colleagues, neighbours, friends, and partners – potentially or actually at the expense of one's natal family. Self-making involves 'negotiating a way through a series of overlapping and competing claims for the products of [one's] labour' (Townsend 1997: 419; see also Solway 2017b on striking this balance) in ways that change over the life course (Townsend 1997: 407), for both men and women, if in gendered ways. Agency, autonomy, and power are produced less by establishing independence than by creating, demonstrating, and carefully managing new forms of interdependence (Durham 1995; 2007; Ferguson 2013) – and by 'regenerating household and community interdependency' (Durham 2007: 103). These gestures signify the potential of care and, in time, they may build mutuality (especially with partners); or they may not, and their disarticulation may run the risk of scorn and jealousy. Navigating these possibilities generates *dikgang*, responses to which may involve drawing people into collective reflection on the sources and significance of their conflicts – thereby building relationships – or may require strategic avoidance and minimisation, thereby containing them. The dual imperative of family-making and making-for-oneself, and the dual claim made on contributions of care-linked work, things, and sentiment, means that care is continuously subject to uncertainty and contestation, reflexivity and reassessment – to *dikgang* – in families above all. In this sense, care is routinely in crisis; and the 'crisis of care' in terms of which the AIDS epidemic has been cast may represent a difference in degree more than a difference in kind, a heightening of stakes and a shift in symbolic terms more than an unprecedented event. Indeed, it may be that crisis – and the process of ethical reflexivity it enables and requires – is a defining characteristic of care.

Klaits describes a widespread discourse of doubt around the reliability of kin care in Botswana, and links it to a parallel concern with family breakdown (e.g. Klaits 2010: 1–3; see also Dahl 2009a; Durham 2000; 2004; 2007; Livingston 2005; 2008). Batswana frequently question, express concern, and even complain about kin care, and they actively recruit large networks beyond their natal families to supplement and expand their access to care. But these networks are seldom meant to – and seldom do – replace kin. Indeed, these alternative networks of care are often built on kin models or through existing kin networks (much like Mma Maipelo's church in Klaits' account), strengthening and

---

Comaroff 1987; 1991: 141) and connotes generating one's own social personhood, particularly through building wealth in people (Miers and Kopytoff 1977).

diversifying the ways in which kin can care for each other. Care, in its simultaneous orientation to creating relationships with others and to making the self, its potentially fraught intersubjectivity, its divisibility and indeterminacy, has friction and conflict built into it. Constant contestations around care signify the negotiated, creative continuity of kinship, rather than its breakdown. A discourse of doubt about kin care does not so much signify or portend the collapse of family, but rather facilitates reflection on who does and should provide what to whom and how, gauged in comparison to their relative ability and responsibility to do so. Complaints about the inadequate provision of care by kin preface claims or acts of *go itirela* and ground the establishment of care-building relationships that are necessary to that process. I suggest that the flash-points around care – the terms in which people most frequently cast the failures of family – are in fact the points where kin roles and relationships are most powerfully reasserted and most effectively recalibrated. And they are also the points where space is made for self-making, within the context of kinship.

Contribution

I frame this analysis in the terms most commonly used by Batswana, as we saw in the dispute above (which are also subtly evident in past anthropological accounts of Tswana economies; see Durham 2007; Townsend 1997): as *contributions*. Analytically speaking, *contributions* sit awkwardly – but productively – between and beyond the realms of gifting and exchange, being both and neither. I often heard 'contribution' used in English, and its roughly interchangeable counterparts in Setswana have similar connotations. *Seabe*, from the verb *go aba*, suggests something divided, shared, or given away (Matumo 1993: 348). *Dikatso* suggests things given in payment for services rendered or anticipated (ibid.: 34). Each of these terms connotes both a thing and an act; they accommodate and bridge objects and work. Like both gifts and money, contributions rely on other contributions and beget further contributions in their turn, giving them a cyclical, open-ended, continuous temporality and generative potential (though not, crucially, an indefinite or guaranteed continuity; cf. Graeber 2012: 100).

At the same time, contributions do not quite fit economies of reciprocity, whether of gifting, commodity exchange, or idealised forms of 'generalised reciprocity' (Sahlins 1972) – a notion, as many have noted, often stretched to cover interactions that are scarcely reciprocal at all. While Tswana contributors certainly anticipated various potential benefits from their contributions, they were not so much focused on getting a

return from what they put in, or even on who needed, was owed, or had received what; instead, they were focused on whether others were contributing in equal and sufficient proportion to their ability and responsibility to do so. And this was the case for contributions made at home, or to small-scale savings groups, or between lovers. Contributions were often fraught with *dikgang*, but conflicts were carefully controlled and linked more to the relationship in which the contribution was taking place than the fact of the contribution itself – a distinct difference from the poisonous, corrosive risks attached to the unreciprocated gift or the unpaid debt (Graeber 2012; James 2017; Parry 1989). As Thomas Widlok (2013) argues persuasively, models of reciprocity and gifting are essentially mirror images of market exchange, and they assume the same logics of transfer and value – thereby missing other key forms of acquiring, redistributing, and consuming resources. Much like Widlok's analysis of sharing, contribution makes room for the range of ways in which things and labour are drawn into, produced through, and moved or redistributed around families, owned and used both individually and jointly, addressing and creating shared needs. They cannot easily be reduced to a transactional or reciprocal logic, and they are governed by a rather different set of values and moral expectations.

And yet, among the Legaes and others I knew and worked with in Botswana, ethical questions about who was doing what for whom, and how, were seldom described or assessed in terms of sharing. To the extent that we might understand siblingship in terms of shared parentage, exchange, and experience (Alber et al. 2013a), economies of sharing are no doubt crucial to sibling relations of the sort this part examines. But *dikgang* such as the debate over the care of the cattle were almost exclusively framed in terms of contribution – in part, I suggest, because they were more unstable, contested, and significant to persons and relations alike. The conflicts that arise around household economies of care (see Durham 2007), in other words, are not so much the 'almost inevitable … other side of generational reciprocity' (Alber et al. 2008: 8) as a key means of assessing, collectively reflecting on, and in turn working to ensure and sustain an ethic of contribution. In this sense, contributions fit the Tswana moral logic of *tirisanyo mmogo*: doing, working, or making together. And they helpfully adapt the moral framework of exchange to incorporate both multiplicity and collectivity, making room for economies that produce both interdependence and independence at the same time.

As Deborah Durham notes (1995), models of reciprocity and exchange tend to assume that the figures engaged in such transactions pre-exist them as agentive, equal individuals (see also Graeber 2012: 122). But in Botswana, Durham argues, agentive individuals must be

created through acts such as asking, which constitute relations between them. Even transient, short-term, and apparently acquisitive transactions – in Jonathan Parry and Maurice Bloch's (1989) terms – may thus underpin long-term subjectivities necessary to the reproduction of the social order (Durham 1995: 126). I suggest that contribution does something similar: it, too, creates agentive individuals, but by demonstrating, performing, and delimiting intersubjectivity and interdependency – a 'richly social' sort of dependency, generative both of personhood and of social belonging (Ferguson 2013: 235). Of course, as we have seen, intersubjectivity is risky and must be carefully managed. One way in which the risk of intersubjectivity is contained in economies of contribution is by actively disentangling the things, work, and sentiment that together constitute care, withholding and diverting certain of those resources. Another is by avoiding and downplaying *dikgang*, and minimising opportunities for collective consideration of who has done what for whom, occasioned by conflict. We will see both tactics deployed in the chapters of this part.

Contribution, in other words, is never complete or total (symbolically or in practice): something is always held back. And what remains, whether it is kept for personal use, given away, or contributed elsewhere, is obscured and kept secret – making it subject to considerable uncertainty, conjecture, and suspicion. A history of contributions does not guarantee future contributions, and an imponderable array of factors might interrupt or waylay them, temporarily or permanently. Indeed, contributions may even be reversed – or, for those contributions that are irreversible (such as lay nursing care; see Klaits 2010; Livingston 2005), reinterpreted over time into something else. This holding back, obscuring, reversibility, and interpretability enables family members to retain the things, undertake the tasks, and build the relationships of their own that constitute making-for-oneself – a key means of managing 'competing claims, and an uncertain future' (as Townsend put it, for Tswana men in an era of labour migration; see Townsend 1997: 415), especially in rapidly changing political-economic contexts. It enables men to save money against the cost of brideprice and weddings, women to clothe their children and pay school fees, and both to provide gifts to lovers or to build houses, allowing obligations both within and beyond the family to be met (see also Durham 2004). For Batswana, not only is the separation between short-term and long-term transactional orders rather indistinct, but transformations from one to the other are often tenuous and partial; the structural and moral tensions between the two, and by extension between personhood and kinship, are therefore not so neatly resolved through those transformations (cf. Parry and Bloch 1989:

25; see also Durham 1995: 124). Like other tensions explored in this book, these are negotiated in practice through a continuous process of conflict and mediation, reflection and assessment – *dikgang*.

The framework of contribution, then, allows us to see the ways in which family economies are bound up in, impacted by, and distinguished from wider economies, and how individuals navigate these entangled exchanges to make for themselves. Drawing together everything from children's labour to migrants' remittances to parents, siblings, and future spouses, extending in turn to expectations of neighbours, community members, and leaders, contribution is key to intergenerational relationships both within the family and across the community (Durham 2004: 595–6; see also Townsend 1997), articulating links and limits between them. They are subject to a changing political economy and they make its effects evident, especially as they shift over the life course (Alber et al. 2008; see also Livingston 2007b; Townsend 1997). And they are imbued with a moral logic that is practised and revised in managing *dikgang*.

In Part II, I follow the ethnographic thread of a few key 'care things' as they are contributed in different contexts. As I have suggested above, the essence or 'thingness' of these things is less at issue than what people do with and through them, and the relationships that are thereby built around them (*pace* Heidegger 1971 [1950]; see Appadurai 1986). It is in this sense that things, the work they involve, and the sentiment they enact are mutually interdependent and subject to ethical evaluation. Much as the spaces and places of Part I took their relevance from how people used, built, and moved through them, things in this section take their meaning primarily from how they are acquired, distributed, used, looked after – and, of course, fought over.

There are several specific things that might provide apt threads to follow through the dynamics of care and contribution in making kin and making selves among the Tswana, but Batswana explicitly articulate the priority of some things over others. The dispute recounted above consistently returns to two of the most important: cattle and food. Others include clothes, household goods, and access to cars and cash. As it happens, these things coincide with the things prioritised by NGOs and government in their family support programming. In the stories that follow, I focus on these priorities; the economies of contribution into which they are drawn; the conflicts, or *dikgang*, they produce; and the implications of these dynamics for our understanding of care. In Chapter 4, I focus on the dynamics of contribution and conflict that emerge around cattle and food, primarily among siblings – establishing their unity and separability, their specific, gendered relationships to one another, and the highly fluid generational relationships that are

simultaneously equalising and hierarchical. In Chapter 5, I consider the contribution economies of making-for-oneself, their gendered and gendering dimensions, and their implications for kin care. Food and cattle reappear, alongside cars, cash, and household goods. Finally, in Chapter 6, I look at how government and NGO donations can be understood in the context of contribution economies, and the ways in which their attempts to address the epidemic's 'crisis of care' simultaneously resonate with families' needs and expectations, and unsettle key dimensions of kin care.

Bana ba motho ba kgaogana tlhogwana wa ntsi.
A person's children share even the head of a fly.

Maraganateng a bana ba mpa ga a tsenwe.
Conflicts among children of one womb are not intruded upon.

Cattle

Around 2 a.m., long, mournful cries started echoing from the far corner of the yard. I was used to the sounds of roosters crowing, donkeys braying, trains passing, and cowbells jangling through the night, but this sound – nasal, plaintive, almost childlike – was a new one.

'What *is* that?' I asked quietly, unsure whether any of the other girls in the room had awoken.

'*Haish*! *Ngwana wa ga Modiri*!' Lorato exclaimed with frustration, pulling a pillow over her head.

Modiri's child. Modiri didn't have a child. But the day before, he had arrived home from the cattle post with a doe-eyed, gangly calf. Its mother had died, and knowing it would not otherwise survive, Modiri had brought it home to rear it himself. As someone who had once liked to threaten the children with a *sjambok*, he had presented an anomalous figure, lifting the tangled calf gently out of the back of the truck, murmuring reassurance.

It was an especially harsh winter. A drought had been declared earlier that year and the cattle had little to eat, little to drink, and were getting mired in the mud of dried-up waterholes without the strength to pull themselves out. Modiri travelled between home and *moraka* (the cattle post) daily to help the herdsman, ferrying feed and medicine back and forth, and occasionally bringing home the carcass of a cow he had lost for cooking and curing. It was onerous work. But every evening, without fail, he carefully mixed milk and medicine into a two-litre glass soda bottle, attached a rubber nipple, and fed the calf by hand. It followed him around

when he was at home, nosing his hand or the pocket of his jeans – to which Modiri would react with mixed annoyance and indulgence. The rest of the time, the calf wobbled on its awkward legs freely around the yard, the boys keeping an eye on it and ensuring that the gates were closed so it couldn't wander off. At night Modiri closed it into the makeshift kraal in the corner of the yard. After the household had settled into silent slumber, it would start lowing pitifully.

Modiri was the first-born son of the family and his parents had given him a name popular among first-born boys: Modisaotsile – 'the herdsman has come'. The name was less a premonition than a prescription. 'Herdsman' described Modiri's position in the family, as if having defined his contribution to it from the outset. And it was a critical, powerful position. As in many other places in Africa, in Botswana cattle are a repository of wealth and are key to relationships within and between families, including 'of power and debt' (Durham 1995: 117). Cattle remain a fundamental component of *bogadi*, and siblings were historically 'cattle linked' in anticipation of this expense: the cattle a married sister brought into the family would be earmarked to enable the marriage of her linked brother, who would later bear special responsibilities to his sister's children as their *malome* or maternal uncle (Kuper 1975). Indeed, cattle have been so important that the practice of parallel cousin marriage – unusual in the region – was cast in terms of keeping a family's cattle together; Isaac Schapera cites the proverb, 'Child of my paternal uncle, marry me … so that the cattle should return to our kraal' (1940: 42). Cattle are contributed predominantly to family – to celebrate wedding feasts, initiations, and parties of all kinds; to mark funerals; and to make major purchases, such as for building houses. More rarely, they may be contributed to enable development projects; the University of Botswana was built partly from public contributions of cattle.

But cattle do not simply produce and define kinship structurally, by their exchange; they are also emblematic of care, both as objects of care and in the care they require. *Bogadi*, for example, is provided to recognise a family's contributions and care in successfully raising a marrying daughter; to transfer her responsibilities of contribution and care to her husband's family; to contribute towards her brothers' successful marriages and making-for-themselves (as they herd the cattle in their turn); and to link the two marrying families together so that they can continue to claim help and contributions from one another, especially through the couple's children. Having a boy who can assist in herding the

cattle – which is customarily, though not exclusively, the work of boys and men – eased the work of cattle herding and enabled the acquisition of a larger herd. The child's contribution enabled the family's expansion of wealth and kinship ties. And Modiri's assiduous fulfilment of his name's promise had just that effect. Calling Modiri's calf his child was partly playful, but it also recognised the contributions Modiri invested in the cattle, and put them on a par with parenting as a contribution critical to producing and reproducing the family. When his father, Dipuo, was away at the lands, Modiri acted and was treated as the head of the household – and this role partly conveyed, and was partly conveyed by, his responsibility for the cattle.

The cattle Modiri herded were not his alone, nor did they belong exclusively to his father. The old man had perhaps only one cow left; the rest belonged to Modiri and his younger brothers. When they were teenagers, they were each presented with one or two cows in recognition of their contributions to the care of the herd (a fact that embittered their eldest sister, Khumo, since she had also spent much of her time herding as a child but had received no such recompense). Gradually they had increased their stock, individually setting aside money – mostly from wage labour – to buy additional heads of cattle. The brothers' cattle all shared the same brand, however, and the same pattern of cuts and notches out of their ears; the brand was Dipuo's and marked both the cattle and the donkeys as belonging to the same family.

I was mystified how the men could tell their cattle apart. The older boys and their uncles could distinguish individual donkeys and cows by their hoofprints in the sand, having spent years responding to their habits and health and tracing them through the bush. But herding separately owned cattle together marked the men's contributions to the family and enabled contributions to events and projects that either extended the family or connected it with other families, producing a vast range of relationships in their wake. This cycle described both the men's movement into adulthood and a gradual generational transition, as cattle were contributed to boys who had contributed to their care, as their opportunities to contribute out of wage labour expanded, and as their responsibilities to contribute to others grew.

Much as they shared a brand, the adult brothers also shared the responsibility for the herd – although, just as they owned the cattle individually, their responsibilities to contribute were also individualised. All were expected to go to *moraka* (the cattle post) at the weekends, if

they were home; and each was expected to contribute to the cost of food, medicines, and a full-time herdsman who would mind the herd, in accordance with their relative incomes. These shared responsibilities asserted the adult men's siblingship. Of course, what they were each able to contribute differed depending on their individual circumstances (and their willingness to contribute); this differentiation indexed their relative influence and power in the family. Modiri's seniority was achieved by taking the lead role in cattle care – and it obliged him to take that role. Moagi's absence – he was in the army – meant that his contributions were limited to his holidays at home, when he was expected to be generous with his time and money. By the same token, he was somewhat distanced from the daily needs and concerns of the family, except when he was home. As Kagiso's success in business grew, and his capacity to contribute financially, so too did the respect he was shown at home, although the constraints that his work driving for a local NGO placed on his time at the cattle post had other effects (as we will see shortly). The fact that Tuelo had fewer cattle and unsteady work meant that his contribution was somewhat irregular and mostly in labour – which gave him a reputation at home for being unreliable. In other words, the brothers' shared responsibilities served to separate them as much as bind them together.

The ways in which cattle bind brothers to sisters, and enable sisters' making-for-themselves, also become evident if we think of them in terms of contribution. As well as contributing incidental work in the care of the cattle in girlhood, women have the potential to make perhaps the most substantial contributions of cattle to the family herd through their marriages. While binding spouses and their families in the idiom of care, these cattle also bind sisters to their brothers, whose self-making they enable and who bear an obligation to contribute to the ongoing care of their sisters' children in turn. The relationship established by this cycle of contribution binds siblings together in perpetuity through their marriages and children, which might otherwise be expected to divide them (cf. Kuper 1975). In other words, through contributions, siblings' separability becomes a source of their sustained togetherness; and both their difference and mutuality are established through contributions and care (Alber et al. 2013a: 12).

The tensions between siblings' unity and separability, equality and hierarchy, as well as between their ideal contributions and their actual ones, inevitably produce *dikgang*. In turn, these *dikgang* play an important role in calibrating sibling relationships. In the dispute with which

I opened this part, Modiri had been muttering for some time about his brothers' unwillingness to help him with the cattle, but he was especially fed up with Kagiso. Kagiso worked full time at a local NGO and was running three businesses on the side, each of which required a continuous investment of his time and money. But they represented work he was doing for himself, from which only he would benefit (like most young men, he had a significant amount of money to save up if he wanted to marry, much less build). He contributed a little here and there at home, but he seldom went out to the cattle post.

Kagiso was equally fed up with Modiri. Modiri had found and hired a herdsman without consulting his brothers on the costs involved, and without informing them about who he had chosen. Given Kagiso's gradually increasing wealth and social status – he was also becoming a preacher of some repute – he felt entitled to be consulted and taken seriously by his brother, as an equal. At the same time, he was keen to avoid bearing any further responsibility to contribute towards the cattle than he already did; he wanted to protect the solvency of his personal projects. Kagiso's growing sense of independence and success in making-for-himself gave him a certain entitlement to respect and authority – especially given that his elder brother, having not built, nor married, nor had children, may have seemed stalled by comparison. No doubt Kagiso's staunch apostolic leanings partly informed the value he attached to 'individual ownership, autonomy, [and] the value of assertiveness' (Klaits 2011: 208) in this respect. Kagiso's emphasis on the equality of siblings – his insistence that all of his brothers should be present for the discussion, that everyone should bear the responsibilities of contribution jointly – served this dual purpose of asserting an equality of authority with his brother while escaping the added responsibility to contribute that such authority and his growing wealth entailed.

However, his family's dismayed and frustrated response made clear that Kagiso's relative success made him neither equal in authority to his brother nor able to claim the lesser responsibility enjoyed by his other siblings. As Mmapula emphasised at the end of their discussion, Kagiso was not simply Modiri's younger brother but his child – emphasising Kagiso's failures to contribute the right things in the right amount and in the right places, and his unwillingness to recognise this responsibility, as well as Modiri's continuing right to claim his contributions. Kagiso bore a greater responsibility than his siblings to contribute care, in both resources and work, commensurate with his

ability to do so. Some adjustments had been made for his changing circumstances; but, if anything, his success underscored the imperative to contribute more, simply to *retain* his role. The dispute also made clear that contributions within the family were not interchangeable: specifically, for a man, bringing home groceries did not suffice in discharging his responsibilities to contribute at and through the cattle post. But perhaps above all, the family's concern was with how Kagiso assessed his own responsibilities, and against what ethical standards. Dipuo asked Kagiso what kind of a person he was, not just rhetorically but to underscore that, in mediating the *kgang* of the cattle, they were jointly reflecting on his assertions as ethical judgements and finding them questionable – thereby calling his moral personhood into question.

While Kagiso's threat to take his cattle was a stubborn attempt to reject this repositioning – reminiscent, in some ways, of an historical tendency among Batswana to abandon a chief they no longer agreed with (Wylie 1991) – in the end it was far more expense and labour than he would be able to bear alone. Like Lorato and her house, he was unable to mobilise the resources and relationships that such a separation would require. But, more than that, the cattle bound him to his siblings, and especially Modiri, in dense contributory economies with long histories on which he would continue to rely. The weekend after the discussion, he spent two days out at the cattle post, helping with the work of the herd. The climbdown from his threat highlighted the extent to which his selfhood relied on bearing his shifting responsibilities to contribute within the family, as much as his success in accumulating resources and relationships outside it, and on finding a balance between them. Kagiso was achieving success in making-for-himself, but the *kind* of person he was becoming was far from decided, and depended very much on his contributory relationships with his kin. At the same time, his volte-face demonstrated the extent to which conflict can *avert* schism, rather than simply producing it, thereby making room for both continuity and change in kinship relations.

As the dispute between Modiri and Kagiso suggests, contributions of care around cattle intersect with and rely on other contributions in their turn. Not just anyone can contribute just anything: certain people are required to contribute certain things based on their relative age and gender. Conflicts arising around these expectations work to fix specific responsibilities on specific people, regardless of changes in their circumstances; and, counterintuitively, they thereby work to avert major schisms, especially between siblings. Below, I explore these themes in the dynamics among women around food.

Figure 5 Winnowing sorghum.

Food

Manong a ja ka losika.

Vultures eat with their family.

I arrived home well after dark one evening, after a long day running errands in town. As I switched on the light in my room, a few of the children trickled over from the main house and flopped themselves on the bed.

'*Haish*! We are hungry!' Kenosi offered in a theatrical, significant tone. 'I like apples,' she added, in case I might have any.

I asked Lesego if anything had been cooked for dinner. At 13, Lesego was responsible for much of the preparation and serving of food at home. When her older cousin Tshepo[1] was around, they shared the job; very occasionally, one of the women – Kelebogile, myself, Lorato, or Oratile – took over for the evening. Every once in a while even Kagiso or Tuelo would whip something up. I had arrived home hungry, hoping I would find my plate full and covered in the kitchen as usually happened when any of us were away at mealtimes.

'*Aa-ee*!' Lesego responded, in a sassy, sardonic negative. '*Nna* I'm not cooking; I'm studying *akere*,' she added. She had notified everyone some weeks previously that her Standard Seven final exams were approaching, and that she would stop cooking so that she could study. It was a reasonable position to take: cooking for between 12 and 20 people was tremendously time-consuming, and Lesego often complained about it. (Learning to type on my laptop, her little sister Kenosi had picked out, 'Lesego cooks too much.')

I asked Lesego whether there was any food in the house. She shrugged, and so I headed to the kitchen to check, trailing the children behind me. Food was bought sporadically; more appeared at month end when everyone had been paid, but only the basics were resupplied throughout the month. Usually Kelebogile bore much of the expense on her own. Oratile, her younger sister, would contribute what she could, which was not much, considering that half of her salary went to pay transport to and from work. I often restocked mid-month. Kagiso would intermittently offer a few hundred pula (£30–£40) to help out, or would bring a few small boxes of vegetables from the small shop he ran. His brothers contributed very little: Modiri would replace tea or sugar when they ran low, and occasionally buy some fat cakes or a few loaves of bread; Tuelo ate at home, but I never saw him contribute for food. Moagi lived away,

---

[1] The daughter of her mother's older sister – *ngwana a mmamogolo*.

although his son stayed with us; he had bought a vehicle for his mother's use and occasionally made similar major contributions, but he excused himself from responsibility for the day-to-day running of the household. The upshot was that it was not uncommon to find the cupboards and fridge empty – in which case, dinner was sometimes forgone.

The rest of the children were sprawled out on the cement floor of the sitting room, watching TV, when we piled through to the kitchen. They followed, stretching and asking hopefully whether we were going to cook. I flipped on the light, and much to my surprise found various boxes and plastic bags on the countertop of the kitchen cupboard unit that stood by the stove. There were tomatoes, peppers, potatoes, maize meal, eggs, packets of soup mix, and seasoning – more than enough for a meal.

'Why has nobody cooked?' I asked. Kelebogile had been home all afternoon; Lorato had been home at least a couple of hours. The men were all home. The children looked at me.

It was already late, so I fried up a mess of eggs and vegetables for us to share. But the next night, I arrived home to the same situation. The same happened the night after that. Each time, there was food in the house – I supplemented it, just to be sure – and there were people at home who might have cooked, but no dinner was served.

The standoff continued for nearly three weeks. The perishables in the kitchen went off. We all grew hungry, cranky, and suspicious. Whispered recriminations flew thick and fast. Kelebogile was seen stashing half-pints of UHT milk and other food in her room, for the exclusive use of her son Tefo. Oratile arrived home one evening with chicken bologna and miniature yoghurts and asked if she could stash the 'food for *my* children', as she put it, in the small bar fridge in my room rather than in the main fridge in the house. The children made do with tea for breakfast and whatever was being served at school for lunch. When Tefo flaunted some takeaway chicken his mother had brought him one night, he was promptly thumped by Moagi's boy, Kopano (for which only I reprimanded them, unusually). Most nights we would go until 8 or 9 p.m. having eaten nothing. Eventually Modiri would call one of the children and send them to buy two loaves of bread so that we would have something to eat with tea.

I cooked a few times at the beginning; but because I routinely supplied half of the groceries, I too started questioning why I should do so, and I gradually stopped. Sometimes I would feed just the children, in my room, from whatever I had in my mini-fridge that didn't need cooking: beans, a tin of chakalaka (a spicy relish), apples, peanut butter. We might wait until there were only two or three of us at home to cook some eggs on the sly; or a few of us would buy something at the shop and go to eat it

somewhere the others wouldn't see us. '*Re ja jaaka magodu*,' one of the children observed on such a furtive eating mission: we eat like thieves. It was a sober reminder that our behaviour was profoundly antisocial and amounted to stealing the food out of one another's mouths.

Like contributions around cattle, the way in which family contribute food – and the work of cooking, or planting, tending, and harvesting it – tells us something about the demarcations of different kin roles by gender and generation. The female head of the household is often the most significant food provider, responsible for ploughing the fields, raising chicken and goats for slaughter, or buying the bulk of the food that needs to be bought. Other adult women in the home bear similar responsibilities, but to lesser degrees depending on their ability to contribute. The teenage girls of the family are primarily responsible for the work of cooking and serving. And, of course, these responsibilities are subject to rolling *dikgang* – especially as opportunities for younger women in education and employment have changed over time (Livingston 2007b).

Much as the brothers shared the responsibility to contribute to the care of the herd, the sisters shared the responsibility to contribute to the provision of food. And, likewise, their contributions were individualised according to their roles in the family, affecting those roles in turn. Kelebogile, being the eldest sister at home (and taking Mmapula's role when she was away at the lands), was primarily responsible for ensuring that there was food available and that someone would cook it; to the extent that she was successful in this role, she was respected as the female head of the household. When she disavowed this role – as she did during the time of the food feud – she was subject to suspicion and moral disapprobation, which motivated her to withdraw from contributing even further, in a sort of reversal of the contribution cycle we have seen. Oratile, being younger, was responsible in part for providing the food, but in greater part for ensuring that it was cooked – a responsibility borne on her behalf by her eldest daughter. Because of her absence for work, and the pittance she earned, Oratile was generally considered well meaning but still young in this regard. Lesego, however, was considered responsible and hard-working, having stepped capably into the role left her by her mother.

As with the men and their cattle, generational transition among the women was also marked by their respective contributions of care around food. More than once, I was called by Mmapula in the presence of one of the younger women and asked whether she should cook if Lorato, or Boipelo, or Tshepo were there. It was a rhetorical question – designed to remind the girls that their contribution was to cook, me that mine was to provide the food, and all of us that the old woman had a claim on our

contributions. Much as generational transition was marked among the men in the handover of cattle to boys who had contributed to their care, motivating further contributions and acquisitions, generational transition is marked among women by the gradual acquisition of care responsibilities: daughters take from their mothers first the responsibility to cook, then the responsibility to provide, then the responsibility to oversee both cooking and provision. Like the men, contributions among the female siblings served both to unite them through their shared responsibilities and to separate them as they met those responsibilities individually.

Contributions around food and feeding differ most from contributions around cattle in the ways that food differentiates between brothers and sisters, rather than binding them together. Men frequently feed themselves; the pot at the cattle post is both filled and cooked by them, and they will often buy themselves basic supplies even at home. Modiri was accustomed to buying his own sugar, tea, and bread, and Dipuo regularly bought himself food for the lands; both of them pointed out these facts in the course of the cattle debate. They may share these supplies in times of shortage, as Modiri did, but such gestures are understood more as a sharing of their own things than a sustained contribution they are expected to make. Indeed, casting such provisioning as a contribution is inappropriate – as Modiri insisted in Kagiso's case. This differentiation arises because food and feeding are responsibilities primarily borne by the women not simply as women, but as parents of children. When Oratile set out to chastise Tuelo one day for eating vast quantities of food without ever contributing, he replied simply, 'I don't care, I don't have children, do I?' While his contributions to the household economy were lacking in other respects, Tuelo did not acknowledge an obligation to contribute food – regardless of how much he was eating – because he didn't have children; indeed, he felt entitled to consideration as a child himself. Food does not figure critically in men's making-for-themselves the way it does for women; and it figures critically for women primarily because it performs and enables motherhood, the strengthening of their relationships with their children, and future claims on care (Livingston 2007b). Contributions, then, bind and individualise siblings, but also establish the priority of parent–child relationships over – and within – siblingship.

As the food feud dragged on, Oratile, Kelebogile, Lorato, and I made the two-hour trip out to visit Mmapula at the family's second lands. We chatted freely enough on the journey, although the tension of the past weeks stayed with us. Mmapula was visibly pleased to see us, having had little company for so long. Eagerly, she suggested we help her with some work in the fields, but no one jumped at the prospect and so she gave up.

After some chat about the children and others at home, I was surprised when the old woman turned and settled in her chair and said she had heard Oratile and Kelebogile were not getting along (*ga ba utlwane* – lit. were not hearing one another). I hadn't expected an intervention. The sisters straightened and readied themselves, however, as if they had come expressly for this purpose.

Each sister set out to give a measured account of what had been happening at home, but emotions quickly ran high. Oratile complained that her elder sister was treating Lesego and Kenosi harshly, describing the nasty comments Kelebogile was prone to making about their laziness or uselessness, or their mother's failure to look after them properly. Kelebogile complained of Oratile's scant contributions to the household, although she was working, and then turned on their mother as well. 'It started with you in 2009. If she can't contribute she tells you. But it's me looking after the household. Why can't she tell me?' Kelebogile spoke rapidly and with great annoyance, gesturing first at her mother and then at her sister, who was on the verge of tears.

The mutual recrimination continued for some time. Mmapula mused on both of her girls' behaviour, stretching back to childhood, with varying degrees of apparent relevance for the disagreement at hand. 'Kelebogile, you like things [*o rata dilo*] too much. These are things of Satan,' she added, referencing their shared faith. 'Oratile, you are too sensitive and cry too quickly; you need to stick up for yourself.' Quite suddenly, she leaned towards me and asked me what I thought should be done. I was at a loss.

'I don't know,' I responded with perplexity. 'Maybe we should figure out how much money we spend on food every month, and then everybody could contribute equally?' It was a naïve suggestion, but I knew the brothers were making decent money and were in the best position to help out.

Oratile crossed her arms and looked away wistfully. 'We can't ask Modiri, he looks after the cattle,' Kelebogile asserted. It was hard to argue the point: he spent a small fortune on the cattle, and this was already the subject of running dispute. 'What about the others?' I rejoined. They helped out occasionally with the cattle, but it was hardly an expense for them; and either they or their children ate at home. An expression of resignation passed across all three women's faces. There was an extended silence.

Mmapula sighed. 'Kelebogile,' she began, 'Oratile is your younger sister, her children are your children.' Kelebogile crossed her arms and looked sullen. Oratile's children recognised her as *nkuku* – the same title they used for their grandmother. Both Kelebogile and Mmapula bore the

responsibility of caring for the girls when Oratile was staying elsewhere for work, although Lesego – the eldest – did a lot of the actual work of looking after her little sister.

'You see what I'm saying. You're not children, you look after children,' the old woman said. 'I don't like too much discussion [*puo*],' she added, sitting up and putting her hands on her knees to end the conversation.

In the end, nothing changed. Kelebogile talked to me once or twice about trying to budget for our grocery expenses and asking her mother to speak to the men in the household about it, but it never happened. Perhaps we both suspected that either the old woman would refuse to make the request or that the men would refuse or be unable to respect it, which would only cause greater bitterness (Durham 1995: 123). It was only after Lesego had finished her exams and had begun cooking again that our dinners resumed.

The fluidity and multiplicity of generational roles emerged in the food feud among the women much as they had in the wrangling over cattle among the men. The egalitarian ethic of contribution is even more apparent in the conflation of mothers and daughters; Kelebogile reproached Oratile's children for their mother's failures, and took Lesego's refusal to cook as a reflection of Oratile's own refusal to contribute (see Livingston 2007b for similar intergenerational patterns of blame). And, much as Kagiso had, Kelebogile used this egalitarian ethic to try to limit the already onerous responsibilities placed on her. But, in the end, as their mother's intervention made clear, Kelebogile's seniority made her the girls' parent and also Oratile's parent, and so her responsibilities to contribute were greater. (Unlike Modiri, Kelebogile's claim over her sister's contributions was not reinforced by this hierarchisation, but I suggest that this difference arose only because Oratile had comparatively little to contribute.) As the silent dismissal of my naïve suggestion indicated, although siblings might be equals, an insistent egalitarianism can undermine claims on their contributions, and so the hierarchical differences in their responsibilities, usually framed in parent–child terms, is reasserted.

Finally, the food feud made the sharpness of gender distinctions in responsibilities to contribute especially clear. No matter how much the women were struggling to generate contributions sufficient to feed the family, men were not called upon. And no matter how expensive the cattle proved to be, the women were not asked to contribute to their ongoing care. Curiously, however, the men were carefully excluded from *dikgang* over food among the women, although the women were necessary players – if primarily as witnesses – in the *dikgang* over the cattle.

Framed differently, women contribute to the negotiation of *dikgang* among men about cattle, whereas men do not contribute to the negotiation of *dikgang* among women about food. Remembering that women are major potential contributors of cattle through their marriages, whereas men's contributions to the family's food and feeding carry no particular weight, this dynamic becomes clearer. The gendered ways in which siblings are engaged in *dikgang* mirror the contributions they make and that are expected of them. *Dikgang*, in other words, are microcosms of the contributory process, and they allow that process to be adapted to individuals' changing circumstances while reasserting a continuity in their complex relationships to one another.

Responsibilities to contribute care – and the conflicts they produce – define roles and relationships within family, both across and between generations, and also define generations themselves. On the one hand, siblings are ideally bound together as a cooperative group that shares those responsibilities, each contributing in accordance with their role and their capacity to do so, and relying on the contributions of others in kind. On the other hand, they are sharply separated and ranked by birth order, generally in the idiom of parent–child relationships. Greater responsibilities of care are borne by older siblings for their younger siblings and those siblings' children; their success or failure in meeting those expectations of care confers or withholds the moral seniority of parenthood in turn. In this sense, siblings' generational positions become multiple; they are potentially of the same and of different generations as one another, as their parents' generation, or as the generation of their siblings' children, depending on the order of their birth and the responsibilities in question. This multiplicity echoes and grounds many others, emphasising the ways in which persons are inevitably children as well as parents, in which one person may have three mothers, or children in other families, depending on the contributions they have made. At the same time, in all this multiplicity, it becomes clear that the critical relationship in terms of which kinship and care are understood is that of parent to child, and that siblingship is encompassed by parenthood.

The proverbs with which this chapter began neatly summarise these conclusions. Siblings share responsibilities to acquire and contribute; they hold and consume things jointly; they feast or suffer together. But the precept that they should share even the head of a fly does not guarantee their unity, much less their equivalency (*pace* Radcliffe-Brown 1950; 1971). The expectations attendant on this dictum are frequently disappointed, as each sibling, brother and sister alike, bears them differently and must meet them individually – while balancing them with attempts to establish a self, life, household, and family of his or her

own. Ideally, siblings are equal, united and together; but, at the same time, they, like their things, are ranked and separable (Alber et al. 2013a: 3). And yet, in making-for-themselves, and in the *dikgang* that ensue, important possibilities emerge for each sibling to access independence through one another – binding them together even as they individuate themselves. The second proverb nods to this paradox, taking as given that siblings are frequently in conflict, and implicitly condoning it as a necessary dimension of binding 'children of one womb' together as kin and as persons.

While demonstrating the ways in which things produce kin, the examples discussed above also demonstrate a concomitant dynamic. Things are held together, but owned separately; they are consumed together, but contributed separately. And, as a result, the work of care they require is cast simultaneously as a shared undertaking ('we were working as one') and an individual responsibility ('if you own something that needs care, you must take responsibility'). This tension can be traced to a deep tension in the things of care and the care of things: they are bound up in wider economies of contribution that are critical to self-making, as well as to kin relationships. With the women stashing food for their children, and the men purchasing and expending cattle independently, it becomes clear that contributions of the very things and work that produce family are also called upon in making-for-oneself – a question to which I turn next.

5 Taking What Belongs to You

Dilo makwati di kwatabolotswa mo go ba bangwe.

Things are like bark, they are stripped off from others.

I Am a Man: Tuelo's Outburst

I awoke suddenly, to the sound of Lesego screaming.

At first I imagined that she was laughing while getting ready for school. But then I recognised a note of panic, and then that she was calling for her *malome*, and finally that it was still pitch dark. I was out into the *lelwapa* even before I was entirely awake, and somehow everyone else was also there already, in shorts and nightshirts and hastily grabbed blankets. It was four in the morning.

The first thing that came into focus was Tuelo striding across the *lelwapa* away from the house, dressed in his bright blue overalls and scowling furiously. The next was the loose brick he had picked up and hurled back at the house with ruthless accuracy, smashing the sitting room window.

From the doorway, Modiri, the eldest, was yelling insults. Oratile was holding him there and trying to calm him down. Tuelo strode back and forth at the edge of the *lelwapa*, yelling '*Ga ke tshabe ope*!!' – I am not afraid of anyone (also, as I was told later, 'I respect no one' – a statement of profound contempt). Kelebogile said something under her breath that struck a note of concern about the cars, near which Tuelo was prowling as if looking for more missiles.

Tuelo moved threateningly back towards the house, and suddenly Kagiso came out to intercept him. Kagiso was thin and reedy in his boxer shorts, but somehow more imposing than usual. He caught Tuelo by his collar with a straight, firm arm and started slapping him on the side of his head. 'Who do you think you are?!' he yelled repeatedly, clobbering Tuelo each time. 'Do you know who I am?!' I had never seen so much as a violent gesture from Kagiso before – the cheery, implacable

114

evangelist of the family. In the grip of his older brother, Tuelo had begun to cower, pulling his arms up near his head and trying to duck the blows. 'It's him!! He was beating me! Look what he did to my head!' he began to bleat, blaming Modiri for having provoked the incident.

Kagiso wrangled Tuelo back into the house, the latter shouting about a long string of injustices he had suffered at the hands of his older brothers: being denied access to their cars, being made to work without pay, having his cattle taken from him unfairly. He vowed to set up his own cattle post and build his own house – insisting, '*Nna ke monna*!!' (I am a man) – as Kagiso wrestled him into his bed. When the complaints began to repeat themselves, Kagiso instructed him simply, '*Robala*! *Robala, monna*' (Sleep! Sleep, man). Tuelo refused, but Kagiso held him in place until his diatribe gradually began to fade, and he dozed off.

Meanwhile, most of the women from the yard across the road had arrived in the *lelwapa*, their blankets secured round their chests. They began telling us about Tuelo's comings and goings: they had seen him leave with the vehicle late the night before, drunk, insulting them as he went. When he finally returned, Modiri had asked where he had been. Tuelo had refused to tell him and insulted him for asking. We all shook our heads at the familiar patterns of Tuelo's drunkenness and violence, although much of the remonstrating focused on his stupidity: why had he stayed out so late with the truck, knowing that Modiri would have to use it to go to the cattle post early in the morning? Why not bring it back earlier? There had been a clear way to avoid the incident, but Tuelo – because he is stubborn and 'doesn't listen' (*ga o utlwe*), they suggested – had provoked it.

It was neither the first nor the last time that Tuelo created such a scene, although it was one of the worst. Generally, the incidents revolved around a borrowed car, alcohol, and month's end – when everyone had been paid, and young men in particular were spending the proceeds of their labour at lightning speed. Month end was a rare opportunity for young men in particular to extend their influence in their friendships and relationships, and they took to it with gusto: buying phone units or gifts for prospective girlfriends, treating friends to drinks or helping them with loans, as well as buying clothes, shoes, watches, or other highly visible items for themselves – seeking and 'achiev[ing] esteem through immediate and conspicuous consumption' (Gulbrandsen 1986: 15; see also Durham 2007; Suggs 2001), and enabling the conspicuous consumption of others. As our builder and neighbour Rra Ditau explained, 'Tuelo only cares about friends and women right now.' Often, the incidents he provoked involved the theft of any cash in the house. The very next morning – once his older brothers were gone, and as the rest of us

prepared to attend a big community event – Tuelo aggressively threatened his mother until she handed over money he had asked her to hold for him, and then he took some of hers as well.

A couple of mornings later, in the bright early morning light, Mmapula rapped on the bedroom door and announced, '*Re tsena mo kgang ya Tuelo*' – we're getting into Tuelo's issue. Modiri was away at the cattle post and Kelebogile refused to come, but the rest of us congregated in the living room, perched awkwardly on the furniture and trying to avoid the seat on which shards of broken glass and a brick still lay. Tuelo was seated across from his father, scowling. The tale of the explosive night was first summarised by Dipuo, then retold at his invitation by Mmapula and Kagiso (the rest of us declined, although we were also invited to give our accounts). Several times Tuelo tried to interject, revisiting his complaints from that night, only to be silenced by his father.

Satisfied with our collective narrative of the event, Dipuo launched into his judgement. He dwelt mostly on the inappropriateness of insulting one's eldest brother, tantamount to insulting the old man himself. Mid-speech, Tuelo, furious, stood up and stormed out. No one stopped him. The old man wondered aloud, primarily to his wife, what they could do with someone so stubborn, who had no respect. After a pause, he concluded, '*Re tla bitsa bo malome*' – we'll call the uncles.[1] No mention was made of the broken window, the car, the alcohol, the cattle, or any of the other things the original dispute had seemed to be about. We disbanded.

'The uncles' were notified, but they never came. Their having been called hung like an ominous cloud over Tuelo for a while, but, as the weeks passed and the meeting did not happen, the threat dissipated. He calmed, was more conscientiously helpful at home, and began working for Kagiso in his shop.

Tuelo, I suggest, ran foul of his family by trying to assert himself as a man through his brothers' things. Kagiso's repeated question to Tuelo – who he thought he was, drawn into comparison with who Kagiso was – made this painfully clear: Tuelo was not a man, he was a younger brother, and in this sense a child. He relied on his older brothers to borrow vehicles, for piece jobs to earn some cash, and even for their hand-me-down clothes. The things Tuelo relied on to assert his independence were often not his; the contributions he made to friends and girlfriends were the repurposed contributions of others. His limited

---

[1] While Dipuo did not specify which uncles, he usually preferred to call the son of his late elder brother, one of the few potential 'uncles' who had married and was beholden to Dipuo for his help in achieving the marriage.

access to these things made it difficult for him to extend them to others, and thereby form relationships through them. At the same time, he frequently failed to undertake the work of care these things (or other things for which he bore responsibility) required. He had a passable basic knowledge of mechanics, but he couldn't pay for or fix the more complex problems that arose constantly with the vehicles; he refused to undertake yard work without payment; and he had even managed to lose much of the family herd – eventually recovering most, but not all, of the cattle. These failures further disrupted his claim on his brothers' things – and, indeed, on any things of his own. They also meant that Tuelo's ability to contribute was limited and highly suspect, subject to widespread doubt – as the neighbours' input above demonstrated – frustrating his ability to build relationships and assert personhood in turn. If, as Deborah Durham notes, 'the "power" of being a young person lies in one's ability to contribute to relations of caring for others within the family and, through activities associated specifically with youth, to extend those relations with other groups beyond the family, including lovers and future spouses' (Durham 2007: 103), Tuelo's failure to contribute to caring relations at home foreclosed his ability to extend those relations elsewhere, and to self-make through them.

Tuelo's example demonstrates the extent to which the acquisition of things is necessary, but not sufficient for self-making – especially when those things are simply taken or borrowed from others. Neither a gift nor a contribution can meaningfully be made from a theft or a loan. Indeed, part of what makes a contribution of cash or clothes meaningful, or valuable, is that it comes from a limited resource that should or could have been contributed elsewhere. In this sense, making-for-oneself is not simply centrifugal, constantly pulling away from kinship; rather, it relies on the context and counterpoint of kinship for its validation and significance.

That volatile morning, Tuelo lashed out against the constraints that his own lack of things placed on his ability to make-for-himself. In some ways, he was trying to make a break (and he succeeded, with the window at least, which went unmended for months). But drawing his family into conflict also had the opposite effect: it reasserted both their responsibility for him and his dependence on them, especially as it concerned his older brothers. It was partly through engaging this responsibility, I suggest, that he was able to acquire paid work from Kagiso and was not asked to fix the window or make good on the money he had stolen. The fact that the incident was never entirely resolved also effectively acknowledged and left room for Tuelo's claims to independence. More than simply allowing kinship to reassert itself, then, *dikgang* also allow family to respond to and

enable the changing circumstances, growth, and gradual independence of its members.

Women's Things: *Motshelo*

'*Owai*!' Khumo exclaimed with annoyance, hurrying past me to check the meat on the grill. 'They haven't brought food, they haven't brought money,' she added, shaking her head.

It was a Sunday afternoon, the day of Khumo's grocery party. Her *motshelo* group – a small-scale savings concern in which she participated with five other women, including her younger sister Kelebogile – met for such events monthly, its members taking turns to host.[2] They usually met on Sunday afternoons, at the beginning of the month. By then everyone had been paid, but other standing debts had not yet finished off the money; clashes with Saturday weddings and funerals were avoided; and, by the afternoon, all the housework and laundry had been finished and the women were free to visit one another's yards.

I was familiar with *metshelo* organised for household goods, building supplies, and even savings-and-loan schemes from my previous time in the village, but grocery parties introduced a twist that was new to me. They had clearly become a popular fixture; the women at home seemed to be attending someone's grocery party every other week. Every month, one member of the *motshelo* would send out invitations to the others, and to friends and neighbours associated with other *metshelo* as well. For core members of the *motshelo*, the invitation would specify an item or items of food of a previously agreed value – in Khumo's case, P125 (roughly £10), which was enough for a sizeable sack of rice, maize meal, or flour, or a few bottles of cooking oil. Thus, every month each member would spend P125 to supply someone else with food, but then one month she would receive food worth P725 (£50) in return. Additional invitees would be assigned a smaller item of food to bring, or a comparable amount of money, as a 'gate pass'. One might then be expected to be invited to their future grocery parties, and to contribute something of comparable value.

Other *metshelo* I knew involved regular meetings among members to gather and tally contributions, but grocery parties were fully fledged events. People who attended grocery parties expected to be fed – and fed well. We had spent much of the previous day sourcing meat, vegetables, drink, and sweets to serve the *motshelo* members and anticipated

---

[2] Older Batswana often called these groups *stokvel*, borrowing the widespread Afrikaans term from South Africa. Comparable arrangements are evident the world over (see Low 1995 for an exhaustive list).

guests. Khumo had had to bear a significant cost up front for these foodstuffs – borrowing from the rest of us at home to cover the expenditure.

'What if the amount of food Khumo gets is less than how much she spent?' I asked Lorato, who was helping me run errands on Khumo's behalf. With six children and a grandchild at home, Khumo struggled to make ends meet at the best of times.

'*Gareitse*,' Lorato answered, non-committally: we don't know. 'We prefer to save our money in people,' she added (an idiom Jane Guyer (1993) might have recognised from Equatorial Africa).

As we helped Khumo finish grilling the meat and preparing the meal, the *motshelo* members chatted behind the house in the spreading shade of an enormous acacia. A long table stood at the head of the impromptu ceremony, covered in a white tablecloth. A blue tarpaulin was laid on the ground in front of the table, folded neatly, the contributed foodstuffs arrayed upon it. It was a substantial amount of food: ten-kilogram bags of maize meal, macaroni, and flour were stacked, each in their own piles, with smaller bags of sugar and jugs of oil and condiments lined up beside them. At right angles to the table, the *motshelo* members sat ranged in two lines on chairs acquired through another *motshelo* in which Kelebogile participated. Kelebogile had carefully registered everything in a ruled exercise book, alongside the names of the contributors, and had just finished reciting every contribution to the ululations and applause of the gathered members.

Neighbours and other invited guests who were not members of the *motshelo* trickled into the yard over the rest of the afternoon, helping themselves to meat and salads, many without having brought anything to contribute. Standing by the grill, we made rough calculations and figured that Khumo was probably running at a loss. At this, her daughter Boipelo – with her own infant child on her hip – became thoroughly annoyed. 'What's the point of *motshelo* if it costs you more money than you get? Why not just use your own money to buy your own food?' She tsked to herself, hoicking the baby up to redistribute her weight.

Not all *motshelo* groups ran such events. Indeed, once everyone in Khumo's *motshelo* group had hosted their own grocery party, the decision was made to simplify things. After I joined the *motshelo*, we would simply meet in the yard of that month's host for a drink and some simple snacks, to ensure that all payments had been made, collected, tabulated, and appreciated. Where there had been covered tables, ceremony, and ululations, now there were chairs pulled into a circle in the *lelwapa* and informal chat (mostly about the *motshelo* itself). Kelebogile even hosted

the group in her pink polka-dot pyjamas, a hat thrown absent-mindedly over her uncoiffed hair.

Not all *metshelo* focused on food, either. Kelebogile and Mmapula belonged to a *motshelo* in which each member bought four chairs for the main recipient each month. *Metshelo* were organised for dishes, cookware, furniture, and even building supplies. Occasionally recipients simply pooled money; in the *motshelo* I joined, we each contributed P150 (£12) to the main recipient each month. Often they were set up on a savings-and-loan basis: each member would contribute a certain amount up front, from which pool loans would be offered either to other *motshelo* members or to friends, neighbours, and family, usually at steep interest rates of 10–30 per cent (see James 2012 for South African corollaries to this practice). The interest would then be divided equally. Savings-and-loan *metshelo* were often kept close: Kelebogile, Oratile, Lorato, and Khumo ran one for a while, as did another friend of mine in concert with her siblings.

Above all, in Dithaba, *metshelo* were women's initiatives. While men might, in principle, have a *motshelo* of their own, these were rare. But every woman in the yard with access to even small amounts of money belonged to at least one *motshelo*, and often several; at one point, Kelebogile belonged to no fewer than eight. Most *metshelo* comprised a cross-section of women linked through family, neighbourhood, work, or friendship; they were often intergenerational, although many explicitly preferred to join with *bagolo* (elders) rather than *banyana* (girls). Many also nominally included members' children, whose contributions were supplied by their mothers. And they were as common in the city as in the village: social workers I knew ran them together, and the young professional women running one major NGO in town had tables recording who was due to pay what to whom tacked to the walls behind their desks (this is a long-standing practice in South Africa's urban centres as well; see Kuper and Kaplan 1944; Verhoef 2001).

The things women bought with *motshelo* money or organised *metshelo* to acquire were seldom small-scale personal items like clothes, shoes, or toiletries: they were usually major purchases for the household. Attempting to illustrate the value of *metshelo* to me, Kelebogile noted that she had acquired the sitting room furniture, her wardrobe, 16 matching chairs, a set of good dishes, large pieces of enamel cookware, and various other items useful at home and for hosting parties. *Metshelo*, she explained, 'help to buy the things that we need at home'. But *motshelo* proceeds were also strategic, and answered to the participating women's sense of what was most needed. *Metshelo* grant women considerable autonomy – and also begin to establish their capacity to provision and

manage a household, an important dimension of making-for-themselves (Suggs 2001; see also James 2015).

Metshelo, in this sense, echo the contributory economies seen in the Legae household in Chapter 4. While in principle they looked like more straightforwardly reciprocal arrangements, carefully tabulated to ensure equivalence, the exchange never quite added up – nor was it expected to do so. Khumo's additional expenditure on feeding the *motshelo* group was not tabulated, but taken as the responsibility of a host. Indeed, when *motshelo* members failed to make their contributions, they faced no reprimand, nor were they chased for any debt. *Metshelo* were less about exchange or reciprocity than about contribution, circulation, and redistribution (Alverson 1978: 59). And those contributions could, and usually would, be contributed onwards, in cycles that could make both families and selves. They were frequently intergenerational, and they could strategically conflate parents and children. They enabled both an 'egalitarian mutuality' among contributors, shielded from capitalist imperatives, and opportunities for social mobility, provided by financialisation, which preserved distinctions, 'inequalities and dependencies' (James 2015: 1051) – not unlike the dynamics we saw among siblings in the accounts above.

But while savings groups have often been described as creating new and lasting ties of mutual support, particularly in an era of neoliberal capitalism (see, e.g., Carsten 1989 for Malaysia; James 2015; Krige 2015), in Botswana these ties were often highly attenuated and relied heavily on pre-existing relationships with neighbours, colleagues, or kin. They were also explicitly *not* kin-like ties – not even, uncannily, when they were conducted among family. The *metshelo* I knew of were often strikingly short-term, fluid, and transient. Most groups I knew lasted through one cycle of contributions – which might last for anywhere between a few months and a year, or perhaps two – and were then disbanded or reorganised. *Motshelo* contributions were seldom used or looked after by members collectively; the proceeds, like the contributions themselves, were explicitly attributed to and earmarked for separate members, and were consumed separately. Contributions therefore bound *motshelo* participants together in only limited ways. *Motshelo* contributions are not, after all, contributions of care; they are contributions of things, explicitly disentangled from the work and sentiment of care. And this disentanglement is one reason why they can be contributed onwards in turn, in gestures of kin-making and self-making.

Tellingly, *metshelo* in Dithaba – though prone to conflict – struggled to deal with *dikgang*. Kelebogile told me numerous stories of cheating treasurers and defaulting members, and the risk of potential loss is ever

present in savings groups, especially in contexts of tenuous employment (James 2015). In Kelebogile's examples, offenders were either privately approached or quietly excluded, or the *motshelo* itself was left to lapse. In worst-case scenarios, the *kgotla* might be involved, but that eventuality was vanishingly rare. Just as the negotiation of *dikgang* is productive of kin relationships, I suggest that the near total absence of collective reflection, discussion, and negotiation of *dikgang* in *metshelo* indexes limits on the relationships it can produce. Notably, the riskiest of *motshelo* projects – making loans – is frequently undertaken only by siblings, who have recourse beyond the *motshelo* to other means of engaging *dikgang*.

Rather than establishing community among women or alternatives to kinship, *metshelo* contributions have another, equally critical, effect: they render accumulation for oneself moral, and they secure that accumulation from the expectations of one's natal family, in part by enabling additional, highly visible and strategic contributions to be made. If Kelebogile were contributing to eight *metshelo* every month, the resources promised to those groups were as good as spent and could not be claimed elsewhere. I could not understand how Kelebogile managed to sustain eight *metshelo* until I saw that they acted like a sort of investment that sheltered her available resources from the expectations of her family. *Metshelo* helped Kelebogile 'enclave' her resources, insulating them from the demands of kin and making them 'unavailable at the moment [but] never completely unavailable' (Durham 1995: 112; cf. Appadurai 1986: 22ff. on enclaving; cf. James 2015 for a comparable story among South African savings clubs). I do not mean to say that Kelebogile wasn't contributing to the family out of the proceeds of her *metshelo*; she was. But so long as she was involved in these groups, there were no expectations that she should contribute more at home – unlike the expectations levelled at Kagiso. This sheltering, I suggest, is made possible because those resources could be interpreted as facilitating further, significant contributions to the household, thereby ameliorating any suspicions about Kelebogile's ability or willingness to continue to contribute. Even if some of the things one acquired through *metshelo* were individually owned or intended for personal use – like Kelebogile's wardrobe or bedroom set – they were among other things available for household use, and could be cast as household contributions. And, in this sense, their accumulation was easily hidden and rendered irreproachable.

At the same time, Khumo's frustration demonstrates the difficulties of striking the right balance among contributions. One must be seen to contribute enough at home, but it is equally important not to contribute too much elsewhere; in both cases, it is critical to keep one's contributions in proportion to one's capacity and to the contributions being made

by others. A similar imperative was at work in the dispute between Kagiso and Modiri. But in the context of *metshelo* – where grudges and outright conflict are avoided, and where recourse is limited – it is one's own projects of making-for-oneself that suffer should that balance be upset. Over-contributing to *motshelo* attracts no moral approbation, but it risks the suspicion that one's ability and willingness to contribute at home will be compromised. The balance between what is contributed and what is kept – between saving in others and contributing to others, which *metshelo* enables – requires substantial practice and fine-tuning.

As we saw in Chapter 2, being able to establish a family and household, a *lelwapa*, of one's own is a critical means of making-for-oneself. But the things through which Batswana establish personhood, and families of their own, are subject to pre-existing claims from their natal households – which also figure powerfully in acquiring those things in the first place. Stocking things for oneself runs the risk of doing so at the expense of one's natal family, putting them at risk of insolvency and putting oneself at risk of moral turpitude. At the same time, contributing everything to one's natal family puts one's own self-making at risk, in part by sharply constraining one's ability to create relationships and a *lelwapa* of one's own. Much as the building of Lorato's house required her to find a balance between being away and being at home – a balance she was ultimately unable to strike – the acquisition and management of things such as food, cattle, cash, or cars require constant balancing work between having and contributing, and further balancing work in terms of what is contributed to whom. And the difficulties of that balancing work produce *dikgang* that families are constantly called upon to address, in ways that assert the family's stability while making room for its children to build independence.

Whether in friendships and relationships, *metshelo* or paid work, associations that stand beyond and between families have important implications for the acquisition of critical things and for the exercise of specific forms of work and sentiment, and therefore for the negotiation of both selfhood and kinship. Informal extrafamilial associations, which range from choirs and drama groups to burial societies, are a long-standing feature of Tswana communities. But they have proliferated and become formalised in new ways in response to AIDS: home-based care projects, support groups for people living with HIV, orphan care projects, and village- and district-level AIDS coordination committees have become a part of everyday village life. Framing the pandemic primarily as a 'crisis of care', the major concern of many of these organisations has been with the provision of some of the very things, work, and sentiment discussed above – either to replace, or to supplement, contributions lost by those

who have died. I turn next to a consideration of the sorts of contributions and care that NGOs and government agencies intervening in response to AIDS provide. I suggest that such 'supplemental care' programmes closely map the contribution economies of the household and of self-making described above. But in supplemental care, not only are care things disentangled from care work, they are disarticulated from their contributors. The effects of these dissociations disrupt kinship practice without enabling making-for-oneself, thereby provoking crises in some ways worse than those they aim to address.

6 Supplementary Care

Pono came struggling up the dusty road towards me, pushing a wobbling wheelbarrow piled high with sacks of maize meal, sugar, vegetables, and odd toiletries tucked in around the edges. I hollered to catch her attention, and she looked up, throwing me a cheeky grin. Shortly, she pulled up in front of me to rest. 'I'm from the shop,' she said breathlessly, omitting the other obvious detail: she had been sent to take her food basket.

I had known Pono since she was six years old, when I met her at the orphan care centre. We had been neighbours, and she and her little sister had visited my yard frequently. She was also a distant relation of Mmapula, their families both hailing from Maropeng. In her early teens, slight, bright, and precocious, she had a mischievous sense of humour and was wise beyond her years. I turned to accompany her home.

'Where's the old woman?' I asked, partly to hear how Pono's grandmother was doing, and partly hoping to avoid meeting her. Since before Pono's mother's death, her mother's mother had been somewhat infamous in the neighbourhood; in my company, she was prone to diatribes and discomfiting requests for money (see Durham 1995).

'She's at the shebeen, *akere*,' Pono answered, without missing a beat. Her grandmother was frequently drunk and often left the children locked out of the run-down brick house in which they lived while she was off drinking. Pono's grandmother did not work, and only infrequently ploughed; the household subsisted primarily on intermittent contributions from Pono's older sister, occasional gifts of food and clothes that came via the NGO, and the food basket Pono and her little sister received monthly from the government as registered orphans. Pono and her younger sister were often left to cook for themselves, wash their school uniforms, and otherwise look after the house and yard, even when I first knew them – which meant that many of the chores either didn't get done or were done haphazardly. At the NGO, we had been tasked occasionally with marching the girls in for a shower, or ensuring that they washed their uniforms at the centre; like the other children, they ate lunch and an early supper there. I had even been asked to administer and monitor a

125

prescription for Pono, since her grandmother was apt to forget. Pono was headstrong, quick to talk back, and acutely aware that she was the primary conduit for many of her family's resources.

'My older sister has moved,' Pono noted as we rolled into her grandmother's unfenced, rocky yard, thankfully empty. She fetched me a ramshackle chair. 'She's saying she wants to take me and my other sister to stay with her.' The older sister, Mpho, was only in Maropeng – the next village over, and the administrative centre of the district – but it was still some distance away. By then, Mpho had two children of her own, and neither she nor her boyfriend had regular employment. They were staying with Mpho's father's father, who was losing his sight. I asked Pono what she thought of the idea. '*Gakeitse*,' she said – I don't know. She shrugged. 'This old woman is saying my sister only wants the food basket. And she's asking, what is she going to eat if we go?'

Tumelo, the village social worker, seemed to share the old woman's scepticism. Pono described joint visits to Tumelo's office with her older sister and grandmother, and their fruitless attempts to negotiate a transfer of the girls' registration and food basket from Dithaba to Maropeng. Mpho would produce a litany of examples demonstrating her grandmother's neglectful behaviour; her grandmother would answer with a litany of examples demonstrating Mpho's greed and filial irresponsibility. From what I knew, both were probably accurate. Tumelo had asked Pono and her sister what they would prefer, but they had remained silent. 'What could I say?' she asked me, rhetorically; we both knew one situation could be as bad as the other, and that taking sides could provoke uncertain consequences.

I heard a few weeks later that Mpho had eventually just taken Pono and her sister to stay with her, hoping that the transfer of the food basket would be hastened when the social workers realised the change in residence was already a fait accompli. It was a misjudgement. The social workers refused, taking the incident as proof that Mpho was only after the girls' food basket and therefore did not have their best interests at heart. The girls remained registered in Dithaba at the same shop; but, in their absence, their grandmother could not fetch the monthly ration from the other side of the village, and so it went uncollected. It marked a major falling-out between Mpho and their grandmother, after which they refused to speak to one another, although the girls were allowed to visit the old woman from time to time.

The Department of Social Services introduced the food basket as its central response to the 'orphan crisis' in 1999, under the *Short Term Plan of Action on the Care of Orphans* (RoB 1999). Much to the chagrin of social work practitioners and policymakers alike, the plan was still the primary policy guide for the orphan care programme during my fieldwork in 2012. The food basket had been a source of endless consternation in the interim. The plan explicitly framed it as a contribution to the

entire family, to assist them in managing the additional burden of caring for an orphaned child in the absence of contributions that child's parent would have made. As such, it provided an ample amount of food – much more than a single person could eat in a month, and certainly more than many of the adults in the Legae household managed to contribute. Nutritionists had been involved in identifying a healthy range of foodstuffs. And yet the stories of the ways in which it had gone wrong were legion: grandmothers were rumoured to resell the staples in their tuckshops; greedy aunts were said to feed their own biological children while letting the orphaned children of their late siblings go without; or orphaned children were reported to have commandeered the baskets and refused to share them with anyone else in the household, cooking for themselves and insulting their grandparents into the bargain. Indeed, tales of food basket abuse by neglectful, selfish relatives or poorly socialised orphans were a sort of shorthand for the irreparable collapse of the Tswana family.

Perhaps partly because of these narratives, almost all of the NGOs I knew provided feeding programmes of some kind. In many cases, that was all they provided. Whether a lack of food was ever a serious issue for the orphans served by these projects was never fully established. Given that the children were fed at school as well as through the government's problematic food baskets, it seemed unlikely. As a Motswana colleague who worked for the American Embassy observed wryly one day: 'Botswana must have the fattest orphans in the world' (see similar commentary in Dahl 2014).

Food was not the only thing with which government and NGOs responding to the AIDS epidemic in Botswana provided their clients – although it was by far the most common. Clothes – donated outfits from NGOs or school uniforms from social workers – were also provided, as was cash support for school fees and transport. Household necessities such as blankets and mattresses were also favoured. But what was most striking was that all of these items were the very sorts of things that figured so strongly in the contribution economies of kin-making and making-for-oneself explored above. Their relative priority in families was largely mirrored in these programmes.

To the extent that AIDS has been framed as a crisis of care – with more people (the ill, dying, and orphaned) needing care, and fewer people to provide it – this parallel is deeply appropriate. To an extent, food *is* care, as are clothes and household goods; and both government and NGOs were attempting to make contributions where they believed those of parents had been lost. This gesture presented a 'way in' to the family, creating a pseudo-kin role for these agencies by dint of their contribution. The common habit of referring to orphaned children as *bana ba bomma-boipelego*, children of the social workers, or *bana ba diNGO*, children of the NGOs – much like calling the calf Modiri's child – seemed to

recognise the contribution made in terms of the parent–child relationship central to Tswana kinship.

But the ironic undertone of these expressions was equally telling. Although they may provide food for the family, social workers don't undertake the cooking or any of the other work of care that raising children or being family requires; nor do they undertake the work of producing the food itself. The same limitation generally applies to NGO donations to the home. The child recipients, in turn, are either unable to do the work that these things require, or they must do it for others who have not necessarily contributed towards it. Even if they are animated by the appropriate sentiment, then, food baskets and NGO donations are awkwardly estranged from the work that might make them expressions of care. And, as we have seen, this disarticulation of things, work, and sentiment not only disrupts care and its relationship-building potential, but also creates the risk of scorn and jealousy in its place. The teknonymic phrases noted above are often deployed when children are conducting themselves inappropriately at home; they serve to signify the children's growing distance from the family rather than the social worker's or NGO's inclusion. These contributions, in other words, only partially live up to their billing as supplemental care, and they do not serve to regenerate kin relationships in the way care ordinarily would. Instead, these contributions behave like poisonous gifts that cannot be reciprocated, and therefore threaten relationships (Durham 1995; Parry 1989). They are not generative – neither of future, additional contributions, nor of kin relationships as such.

This partiality does not entirely foreclose the possibility of care, however, as it leaves the source of the contribution open to reinterpretation. Government policy positions the food basket as a sort of replacement for a dead parent's contributions, for the use of the whole family (RoB 1999). But in the absence both of the dead parent and of the contributing institution, the contribution is delinked from a contributor. And it is open to claims – as a contribution – by those who cannot otherwise contribute to the extent expected of them. In this sense, it offers family members a potential means of asserting a new role for themselves in their families, and a new means of making-for-themselves as well. Thus, Pono, her elder sister, and her grandmother all asserted some claim on the girls' food basket – not simply for their own use, but as an object that their other care work validated as a contribution to the family and therefore as an expression of care. But, as we saw in Tuelo's case in Chapter 5, contributions made of others' things seldom have the desired effect. The extent to which the food basket is delinked from work and from its original contributor makes contributory claims on it highly volatile and open to contestation. As we saw with Pono's older sister above, ethical assessments about what such a claim means or demonstrates about the

would-be contributor and her relationships may arrive at quite different conclusions. And this indeterminacy is particularly marked when the potential arbiters of such claims – social workers or NGO figures – explicitly exclude themselves from the relationships of the *gae* and apply rather different ethical measures of their own.

Perhaps more importantly, these claims to self-making by appropriating contributions are made *at the expense of* someone else's claims, or in direct competition with them. Children's claims to food baskets become a sort of precocious claim to personhood and to a more significant role in the family (even a political claim, as suggested by Dahl 2009a) – a claim that speeds them up or knocks them out of time, much as Lorato's building project did in Chapter 2. Because these newly acquired resources cannot easily be contributed or gifted elsewhere, they do not serve to build the extrafamilial relationships that might constitute self-making. In the worst-case scenario, like the soil-eating children of the Amazon (Gow 1989), Tswana orphans are enabled to provide for and look after themselves – truncating the relationships that constitute and sustain not only family but also personhood. In this sense, food baskets and donations successfully enter into the contribution economies of kin, but they also serve to disrupt those economies, frustrating attempts at making-for-oneself within the context of kinship. Much like the Basic Income Grants and other forms of direct cash transfer support James Ferguson describes in South Africa, food baskets meet material needs but 'offer far less by way of dealing with … social and moral needs', are unable to convey 'meaningful personhood or social belonging', and prove 'dangerously empty' (Ferguson 2013: 235).

Of course, there were limited but important ways in which NGO and social work actors *did* undertake the work of care associated with the things they provided, in ways animated by the appropriate sentiment as well. As we saw in Pono's case, staff or volunteers at the NGO cooked the food they provided, washed the uniforms supplied by social workers, and helped administer the medicines they sourced. This approach echoed and preserved a distinctly Tswana understanding and expression of care. However, this expression of care was non-contributory as concerned the family. Care was provided within the confines of the NGO, exclusively to the registered client, disentangled from the *gae*. Between them, NGO staff, child clients, volunteers, and others might be thought to be collectively involved in a contribution economy that generated care; however, since these 'contributions' were either professionalised (the cooks are paid to cook) or gift-oriented in a way that was impossible to reciprocate (as with gifts from anonymous foreign donors to small children, intended as 'pure gifts' (Parry 1989); see also Durham 1995: 111), they unsettled the logic of contribution.

In this sense, NGOs seemed to be establishing themselves as fully fledged alternatives to family, in part by establishing an alternative economy of care. Removing their clients from the contribution economy of their families encouraged children's refusal to contribute at home. As we saw with Lesego's refusal to cook, the withdrawal of a child's contribution at home is potentially enough to set off a domino effect among the contributions of the whole family. During my time working at the orphan care centre, we fielded streams of complaints from grandmothers whose orphaned charges arrived home, claimed to be full after having eaten at the NGO, and refused to cook, to clean dishes, or to eat the food that had been set aside for them. Because they spent all the time they weren't in school at the NGO, they weren't doing any other work at home either. Accusations that the NGO was breaking apart families were generally framed in these terms. In other words, the very 'crisis of care' and family collapse discourse that motivates NGO support provokes crises of its own.

This book takes as its central argument the idea that conflict and crisis are productive of kinship, not simply destructive. But rather than providing for the recalibration of relatedness, the conflicts that developed around NGO and government contributions were often intransigent. Families were not in a position to call NGOs or social workers together in the way they could with their own wayward broods. NGOs or social workers might call families together, but as they positioned themselves outside the family's economy of care, they were ill-placed to resolve emergent tensions within it. And, of course, because families do not contribute to NGOs or government – they are institutions that rely on other economies for their solvency – families that called them or complained to them enjoyed little leverage. The basic preconditions under which *dikgang* could be engaged and negotiated, reflected on and evaluated, went unmet.

By the same token, resources are resources – seldom would anyone risk losing them by complaining about their surfeit. Food baskets and other donations held out both the possibility of transformation into a contribution through someone's appropriate care work, and the possibility of making-for-oneself, difficult to realise as it may be. The recalcitrant children themselves could be – and often were – called and upbraided; but to the extent that they understood themselves as sources of major contributions to the family, their usual position in these interventions was upended, and their dependence on family for their own independence was undermined. In the NGOs they attended, and for the social workers who served them, these children were also the critical objects of the 'contributions' and gifts those institutions attracted, which put them in a comparably powerful position. In both cases, confrontations presented the risk of permanent schism, and, as such, they were frequently avoided.

Conclusion: Part II

Some time after I had returned from fieldwork, I was chatting with Lorato on the phone and asked whether the family had been out to the lands recently. '*Haish*! *Ke kgang*,' she replied – that's a problem.

Years previously, her grandfather Dipuo had been insistent about buying the family's second lands, in a village a significant distance away. The land in the area was known for its fertility, and he was convinced that it would be a good investment. He had even contributed a cow from the herd to assist with the purchase. Suddenly, Lorato explained, he was demanding his cow back.

Mmapula had taken most of the responsibility for ploughing at these lands, but she was suddenly made solely responsible for the lands in question by this gesture. Of course, she had no cow to give her husband. The cow had become land, and while the land produced ample food, it was all either eaten by the family or sold to cover the running costs of both the farm and the household. And, of course, women did not typically invest in cattle, as Dipuo knew well. A cow would have to come from among their sons' heads of cattle, if anywhere, which was a request Mmapula could hardly make. The demand was deliberately awkward – and seemed to portend something worse.

'My grandmother has realised he's been slowly separating his things for a long time now,' Lorato said.

'Like what?' I asked. 'Why would he do that?'

'*Gareitse*!' she said, in a tone of suspicious resignation – we don't know. 'First he says Dithaba is his lands, the others are hers. Then he gave away the donkeys. He's been taking all of his clothes to the lands bit by bit. His money, food, now the cow …' She trailed off.

Dipuo's separation, hoarding, and demands for 'his' things – like Kagiso's threat to take his cows – illustrate the fundamental uncertainty and potential reversibility of contributions and of the care they instantiate and produce. The contribution of the cow to acquiring lands for Mmapula to plough was a gesture of care – but when Dipuo demanded it back, with potentially profound effects on the further contributions it had enabled (the cow for land, the land for food, and so on), it called into

131

question his care, and the relationships he had built through it to Mmapula and the rest of his family. And it was not only the futures of these relationships that were suddenly destabilised, but also the meanings of the full range of his contributions in the past. Previously shared understandings of what Dipuo had provided for his family, what it meant, what they had done for him, and with what effects were thrown up into the air.

Contributions, then, are critical to binding together kin, reflecting and shaping responsibilities by age, gender, and generation over time; but they are also means by which kinship can be confounded, rejected, and undermined. This instability and reversibility renders contributions, and *tlhokomelo* in turn, prone to *dikgang*, which – though never fully resolved – allow for the active negotiation, renewal, and recalibration of family relationships and their ethical underpinnings.

As we have seen, contributions are equally essential means of making-for-oneself. Contributions to friends, neighbours, and partners are required to build relationships with them and to establish or assert oneself as a person, as well as to build one's own *lelwapa*. And the things, work, and sentiment one is expected to contribute are similar to those expected by one's family. This conundrum affects women and men alike, if in different forms, over the entire life course (as Dipuo's example suggests). The tension between these divergent demands frequently produces *dikgang* – which defer outright fission in the natal family by reasserting its claims and relationships, while making room for the accumulations and redirections required by the project of self-making. According to this model, personhood is meaningful only if it is built *within* the context of kinship, in spite of appearing opposed to it. It marks a form of self-determination derived not from demonstrating independence but from demonstrating and carefully managing *inter*dependence. In contrast, NGO and government contributions of comparable things, work, and sentiment – though cast as a form of care – behave more like gifts that cannot be reciprocated, shared, or given in turn; as such, they disrupt both the contributory economics of the family and those of making-for-oneself.

Of course, the tension between the imperatives of self-making, its reliance on one's natal kin, and the role of *dikgang* in negotiating that tension is not confined to questions of contribution and care. Similar tensions arise in attempting to secure intimate relationships – predominantly through the careful management of the ways they are seen, spoken, and known, or *recognised*. The often fraught negotiations of the *dikgang* that emerge around pregnancies and marriages perhaps best illustrate this process of managing recognition, and in Part III I turn to a consideration of the reproduction of kinship through conflict.

Figure 6 'I Care, Do You?' Government public health messaging by the highway.

INTERLUDE: AN INCIDENT

It was already dark when the phone rang. Down the line, Boipelo's voice was frantic. 'My father has attacked my mother! With a knife! Please come, you must come quickly!'

Boipelo's family lived on the edge of the village, where it met the bush. Everyone who was home piled into my small car. Kelebogile, Oratile, and Lorato hurriedly wrapped themselves in blankets and tucked themselves into the back seat. Thabo and Kabelo, two of Boipelo's little brothers, were staying with us that night and clambered onto the adults' laps. Everyone else was away at the lands or the cattle post.

'We should at least be going with the men,' Kelebogile muttered to herself, noting her brothers' untimely absence. 'Or weapons,' added Oratile. 'No time,' responded her sister. I pulled out of the yard and drove as quickly as I could along the rutted, twisting dirt roads of the village, leaving a billowing cloud of red dust behind us.

We arrived at Boipelo's place in minutes. Everyone piled out into an oddly quiet, pitch-black darkness. We entered the gate quietly, letting our eyes adjust. The wide, sandy yard was dotted with leafy trees and well-tended ornamental plants. The house itself was little more than a two-room shelter of iron and beams, but well built.

We found Boipelo's father, Mosimanegape, seated on a bench not far from the house, facing us. Boipelo and her infant child sat on another, under the tree near the house; her mother, Khumo, stood some distance beyond them both. Kelebogile greeted them all with a slow, flat *dumela*; we all followed suit and were greeted in turn – an act oddly mundane in its tone, given the violence of the event. We each took up positions around the yard: Kelebogile moved to the stoep in front of the house; Oratile across from her, together with Lorato, standing in the sand. I hunkered down on a discarded tyre at the edge of the gathering, and the two small boys jostled for space in my lap.

Kelebogile began by asking Mosimanegape what had happened, while moving towards her sister Khumo – who sobbed suddenly, but wiped her face and regained her composure almost as quickly. I noticed that she was soaked to the skin. Mosimanegape began complaining, in a mix of awkward English and equally awkward Setswana, about wet blankets. Gradually the story of a fight the previous night emerged. Khumo had gone off to a late shift at her security post, locking him in with a padlock on the outside of the corrugated iron door. He, in turn, had fastened a padlock to the inside and locked her out. When she returned late at night, he refused to let her back in and left her outside for some time. Eventually, frustrated, she fetched the hosepipe and snaked it through the narrow opening of the trap window, soaking the blankets in which he slept.

Khumo then chimed in, to say that Mosimanegape had disappeared with their youngest at 3 a.m. Having returned to their yard later to find the man home, she had set about preparing to go to work – only to have him turn the hosepipe on her

this time, soaking the one uniform she had to wear for her post. As we were speaking, a workmate from down the street arrived to accompany her to her shift – only to be turned away apologetically, and without explanation.

Suddenly, the beams of car headlights swept through the yard, and another car arrived at the gate. Seconds later, Kagiso entered. I had no idea how he had known to come, although I suspected that Kelebogile might have sent him a text message. He took a seat on another bench, opposite Kelebogile, so that they bracketed the quarrelling couple between them. He, too, asked what had happened, crossing one knee over the other and folding his arms together thoughtfully, as if concentrating. After a pause, Mosimanegape said simply that Khumo had soaked his blankets, and Khumo simply that he had tried to kill her.

Then a slow-moving shadow appeared, walking with deliberation from the gate. I noticed the cane first, then the floppy woollen hat, and realised it was Dipuo, the elderly patriarch of the family. His presence came as something of a shock, as he was seldom in the village. He had been biding his time in Kagiso's car. His carefully paced appearance produced a dramatic effect: Kagiso finished what he was saying and everyone else fell silent.

The old man sat on a bench across from Mosimanegape, forming an open square, and leaned his walking cane against one knee. He didn't seem to need to ask what had happened, although it was unclear whether he might have overheard any of the prior recriminations. Instead, he asked Mosimanegape, 'What use are you?', rhetorically and damningly. He accused Mosimanegape of laziness, and of breaking promises to help in the fields with the ploughing. Mosimanegape attempted to stand up for himself, but Dipuo spoke over him effortlessly. He told Mosimanegape that he had long waited to hear that his daughter Khumo would be married, and he had been disappointed for years. 'I have been waiting all this time. I don't know whether you are bringing me marriage or death,' he said, flatly.

Suddenly, Khumo rushed up behind Mosimanegape, attempting to upend the bench under him. He stood up and shouted at her defensively: '*Tswa mo go nna*!' – get away from me! She shouted in turn that she was trying to get the knife, which he was holding under his seat. Mosimanegape denied this categorically, but then started backing awkwardly around the side of the house, protesting his innocence as he did so. 'Don't go anywhere with that knife. Just stay where you are,' Dipuo warned him. Even after he had disappeared behind the house, Mosimanegape kept voicing an insistence that there was no knife, that he had done nothing wrong. After a few moments, he walked back to the front of the house and resumed his seat.

'Where is this knife?' the old man mused, more than asking. While he continued with his litany of disappointments, Lorato indicated that we should go to look for it. She, Oratile, and I clambered over the low fence behind the house and began sweeping the area with the weak flashlights on our mobile phones. We stumbled between dense thorny bushes, over clumps of grass and ankle-turning stones, remarking on the improbability of finding anything. But then I caught sight of a

large, rusty carving knife lying in the dirt. I gave it to Lorato to take back to her grandfather.

As we returned from behind the house, we passed Boipelo, her little girl on her hip, standing in the shadows. Usually quiet but carefree and quick to smile or laugh, Boipelo was visibly shaken and reserved. I asked her if she was alright, and she nodded quickly. Then I told her that if she didn't feel safe and needed to come and stay with us, I would give her and her siblings a lift. She shook her head emphatically, and said, 'No, we'll all stay here,' with a quaver in her voice. I asked if she was sure, and she insisted.

Dipuo was holding the knife in both hands, at arm's length, examining it. '*Ijo*!' he had exclaimed, in surprise, when he first saw it; 'A knife as big as this!' After some moments he began berating Mosimanegape for his cowardice, saying that a man would never attack anyone with a knife – and definitely not a woman. Mosimanegape now stood some feet away, wearing a hangdog expression; his outbursts were fewer now, less convinced, and more easily brushed away by a simple '*Nnyaa*' – no – from the older man.

Dipuo began considering, out loud, the wisdom of involving the police. He seemed to suggest that usually he would be reluctant to involve them, but that the knife was of such a size that a line had been crossed. In front of us, he asked Khumo what she thought. She mumbled that she didn't like the idea and that things should be sorted out among them. Dipuo then made a show of asking the rest of us what we thought. Kelebogile and Oratile each muttered a non-committal '*Gakeitse*', I don't know, and Kagiso remained silent – letting the threat hang in the air. Mosimanegape had been protesting in the background that it was unnecessary, but he was formally ignored in the old man's consultation.

After a pause, Dipuo asserted, 'I am taking my children home.' Immediately, Khumo, Boipelo, and the other children in the yard set about gathering some clothes and necessities to take with them. Boipelo's earlier insistence on staying dissolved. Mosimanegape was shaken and became confused and defiant: first insisting that he would stay there alone (Khumo refused, as it was her plot), then saying that he didn't care – he would go to stay with his father's sisters and call them in on his behalf. 'Yes,' the old man concurred, 'we need to speak with them.' The assertion set Mosimanegape on his back foot again. He stammered, clearly caught off guard, and fell silent. We drifted back to the cars. Mosimanegape stormed off into the night.

Part III

'We Are Seeing Things'
Recognition, Risk, and Reproducing Kinship

> *Lerato ke lone leo*
> *A re itshwarelaneng*
> *A re buisaneng*
> *Lerato la matlatsi a le nkitsa go nyala*
>
> That's love
> Let's forgive one another
> Let's talk together
> Love these days makes it difficult for me to marry '*Lorato la Malatsi A*'
> (Love These Days), Culture Spears[1]

It was a hot, quiet Sunday afternoon, and we sat together lazily in the *lelwapa*. Kelebogile, Oratile, and Tshepo were braiding Lorato's hair. I sat with Mmapula and her granddaughter Boipelo on a blanket spread out in the shade of the stoep. Boipelo was nursing her infant child; the other children lay on the blanket with us, and then clambered over us, and then chased each other around the yard, their irrepressible energy in stark contrast to our lethargy. Kagiso tinkered with a car nearby; Dipuo sat mending a chair and half-heartedly waving off chickens.

We were joking about the possibility of Boipelo's and Lorato's marriages. Both girls were in their mid-twenties and were in relationships we all knew about but avoided discussing. Boipelo had a child. They were prime candidates. Tshepo, Boipelo's younger sister, had asked in passing how much her grandmother Mmapula would expect for *bogadi*. 'These days, I would insist on at *least* ten cows,' Mmapula asserted. Her daughters and granddaughters all set up an instant clamouring disagreement. '*Heela*!' exclaimed Kelebogile. 'What man can offer that many cows?' 'No family can agree to that!' added Oratile. The younger girls laughed and made noises of incredulity and dismay.

---

[1] A video of Culture Spears' '*Lorato la Malatsi A*' is at www.youtube.com/watch?v=MvizJ9O4jn4.

137

'Listen, let me tell you,' Mmapula rejoined sternly. She numbered the cattle off on her fingers: one for Mmapula's younger brother, who was *malome* to the girls' mothers; another for Dipuo's older brother; two for the girls' own mothers' brothers (for Lorato, Modiri; for Boipelo, Kagiso); two for Dipuo himself; two for other relatives I couldn't place; and two for the feast. The genealogies left us all baffled. But their bafflement didn't stop the younger women from taking issue with these distributions, arguing all at once that nothing was owed to the old man's brother, that one cow should be enough for their own *bomalome* – Kagiso protested half-heartedly from under the car bonnet – and that the cattle for the feast should properly come from the herd at home.

'Now you see why none of us is married from this yard,' Lorato observed archly, bracing herself as her hair was pulled and twisted. Tshepo, 17 years old and precocious, took a different tack. '*Aaa-ee!* *Nna* I am taking *bogadi* for myself!' she insisted with comic vehemence, to general laughter. 'How am I supposed to start my family if my husband has given away all his cattle? How will I look after my children?' It was a position I had heard her rehearse almost word for word in past conversations; it was both satirical and serious, deliberately provocative.

'You can't take *bogadi* for yourself!' her grandmother challenged, while her mother's younger sisters laughed.

'At least my mother should get it so she can build, then,' Tshepo said. 'But not my father! What has he done to raise me?' Tshepo's father had lived with Tshepo and her siblings their whole lives but had never taken any formal steps towards marrying their mother. He had had only intermittent work, squandered money on drink, and was generally considered a deadbeat, not least by Tshepo herself.

'*Heela*,' her grandfather intervened, quietly but sternly. 'Your *bogadi* will come to me, both of you. Your fathers never paid *bogadi* for your mothers. You are my children.'

'And I'm saying, ten cows,' Mmapula added.

'*Ijo*! *Nna* I'm not getting married then,' exclaimed Tshepo. 'Or I'll tell my man to keep his cattle so we build a house,' she mused, deftly exploiting the congruence of terms for 'my man' and 'my husband' (both are *monna wa me*).

'*O tla ipona*!!' rejoined her grandmother – you'll see (lit. you'll see yourself). 'What happens when he leaves you like that with your children? As for us, we won't know anything about it.'

'These days women can even pay for their own *bogadi*,' observed Lorato, generating another reproachful and incredulous clamour from the women. '*I* can't,' she clarified. 'How can you marry yourself? And if the man can't even pay *bogadi* then how do you know he will look after

you? He can even leave. But some women who have money and their men don't, it happens.'

'*Hei*, even NGOs marry people these days!' added Boipelo, to even greater collective surprise. 'Didn't you hear about that NGO in Mochudi? They take unmarried couples who have long been living together and already have children, and marry them! The NGO even finds the cattle for *bogadi*, and rings; they have the whole ceremony!'

'*Ee*, when people like this old woman expect ten cows what else can we do?' observed Oratile.

'*Ija*! *Ke kgang*,' Mmapula exclaimed, derisively. 'Then when there are problems, who resolves things? Do the woman's *bomalome* negotiate with themselves? Does the NGO look after their children? Do these NGOs think people have no parents?' Everyone laughed at the series of incongruous scenarios.

'*Mm-mm*,' Dipuo commented, shaking his head in dismay. '*Re bona dilo*.' We are seeing things.

The topic of *bogadi*, or brideprice – often also called *lobola*, as elsewhere in Southern Africa – came up frequently among the Legaes. It often triggered a subtler array of questions and concerns around marriage, pregnancy, and children, and about intimate relationships more generally. At the time I lived with them in 2012, six of Mmapula's eight children, and one of her grandchildren, had had children of their own; but by the time I was on fieldwork, none of them had yet married, much to Mmapula's chagrin. The situation was not unusual. At the time, marriage rates in Botswana, and across Southern Africa, had been in sharp decline for years (Pauli and van Dijk 2017). While Mmapula was keen to see her children married, she was also very concerned that those marriages should be concluded in a specific way. Her preoccupation with how things should be done drew together many of her abiding worries, and her children's abiding uncertainties: the success of their self-making, the care of their children, and the solvency, well-being, and reproduction of the extended family. Mmapula was not alone in her anxieties: deep ambiguities in the reproduction of Tswana kinship have preoccupied Batswana and anthropologists of Botswana for at least a century (Comaroff 1980; 1981; Comaroff and Roberts 1977; Gulbrandsen 1986; Livingston 2003b; Lye and Murray 1980; Schapera 1933; 1940; Solway 1990; 2017a; Upton 2001; van Dijk 2010; 2012a; 2017) – and they have taken on new urgency in the context of one of the world's worst AIDS epidemics.

Taking cues from the scene above, this part engages the fraught ways in which Tswana kinship is extended and reproduced through intimate relationships, as well as the legacies of this fraughtness for self-making.

The loaded tropes around seeing, saying, and knowing that peppered our conversation – and that emerge frequently in such conversations – indicate ways in which conjugal relationships[2] transform and are transformed into kin relationships during pregnancy and marriage negotiations: in a gradual, carefully managed process of recognition. Both the tone of contestation in the family's discussion and the wide range of problems and disagreements it anticipated also suggest that recognition is a fertile source of *dikgang*: 'issues', problems, conflict, or crisis. I show how it is in the acquisition of these *dikgang*, and the collective process of reflection and interpretation through which they are negotiated, that new kin relations are constituted, and self-making pursued. Finally, I extend these possibilities to conjugal relationships in a time of AIDS, and suggest that the risk of contracting the disease is of the same order as the risks of *dikgang* that Batswana routinely face in managing such relationships. I contend that it is the management of recognition as much as – or more than – the risk of illness and death that raises the stakes of HIV infection, while offering families a key means of addressing the crisis AIDS represents, and of living with the epidemic.

Recognition

'Recognition' is a concept elaborated by social scientists, but I use it to condense a range of emic terms and ideas: specifically, *go bona* (to see), *go bua* (to speak), *go utlwa* (to hear/feel), and *go itse* (to know). These terms appear regularly – often interchangeably – in Setswana conversation, as exclamations and challenges. *O a bona* (you see) is frequently appended to the end of sentences, as is *o a itse* (you know). *O a utlwa* (you hear) is affixed to instructions or requests. Such injunctions may indicate the clarification of ambiguity, an invitation to agree, an attempt to convince, or an implicit insistence on being heeded; responses cast in the same terms may mark either willingness or refusal. Recognition, in this sense, is perpetually sought but frequently evaded and contested. And it takes on special relevance in the context of both relationships and self-making. Among the Tswana, love, care, understanding, and so on involve not simply sentiment but action, demonstration, and performance, so that they can be seen, heard, and felt (Alverson 1978: 138; Klaits 2010: 6). In being seen, heard, and felt – in other words, recognised – these enacted sentiments create intersubjective effects:

---

[2] I use 'conjugal relationships' much as Julia Pauli and Rijk van Dijk (2017: 259) do: to connote 'a range of [heterosexual] … relationships' variously understood in terms of 'customary practices, residence arrangements, state and religious laws, and sexual and other types of exchange', which may or may not signify or lead to a formalised marriage.

health, strengthened relationships, prosperity, and the capacity to give and evoke love and care. At the same time, refusals or misinterpretations of such demonstrations can produce jealousy and scorn, which also generate sentimental action, with potentially deleterious repercussions for the well-being of others – including illness and the threat of witchcraft (Klaits 2010: 4–5). In this sense, recognition is both a key dimension of sociality and a key source of social risk (Durham 2002a; Durham and Klaits 2002).

This tension between the risks and possibilities of intersubjectivity underpins the Setswana understanding of personhood and self-making as well. On the one hand, the risks of recognition ground an imperative to keep the self fragmented and concealed – never fully seen, known, or grasped – in order to protect it from danger, and especially from witchcraft (Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). On the other hand, recognition is a singular source of self-knowledge and moral personhood; as Richard Werbner notes from his work among Tswapong wisdom diviners in Botswana's north-east, '[u]pon recognition by others depends the very dignity of the self' (Werbner 2015: 2). It is only possible to know an intersubjective self 'mirrored in the gaze of others' (Werbner 2016: 83, echoing Laidlaw 2014: 502); making oneself involves inviting the ethical reflection of others on oneself. And doing so successfully – in ways that contain the risks of recognition already noted – requires the careful management of what others see, hear, and know. Not only does recognition therefore inevitably involve 'ambivalence, conflict and contradiction' (Werbner 2016: 82), it is sought, achieved, and ascribed through them – in other words, through *dikgang*.

The management of recognition, then, involves the management of selves and relationships; as such, it also structures power, hierarchy, and specifically gender. The licence to hear, know, and speak in the resolution of disputes, for example – whether at home or in the *kgotla* – is held customarily by older men and is instrumental in conveying their authority (van Dijk 2010: 290). In Werbner's terms, it exposes them to reflection on the part of a wide range of others, and therefore to greater risk, but also to more far-reaching recognition and potentially greater dignity and political power. Women, too, hear, know, and speak in the management of *dikgang* and thereby gain recognition; but, as we have seen already and will see in the chapters of Part III, their repertoires are comparatively constrained, centred largely on the household and its relations. The reflection of others on women's behaviour is tied to the appropriate observance of these constraints – which is one reason silence figures so strongly in women's management of *dikgang*, and particularly *dikgang* involving men. As well as different repertoires of hearing,

knowing, and speaking, different sources of *dikgang* are key to the recognition of men and women: pregnancy and its attendant crises prove most formative for women, and marriage and its attendant crises for men.

Framing conjugal relationships in terms of recognition, I suggest, avoids the limitations of considering them in terms of either exchange or love, as either collective processes of social reproduction or strictly personal projects – framings that have predominated in the anthropology of marriage and intimacy, especially in Africa (Smith 2009: 159). Recognition makes room for both affect and economy, mutuality and contract (Gudeman 2009), sociality and self-making, capturing their mutual entanglements and the tensions between them while underscoring the social creativity of the conflicts that inevitably emerge. It creates space to draw filial and affinal relationships into the same analytical frame, marking a key point of articulation between the two. It draws together both the social processes and the events that mark contemporary Setswana marriage and pregnancy[3] and their shifting temporalities, their quickenings, foreshortenings, and inversions (Livingston 2003b; Solway 2017a; Upton 2001). And it makes room for ambiguity, partiality, and reversibility, incorporating – for example – practices of secrecy and concealment, where relationships may be known but not spoken (Hirsch et al. 2009). It accommodates the jural, processual, and ritual dimensions of conjugality; and it accommodates the equally crucial ethical practice of inviting and undertaking reflection on the self. In this sense, recognition captures both the historical sensibilities that inform Setswana conjugality and emergent practices that may be changing it (Comaroff 1980; Comaroff and Roberts 1977; Solway 2017a; van Dijk 2017).

These dynamics of recognition, of course, take on a new significance in a time of AIDS. The recognition of those living with HIV has alternately mediated or foreclosed access to treatment, precipitated alienation from community and kin, or granted 'therapeutic citizenship' (Henderson 2011: 24; LeMarcis 2012; Nguyen 2010: 89–110). In Botswana, governmental and non-governmental responses to the epidemic have produced new, formalised modes of recognition, emphasising the need to know one's status and speak about it with sexual partners, while promulgating 'confessional technologies' and 'a market for testimonials' seen elsewhere

---

[3] John Comaroff (1980: 167) identifies 'public recognition' as the 'final element in the creation of a legitimate union' among the Tshidi. He distinguishes it from the four other elements he identifies – *patlo* negotiations, the prestation of gifts, cohabitation, and *bogadi* – because it is not linked to a specific event. However, I suggest that it also characterises those events and might offer a strong analytical thread to bind them.

in the management of HIV and AIDS (Nguyen 2010: 21, 35–60). Botswana's nationwide voluntary HIV testing programme is even called *Tebelopele*, or 'vision'. Secrecy, concealment, and silence, on the other hand, are linked to the spread of the virus – originally cast in Botswana, as elsewhere, as a dangerously 'silent' or 'invisible' epidemic (ibid.: 2) – and thereby pathologised. These shifting, heightened stakes around recognition suggest one possible link between the parallel 'crises' of AIDS and marriage, while the work that marriage does in the management of recognition suggests one reason why churches and other intervening agencies might present it as a panacea to the epidemic (van Dijk 2010: 287).

In the stories that follow, I describe courtship, pregnancy, and marriage – in that order, as they are most frequently experienced in the Tswana life course – as marking a continuum of recognition, negotiation, and risk. I explore the ways in which women and their relationships are made recognisable, largely through their bodies, in pregnancy, and the ways in which men and their relationships are made recognisable, largely through the marriage negotiations they undertake. I consider the concealments both allow and the *dikgang* both produce – including *dikgang* across generations, among siblings, between the conjugal partners themselves, and between their respective extended kin, as well as the unresolved *dikgang* of past pregnancies and marriage negotiations, which are brought into intergenerational recognition in turn. More than just a question of managing new economic constraints or producing new class distinctions (e.g. James 2017; van Dijk 2010; 2017), I suggest that pregnancy and marriage require engagement with fraught family relationships and histories, in anticipation of fraught futures. I further suggest that acquiring and successfully navigating these *dikgang* – which include the full range of *dikgang* that characterise kin relations – are crucial, gendered dimensions of self-making and underpin the potency of both pregnancy and marriage in reproducing and reorganising relationships among kin. These processes may reorient relationships between households, but they are also strikingly preoccupied with realigning relationships among existing kin – a long-standing orientation that indicates the persistence of ambiguity, even in times when certainty is sought (cf. van Dijk 2010; 2017). And in these practices, unexpected means of absorbing and addressing the risks presented by HIV and AIDS emerge.

7   Recognising Pregnancy

Phokoje wa morago dintsa diammona.

The dogs chase the last jackal.

When Boipelo's pregnancy began showing, at about four months, her mother Khumo hastened halfway across the village to her own mother's – Mmapula's – home. Boipelo, not yet 20, was the eldest of Khumo's six children. Khumo was a calm and pragmatic woman, extremely hard-working, independent, and reserved, sometimes recalcitrant. But on that day, her report to her mother was frustrated and despairing: 'Who could the boy be, in this village? They're useless! Unemployed, no money. How will we look after a baby?' Khumo and her children lived in a cramped, two-room lean-to, and they struggled to make ends meet. Boipelo had just finished school, and her mother had hoped she would find work and help build a house. Instead, there was a baby on the way.

Lorato, Boipelo's older cousin, fell pregnant at roughly the same time. Lorato knew about Boipelo's pregnancy from the beginning, but she told no one at home about her own. Knowing that it would put enormous pressure on the family to have two babies at once, Lorato and her boyfriend considered crossing the border for an abortion in South Africa. But he had a good job and was building a house in the city – perhaps, she thought, they could manage to raise a baby on their own. They decided to keep the child.

Lorato's pregnancy started showing shortly after Boipelo's. When Mmapula noticed, she sent two of her daughters to call Lorato and confront her. Having had her suspicions confirmed, the old woman hastened down the street to confer with trusted neighbours (who were also relations). She was as frustrated and despairing as Khumo had been a few short weeks before.

The double pregnancy happened before I returned to Botswana for fieldwork, but I received a formal and somewhat disconsolate email from Kelebogile informing me of the situation – a rare occurrence in its own right. Lorato had recounted the events to me within days of my arriving

144

back, and, over time, Oratile and Kelebogile filled in bits and pieces as well. For many of my friends in Botswana, as well as for Boipelo and Lorato, pregnancy marked a major watershed in relationships with lovers, in family relationships, and in life trajectories. In most cases, it preceded – but seldom precipitated – marriage (a long-standing trend; see Comaroff and Roberts 1977: 99; Gulbrandsen 1986; Lye and Murray 1980; Schapera 1933; Townsend 1997). Pregnancy was often, though not always, the point at which a courtship became unavoidably apparent. It brought sexual relationships, otherwise carefully kept secret, into the sphere of the seen and the spoken, the known and the negotiable. It subjected them to reflection, assessment, and interpretation; it made them recognisable. And this shift was part of what gave pregnancy an aspect of crisis, both for the soon-to-be parents and for their families. It was a risky shift: pregnancy rendered the *existence* of an intimate relationship recognisable, but not its critical details. There was no incontrovertible means of identifying the father, and no certainty that his partner would name him. He or his family might dispute or deny the claim, refusing to be recognised. If the father admitted paternity, but he and his family had few resources, the mother's family had little hope of laying charges or claiming financial support for the coming child and might wish that he had remained hidden. On the other hand, if he was well off, charges might be laid (a colonial-era invention; see Schapera 1933: 84) but might not be honoured, which might undermine the relationship itself. The recognition of pregnancy was, in other words, a source of numerous potential *dikgang*, which required careful negotiation between couples and within and between their families. The success or failure of reproducing family lay in the success or failure of these negotiations as much or more than in the pregnancy itself. Success, in this context, meant leaving these *dikgang* at least partially *un*resolved. Such a suspension did not necessarily stabilise the relationship, but it left open the eventual possibility of marriage.

After her distraught visit to the neighbours, Mmapula gathered her resolve and set the mechanisms of pregnancy negotiation in motion on two fronts. She asked two of her sons – Moagi and Kagiso – to talk to the girls individually and to find out who the fathers of the children were. They learned that Lorato's boyfriend was older, and employed, although he was from far away. This information gave Mmapula hope: if the negotiations were handled properly, he would be in a good position to support the child and might ultimately prove to be suitable marriage material. In the meantime, she could assert a claim for compensation. She dispatched her sons to summon him to the yard. Boipelo's boyfriend, by contrast, was a former neighbour, young and sporadically

employed, and his family was not well off. His family's proximity meant that they could easily have been called or visited, but the matter was not pursued. In fact, the boy's family was not officially notified about the pregnancy until after the child had been born, although he and Boipelo continued their relationship.

Moagi and Kagiso sought out Lorato's boyfriend, but he evaded his summons. On a couple of occasions Lorato was visiting him when one of her uncles tried to call him, and she identified the callers. When he still refused to answer, she began to doubt his willingness to take responsibility for the child he had fathered. 'He said, "I haven't done anything wrong, why should I be called?"' she explained, still hurt by the refusal. 'I told him he couldn't refuse to speak to my uncles. I asked him if he was refusing the child. He didn't say anything.' To her mind, his rejection of the summons suggested a rejection of the potential for kinship that her pregnancy had initiated.

Eventually, Mmapula herself acquired the telephone number of the man's mother from Lorato and phoned her to report the pregnancy and assert a charge of P5,000 (roughly £425, enough for a couple of cows or a good bull) for 'making our daughter's breasts fall' (for a description of the 'fence-jumping' fine, *tlaga legora*, see van Dijk 2017: 32). She would have preferred to call the man's family to her yard, but, given the distances involved and the apparent hesitance of the man to acknowledge the summons, she decided to hedge her bets. The man's mother agreed to report the charge to her son, but promised little more. The matter was left there.

After that point, the man was sufficiently 'known' to Lorato's family that they would ask after him, talk or joke about him as a potential husband, and allow Lorato to visit him for a few days at a time. Lorato's mother's brothers scolded her for laziness with the warning that, once she was married, they would not take her back, insisting that she should develop appropriate work habits now that she 'had a man'. As the pregnancy progressed, the boyfriend supplied Lorato with ample food, clothes, lotions, magazines, and supplies for the child, reassuring her that he recognised the child as his own. But this mutual recognition remained tentative and tenuous; the man had refused his summons, had never officially visited the yard, and had yet to pay the fine levied on him. If he came to visit Lorato, he generally stayed in his car down the lane and avoided entering the *lelwapa*. When Lorato went off to see him, Mmapula occasionally asked, 'And when is he coming to greet us? Tell him we are still waiting to see him. One of these days if something happens to you, we won't even know where to look for you.' Boipelo's boyfriend was similarly circumspect, although he had been a frequent

visitor to the yard before her pregnancy. He, too, was tentatively recognised as the father of Boipelo's child, and Mmapula occasionally asked after him in private; but he was unable to cater to Boipelo's needs as well as Lorato's boyfriend, and there were few jokes about Boipelo marrying him.

While pregnancies signify the existence of serious relationships and make them formally known to the families of both partners, they don't necessarily stabilise the relationship itself. A friend demonstrated this persistent uncertainty to me on the bus home one day. She had been fielding amorous text messages from an older man in the village. '*Hei*! The way this one was after me when I was pregnant!' she commented offhand, much to my astonishment. She saw my shock and laughed. 'You don't know these men. They propose to us when we're pregnant because they know they don't have to worry about impregnating us! No chance to get caught!' I asked what her boyfriend thought about it. 'O! Why should I tell him? He was too worried to touch me the whole time I was pregnant. What should I do? And anyway he probably has his girls,' she added with a note of bitterness, thumbing out a reply on her phone. While pregnancy and the fines and negotiations attendant upon it rendered some relationships recognisable, my friend seemed to indicate that it safely concealed others (compare Comaroff and Comaroff 2001: 275).

The sorts of recognition conveyed by pregnancy, then, produce multiple *dikgang*, all of which are addressed in ways that perpetuate ambiguity rather than eliminating it. This ambiguity produces further *dikgang* in turn – but also leaves open the possibility of kin-making. Among the neighbouring Bangwaketse, Ørnulf Gulbrandsen (1986: 22) noted a reluctance to take disputes around pregnancy fines to *kgotla* (customary court) for formal resolution, despite a tendency to favour the woman's cause. He explains this paucity of prosecution in terms of guardians' wariness about their daughters gaining reputations for being quick to sue (ibid.). However, something simpler may be at work: having failed to draw another family into mutual recognition, into the joint process of reflecting on the situation at hand and its implications for their relationships with each other that characterise the negotiation of *dikgang*, the would-be complainant's family has already failed to make the would-be defendant's family into kin. Drawing the family into formal negotiation at the *kgotla* may produce a final resolution – usually in the form of a payment awarded – but neither the formal process nor the final decision will produce a husband, nor the community of shared risk, ethical reflection and disposition, and continuous *dikgang* management that makes kin. Indeed, a formal, legal resolution ultimately forecloses those

possibilities (a point we will return to in Chapter 12). Where fines and agreements are left ambiguous, processes of mutual reflection and recognition are suspended but can still be pursued – leaving the opportunity of kin acquisition as open as possible, on as many levels as possible, for as long as possible. This open-endedness creates a cycle of conflict and irresolution – potentially extending, as we will see, over the course of generations – and this cycle, I suggest, underpins the production and reproduction of Tswana kinship.[1]

Afterbirth

Her grandmother and mother's younger sister swaddled the baby boy and took him away before Lorato even knew of his death. At seven months, Lorato had gone into hospital, short of breath and with high blood pressure. The doctors performed an emergency caesarean, but the child's lungs had begun to bleed, and by the time Lorato woke he was gone.

A small grave was dug adjacent to the room in which Mmapula and most of the children slept, virtually in the short pathway that led into the *lelwapa* past the outdoor kitchen. It was sealed with cement. It was some time after I had returned in 2011 that I was told where the grave lay, and I was surprised when I heard: it was a space where old plant pots and dirty buckets were left, where large cooking pots were tipped up to dry, and where the children played freely, often running over the top of it as they came charging around the edge of the house. But it needn't have surprised me. Kelebogile's first child, lost at roughly two years old, lay under the grandmother's room next to it, buried there before the addition had been built. 'That way she's close to her mother in case she needs anything,' Lorato said, explaining her own child's burial by way of her mother's sister's lost girl.

Boipelo had been delivered of a baby girl shortly afterwards. Lorato and Boipelo were both taken to be *motsetse* – a term for new mothers in confinement – and both stayed with the baby in a room they shared in Mmapula's yard. Neither of them was meant to move out of the house or yard for a month. Neither was permitted male guests, and neither could visit her boyfriend nor receive him at home. There were no special constraints on the girls' movement outside the village, but while they were in the village they were prohibited from setting foot beyond the gate. Lorato was uncertain about the reasoning for this edict, but she

---

[1] See Comaroff and Roberts (1981) for a similar argument around Tswana law.

connected it loosely to the prevention of drought and harm to cattle, and to the avoidance of risk to people who might cross her path – as well as avoiding risks to herself, Boipelo, and the child with whom they were confined. It was also intended to protect against witchcraft and illness, which were especially marked risks given the loss of Lorato's baby (see Lambek and Solway 2001 on *dikgaba*, illnesses that afflict children and are linked to jealousy and witchcraft among relatives; see also Schapera 1940: 233–4; and, on ritual avoidance more broadly, Douglas 2002 [1966]; Turner 2017 [1969]).

In this sense, a woman's movement out of the yard and around the village after the birth – or loss – of a child presents a further and slightly different series of dangers, or *dikgang*, to be contained. And it is her natal family that has a special responsibility in containing them, especially where family-linked witchcraft is implicated. Confinement helps contain these risks in part by blocking and reversing the recognition that a woman's pregnancy brings upon her and the relationship that produced it; it renders her and her child temporarily invisible, inaccessible, and their status unknown. Even old friends who had given birth while I was in the village suggested that I visit them at the clinic before they were sent home, 'because you know how these elders are about witchcraft'.[2] The re-emergence of new mothers and babies into public spaces after their confinement is also a carefully managed, gradual process of controlling what can be seen, heard, spoken, or known, by whom and how. When Boipelo's baby was first allowed out into the yard, her six-year-old brother Thabo remarked to the little girl, indulgently, '*Ga re go itse, akere*!' – We don't know you, do we? – as if to introduce himself, while distancing her from the risks that relational recognition might create. Parties are often held for children when they turn one year old, although only family and friends attend instead of the large public attendance expected at most other domestic celebrations. At the end of her confinement, Lorato's maternal grandfather, Dipuo, instructed her to wash her feet, and then led her around the village silently, well before anyone was awake and might see them. He sprinkled her washing water before her, as if to contain the traces she might leave, enabling her emergence by concealing it. Containing recognition cannot eliminate *dikgang*, but it carefully circumscribes the relational sphere in which they may emerge.

Of course, the *dikgang* emerging from pregnancies are not confined to fraught dynamics of recognition around establishing paternity through

---

[2] I did visit one or two women who were *motsetse* – once quite by accident – but was told that it was permissible because 'white people don't believe in witchcraft'. Close (female) family friends or neighbours may visit *motsetse* freely but discreetly.

fines or managing the dangers posed to and by postnatal women. They also emerge around the provision of care to the newborn child – specifically, the father's recognition of responsibilities to contribute, and the recognition conveyed on him in turn. Lorato's boyfriend had provided well for their baby's needs and Lorato had a generous stockpile of clothes, nappies, toiletries, nutritional supplements, bathtubs, and other supplies stashed in her room before she lost the child. She spoke often and with deep fondness of the time she had visited her boyfriend and he had given her a sum of cash to buy whatever she needed for the baby from the shops. To hear Lorato tell it, pregnancy had been a time of plenty for her; she had had comparatively few responsibilities, had been accorded a degree of freedom to visit her boyfriend, and had been handsomely supplied with clothes, food, magazines, mobile phone units, and virtually anything else she desired – as well as everything that would be needed for the baby. She sometimes joked that it was the best job she had ever had – and, unlike other jobs, she hadn't been expected to provide tokens of respect and support to her *malome* or grandmother, but could keep everything for herself.

While the gifts Lorato's boyfriend had provided were not official gestures in the way that gifts presented in anticipation of marriage are (as we will see later), they did indicate a potential willingness and ability to provide for the care of Lorato and their child (compare Klaits 2010: 43) – a contribution to Lorato's natal household that marked his acceptance of responsibility for her and a willingness to behave like kin, in keeping with his level of income. In many respects, the gifts were his one gesture towards recognisability; and they were a critical dimension in the family's recognition of him, tentative as it was (compare similar allowances on the part of family in Schapera 1933: 80). At the same time, they did not stand in for a formal acknowledgement of the family's claims on him, and – coming as they did through Lorato – they carefully evaded the sort of recognition those claims would establish over him and the ongoing cycle of negotiations they would precipitate. They were gifts given to Lorato, not debts paid or contributions made to her family; as such, they evaded *dikgang*. By comparison, Boipelo's sporadically employed boyfriend had provided her with little or nothing prior to their child's birth – which exacerbated his effacement at home.

'Actually, that's why I didn't buy a stroller,' Lorato added. I didn't follow. She explained that her boyfriend had wanted them to buy a stroller – an expensive and uncommon item among families in the village. 'He was insisting but I refused. How can I have a stroller, Boipelo having nothing?' She explained that two of her mother's younger sisters had faced a similar situation at the births of their own first children. 'When Kelebogile was having her first child,' she explained,

'Oratile got pregnant about the same time. Kelebogile's boyfriend was working and gave them everything. But Oratile was younger, the boyfriend was a bit useless, he wasn't working or anything. So they were struggling at home. Kelebogile lost her first child when she was maybe a year or something. She gave everything, all the things the boyfriend had bought, to Oratile.' The grudging, subtly bitter attitudes towards their mutual responsibilities, which often provoked squabbles between the two sisters (as we saw in Part II), suddenly took on a new dimension.

These legacies had re-emerged for scrutiny in Boipelo's and Lorato's situation, and Lorato was outlining yet more careful balances to be struck. On the one hand, she had to make clear her boyfriend's willingness and ability to provide for her, allowing her family to recognise it (and him) without making a show; on the other, she had to conceal this support in order to minimise her continuing responsibilities to contribute to her natal household, and to keep demands on her partner reasonable, sustainable, and primarily oriented towards herself. But Lorato also had to demonstrate a reflexive awareness of how her newly acquired resources might have an impact on her relationship with Boipelo and Boipelo's self-making trajectories, and of how her choices over what to do with those resources might echo and reflect upon the past *dikgang* of her mother's sisters. After the loss of her own child, Lorato gave everything she had stockpiled to Boipelo, just as Kelebogile had to Oratile.

I noted several changes in Lorato after the loss of her child and her confinement. Most notable was her attitude towards her younger cousins. She had always been friendly, playful, and at ease with them, like siblings; but now she scolded them and spoke sharply, gruffly sending them on errands or putting them to work. Indeed, her mother's brothers and sisters, and her grandparents, now chastised her when she was too familiar with them. When I mentioned it, she replied with conviction: '*Ke motsadi* [I am a parent]; I can't just play with children any more.' Boipelo, too, took on a new tone of authority; she was preoccupied with finding paid work and left her sister with most of the childcare responsibilities. Both women spoke, dressed, and behaved differently, and they related differently to those with whom they had been most familiar. They had come to be recognised as parents, and as women.[3]

Thus, while pregnancy and birth may leave considerable ambiguity in relationships between new parents, and between their families, in one respect they are unambiguous: they reorganise a woman's relationship to

---

[3] Rebecca Upton's work describes a notable corollary to the recognition conveyed by pregnancy in her accounts of women being rendered invisible by their infertility (Upton 2001).

her natal family. This reorganisation begins in pregnancy negotiations but is perhaps most marked in the management of *dikgang* after birth. Neither the father nor his family has any formal part to play in taking on or ameliorating these *dikgang*, and there is little negotiation involved. If anything, he and his kin are explicitly excluded. This is the case even for married couples: with their first child, women will generally return to their natal homestead for confinement after the birth (which is increasingly conducted in a clinic or hospital). I suggest that this unilateral responsibility for the risks of birth and their containment works primarily to produce and reproduce kinship between the woman, her child (if there is one), and her natal family, who will be important figures in her child's life whether she has married and moved away from them or not – her brothers especially, but also her sisters and parents.

Pregnancy also makes a significant difference to women's personhood, marking a key success in making-for-themselves. Even if the woman cannot carry the child to term, she nevertheless becomes *motsadi* (parent) and *mosadi* (woman) by virtue of her pregnancy. In Setswana, the verb for being pregnant is *go ithwala*: the verb *go rwala*, to carry or bear, cast in the reflexive – so that it is something one does to oneself. To conceive or be pregnant, in other words, is to carry oneself or to bear oneself, as well as one's child – a description that alludes richly to its importance in a woman's self-making. This new status, of course, is perfected gradually and entails a long learning curve: Lorato had to learn to distance herself from the other children of the yard, to treat and speak to them differently. While both she and Boipelo stumbled and fell over some of these new expectations, they did not cease to be women and parents as a result; pregnancy conferred that role on them, irreversibly. Their pregnancies were incontrovertibly recognisable in the women's bodies, which publicly marked their sexuality, fertility, and new responsibilities of care. And the *dikgang* generated by this recognisability – from questions of how to care for the child to claims against boyfriends and the containment of risks posed by postnatal bodies – were all managed within and by their natal family.

Notably, the Legaes spoke of neither Boipelo's nor Lorato's boyfriend as *motsadi* (parent) or *monna* (man) due to his having fathered offspring. Only Lorato's boyfriend was identified as *monna* (man), with explicit reference to his potential marriageability. Rather than pregnancy – in which men are only indeterminately recognisable, and from the *dikgang* of which they are excluded (and may exclude themselves) – it is marriage that seems to confer on men the recognition that enables them to reproduce and realign kin relations. But reproducing kinship through marriage is also a fraught and uncertain process – as Kagiso's attempt to marry showed, which I turn to next.

Figure 7 The bride enters. Her new in-laws demonstrate the work that will be expected of her as a wife and *ngwetsi* (daughter-in-law).

8   Recognising Marriage

Bogwe gabobole.

Relationship-in-law does not decay.

'Ah, it's not going to work out,' Kagiso admitted with resignation and a slow smile as he stood under the backyard acacia, absent-mindedly pulling leaves from one of its thorny branches.

It had been two months since Kagiso, his parents, and representatives from his father's family had formally visited his girlfriend's house with the hope of asking for her in marriage. They left without ceremony one Saturday afternoon, no one having made any mention of it beforehand. I only heard about it later, when I found Dipuo's sister's son drinking tea in the *lelwapa* and chatting deferentially with his *malome* Dipuo.

The foray had not gone well. To their collective astonishment and dismay, the girl's father had refused even to receive the delegation. Much of the men's chat over tea circled around how strange the father's reaction had been. When I spoke to Kagiso on his return, he was disappointed and angry, but already strategising for workable alternatives. His parents were less hopeful. Dipuo had reserved comment, simply shaken his head and left for the lands promptly after taking tea. Mmapula, uncharacteristically, spent the whole of the following day lying on the stoep, alternately sleeping, pondering, and talking through the previous day's disappointment with her daughters. It was perhaps the only time I had seen her stop her incessant work and movement for so long – as if resolution of the impasse lay in her stillness, or as if she were healing a familial wound the way an invalid contains and heals from illness, by staying home.

After his original determination, Kagiso's resignation came as a surprise to me. 'Are you just going to give up, then?' I asked, realising suddenly that there may have been a reason for the family's silence on the issue in the intervening months. 'What can I do?' he countered, smiling again, in his tranquil, reconciled way. 'You know, he refused even to come out to greet us,' he said, describing his girlfriend's father's

154

odd recalcitrance. 'He just hid in the house. The wife [his girlfriend's stepmother] kept telling us he was coming, but he didn't come.'

Kagiso had been seeing the young woman for two years by then, and he was keen to marry. He had been working assiduously for years to set aside the money needed to pay *bogadi*, and had since become a respected preacher in a local church; he knew he was a good catch.

But Kagiso had had an inkling for some time that his girlfriend's father would prove evasive. The man avoided him and refused to greet him when they passed each other in the street. After some 'research', as he called it, Kagiso concluded that there was an unresolved conflict with the girl's mother's family – likely related to the custody of the girl herself. 'Maybe he took the child when he wasn't supposed to, and they are still disputing it,' he ventured. 'That would explain why he refuses her to visit her mother's family in the city.' Whether the girl's parents had been married was unclear, and her mother had met a strange and untimely death (which, like the death of Lorato's baby, rendered it subject to the suspicion of witchcraft). 'Who can say?' he concluded, alluding to unsavoury possibilities. 'But he knows I know something is wrong – that's why he can't look at me or greet me.' I asked whether the young woman had told him anything. 'Even she doesn't know the whole story,' he noted, 'but there are things she's not willing to say, even to me. Some other things she has come close to telling me, but in the end she keeps quiet.'

'He could have come out at least to reject us,' Kagiso mused, after a pause. 'He refused because he knew he had no right. Her cousins on the mother's side told her that man has no say in your marriage. Why is that? The stepmother even said, "You know him – this thing, you have to do for yourself."'

'How do you get married by yourself?' I asked, perplexed.

Kagiso shrugged. '*Gakeitse*!' he answered – I don't know. 'Without the parents? I don't know. I don't think there is a way.'

'Getting married is a problem,' I observed.

'I'll keep trying,' said Kagiso, flashing his confident smile. It wasn't clear whether he meant to keep trying with the girl's family, or just to keep trying to get married – with another girl if necessary. The ambiguity seemed deliberate.

While some of the details around Kagiso's failed proposal initially struck me as exceptional, the failure itself was common enough. And, on reflection, his apparently singular misfortune had more in common with other failed attempts than I expected. His older brother Moagi, for example, had embarked on marriage negotiations with his then partner and the mother of his son a couple of years previously, while I had still been away. The build-up had been extended. Roughly two years before

the negotiations had even begun, he had undertaken construction of a two-and-a-half-room house in the yard of his parents. His parents had insisted on it as a prerequisite to undertaking negotiations on his behalf. When – well over a year later – it was completed and they had made the long journey to the woman's home village, the woman's family had been particularly demanding in their *bogadi* requests (in contrast to the colonial-era expectation Schapera described for the Bakgatla, that whatever the man offered would have to be accepted; Schapera 1940: 87). 'They wanted a house built for them, so many cows, a nice suit for the old man and dresses for the old woman, money, blankets, everything!' Lorato recounted. Moagi's delegation replied that they had heard the request, and then returned home, nonplussed.

When I asked after the situation on my return, nobody was clear about what had happened or where things stood. The process had faded back into a certain inscrutability – much as it had with Kagiso after the initial attempted negotiation. Moagi's sought-after bride occasionally called to check on her son, who lived with the Legaes; she even came to stay once, for a couple of days. However, the woman now called Moagi's younger sisters to ask them to send her son to visit, rather than calling Moagi himself, causing everyone discomfort and some consternation. Whether this reflected some breakdown that had happened before the marriage negotiations took place and had railroaded them, or whether it had been caused by the mysterious suspension of the negotiations – or whether, indeed, there had been no breakdown at all – no one could say. 'Maybe she didn't want to get married to him, and told her parents to make it impossible,' Lorato surmised. 'Or maybe the parents didn't like him and made it impossible by themselves. *Gareitse*,' she concluded, as she often did – we don't know. The relationship had receded into opacity.

Marriage stands at the heart of the unique structural ambiguities and flexibilities of Tswana kinship. Historically, Tswana marriage preferences were an anomaly among Southern African kinship systems: they accommodated marriages between cross-cousins, the children of siblings of the opposite sex (e.g. a man's son with his sister's daughter), *and* parallel cousins, or the children of siblings of the same sex (e.g. a man's daughter with his brother's son; Kuper 2016; Radcliffe-Brown 1950; Schapera 1950).[1] Over time, these preferences created an overlapping

---

[1] Both preferences are cast in terms of keeping property within the family. Cross-cousin marriages kept property between the households of cattle-linked siblings, where the *bogadi* acquired through the marriage of a sister was used to finance her brother's marriage, giving her a preferential claim on his son for marriage to her daughter in the next generation. Parallel cousin marriages kept property within a patriline.

and indeterminate field of kin relations, in which any given kin tie might be '*at once* agnatic, matrilateral, and affinal' (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991: 138, emphasis in the original) – meaning that, in practice, kin relationships were susceptible to constant contestation and renegotiation, oriented around relative wealth, power, and so on (ibid.; see also Comaroff 1981). While it was more often nobles who married kin than commoners (Schapera 1957), parallel cousin marriage – and the principles of ambiguity, flexibility, and pragmatic responsiveness to social variables it generated – remained one ideal form of union (an ideal that appears to persist in other areas of Botswana; see Solway 2017a: 317 on 'Formula One' marriages among the Bakgalagadi). What I want to emphasise here is that these ideals were markedly insular: rather than simply prioritising the extension of kinship to other, unrelated households, marriage was in many ways preoccupied with containing, reproducing, and reorganising *existing* kin relationships (perhaps especially following the decline of polygyny; see Solway 1990).

Tswana marriage has long been characterised as a drawn-out, indeterminate, often incomplete, and potentially reversible process – rather than a definitive event or state of being – which reproduces and compounds the structural ambiguities described above (Comaroff 1980; Comaroff and Roberts 1977). By contrast, contemporary anthropological accounts suggest that marriage is increasingly geared towards foreclosing indeterminacy. Where the stages of marriage once unfolded over years, they are now concluded rapidly and all at once, with *bogadi* paid, vows made, and spectacular celebrations happening in one extended event (Solway 2017a; van Dijk 2010; 2017). Government has taken a more prominent role, formally registering marriages and overseeing mass ceremonies that generally precede the ceremonies and celebrations organised by kin. Where marriage was once an explicitly intergenerational undertaking – a father paid *bogadi* for his son's bride; a sister's bridewealth enabled her brother's marriage and established her claim on his daughter in marriage for her son (Kuper 2016: 274) – intergenerational kin involvement now seems to be waning (Gulbrandsen 1986; Solway 2017a).

At the same time, marriage itself has been in sharp decline, since at least the advent of labour migration in the region (Gulbrandsen 1986; Pauli and van Dijk 2017; Townsend 1997). Explanations for this trend have surmised that, in an era of waged work, both men and women are less reliant on one another's labour and resources, and less willing to put up with the constraints of married life; and that men's natal families in particular have greater reason to want to retain their contributions at home (Gulbrandsen 1986; Townsend 1997). Links have also been made to growing inequalities, with the lavish displays of conspicuous

consumption that now characterise weddings increasingly a privilege of the elite (Pauli and Dawids 2017) or bound up with emerging loan industries and the acquisition of substantial personal debt (James 2017; van Dijk 2010; 2017). And yet – as the conversation at the beginning of Part III suggests – marriage remains a highly desirable goal for men and women, if an elusive ideal. Approaching marriage in terms of recognition and the *dikgang* that accompany it, I suggest, shows that this elusiveness is not only a question of political economy but also remains linked to ambiguity. Rather than being eliminated, ambiguity seems to have been relocated from marriage as such to the pre-wedding phase – and, beyond that, into familial histories. Aside from the question of financial strategies and resources, the failure to marry may also be a question of the costs of seeking definitive clarity in intergenerational relationships, which rely on a degree of ambiguity for their continuity. In this sense, I suggest that contemporary Tswana marriage remains preoccupied with the management of existing kin links – showing an uncanny resonance with pregnancy and its reorganisation of women's natal kin relationships.[2]

Ideally, marriage negotiations involve a step-by-step process of seeking formal recognition for a conjugal relationship. At every stage, acts of seeing/showing, speaking, hearing, and knowing are explicitly foregrounded, requiring other acts of recognition in turn. Each of these acts explicitly makes the previously hidden seen (Werbner 2015), to wider and wider groups of people. The potential interpretations of what is newly grasped must be carefully managed, especially given the historical tendency towards indeterminacy and dispute (Comaroff and Roberts 1977).

After conducting the relationship itself with great secrecy, Kagiso had to tell his parents of his intentions, disclose his financial status to them sufficiently to demonstrate his ability to pay *bogadi*, and ask them to call 'the uncles' (as he described them) to speak to his potential in-laws. His parents, having heard his request, had to identify, call, and speak to appropriate kin (Dipuo chose his younger sister's son and the son's wife); demonstrate the viability of his proposal to them; and then ask them to assist in repeating the process of speaking, making known, and asking with Kagiso's potential in-laws. The cycle continues right through wedding-related rituals: as Solway (2017a: 316) notes, 'seeing' and

---

[2] In a different sense, Tswana marriage has long sought to eliminate ambiguity (*pace* Comaroff 1980) – if not between partners, then between their children and their kin. Batswana make provision to marry the dead (Dahl 2009a: 1), for a man to marry his children, or for boys to marry their mothers on behalf of their late fathers (Comaroff and Comaroff 1991), generally when the original conjugal relationship has ended. Such marriages work to secure the recognition of children and their inheritance rights – thereby reworking their relationships with their parents and forebears.

showing *bogadi* cattle have long been crucial aspects of conferring recognition on a marriage and on the networks of relationships that enable the achievement of a wedding, which the cattle make evident – although they, too, are subject to multiple interpretations (ibid.; see also Comaroff 1981: 172). Today, showy white weddings, photographs and videos, and social media posts with customised hashtags seek similar recognition in novel ways, extending the recognisability of the couple's success, and that of their kin, in time and space (Solway 2017a: 313; see also Pauli and Dawids 2017: 23).

But at each stage, these processes face an increasing risk of disagreement, refusal, failure, or jealousy, among an ever expanding group of people – *dikgang* that may adversely affect the relationship of the partners and of the negotiating kin, whose contributions to the process remain key. Even where couples seek to avoid these difficulties by 'marrying themselves', as van Dijk (2017: 36) notes, potentially fraught disclosures of the marrying couple's resources to their respective kin run comparable risks of inviting jealousy or refusals to assist. When Kagiso's would-be father-in-law refused to see the delegation or hear their request for his daughter's hand, he not only refused to recognise the relationship but also showed Kagiso's parents and negotiators that refusal, refusing them in turn. The refusal undermined Kagiso's hopes for marriage and his claims to adulthood; like Lorato's failed house, Kagiso's failed proposal frustrated and stalled his ability to make-for-himself. But the repercussions were greater, in proportion to the number of people concerned and the degree of exposure involved: it was not only Kagiso whose ability to manage people, relationships, and *dikgang* was called into doubt, but also the ability of those who had gone to negotiate for him. The failure cast doubt on his family's ability to secure marriage for him, and on their status relative to that of their potential in-laws as well.

The recognitions involved in marriage negotiations demand other disclosures and recognitions in turn, and so such refusals may also be explicit concealments: not only of relative resources, but also, as Kagiso speculated with regard to his partner's father, of the unresolved – or unresolvable – *dikgang* of the past. By Kagiso's assessment, the would-be father-in-law's refusal to receive Kagiso's kin was most likely a question of keeping the fraught, ambiguous history of his relationships with his child, his (deceased) partner, and her family hidden, removed from further reflection or interpretation. In part, Kagiso's speculation was an effort to cast the failed proposal in a specific light: as a *kgang* that was irreconcilable because it was oriented around his partner and her family, rather than him and the Legaes. While this framing didn't change the outcome for Kagiso, as an explanation circulated among family it served

to shelter them from any further intransigent conflicts around an issue that was out of their hands, to sustain Kagiso's own capacity to self-make, and to mark an insuperable distinction between kin and non-kin (a point to which we will return). But Kagiso's speculation also indicates an expectation that marriage negotiations routinely risk forcing long-standing, unresolved familial issues out of suspension and back into play – whether between a potential spouse's own parents or between the parents' respective siblings and extended kin, the full range of whom will be called on in various ways for the marriage to succeed. It taps into an assumption that marriage negotiations risk rendering the ambiguities of those relationships recognisable, often uncomfortably so, to a generation among whom they were previously unknown and for whom they might pose further problems. Marriage negotiations also offer a rare means of resolving such long-standing *dikgang* – but, in practice, they often exacerbate them.

Thus, for example, were Boipelo to get married – as Dipuo reminded her at the beginning of this part – the payment of *bogadi* from her marriage would go to Dipuo, her mother's father, unless her own father managed to pay *bogadi* for her mother first. The impending marriage of daughters was often a major reason given by men I knew in their forties and fifties, having set up households with their wives and children long before, for finally wanting to pay *bogadi* (see also White 2017). Knowing that *bogadi* would soon be received for marrying daughters meant that they could finance their own *bogadi* with greater confidence. Children's marriages, then – daughters' marriages in particular – enable the formalisation of their parents' marriages, resolving any suspended questions of their status, their respective responsibilities, inheritances, and so on (a development that suggests that marriage remains an intergenerational matter, but in inverted terms). Ideally, the distribution of *bogadi* from Boipelo's father among Dipuo's family, and then from Boipelo's would-be husband among her parents' family, would strengthen and reinforce their relationships to one another, reconcile past misunderstandings, and provide a new framework of relating. Both Boipelo and her partner, and her parents, would also achieve a certain degree of recognised independence, as households and as individuals. (The Tswana term *kgaoganya* – both 'sharing' and 'separating' – also connotes 'resolving'.) At the same time, should delays or disputes about the payment of that *bogadi* emerge between Boipelo's future husband's family and her parents, or between her parents and her mother's parents, the confusion of stakeholders and proliferation of claims – and the questions raised about what those delays or disputes suggested about the people and relationships involved – could well destabilise relationships even further and derail either

marriage altogether. Certainly, the inability of Boipelo's father and his kin to successfully negotiate the *dikgang* of his own 'marriage' without the help of his daughter's marriage would also render his capacity to cope with *dikgang* suspect, thereby further undermining his position.

Similarly, had Kagiso insisted on negotiating his marriage with his girlfriend's maternal kin, the causes of animosity between her maternal and paternal kin would have had to be articulated and addressed. However, if – as seems likely – the issues at the heart of Kagiso's would-be father-in-law's evasiveness were deeply insoluble, pushing his case could have risked irreparable ruptures in the young woman's family, and might have foreclosed the possibility of marriage. In the end, her father having refused to recognise Kagiso's overtures, Kagiso's girlfriend moved north to visit her maternal kin. Her relationship with Kagiso faded into obscurity not long afterwards. Having failed to negotiate the *dikgang* of recognition, Kagiso found himself back at square one, his role and relationships within his own family unchanged.

Beyond the often cited pressures of expense – whether for *bogadi* or weddings – it is perhaps the difficulty of addressing long-standing, suspended *dikgang* within families, as well as managing the *dikgang* that emerge between families, that introduces 'new forms of slowness' (Solway 2017a: 218) in the negotiating stage, making marriage so difficult to achieve in contemporary Botswana. Even more than pregnancy, marriage is a deeply fraught but critical means of reorganising and reproducing families. And this fraught creativity affects not only prospective spouses and their children, but also the generations that precede them. The tension I have described attaches not simply to questions of exchange or love, affinity or procreation, but to the *dikgang* generated by recognition. At the same time, marriage is one of the few processes that offers the structural possibility of resolving the suspended *dikgang* of the past, while enabling the reproduction of kinship into the future – leaving Tswana families, and particularly their men, in something of a quandary.

As Gulbrandsen noted for the Bangwaketse, 'no bachelor can ever be fully recognised as a man' (1986: 12; *pace* Lafontaine 1985: 162). At stake for Kagiso was not only a 'form of adulthood' (van Dijk 2010: 290) but also a new role in the family, in which he could 'tak[e] decisions in family affairs, inheritance and the ownership of property' as well as negotiating the marriages and disputes of others (ibid.; see also Durham 2004; Townsend 1997). In Setswana, a man marries (*o a nyala*) whereas a woman is married (*o a nyalwa*); in asserting that relative agency, an important measure of social and political personhood is conferred that goes beyond the man's ability to accumulate or provide resources (cf. Gulbrandsen 1986: 15). I suggest that such recognition

emerges as a result of a man's proven willingness and ability to make the hidden seen, by drawing both his relationship and his capacity to marry to the awareness of a wide range of kin and non-kin, and by successfully navigating the risks that emerge with that awareness. In other words, his recognition is first achieved, and then continuously reproduced, in the acquisition and management of pronounced, perpetual – one might even say chronic – *dikgang*. The ability to tackle *dikgang* successfully with a vast range of kin and affines, which a man demonstrates by securing his marriage, and the continued responsibility for further negotiations he will bear as a married man, establish his suitability to participate in other public forms of negotiation – whether they be additional marriage arrangements or the hearing of cases at *kgotla*.

Marriage is not the only, or final, marker of a man's adulthood, of course. Setting up a household for a wife and children (Townsend 1997: 409), his father's death, and his own record of participation in decision making (Durham 2004: 596) all mark further projects of self-making in which a man's adulthood, and his personhood, grows. But like marriage, these projects involve new forms of exposure and recognition, as well as the acquisition of other *dikgang* that require reflection and negotiation, of the sort explored throughout this book. His success in handling the *dikgang* of recognition leading to marriage both creates opportunity for and forecasts his potential in addressing these additional *dikgang*. In this sense, while marriage may seem to have become irrelevant to a man's rank and status since the advent of waged labour (Gulbrandsen 1986: 15), it nonetheless remains a key aspect of his self-making and his aspirations to ethical personhood.

Kagiso was ultimately successful in negotiating a marriage several months after I left the field – perhaps a year and a half after his previous attempt. He had met his wife-to-be at the local home-based care NGO where they both worked. I had met her a few times when she was spending time with Kagiso at his shop, although usually she stayed in his car and was at pains to avoid anything but the most basic greeting. After Kagiso's initial negotiations with her family, she still lived in her own rented house in the village, but I heard that she had become warm and friendly with the family at home, regularly visiting in the afternoons and often coming to stay with Kagiso at night. All that remained in Kagiso's marriage trajectory were the ceremonies: at the district commissioner's hall, at the church, and at the two families' natal homes. The expense and logistics involved in the ceremonies meant that they would be some time in coming; dates a year and longer after the initial negotiation were being considered. However, the two families' successful management of the initial marriage negotiations laid the groundwork for

equally successful joint responses to future issues – the critical factor in maintaining flexible and creative kinship bonds in the context of inevitable *dikgang*. It is this proven capacity to share and jointly negotiate *dikgang* that gives affinal kinship sufficient persistence that – as the proverb which opened this chapter suggests – it does not decay, even if the married spouses themselves part.

In the context of the AIDS epidemic, however, the recognition of relationships has taken on new risks, and associated *dikgang* threaten to take on new forms while continuing to work in ways familiar from the discussion above. It is to the dynamics of recognition in the epidemic, and the *dikgang* that result, that I turn next.

'*And* … she's pregnant.' Lesedi and I sat in shock for a few moments. It had taken some time to eke this information out of her; she had refused to tell me anything on the phone, other than that her cousin Tumi was in hospital.[1] She had called home, asking to use the Legaes' postal address to access a good hospital that would be less crowded than those in the city, but she would explain no further. Gradually, as we sat on the long benches lining the small courtyard of the maternity ward, the story emerged.

Lesedi had found Tumi in the middle of the night, collapsed in the hallway of the house they shared with two other maternal cousins and Lesedi's daughter in the capital, Gaborone. Tumi had been weak and sick for some time, and had lost weight. She had had episodes when she talked nonsensically. The signs were straightforward enough and saved articulating the painfully obvious: apparently Tumi herself had known for some time that she was HIV-positive, although it was only the routine test at the hospital that had brought the fact to the attention of her cousin. The pregnancy was an added surprise to everyone, Tumi included.

The last time I had seen Tumi had been at a family wedding some months before. Even then I hadn't seen her much; she had come home with a new boyfriend and was reluctant to bring him into the yard. A long-term relationship with another man had ended dramatically not long before, upon her discovery of photograph albums stashed under his bed recording his marriage to another woman in his home village. By all accounts Tumi was smitten and enthusiastic, and the new relationship was happy and hopeful.

Now, on the hard hospital benches, Lesedi began to tell a different story. Tumi had met the new man at the clinic where she worked, and where he was a regular client. They had begun seeing each other. He talked of the untimely loss of his first wife and about his desire to remarry. And then the clinic doctor sent Tumi's workmate a text message, asking her to warn Tumi that she was getting involved with a man

---

[1] Tumi is Lesedi's mother's younger sister's child – *ngwana a mmangwane*.

164

who was HIV-positive. But, by that point, Tumi was too much in love to care. 'Or maybe the workmate didn't tell her right away?' I suggested. 'People can be jealous.' Lesedi shrugged. '*Gareitse*,' she said. 'It's possible. I think she just loved the idea of getting married. You know, what girl doesn't want that?'

Around us, women in advanced stages of pregnancy lounged about in bathrobes, their hair wrapped in scarves, chatting with visiting family members. Lesedi took in the scene with a flat expression, the usual glint of mischief and knowing irony gone from her eyes. She explained that the doctor had disclosed more than his patient's status – which Tumi, working at the clinic's registration desk, would probably have been able to glean from his file in any case. He had explained that the man's first wife had died of AIDS and that the man himself had nearly died as well. The doctor surmised that the man carried a particularly virulent strain of HIV, and said as much in his text to Tumi's colleague. It was an astonishing breach of confidentiality, if not unprecedented; from early on in the epidemic, the relative ethical merits of patient privacy versus potential risk to loved ones had been hotly debated. For Lesedi, the question of confidentiality mattered less than the danger her cousin was now in.

Three months later, Tumi had discovered that she, too, was HIV-positive. She mentioned it to no one but her new boyfriend, who quickly began to withdraw. Lesedi felt that the stress of the situation was what had begun to take its toll on Tumi, making it impossible for her to cope with the combined effects of the virus and – as was now apparent – a pregnancy.

'Where is this guy now?' I asked. The situation angered me: the man's apparent capriciousness, Tumi's willingness to trust him, her illness, the baby, the shockwaves sent through everyone else's lives, his convenient absence, the impotence of anyone to do anything about any of it. Lesedi shrugged again. She wasn't sure if Tumi was still in touch with him but suspected she was. He hadn't shown his face. Besides Lesedi, the only other regular visitor Tumi had was the married man she had been with before. She explained that I couldn't go in to see Tumi myself – she was being treated for tuberculosis and was limited to two regular visitors.

We sat in silence for a while, punctuated only by the occasional '*Mxm*!', a sharp teeth-sucking sound of annoyance and derision. We watched the round, bath-robed women basking in the sun. Two soldiers walked by in camouflage and high, polished boots, entirely out of place. Our disgruntlement latched onto them as they passed. 'Ah! Men are useless,' said Lesedi. 'Imagine. What kind of person can do that?' We fell quiet, each thinking of the number of men we knew who had abandoned women to their pregnancies; and the number of women we knew whose pregnancies had helped them secure some relationships and end others.

It didn't always involve life-threatening illness, but we both knew plenty of people, men and women, who could do similar things in similar circumstances. That didn't diminish the ethical imperative of Lesedi's question, though: what kind of person does these things? And what does it mean for them, for those embroiled in the situation, for the networks of their relationships, and for us?

Lesedi and Tumi were both from the far north-east corner of the country, a day's drive away. Their mothers were sisters and they had grown up together. They stayed with Lesedi's seven-year-old daughter and two other maternal cousins in a spacious, three-room house in one of the new neighbourhoods springing up around the capital, spanned by rutted, unpaved roads and convenient to a profusion of shopping malls. They went home infrequently, but always for major holidays and events. The grandmother who had raised them was diabetic and increasingly frail. Lesedi had built a roomy house in their natal yard, but both women felt that there was little left for them there and that the obligations of life at home were too consuming.

With an expression of surprised guilt, Lesedi admitted that she had been thinking about asking Tumi to move out. She felt that Tumi had not been contributing enough at home, and Lesedi was overwhelmed with the demands of her own university schooling and caring for her child. Of course, she could not ask such a thing now, but awareness of her responsibility for the additional care Tumi would require in the coming weeks and months showed in the strain on her face. I asked her whether she planned to tell her grandmother at least – knowing that, in such a situation, the elderly woman would be certain to come down to help. Lesedi hung her head and shook it slowly. 'I don't think so,' she said. '*Kana* she's old, it can kill her. I'll just tell them about the pregnancy – it's bad enough.'

Tumi's tale resonated with many others I heard. Whenever I became naïvely exasperated with friends for putting themselves in danger of contracting HIV, I was met with similar explanations: a shrug and an assertion that love, the promise of marriage, or the desire for a child made sense of the risk (see the description of AIDS as a problem of love in Klaits 2010: 3; see also Hunter 2010). The *dikgang* that surround the goals of pregnancy or marriage in usual circumstances, with far-reaching consequences of their own, put this reaction in context. HIV is rendered *one of many* risks to be borne in the project of making the family and the self, one of many potential crises to be faced in that process. It is a risk people are willing to take in order to build conjugal relationships, which open up opportunities to self-make and to refigure kin relations. In this sense, it is a risk of the same order as others I have described above, many of which also present the threat of illness or death. Indeed, Batswana actively absorb HIV and AIDS into the range of *dikgang* associated with conjugal intimacy as a crucial means of living with the epidemic.

Even practices that seem to offer little more than an egregious danger of infection – like having multiple partners, as Batswana often do – might be understood to *ameliorate* the other risks inherent in intimate relationships. Before antiretroviral (ARV) treatment was made widely available, Klaits notes that men in the Apostolic church he studied kept multiple partners 'in order to "protect themselves" (*go itshireletsa*), ironically the same phrase used in health campaigns to promote condoms' (2010: 131). Klaits links this 'protection' to a distribution of love that ensures emotional well-being and the improved chance of return on one's investments in others. Such protection is no less necessary in a time of widespread ARV treatment. Indeed, the imperative to keep a relational self fragmented and concealed, in order to protect oneself and others against witchcraft, predates and outstrips the particularities of the pandemic (see Comaroff and Comaroff 2001). It is a sort of protection decisively linked to managing and containing recognisability, to controlling who can see, speak about, or know a person, on what terms, and to what extent. And it suggests that this protection against relational indeterminacies and risks is as important as – or *more* important than – protection against the virus (Hirsch et al. 2009: 19).

Of course, to say that the risk of contracting HIV or developing AIDS is of the same order as other *dikgang* in intimate relationships is not to say that the stakes remain the same. Public health discourse has actively sought to heighten the stakes of HIV infection, as have behaviour change campaigns run by government, NGOs, and international agencies countrywide. In many ways, these responses to the epidemic explicitly pathologise the *dikgang* I have described, turning the everyday ambiguities associated with intimacy, care, love, sex, marriage, pregnancy, and birth into clearer-cut questions of life and death. These renditions seek to change the terms of engagement with HIV and AIDS by requiring and attempting to refigure their recognition (Henderson 2011: 24; LeMarcis 2012; Nguyen 2010), foregrounding the visibility of the disease over the people and relationships it affects.[2]

HIV became recognisable in Tumi's body in many of the same ways her pregnancy eventually did. Its symptoms became visible gradually, over a period of several months. And, as Lesedi's reflections indicate, it provoked some of the same responses and repercussions that we saw in Chapter 7. It signalled the existence of a relationship without incontrovertibly identifying the man involved, and it fell to the woman's natal family above all to negotiate the crisis, reasserting her connection to them. I knew young women who returned home to their natal yards to

---

[2] Something similar might be said of the COVID-19 pandemic, of course – a possibility to which I return in the Epilogue.

be nursed in advanced stages of illness, much as they might return to give birth and be confined. And nursing – or continuous, intimate care – was a primary means through which the family could address the *kgang* of illness and seek to contain it (Klaits 2010; Livingston 2005). Friends often noted that death after a long illness at home was preferable to sudden death because it offered family the opportunity to discharge responsibilities still owed to their stricken relative by contributing to their care. For women like Tsholo, the recognition of AIDS was much like the recognition of pregnancy and birth: it was primarily oriented towards reproducing relationships to natal kin.

But differences emerge in what is recognised, in the options available for managing the *dikgang* that arise, and in the repercussions of those management strategies. In Tumi's story, it is recognition of the disease itself that threatens to dominate. The relationship through which it was transmitted and the people involved recede from view by comparison. And, in the overdetermined representational context of AIDS interventions, this differential recognition works to change what is made recognisable: that is, mortality and the threat of death, instead of relational personhood and the potential of life. The conceptual distance between recognising AIDS and recognising relationships or persons is underscored by Tumi's willingness to accept and overlook her boyfriend's HIV-positive status, which she had many ways of knowing. At the same time, the dominance of the disease in the way in which the clinic staff perceived not only the boyfriend but also his past marriage and Tumi's relationship with him underscores the violent priority of recognition claimed by the virus in contexts where biomedical knowledge and public health discourse hold sway.

The recognisability of AIDS, in this case, produces *dikgang* that differ markedly from those that emerge when conjugal relationships are recognised. It throws into question the capacity both of the individual to care for herself and of her family to care for her, without themselves falling ill and dying. As Klaits argues convincingly, AIDS is hard to talk about because it enhances scrutiny of and 'frequently amounts to critical commentaries on caregiving relationships' (Klaits 2010: 33). In a similar vein, Livingston notes that the care required for debility renders differences among kin problematically visible, as 'relationships undergo both public and private scrutiny' (Livingston 2005: 3). But the same might be said of marriage and pregnancy. Concern surrounding the Legae pregnancies focused on the family's ability to look after both their own daughters and their daughters' children, as well as the fathers' willingness and ability to do so. And Kagiso's abortive proposal meant that his and his girlfriend's relationship, and the full range of kin relationships in

which they were embedded, came under deeply problematic scrutiny, highlighting and creating differences both among and between their families. *Dikgang* routinely destabilise relationships and call them into question; as we have seen, the *dikgang* associated with marriage and pregnancy destabilise the full range of kin relationships, across generations, among siblings, and between couples. But when that range of *dikgang* is engaged, reflected upon, and addressed – even if they are never fully resolved – they create potential for the full range of those relationships to be reproduced and reconfigured (even if the results may be mixed). And they make it possible for the individuals involved to self-make, to be seen, and to see themselves as ethical persons through the gaze, or recognition, of others (Werbner 2015; 2016). An intransigent problem arises when that process of reflection and recognition is shifted away from those relationships, and the *dikgang* they involve, to AIDS as a terminal disease – adequate responses to which lie exclusively in the hands of biomedicine and public health.

AIDS *qua* AIDS cannot be reported to a partner's kin the way pregnancy can; fines cannot be levied; kin negotiators cannot be informed and sent to make claims. AIDS cannot be demonstrated to extended kin as proof of readiness to marry, nor can it be negotiated between two families; and while it may throw the failings of intergenerational relationships into relief, it cannot help address them. But AIDS as a *kgang* of conjugality, a crisis in the making of selves and of families, *can* be reflected upon and addressed on those terms. The *kgang* of AIDS overlaps enough with other conjugal *dikgang* that it can be absorbed into them; and, where it can't, Batswana actively recast it in terms of *dikgang* that can be addressed. More than simply 'hiding' the disease, this work involves shifting reflection and recognition from the disease itself back to people and relationships, transferring the stakes from life and death back to kin-making and self-making. Much as Livingston (2005) argues for traditional Tswana diagnostic categories, the key is to embed affliction within social relations that can be engaged constructively. Doing so redirects the moral imagination of HIV and AIDS, refocusing it on the hidden dynamics of selves in relation rather than on the virus, keeping it alive to 'alternatives in flux' (Werbner 2016: 87) and practical possibilities of response. Small wonder, then, that Lesedi would choose to notify her grandmother about Tumi's pregnancy – a *kgang* about which something could be done and around which kin-making and self-making could proceed – but not about her HIV-positive status. She worked not so much to conceal her cousin's diagnosis as to subsume it and the crisis it represented in a way that prioritised and enabled Tumi's self-making and kin-making projects.

Conclusion: Part III

Dipuo reacted to emergent trends in negotiating contemporary marriage by muttering '*Re bona dilo*' – we are seeing things. The comment aptly summarises the central *kgang* of conjugal relationships among Batswana: the management of recognition. Seeing things, saying and hearing things, and knowing things – whether about a pregnancy or about a relationship moving towards (or through or away from) marriage – form and transform kinship by posing problems to be negotiated within and between families. The ways in which recognition is acquired, and the risks and opportunities that it presents, differ for men and women. But, for both, a full range of kin relationships are implicated: from intergenerational relationships, to sibling relationships, to conjugal relationships. *Dikgang* from the past may emerge unexpectedly and require navigation; *dikgang* of the future are anticipated in addressing those of the present. I suggest that pregnancy and marriage mark such potent means of both reproducing and reorganising kin relations because they draw all of these *dikgang* together, implicating and engaging the broadest possible range of kin in reflecting on and addressing them. Rather than marking disruptions in kinship practice that suggest significant social change or breakdown, the *dikgang* that commonly arise in Setswana pregnancy and marriage – and that have filled anthropological accounts of both since the colonial era – may be critical factors in continuously reconstituting and reorienting Tswana kinship, thereby securing its continuity and responsiveness to contexts of rapid change.

Dipuo's comment also implies that things are now being seen in ways they shouldn't – an observation suggestive of the problematic new visibilities of illness and mortality that may emerge in conjugal relationships during a time of AIDS. As we have seen, the risks posed by HIV and AIDS are in many ways interpretatively aligned with, and actively absorbed into, the *dikgang* long associated with intimate relationships among Batswana. This convergence may go some way in explaining both the uncommonly high prevalence of the disease in Botswana and its tenacity in the face of extensive public education, treatment, prevention, and behaviour change campaigns (cf. Bochow 2017). But it also

170

underscores the creative ways Batswana have found to live with the epidemic. While the repercussions of AIDS and related public health discourse for managing conjugal relationships are considerable, and the stakes significant, Batswana work to keep them oriented around kin-making and self-making; as such, they assert continuity not only with the *dikgang* but with the imperatives and terms of negotiation that have long characterised Tswana kinship. In this sense, Tswana families and kinship practice may be better able to respond to the crisis of AIDS than has generally been assumed – and they may form an important, largely overlooked, site of resilience in the heart of the epidemic.

★★★

INTERLUDE: FAMILY PORTRAIT

It was a hot, hazy day, and we hung about the yard listlessly. None of us were motivated to do anything, except the younger children and their friends from the neighbourhood, who had stretched out on the cool, smooth concrete of the stoep, assiduously colouring in books I had brought them at Christmas.

Watching them, I hit upon an idea. I called the older children over. They were either bored, curious, or respectful enough to agree when I asked them whether they would like to help me with something for my schoolwork. I tore out some long, sturdy pages from my drawing book and gave them a couple each, asking the children to describe their family on them. After establishing whether they were to write or draw – I told them both were fine – they each beetled away into separate corners of the house to get started.

They all took the assignment quite seriously. As evening approached they asked if they could have more time, and another sheet of paper, and whether it should be in colour or ink or if just pencil was okay. I told them to take as long as they liked and do it however they liked.

It was perhaps a week before the first started trickling in: Tefo's, in heavy pencil, a series of lines and squiggles that represented the lands; Tshepo's, a list of all her brothers and sisters and cousins, the printing narrowing off into the corner of the page.

But Lesego's struck me. In neatly written, careful English, she described her family: her father, mother, and sister, where her mother worked, the house they lived in, and what she wanted to be when she grew up. Below the narrative was a drawing of her two parents, sister, and herself, lined up from tallest to smallest and holding hands, their clothes neatly coloured in. It was formal and practised, as if she had done similar assignments at school.

Lesego, of course, lived in the same yard as me. We were between 15 and 20 people, spanning four generations, all jumbled together into the same two houses. At the time, her mother lived away, partly for ease of access to work.

She may have known her father by having had him pointed out to her – he was pointed out to me once or twice – but, as far as I knew, she had never lived with him, and he had separated from her mother long ago. Her mother had since had a few relationships, some serious enough that the girls had met the man, but nothing more. And Lesego knew that I knew all of this.

I never asked Lesego about her family portrait. I was never sure how to put it without seeming to doubt her portrayal. Was it a habit borne of repeated school projects? An expression of desire, or aspiration? Was it an expectation, an ideal, *her* ideal? Or was it an experience of hers I was unfamiliar with? Where had it come from?

Part IV

'They Were Far Family'
Circulating Children and the Limits of Kinship

Go lemala ganamane ke go lala le mma yo.

The way to spoil a calf is to let it sleep with its mother.

'My aunt wanted somebody to go and stay with her in the city, one of the girls, so that she could take her for schooling, pay for each and every thing …' Lesedi trailed off, looking wistful and laughing at herself a little. 'It's a kind of funny story,' she started over, and then hesitated, laughing uneasily again.

Lesedi and I sat in the University of Botswana library, where I had found her studying for her exams. After updating me on her cousin Tumi's condition – Tumi had finally been allowed to leave the hospital and return to their shared house – Lesedi had fallen to reminiscing about their childhood. Her usually bright, direct gaze had taken on a contemplative, inward-looking quality.

Lesedi and Tumi had grown up in the same yard, with their mothers' mother, Tumi's mother, and three other children of their mothers' siblings. Lesedi's mother was still alive then, moving back and forth across the nearby borders with Zimbabwe and South Africa to buy and resell clothes. She wasn't home often, although she visited from time to time. Her older sister stayed in a nearby city. 'Tumi's mother was not working,' Lesedi explained. 'Well, my mother was also not working at the time, not really' – income from itinerant selling was hardly reliable – 'so it wasn't just about that,' she said, piecing the situation together with some caution and uncertainty.

'My aunt[1] in the city was the first person at home to work, and help my grandmother,' she explained, having settled on a way of framing the tale. 'My uncles were all working, but they were married and looking after their wives. My aunt wanted one of us to go and stay with her, because

---

[1] Lesedi used 'aunt', 'grandmother', and 'uncles' in English, but the Setswana equivalents in this case would be *mmamogolo*, *nkuku*, and *bomalome*.

173

she had a baby, she wanted somebody to go and look after her boy, and also go to school.

'At the time we were suffering, you know, we were just staying at the lands.' She laughed again, with a hint of embarrassment. 'None of us had shoes or anything at that time; we would just go to school without shoes. So my aunt told us she was only going to take someone who had shoes. We had to go and ask for shoes from somebody, the neighbours or whoever. I went to the neighbours' place – there was one girl who was my age, so I asked to borrow her shoes. And she agreed. So I said, "Okay, it's fine. I'll come in the morning to take them."

'In the morning I slept late,' she said, chuckling at her own laziness. 'But I told Tumi the story, that I asked for shoes from the girl next door. So Tumi, early in the morning, she went there to take the shoes! Hey, Tumi was clever, you know? She took the shoes that were supposed to be mine.' When their aunt arrived in the yard that morning and found Tumi wearing shoes, she took the girl to live with her in the city.

'But Tumi grew up – my aunt really helped her,' Lesedi added, becoming reflective. The intervention had marked a profound shift of circumstances for Tumi. Having left her mother at home in the village, Tumi had moved to stay with her *mmamogolo* in the city and had been raised there. She had had the advantages of city schooling, of the food and clothes and comfort that her aunt, working in a well-paid job, could provide. Like the rest of their extended family, Tumi visited her home village at Christmas and during other holidays; she and Lesedi remained close. But she had few friends or acquaintances in the village, marking the extent to which the city had become her place. Given the apparently arbitrary nature of the original decision to take Tumi, Lesedi's taciturn way of relating the story took on a new clarity: such comparative advantage could easily have been a source of jealousy and bad feeling between her and her cousin. But Lesedi was carefully ungrudging. 'I was a little bit clever; I could manage to pass even when no one was interested in education at home. But Tumi might have struggled. Now you see her here, working. My aunt helped her.'

In Part IV, I explore Tswana practices of child circulation and the ways in which they differentiate degrees of relatedness across Tswana kin networks. Being called or sent to stay with a wide variety of relatives, or taking relatives in and looking after them, whether temporarily or semi-permanently, is a crucial and common experience of kinship for Batswana. For children and young people, living with grandparents, the siblings of either parent, and a range of more distant relatives, caring for and being cared for by them, constitutes a formative exposure to the people and relationships that make up their extended families. It makes

them kin. But more than simply mobilising relationships of care and thereby strengthening bonds between kin, I argue that child circulation plays an important role in differentiating kin as well: in establishing and reproducing degrees of relational nearness and distance, and ultimately in setting limits on relatedness. Like other tensions in family life, the tension of sustaining mutual responsibilities of care across extended family networks, while simultaneously ensuring that those networks are carefully distinguished and do not collapse in upon themselves, produces and is made legible in *dikgang* – conflicts and the processes of ethical reflection, negotiation, and irresolution that follow. And, as we have seen elsewhere, parallel tensions between effectively sustaining those networks and leaving space for *go itirela*, or self-making, exacerbate these *dikgang*.

At the same time, child circulation – as both a cause of and solution to familial *dikgang* – is a critical object of concern in assessing and addressing the repercussions of the AIDS epidemic. Among governmental and non-governmental organisations, it is simultaneously considered the 'traditional' practice best positioned to compensate for the supposedly widespread loss of parents and the ensuing 'orphan crisis'; feared to be breaking down under the twin pressures of modernisation and disease; and viewed with concern as a practice that may render children prone to neglect and abuse.[2] In Botswana, formal fostering alternatives have been set out in law and piloted in practice, but they have failed despite a widespread sense of their necessity among social work professionals. In this context, child circulation is an especially useful lens through which to consider Tswana kinship, the effects of AIDS, and the legacies of institutional interventions that have emerged in the epidemic's wake.

Circulation and Distinction

I have deliberately framed these chapters in terms of 'child circulation' rather than 'fostering', 'adoption', or even 'parenting'. Early structural-functionalist work on the topic focused on defining and distinguishing adoption from fosterage – primarily by identifying the range of tasks involved in parenting and tracing which were transferred in which

---

[2] See Madhavan (2004) for a thoughtful example of this argument, made at the height of the pandemic in South Africa, and Block (2014: 714) for an overview of similar concerns in Lesotho. A significant branch of anthropological literature on child fostering in sub-Saharan Africa describes and responds to the third concern in particular (Archambault 2010; Archambault and de Laat 2010; Bledsoe 1990; Verhoef and Morelli 2007) – latterly concluding that it may be overstated. Alber et al. (2013b: 15) note a similar ambivalence in West African framings of children's rights, where fostering is simultaneously held up as the best way to help children access schooling and the greatest risk for promoting child labour.

contexts (Goody 2013 [1982]). But, in practice, the two categories frequently blur together (Lallemand 2013 [1988]); and, as later critiques pointed out, identifying tasks and transferences downplayed the plurality of parental roles, their gendering, and the fact that most were processual, negotiated, and ongoing rather than properly transferrable (see Alber 2013: 79–107 for a detailed critique). Susan Lallemand (2013 [1988]) originally used 'the circulation of children' in part to avoid these assumptions and rigidities, and the phrase has since gained currency in ethnographic work from Peru (Fonseca 1986; Leinaweaver 2007a) to Alaska (Bodenhorn 2013). I adopt the phrase here to avoid assumptions about practice and affect with which the English terms 'parenting', 'adoption', and 'fostering' are laden, while bringing the situations I present into fruitful conversation with these globally diverse contexts.

The open-endedness of 'child circulation' is particularly suited to Botswana in a number of ways. In Botswana, arrangements made for (and by) children may be more or less permanent – as in the case of Lesedi staying with her grandmother, who raised her both before and after her mother's death; but they are also likely to be punctuated by a series of shorter-term circulations as well, as children are claimed by or sent to kin to offer help, or to stay for periods of schooling or work. The practice may not involve the child's physical relocation at all, or it may involve several relocations, including across the country. Perhaps most importantly, 'child circulation' leaves the question of agency open, making room for ways in which children circulate themselves, as well as ways in which they are circulated by both kin and institutions (see Archambault 2010 on children circulating themselves among the Maasai in Kenya; Leinaweaver 2007b for Peru). It gives a sense of movement appropriate to the Tswana experience and management of kin spatialities and associated dangers, too; children circulate not just between adults, but with them, or away from them, as the adults undertake their own movements (Coe 2013). At the same time, the term emphasises something specific to children's movements: both the highly transitory nature of children's residential patterns (e.g. Alber 2018; Alber et al. 2013b; Coe 2013) and a perpetual, cyclical element to them, giving an apt sense of the simultaneously interrupted and continuous temporality of the practice.

Notably, there is no term in Setswana for 'fostering' – whether in the sense of taking in the children of kin or non-kin – nor for 'foster child', although practices of asking for, giving, and taking children are widespread and long-standing, among family and even neighbours (Schapera 1940: 246–7; cf. Ingstad 2004). Cati Coe suggests that a similar absence in the vocabularies of West Africa may indicate that fosterage is

'an unmarked, and unremarked upon, aspect of daily life' (Coe 2013: 207; see also Alber et al. 2013b: 6). Friends whom I asked about this terminological gap explained it by saying, 'If I am sent a child, that child becomes my child,' underscoring the extent to which parenting responsibilities should be shared, and to which children ought to take all of their elders as *batsadi* (parents). However, these same friends took in the children of distant relatives as nannies and maids, treated them rather differently from their own children, and called them and were called by them using either the terms of their existing relationship or with reference to a 'real' parent (*malome*, *ngwana wa ga* … – 'child of …'[3]). 'Parenting' or 'parenthood' (*botsadi*) is therefore an equally problematic framing, for while it connotes critical kin ideals and encompasses a wide variety of caregiving arrangements in ways suitable for the term's highly inclusive Setswana usage, it does not clarify the discriminations among them that Batswana routinely make.

Of course, there is no term in Setswana for child circulation either, other than in descriptive phrases (focused on calling, sending, or taking). But its relative ethnographic and analytical open-endedness unsettles the assumptions attached to fostering in some strands of the anthropological literature. One long-standing theme in this work, globally, emphasises the role of fostering in creating, extending, strengthening, condensing, or multiplying kin ties, both between child and foster parent and between the child's natal and fostering families, especially where families are dispersed (e.g. Alber 2004; Bledsoe 1990; Bodenhorn 2013: 139; Carsten 1991; Lallemand 2013 [1988]; Leinaweaver 2007a; Meier 2013; Stack 1974: 62–89). This interpretive angle has proven productive, drawing our attention to processes of becoming and transforming kin, creating belonging, even to equality and social cohesion, and to the crucial roles children play in those processes (e.g. Alber 2003; 2018; Block 2014; Goody 2013 [1982]; Leinaweaver 2007a; 2007b). But it is a line of argument that seems to begin with what Roy Wagner (1977) describes as 'the traditional anthropological assumption of the innateness of kin differentiation … [and the] human responsibility to integrate them' (1977: 623). That is, it takes separation as a given, a problem for relatedness that is overcome by creating connection, belonging, and integration. What, then, of contexts where selves are not only intersubjective, but kin ties are potentially so dense, overlapping, and indeterminate that connection and integration pose the problem, rather than the solution? In Tswana practice, I suggest, child circulation is frequently

---

[3] This distinction is milder and more mutual than Schrauwers describes among Indonesia's fostered 'Cinderella' children (1999), but a careful distinction nonetheless.

experienced as a process of segregation, distancing, and exclusion. In Part IV, I look at ways in which Tswana child circulation circumscribes the fraught intimacies of kinship, enacting a 'moral duty' not to integrate but 'to differentiate, and to differentiate properly' (ibid.). And, in keeping with Wagner's mention of the 'moral', I examine the ways in which *dikgang* shape this differentiation, in part by containing processes of ethical reflection to specific relationships, while actively avoiding them in others.[4]

Anthropological work on fostering also shares a concern with the economies of child circulation, considering it variously in terms of transactions and gifts, exchange and sharing – with special relevance for social mobility (Bledsoe 1990). Indeed, Lallemand's original analysis of child circulation was intended primarily to grasp its exchange dynamics – and specifically to reconsider the practice in terms of alliance, concerned not just with parent–child relations but with anticipating, enabling, or replacing marital ones (2013 [1988]: 61–2).[5] Coe notes that even previous studies analysing fosterage in terms of the 'transfer, sharing, delegation, surrender and circulation of parental rights' rendered 'parenthood a form of property' (2013: 202) that could be transacted. Taking a slightly different tack, Erdmute Alber et al. (2013b) emphasise the expectation common across West Africa that children are born for their wider families and should be shared as food is shared – an extension of the notion that kin is a form of wealth. Janet Carsten's description of children's movement among Malays bridges these frameworks, noting that child circulation – prefigured by marriage exchanges – 'blurs the distinction between sharing and exchange in that it may be interpreted either as

---

[4] There are, of course, a wide range of ways in which children of different ages may be circulated, including between friends and their kin, or into the care of church leaders or other respected public figures. In some cases, these forms of circulation may crosscut kin groupings or create alternative networks of kin-like relations (for example, the *losika la semoya* or 'spiritual family' that Mma Maipelo sought to establish in her Gaborone church, as described by Klaits (2010)). These relations may be instigated by the children themselves, too. However, the more kin-like these ties become, the more consternation they seem to cause natal families – suggesting that the expectation or moral norm is that such circulations should create distinctions among kin, rather than connections between them.

[5] Child circulation is not, to my knowledge, understood in these terms in Botswana – although there was at least one unsavoury connection between child circulation and marriage. The Adoption Act (1953) was infamous among my social work colleagues in government for providing for the marriage of an adopted child by their (opposite-sex) adoptive parent once they reached the age of 18. My colleagues attributed this clause to the degeneracy of the British colonial government and frequently used it as an example to emphasise the need to update pre-independence laws still on the books.

exchange between discrete units or as sharing within an expanded unit' (Carsten 1991: 438).

The ambiguity between children's capacity to bind and distinguish family units in Carsten's account has echoes in Tswana practices of child circulation. However, in keeping with the economies of kinship explored in Part II, I suggest that Tswana ideals around child circulation are framed primarily in terms of contributions, which also subsume sharing and exchange; and that these contributions are not always reciprocal or reciprocated, nor unambiguously positive (see Block 2014: 714 on Lesotho for a similar point). Circulating children both *are* contributions and *make* contributions; they are both objects and agents of care. Children may be requested from or offered by one's siblings, one's children, the family of one's *malome*, and the full range of paternal and maternal kin – people with whom one would otherwise have long-standing contributory relationships of various kinds. In these cases, the child herself is a contribution to the management and completeness of one's household on behalf of those figures. But once moved, the children bear a responsibility to contribute help and care, including mobilising resources from their natal homes and other sources (including NGOs and government). The child's capacity to meet expectations of contribution, the host family's willingness and ability to contribute care in ways that benefit the child and her projects of self-making in turn, and the child's natal family's sense of whether their contribution to the host family is being adequately matched are all subject to ongoing assessment and reflection – and are therefore potential points at which *dikgang* emerge.

In Lesedi's brief account above, we begin to see how the practice of circulating children among extended families maps experimental extensions of many of the key practices of kin-making we have explored in earlier chapters: moving, staying, being called, and being sent among a multiplicity of 'kin spaces'; contributing care, through the provision of things and the work attendant upon them, in ways that build mutual obligation as well as personhood; and even making oneself and one's relationships and capacities (such as being able to mobilise shoes from neighbours) visible and known in ways that ground opportunities *go itirela*, to self-make. And across all of these experimental extensions, *dikgang* emerge – making child circulation a practice in which the full range of possible familial conflicts is condensed.[6] As Alber (2018: 144)

---

[6] See Alber et al. (2013b: 9–10) for a description of conflict in child fostering situations across West Africa; and Bledsoe (1990) for an early exploration of conflicts and fosterage among the Mende, to which we will return.

notes for Benin, conflicts around circulated children in particular risk triggering conflicts between 'taking' and 'giving' households, but also conflicts between husband and wife, and potentially their respective kin, with broad implications for the family's moral standing. In the Tswana case, I suggest that the management of such densely potent *dikgang* works primarily to assess and establish the limits of the experimental extensions of kin-making undertaken in circulating children, and to assert distinctions among kin. Family is segregated into those who contribute and manage resulting *dikgang* together, for example, and are therefore close, and those who do not, or cannot, and are therefore distant.[7] In the process, circulated children not only learn to accept hierarchies of gender and generation (Alber 2018: 140) but also to identify relational distance and appropriate ways of sustaining relatedness across it while carefully reproducing it.

In Chapter 10, I explore the spectrum of Tswana child circulation practice, the range of *dikgang* it maps, and the differentiation between 'near' and 'far' kin it produces. In Chapters 11 and 12, I consider two comparatively atypical situations involving the circulation of children among non-kin: one in which a young man placed himself with the Legaes, a family to which he was unrelated, in response to perceived witchcraft and abuse at home; and one in which a pilot government programme formally removed children from their family and placed them with unrelated 'foster parents'. Considered exclusively from the perspective of care and kin-making processes, all of these practices might be assumed to represent creative extensions and adaptations of – or at least substitutions for – kinship in times of crisis. However, comparison among these examples, paying attention to *dikgang*, makes clear the critical role that child circulation plays in continuously differentiating specific relational distances among kin, and in distinguishing kin from non-kin. And it illustrates continuities in child circulation and parenting practice that extend across the 'crisis of care' that AIDS is assumed to have created.

---

[7] Notably, in the differing 'constellations' of fosterage described by Verhoef and Morelli, those organised across the greatest relational distances corresponded with the greatest likelihood of conflict (2007: 46–8).

10 Far Family

Bosa iphuteng metlhala lotshosa diletseng.

Fail to know your relatives and one day they will turn on you. / Fail to help your relatives and you won't receive help when you need it.

Lesedi eventually had her own experience of being sent to stay with other relatives, like Tumi had, and like almost everyone else I knew in Botswana. Lesedi's mother died while she was a teenager, but that did not affect her living arrangements as such; she remained with her grandmother and Tumi's mother, who continued to look after her, until she finished her public schooling at Form Five. Having failed her exams, she had limited opportunities at home – until she was called by relatives living in the south, in one of the large villages close to the capital.

'They were far family,' she explained, 'on my grandmother's side – he was my grandmother's brother's son.'[1] The man's wife had taken a teaching post in a distant peri-urban village, and they told Lesedi's grandmother that they wanted to take her so they could help her repeat her Form Five. On the face of it, it looked very much like the sort of help Tumi had been offered years previously, which gave Lesedi hope. 'But it didn't work like that,' she explained, with a look of resentment. 'When I came to stay there they wanted me to be their maid. They didn't even take me to the school they promised. They wanted somebody to help them, so they just lied that they'll take me to school.'

She stayed with them for a year and a half. 'It was bad … I just had to, to stay there. She couldn't even give me two pula,' she added, referring to the wife. At one point, her hosts had even begun passing comments about the cost of feeding her, suggesting that her grandmother should be contributing something for her care. The injustice and disappointment in being expected to contribute to a household when the contributions promised towards her schooling were withheld – along with the

---

[1] She thereafter referred to him as *malome*.

opportunities for self-making schooling presented – were still raw in Lesedi's telling. Lesedi had felt unable to say anything to her host family about the issue or its possible resolution. I asked if she had told her grandmother, through whom the arrangement had originally been made. 'I didn't want to stress her,' she answered. 'I only told her after I left. Because you know how people are – if you tell, tomorrow it's like you are trying to destroy people's families or something. So I just stayed. Also it was hard at home. My brother had just started working, but others were staying with him, plus he was looking after everyone.'

Lesedi had done quite well for herself since then. She had eventually put herself through Form Five exam rewrites and had passed, and she was attending university, which meant that she was receiving a substantial stipend from the government – enough to comfortably cover her expenses, from rent and food to clothing and toiletries for herself and her daughter. The father of her child had a good job and also supported them both financially; he had bought her a car and helped build a house for her in her home village. She was comfortably settled in the capital. Partly as a result of this visible success, and partly because she stayed in the city, close to its amenities and opportunities, she had moved into the role her mother's older sister, 'far relatives', and brother had all played before her: two younger cousins had been sent to stay with her at the time we spoke.

A younger male cousin,[2] who had come to the city to attend agricultural college, was the first to ask to stay at Lesedi's. She agreed to accommodate him on the condition that he assist with the care of her school-aged daughter. He often cooked, cleaned the house, and played with or babysat the little girl. However, as his comings and goings became more frequent and unpredictable, and as it became clear that he was at risk of being kicked out of school, Lesedi sent for a younger female cousin to come and replace him. The girl had failed her Form Three exams, and Lesedi offered to help her repeat her courses in exchange for help around the house. She prepared meals, cleaned the house and yard, babysat the little girl, and did anything else she was asked. She seldom left, except to attend classes or to make the long, occasional trip back to their home village. Lesedi described these arrangements with some frustration, however, noting the unreliability of both cousins in doing housework and despairing of either making anything of themselves. The parallel between both situations and Lesedi's own, at a similar age, went unremarked.

---

[2] Lesedi described these relationships using the English term and did not specify further, but they were related to her via her mother's siblings.

While her younger relatives looked after the child and the house, Lesedi had taken on primary responsibility for Tumi's care after her return from hospital. It was proving onerous. On a recent trip back to their home village for a wedding, at one of the large family meetings that typify such events, Lesedi told me that she had made an explicit move to disengage from any further responsibility for relatives coming and going to the capital: 'The city is eating us,' she told them. 'I don't want to encourage anyone else to come there. If they do, they should make their own arrangements.' To a mutual friend, she vowed: 'From now on, I just want to think about me and my daughter.'[3] But at the same time, she would continue to need help caring for her daughter, and for Tumi's infant child, especially while Tumi remained ill. Lesedi may have hoped to escape the cycle of circulating kin, but it seemed unlikely, a matter of needs and obligations beyond her control.

Lesedi's experience describes many of the ways in which children and young people circulate, are called, sent, and taken in in Botswana – and it charts the trajectory of growing from a circulating child to an adult attempting to manage such circulations, and the perpetuity that characterises those cycles. As a child, Lesedi's unmarried mother left her *ko gae* – at home – to be cared for by her maternal grandmother and her mother's sister. Having a child meant that there was pressure on Lesedi's mother to work; and work meant being away from the village, in this case in a transnationally mobile manner. After her mother's death, like many orphaned children, Lesedi stayed where she had been: with her grandmother. As a teenager at a loose end, she was taken to care for the children of distant relatives in conditions that she described as unfair and uncaring, oriented towards labour. And once she had become a mother and had acquired a house herself, Lesedi hosted younger kin going to school in the city, eventually sending for a young cousin from home to assist in the care of her child in exchange for better schooling opportunities – much as her mother's sister had done for Tumi and Lesedi's *malome* had done for her. Perhaps the only sort of circulation she hadn't (yet) undertaken was of sending a child of her own to relatives for company and help, or for accommodation during schooling or work.

Lesedi's story is not unusual. Many of the Batswana I knew, girls and boys, men and women alike, had had similar experiences: they were raised predominantly by grandparents, had lived with other kin while

---

[3] Lesedi's attempt to withdraw herself from her family's child circulations, and thereby 'nuclearise' her family, echoes trends described by Archambault (2010) and Archambault and de Laat (2010: 202) among the Maasai in Kenya, where modernising discourses emphasising sedentarisation and nuclearisation are changing fosterage practice.

working and/or attending school – often in exchange for providing child-care or other forms of help – and, as adults, had taken in the children of relatives for various periods of time. And these practices are not new: Mmapula, the elderly Legae matriarch, had been raised by her own grandmother in the 1950s and had in turn raised her sister's child (as well as housing several other members of her and her husband's extended kin for different periods of time). Lesedi's experience of fraught, unspoken conflict and bad feeling while staying with her 'far' relatives – compared with the relative ease of her relationship with her grandmother, or Tumi's ease with their mothers' sister – was also typical of others I knew. Hers were, in other words, widely shared experiences of child circulation and of kinship in Botswana.

These diverse situations involve many of the kin-making processes described so far. All cases involve co-residence; free, frequent movement between places of the *gae*; and care work undertaken in each of those places. They anticipate the contribution of certain resources and labour by the hosting families – especially food, clothing, toiletries, and trans-port, as well as discretionary funds; but also cooking, guidance, and discipline, or help with schoolwork. And they anticipate the care contri-butions of circulated children as well – in raising younger children, cleaning and cooking, and mobilising additional resources. There are, however, noteworthy distinctions among the sorts of child circulation described above, which I suggest work to define gradations of related-ness, from 'close' to 'far' family. Such distinctions are already apparent in the reasons behind children being circulated, which fall into two rough, sometimes overlapping categories: the absence of birth parents (com-monly because of work, but also because of illness or death); and the absence of children, specifically children old enough to contribute to the household. And these distinctions vary with the places to which children are circulated, from *ko gae* (at home) to away. Thus, in the absence of birth parents, ideally children are circulated *ko gae*, if possible with the absent parent's mother or older sisters, often in semi-permanent arrange-ments; whereas in the absence of children who can assist in the work of the household, they tend to be drawn from away, farther from the host's home both geographically and genealogically, and often for shorter periods of time.

But these distinctions are perhaps most evident in the sorts of conflicts that arise, in the ways in which they are – and aren't – addressed, and in the people called on to address them. We have seen in the preceding chapters the different ways in which *dikgang* emerge and are addressed among families living together at home. These same conflicts, and the means of addressing them, are roughly common to situations that arise

when children are circulated *ko gae*. Tumi's mother's sister would have addressed any conflicts with her much as her own mother would have; if the issues had been serious enough to involve calling in others to intervene, the same *bomalome* would have been called in the same ways, by virtue of comparable relationships. In assessing the problems at hand, the quality of relationships among many of the same people would be called up for reflection as if Lesedi had been at the heart of the matter.

When children are circulated away from the *gae*, similar problems emerge, running the full gamut of *dikgang* we have explored so far, with the potential to embroil children, husbands and wives, siblings, multiple households, and an extensive range of kin (Alber 2018: 144). However, these *dikgang* are seldom engaged directly, and seldom addressed within the host yard.[4] Instead, they are either carefully avoided (see ibid.: 140), indefinitely postponed, or expressed through – and referred for resolution back to – the family from which the young person was sent in the first place. Lesedi would not have considered raising her concerns directly with her host family; only her grandmother, who sent her, was an appropriate audience, and then not until considerably after the fact. Likewise, her hosts would not have confronted her with their concerns; instead, they would have presented them to her grandmother for resolution. Within the hosting yard, conflicts are actively muffled: fostering adults may pass comment, but only indirectly, and circulated children are expected to hold their tongues respectfully. A grudge-like atmosphere emerges. Expectations and interpretations of the scenario diverge, but they are not voiced, discussed, or reflected on collectively.

The result of this scenario is frequently an impasse. Having not been witness to the causes of conflict, and having no means of hearing the story from both sides without casting aspersions on people who have offered a favour, the family *ko gae* does not weigh or attempt to establish the comparative truth of each tale, nor reflect on what they may mean for the relationships at hand, nor pronounce judgement. They are, essentially, unable to mediate. Most often they will counsel their child simply to be respectful and do as she or he is told, especially if there are no better

---

[4] The Tswana case here contrasts sharply with that of Sierra Leone as described by Bledsoe (see, e.g., Bledsoe 1990) – and yet the contrast substantiates my overriding argument about the role of *dikgang* in forming kin (or kin-like) relationships. Bledsoe notes low rates of suing over foster–child treatment and a tendency to resolve issues in formal 'house palavers', like those we have seen elsewhere in this book. The difference, I suggest, is that in Sierra Leone natal parents are attempting to create long-lasting relationships of patronage with foster parents, through their children – and, as in Botswana, engaging in the formal, collective consideration of disputes seems to be key in cementing those relationships.

immediate solutions available; and if the issue persists and seems impossible to resolve, they will simply summon or allow the child to come home, without further discussion, letting silence and movement resolve the *kgang* (see Alber 2018 for similar strategies, if in quite different contexts).

Lesedi's comment regarding the risk of telling her grandmother about her poor treatment at the hands of her 'far relatives' – for fear she might be accused of 'destroying someone's family' – is telling in understanding this dynamic. The family she risks destroying by speaking ill of their conduct is not her extended family as a whole, nor her natal family, but the family that has taken her in. Like any kin who live together, she is a potential threat; and speech, especially the articulation of discord (or *puo*), is one of the most potent means of actualising that threat. But, in this case, the threat she poses is greater because it risks drawing kin into conflict who would otherwise carefully avoid it. As such, the threat is best contained by exclusion and distance, silence and grudges, and above all by forgoing active engagement in conflict. By the same logic, the departure of a circulated child will be accepted without remonstration or accusation (see also Coe 2013: 170).

To the extent that the 'far' host family in a scenario like Lesedi's does not engage in inevitable *dikgang* the way her family *ko gae* might, they are distanced from her; they do not, and cannot, replace her 'near' family (cf. Coe 2013: 157–8). This distancing reflects their distance from other members of her natal family; in this sense, it reproduces the 'farness' of their relatedness. By referring the conflict at hand, and its resolution, back to the natal kin, the latter's unique capacity to engage and resolve conflict is emphasised – reproducing the nearness of their relatedness to the sent-out child.

When I asked her to map out her family however she saw fit, including and excluding whomever she liked, Lesedi did not include the family that hosted her; nor did she include them among the broad range of people who had raised her. Staying with them, caring for their children, and ultimately coming into unresolved conflict with them did not bring her closer to them; it clarified their distance and reasserted their position as 'far relatives'. In a similar exercise, Tumi listed her mother's sister who took her to be raised in the city as kin, but did not give her any particular priority – certainly not above her own grandmother and mother. She acknowledged the help she had received from her *mmamogolo*, but the time spent with her did not change their relationship so much as reaffirm it. Child circulation among Tswana families thus seems not so much to tighten bonds of kinship, nor even to transform those bonds, but to assert appropriate degrees of closeness and distance between kin and to

reproduce these differentiations across generations. Circulated children come to know their relatives and apposite ways of relating to them that ensure help in times of need, while containing the danger – suggested in the proverb above – that misreading their likeliness to help might produce. And in the process of doing so, acquiring and demonstrating good judgement in managing *dikgang*, their circulation contributes to their projects of self-making as well.

But what about child circulation – undertaken either informally or formally – with non-kin? Does it serve to create a sort of replacement or substitute kinship where kin circulation does not? What practices of care, conflict, and resolution does it involve? And how does it compare to kin-circulating practice? In Chapters 11 and 12, I consider these questions with reference to the case of a young man who brought himself to stay with the Legaes during my fieldwork, and the case of Botswana's first – and only – formal placement of children with a trained foster parent.

11   Living Outside

Ngwana e o sa leleng o swela tharing.

The child who does not cry dies in its carrying-skin.

Arriving home one twilit evening, trading loud greetings over my shoulder with others in the yard, I walked into the sitting room and had a shock. An unfamiliar young man sat there, alone, glowering up at me from the edge of the couch. I greeted him; he looked away without response. I passed through into the kitchen to put the kettle on, and when I returned I found him unmoved: leaning forward, his elbows on his knees, he clutched a book and stared into a dark corner of the room.

I went out into the *lelwapa* and asked Modiri surreptitiously who the young man was. He shrugged, took a drink of his tea, and said the boy was waiting for Kagiso.

Later that night, as we sat scattered around the *lelwapa* after dinner, I noticed Kagiso's voice in the house. The lights had been turned on in the sitting room, giving it a pale blue glow through the window. The door was closed. I asked Kelebogile what was happening, and she explained that the young man attended church with them and had come to ask help from Kagiso – their sometime preacher – because his family was bewitching him. They were enclosed together in the sitting room praying intently, and they stayed that way until long after I had gone to bed.

The next morning, I was surprised to see the same young man, now in school uniform, drinking his morning tea by the fire.

I didn't learn the young man's name for almost two weeks. He and I circled around each other warily, each of us equally confused by the presence of the other. We seldom spoke, unsure how to take one another or what to say. I would sometimes go for days without seeing him, and he seemed to come and go freely, but a great stack of his school papers and books had appeared on the bookshelf in Kagiso's room, where he slept. I heard from the younger children in the yard that Kagiso had gone to visit the boy's family to tell them where he was; he had visited

188

the social worker and the school to make similar reports and discuss alternative arrangements – of which, apparently, there were none. There the matter rested.

His name was Bonolo. He had been staying with us for eight months before I asked to sit down with him and hear his whole story. During that time, he had integrated more or less seamlessly with the Legaes. He took on chores of his own almost immediately, including starting the fire in the morning, sweeping, and occasionally doing dishes; he often also went out to the cattle post at weekends to help with the heavy work of finding, herding, and feeding the dispersed herd (see also Archambault and de Laat 2010: 196 on chores and integration). He spent many of his week-nights at Kagiso's shop, helping out and passing the time with the Legae children who worked there. His clothes were mostly hand-me-downs from both Kagiso and Tuelo, and he was served and ate at home with everyone else. He was well liked by the children of the yard and became close to them, spending much of his time at home in their company.

But there were subtle limits to his integration, too. Unlike the other young people of the house, for example, I didn't feel I could send him for things, or ask for his help. Other adults in the house seldom sent him for anything, although he would often volunteer to go with one of the other boys when they were sent. The chores he had taken on – at home, at the cattle post, at the shop – were all voluntary; I never saw him being asked to undertake any specific tasks, nor scolded for neglecting any, although the men might invite him along on errands. His relationships with the adults in the yard seemed to remain aloof. While he would sometimes seek help with homework or engage in lively debates around various Christian precepts, he did not seek the adults out for advice or attach himself to any of them particularly. And they, in turn, remained aloof from him and avoided inquiring into his background or life. Kagiso – who was running three small businesses, working as a full-time driver, and conducting a clandestine courtship – was seldom home or available. While Bonolo clearly considered him a sort of mentor, their connection did not seem to run much deeper than that.

As companionable as they found him, none of the family members – not even the children – referred to Bonolo using kin terms either. Occasionally family members teasingly referred to Bonolo as *ngwana wa ga Kagiso* – Kagiso's child – but these comments were used in humorous banter among the women, seldom made in front of Kagiso, and I never heard Bonolo called that to his face. Kagiso, moreover, was never called *Rra go Bonolo* (father of Bonolo), even in jest. The closest comparison was with the foundling calf that Modiri had brought back from the cattle post. The women's commentary seemed to be more about playfully recognising an unexpected potential to provide care in

both men, without asserting any real sort of obligation or relatedness. Indeed, the commentary was perhaps more about the fact that neither man had children of their own, while expressing the hope that one day they might.

While there had been occasional meetings between Kagiso and his parents, Mmapula and Dipuo, about Bonolo's situation, these had never involved the rest of us; we heard of them as if by rumour, long after the fact. (As Bonolo pointed out to me, these meetings never involved him, either.) Barring Tshepo, who was Bonolo's age-mate and former classmate, none of us had any real idea about Bonolo's circumstances. We speculated and swapped overheard snippets freely among ourselves, but nobody asked.

Bonolo had a slow, intense, non-committal gaze when he was listening that almost inevitably dissolved into an affable, indiscriminate smile when he spoke – whether he spoke of happy things, or frustrations, or things to which he took exception. So I was uncertain how he actually felt about the notion of being interviewed, or about anything else for that matter. But he was insistent that people should know his story, and even that I should use his real name (which I have done). In fact, he insisted on writing his entire story out, in longhand, before we began talking.

The story, written in English in a confident, broad hand, traced his movements among all the places he had been raised. Having spent time initially in a small town in the south-east, he moved to the northern border of Botswana to begin schooling. He stayed there for several years before moving to Dithaba for a year, and then to the western desert, all by the time he was 12. After a couple of years there, staying with family and in a boarding school, he came back to Dithaba again, and had stayed there ever since. When he moved the first time, at perhaps seven years old, so had his mother – not north with him, but to the far north-eastern corner of the country. By that time, he reflected, she was working and didn't seem to be 'into alcohol or any habits unusual … and me also, I saw my photos … it seems like I was well provided [for]'. He took a curiously distant, sceptical perspective on himself. He surmised that they had had to separate and move 'because of life'. His mother and two of his siblings still lived together in Francistown, and an older sister lived near them with her own children. Another of his sisters 'lived outside', as he described his own circumstances, but he could not say where, or with whom, or why.

He was in Form Four[1] when his relatives began to abuse him, as he described it, making him 'do too much household chores and shopping'. The rest of the children in the yard had been too small to help with work

---

[1] Form Four is the fourth year of high school and the first of senior high school.

around the home, and he had been left with all of it. This complaint, a usual one for people his age, was what he said had finally brought him to our yard. His account made no mention of the witchcraft he had cited on his first appearance. 'None of them came to hear why I runned [sic],' he said of his natal family. He lavished praise on the Legaes as his hosts, noting that 'my mother didn't contribute any cent, and they didn't demand nothing [sic]'. He added: 'I wish the most high to drive me not to forget them … they are my saviours and trusted friends.'

To this narrative, Bonolo had added a family chart. On one page, he drew in his mother's parents and their descendants, down to his sister's children. Down the right-hand side of the page, from his mother's father, he drew an additional, long line to a second grandmother, with a generic dichotomous split line below her, and nothing else. He focused on his mother's family, telling me about her siblings and their children. As we talked, I realised that he had not been staying with any of them in Dithaba – indeed, none of them were in the village at all. I asked him to tell me more about the second grandmother he had sketched at right angles to his grandfather, and her family.

He explained that she and his grandfather had not been married, and so he had not sketched in that side of the family. He began to do so, with some hesitation. Slowly I realised that one of the women on this branch of the family tree was the one who had taken him to school in Ghanzi; and that one of her brothers was the *malome* who had followed up Bonolo's 'issue' with us occasionally at home. He then explained that he had been living with this grandmother, two of her daughters, and their children in Dithaba for years – and it was in reaction against them that he had come to stay with us. He described the grandmother and her daughters as people who had raised him, although they were not *batsadi* (parents). He did not even list his mother among his *batsadi*. Only his mother's married parents achieved that status.

Perhaps halfway through the interview, the phone rang, and Bonolo paused to answer it. Uncannily, it was his mother calling. I had heard that she called from time to time to check in on him but had not witnessed a call myself. He smiled and his voice became excited, like a child suddenly, asking about when he could go to visit. As the conversation progressed he became quieter, mumbling assent. Finally, he dropped the receiver with a sigh. She was promising to come to Dithaba to visit his extended family and then take him back with her for the school holidays. He was sceptical. '*Nna ke blamea mama*,' he said – me, I blame my mother. When he had had his misunderstandings with his family in Dithaba, he explained, she had refused to come. 'If she had come, they

could have known the problem and resolved it,' he asserted. 'But she didn't come at all. Even now she is not going to come.'

We spoke about the future, his plans to study engineering at the university and perhaps go to work for the army or the mines. 'I want to stay far from my mum, both geographically and emotionally,' he said, when I asked where he'd like to settle.

As we wrapped up the interview, I mentioned to Bonolo that the government was thinking about launching a formal foster parenting programme, whereby people would be recruited and trained to look after children who were having serious problems living with their families – much as he had. He was categorical in his response: 'I don't support that.' Surprised, I asked him why not. He shook his head. 'It's not good to take children from their families; they should know they have responsibility for those children no matter what,' he explained. I asked what he would tell children in his situation to do. He smiled. 'I guess they could do what I did. But they should try by all means to solve their problems.'

Most of the Batswana friends to whom I mentioned Bonolo's presence at home found the situation surprising, even dubious. As common as it is to circulate children among kin, for a child to stay with non-kin is somewhat beyond the pale, and many view it with suspicion. One friend, however, described a very similar situation in his own family. A close friend of his daughter's had lost her parents in her early teens, and afterwards spent much of her time at their house. When they were making plans to move across the country to the capital a few years later, the girl's older siblings approached them and asked whether they would consider taking her with them. The siblings explained that she had come to see them as parents, and were concerned she might take their loss doubly hard. And so my friend and his wife agreed. He laughed bitterly as he recalled how difficult it had been to have two teenage girls in the house at once – all the more so because while one was his daughter, the other wasn't (he used the English phrase 'foster daughter' throughout our conversation). He sent her home to her family during the holidays, and he had recently put her into a boarding school nearer to them, retaining responsibility for her fees and upkeep.

There are three telling details in these stories. One is that – contrary to popular assertion – Batswana do indeed take in children from outside their kin networks. The second is that it is often the children themselves who orchestrate these arrangements (Archambault 2010; Leinaweaver 2007a). And the third is that – although they undertake the responsibilities of a family member and are treated in many of the same ways – these children do not necessarily see themselves as, nor are they seen to be, members of their fostering families. They are 'living outside' both

their natal families and their host families. Like child circulation among kin, then, 'living outside' does not extend or replace kinship so much as define and reproduce its limits.

Thus, although Bonolo slept, ate, worked, played, and otherwise stayed with the family in much the same ways as the other boys did, and although he was treated with affection and goodwill, he was not identified – nor did he identify, nor apparently want to identify – as family. No specific claims were made upon him: although he took on chores, he was not sent on errands, he was not scolded, and neither he nor his mother was expected to provide any specific contributions to his upkeep. Nor did he, in his turn, make any specific requests or claims beyond being allowed to stay. He was not taken along to funerals, weddings, or other events, nor was any great fuss made of his presence at home. There was little special effort to get to know him, develop intimacy, or otherwise draw him closer into the family. And Bonolo himself seemed satisfied with this arrangement, preferring to think and speak of his host family as 'saviours' and 'trusted friends' rather than as surrogate kin.

These limitations become clearest if we include *dikgang* among the defining characteristics of kinship. Bonolo's experience with his chosen host family was marked by a surprising lack of conflict – especially considering the frequency of conflict we otherwise experienced at home. Mutual claims, obligations, knowledge, and intimacy were all avoided, I suspect, precisely in order to ensure that there would be few things to fall out about. The Legaes did not get involved with the ongoing disputes in Bonolo's natal family whatsoever. Although Kagiso visited Bonolo's family to report his presence with us and hear about the issue at hand (like a mediator might), and although he shared that information with his parents, once it was clear that Bonolo would be staying, Kagiso conscientiously avoided getting involved – or drawing in anyone else. He took the care of Bonolo as a temporary responsibility, but he did not take on the negotiation of the conflicts the situation involved. Neither Kagiso nor anyone else at home was asked to help expedite the issue by Bonolo or anyone in Bonolo's family. Only Bonolo's mother was in a position appropriate to engage *dikgang* with her family; no one sought to replace her.

While, on a superficial level, Bonolo's experience suggests a kin-making dynamic, closer examination shows that it is anything but – precisely because those situations in which *dikgang* might emerge are explicitly forgone. Bonolo is not called or sent, nor reprimanded for his movements, and is left to stay as and where he sees fit; neither he nor his family is required to make contributions, nor are their contributions

compared with those made by others in his host family; and his pre-existing relationships are neither enquired into, nor discussed, nor made unduly visible. Care, in this scenario, is delinked from *dikgang*; and, thus delinked, is insufficient to making kin. As Bonolo himself emphasised in parting, responsibility and problem solving are equally critical to kinship. In a context where kinship entails risk, where those who are closest to you are also most dangerous to you, it is perhaps unsurprising to find that a family otherwise willing to provide care would hold the expansion of their kin networks in such careful check.

Child circulation among Batswana, then, has an unexpected effect: to produce and reproduce nearness and distance in relatedness, whether among kin or between kin and non-kin. Circulation does not extend nor supplement kinship; rather, it defines its terms and limits. And, as a practice, it creates this distinction primarily in terms of differential responses to *dikgang*. How, then, might government-driven initiatives in formal foster care – where children are removed from environments of perceived abuse or danger and placed with non-kin foster parents trained for the purpose – fare in the Tswana context?

Figure 8 Tinkering: brothers, mechanics.

12   Children in Need of Care

Bana ba tshipa tshwaraganang fa lo kgaogana loso lwamogotlha.

The wildcat's children cling together; separating them invites disaster.

'They understand informal fostering – that is the practice we are all doing. It's foreign when we talk about making it legal. That's what is putting us in trouble. But if there are no relatives, we need law.'

Tumelo and I sat on either side of her wide desk in pools of shadow left by the daylight filtering in through her office windows. It was an unusual moment of quiet. I had visited her previously at the simple concrete block adjoining Water Affairs that served as the Social and Community Development office, hidden from the highway by a string of bars. But on past occasions she had been beset by long lines of caregivers, groups of young people, or the spreadsheet report listing her orphaned clients by name, surname, age, and ward that was to be submitted to Social Services every month. Diminutive and feisty, Tumelo was energetic to the point that I found it difficult to keep up with her; she spoke quickly and changed topics at lightning speed. She was passionate, humble, and quick to laugh, and she had a particularly mischievous, conspiratorial smile.

Tumelo was the social worker who ran the Foster Care Pilot Programme in Dithaba for its duration. When the pilot was launched in 2007, I was responsible for its orchestration at Social Services, in conjunction with a major national NGO. In the programme's initial phase, we had identified a number of priority districts – including Tumelo's – and run in-depth training for teams of social workers in each. But, to my knowledge, only Tumelo's office had gone as far as recruiting parents and placing children.

The idea of formal foster care was still unusual but not altogether new to Botswana when the pilot was undertaken. Social work degrees at the university had long involved a core course in managing foster care, and detailed procedures had been laid out in common law under the *Children in Need of Care Guidelines* (RoB 2005a). The guidelines provided for the temporary removal of children from their families, by a government

195

social worker, in cases where professional assessment had raised significant concerns of neglect, abuse, or other pressing issues affecting the child's well-being. Especially in cases where suitable extended family could not be found to take in the children immediately, the guidelines proposed that banks of vetted foster parents from the local community should be trained up for the role, to minimise disruption in the children's lives. The ultimate aim was to work with families to address their issues and enable the return of children to their original households, or to negotiate their long-term placement with other suitable kin. In the context of the AIDS epidemic and perceived breakdown among extended families, social workers customarily expressed an urgent need for 'alternative care' for children, and many were concerned about the overcrowding and inappropriateness of institutional places of safety in this role. But they were equally uncomfortable with the notion of formal foster care. The guidelines had been ten hesitant years in the making, and by 2007 they had seldom been deployed in the removal and placement of children for whom they made provision. The problem was, according to my social work colleagues and my neighbours in Dithaba, that fostering the children of non-kin was fundamentally un-Setswana. Unsurprisingly, then, while the programme was the first of its kind, it had lapsed between my departure from Social Services and my conversation with Tumelo – although the NGO concerned was working diligently with a few remaining government supporters to revive it.

'I'm not sure how it came to Dithaba,' Tumelo admitted, as we reflected on the programme's beginnings. 'There were so many problems there at the time. Property grabbing was a serious issue.[1] Family conflicts.' I asked her what she meant. 'Conflicts can be caused by lots of things – maybe jealousy of relatives, fighting over property, or just lack of understanding among siblings. Anybody can report it, though it might not come out clearly that it is conflict, but reading between the lines then one can see.' I was struck by how mundane the sorts of conflict she was describing were – they were the sorts of everyday *dikgang* I had experienced living with the Legaes. But Dithaba was often singled out as having been particularly hard hit by AIDS from the start; the subtext of Tumelo's comment seemed to be that these mundane conflicts were

---

[1] 'Property grabbing' was a key issue at the height of the AIDS epidemic in Botswana. Generally, it was cast in terms of unscrupulous relatives taking advantage of uncertainty around the inheritance of a dead person's property – especially land – to dispossess the partner and children of the deceased. Dispossession was especially common in cases where the deceased and his or her partner had not been officially married, in which case the partner and children had no clear customary rights to the deceased's property.

more serious, more numerous, or more frequently referred to social workers as a result.

Tumelo described how she managed the programme as it unfolded, from her two-day training workshop in the capital to the process of briefing the *kgotla* (customary court), the village development committee, and district councillors on the initiative. 'They all knew cases' that they thought appropriate for formal fostering, she noted. Rather than put out a call for volunteers, Tumelo worked in collaboration with these key village representatives to select roughly 20 women who could form a 'bank' of potential foster parents. They applied a range of criteria in their deliberations. 'These were women who knew how to run their families,' she explained of the candidates, 'and know how to care. They have a heart for children, and love.' Their families were stable; many were married, though not all; the number of their children was comparatively few, or the children were already grown up. The women were not necessarily wealthy but managed what they had well. When the women were called to a workshop on the new programme – covering parenting skills, children's rights, and relevant laws, to which most of them would not have had formal exposure before – all came.

During the pilot, Tumelo had arranged a single removal and placement in the village, for three boys ranging in age from 9 to 13. They had been staying with their grandmother, but there had been fights among the family about food and over who would care for the children. Recounting the case, Tumelo didn't go into detail – partly out of professional discretion, perhaps, but largely because it was a familiar narrative in the orphan care field and scarcely bore repeating. As we have seen, government provision of food baskets to the caregivers of registered orphans is widely understood as a source of significant conflict and competition among extended families – and as symbolic of their fundamental fractiousness, ruthlessness, and untrustworthiness as care providers for children. Again, the issue struck me as mundane, particularly as a justification for child removal. Tumelo left me to 'read between the lines'.

In handling the case, Tumelo went to the *kgotla* first, accompanied by the boys' grandmother and a letter written and signed by the prospective foster parent, Mma Dineo. 'It was an emergency situation,' she explained; she planned to follow the official legislative route, through the Children's Court in the city, later on – though in the end they never did. But, she pointed out, 'even if it can go to the courts, it has to go back to the *kgotla*; whatever is happening should be reported there'. She described the *kgotla* as a repository of local knowledge in which the movements of children and the promises and obligations of families should be stored – even (and especially) when the children and families

themselves had lost track of them. A woman active and outspoken in local child protection initiatives, Mma Dineo had also been insistent about taking the proceedings through the *kgotla*. 'She was very cautious,' Tumelo reflected thoughtfully; 'I'm not sure what about. *Hei*! That lady can talk,' she added, noting with some chagrin Mma Dineo's frequent visits to the social work office with concerns and complaints about her charges.

The boys had wanted to go to boarding school but instead moved in with Mma Dineo. Everything went smoothly at first – until the food basket and other government resources attached to the boys' care followed them. Officially, the guidelines on formal foster placements explicitly forbade the provision of material support or remuneration to foster parents, in order to ensure that people did not take children in for 'the wrong reasons': exploitation or personal gain. In practice, however – especially given the connection between care and material support in Tswana understanding (Part II) – social workers and trained foster parents all expected that some compromise would be necessary, particularly if children were to be kept in their home villages. Reassigning government provisions to follow the children was the most obvious compromise to hand. The boys' grandmother became furious with the arrangement and made her disgruntlement clear in public scenes at both the social workers' office and Mma Dineo's place. 'I guess it was just jealousy,' Tumelo explained, downplaying it, although the public exposure to insults of wrecking a family was no doubt a challenge even to the staunch Mma Dineo. Ultimately, Tumelo stressed, it did not derail the placement.

Shortly afterwards, some unexpected family turned up. One of the father's younger brothers came looking for the boys, offering to take them. He said his family was angry and they wanted the boys back. The boys seemed to want to go back, too. 'When we arranged for the boys to be fostered we didn't know about those relatives,' Tumelo explained, matter-of-factly. 'We only found out about them after they came to find the children.' Knowing that social workers were generally quite thorough in tracing extended families, I asked how they had been overlooked. 'We didn't really expect help from them,' Tumelo explained, 'and they were difficult to find.' To reduce confusion, the father's brother was initially turned away. After the boys were settled, he was called back, had the situation explained to him, and signed off on the placement as well.

A little over two years later, the man returned and offered to transfer the boys to the junior school in his village. 'The family felt they had completed their punishment,' Tumelo explained, paraphrasing his

rationale. 'So the boys went. But I just heard on Saturday that they want to come back to Dithaba. They are spoiled. I told Mma Dineo and the family, just accept them, they are children, don't fight with them.' Her complaisance seemed strange given the active role she had taken in their removal, placement, and later movements.

'The placement was a success,' Tumelo decided, after some reflection. 'Maybe people feel deeply bothered by children being taken out.' She shrugged. 'To have the option of fostering is good.' She noted that several of her current clients had had to be placed in a local place of safety, which she felt was overwhelmed and often ended up 'chasing' children back out to the social workers. 'I'm not sure what institutions add,' she mused. 'Fostering is a way of teaching them it's very important to have a family.'

Tumelo's account makes plain the ways in which formal foster care in Botswana differs sharply from its antecedents: the informal circulation of children among kin and between non-kin. Again, these differences revolve primarily around approaches to *dikgang*. Circulating children among extended kin might be seen in terms of delegating responsibilities of care beyond the usual contribution-oriented economies and their conflict-management strategies, creating perpetually irresolvable *dikgang*; taking in non-kin as a suspension of *dikgang*, which neither exacerbates nor addresses them; and formal fostering as a deliberate attempt to decisively resolve *dikgang*. Where the first two reproduce appropriate distances of relatedness, the last risks conflating and collapsing them, offering not simply a temporary alternative family but an alternative model of kinship in its place.

Tumelo's description of the *dikgang* arising among her client families is familiar from the sorts of conflicts we have seen already. While she did not explain how such issues were initially brought to her attention, it is most likely that she would have first come into contact with the families when they registered for the government orphan care programme. She may have been called on to settle intransigent disputes by the family itself, particularly if there were any conflicts over the food basket. Especially intractable problems at home may be handed to government institutions such as the police, clinics, and social workers – generally in the hope that the handing over itself, rather than any solutions that might be engineered, will help preserve the delicate balance of obligations and responsibilities, power and care, within the family. In this sense, families might envision the social worker's intervention – including the placement of their children in temporary formal fostering situations – as simply a first step in the process of negotiating an ongoing family issue, or as a temporary suspension of that process.

However, in cases like those described by Tumelo, removing a child into formal foster care presents a problematic set of knock-on effects. The child himself, for example, is seldom the singular focus of *dikgang*, which reflect wider kin dynamics and demand reflection on the trajectories and quality of specific relationships. Battles over property or responsibilities of care and misunderstandings between parents or among their (often co-resident) siblings may all affect a child, but they seldom take the child as their object. A mismatch emerges between the family's positioning of the social worker as an extrafamilial actor whose involvement might usefully suspend *dikgang* until the status quo can be re-established, and the social worker's dual mandate of protecting children and achieving lasting fixes to family crises (whether in specific cases or by promoting alternative models of being kin). And this mismatch is exacerbated by a certain myopia on the part of the state; in spite of social workers' best efforts in tracing families, the burden of their caseloads makes it virtually impossible for them to recognise the full range of kin affected, how they are affected, and how they intend the social worker to be involved. No wonder, then, that the boys' father's brother saw the removal as a punitive gesture rather than as a means of resolving the *dikgang* with which the social worker was presented in the first place. Critical capacities and responsibilities to contribute care for the boys (and for them to make their contributions in turn) were not only drawn into question but cut off; the ability to resolve *dikgang* appropriately in ways that involved them was removed, and the repercussions for reciprocal obligations between adults and children rendered deeply uncertain. In other words, the processes critical to forming kinship with, through, and around the boys had been foreclosed.

Worse than this, the family to which the child is removed is drawn into potential *dikgang* with the child's natal family. The loss of the child, their work in the home, and any contributions of care they can mobilise is a source of serious bitterness and ill will towards the fostering family, as the grandmother's fury and public insults demonstrate. In this situation, the social worker is the primary arbiter of conflict, rather than the child's natal family. As Tumelo's irritation with Mma Dineo suggests, the position of arbiter is hardly a welcome one for social workers: not only are they overwhelmed with their caseloads, but of necessity they are entirely disengaged from the day-to-day life of their client families, especially their conflicts – which require a great deal of unavailable time and effort to address. Most social workers will therefore hear out an issue, and perhaps offer advice, but will not re-enter the fray. Natal and foster families are thus drawn into kin-like (and kin-affecting) *dikgang*, without the means of resolution that might build connections between

them and contain the risks that conflicts pose. As Erdmute Alber's informants in Benin reflected of their changing fosterage practices, contemporary 'fostering brings so many problems into the web of kinship that it is better not to take foster children at all' (Alber 2018: 146).

Beyond these new dimensions of *dikgang*, the formal foster parenting programme seems to presuppose and decree a certain ideal of closeness or intimacy between the foster family and the fostered child that – as we have seen – may be at odds with the more fraught affect that characterises usual practices of child circulation. The recruitment drive's emphasis on able parents, who 'know how to care', 'have a heart for children', and 'have love', and the social worker's willingness to ensure that additional material support is available to women who meet those criteria, are initial signs of this tendency. These attributes were, of course, appropriate to a Tswana mother; Livingston (2007b: 183) glosses them as 'moral superiority, a patient heart, and kindness' (see also Ingstad et al. 1992). But they are not necessarily the same traits expected of non-kin in looking after a child. Bonolo's example in Chapter 11 showed us that these characteristics on their own are not necessarily kin-making; indeed, the absence of similar discourse in describing parenting ideals (focused more on 'raising properly' or 'help') suggests that they are relegated to the background, or at least left implicit. But as fostering families are also drawn into *dikgang* with their foster child's family by the placement process, and unable to refer conflicts with the child back to his or her family or the social worker, they are placed in an increasingly isolated, replacement kin position.

Batswana may read formal fostering less as a matter of taking children out of dangerous families to safety than of bringing an entire network of non-kin into a level of partial intimacy and irreconcilable conflict that may make those non-kin themselves especially dangerous. In contrast to informal child circulation, formal fostering seeks to extend, supplement, and replace family; and, in the attempt – which can be only partially successful – it spreads the risk and danger associated with kinship instead of containing them. It presents, in other words, a worst-of-both-worlds scenario. Formal fostering interferes with the processes of differentiating kin that child circulation usually enables, thereby producing 'a kind of contagion, a moral degeneracy' (Wagner 1977: 624) that people register when they describe the practice as 'un-Setswana'.

Legal rights in children were a key focus of early structural-functionalist approaches to child circulation and were used to distinguish adoption – where all legal rights to a child are transferred from natal parents to new parents – from informal fostering, where legal rights remain with the natal parents. In Tumelo's account, 'the law' makes a

slightly different distinction: between child circulation of the sort described in earlier chapters and formal fostering – not so much in terms of transferring rights, but in terms of offering protections and clearly structuring the roles, justifications, and processes of fosterage. In both, the crucial distinction the law makes is between arrangements made by, among, and through kin and those made by the state. As Tumelo's description of her first formal placement shows, 'the law' deployed is not simply Roman-Dutch common law, governed by the Children's Act (1981, 2009) and the *Children in Need of Care Guidelines* (2005), nor Tswana customary law, but a hybrid of the two.[2] This hybridised notion of law was used to assess the need for children's removal, to identify appropriate foster parents, and to anticipate any disputes that would arise, in part by identifying those who would mediate them (the social worker, but also potentially the chief). 'The law', in other words, takes responsibility for identifying and resolving *dikgang* among kin, displacing the ethical work usually undertaken by families. And, in turn, it reworks the boundaries between kin and non-kin. It requires and produces a muddling of intra- and inter-familial kin distinctions, of processes by which families manage *dikgang*, and of Setswana kin ideals. I suggest that it is the power that formal fostering gives 'the law' in deciding how families should work that makes many fundamentally uncomfortable with it – not least because it marks a fundamental inversion of what the relationship between kinship ethics, practice, and law *should* be. The 'un-Setswana' character of formal fostering also lies in the law's attempt to redefine kinship practice and ethics, instead of being modelled on and directed by them.

---

[2] See Wanitzek (2013) for a description of the ways in which customary and common law are strategically woven together in managing fosterage in Ghana.

Conclusion: Part IV

Historically, much of the literature on fosterage and child circulation understood these practices primarily in terms of prevailing political and economic conditions (Alber 2004; Bledsoe 1990; Block 2014; Goody 2013 [1982]: 3; see a similar argument in Alber et al. 2013b), often as a response to crisis (Ingstad 2004; see Goody 2013 [1982] on crisis versus non-crisis fostering), and specifically as a reaction to poverty, seeking opportunities for social advancement on the part of the child, the natal parents, or the foster parents (Archambault 2010; Bledsoe 1990; Leinaweaver 2007a; 2007b; Stack 1974). But it is also an ordinary, widespread kin practice, not simply responsive to socio-political conditions, but also actively engaged in reworking them. Researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners alike work on the assumption that child circulation in the context of AIDS can best be understood (and formally deployed) as a response to mass orphanhood and a crisis of care. However, taking cues from Schapera's (1940: 246–7) descriptions of practices that are familiar from my own fieldwork over 70 years later, in Part IV I have argued that child circulation forms an integral dimension of the ideals, structures, and practice of Tswana kinship more broadly. Further, I have sought to demonstrate that it serves not simply to extend kin networks or bind them more closely together, but also to differentiate and distance them; that *dikgang* are critical means and indicators of this differentiation; and, counterintuitively, that such differentiation is critical to the resilience of those networks.

In Part II, I examined ways in which relationships among siblings, between siblings and their children, and between grandparents and grandchildren are all frequently refigured as parent–child relationships – thereby generating a shifting field of generations and intergenerational relatedness. In child circulation, we find processes that work continuously to differentiate these relationships from one another and to prioritise certain parent–child (or generational) configurations over others. Thus, a girl like Lesedi might have an older sister, a biological mother, a mother's sister, and a grandmother, all of whom are potentially and actually considered mothers to her. But with her biological mother

203

largely absent, which meant that she was raised primarily by her grand-mother, her grandmother takes precedence as mother; and Lesedi's relationships with other members and generations of her family shift to accommodate this precedence. If her older sister lived elsewhere and they seldom saw each other, the sister's parent role would be diminished in comparison; although, by the same token, if Lesedi went to live with that sister, the latter's parent role would be gradually prioritised. And these configurations often change over time, depending on the circum-stances of the people involved and their enactment of the key processes of kin-making we have explored – above all, their involvement in managing *dikgang*. While an 'essential similarity *flows* between and among' (Wagner 1977: 623, italics in the original) these relationships, making them each a sort of parenthood, the circulation of children – counter-intuitively – works to disrupt that flow.

This differentiation, in turn, enables the multiplicity that is so charac-teristic of Tswana kin roles and relationships. One can have multiple mothers, be mother to multiple people (siblings, offspring, grandchil-dren), and be multiple sorts of relative (sister, mother) to a single person, not because these relationships are conflated and interchangeable, but to the extent that they are differentiated and particularised. Multiplicity suggests not simply that anyone or everyone *can be* someone's parent, but that several specific people, by dint of their positions in a network of relationships, the responsibilities they undertake (of managing move-ment, contributing care, and jointly reflecting on and negotiating *dik-gang*), and their explicit differentiation from one another, *are* one's parents. Similarly, one can only be sister *and* mother to someone (poten-tially or actually) if these are differentiated roles. And it is perhaps this multiplicity above all – and, by extension, the means of differentiation that produce it – that has made families and kin practice so fraught and yet so resilient in the context of the AIDS crisis, and many other crises besides. While there is no question that socio-politico-economic contexts affect kin practice, it is not simply in terms of the stimulus–response effect that is often presupposed; one produces, is implicated in, and adapts to the other. I suggest that it may not be the epidemic itself as much as assumptions about the childcare crisis it has created – and associated policy responses to that apparent crisis – that have begun to introduce new variables into Tswana understandings of child circulation.

In Part V, I move from the creation of appropriate distinctions within and between families to the creation of appropriate distinctions between the family and the village. Taking my cue from concerns about the appropriate relationship between law and kinship noted in the context

of formal fostering, I explore the work that goes into ordering inter-actions between the *lelwapa* (courtyard, house, or family) and the *motse* (village or community) or *morafe* (tribal polity). As in previous chapters, self-making is implicated in – and in turn enables – these processes of ordering and distinguishing. And as in all the scenarios I have explored so far, the management of *dikgang* plays a critical role as well – this time in terms of its exposure and concealment. These dynamics were thrown into sharpest relief in the frequent public events that characterised village life during my fieldwork – most notably, in a major celebration to honour Mmapula and Dipuo, in the first initiation held in a generation, and in an opening ceremony conducted by a local NGO.

<div align="center">★★★</div>

INTERLUDE: TUMI'S NOTE

One Friday afternoon I had a short, formal message from Lesedi's brother.

'Hello Koreen! I duly inform you of the passing on of Tumi M. She passed on today, in the morning.'

Its suddenness caught me off guard. 'Tumi as in your cousin Tumi??' I responded. A ridiculous question. A last-ditch attempt to stave off the news.

'The Tumi you know,' he replied, patiently.

I was sitting at a table in a bustling café in Edinburgh, feeling suddenly out of place. I had been trying to write, which now felt pointless. But words were all I had to imagine my way to them. I saw them making their way up the A1, in Lesedi's white Toyota. Lesedi's girl will be in the back seat. But with whom? Lorato, perhaps. Lesedi's girl will be talking away, provocative, precocious, working at being oblivious. Lesedi's brother may be in the front seat, up from South Africa. Others may have caught the early morning bus north. What would the mood in the car be like? Tired, I think. Tired of the week that has been and the weeks before that – of illness, hospital visits, trips all over the city looking for medicines, of children crying, the strain of not knowing what was to come. Tired of the week to come – the cooking and greeting and cleaning and singing and burying.

But things are never quite as I imagine they might be. Two messages arrived from Lorato as I wrote. They are still in Gaborone; Lesedi has too many errands to run; they will leave tomorrow. Tumi has already gone ahead. They went to fetch her at Marina, the local hospital, in the morning, with the mortuary car; they took her back to the house in the city for prayers; and then she left. The last journey home. There is little mention of how anyone might feel. But Lorato says she can't stop crying; she says it's disbelief, shock. They were not particularly close. Then again, death has surprising ways of bringing us together.

I have fought against this being a story of dying. But still it is: a story of dying mothers, of dying children, of endlessly, impossibly, recreating ourselves and our families in the face of death.

I had been writing about Tumi the week before she died. About her sitting on the floor, on the tiles, with her back against the wall in the house in Gaborone; about her two-month-old child on folded blankets beside her, sleeping, then kicking awake, then mewling. About sitting on the end of the worn, slung-back red sofa near them, holding the fussing little one as Tumi described her family on my sketch pad, instructing me not to look. Being careful of the baby's neck and head. Tumi writing on her knees, noticing that she'd forgotten to include her child at first, then squeezing in her name at the bottom of the page with a laugh. How much less, and less brazenly, she laughed by then. Her eyes, which always seemed grounded, relaxed, but that darted suspiciously too. Her talk of witchcraft. The love of her daughter. Her slow smile and freckled face. Her seriousness: I must not read what she had written, nor show anyone, until after I had left. Closing the sketchbook, putting it upside down under my other books as we continued our conversation; her watching to make sure I had taken it and kept it closed even as I departed.

Finding a list of the names of her family members and their relationships to her, from her grandmother to her daughter. A short paragraph on how much she loved her family, especially her cousin who had looked after her so much, and her baby girl.

I send money for the funeral, and a story. I feel as if something is slipping through my fingers.

'We Show People We Are Together'
Making Selves, Families, Villages, and Nations

Motse o lwapeng.

The village is in the home.

'There are other things I could say here, but I am told I shouldn't.' Dipuo paused for effect, casting a dour, subtly challenging look over the dozens of people seated at long tables before him, and at the dozens of people standing behind them, jostling for shade under the lip of the tent.

Behind his immediate audience, in the far corner of the yard and out of earshot, still more people were busy tending the stews and beef *seswaa*, the chicken, rice, and samp that had been cooking all morning in massive three-legged cast-iron pots. My room had been commandeered, and I had popped in to check on the ginger beer, which we had been fermenting in a 50-gallon vat for two days. The apples and oranges and pineapple I had added early that morning floated in a thick, fruity layer on its surface. Around me, women were filling enormous enamel dishes with squash and beetroot and chakalaka. Stacks of plates stood ready in the corners. The women moved with alacrity; when the speeches were over, the meal had to be ready.

The party was a celebration to appreciate Dipuo and Mmapula for having raised their children so well, and it had been in the works for several months – anticipated with excitement, anxiety, and endless meetings, errands, and preparations. Two cows had been slaughtered, a vast amount of food procured, pots and chairs and dishes borrowed, a tent and tables and a sound system hired. Themed T-shirts emblazoned with a slightly misprinted quote from Proverbs 23.25 – 'Lets our parents be glad' – had been ordered in four colours and pre-sold to invitees. His sons had bought Dipuo a new suit and shoes; Mmapula had had two new dresses tailored. We had repainted the inside of the house in a bright peach, and had covered its outer walls with a rough stucco coat of deep burgundy. That morning, guests had begun trickling in early to help with the cooking and preparations; as mealtime drew closer, their numbers

had swollen to perhaps 200. It was the first time I had seen almost the entire extended family together in one place. Neighbours, friends, co-workers, churchmates, some local politicos, and even a well-known singer from the village had all come. The Legae siblings and their children scurried hither and thither, sorting out last-minute problems, shepherding people, worrying whether there would be enough food and whether it would be cooked on time. They were in decidedly high spirits, teasing one another (and me), working efficiently and happily together. 'Tomorrow we show people we are together,' Moagi had said to us, by way of encouragement, late the night before. And so we seemed to be.

As one of the guests of honour, Dipuo's was the last official speech to be made. The assembled crowd had already heard the full genealogy of the family stretching back three generations, to the elderly couple's parents' parents; formal introductions of its key living members; and short speeches of appreciation from Mmapula's *malome* (the son of her mother's late brother), one of the couple's children, and one of their grandchildren. Mmapula had just given an impassioned oration about parenthood and family. When it was his turn to speak, Dipuo began by noting, '*Ke bediwa Dipuo, mme ga ke rate dipuo*' – I am called Dipuo but I dislike disagreements (literally, *dipuo* means 'discussions') – to general laughter. But it was also a sort of ironic warning, a phrase he had been uttering ominously in family meetings leading up to the event itself. As his speech wore on, his meaning became clear.

'I can't refuse; I'm happy about what they did for us today,' he allowed, picking up from his deliberate pause. 'Even though they are saying I should not tell you that I'm not happy with the fact that they are not helping me at the lands, and not looking after me – yes, I won't say it.'

Over the days prior to the party, the old man had been sounding out people in various quarters about his speech, and about voicing his complaints about his children's supposed filial failures. Provocatively, he had suggested the possibility first to his eldest daughter, Khumo, and then to his son Moagi – both of whom had been marginally involved in the party planning but were nonetheless contributing and were implicated in the accusation. Both told him abruptly that it would be inappropriate. Worse, he then suggested to the son of one of his brothers (often called as *malome* for his own children) that he would shame his children in front of the crowd for being busy organising parties and pretending to care about him in public when in fact they don't help him at the lands or look after him properly. Reputedly, the brother's son had become very angry with him and had insisted that he should say no such thing. But now it had been said.

As he finished, some of the women began gathering in the outdoor kitchen – converted now to a serving station – and started filling plates for the older children to ferry around the yard to guests. To the siblings' great relief, there was ample food, and still more left over for guests who might arrive later. But most of the siblings had been busy in the yard during Dipuo's speech and would only come to hear of his imputations later that evening when we sat down to debrief. '*Re na le mathata*,' Modiri concluded then – we have problems. '*A mantsi*,' added Moagi. Many.

At any given time, there were countless celebrations in the offing in Dithaba. During my fieldwork, we organised three notable parties at home: one for the first birthday of Boipelo's child; one for Lesego's thirteenth birthday; and the enormous feast described above. Scattered between were celebrations hosted by neighbours, friends, and relatives: for Christmas or New Year; *motshelo* (savings group) meetings, graduations, or birthdays – including the eighty-third birthday of Mmapula's late mother's sister, a party that drew well over 100 people. And then there were the frequent village-wide events held at the *kgotla* (customary court), parties thrown by local NGOs, baby showers, weddings, and funerals. Some were customary, with long-standing precedent, like the first birthday party, but most were ad hoc, such as those attached to the otherwise randomly chosen birthdays of Lesego or Mmapula's *mmamogolo*.

A remarkable prevalence of celebratory events is nothing new among Batswana, although their motivations may have changed. Schapera records the frequency of parties and get-togethers in the colonial era, for everything from 'doctoring' new huts to births, confirmations, initiations, betrothals, weddings, and funerals – although he notes that some causes for celebration had already been abandoned (Schapera 1940: 174–5). He touches on them only in passing, however, as '[e]vents … [that] help to relieve the monotony of what at best is hardly a colourful existence, even to the people themselves' (ibid.: 172) – although he concedes that they might 'counteract in some degree the disintegrating tendencies of frequent separation' (ibid.: 178) that he described as characterising household routines and residential patterns, especially during the era of labour migration (ibid.: chapter 6). In that capacity, he connects events with family meetings called to deal with marriage negotiations, court cases, and internal conflict.

I suggest that these two sorts of 'family gatherings', as Schapera calls them – for celebration on the one hand and for negotiations on the other – are equally important in making kin, but of rather different orders. Parties and events explicitly involve everyone from neighbours to friends to political figures, and they focus on performing the family's

success in achieving certain kin ideals. But negotiations are exclusive to key members of the family, are carefully restricted and hidden, and grapple continuously with the threats and failures that families face. While both bring family together, they do so in quite different ways, to quite different ends. One often produces the other: negotiations are undertaken in anticipation of weddings and funerals. And, like other kin-making processes, hosting or participating in events creates discord and risks of its own, which must be managed and contained in certain ways, and which are critical processes in sustaining and delimiting family. But in their differentiation, part of the relevance of celebrations emerges: more than simply relieving monotony or encouraging togetherness, celebrations demonstrate the negotiation of tensions between the familial and political dimensions of Tswana kinship, between publicly performing the ideals of kinship and managing its fraught realities.

Celebrations provide insight into the production and management of other tensions as well. As McKinnon and Cannell point out, any distinction between the familial and the political is ideological, not given, and therefore requires significant boundary-making work – in spite of which, a deep interdependency remains (McKinnon and Cannell 2013: 11). Events like those described in this chapter mark critical sites for this work, and provide useful perspectives on the unexpected interdependencies that emerge. They require participants to 'negotiate issues of inclusion and exclusion, of cooperation and rejection, of civility and incivility' (Durham and Klaits 2002: 778); those negotiations work primarily to differentiate and connect certain groups from or with others in certain ways – especially kin from and with non-kin. Moreover, they are negotiations condensed around *dikgang*. Glossing the proverb that opens this chapter, Schapera suggests that 'a man's social standing and influence are often determined by his reputation as a host' (Schapera 1940: 170). His analysis hints at but understates the relevance of the conduct and management of the home, and of kin and non-kin *in* the home, to the political dynamics of the village. To say *motse o lwapeng*, the village is in the *lelwapa*, is to suggest that the village begins in, is sustained by, and is even generated by the home; and that, in many ways, the shape and meaning of the public sphere, and the power of its politics, emanate from this specific relationship with the home. And, as Schapera's gloss implies in its emphasis on hosting, these relationships are perhaps most apparent in events and celebrations.

The chapters in Part V examine this possibility through a close reading of three quite different events: the party at home introduced above; a homecoming celebration for the first *mophato*, or age regiment, to be initiated in nearly 40 years; and a ceremony held to celebrate the opening

of a campsite run by a local NGO. I consider the first event, and kin events generally, as a key means of establishing a family's relative success, its collective ability to mobilise people and resources, to cooperate, and to provide amply for itself and for others. But such events are also a site where families both invite and contain conflict (or *dikgang*) in ways that establish the limits of kinship. Family parties are also alternative, experimental means of producing opportunities to self-make when pregnancy, marriage, and other routes can be so fraught; and they mark moments in which specific distinctions and relationships between the home and the village, the family and the state, the realms of kinship and of politics are generated, sustained, and negotiated. The initiation homecoming is a similar site of negotiation, explicitly oriented towards regenerating the *morafe*, or tribal polity – again by creating new opportunities for self-making and kin-making, but also by demonstrating the interdependencies of *morafe* and *losika*, or family, and by establishing distinctions between the two that render a rough parity between them. Finally, the opening ceremony demonstrates the ways in which NGOs, state agencies, and transnational donors tap into kinship idioms and practices to naturalise and legitimise their work, their relationships with one another, and the precedence they seek over the families in which they intervene. But the ceremony also demonstrates the contradictory multiplicity of kinship practices and ideals that permeate that work and those relationships, overwhelming and undermining them, and frustrating their projects of social change. Holding these three events together, I suggest, enables what Sian Lazar has called a 'kinship anthropology of politics' (2018), focused on political spaces and the construction of political subjects – but also, here, on the spaces in which the domains of kinship and politics are distinguished and produced and in which the self, the family, the polity, and the state are generated.

In Part V, I have chosen to focus on comparatively exceptional, ad hoc events. Attention to such festivities helps to sidestep deep-seated and problematic assumptions that AIDS affects only family reproduction and survival – which a preoccupation with weddings and funerals in the literature suggests – and to take a wider perspective on the potential legacies of the epidemic. Parties such as the one described above often share many features with weddings – the range of invitees, the large white tent, the changes of clothing, choreographed dancing, programme of speeches, and not least the feast itself – and this resonance has important implications. But opportunities for ad hoc parties are more easily and spontaneously created – often at more or less random junctures, in response to a felt need as much as a specific event, time, or more predictable rationale – and their frequency suggests something ongoing

and continuous in the dynamics they generate. In this sense, parties offer insight into the everyday ritual dimensions of kinship, and they become especially relevant when certain key rituals, such as marriage, can be so difficult to orchestrate. Parties and celebrations also proved surprisingly open to experimentation: small organisations and government agencies could (and did) organise and adapt them to their own ends. I suggest that this adaptability makes these otherwise distinct sorts of events uniquely demonstrative of ongoing negotiations around the limits of family, the differentiation of political from family spheres, and the management of appropriate relationships between the two.

Figure 9 *Dipitsane* – pots cooking for the feast. Men tend three-legged pots of meat for *seswaa*, and women pots of vegetables, for the Legae party.

13 The Village in the Home
A Party

Dijo ga di ratanelwe.

Some do not like the food of others.

Lorato had struck on the idea for a family party quite spontaneously, not long into the new year. 'Isn't the old woman turning 65 this year?' she had remarked with careful nonchalance as several of us sat in the *lelwapa* one morning. Nobody was quite sure; Mmapula herself was fuzzy about the year she had been born. 'Anyway, we should have a party for her,' Lorato continued, adding, 'We've never had a *big* party at home.' Smaller parties had been frequent enough, but Mmapula and her children often voiced their disappointment that nothing larger – specifically, no weddings – had yet been held in the yard.

Modiri, Kelebogile, and Oratile were all sitting nearby. Almost immediately, they began thinking up what they could provide and whom they could invite, assessing potential problems and solutions. They were pragmatic and muted, but undoubtedly keen. Modiri noted that having a party for Mmapula without involving Dipuo would create serious misunderstandings and would worsen existing tensions between them; so the siblings agreed to have an event that would celebrate both of their parents together, as a way of thanking them for having raised their children so well. Modiri was deputed to speak to Dipuo, and Kelebogile was asked to sound out Mmapula, to ensure that both were on board and to seek their advice.

Once the proper motivation and type of party had been established, and the elderly couple had given their approval, a date in December was set and preparations began. They were extensive and drawn-out, moving slowly and stalling frequently at first, picking up urgency as time progressed and the scale of the event grew. What started as a simple idea quickly became ambitious – and costly. We met monthly, and at every meeting it seemed that a new expense had been identified. Didn't we need a tent? A sound system? What about drinks? More food? Printed invitations? And the house had to be fixed up … Each time the new cost

213

was voiced, everyone would shift uncomfortably and look at their shoes. Kelebogile was often quick to say that she had no money; none of us had much to spare, and the everyday costs of running the household already weighed heavily. And yet there was no question that the expense – whatever it was, whether hiring a tent or printing T-shirts – was necessary; it was simply accepted as such. And so the issue would be left hanging, the oppressive weight of expectation over everyone's heads.

Addressing these emergent costs was all the more difficult because not all of the siblings attended the meetings regularly, or at all. Moagi was out of town; Kagiso was seldom home, regardless of how often we changed our meeting times to anticipate his schedule. Khumo came once or twice, nearer the end, but everyone was aware of her financial circumstances and expected her to help mostly on the day itself. A flat contribution rate per adult family member was decided among the lead organisers who were present – usually Lorato, Kelebogile, Oratile, and Modiri – but it was virtually impossible to enforce it with those who had not been there to agree to it. Hoping to draw in help from the extended family, a larger meeting was called perhaps two months before the main event, involving representatives from among the siblings' age-mates, identified with Mmapula's help. But, on the day, only two people came, and certain key figures – the sister's daughter Mmapula had raised as her own child, and Mmapula's *malome* (her mother's brother's son, who had inherited the position from his late father) – were absent and sent no word. Such a discouraging silence puzzled and dismayed the siblings, and Mmapula as well.

In the context of this uncertainty, Mmapula indicated that we should go to make invitations in person. Doing so was a much more formal process than I had anticipated; it involved us going as a small contingent – Mmapula, Oratile, and Lorato, with myself as driver – from yard to yard among the relatives, most of whom lived some distance away, in the next village. We moved in a specific order: first to Dipuo's relatives (from his father's brother's son, to his sister's daughter, to his brother's children); then to Mmapula's brother's house. Each time we were offered chairs in the *lelwapa* of our hosts and sat shoulder to shoulder, facing outwards; and each time, after exchanging greetings and ensuring that our hosts knew who each of us were and how we were related, Mmapula conveyed the formal invitation. Oratile and Lorato were occasionally as clueless as I was about the relationships, even where we all knew the house and people of the yard from weddings and funerals we had attended. 'I'll never remember all of these relationships!' sighed Lorato as we drove home. 'At least if one of my sons was married I would have a daughter-in-law to send,' rejoined Mmapula with a note of melancholy, gazing out of the window.

As the party approached, we met more frequently, the question of contributions became more urgent, and there were more favours to be asked, things to be bought or collected, and choices to be agreed upon. Money began to materialise from somewhere – *motshelo* contributions, debts recalled or incurred, partners, savings, it was never quite clear where – and would sometimes be noted in meetings, sometimes not. No one wanted to advertise their wherewithal too liberally. I didn't even realise the old man was getting a new suit courtesy of his sons until I saw him wearing it. We met for the last time late into the night before the event – it was the first time all of the siblings had met together, in Mmapula and Dipuo's presence – and we ironed out the last costs, contributions, programme details, and errands to be run. Moagi, in charge of the meeting, thanked everyone for their hard work and invited his parents to offer words of encouragement or advice. 'Some people are jealous, and they will try to make problems with what you have done,' noted Dipuo. 'Work together, show them you are together,' he added, without apparent irony.

From the moment guests began trickling into the yard the next morning, they were carefully managed. The women – mostly friends and neighbours, plus a few younger relatives – began arriving first, and were directed to long tables set up in a fenced-in space under the trees to help clean and prepare mounds of potatoes, carrots, squash, and cabbage that had been bought. Enormous logs, gathered by the young men all week, were set in radiating circles to create several low fires not far from the tables, where still other women cooked bread for the helpers' breakfasts. The large pots waited in the wings, deployed later for the cooking of stews and vegetables, samp and sorghum, with a few left to the young men for cooking the tender beef *seswaa*. Older men and women arrived in the early afternoon, the men sitting with Dipuo in an impromptu semicircle just behind the tent, the women helping with the work that remained to be done as everyone waited for the official programme to begin.

Everyone stayed outside. We had spent hours painting and stuccoing the houses, but they were really just a backdrop to the event: virtually no one went in. I chopped fruit in the indoor kitchen in the morning, as it was the only counter space I could find, but even the children from the yard were reluctant to join me there to help. After we left, it remained empty. Mmapula's adjoining room out front was used to dress Dipuo and, later, the children. In the secondary house, Mmapula and the women used Kelebogile's room to change in – we all went from cooking clothes to formal clothes and then to T-shirts as the day proceeded. It was also used as a storeroom for drinks and plates, as well as anything of

value; access was regulated by Kelebogile's key and was restricted mostly to immediate family. My room had been cleared out and now housed everything from meat to cooking dishes, ginger beer to salads. Family, close neighbours and friends or relatives who were helping with the cooking – generally only the women – came and went freely, but efficiently, and did not linger. But perhaps most strikingly, the *lelwapa* was left clear the entire day. The large tent, where the tables were set out for guests and the speeches given, sat at its front edge; at mealtime, older women sat in chairs on the stoep around its edge to eat, children perched below them. And while it became a thoroughfare for those of us cooking and serving, no one dallied or sat *in* the *lelwapa*, which – as we have seen – was where most of the family's meals were taken and where guests were usually welcomed. While anyone and everyone had been invited into the yard, they were not only differentially restricted from the intimate spaces of the house (the bedrooms); they were also uniformly excluded from the shared living spaces (kitchen, sitting room) and even the distinctly public–private heart of the home – the *lelwapa*. People were drawn into the yard, but they were kept at a distance befitting the boundaries of the family and their existing relationships to it, which the party served to rearticulate.

Establishing boundaries of this sort was in many ways the business of the day. They were established in space and in movement, in terms of who could contribute what and how, and in terms of which relationships were on display and which were not. When Lorato's boyfriend turned up unexpectedly on the perimeters of the yard after dark, she served him outside with some annoyance. 'Two of my uncles saw him,' she explained later, adding, 'I don't need him to be seen by my uncles at a party like this.' Although Lorato's failed pregnancy had made her relationship visible, the rockiness of negotiations thereafter made her boyfriend a figure better hidden from both the family and their guests.

But the boundaries were not always clear. After most of the guests had gone home in the evening, with just a few close friends and neighbours remaining behind to barbecue the leftover meat, the siblings gathered together in Kelebogile's room to debrief. They invited their parents to join them. The gifts Dipuo and Mmapula had received were all laid out neatly on the floor: large cooking pots, oversized enamel serving dishes, tea sets, other household goods, and money. They had come from friends, neighbours, and family who considered the old couple to be elders or *malome* (mother's brother) and *mma malome* (lit. female uncle/mother's brother; usually the wife of *malome*). Dipuo made a special example of the beautiful new cooking pots one of his sisters' sons had provided. 'You see what beautiful things my relatives have given us,'

he said. 'I have been a *malome* to them,' he added, before exhaustively listing each marriage negotiation with which he had assisted, weddings and funerals attended, help given for children and houses. His children listened, nonplussed by the implicit, critical comparison: none of them were married, and none of them had completed a house of his or her own. 'I'm going to take these presents that were given by my family, because they were given to appreciate me and my help,' he concluded.

Everyone kept their faces studiously blank. After asking Mmapula whether she had any words for them – she had none, except to thank them for the day – they let their parents go so that they could evaluate the party in more depth among themselves. It was only at this point that they voiced their shock and hurt. 'Did you hear what that old man was saying?' asked Kelebogile incredulously. 'Always his sister's sons, his sister's sons [*bo setlogolo*]. Why should he take those things? They're also for his wife!'

The debrief meeting, held among the wreckage of the day's event – rumpled piles of clothes and half-finished bottles of soft drink, the jumbled presents and a couple of sleeping children – was in many ways a tallying of the day's ignominies, many of them generated by Dipuo. '*Hei*,' began Moagi, 'this old man was refusing even to get dressed this morning.' He recounted Dipuo's complaints about his new trousers being ill-fitting, disliking his tie, and completely refusing to wear his shoes as one might recount the misbehaviour of a stubborn child. Dipuo had a serviceable pair of shoes Kagiso had bought for him, but a couple of days previously he had refused to wear them to the party. Kagiso had dashed to town the day before the party to buy a new pair; these, too, the old man had rejected, just that morning, complaining that he didn't like their style. Instead, he had chosen a battered pair provided some time back by one of his sisters' sons. 'He takes his sister's sons as if they are his children – as if he doesn't have children,' reflected Kelebogile. Modiri and Moagi echoed her last statement word for word, and the others hummed in dismayed agreement. Given everything the siblings had spent on and put into the party, and combined with reports that had filtered back to them on the old man's earlier speech, it was a particularly bitter pill to swallow.

Someone knocked at the door as these tales and grievances were being recounted. 'We're talking!' answered Modiri, ensuring that the door was shut tight. Despite frequent knocks, no one was let in for the duration of the meeting – with the exception of a neighbour's child who was sent to ask for a drink. Everyone fell carefully silent while she was given one and sent out.

The siblings reassured one another on having provided more than enough food, noting that they had overheard people commenting with

satisfaction on how well they had eaten and how amply even latecomers were served. Grumbling about the lack of food after a party was a common means of signifying the event's failure and casting doubt on the hosts. 'Nobody can say they went home not eating,' noted Modiri with a combination of approbation, relief, and latent concern. They were equally pleased with having kept the programme on schedule, and with the number and variety of guests who had come (aside from one or two notable absences). 'I heard some people saying it's like we were marrying our parents!' noted Lorato with a laugh and visible satisfaction. But it was small consolation. 'We need to call this old man and talk to him,' asserted Moagi finally, to general agreement. 'We have to tell him it's not okay for him to treat us like nothing in front of everyone,' agreed Kelebogile.

Dipuo was never called. The next day everyone was busy cleaning the yard and house after the party, returning things rented and borrowed. The day after, children were being prepared to visit their other parents' extended families before Christmas, or to go to help at the lands. Moagi was getting ready for the long drive back to his base. I asked quietly once or twice whether they were still planning to call their father; I was met with shrugs, sighs, and indications that Moagi would be leaving and it wouldn't be right to have the meeting without everyone concerned present. And so the issue was left to lie – like so many others.

As we saw in Part III, making intimate relationships recognisable is a key means of making them *kin* relations. The same might be said of large-scale family celebrations: parties involve a public performance of kinship and an explicit display and narration of who is related to whom and how, and of the historical trajectories and qualities of those relationships. The family genealogy was recounted, identifying which villages (and *merafe*) each ancestor had come from; within that context, Moagi introduced each member of the family by order of age, describing who was whose child and their specific contributions and importance to the family. Similar genealogical accounts characterise Tswana wedding feasts. Just as a pregnancy makes a previously hidden intimate relationship visible and knowable, a party throws the entire network of kin relations into public relief; and, as the frequency of parties suggests, this performance is a key means of expressing and sustaining kinship.

Parties, however, are carefully organised to make certain dimensions of the family publicly recognisable and to obscure or downplay others. Celebratory events are meant to demonstrate the achievement of key family ideals: harmonious cooperation, or *tirisanyo mmogo*, self-sufficiency, and the ability to provide for others. A beautifully built house, the ability to mobilise contributions of things and labour,

comfortable surroundings, ample food, music, and entertainment, and the seamless coordination of everything from invitations to yard preparations, cooking to the official programme – all are key indicators of the achievement of these ideals. In this sense, parties draw together and provide an opportunity to publicly perform all the ideals of Tswana kinship we have explored so far.

Of course, taking on such a task runs a significant risk of failing to live up to those ideals. The entire planning process had been fraught with refusals, absences, regrets, and the risk of failure – *dikgang*, now extended across a wide field of relations. The family's images of itself had been challenged; its relative success in achieving kin ideals – of marrying sons to acquire daughters-in-law, for example, or of retaining the support of children raised on behalf of others – had been thrown into question. Just as parties draw together all of the kinship ideals we have previously discussed, they echo the linked sources of *dikgang*: the organisation and management of space, and movement to and through it; contributions of material resources and of work; silence and speech, visibility and know-ability. And the danger of *dikgang* is exacerbated in the public display that the event involves. Inviting so many people to participate led to heightened scrutiny and substantial potential for disappointment, criticism, and bad feeling. Celebrations risked putting a kin network's functionalities *and* dysfunctionalities, successes *and* shortfalls on display; and these ambiguities were not simply exposed to the family itself, but to friends, neighbours, and even strangers.

But these dangers were anticipated throughout the planning process, too. Holding parties like the one described here deliberately invites risk and danger into the yard, and into the very heart of the family. Celebrations at home perform familial success by setting it a sort of test. The cohesiveness and strength of the family are implicitly proven in its ability to absorb and withstand the *dikgang* presented by their invitees – incorporating the full range of their extended families as well as friends, neighbours, and colleagues. And the family is given a unique opportunity to identify and deal explicitly with the problems that emerge in the process (such as Dipuo's intransigence).

Unlike pregnancies and marriage arrangements, however, parties do *not* involve any explicit, public negotiation or collective reflection on these risks. *Dikgang*, and the means of their resolution, are obscured, concealed, and restricted to specific members of the hosting family. It is in this containment of problems and their resolution that parties work to define the limits of family. The management of *dikgang* does not simply extend the possibilities of kinship ad infinitum; it draws its boundaries, too. In spite of the kin-like contributions and behaviours expected of

guests – in readying the yard, in making contributions, in the preparation, cooking, and serving of food, in the eating and cleaning up, or in giving gifts, all of which we have seen featured in kin-making – the party is decidedly *not* a means of extending kinship. Instead, it restricts kinship, performs these restrictions publicly, and defines a public by virtue of its exclusion. At the same time, a certain hierarchy between the family and that public is established. The family demonstrates its capacity to reach distant relatives, friends, neighbours, and other community members – in mobilising resources and labour, in providing food, in accommodating, in calling and sending, and so forth – while containing the dangers that arise from that extension, revealing a power that goes beyond self-sufficiency and draws others into relationships of care and obligation. This process of defining kin and community against one another, and of establishing the priority of the former in generating the politics of the latter, is one way in which we might better understand the proverb *motse o lwapeng* – the village is in the home.

There are, of course, concomitant processes or attempts at realigning the relationships internal to the family, too – although they were more experimental, and, in this case, rather less successful. The party's consistent echo of wedding celebrations – in a context where none of the siblings were married and the family's attempts to negotiate marriage had been frustrated – marked a certain innovative attempt at self-making on the siblings' behalf. Dipuo's public reproach of their filial failures, in this reading, comes across more as a rejection of that particular claim than a wilful exposure of his family to public censure (although it also had to be handled as the latter). Notably, Dipuo did not dissuade his children from throwing the party in the first place, nor did he attempt to divide them or turn them against one another, as he had in other situations; he encouraged their display of togetherness and of harmonious cooperation, both explicitly and by providing them with a common cause to rail against. What he seemed to reject were the claims the siblings were making: the claim that the process of raising them was complete, and that they were therefore fully fledged adults; or the claim that they were self-sufficient enough to remarry their parents, thereby implicitly divesting themselves of further responsibilities to the pair, and celebrating themselves and their ascension to a new social role. Whether by pointedly wearing the shoes and claiming the gifts given to him by his married, established sister's sons, or by rejecting the presents given by his own children and shaming their behaviour *as children* (much less adults), Dipuo repeatedly refused to acknowledge these new claims on personhood as being equivalent to those acquired through marriage, building, and other more traditional routes. And his refusal – combined with his wife's frustrations in

not having a daughter-in-law she could send to make invitations, or in being disappointed both by a child she had raised and by her *malome* – suggests a further implication: that Dipuo's and Mmapula's self-making projects had also been inhibited by their and their children's failures to secure obligations among kin, marriages, and so on, failures that were put on display over the course of the party's organisation.

Recognising how parents' and children's aspirations to self-making are bound up in each other leads us to another way in which boundaries within the family were being renegotiated during the party: in terms of intergenerational relationships. The impression that the siblings were marrying their parents, noted by guests at the event, irked Dipuo in particular not simply for its untoward claim of adulthood on the part of his children, but for the inversion of generational order it suggested. Of course, this particular inversion has precedent in Tswana custom: historically, sons could pay *bogadi* for their mothers in the absence or after the death of their fathers, partly to ensure their own legitimacy (Schapera 1933). But this customary practice suggests the need to replace a father, where *bogadi* debts have been unpaid and marriage negotiations unsuccessful. Given that Dipuo was not only present but had successfully managed his own marriage as well as securing the marriages of others, his resistance to that interpretation of the party becomes clear. His refusal to wear clothes provided for him, as might be provided by a parent to a child, and his emphasis on how many quality gifts he had been able to acquire through the superior filial bonds he had crafted with his sister's sons, indicated resistance to his children's apparent attempt to undermine and claim his authority.[1]

As we have seen, Dipuo's authority tended to be most visible not in his provision of goods or support for his family, but in his role as a negotiator of *dikgang*. In underlining his achievements as a *malome* to his sister's sons, his success in negotiating their marriages, and his ongoing responsibility for conflict management in their relationships, he was asserting the validity of his claim to authority primarily in those terms (ignoring the failures that may have affected his own children, which implicitly became their responsibility). But Dipuo also seemed to have been asserting his unique authority by *creating* problems that his children could not address – and about which they could not call upon anyone else to assist them. Whether in his slyly damnatory speech at the party, his self-

---

[1] Dipuo was adept at playing the tensions between agnatic and affinal kin; while these distinctions are structurally more blurred among the Tswana than in many other places where they have been described (i.e. Fortes 1949), they are all the more up for grabs and subject to canny manipulation as a result.

aggrandisement among his children as they debriefed, or in his past indiscretions and the upheavals they caused, Dipuo's greatest power lay in his ability to provoke *dikgang* among his kin. In his work among a neighbouring *morafe* (polity), Rijk van Dijk observes that '[p]laying havoc is reserved for the elderly, particularly for adult men' (2012a: 152); but more than a right of mischief earned through age, this causing havoc both demonstrates and reproduces power. As we have seen throughout this book, *dikgang* shape gendered persons, relationships, and hierarchies; and the role that older men, especially *bomalome*, play in navigating them is key to reinforcing patriarchy as the fundamental moral order (Werbner 2016: 85). I suggest that the ability to make potentially serious trouble that cannot be addressed or ameliorated by anyone else is more than a matter of skills in negotiation, mediation, influence, and consensus building (*pace* Wylie 1991); it stands at the core of the power enjoyed by older men – and at the core of the gerontocratic patriarchy that characterises Tswana sociality.

Ultimately, Dipuo's children seemed to recognise and accept their failure, despite the success of the party itself. They did not call the old man to account, as one might do with a wayward dependant or someone over whom one had established some authority, and they did not pursue the matter with anyone else. While the party held out the possibility of self-making for the siblings and their parents, as well as different inter-generational relationships, it also reinforced the limits of those possibilities. It generated the means to engage and negotiate tensions between the preservation of family unity and the promotion of individual members' self-making projects, but also between ensuring the progressive intergenerational transmission of authority and retaining intergenerational hierarchies and the claims of obligation and support they enable. These tensions, and the ways in which they could be negotiated, became most apparent in the *kgang* of Dipuo's intransigence and the ways in which his children handled the situation.

As in previous chapters, attempts to assert and enable self-making while retaining responsibility to the family, or to enable the progression of generations while preserving hierarchies, are a source of *dikgang*; and *dikgang* in turn enable a tenuous balance to be struck between those otherwise contradictory imperatives. What the example of the party underlines is the importance of an explicitly public audience or context in this process. Building, cars and *metshelo*, pregnancy, marriage, and the emergence of intimate relationships, and the care of others' children – these all derive both their riskiness and their salience to self-making not simply from recognition among kin but from their apprehension by a wider, specifically non-kin audience as well.

Of course, it is not only families, or family-run celebrations, who set the limits and terms of engagement between kin and community. A few months before the party, Dithaba had been preoccupied with the home-coming of the first age regiment – or *mophato* – to be initiated among the Balete in over a generation. In Chapter 14, I turn to this homecoming celebration to examine how the revival of a lapsed tradition sought to reorder relationships between selves, families, and the tribal polity – and thereby regenerate a collective ethics.

14   Lifting up Culture
A Homecoming

Kgotla ke agiwa ka losika.

The customary court is built by family.

It was a warm afternoon in early September, and hundreds of people from the surrounding villages had gathered at the main *kgotla*. Anyone who could get away from work and make the trip to the district's main village, Maropeng – the administrative locus of the *morafe* (tribal polity) – had come to welcome back the first *mophato*, or age regiment, to be initiated in nearly 40 years.

People had been milling around the stone walls of the *kgotla* since late morning, exchanging greetings and speculating on when the initiates would arrive and how the afternoon would unfold. The *mophato*'s return had been greatly anticipated since they had left a month previously, and the initiation had been the subject of frequent conversations both at home and around the district in the interim. Mmapula and Dipuo had both been initiated, as had many other elders in Dithaba, but anyone younger had learned what little they knew about *bogwera* and *bojale* – men's and women's initiations – from stories and schoolbooks, and many were acutely curious. For perhaps the first time in my fieldwork, almost everyone was as confused as I was about what would happen next and what it all meant. Our collective bewilderment gave the day an air of festive camaraderie.

No one seemed sure about why the initiations had been discontinued in the first place. Official rationales, provided to local media outlets by the paramount chief's office, focused on recurrent drought and South Africa's political instability in the 1980s, which had a habit of spilling over the nearby border (*Midweek Sun* 2012). Anti-apartheid activists frequently sought safe haven in Botswana's border towns, of which the district's main village was one, or in the empty stretches of bush between them, where initiations were held. The unrest, of course, had died down long ago, but the initiations had not been revived in the interim.

224

Most other *merafe* in Botswana stopped running initiations in the colonial era – generally under pressure from the missions, which imagined them as lascivious and violent at worst, or as 'tedious ceremonies' that created 'prodigious barriers to the gospel' at best (Moffat 1842: 66; see also Schapera 1955 [1938]: 105–6; Werbner 2009: 453). Some *merafe*, however, continued to initiate age regiments of men and women intermittently throughout the colonial era – most notably the Bakgatla (Schapera 1955 [1938]: 106; Setlhabi 2014b: 461–3), a group of whom had settled in Dithaba during that time. But even among the Bakgatla, the practice was abandoned, revived, and abandoned again (Setlhabi 2014b). Girls' puberty rituals – which share several symbolic aspects with the initiation of age sets but focus more on individual initiates – had been sustained further north in Tswapong; latterly, however, at around the same time that initiation revivals in the south gained steam, they began suffering a drop-off in participation, as girls sought more 'progressive' and 'modern' ways of being and becoming women (Werbner 2009; 2014b).

This tension between the 'traditional' and the 'modern', the political claims and subjectivities each category marked, was one likely source of the lapses – and revivals – in *bogwera* (the men's initiation). When Lentswe II, the paramount chief or *kgosikgolo* of the Bakgatla, reintroduced *bogwera* in 1975 after a long absence, it was explicitly aimed at 'the restoration of our cultural values and civilisation' (quoted in Grant 1984: 15). In response, Sir Seretse Khama – the first president of the Republic and the paramount chief of the Bangwato – denounced *bogwera* as primitive, divisive, and tribalistic, an 'impediment to progress' (ibid.) for a nation seeking to assert a unified, homogeneous national culture and identity in place of the ethnic fragmentation of Britain's colonial government (Werbner 2008: 38–40). The echo of the missions' disparagements was not accidental.

As Keletso Gaone Setlhabi argues for the *bojale* (women's initiation) among the Bakgatla, initiations are often bound up with the political needs of the paramount chief to assert authority, an 'indication of his power and prestige' (Setlhabi 2014b: 463) that harks back to a time when *mephato* were military and labour regiments at the service of the *kgosikgolo*. As she observes, the initiations of Kgatla *mephato* map directly onto the years when new Kgatla chiefs were installed, with additional initiations held when needed for their wives or heirs. The revival initiations run by Lentswe II in 1975, and later by Kgafela II in 2009,[1] also marked

---

[1] See Setlhabi (2014b) for a full account of the dramatic story of Kgafela II and his struggles with the Government of Botswana.

a 'more ambitious project to reclaim the power of the Tswana chiefs, abolished by the Botswana constitution and a succession of laws, by enhancing … chiefly autonomy and independence' (Werbner 2014b: 375–6).[2] But while initiations could be highly responsive to a *kgosikgolo*'s political needs, they could equally well lapse in his (or her) absence (Setlhabi 2014b: 462); and, as became clear among the Balete in the apartheid era, they were also highly sensitive to political upheaval.

Political imperatives were less obvious at the Balete initiation in 2012. The paramount chief, Mosadi Seboko, had been installed nearly a decade previously – the first woman to hold the role. Unlike the contentious *kgosikgolo* of the Bakgatla, she had no political axe to grind with the Botswana government. But *kgosikgolo* Seboko shared other concerns with her Bakgatla peers. In Maropeng, the revival of initiations was justified explicitly in terms of repairing the moral fibre of tribal and family life – which, in the alarmist terms of one local newspaper, was beset by corruption, degradation, and the inability to run families properly (*Midweek Sun* 2012). AIDS was cast as one of many symptoms of this purported social rot. Specifically, initiation was intended as a means of promoting *botho* – often translated as 'humanity' but also literally 'personhood', a powerful moral standard of dignity, humaneness, respect, and civility (see Livingston 2008) – as an antidote to these iniquities. In other words, this initiation was deeply preoccupied with regenerating a collective ethics, and was intended to inspire collective reflection on shared and intransigent ethical dilemmas – a preoccupation familiar from family negotiations of *dikgang*.

Our uncertainty about how the ritual events would play out had precedent: that process of collective reflection was not only historically contested but deliberately left open to interpretation. In Pnina Werbner's (2009) account of Tswapong girls' puberty rituals, the elders' explanations of what was happening and what it meant were multiple and highly variable, mapping out a landscape of interpretive – and ethical – possibility that the new initiates would no doubt reinterpret in their turn, adapting it to the circumstances in which they lived. As far back as 1909, W. C. Willoughby commented in his reports on 'Becwana' initiations that 'the significance of the ritual is not known even by the tribes that preserve it' (1909: 228). Ignorance and confusion around initiation rituals are, of course, one way of distinguishing the initiated from the uninitiated, and of privileging those with ritual knowledge (LaFontaine 1985: 16–17). However, I suggest that the interpretive open-endedness

---

[2] See also McNeill (2011: 74–113) on the contested role of initiation in renewing chiefly power and resisting state interference among the Venda in South Africa.

that characterises Tswana initiations, even among the initiated, is also a potent site for the collective exercise of the moral imagination.

If initiation 'shapes an ethical subjectivity' (Werbner 2009: 441), then, it also marks a zone of contestation over what ethical frameworks ought to apply and what sorts of subjectivities are desirable – and these are political questions as well as ethical ones (Werbner 2014b). These questions are worked out, in part, by collectively negotiating appropriate relationships between the self, the *losika* (or family), and the *morafe* (or polity). In this sense, initiations provide an important antecedent and context to the NGO and government interventions I have described in this book. They offer an insight into the ways families have figured in and managed such interventions in the past, and with what implications for the relationships between *lelwapa* and *kgotla*, *losika* and *morafe*.

I do not propose, in this chapter, to attempt a full analysis of Tswana initiation on the basis of a single homecoming celebration.[3] However, following Maurice Bloch (1992), I take it that the reintegration stage of such a rite of passage might be illustrative of its legacies and implications, and may therefore have much to say about the relationships between self, *losika*, and *morafe* that initiation mediates. Specifically, I suggest that the homecoming condensed a long-standing interdependence between these domains, in which being able to mobilise labour and contributions from within families was key to establishing, asserting, and centralising political power in the *morafe*, and in which family histories, relationships, contributions, and care were highlighted and reanimated in turn. It also enacted a series of distinctions: between the initiate and his family; among *malwapa*; between *lelwapa* and *kgotla*; and, ultimately, among *merafe* and between the *morafe* and the nation state (Setlhabi 2014b). And, as elsewhere, these interdependencies and distinctions, and their ethical implications, are made evident in the generation and management of *dikgang*.

The initiation was carefully veiled in secrecy: initiates – past and present – were explicitly forbidden from discussing what the process entailed (see Setlhabi 2014a on secrecy and *bojale*). But between pestering the elders at home, prompting their age-mates among our neighbours, and considerable speculation, the Legae siblings and I had cobbled together a few ideas. Mmapula and Dipuo explained that the men would learn the history of the *morafe* and its songs and practices – although, based on the send-off event, Mmapula was concerned that they would be learning generic Setswana songs rather than those particular to

---

[3] For a thorough historical overview and symbolic analysis of Tshidi initiations, which bear several resemblances to events described here, see Comaroff (1985: 78–122).

the *morafe*. They would learn to hunt. Rra Ditau, our neighbour and builder, had tipped us off that initiates also learned minor witchcraft – of the sort that was necessary to protect oneself, one's cattle, and one's family, or to identify and divert malicious threats and attacks sent by others. And, perhaps most importantly, the men would be circumcised and 'doctored' with herbs thereafter – although official statements on the current initiation had carefully aligned themselves with the Safe Male Circumcision campaigns to curtail HIV and AIDS and noted that trained doctors would be involved (*Midweek Sun* 2012). When they returned, the initiates would be recognised as men. Indeed, once they were back in the village, initiates were greeted and congratulated with shouts of 'O *tla nyala*!' – You will marry! – although many were already married and had had children long ago. In fact, the initiates ranged in age from their early twenties to their late forties, there having been no initiations for so long.

None of the Legae brothers had opted to participate. Tuelo, the youngest, had originally planned to go along and had attended preparatory meetings, but at the last minute he backed out. Kagiso was adamantly disinterested. '*Ga ke motho wa dilo tse*,' he said dismissively – I'm not a person for these things, implying that with their dalliances in witchcraft and tradition they were inappropriate for a born-again Christian. Modiri and Moagi registered no particular interest. Oratile and Kelebogile were ambivalent when toying with the idea of participating in the women's initiation planned for the following year. Kelebogile was up for it until her mother told her that she had had to sit quietly and without reacting next to a snake at her own initiation, at which point Kelebogile changed her mind abruptly. Neither Mmapula nor Dipuo put any pressure on their children to participate; indeed, both official discourse and village conversation seemed to stress the importance of initiates choosing to participate for themselves, although they required fairly hefty ongoing sponsorship from their families (to which we will return). Only Mmapula's *malome* from the main village – or rather the son of her *malome*, who had inherited the responsibility – had decided to attend. We were hoping to find him among the men at the homecoming.

By early afternoon, word had spread that the *mophato* would soon arrive. The milling spectators converged on the main road into the *kgotla* in anticipation, their phone cameras readied, jostling one another with an air of companionable merriment. Someone wedged herself through the crowd to stand next to me. I glanced up, surprised to find Mmabontle giving me a mischievous look. She was an old friend from Dithaba with whom I had worked at the orphan care centre for some time, but hardly someone I had expected to see there. After some affectionate teasing and banter, I asked whether she had come specifically to see the *mophato*.

'*Ee*, I'm here for Tharo,' she explained. This statement came out of nowhere, and I was baffled. Tharo was a young man we both knew from the orphan care project in Dithaba, but then we both knew plenty of young people that way, and it seemed an odd reason for her to come all the way to Maropeng. She watched my confusion for a moment with a knowing look. 'Don't you know we're related?' she added casually, knowing the discovery would give me a shock, and laughing with satisfaction when it did. She explained that after doing some research into a 'small house' her father had had – another family outside his marriage – she discovered the link. 'My father was his grandfather. Anyway,' she continued, with her characteristic nonchalance, 'when we heard Tharo was to be initiated, we contributed to buy a cow. I bought him blankets and contributed for some food,' she added, referencing the costs incurred during the initiation itself.

It was a very generous contribution, given that Mmabontle was already looking after her own and her sister's children on a fairly meagre income. Tharo's older sister had been complaining bitterly to me of the initiation's expense the week before, calculating the combined cost of food, blankets, shoes, and the shorts, beads, and creams with which the men decorated themselves on their return at well over P3,000 (£250) – more than most reasonably employed people in Dithaba made in a month. The cost had been a source of some strife at home, making Mmabontle's contributions timely – they would have added as much as P1,000 (£85). '*Hei*! They don't tell you how expensive these things are in the beginning,' Mmabontle said. 'You just see them coming to you saying they need more money to feed *mogwera* [the initiate]. Even these boys they don't know how much it costs. But what can you do? If the boy wants to be initiated, you see what to do. Look, I made him a purse,' she added, showing me a small drawstring pouch she had sewn from scraps of cloth to give to him for collecting coins from people who wished to speak to him that day.

In his notes from 1909, Willoughby describes a similar economy of contribution mobilised to feed the initiates. He records that the initiates were housed together by ward and that the women of the ward would prepare and bring out food to them daily, dropping it at a safe distance before retreating. The initiates would eat this food together, along with their initiators. Remembering that wards tended to be patrilines, in Willoughby's account, both the provision and the consumption of food were active expressions and experiences of kinship, extending from the village into the initiation camp. While the logistics of feeding no doubt worked differently in 2012 – Tharo's older sister had complained that the initiators insisted on being given packs of Russians, as the popular spicy

sausages were known, as well as money – the contributory expectations and process were similar. And for Tharo and Mmabontle, it provided an opportunity for the public acknowledgement and performance of what would previously have been an unknown kinship. Much like the youth posted out on national service (*Tirelo Sechaba*, or 'Work for the Nation', a programme now lapsed), the initiates 'were situated … as household members receiving care, as engaging in self-development, and as forming links with and for the nation' (Durham 2007: 119) – in this case, the *morafe*.

As Mmabontle and I chatted, older men in blue work overalls and hats moved towards us along the road, pacing back and forth and snapping long, slender sticks against the pavement like whips to clear the route. The spectators moved quickly out of the way; the initiators were rumoured to thrash people if the occasion demanded it. Then we heard ululations and excitement from the top of the road, and, in the distance, above the heads of the crowd, we saw handkerchiefs dancing on the ends of long staffs. Before long, the *mophato* was trooping past us, each man covered completely in new, heavy blankets, incongruous with their floral prints. It was impossible to see any man's face, much less recognise him. It reminded me of the way I had seen women covered in blankets for *patlo*, as their relatives and in-laws whispered advice in their ears. One initiate was driven by in a car, the rumour chasing up the line behind him that he was ill.

The men were herded into the cattle kraal attached to the main *kgotla*, the high stone walls of which made it impossible for them to be seen. Anyone who tried to climb something nearby to get a look was angrily chased off by one of the initiators. No one was admitted into the *kgotla*, and so we all waited around in some confusion. Eventually, smaller groups of men – still bundled head to toe in blankets – began to emerge from every exit, heading off in different directions. The crowd scattered, people running to attach themselves to one group or another, following behind them with enthusiasm. I lost Mmabontle, and, like many others, followed one group and then tagged after another, clueless about what was happening until someone explained to me that each group was going back to its home *kgotla* – of which each ward in the sprawling village had its own.

Lorato joined me soon after she knocked off work, to try to find Mmapula's *malome* (whom the whole family took as *malome* as well). Many of the wandering spectators were not entirely sure in which *kgotla* they might find their relatives – nor even, in some cases, where the ward *kgotlas* were. Some simply followed the initiates, although there was no way to recognise anyone unless you knew – having bought – their

blanket. After many phone calls home to Dithaba for suggestions, we eventually traced our *malome* to a yard in the neighbourhood Mmapula and Dipuo had grown up in. We didn't find the open, stone-walled circle that would ordinarily signify a *kgotla*, nor even the more old-fashioned semicircle of stripped logs jammed upright in the ground, but we surmised that the yard must have been that of the headman. Like many larger yards in Maropeng, it had a thatched rondavel at the edge of the *lelwapa*, which had been requisitioned for the men; the *lelwapa*, or courtyard, had been partitioned and enclosed with a fence of thin hedge branches. We greeted the hosts and elders perched around the edge of the *lelwapa* individually, most of whom were familiar from past funerals and weddings I had attended. A man sitting in the entrance tried to demand money from everyone who entered, in exchange for the right to speak to the initiates – an act of contribution that would be demanded again the following day by the initiates themselves (a practice also described in Tswapong by Werbner 2009: 453) – but visitors didn't always oblige.

The initiates were ranged inside with their backs to the thin fence and their legs drawn up, looking tired and ragged, clothed only in cut-off shorts. The gatekeeper told us to greet everyone quickly and move out, but at the insistence of our uncle and a couple of his friends we sat in front of them to chat awhile. To my surprise, I found Tharo among them too, grinning and asking me to bring him a bottle of Coke the next day as he had been craving it. As we chatted, it became clear that most of the other men had been connected to the ward through family history (see also Willoughby 1909: 230). Given that wards were historically settled by a single patriline, that congruence suggested that most of the men would have been related. While the initiation worked to stratify families and thereby shore up political hierarchies, '[t]he ranking system always revealed unknown family histories' (Setlhabi 2014b: 469) as well, demonstrating and reviving unexpected relationships among and between extended kin groups, while transmitting and reproducing them intergenerationally (Werbner 2009: 454; Willoughby 1909: 230). And yet, specific relationships remained opaque, especially to those of us who were uninitiated. Given his presence there, I surmised that Tharo must also be somehow related to the Legae family, as well as to Mmabontle's.

We were back in Maropeng again the next morning to see the official welcoming and naming of the *mophato* by *kgosikgolo* Seboko. The main *kgotla* was packed: the large, thatched stage was crammed with dignitaries, and grandstands erected around the open meeting area were jammed with people standing and sitting, many having clambered up onto walls and the roofs of vehicles. The initiated men came trooping in from the

various corners of the village at a stomping trot, kicking up clouds of dust around their jostling staffs, glistening red with a mixture of soil and Vaseline they had applied to their bodies. Their hair had been shaved to their scalps and coloured back in, sharp-edged, black, and iridescent. Plastic beads rattled, draped diagonally across their chests. Some blew on the hollowed, twisting horns of kudu antelopes, symbols of a successful hunt. Their initiators circled them with thrashing whips, keeping the crowd back, herding the men back into the cattle kraal, where they stood out of sight until being called in front of the paramount chief.

The official programme of the event unfolded in something of a blur, everyone jostling for space and talking excitedly over the top of one another. It was uncharacteristically brief. Unlike *kgotla* events for Independence Day and other celebrations – which usually featured long-winded speeches from district bureaucrats, local counsellors and members of parliament, the chief, pastors, and whoever else might be available – only the *kgosikgolo* spoke. She named the *mophato* '*Matsosangwao*' – 'those who lift up culture' – emphasising the import-ance of rediscovering culture as a route to dignity and *botho*.[4] She described the historical importance of *mephato* in defending the village, and later in advancing development projects for the community's benefit; and she emphasised the initiates' new-won status and the civic responsi-bilities that went with it, urging them to work for the betterment of the village and to support one another in times of need. The crowd listened impatiently. When the ceremony concluded, the men were trooped back to their respective ward *dikgotla*, from there to return to their homes. The men from Dithaba and other, more distant villages stayed the night and undertook the entire event again on a smaller scale in their home com-munities on the following day.

This series of events around the *mophato*'s return suggests an inter-polation of the *morafe* into the role of the family in the process of self-making, as we have seen it unfold throughout this book. The main *kgotla* called, sent, and moved the initiates around the village in ways that were opaque to the uninitiated, and briefly housed them as well – much as they had been called, sent, and housed together in the bush. Initiates were required to mobilise contributions of money, food, and labour to support them during their time away, and to support their initiators too; and the *kgosikgolo*'s speech emphasised the continuing contributions they would be expected to make to one another and to their villages and

---

[4] *Mephato* were historically named to reflect key socio-political themes or concerns among the Balete, rather than after participating chief's sons, as described by James (1996) for the Pedi.

morafe. Both the contributions and the organisation of initiates by ward enacted and performed a wide range of kin relationships, including some that were previously unknown, making the *bagwera* and their kin networks newly recognisable to themselves and each other. The men's initiation also rendered them recognisably marriageable on their return. All of these undertakings resonate with the interlinked practices of kin-making and self-making we have explored, and in many ways they seem to usurp them from the *mogwera*'s natal family. At the same time, initiation does not serve to extend or produce kinship among initiates who were not otherwise related, even metaphorically. The *kgotla*, in other words, produces kin and selves in the same ways families do; but, in the process, it actively distinguishes *morafe* from *losika*, the realm of the domestic from the political. And it is the simultaneous enactment of kin work and distinction from kin that underpins the *kgotla*'s claim to pre-eminence.

This demonstration of the *kgotla*'s efficacy in self-making and kin-making was especially potent in a context where other means of making-for-oneself were so fraught and difficult to achieve, particularly for men. But its appeal extended to married as well as unmarried men, settled with families or otherwise. More than marking a specific, fixed stage of transition in the lifecycle, *bogwera* provided an additional, experimental means of self-making – itself an open-ended, cumulative process. The fact that none of the men at home felt obliged to participate – especially those, like Kagiso, with confidence in the ways in which they were already making-for-themselves (through business, church leadership, and marriage negotiation) – underscores the extent to which initiation, revived after so long, was more an optional and alternative approach than a necessary prerequisite to personhood. At the same time, there was some effort made to reassert the value of initiation in self-making. During the entire month that the *mophato* was out in the bush, weddings and parties were banned, bars were asked to close early, and churches were asked to keep their services quiet (a gesture that suggests the comparable roles of each in the making of persons; see Suggs 2001 on bars and making men). For two nights before the *mophato* returned, a village-wide curfew and blackout was maintained. The emphasis on maintaining silence, invisibility, and secrecy for the duration of the initiation, and during the subsequent gradual, controlled process of revealing or emergence – as the men returned to the village first covered in blankets, then partly obscured in *malwapa* (courtyards) scattered all over the village, then resplendent in red body cream and beads at the main *kgotla* – is reminiscent of the emergence into recognition that pregnancy provokes for women, a permanent sort of recognition to which

men otherwise have limited access. By demonstrating its ability to bring about this unique sort of self-making, the *kgotla* again distinguishes itself from and elevates itself over the *lelwapa*.

The family is actively backgrounded in this process, if not altogether concealed. Unlike the careful description of relationships that character-ised the party – whether during invitations, speeches, or introductions among guests – the public ceremonials of the homecoming obscured and understated kin networks. No one was quite sure where the initiates were going when they left the *kgotla*; even when they arrived in the yards of familiar (and familial) wards, no one was quite sure whether or how they were all related, and no formal effort was made to describe those rela-tionships. Family queued to see their initiates and paid money to speak with them; the men ate and slept separately. Speeches focused on the men's achievements and responsibilities, their new roles in the *morafe*, and their new relationships to one another, rather than to kin. The men were demonstrably distinguished from their families, and the *morafe* was likewise distinguished from the *lelwapa* and bound to the *kgotla*.

At the same time, as narratives such as Mmabontle's suggest – and they were common currency among spectators as we waited for the *mophato*'s return, trying to piece together what was unfolding – kin relations permeate *bogwera* and are crucial to the initiate's success. An initiate's family must be willing and able to cobble together money, food, clothing, and other resources sufficient not only to send the initiate off, but also to address immediately any need expressed by his initiators in his name during the initiation, and to welcome him home again – often with lavish celebrations (also described by Willoughby in 1909). In supporting a man's initiation, his family demonstrates its ability to cooperate, to provide, and to sustain its members in their self-making projects – opening opportunities of marriageability and the reproduction of the family in turn. As we saw in the example of Mmabontle's new-found kinship with Tharo, who constitutes an initiate's family becomes newly evident in who contributes to his sponsorship and upkeep, who clothes him for his homecoming, who takes him gifts upon his return, and who throws him a party. Initiation is thus enabled by kin, performs kinship, and becomes a kin-making process as well. And, indeed, the scope of kinship is unexpectedly expanded in this process: a 'small house' is absorbed into the relations of the 'big house', long-standing but long-forgotten ward-based patrilineal relations are rediscovered and re-animated, and so on.

Family – and specifically the *lelwapa* – also has a critical role to play in reintegrating the *mophato*. The initiated men are considered dangerous when they return from their isolation in the bush. They have great

potential to cause damage – hence the preparatory interventions of witchcraft to ease their return into the village, the distance at which people are kept as the *mophato* travels to the *kgotla*, their covering in thick blankets, and the imposed curfews. And, of course, they pass through the *kgotla* – or, at least, its cattle kraal – first. But then they are returned homewards – specifically to one *lelwapa* in their ancestral wards, which, given that they were historically settled by kin, returns the men to perhaps their widest network of family, and thereby throws the history of their kin relations into relief. Those who could find them there were those who shared and knew those relationships, or were able to discover them (as we did) from family; alternatively, they were those who – being family – had provided the men's blankets and could identify and follow them accordingly. As such, those who visited the initiates and contributed money to speak with them – a gesture of re-establishing kin economies of contribution, perhaps, acknowledging that the initiates had accumulated a new sort of value – tended to represent the widest possible extension of kin. It is in the space of the *lelwapa* that the men bathe, shave, and beautify themselves in preparation for their recognition as a *mophato* the following day, in a sort of preliminary domestic transformation that will allow them to move via the kraal of the *kgotla* to its central arena – cattle becoming men.[5] The *lelwapa*, in the case of Maropeng's contemporary *bogwera*, is a key space both for containing and mitigating the danger the new initiates present and for rendering them safe again – for re-domesticating them. After their initial return, and before they can be named and officially recognised by the chief, the age regiment is literally contained in the *lelwapa*; and, in that sense, so too is the political construct of the *morafe*.

   I suggest that this obscured but permeating involvement of kin in initiation is key to the *kgotla*'s project of regenerating a collective ethics. A school textbook the Legae children showed me listed the first task of initiation as '*Go ba fa molao wa Setswana*' – to give them (the initiates) the law (Makgeng 2004: 206; see also Werbner 2009: 450 on 'laying down the law' in Tswapong girls' puberty rites; McNeill 2011: 92–101 on the role of Venda laws, or *milayo*, in initiation). It reminded me of a similar explanation Mmapula had given me of *patlo*,[6] the gender-segregated,

---

[5] Compare Werbner's description of girls in Tswapong being driven to the kraal like goats, and then home again, as part of their puberty rituals – moving them 'from animality to reproductive, domestic animality' (2009: 445). In the past, at least among other *merafe*, these domesticating refinements occurred in the main *kgotla*, where the men stayed for a week after their return from the bush (Willoughby 1909: 243).

[6] *Patlo* is not understood in the same way everywhere in Botswana. Friends from other *merafe* (polities) associated the term with marriage negotiations, and much of the

nominally secret session in which a marrying woman is advised by the married women of her own and her spouse's family on her obligations as a wife, during which she is also 'given the law' (men undergo a similar session). Giving initiates, or marrying spouses, *molao wa Setswana* involves equipping them with an ethical framework to effectively engage *dikgang*, and thereby make both themselves and their families. While the *kgotla* constructs and retains the ultimate authority to rule on disputes that cannot be addressed by the family, it also positions initiates to better address *dikgang* at home and thereby avoid that eventuality. Much of Tswana customary law is geared towards managing disputes of kinship; on this reading, kinship emerges as one major means of the law's transmission, interpretation, implementation, and change over time (Reece 2021a). Just as the family generates and permeates the village and *morafe*, the *kgotla* and the law permeate the family – and the distinctions marked between the two are made in terms of *dikgang*.

This distinction was already emerging in the *bogwera* itself, which generated a range of *dikgang* for initiates' families to navigate. As we have seen, the expectations that emerge from initiation are likely sources of *dikgang* among kin, and they must be managed to ensure that they do not interfere with the initiate's success – or, indeed, the wider success of the *mophato*. As Tharo's older sister discovered, mobilising the resources necessary to support him occasioned pushback, shortfalls, and disappointment among his family, much like those that characterise the contribution economies of kin – requiring both her careful management and Mmabontle's help to ensure that they were suitably addressed. More seriously, the sick man who came back from the bush by car – reputedly fallen ill because of a reaction to the herbs used to heal the circumcision – was nursed for a week at home, until he died, raising the fraught question of whether he or the family had been targeted for supernatural attack, and by whom. While *bogwera* provoked these issues, they were not addressed in or by the initiation, nor indeed by the *kgotla*; they had to be managed by kin – who are also, of course, one likely source of the problem.[7] The *dikgang* produced by the initiation offered a sobering reminder of both the potential threat kin posed and their singular capacity for managing that threat, on which initiate and *morafe* alike relied.

---

literature on marriage in Botswana understands the term in the same way; the noun *patlo* is derived from the verb *go batla*, to seek. Among the Balete, however, it is as described here (see also Reece 2021a).

[7] It was also widely speculated that this young man, and two others who fell ill after their return, had neglected to take their ARVs with them into the bush. One of the ill men, a family friend and neighbour, was hospitalised and then nursed at length by his eldest daughter, but he recovered.

In Maropeng's contemporary *bogwera*, then, the *kgotla* permeates and animates extended kin networks, bringing their histories and relationships to light; creating new opportunities for self-making and kin-making through kinship practice; and equipping families to negotiate *dikgang*. At the same time, the *losika* permeates and animates the *morafe*, drawing it into being, containing and domesticating it. The *mophato*, in other words, tapping capacities that Durham associates with youth more broadly, proves 'key to regenerating household and community interdependency' (2007: 103), enacting and embodying both the ties and the distinctions between *losika* and *morafe*. Rather than simply demonstrating that the *morafe* encompasses or supersedes the family (*pace* Comaroff 1985: 98), initiation underscores the ways in which the *losika* builds the *kgotla* as well, as the proverb at the beginning of this chapter suggests – an iterative process in which both *losika* and *morafe* produce and reproduce one another as collective ethical subjects (see Lazar 2018). In this sense, the Tswana public mirrors the Tswana person – it is brought into being through, if in marked tension with, the family, which it brings into being in turn.

At the same time, the limits on this mutual involvement – like the temporary wall erected to contain the newly returned initiates in the *lelwapa* – are equally clear. As Jean La Fontaine notes, 'Initiation defines boundaries' (1985: 16). After a man's initiation, the *kgotla* acquires a narrow access to him, and through him to his family – a right to call him to service or work and to demand contributions from him and his kin – as do a man's co-initiates. And the *kgotla* is drawn into a narrow connection in turn, whereby it may be called upon to resolve intractable family conflicts and disputes. But the *kgotla* does not, for example, enter into family conflicts without being called to do so (usually as a last resort); it seldom accesses the space of the home at all. Even historically, it did not force initiates to leave paid work or neglect their obligations to plough and harvest in order to undertake the work of the village (Schapera 1955 [1938]: 110). In this sense, a relationship of relative, voluntary parity is established. As collective ethical subjects, *losika* and *morafe* are imbricated but separate; neither one absorbs or supersedes the other. I suggest that it is in reasserting this deep mutual embeddedness and these clear distinctions, and in regenerating this parity, that *bogwera* achieves the social change sought by the *kgosikgolo* at the outset, in and through the family – in ways that similar attempts by NGOs and social work offices struggle to achieve.

Having examined how the Tswana family manages its interdependencies and boundaries with the *motse* and *morafe*, and how the *morafe* manages those interdependencies and boundaries in turn, Chapter 15 explores

how government ministries, local NGOs, and international civil society and donor groups manage similar dynamics. These agencies foreground idioms and ideals of kinship to naturalise and legitimise their work, to establish relationships among themselves, and to encompass the families in which they intervene. They, too, explicitly and implicitly open up spaces of contestation around alternative ethical frameworks and alternative subjectivities, posed in terms of alternative relationships between the self, *losika*, and *morafe*. And, in doing so, they, too, work to establish themselves in and through the Tswana family. But at the same time, they are permeated and driven by an unmarked range of kin dynamics. These dynamics – and their accompanying, divergent ethics – simultaneously animate and frustrate their projects, aligning them with but excluding them from the families they serve, undermining their claims to precedence, and interfering with their projects of social change.

Figure 10 The *Matsosangwao mophato* returns home.

15   A Global Family

This week, Batswana have welcomed into their family twenty-nine ambassadors from Canada. In diplomatic work, relations can be nurtured at personal level; nation-states are composed of individuals, and the international system is composed of nation-states, so it follows that individual relations facilitate better international relations.

The Deputy Permanent Secretary for Botswana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stood at a makeshift podium, incongruous in his sharp business suit among the trees. Flanking him to his right sat a small phalanx of similarly well-dressed officials, suited or uniformed, the women wearing high heels despite the deep sand. To his left ran a long, open white tent, under which a handful of elite personages sat on office chairs at long tables covered in cloth and Botswana-blue bunting, fronted by an impressive display of baskets, gourds, and woven mats. Facing the tent, across an open performance area, three rows of Canadian high school students wearing tailored shirts and skirts of blue German-print[1] cloth shifted uncomfortably on small iron chairs brought from a local primary school for the occasion. Everyone else – a crowd of people from the nearest village, including elders, young men and women, and gaggles of children to whom the speaker gestured inclusively but vaguely as 'the community' – sat and stood around the edges, behind the ranks of officials and Canadians. Children darted in to check the proceedings, and back out to play in the surrounding bush.

The Deputy Permanent Secretary was outlining the president's goals for national development, and appreciating the Canadian group for situating their work so well within them. 'That these students can demonstrate this kind of love and care for other human beings gives me hope that coming generations will inherit a more caring world,' he continued. 'I wish to pay a special tribute to the parents of these young people … we

---

[1] This 'traditional' indigo cloth was first manufactured Lancashire, England, and made its way to Botswana via German settlers in South Africa.

239

hold in high esteem parents who can allow their small children to travel to a far place and live among strangers for a week.' He spun together development goals, love and care, inheritance, global humanitarianism, parenthood, and cultural exchange as effortlessly as he had envisioned ambassadors in families in his opening lines. His audience listened impassively.

We were an unlikely group in an unlikely spot. We sat in a semi-cleared, wooded area next to a deep, dry riverbed, tucked behind a range of unusual rock formations in a remote corner of the country. A well-respected national NGO had acquired the area as a campsite in which to host its therapeutic retreats for orphaned children. Its programme had been modelled explicitly on the tradition of initiation, which had long since lapsed in most of the areas the NGO served (including, until not long before, Dithaba); a group of children participating together from one community were even called a *mophato*. But unlike the *bogwera* undertaken in Maropeng, the retreats were also cast explicitly in funding proposals as a means of 'creating kin'. I had helped broker the government's partnership with the NGO in my previous incarnation at Social Services, and I had attended training sessions and part of a retreat in the past. The programme now spanned the country and was being implemented by government social workers in half of the nation's district councils. It had already enjoyed a long history in Dithaba, where the NGO had been working for years with many of the children and families I knew.

The Canadian students, looking alternately bored and bewildered as the speeches continued, had fundraised to help build a meeting hall – modelled on a *kgotla* – to be used for ceremonies at the new campsite. They had come for a week to help finish its construction before making a short tour of the country, and an agreement had been struck to mark the occasion with an official opening event. And so a remarkable number of senior civil servants – from the tribal administration and schools in the nearby village; the district council and land board in the main town a couple of hours' drive away; and the Department of Social Services, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Local Government in distant Gaborone – had made their way along the red, sandy roads and down the narrow track that led into the site. Many had come from the capital, a day's drive away; some had come during the week to camp and help with the work of finishing the site and preparing for the event, much as they might have done for a wedding or funeral. The head of the country's orphan care programme had even been tasked with chaperoning the Canadian group for their entire stay. As I had enjoyed long-standing relationships with both Social Services and the NGO, and being Canadian too, I was invited to tag along.

The Deputy Permanent Secretary finished his speech and made way for the first of six local choirs performing that day. Dressed in matching T-shirts printed with the choir's name, they danced and sang their way into the performance area to the shouts and ululations of the audience, some of whom came forward to dance with them in encouragement. The choir, singing a greeting song for *bagolo* (the elders), initially faced the podium and tent – until an enterprising social worker, no doubt noticing the disappointed expressions of the Canadian contingent, induced them to move so that they could be seen by everyone at the same time. They sang, '*Modimo, o thusa bana ga ba na batsadi*' – God, help the children without parents. It was the first reference to the children for whom the campsite had been built. The song painted a vivid picture of orphans' helplessness, vulnerability, and isolation, as well as the threat they posed to the nation's future. The choir sang boldly and danced energetically, at one point prostrating themselves – as if they were the helpless children about whom they sang – until a well-dressed man came forward from the ranks of dignitaries to drop cash in the dirt in front of them. They refused to go on performing until money had been left by others as well, at which point they gathered it up triumphantly, ululating.

The story I have told about Tswana kinship so far has gravitated around the home, or *gae* – the expansive, multiple, and interlinking spaces in and between which families and selves are made. As we have seen, social workers and NGOs, and the programmes of intervention they run, have claimed an increasingly prominent role in that context, with mixed success. I have suggested that the work of these agencies and the families they serve adheres to a certain common logic and practice, which links them intimately. Both agencies and families focus their energies on enabling and managing movement, for example; both prioritise building as an important gesture of self-making and kin-making; and both locate care, in part, in the provision of specific sorts of material goods (food, clothing, cash, and so on). Both are concerned with managing the recognition of relationships (as we will see further below); both take the care and circulation of children as a primary responsibility; and both rely on the public performance of success to solidify their relative priority in relation to one another. Given that most social workers and NGO staff or volunteers at the projects I have described are Batswana, share experiences and understandings of kinship with their clients, and are even bound up with the communities they serve through kinship ties, the close alignment between the services they provide and the needs they seek to address should come as no surprise. At the same time, the preceding chapters have detailed how social work and NGO practice serve to disrupt, invert, and muddle Tswana kinship practice in each of

the spheres above – knocking it out of sync, stretching or collapsing its boundaries, and in some cases displacing it altogether. These disruptions have been most evident in the sort of *dikgang* (conflicts, risks, or issues) that arise and in the availability of responses to them. Such disruptiveness is only possible because of the close links of ideology, experience, and relationality that organisations and kin enjoy; but it also speaks to a fundamental divergence.

What generates this divergence? In this chapter, I turn my attention to the dynamics evident within and between NGOs, government agencies, and donors to pursue that question. While the opening ceremony was a singular event, it condensed the attitudes and assumptions that pervade the work of these agencies in Botswana and that animate the relationships among them. It also draws together the trends we have seen in practice in their programmes over the course of this book. Following the clues of their unexpected resonances with kin practice in previous chapters, and the trail of *dikgang*, I ask whether and to what extent we might better understand these institutional endeavours in kinship terms.

While these institutions may cast themselves as iterations of a recognisably modern, liberal, and perhaps 'Western' political project (in the sense used by McKinnon and Cannell 2013), I suggest that we might reconceptualise them as being fundamentally informed by kinship ideals and practices, and as being in constant, unmarked negotiation with both. Unlike the *morafe* initiation, however, the work of these organisations both ignores and rejects the possibility of their interdependencies with kinship. Indeed, in performance and practice, they cast themselves in opposition to kinship and the family, which become corrupt, dysfunctional remnants of an immodern era – requiring the intervention and benevolent guidance of these agencies. And this opposition, like the distinctions made by the *morafe*, is a question of ethics: it seeks to escape, avoid, or transcend the fraught interdependencies of community life, and thereby offer equal service to all. Assuming the distinctions between the domains of politics and kinship are given, and that the realm of the political naturally encompasses that of the family (Ferguson and Gupta 2002), these organisations focus instead on deploying a kinship idiom to naturalise and depoliticise their claims, to forge links, and to contest hierarchies among themselves. But, as they do so, it becomes clear that the shared, universal terms in which they think they are working are shifting and unpredictable – suggesting both that there may be more than one sort of kinship at stake, and that it may permeate their institutional practice in unexpected ways. Paradoxically, in failing to recognise the imbrications of their political projects with kinship, to negotiate

and produce appropriate distinctions between those domains, these modern agencies prove decidedly 'immodern' (Lambek 2013).

Humanitarian and development interventions have been convincingly described in terms of their anti-politics (Ferguson 1994; Ticktin 2011), but seldom in terms of the work to which kinship and families are put in their depoliticisation. I suggest that the family provides a key depoliticising, dehistoricising, and universalising space in and through which an international humanitarian community – a global family – can construct itself (see a description of refugees in these terms in Malkki 1996: 378). As Erica Bornstein noted in her work on World Vision in Zimbabwe, the health and safety of the family mark a universal moral good that transcends national politics, opening up new avenues for NGOs, states, and donors to reconfigure and extend their power (Bornstein 2005: 97–118). In both the speech of the Deputy Permanent Secretary and the choir's performance, deploying the discourse of family is a powerful means of downplaying (or justifying) fundamentally political aims. The family provides a powerful metaphor that government, NGOs, and donors can – and do – tap into as a means of naturalising their work, relationships, and power. But attempts to operationalise kinship to further the ends of governance are frequently foiled by the 'superfluity … and excess' of kinship (Lambek 2013: 255; cf. Ticktin and Feldman 2010: 5). Kinship is, after all, more than a metaphor; and I argue that it features just as powerfully in the daily practice and lived experience of 'official' spaces as in their programme delivery. Government and NGO programmes that intervene in the family, attempting to contain and reshape it, are themselves suffused and animated by kinship ideals and practices. These ideals and practices are neither clear nor consistent; they are left unmarked and opaque. In this sense, kinship is as crucial to understanding development and humanitarian programmes as development and humanitarianism are to understanding kinship.

In this chapter, I explore these possibilities by focusing on the ways in which relationships within and among NGOs, government, and international donors are publicly performed and delimited. I argue that the ceremony described above simultaneously enacts *multiple* notions of kinship; and I suggest that these multiple notions have also been contested and at work in the NGO and social work office described in previous chapters. This multiplicity exacerbates the superfluity of kinship, which tends to overwhelm, outstrip, and evade the constraints imposed by both workplaces and bureaucratic systems. Keeping this multiplicity in mind, I ask whether kinship can be 'encapsulated in and by the state' (Lambek 2013: 257; see also Ferguson and Gupta 2002 on assumptions about the state's encompassment and verticality) and by

other transnational political agencies; or whether it not only permeates but also generates and animates those agencies.

The choir finished its rousing performance, weaving its way off the sandy stage and singing until its members broke formation and dispersed among the audience. From the podium, the master of ceremonies thanked them with great enthusiasm and warmly welcomed the lead teacher of the Canadian school group to speak next.

The lead teacher was a contentious figure, having offended many government and NGO representatives over the course of the week with his brash, demanding manner. The previous day he had insisted on separating water for his students from the water supplied for everyone else, suspecting theft; senior government figures watched with bemused resignation as he first berated the NGO director and then instructed his students to relocate dozens of water bottles from the kitchen into their tents. Now at the podium in his custom-tailored German-print shirt and a baseball cap, he consulted with the translator to ensure that he would be translated phrase by phrase. After speaking about what the retreat campsite – which he framed as a 'humanitarian project' – represented for bonds between Botswana and Canada, the teacher thanked the host NGO and government departments and ministries in a perfunctory, non-differentiating fashion. He added offhandedly, 'We consider everyone here to be like surrogate parents for us.' The translator followed with '*Re le tsaya jaaka batsadi ba rona tota tota*' – we take you like our real, real parents.

He then called all 29 of his students in front of the podium – although it meant that their backs were to the dignitaries and most of the community, and they faced only the VIPs under the tent – and presented them as the best Canada had to offer. They were a visibly mixed group, as the line-up was meant to emphasise, of largely South Asian, South-East Asian, Chinese, and mixed European descent. He intoned: 'A country without its culture is lost.' It was an accidentally apt echo of the words of Botswana's first president, Seretse Khama, who warned that 'a nation without a past is a lost nation, and a people without a past is a people without a soul' – a sentiment that has shifted to incorporate a warning against the loss of culture instead of just the loss of history (Parsons 2006; see also Dahl 2009b). Indeed, a similar sentiment pervaded the revival of initiations back in Maropeng, as well as the NGO's own initiation-oriented model. Attached to such a diverse group of children, however, from a place no one knew much about – but that presumably had greater prosperity and fewer social ills to cure – it caused obvious confusion. The teacher elaborated a vision of what defined Canada as a nation: multiculturalism, a history of peacekeeping instead of war, the assurance of

equality for all. 'We teach our children to celebrate other cultures and values,' he explained, describing his students as the future leaders of Canada. He added: 'They are an example of what youth should be throughout the world … committed to making change.' The students tried to look grave and inspiring. Behind them, many in the crowd looked politely baffled. On the one hand, it seemed, the audience was being encouraged to preserve their culture; on the other, they were being encouraged to adopt a rather inscrutable but ostensibly successful Canadian model. On the one hand, these children had respected and taken their hosts as parents; on the other, they seemed to suggest that parents were incidental or unnecessary to the exemplary individuals these children had already become. I thought back to the teacher's comment to his students late the night before, which I had overheard from across the campsite: 'I'll be honest with you, I don't really care about Botswana or Botswanans or whatever. The important thing here is you guys, and the experience you're getting.'

The Canadian teacher stepped down from the podium, leaving it to the last and most highly ranked speaker – the Assistant Minister of Local Government. His ministry oversaw everything from Social Services to district councils and village *kgotla* administrations. He made his way out from under the VIP tent, dressed in sharp khaki trousers and a multi-pocketed photographer's vest and flashing a good-humoured smile. He waved away the translator jovially and settled in at the podium, beginning with an unexpected injunction: 'I would like to invite you all to rise, and observe a moment of silence for those orphans we have lost to HIV and to abuse.'

His sombre invitation – in English – caught us all a little off guard, although we rose dutifully and bowed our heads. Indeed, for all my years of attending such ceremonies and events, I had never heard such a discursive combination of catastrophes. Holding orphans up for pity over the loss of their parents and the assumed neglect of their overburdened families, and rallying cries to rescue them and the future of the nation, constituted the usual rhetoric. But in the context of successful, free programmes for the provision of ARVs and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission, orphanhood was seldom posed as a cause of HIV infection, and links between orphanhood and death were virtually never made. While abuse was connected with orphanhood frequently enough and had become a major focus of social services discourse, I had never heard it connected to death either. The request for silence was unsettling in the complexity of social ills it subsumed; more than that, it was jarring in its dislocation from the reality to which most of us in the audience were accustomed, in what felt like a dramatic inflation of the stakes of orphanhood in particular.

After the silence, the Assistant Minister continued for a while in English, congratulating the Canadian students, and their parents, for the spirit of love and giving they had shown, and calling upon all present to learn from their example. He did not bother to translate. Before long, however, he had shifted into Setswana – and he began a different speech altogether. The exhortative thrust of this parallel speech was *kgokgontsho ya bana*, child abuse, and on this topic the Assistant Minister spoke at great length, with great conviction and passion. He confronted his audience: 'Child abuse is there in our homes and families, though we are turning a blind eye to it and pretending it is not. Men! Uncles! Check yourselves! Check yourselves, look into your hearts.' It was the deliberate echo of a nationwide HIV and AIDS behaviour change campaign launched a few years previously, dubbed *Oicheke*! – Check yourself! (USAID 2010). 'We appreciate these Canadian children for coming to look after our children,' he continued, still in Setswana, 'but we have a responsibility to look after our children too, so that one day they might go to Canada to help children there, or even to any other place in the world.' He did not bother to translate this part of the speech either.

It was a spellbinding oration. And yet the audience did not look altogether engaged. The ranks of community members listened attentively but wore bland expressions. Children continued to run in and out, and choir members joked with one another on the sidelines. The Canadian contingent had begun to glaze over; most looked bored and a few looked frustrated, or perhaps offended. Just at the point when he had almost lost them, the Assistant Minister switched back into English – to describe his hope that, one day, one of the Canadian students before him would meet a doctor on their travels and find that she had grown up in Botswana; had attended a camp run in the very place they sat now; had come to grips with her loss and grief, had found hope, a sense of self and direction, and had made something of her life. The students lifted their heads, and some began to smile warmly. They were, of course, unable to decipher the strange double register that had emerged: in Setswana, families were abusive, irresponsible, corrupted, and broken; while in English, they were sources of love, giving, and hope for the future.

Shortly after the speeches finished, the cooks and several volunteers from the village nearby called the Canadian students to help serve up the enormous meal that had been prepared – a gesture of inclusion that befitted children and young people at such a gathering. Their lead teacher was outraged, refused his meal in protest, and insisted that they all sit and allow themselves to be served like the VIPs, as he felt befitted respected guests. Everyone dispersed soon afterwards, the community members walking up the dusty road back to their homes and the

government officials heading off in convoys of white four-by-four trucks. I learned later that the event, and the Canadians' week-long visit, had in fact cost the host NGO in Botswana more than three times as much as the students had fundraised – running into hundreds of thousands of pula. It cost Social Services as much again, in officers' hours, petrol, food, and so on; and both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the district council would have had similar bills. I was shocked, but my friends at Social Services and the NGO shrugged it off. 'If someone was giving me only five pula I would still do everything to appreciate them,' one insisted.

The speeches recounted above show how discursively entangled the family is with the state, and with projects of development, humanitarianism, and international relations – a notable contrast to the careful way in which the *morafe* distanced the *mophato* from family, in discourse and performance. At the opening ceremony, community, national, and international relations were all – often awkwardly – cast in the idiom of family, with a special emphasis on parents and children. International diplomacy was framed as a familial fostering of ambassadors; humanitarian work was cast in terms of love, care, and the inheritance of future generations. The NGO took as its explicit mission the creation of kin for and among orphans, implicitly replacing lost parents. The Canadian students were thanked in part through their parents; acknowledged their hosts as parents; and were appreciated for helping raise Batswana children – a network of relatedness within and against which they then defined their culture and nationhood. As Elana Shever notes of national sentiments – to which we might easily add humanitarian and development sentiments more broadly – they 'rest on a trope of familial bonds as the authentic basis for solidarity, care, obligation, and sacrifice' (Shever 2013: 88). And this trope worked to refigure an otherwise distinctly odd combination of institutional characters in Botswana's backwoods, loosely and temporarily bound together by circumstance, as natural, unified, and enduring.

At the same time, these discursive formulations worked to separate the event's participants and to establish the terms on which they could relate. As Didier Fassin notes, compassion performed in public spaces is 'always directed from above to below' (2012: 4), both presupposing and reproducing inequality. The sharpest separation made was between the NGO, government ministries, and Canadian students on the one hand – sources of care, love, and compassion – and the families in attendance, whose lives these figures sought to protect, on the other. This performance, and others like it, 'was more of a theater for politicians than "for the people"' (Bornstein 2005: 112), a matter of contesting institutional hierarchies in which 'the people' were always already at the bottom.

Thus, the Assistant Minister cast aspersions on his entire Setswana-speaking audience by purporting to publicly expose the abuse in their homes, upbraiding them collectively for their inability to look after their own children as effectively as the Canadian students – themselves children – could. The Tswana families (especially their men, and *bo malome*) were thereby infantilised, cast beneath the protective elderhood first of the juvenile Canadian contingent, and second of the government and NGO agencies that recruited the Canadians' assistance. The Canadian teacher's speech, while accepting the group's Tswana hosts as surrogate parents, underscored this infantilisation by emphasising the students' superior agency in addressing issues that afflicted the community.

Meanwhile, both the Assistant Minister and Deputy Permanent Secretary – when speaking in English – were careful to position themselves and their agencies as the equals or elders of the Canadian group, whether thanking the students through their parents or positioning themselves as temporary parents. The insistence on appreciating the Canadian contribution no matter the expense required was, I suggest, a similar assertion of independence and equal agency, and an active refusal of the implicit hierarchies that emerge in gifting and international aid – a corollary to what Durham (1995) describes as the spirit of asking, and a means of absorbing gifts that have not been asked for (see Stirrat and Henkel 1997 on how development gifts reinforce difference and hierarchy). And both of the government keynote speakers deployed parallel professional discourses – one framed around international relations; the other in terms of social work assessments of societal dysfunction and its remedy – that reinforced this claim to equal consideration by establishing a suitable distinction between the corrupted, suspect realm of the family and the advanced, modern realm of the state. As China Scherz notes in reference to the model of sustainable development more broadly, this professionalisation allowed agencies to 'imagine themselves as separable and separate from those living in the places they work' (Scherz 2014: 8) – a hallmark of their modernity and their alignment with prominent global expectations in development work. This distinction echoed those made by the Canadian teacher, whose reference to family was peremptory and quickly superseded by a lengthy rumination on the Canadian nation, establishing common ground among the speakers and their agencies from which the families in whose mould they had earlier cast themselves were explicitly excluded. All of the speakers, in other words, were engaged in a form of ideological boundary-making work in separating the realms of politics and kinship (McKinnon and Cannell 2013) – although, unlike *bogwera*, there was no room for interdependence with kin, much less the potential for voluntary parity.

These discursive deployments and repositionings of kinship are typical of a social welfare, development, and humanitarian genre as well as being familiar ways of speaking about the state. To the extent that they organise means of relating, however, they are more than simply metaphorical. Indeed, a closer look at the unfolding of the event demonstrates uncanny parallels with kinship practice and discourse. Echoes of the family feast – itself reminiscent of wedding celebrations and of the feast we saw in Chapter 13 – are perhaps most obvious: the white tent, housing *bagolo* (elders) around which the event was oriented (here government ministers instead of parents); the arrangement of celebrants around an open *lelwapa*-like space; the speeches, introducing key figures in terms of their relatedness to one another; and the collective contributions of money, goods, and work appropriate to a celebration, for entertainment, and of food sufficient to feed a village of guests. Like the family feast, the opening ceremony sought to perform the success of key figures – NGO, ministries, and Canadians – and the generative power of their relationships, while attempting to extend that success and remake those relationships in clear ways that distinguished them from the invitees.

Echoes of other dimensions of kinship practice are evident, too, including all of those we have seen throughout this book: geographical scatteredness and the mobilisation of movement, gravitating to a shared space of care work and contribution; the careful management of visibility, speech, and recognition; the anticipated circulation of children to the campsite for therapy, which was modelled explicitly on *bogwera*; and so on. But perhaps most significantly, *dikgang* were produced throughout: around imputations of stolen food and water; refusals to share, help serve, or eat; the public dressing-down of NGO organisers or purportedly abusive families; and many more besides – all of which echo *dikgang* we have encountered elsewhere, and draw the performance of relational success into question. Where dynamics of *dikgang* have previously highlighted limits on the ways in which social workers and NGO staff relate to the families they serve, here they suggest a performance of relatedness among rather unusual actors: national government, local government, international donors, and local NGOs. Indeed, we might even discern an attempt to create a collective, ethical subject (Lazar 2018: 268) in the process, one like the family, or indeed the *morafe*, interlinked and hierarchised, able to self-produce and reproduce. But, if this process is afoot, it is a different sort of ethics at work. It may provoke a collective reflection on who has done what for whom, through which specific relationships and relative seniority are asserted and recalibrated; but it takes the larger question of the correct relationship between self, family, and

polity – which was at the heart of the ethics of initiation – as given, a natural matter of verticality and encompassment.

The Tswana family, meanwhile, is marginalised from this process, destabilised, even demonised. Parents and children sit on the edges of the ceremony, moving in and out; unusually, they have no real role to play in the proceedings. The only mention made of them is either in terms of orphans having lost parents to disease or in terms of the collapse and corruption of their relationships, beset by death, loss, abuse, and the constant threat of harm. While appreciation is afforded the Canadian students and NGO for their help, it is the Tswana family that bears the blame and responsibility for its own dissolution. Everything is done for them, but they have done – and can do – nothing for themselves or for the agencies that offer this withering vision. What families may have done for one another is obviated; the standard to which they are held here is one of international rights discourse and the self-improvement imperatives of sustainable development (see Scherz 2014 on the ethics of sustainable development in Uganda and similar dissonances with Baganda ethics of patronage).

In discourse and practice alike, then, it seems that both the state and NGOs are involved in processes that we have seen to be characteristic of Tswana kinship – but in ways that are more about legitimising themselves as political entities and navigating their relationships with each other. They are engaged in a process of state-making, or NGO-making, or perhaps the making of a shared public sphere, *through* family and kinship processes but also against them, and in ways that exclude actual families. Their legitimacy is modelled on kinship, justified by their intervention in actual families and enacted in kinship idioms, practices, and ideals; but it is geared towards navigating relationships with other 'super-familial' actors, at local, national, and transnational levels, where relative influence is highly contested (Bornstein 2005: 98–9). And this disjunction is especially apparent in the different ways in which *dikgang* are identified and addressed. As distinct as the spheres of development and humanitarian policy and practice may be (Mosse 2004b), they are thus bound in part by an idiom and logic of kinship. Paradoxically, their deployment of that idiom and logic separates and excludes them from the sphere of the family, over which they attempt to assert authority but to which they enjoy little real access, which means that their programmes are often beset by failure and frustration.

What *is* the logic of kinship that seems to bind these actors? In the speeches above – as in the disjunctions evident between social work offices, NGOs, and families 'on the ground' – a certain mutual misunderstanding seems to be at work. While the Canadian head teacher imagines his hosts as 'surrogate parents', for example, his translator understands them as real parents; the links the teacher makes between

individuals, culture, and nations against that backdrop visibly perplex his audience. The Assistant Minister's assessment of family breakdown, and his moment of silence for 'lost orphans', strikes a similarly confusing note. While these speakers assume a shared understanding of the biological realities of relatedness and the social relationships they underpin as indisputable 'facts of life', with clear epistemological and moral implications (Pigg 2005), this assumption doesn't quite hold. I suggest that these moments of misunderstanding result from a proliferation and confusion of different notions of kinship at work in the discourses above, and in the intervention practice we have observed. The speeches above weave together, take apart, and move between what we might identify as Tswana and Canadian – or at least Euro-American[2] – understandings of kinship, familiar enough to one another to be mutually recognisable, but disparate enough to be jarring. In this sense, it is worth considering political institutions as 'site[s] of contention … between competing normative ideas' (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014: 6) of kinship as much as of governance or bureaucracy.

A strongly Euro-American notion of kinship emerges from the very beginning of the ceremony. The Deputy Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs cast families as a background, contextual device for the production and reproduction of individuals and nations – prioritising the individuality of persons (Strathern 1992: 10–11). The Canadian lead teacher replicated this discursive technique, perfunctorily appreciating the group's Tswana hosts as 'parents', effacing the students' own families, and then presenting the youth as successful, agentive individuals, able not only to represent but to reproduce both their own nation and the nations of others. The Assistant Minister, too, in *both* his English and Setswana speeches, emphasised individuality as the key experience and aim of kinship. He individuated orphans first of all, cutting them off from their families in a way that explicitly prioritised their relationships with their biological parents over any other relatives (Strathern 1992: 12); he portrayed uncles and others outside the parent–child binary as the most insidious figures of the family; and he personalised responsibility for abuse, while suggesting that it will produce abusive individuals in turn. Indeed, having chosen to come halfway around the world to help other

---

[2] I am glossing the image or ideal of Canadian kinship here as an intersection of English and American folk models, as described by Marilyn Strathern (1992) and David Schneider (1980) respectively. There is no question that this ideal may diverge from the lived experience of Canadian kinship – particularly for a group of students who come from a range of predominantly Asian backgrounds. However, it is arguably the kinship ideology that underpinned the students' project and trip, and the one being presented by the lead teacher (himself of British extraction).

people's children, and having enacted that commitment in a wild, isolated space – notably, in the absence of those children and their families – as an individual enterprise oriented mainly to their own growth, the Canadian students were bringing to life many of the fundamental imaginings on which English kinship is based (Strathern 1992: 12–13): choice, isolation, nature, and, above all, individualism.

What I have glossed as the Canadian or Euro-American imagination of kinship is not, of course, entirely divorced from the Tswana notion of kinship, and links emerge at several points. These connections give the impression that everyone is referencing the same, universal notion of kinship, while also producing the distinct jarring noted above. So, for example, although an emphasis on the parent–child relationship would have felt familiar and 'natural' to Canadians and Batswana alike – since Batswana reframe a variety of relationships, including siblingship, in these terms, and since it is the critical nexus for biologised and emotional concepts of Euro-American family relationships as well (Schneider 1980) – the sense of mutual recognition it provides is quickly undermined by the stakes it represents. Thus, in Euro-American articulations of kinship, the parent–child relationship most strongly evinces uniqueness and individualism (Strathern 1992: 12); but in Tswana articulations, it is taken to underline lasting responsibilities of care, intersubjectivity, and mutual dependence. For the Canadian students, the parent–child relationship is fixed, given, and linked uniquely to birth (Schneider 1980); for Batswana, it is multiple, fluid, and linked to responsibilities of care, which may be applied equally to siblings, spouses, or other relationships.

This simultaneous familiarity and divergence also applies to references to love and care. Both Canadians and Batswana emphasised these qualities and used these words in English; both groups recognised them as key concepts in their understandings of kinship; and both assumed that they shared a common understanding of the terms. However, in Frederick Klaits' thorough description, the Tswana association of love with *lorato* involves 'action and sentiment directed toward enhancing the well-being of other people' (Klaits 2010: 3); it involves ways of speaking and acting that work in people's bodies (Durham 2002a: 159). Care, or *tlhokomelo*, emphasises the provision of material goods and work (Klaits 2010: 4). Both of these terms have sentimental dimensions, but they are expressed and generated in bodily, material, and work-oriented ways. The dominant tone of these terms for the Canadians, in contrast, is more likely to be emotional and private (Strathern 1992: 12) rather than materialised or enacted; and it will likely have been clearly separated from work (Schneider 1980).

What become clear in these observations are the fluid, almost invisible ways in which the Batswana speakers in particular shifted back and forth

between Tswana and Euro-American understandings of kinship. This subtle shifting, I suggest, is indicative of the multiple ways in which Botswana's government policy, social workers, and NGO staff *see* families; and of the extent to which these different visions grow out of fundamentally different ways of *being* family. The ways in which social workers and NGO staff see their clients show strong elements of Tswana notions of kinship, but they also show strong Euro-American influences. This combination is perhaps unsurprising: the Ministry of Local Government, under which the Department of Social and Community Development operates, is a survivor of the colonial era, and many of its acts and policies – including a particularly outdated one on adoption (RoB 1951) – hark back to that time. So, too, do the principles that underpin those frameworks. The curriculum for social work taught at the university was also of British inspiration aligned with international standards of social work. And, of course, the work of social workers and NGO staff is framed by international conventions, policy frameworks, and 'best practice' promulgated by the United Nations and prioritised by European and American development and aid agencies, with a bent towards Euro-American ideals of kinship (see Mayblin 2010 on international conventions on child labour). The ethical register in which NGOs and social workers assess Tswana families, then, is by necessity an assemblage of the sort described by Scherz (2014) for Uganda, entangled with quite different notions of what families are and ought to be, and with the political-economic contexts in which those notions have changed and unfolded over time.

Where kinship seems to provide a common basis of mutual understanding – a natural, shared ideal, a common emotional register, a familiar set of practices, a 'fact of life' (Pigg 2005) – it instead provides a multiplex, muddled, and contradictory field of experience. In this sense, kinship describes a powerful but unstable register that simultaneously binds together and fractures the political, institutional realm. Kinship both saturates and evades the political, not because it taps into a naturalised, universal process, but because it *doesn't* – although these political projects expect it to do so. Where kinship is invoked to naturalise and stabilise institutionalised claims of power, its multiplicity and excess instead makes them awkward and unnatural, and *de*stabilises them. Kinship, then, does not simply escape or overwhelm bureaucratic attempts to contain it; it drives those attempts, permeates their logic, and disrupts their practice from within, rendering them ineffective for reasons that are difficult to grasp. And it is in this sense that I suggest kinship may be understood to generate and animate the purportedly modern, liberal political spheres of governments, NGOs, and donor agencies alike. Not only is the village in the home, but so too are a global array of political communities.

Conclusion: Part V

As Jacques Donzelot (1979) has shown in his history of 'policing' and philanthropy in France, political actors – including state and non-state agencies – have long prioritised access to families and provision for their welfare as key means of extending, stabilising, and reproducing power over time. I suggest that a similar project has animated the work of local, national, and transnational political actors in Botswana since at least the colonial era. Tswana families, in their turn, are constantly working to acquire and incorporate new resources and relationships, to enable the self-making of their members and the reproduction of kin groups over time. In Botswana's time of AIDS, NGOs and government are important sources of those resources and relationships. The family and the state, NGO, or foreign donor are thus deeply reliant upon and implicated in each other; each establishes its relevance and sustains its growth through the other. But each also poses risks to the other that require containment and management. Efforts to generate social change find traction if they tap into this 'immodern' (Lambek 2013) interdependency, and can create the distinctions that enable a collective ethics; those that reject that interdependency, falling back on assumptions that the political sphere is naturally distinct from and encompasses the domestic, struggle to do so.

The *kgotla*'s attempt to create social change explicitly in and through families, on one level, resonated with the attempts of NGOs and state actors to do the same. But the *bogwera* enacted a deep interdependency between the family and the polity, as well as marking sharp distinctions that reinforced the capacity of families to engage and resolve *dikgang* – rather than taking over, blocking, or frustrating that role. Part of what was being reclaimed in the initiation was a particular relationship between the self, *losika*, and *morafe*, the shape and limits of which had been blurred over years of increasing programmatic interventionism on the part of competing public agencies. Mobilising the ethics and practices of kin-making allowed the *kgotla* to regenerate the collective ethical subject of the *morafe* through a regeneration of the collective ethical subject of the *losika*, simultaneously reasserting both as subjects 'that

254

can take action on the world in order to transform the world' (Lazar 2018: 268).

By contrast, at the ceremony described above, the families of the *motse*, or village, were ranged around the outside of the event, an undifferentiated mass of variously engaged witnesses to the agencies' main act. While the NGO's attempt to recreate initiation in its programming showed an awareness of the transformative potential described above, in the event, the government ministries and Canadian students seemed instead to take these families as context and backdrop: a potential challenge, an audience to whom exhortations might be made and for whom responsibility must be borne, but an entity marginal to the performance itself. While these families were a source of far-reaching *dikgang*, in the speeches of the opening ceremony they were denied the capacity to engage those *dikgang* and regenerate the collective ethics that might address them, while restoring their relations as kin. The agencies being celebrated implicitly retained that power for themselves. And yet, it was these very families – and the shadow audience of Canadian parents behind them – against, through, and within which that performance was defined, and to which it was oriented. It was those very families – and the diverse and contradictory range of kin practices and ethical engagements they involved – against, through, and within which the everyday work of those same NGOs and ministries was conducted. Just as we found the village and *morafe* defined against, through, and within the family, here we find a transnational array of political agencies unexpectedly defined in the same way. But in ignoring the imbrication of their politics with the families they serve, the efforts of these agencies to shore up their power and to create social change through their collaborations fall short.

It is not simply that powerful national and transnational political, economic, religious, or other forces are exerting unidirectional influence on the Tswana family and creating upheaval – as Schapera (1940: 346–57) claimed in the colonial era, and as development and humanitarian discourse suggests now. And it is not simply that the Tswana family is evading those influences or exerting its own counter-influences. Rather, the 'domains' of family and politics (McKinnon and Cannell 2013) – produced in governance, development, and social sciences discourse – are intrinsically interdependent, in practice as much as in idiom: each can only be meaningfully and fully understood in terms of the others. This interdependence becomes especially clear in the context of *dikgang*, where the moral and ethical terms in which those domains are established is up for grabs, open to interpretation and reflection. Given that the distinctions made between domains underpin the production of

collective ethics, and in turn the ability to act upon the world, both these interdependencies and distinctions ought to be key objects of ethnographic enquiry when attempting to understand the production of social change.

Anthropological analyses of development, humanitarianism, and public health have tended to ignore the family, taking for granted that the domestic is distinct from and incidental to the political, and reproducing that distinction in turn. And yet families are a key sphere in which humanitarianism, development, and public health concerns inevitably converge (*pace* Redfield and Bornstein 2011: 4). Families are targeted by such a diverse and vast array of interventions in part because they provide a context, discourse, set of practices, and ethical framework through which the states, NGOs, and other agencies that run those interventions can produce and reproduce themselves, while simultaneously elevating themselves and naturalising their power and their relationships. The hierarchies generated between family, NGO, and state in turn provide a framework for reproducing, depoliticising, and naturalising global inequalities between nations. At the same time, kinship practices, ideologies, and ethics are shifting, in constant reformulation, and they saturate the work of these agencies in ways that blur and alter the distinctions those agencies seek, invert and denaturalise the hierarchies they assert, and ultimately disrupt the work they undertake, in part by excluding them from families. These dynamics account, in part, for the unintended consequences for which such interventions are notorious; any serious attempt to make sense of the complex legacies of intervention – especially in contexts of crisis – requires that we expand our frame of reference to incorporate the family accordingly.

★★★

INTERLUDE: THE INCIDENT CONCLUDED

It was late by the time we arrived home. We each faded into our respective nooks in the house, or prepared to bathe before sleeping. But the old man took up a chair at the edge of the *lelwapa* and laid the large knife carefully on the ground in front of him. He called his daughter Khumo.

What came to me of their discussion did so by way of overheard snippets carried by whoever was walking between the house and my room, although the traffic was steady. Kagiso and Kelebogile were soon called as well. Dipuo had decided that involving the police was the best way forward, and he was trying to convince his children. Khumo, her head bowed, was resisting the suggestion, concerned that it might mean Mosimanegape going to jail. Her siblings were also advising restraint.

Half an hour later, the beams of car headlights swept into the yard and through the windows. Two members of the village detachment came and stood near the

small group of chairs around the old man in the *lelwapa* and were quickly brought chairs of their own. They were not there long; the old man recounted the evening's events to them slowly and thoroughly, and they inspected the knife he handed them. His children remained silent. The police made an appointment with Khumo for the following day.

In the morning, the children got up and prepared themselves for school and the adults got ready for work, in the usual great bustle of ironing and heating water and bathing and drinking tea. I had a meeting in the city and left shortly after them. I had not seen Khumo in the yard, but I assumed that she must already have left for the *kgotla*, where the police were based. The old man had left to return to the lands before I was awake.

It was not until long after I had arrived home that evening, had greeted everyone and settled in that I noticed Khumo was still not around. I asked after her and was told that she had returned to her own yard. I had to eke out further detail from Kelebogile, Oratile, and Lorato: she had gone with the children; and, yes, it seemed that Mosimanegape was home as well. I was surprised – and a bit dismayed – but all three women either shrugged or laughed, noncommittally.

Over the course of the next couple of days, it emerged that the police had called Khumo and Mosimanegape together. Mosimanegape had been mildly threatened, the police having told him that they knew about him, his drinking, and his tendency to violence, and that he was walking a fine line. He expressed what they found to be appropriate contrition. Khumo declined to press charges. And they were sent home, promising that they would do better.

True to his word, the old man said nothing about this arrangement; nor, to my knowledge, did anyone else in the family comment on it, its appropriateness, relative success, or repercussions ever again.

Conclusion

'We Have a Problem at Home': The Ordinary Crisis of Kinship

Late one night, less than a year after I had left the field – and not long before Christmas – I had a sudden and unexpected message from Moagi.

'Hi dear, how are you? We have a problem at home. Kagiso is late, car accident.'

It knocked the breath out of me. I responded in urgent disbelief, asking what had happened, when, where. Moagi did not reply. I tried to reach other members of the family by text, but none of them replied either. Multiple phone calls wouldn't connect or cut out after a few rings. Eventually, in a state of anxious dread, I got through on the family landline. Lorato answered as if she had been expecting me.

'Who told you?' she asked first. I explained I'd had a message from Moagi. She let out a sigh of relief. 'We've been trying to figure out how to get hold of you. We were worried you would hear from someone else first.'

She told me what they knew of the afternoon's disaster. Kagiso and his fiancée – for whom he had recently concluded negotiations and paid *bogadi* – had been driving to town in Kagiso's car. It was a drive Kagiso made every day for work, often multiple times. It was a drive I had made hundreds of times myself. A truck overtaking at high speed hit them head-on. They were both killed instantly.

Everyone except Moagi was already home, and he was expected back from his post, across the country, the following day. Lorato described them to me, sitting scattered around the darkened *lelwapa* in silence, their faces intermittently lit by their mobile phones as they notified family and friends by text message. 'Nobody can sleep,' she said. We sat in silence on the phone for a while ourselves. The last time we'd spoken, we'd been anticipating the second stage of Kagiso's marriage – a church wedding – and wondering when it might be held and how it should be organised. 'I don't need to hear anybody crying,' she warned, adding, 'It will be too painful.' I swallowed and tried to heed the warning; we had each heard the tell-tale catch in the other's breathing.

258

Steering ourselves back to safer ground, we started talking through everything that would need sorting out that week: the food to be bought, the programmes to be designed and printed, the tent to be hired, the firewood to be collected. '*Ija! Ke dikgang hela*,' I said, trying to be light-hearted – nothing but problems! Lorato chuckled. 'But there's going to be a serious issue of some sort, isn't there?' I added more seriously, with a sudden sense of foreboding. The situation was so difficult already. '*Gareitse wena, re tla bona*,' Lorato answered, sighing – we don't know, we'll see. We stayed on the line for hours, alternately chatting reflectively or sitting in silence – until the sun came up and Mmapula called everyone to begin preparing the yard and house.

Kagiso and his fiancée died early in the week. Funerals were usually held on Saturday, but no one was sure whether the arrangements could be made in time. Kagiso's fiancée came from a village halfway across the country, and representatives sent by her family – parents, uncles, aunts – had to make their way to Dithaba before preparations could begin. They arrived on the Tuesday; that night, the Legae family hosted a large meeting with their guests to begin the funeral consultations. Unfortunately, my foreboding had been justified: *dikgang* emerged almost immediately.

'They're refusing to let us bury her,' Lorato explained by phone when I called for an update. 'When we called them at first they said there would be no problem, we could bury her here with Kagiso. He paid *bogadi*, right. But now we don't know what happened, somebody must have changed, because now they're refusing. Saying the marriage was not finished. They want to take her home.' The insistence was unexpected and had thrown the meeting into disarray. Both families agreed to meet separately and to reconvene the following day. '*Haish, wena, ke kgang e tona*,' Lorato commented, dispirited – it's a big issue.

I called daily for updates, and I received regular text messages from Moagi and my friend Lesedi, who had arrived in Dithaba to help. The debate among the Legaes – including Kagiso's parents, aunts and uncles, siblings, cousins, and other elder members of the family – was protracted. Some were piqued that the woman's family could even suggest taking their daughter home for burial when *bogadi* had already been paid; lengthy exegeses of Tswana law were offered, and it was suggested that *bogadi* should be claimed back. Others – including Mmapula, Kagiso's mother – were deeply hurt but could not summon the emotional will to fight, and they thought it best to let the issue go. Alongside these questions of principle ran equally urgent questions of who would meet which of the funeral's steep costs, who should take on which formal roles (giving speeches, pall-bearing, and so on), how the programme should

run, and how the extensive work of preparing for the event itself would be managed – all of which hung on the question of whether or not the woman's family would contribute.

The two families met together and disbanded again twice more over the next two days, holding separate meetings in between. The woman's family seemed to be as divided and uncertain as the Legaes were. Some were insistent about taking their daughter home for burial at all costs; others were quietly convinced that her place was with her husband, especially given that they had died together. The same concerns about cost, contribution, and organisation hung over their deliberations. The woman had left behind a young son; he had become close to Kagiso, but Kagiso had not paid the requisite cattle to take the child as his own. The problem of who would take on his care presented yet another thorny decision, entangled with and impinging on the others.

Muffled recriminations began to fly. Some of the Legaes wondered whether the woman's family wasn't holding out in order to retain exclusive benefit from the large payment anticipated from the Motor Vehicle Authority (MVA) – a government agency that paid out often significant claims to passengers injured or killed in car accidents. Others suggested that her kin had already stripped the woman's house of furniture and belongings without a thought for her son's inheritance. Witchcraft ran as a subtle subtext throughout: a likely explanation for how such a tragedy should befall a young couple, especially given Kagiso's growing profile in business and the church, but also a risk that hung over each family and between them, should their multiple negotiations go awry and produce intractable ill will. It was a tense and dangerous time, compounded by the deep shock and pain of the two deaths.

Finally, late on Thursday, an agreement was reached. Kagiso and his fiancée would be buried together in Dithaba. The funeral would be held on Saturday morning. The MVA had indeed been consulted and was to provide a substantial sum towards the cost of the funeral. Those who had compromised by allowing the woman to be buried in Dithaba insisted that no expense should be spared. Joint teams, comprising members of each family, were sent to town to locate the best coffins. Modiri contributed no fewer than four cows from the family herd; vast quantities of food were procured by the women; the programmes were unusually large, at A4 size, and printed in full colour – making them exceptional enough to be fought over by those who attended the funeral. And hundreds attended. Most of both families were there, as were neighbours and friends from near and far. Many staff members, volunteers, and clients from the local home-based care centre for people living with HIV – where Kagiso and his fiancée had met and had worked together – were in

attendance; they also contributed substantial financial support, and had helped design and print the much vaunted programme. Members of the couple's church arrived from all over the district. Even the attendance of more remote figures was widely anticipated and rumoured – like the couple who had once run the local orphan care centre where Kagiso and I met, who had long since left the country; and, of course, my own – if ultimately disappointed. The funeral lasted much longer than usual to accommodate not only speakers from both families but also the *kgosi*, and – in a moving gesture – a spontaneous ceremony conducted by the elderly head of Kagiso's church, who stood between the couple's coffins and bound them together in Christian marriage.

<center>★★★</center>

Once the shock had faded, I was struck by the extent to which the deaths of Kagiso and his wife mapped and condensed the full range of *dikgang* – issues or conflicts, their negotiations and irresolution – that emerged over the course of my fieldwork. The preparations and the funeral that followed also powerfully demonstrated the ways in which kinship is *constituted* in crisis and conflict, rather than being destroyed by it. The sudden loss of Kagiso and his wife creates a darkly apt frame in which to draw together the stories of contemporary Tswana kinship I have tried to tell.

The dangers of distance, movement, and moving together – which figure critically in the spatialities of Tswana kinship – are especially pronounced in the case of a car accident. The distance at which Kagiso's wife was living from her family, the necessity of movement in the couple's personal and working lives, and the ways in which kin gravitated and were called to the *lelwapa* on receiving news of the deaths all resonate with the descriptions I have given of kin space. The Tswana *gae*, or home, is a multiple and scattered place – usually comprised of *masimo* (farm lands) and *moraka* (cattle post), with the *lelwapa* as a lodestone. Its dispersed places are integrated through gendered and generationally differentiated practices of movement, staying, and care work, which seek to strike a careful balance between closeness and distance – and which produce *dikgang*. Whether in disruptive intimacies and absences, like Dipuo's during his dalliances with the neighbour's widow, or in the necessity and risk of sending children like Tefo 'up and down' on errands, awkward balances must be struck between keeping family simultaneously together and apart. And it is in the continuous production and negotiation of *dikgang* that this balance is created.

The need to get away and be away from family, while remaining connected to them, loosely characterises the challenge of personhood

as well. As we saw in the construction of Lorato's house, building is a critical and continuous means of *go itirela*, or self-making. Building, too, invites a proliferation of problems: in the need to mobilise resources and manage labour, as Lorato did among kin, neighbours, and NGO connections; in highlighting the failures of others – in this case, Lorato's aunts and uncles – to build; and in reworking one's actual and potential relationships with relatives and partners, echoed in Lorato's concerns about marriageability after she had built. Building, in other words, involves an accumulation of *dikgang* on the part of the builder, and an opportunity to demonstrate one's ability to manage those issues – making *dikgang* central to personhood too. Batswana do not build in a vacuum, of course: governmental control of plot allocation, combined with shortened timelines for plot development and the advent of both governmental and non-governmental programmes to which builders have differential access (based on, for example, orphanhood), produces further problems to be negotiated. These *dikgang*, however, knock builders out of sync, introducing a temporality that interferes with usual tactics of negotiation and frequently frustrates progress. Many noted with dismay that Kagiso had not even managed to build before his sudden death – a fact made all the more bitter because he had helped improve and extend the house at home and had saved an amount substantial enough to build for himself, but had been unable to secure a plot. Even Lorato expressed guilt around this circumstance, having chosen to build for herself rather than giving her plot to Kagiso when he had requested it years earlier.

Similarly intractable *dikgang* are produced in the spatial practices of social work offices and NGOs working with families in the village. Kagiso was a driver for both the home-based care and orphan care centres at which he worked, and, as we have seen, the ability of NGOs and government to enable the movement of their clients was a key factor in their relevance to families. These agencies presented a surprising parallel to kinship spatiality – being equally scattered, requiring comparable movement, and emplacing the work of care in similar ways. But an inversion was at work: a centrifugal tendency which moved clients away from the *lelwapa*, and which managed boundaries and access in ways that both competed with and disordered kin spaces. These similarities and divergences demonstrated clear links between kin practice and intervention practice, but also antagonism, displacement, and disruption – a pattern that echoes throughout this book.

A preoccupation with who would contribute what, how, and in what spirit – in terms of things, work, and the sentiments they condensed – saturated negotiations around the funeral much as they saturated home life. For Batswana, kin care is constituted in contributions: specific material things (cattle, food, cash, cars, or clothes, for example); the

work of acquiring, producing, or looking after them; and the sentiment that animates making them available to others. As Modiri's responsibilities for the cattle, Kelebogile's for food, or Lesego's for cooking showed, expected and actual contributions define – and are defined by – kin roles, according to gender and age. And contributions, too, are subject to *dikgang*. The *dikgang* that emerged around both cattle and food enabled a shifting generational framework, whereby family members may inhabit multiple generational positions at once, creating alternately hierarchical and egalitarian relationships. Thus, Modiri was Kagiso's brother as well as his father; Kelebogile was Oratile's sister as well as her mother, and was grandmother to Oratile's children. And all of these relationships were indexed by responsibilities to contribute. Contributions forgone – as when Lesego stopped cooking – mark a profound threat to these relationships; and the question of who would contribute what at the funeral posed the particularly fraught problem not only of how surviving family members related to their dead, but how they related to one another, within and between the two families.

At the same time, contributions are subject to competing claims. The very things and work that a family expects of a given person are expected by potential partners as well, and they also figure critically in other processes of self-making. Tuelo and Khumo faced these conundrums in trying to acquire things for themselves through others – Tuelo through theft and violence, Khumo through *motshelo* savings groups – and in the claims to which these acquisitions were subjected. The uncertainty that emerges around what people can and should contribute, what they *will* contribute, to whom, and for how long means that contributions are a fertile source of serious *dikgang*. Care, in turn, is routinely subject to crisis. AIDS, of course, is frequently described as presenting a 'crisis of care' – a framing that reveals a fundamental misunderstanding of Tswana practices of care. The crisis AIDS presents may differ in degree, but not in kind, from the ordinary crisis of kin care. Interventions in response to AIDS, however – the bulk of which prioritise the provision of the very same goods listed above – *do* produce crises that differ in kind: by disentangling care things from care work, leaving both subject to competition within families over who might be seen to be 'contributing' them, thereby profoundly disrupting the dynamic of contribution itself. These *dikgang*, like others generated by government and NGOs, evade the family's capacity to negotiate them. The MVA payout described above posed precisely this threat, but the ultimate choice to contribute it entirely to the costs of the funeral defused its disruptive potential.

While the question of contributions cast a long shadow over the funeral, at the heart of the *dikgang* that emerged was the drawn-out,

highly uncertain process of marriage. I have suggested that intimate relationships become kin relationships through a gradual and carefully managed process of *recognition*, whereby they become visible, speakable, and known among increasingly wide circles of family. Women achieve recognition most meaningfully through pregnancy (which generally precedes marriage, as we saw with the parallel cases of Lorato and Boipelo); with men, however, it is often first conferred through negotiating marriage. Every shift in recognisability is marked and achieved by *dikgang*, the negotiation of which progressively expands to include additional relations; and their engagement with these *dikgang* determines not simply how families might relate to one another, but also the viability of the relationship their recognition shapes. Kagiso's first attempt to marry a previous partner was ultimately scuppered by her father's unwillingness to engage in negotiation, which sank the relationship in turn. And the father's unwillingness was rumoured to stem from unresolved *dikgang* between himself, the girl's mother, and her family, demonstrating the intergenerational ripple effects that the characteristic *ir*resolution of *dikgang* can produce. Although Kagiso and his family had successfully negotiated his marriage on their second attempt, including the payment of *bogadi*, his wife's family's initial refusal to bury her with him underlines the highly tenuous – even reversible – nature of recognition conferred by marriage, especially to the extent that it relies on the indeterminate dimensions of *dikgang*. The couple's posthumous wedding was moving in part because it signified a final, irreversible recognition of the sort unavailable in life. It marked the successful negotiation of *dikgang* between and within the two families; and it settled any outstanding issues sufficiently that the child left behind would not inherit them when it came time for his own marriage.

Although the accumulation and successful negotiation of *dikgang* promises a stable accumulation of personhood – pregnancy decisively reworks a woman's position and relationships in her natal family, just as marriage reworks a man's position in the community, regardless of whether either the child or the marriage survives – building relationships through such *dikgang* is also risky and prone to failure. In this light, the risk of contracting AIDS becomes one among many risks associated with intimate relationships; if its stakes are higher, they are understood more in terms of potential effects on negotiating recognition than in terms of life and death. Indeed, I have argued that protection against the indeterminacies generated by recognition and the *dikgang* it generates may be more crucial to Batswana than protection against contracting the disease itself – a possibility that goes some way in explaining stubbornly high rates of HIV infection in Botswana.

The child left behind by the deaths of Kagiso and his wife brings us to the question of children's mobility, claims of responsibility for their care that are made or rejected, and their potency in asserting the limits of kinship. The son of Kagiso's wife had been moving between his mother's house in Dithaba and her family's house across the country; while he had become used to Kagiso, and we had seen him frequently at home, the decision was taken to return him to his mother's natal village. Given that he had already been in frequent movement, continued shuttling among kin of the sort we saw with Lesedi's family was highly likely. I have described this kind of child circulation as an experimental extension of the circulations of kin, the economies of contribution, and the recognisability of relationships. It attracts potential *dikgang* connected to all three, the management of which serves to articulate which kin might be considered 'close' and which 'distant'. Drawing on Lesedi's disillusionment with the 'far kin' who offered to send her to school but instead treated her like a maid, I argued that child circulation tends to reproduce appropriate distances of relatedness rather than producing new bonds of closeness. It asserts limits, differentiating and distancing kin. Lesedi's case and that of her cousin Tumi – taken in by a 'close' aunt – demonstrated that circulating children among kin already bound by economies of contribution tends to produce irresolvable *dikgang* managed in much the same way as those linked to contribution would be, leaving relationships unchanged. By comparison, children moving to stay with non-kin – as Bonolo did when he decided to foster himself to the Legae family, in response to ill treatment and a fear of witchcraft at home – does not necessarily involve establishing kin-like relationships, partly because *dikgang* are suspended and ignored, neither worsened nor addressed. Formal, government-sponsored fostering, in contrast, seeks to form relations of mutual care, responsibility, and love between non-kin, and attempts to provide a permanent solution to *dikgang*. In this sense, formal fostering seems to collapse appropriate distances among and between families that child circulation would ordinarily reassert, while offering not only an alternative family but an unmarked alternative ideal of kinship in its place – creating a disruption of and direct competition with usual kin practice, reminiscent of that seen in preceding chapters.

In part, Kagiso's wife's family sought to address the *dikgang* generated by her death by turning the funeral into a major event. As we have seen, such events serve to articulate the boundaries of family and to establish its proper relationships to the wider community, while offering opportunities to redefine personhood. The presence of everyone at the funeral, from neighbours to chiefs and churchmates to friends, the provision of food, the programme, and the management of work and space were all

reminiscent of the priorities asserted in the family party a year earlier – if with distinct, dark differences. Death itself, and the couple's posthumous marriage, marked a new configuration of personhood for them both.

I have suggested that the distinctions between family and village relied primarily on the careful management of hiding and sharing – an echo of the recognition dynamic – through which non-kin are drawn into the family's performance of success, but carefully excluded from the messier realities of *dikgang*. Attention to *dikgang* demonstrates ways in which the *lelwapa* generates and permeates the *motse* (village), articulating a relationship in which the village is understood to begin in and to be sustained by the home. The deaths of Kagiso and his wife – especially given the hopes people had for their growing prosperity – marked a disastrous sort of inter-familial *kgang*, making the performance of a successful response all the more critical and complex to manage. This imperative weighed on the negotiations leading up to the funeral, and on the question of how each family could best demonstrate its own ability to respond – forcing the question of which *dikgang* needed most to be hidden from the other family, which shared, and how. It was partly this consideration, I suggest, that motivated the debate over where Kagiso's wife should be buried. In the end, the two families seem to have concluded that they were in a much better position to preserve the priority of the relationship between family and community by working together. Jointly, they could draw in the maximum number of people to whom they could demonstrate their encompassing reach (through costly coffins, fancy programmes, and ample food). And, having successfully negotiated the question of the burial between them, they could be relatively confident that they would prove able to contain further *dikgang* that might arise. Together, they succeeded in drawing the village – or the better part of two villages – into the home, containing any risks involved, and securing the transformation of the couple's status by doing so.

Finally, the ambivalent influence of government and NGOs around the funeral – at which they are simultaneously absent and present, marginal and critical – echoes the ambivalence both of their influence in the home and of the home's influence on them. As we saw above, a major financial contribution from a government agency – the MVA – was both a source of suspicious speculation and a means of achieving compromise within and between the two families, in part by alleviating the burden of contributions they faced. Kagiso and his wife were also linked to a variety of AIDS-oriented NGOs in the village through their work and even in their relationship: members of the home-based care project figured strongly among the attendees at the funeral, carried out some of the work involved, and made significant contributions, honouring

relations mediated by and through the project on which they had worked together. And, of course, my own connections to Kagiso and the Legaes had been forged through our mutual involvements in the orphan care NGO. At the same time, that NGO had long since closed, and, despite my connection with the family, I was unable to attend the funeral, underscoring an inevitable tenuousness in that connection.

As much as these agencies may succeed in mediating kin relations, ultimately they can neither enter into nor incorporate the family. While the home-based care staff mediated Kagiso's relationship with his wife and participated meaningfully in the funeral, they were not themselves family and could not have participated in resolving the issue of the wife's burial. The impacts of NGOs and government agencies on kinship practice are achieved, as it were, by knock-on effect rather than through direct involvement in kin relations as such. Families, for their part, efficiently draw such agencies into the realm of kin practice while carefully excluding them as kin actors.

What these projects do evince, however, is a tendency to deploy kin-like structures and practices – including familiar dynamics of *dikgang* – in the internal dynamics of and relationships between state and non-governmental agencies at local, national, and transnational levels. Kagiso's marriage to his co-worker, the fact that his sister worked in the same NGO, and the fact that its founder was a close friend of their mother and took a parental concern in them all, indicate ways in which the home-based care project relied on, mediated, and reproduced kin relations. And those relations, in turn, naturalised, depoliticised, and legitimised its work. But this naturalisation presented a conundrum: NGO and government projects alike draw on multiple, mutually familiar and yet divergent notions of kinship within a discourse and practice that explicitly differentiates them from the family. As we have seen in both social work offices and NGOs, and perhaps most powerfully at the opening ceremony of the NGO campsite, these projects bring an array of Euro-American notions of what kinship should be, and of how it should relate to politics, into jarring juxtaposition with their Tswana counterparts. These contrary notions mirror but also disrupt one another, especially because they are obscured and implicit. This same mirroring and disruption, of course, is evident in intervention programmes' influence on households. I suggest that the frustration that plagues governmental and non-governmental intervention in families – or, at least, the sharp divergences between their intended aims and actual outcomes – may be traced back to this confusion of kinships, and their tendency to saturate and overwhelm the bureaucratic practice that seeks to contain and instrumentalise them. At the same time, this confusion exacerbates the

dynamics of permeation described above: kin logic and practice do not simply escape political projects of containment – they define, motivate, and disrupt them from within.

Everything that we might understand as constitutive of Tswana kinship thus creates *dikgang*, the negotiation of which produces additional *dikgang* in turn, in a continuous, fraught, and yet surprisingly innovative and generative cycle. *Dikgang*, in this sense, form a critical dimension of Tswana kinship. This understanding of *dikgang* suggests a novel role for crisis and conflict as something more than simply external influences on kinship practice, or as unfortunate but anomalous and fundamentally inconsequential corollaries of being family. I have attempted to make the case that crisis and conflict are, instead, *constitutive* of kinship. I suggest that crisis is inevitably produced by deep tensions and contradictions in the work to which kinship is put – between, for example, enabling the development of a distinctly individualist personhood while retaining the togetherness and mutual support of family; between creating closeness and maintaining distance, accumulating and sharing (or sharing and separating), recognising and concealing, connecting and dividing, creating 'publics' and preserving 'privacy'; or between multiple ideals of kinship and between its ideals and reality, among other contradictions we have seen. And I suggest further that it is the ongoing negotiation of crisis that enables kin to strike unlikely balances among these opposing imperatives, continuously and creatively. For Batswana, the ongoing negotiation of *dikgang* both defines and differentiates relationships among kin – by generation and gender – and between kin and non-kin; and, at the same time, it is fundamental to the reproduction of kinship. Self-making, too, emerges as a process of accumulating and managing *dikgang*, and it waxes and wanes depending on the sort of *dikgang* that one has undertaken and one's success in facing and living with them (since their resolution is often suspended indefinitely). The notion that crisis and conflict might reflect not only common experiences but crucial dimensions of kinship helps explain the surprising resilience of kinship in times of major socio-political crisis, such as Botswana's time of AIDS – and also provides ample opportunity for cross-cultural application and comparison.

The question remains as to how far we can push the idea that crisis or conflict constitutes kinship. Throughout my time in Botswana, so-called passion killings – murder–suicides, usually committed by young men who killed first their girlfriends and then themselves – were rife and were subject to extensive public commentary and concern. Passion killings were often the result of *dikgang* between partners (and occasionally their families) of the sorts I have described, as well as being a source of serious

public *dikgang*, and they suggest one violent limit on the generative potential of conflict. There is also some question as to whether different socio-political contexts of crisis and conflict work differently on the crisis dynamics of kinship. While I suspect that some of the conclusions drawn here about the AIDS crisis might apply to other public health crises, comparison with different sorts of large-scale crisis or conflict – whether natural disasters, overt political violence, or economic collapse, for example – in different socio-political and cultural contexts might reveal other critical limits to my argument. In the example of Botswana's experiences of and responses to AIDS, I hope at least to have challenged the prevalent assumption that crisis and conflict simply destroy families, and that the only way of understanding kinship in such circumstances is in terms of breakdown or collapse.

In virtually all of the cases suggested above, of course, there is no single cultural framing of crisis or conflict at work. There are multiple framings. To the extent that each framing invites intervention, and to the extent that those interventions originate in a vast range of different institutional and socio-cultural contexts around the world, to talk about crisis is automatically to make connections and comparisons. Crisis, in other words, is exceptionally well suited to comparative anthropological study. The perspectives I have provided here would undoubtedly benefit from further investigation into the ways in which socio-cultural attitudes towards conflict or crisis, and their implications for families, inform humanitarian intervention ideology and programming originating outside Botswana.

In challenging the assumption that crisis is simply destructive, I have also sought to provide a fresh perspective on the wide array of governmental and non-governmental programmes that take it as their starting point. Part of the motivating concern of my research was to shed light on those factors that consistently frustrate family welfare programming in Botswana, and that frequently produce unintended and highly problematic knock-on effects for the families they seek to assist. As we have seen, most of these factors can be traced back to a fundamental misunderstanding of the elasticity of the Tswana family and of the importance of *dikgang* in that elasticity. This misunderstanding underpins other problematic assumptions in turn, about everything from the spatial and temporal norms of the Tswana home to the management of resources among kin, from the long-fraught unfolding of kinship reproduction and the life course to relative assessments of risk, from the role and power of children to the relative priority and power of family, as well as – perhaps most crucially – a misapprehension of the ways in which kinship and government or organisational practice ought properly to relate. While many

of these programmes have adopted practices reminiscent of Tswana kinship practice, and thereby create an influential resonance or link, their effects have been to disrupt, invert, muddle, overextend, and competitively displace existing kinship practice. Combined with an explicit mandate of alleviating crisis, resolving conflict, and recreating the broken family in an appropriately 'modern' shape, these mis-framings create a legacy of disarray that has affected the Tswana family much more deeply than AIDS itself. While the conclusions drawn above suggest a certain inescapability in the dynamics they describe, they also provide a fundamental reframing of the problems facing Tswana families that holds the potential for experimentally rethinking both social work and NGO practice.

Finally, I hope to have provided a case for rethinking the conceptual and experiential relationships between kinship and politics, as we understand them in social sciences research. Michael Lambek argues that kinship is characterised by a 'surfeit of meaning, relations, and sentiment' (2013: 242); I have argued that much of the work of kinship for Batswana is to contain, shape, and direct that surfeit and the dangers it presents. The goals of states and transnational organisations working with families might be understood in much the same terms of containment and control (ibid.: 251–5), and of redirecting that surfeit to naturalise and justify institutional exercises of power. Paradoxically, however, agency interventions in family strategies of containment *disrupt* that work of containment, producing a confused, undifferentiated, and unbounded profusion of meaning and relations. To use Lambek's terms, state and organisational intervention in kinship exacerbates its 'immodern' excesses precisely in the ways in which it seeks to eliminate or modernise them. This disruption and exacerbation is not simply a matter of problematic systems that need to be fixed, however; nor is it simply about the depersonalised and dehumanising effects of bureaucratic systems. It is, I have tried to show, a direct product of the surfeit it seeks to contain: states and transnational organisations fail with families because their work is understood, experienced, and enacted in kinship terms and kin-like practice, and because these terms and practices tap into a multiplex confusion of kinship models. Such analytical possibilities emerge only when we read kinship and politics together, rather than assuming that they are separate and exist in fixed relationships to one another (McKinnon and Cannell 2013).

★★★

A few months after the funeral, I called the Legaes to see how things were going. It had been a difficult time for all of them. Mmapula had not

ploughed – the funeral had been held at the beginning of the ploughing season, and she had not been out to the lands since – and so food was in shorter supply than usual. Winter was coming and warm clothes were scarce. The combi-van that Kagiso had run as a school bus to the nearby town had broken down; two of the children who had enrolled in school there were struggling to get back and forth. The younger children had been deeply upset by Kagiso's death and were inclined to reminisce about their uncle, including by posting photographs of his *bogadi* negotiations on Facebook. Mmapula had reprimanded them harshly for vocalising their memories more than once, and had taken to making wry comments about how much they ate, as if they hadn't noticed that their uncle was no longer there to feed them. Meanwhile, she and Dipuo had paid to have the wrecked car towed home, and it remained in the yard behind the house – a fact many friends and neighbours expressed concern about, partly because of its symbolic concentration of grief, and partly because of implicit concerns that it may have been bewitched.

But perhaps most worrying of all, Dipuo had been making more strange and unsettling pronouncements – and they had been taking on increasingly dark overtones. 'He said something to Khumo about the next one who's going to go under the ground,' Lorato said. She wasn't sure of the context or complaint, but the statement itself was so threatening that it left no room for extenuating circumstance. 'The old man likes to blame Kagiso's death on the Bangwato,' – another Tswana tribe – 'but these days Modiri is wondering whether it wasn't him [Dipuo]. It's like that's what he's trying to say. Modiri and the others are planning to call him and tell him that if he doesn't promise to come back from the lands to stay in the village, they're out [of his life].'

The call weighed heavily on me long after I had hung up. We had discussed various tacks to be taken on each of the issues in turn. Modiri was already fixing the combi. Khumo was looking into boarding school options. I offered to look into finding good winter clothes coming on sale in the northern hemisphere that I could send. Lorato had agreed to talk to her grandmother about our collective concern over the car and see if she would be willing for us to pay to have it removed. I talked to the children about being considerate towards their elders' discomfort with speaking about their late son. Oratile agreed to talk to her mother about the way she was speaking to the children. Modiri and Khumo would call their father. It would all take time. None of it suggested decisive solutions – indeed, most of it suggested more problems to come. Being so far away, it felt overwhelming, and I felt impotent.

Over the next few weeks, there was a spate of Facebook activity among the family who used the site. Boipelo created a family Facebook group

and posted photographs from the last Christmas I had been in Botswana. Tshepo posted lovelorn status updates; Lesego deftly deflected online suitors; Lorato posted a note to the family group to say that she was moving to the next town for a new job. Moagi wrote to say hello while on a work trip up north to Kasane; Oratile, who had also moved for work, wrote to tell me that she was taking some of the children from home to stay with her for a while. The contrast with the weighty phone conversation was striking: here there was a sense of growth, movement, and possibility.

On reflection, I realised that even the density of *dikgang* I had heard about over the phone presented possibility, in its own way. Modiri's insistence on calling his father home opened up the possibility that he and his siblings might successfully assert a new authority. The children's insistence on vocally reminiscing about their uncle opened up the possibility of reworking their relationships not only with his memory but also with their grandmother. Tshepo, who had been commuting to school, began boarding, which afforded her considerable comparative autonomy for the first time. Khumo, who had been working doubly hard at the lands, was gradually solidifying a claim to continue working them as her own. Each of these possibilities, of course, presented new *dikgang* in turn; but, taken together, they reminded me that among family *dikgang* are never completely unmanageable. They are always already in the process of being dispersed, suspended, or transformed into other *dikgang*, which are also negotiated into new manageability, in a continuous, generative cycle.

I realised that the apparently intractable knot of problems with which I had been presented over the phone had not been given to me for untangling, nor simply to re-entangle me; it was meant to draw me back into the continuous processes of disentangling in which I had a part to play, but that reached well beyond me and involved us all. For all that I had come to understand the dynamics of crisis in the Legae household, my default position was still to frame problems as things that needed *solving*, possibly by me – an artefact of my time working in both NGOs and Social Services, and of my own personality and upbringing, without doubt. But for the Legaes, including me in *dikgang* had always been, first and foremost, a way of including me in family. *Dikgang* were what we shared when we spoke together; they were what brought us together and what kept us together. Moagi would often say, by way of concluding his brief updates on the unfolding *dikgang* of the funeral, '*Re mmogo*' – we are together. And in that simple statement, he reminded me that, for all the *dikgang* we had faced, and for all the directions our lives had taken, we were indeed still together; and that in the face of these new challenges – indeed, *because* of them – we would remain so.

Figure 11 Fireworks. Celebrating the New Year in the Legae yard.

An Epidemic Epilogue

As I was completing this book, a new epidemic arrived.

The news of a novel coronavirus in Wuhan broke in January 2020. At first, reports of its progress juddered in fits and starts, like transmissions from somewhere incalculably far away, about the sort of catastrophe that only happens in other places. Then the virus washed up in Italy, and reports took on a tone of alarm and disbelief; then it found its way to the UK, where I am writing, and the news became a steady, swelling background noise, until it came in a deluge, and the virus was as near as our doorsteps – or as near as our hands are to our faces. As I write this epilogue, the UK has been in lockdown for two months. We do not yet know what the end might look like, but for now there is no end in sight.

There is a danger in writing without the advantage of hindsight, and without the scope of information and the time for sense-making it allows. But there is clarity and potential in it too – not least as it is so often how we must live our lives.

As we have collectively groped for perspective, appropriate responses, and meaning, comparisons to HIV have bubbled to the surface. Some forget that that pandemic is still ongoing, nearly four decades after it began. Others conclude from its example that life goes on – and it should simply go on now. But the latter conclusion overlooks the extraordinary time, effort, and resources, the mistakes and innovations, the research and treatment, the political will and failures, the personal and interpersonal choices and decisions – the illness and caring and dying – that have gone into finding a way for life to go on, and that continue to this day.

When COVID-19 arrived in Botswana, it arrived very close to home. The country went into lockdown shortly after the discovery of their first case, posthumously, in a 79-year-old woman from Maropeng who had crossed to South Africa for the day. The government declared a state of emergency, shut the borders early to all except essential traffic – mostly the import of food and necessities – cancelled some foreigners' visas, called Batswana home from abroad, set up quarantine stations and border testing, and required the use of masks in public. It was a rapid

274

and decisive response, if fraught with confusion, fear, and uncertainty as the measures took effect – as with responses everywhere.

Botswana's long experience with the AIDS pandemic gives it valuable technical expertise and public health experience for facing COVID-19, as well as broad public understanding of what is at stake and how to respond. But we do not yet know how COVID-19 might impact those with suppressed immune systems due to HIV. As trials are run on lopinavir and ritonavir – components of the antiretroviral medications used to treat HIV – to test their potential for suppressing COVID-19, the tantalising possibility emerges that the decades of work and the political and financial investment that went into providing ARVs have not only extended tens of thousands of lives, but may buffer the impact of this new epidemic as well.[1] Regardless of the outcomes of those trials, the fact remains that the public provision of drugs that strengthen the immune systems of Batswana living with HIV gives them, and in turn their communities, a valuable line of defence.

So far, however, it seems to be the global North that has been disproportionately affected by COVID-19. Some of the wealthiest, most well-equipped nations in the world – including the UK – are being hit the hardest, experiencing the highest rates of infection and death. While explanations are floated in terms of demographics (older populations, greater density), preparedness, political leadership, and public trust (or a lack thereof), the need for those explanations scarcely conceals an underlying shock: we in the global North have become accustomed to the trajectories of crisis, suffering, illness, and death leading elsewhere, not leading home.

The pandemic and the widespread lockdowns that have followed in its wake have demanded an unexpected reckoning. They have demanded that we rethink who we are, how we live, and how our behaviour affects one another – locally and globally. COVID-19 requires us to refigure not only our households, work, and friendships, but also the services we access, the way we move through space, and our management of time. Our understandings of risk are shifting under our feet in ways we struggle to grasp or act upon: those to whom we are closest may pose the greatest danger; children initially appear less, rather than more, vulnerable; and, perhaps hardest of all to imagine, given the apparent prevalence of asymptomatic cases, each of us may prove a greater threat to others than

---

[1] In late 2021, much after this epilogue was written, the reported emergence of the Omicron variant in an untreated HIV patient in southern Africa underscored just how important mass public ARV provision has been in staving off further health crises – and just how global the risks of a lack of treatment availability can become.

they are to us. We don't yet know enough about the virus, its transmission, or its progression to be able to gauge our risks and responses. Government guidance, even when communicated well, is often insufficient to help us determine how to behave in any given circumstance. And so we have to rethink our everyday choices and behaviours, and assess those of others, against new and unclear standards of right and wrong. We find ourselves contemplating how to respond not in terms of the virus, but in terms of our relationships to ourselves, to each other, and to the earth. COVID-19, in other words, poses a collective ethical problem – not unlike the collective ethical problem posed by AIDS before it, and, indeed, by the *dikgang* that Batswana navigate on an everyday basis.

Much like *dikgang* in a time of AIDS, I suspect that the crises of Covid will generate creativity, innovation, and the possibility of unexpected change – particularly in and through families. As we seek new ways to live with and relate to each other in the presence of this novel coronavirus – in many cases, locked down at home – I anticipate that many of those innovations will emerge first in our most intimate relationships, among kin, where such experimentation is already commonplace. Whether we are stuck with them or cut off from them, our pandemic circumstances make family and intimacy a new sort of problem. But from among the extensive repertoire of problems we have already negotiated or anticipated in those contexts, new responses suggest themselves. The virus reminds us that to be family is always, in one way or another, to be a risk to one another; the perpetual issue is how best to manage that risk and how to sustain love and care for one another, not only in spite of it but as a means of addressing it and rendering it generative.

However, COVID-19 is also what Marshall Sahlins might have called a 'revelatory crisis' (Sahlins 1972: 124, 143; see also Solway 1994): a crisis that exposes structural contradictions, inequalities, and deteriorating socio-economic conditions – here, not just to the ethnographic observer but to anyone who is paying attention. Collectively, we have scrolled through reams of digital newsprint reminding us that the virus does not discriminate, and will happily infect prince or pauper. Further reams of commentary demonstrate that this is not quite true, and that the marginalised are disproportionately affected and at much higher risk of death – the poor, ill, elderly, and, especially in the global North, those from black, indigenous and minority ethnic backgrounds. What both of these analyses miss is something HIV taught us long ago: that pandemics of highly contagious viruses demonstrate above all the unexpected, intimate, and uncomfortable ways in which we are connected to one another, across every socially constructed barrier of nation, class, race, age, gender, or sexuality (Comaroff 2007). Such viruses are transgressive, in

the literal sense of crossing and collapsing boundaries; and they demonstrate that our interconnectedness is much more tightly woven than we might like to think. While we might imagine prince and pauper in discrete, segregated worlds, it may well be that one has infected the other – and, worse, that if the prince has a better chance of survival, it is *because* the pauper has a worse chance. It is no accident that a highly contagious virus should throw all of these questions wide open; it has destroyed our containment fields and has demonstrated their frailty and inadequacy.

The risk of revelatory crises is that they can also conceal the very contradictions and injustices they reveal, by attributing them to the crisis itself – thereby reproducing or exacerbating those underlying problems (Solway 1994). Our immediate response to a pandemic – to reinforce the seemingly natural boundaries that separate us, whether as bodies, households, or nations, through different forms and practices of quarantine – has critical, unquestionably necessary public health advantages. It keeps people healthy and alive. But I suggest that quarantine, while a highly effective public health measure, casts an ideological shadow. In attempting to make meaning from illness and death, and even from the experience of quarantine itself, people caught in this interpretive shadow can conclude that it is the transgressive, 'unnatural' relationships through which a virus moves that are sick, and that it is those relationships that must be severed to stop the spread of disease. And, of course, the relationships that some may already find transgressive are those that are made suddenly threatening in this ideological revisionism: those that cross national borders or socially constructed distinctions of race and ethnicity, age or class, or those that do not conform to normative expectations of cisgendered heterosexuality, for example.

In the long term, a 'quarantine ideology' may conceal, naturalise, and reproduce the inconvenient truths and injustices that the pandemic crisis has revealed, but it will not protect us. HIV and AIDS were highly susceptible to this sort of quarantine ideology. Even now, in the popular imagination of the global North, HIV and AIDS remain afflictions of the marginalised: of gay men, drug users, sex workers, migrants, and African-Americans – or Africans. And nearly 40 years after AIDS first appeared, there are still 1.7 million new infections a year globally, statistics likely to worsen in the shadow of COVID-19 (UNAIDS 2019; 2020). Quarantines can contain and even halt pandemics; quarantine ideologies perpetuate them.

What I hope this book has shown, in part, is that the intimacies and relationships through which a contagious virus moves are not the problem; if anything, they are the signs of our humanity and the

expansive success of our sociality. They indicate a mutuality that, when we recognise it, triggers a renewed sense of our moral responsibilities to one another and opens up a space for us to reflect on and engage them together – in ways that strengthen our selves, relationships, and societies.

The prefix *epi-* means upon, over, among, or in addition to. An epilogue casts back over a text to add a final word; an epidemic is upon and among the people. The latter in particular describes something permeating, enveloping; something that draws in and covers everyone by saturating the spaces between them. Understanding the ways in which we are similar or different – the classic preoccupation of anthropology – is of somewhat limited use in an epidemic. An epidemic requires us to see the ways in which we are *connected*. And it demonstrates to us how expansive and wide-ranging our connections are, transgressing and collapsing the boundaries and categories around which we have organised our sociality – and proving beyond a shadow of a doubt that those boundaries and categories create inequalities that kill people. The ties that connect us are not pathological; the insuperable inequalities that characterise them are. And until we find ways to redress those inequalities, COVID-19 is unlikely to be the last pandemic we have to learn to live, and die, with.

Glossary of Setswana Terms

Note on Pronunciation

Setswana is pronounced much as it is written, with a few key exceptions (Matumo 1993):

> 'e' may be pronounced either as *ey* in the English *they*, e.g. *malome*; or as *e* in *then*, e.g. *akere*
>
> 'g' is pronounced like *ch* in *loch*, e.g. *gae*
>
> 'i' is pronounced *ee* as in *deep*, e.g. *masimo*
>
> 'kg' is pronounced as a guttural *k*, e.g. *kgotla*; *dikgang* is therefore *di-KHang*
>
> 'ng' is pronounced like *ng* in *sing*, e.g. *ngaka*
>
> 'o' is pronounced like *oa* in *boat*, e.g. *motse*
>
> 'th' is pronounced as an aspirated *t* as in *take*, e.g. *motho*

Glossary

(go) aga	to build
akere	right?; isn't it?
Ao!	expression of surprise (interjection)
bagolo	elders
balwapeng	family (lit. people of the courtyard)
bana ba bommaboipelego	children of the social worker (often used for orphans)
bana ba motho	siblings (lit. children of a person)
banyana	girls
batsadi	see *motsadi*
Batswana	Tswana people
bogadi	bridewealth (see also *lobola*)
botho	personhood; connotes dignity, respectfulness, and humane behaviour
dikgang	see *kgang*

279

ee	yes
gae	home or home village
gareitse (gakeitse)	we don't know (I don't know)
hei! / *haish*! / *heela*!	hey!; expressions of surprise, insistence, or fatigue (interjections)
ija! / *ijo*!	expressions of surprise, annoyance, or sympathy (interjections)
isong	fireplace, hearth, or outdoor kitchen
(go) itirela	to make or do for oneself; to make oneself as a social person
kagisanyo	harmony
kagiso	peace
kana	actually, as it happens (interjection)
kgang (pl. *dikgang*)	issue or problem; topic of discussion, argument, or earnest debate; a disputed question or contention; also news
kgaoganya	to share out, separate, or resolve
kgokgontsho ya bana	child abuse
kgosi	chief
kgosikgolo	paramount chief
kgotla	customary court or tribal administration
ko gae	at home (referring to one's natal home or home village)
ko lwapeng	in the courtyard or at home (i.e. the yard one stays in)
kwa ga …	at the place of
lefufa	jealousy
lelwapa (pl. *malwapa*)	courtyard; house; family
lobola	bridewealth (see also *bogadi*)
lorato	love
malome (pl. *bomalome*)	uncle (specifically, mother's brother)
malwapa	see *lelwapa*
masimo	farmlands
medumo (sing. *modumo*)	noise; disturbances
mmago/*mmagwe*	mother of
mma malome	uncle's wife; female uncle
monna	man or husband
monna wa me	my man or my husband
mophato (pl. *mephato*)	age regiment
morafe (pl. *merafe*)	tribal polity; nation

moraka	cattle post
mosadi (pl. *basadi*)	woman
motsadi (pl. *batsadi*)	parent
motse	village
motsetse	confinement
motshelo (pl. *metshelo*)	savings group
Motswana	Tswana person (singular)
mpona!	look at me!
mxm!	expression of annoyance, frustration, or derision (interjection)
ngaka	traditional doctor
ngwana	child
nkuku	grandmother
nna	me or I
nnyaa	no
puo	conversation or discussion (of difficult matters); a case to be tried
rrago/rragwe	father of
seabe	a portion given; a share
segotlo	backyard
seswaa	stewed and shredded meat, common at weddings and funerals
Setswana	the language and culture of the Tswana
sjambok	a rubberised whip (Afrikaans)
sotlega	scorn
tirisanyo mmogo	cooperation; working together
tlakwano	come here
tlhokomelo	care
(go) tsamaya	to go
wena	you
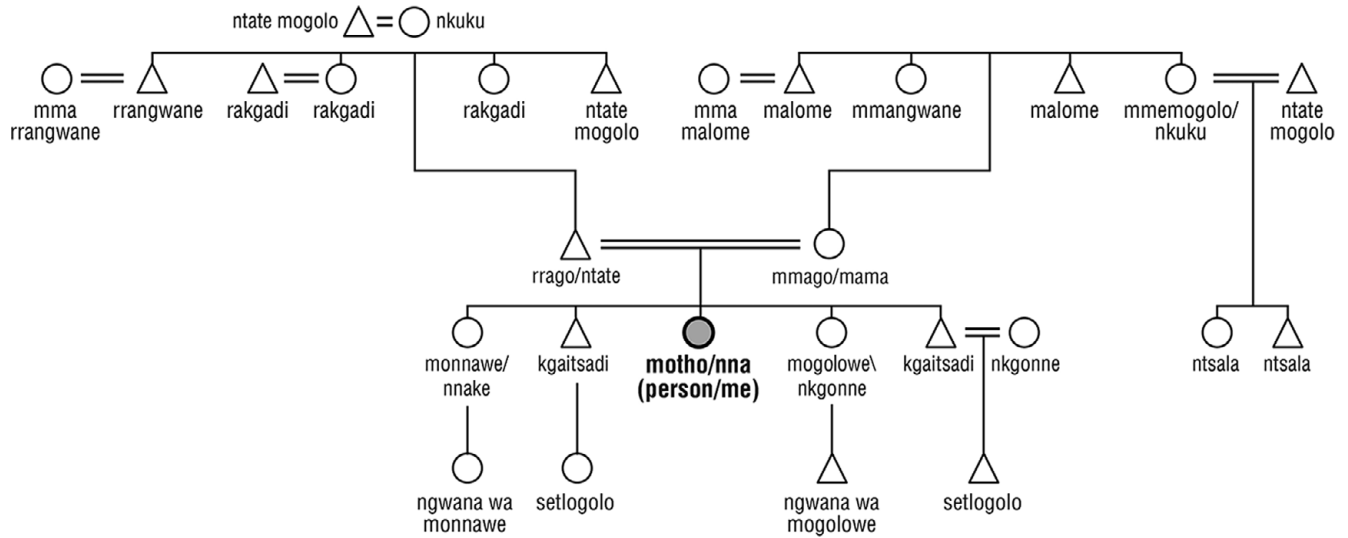
Figure 12 Tswana kin terms.

Kin Terms

Kin terms in Setswana are complex, fluid, and sometimes interchangeable, and they do not translate readily into English. They distinguish on the basis of relative age and relative sex, and there are different terms used to identify relationships in the third (his/her), second (your), and first (my) person. Here, I have distinguished them by generation for ease of reference, although roles and terms frequently move between and across generations (Figure 12).

Bibliography

Alber, E. 2003. 'Denying biological parenthood: fosterage in northern Benin', *Ethnos* 68 (4): 487–506.

2004. 'Grandparents as foster parents: transformations in foster relations between grandparents and grandchildren in northern Benin', *Africa* 74 (1): 28–46.

2013. 'The transfer of belonging: theories on child fostering in West Africa reviewed' in E. Alber, J. Martin, and C. Notermans (eds), *Child Fostering in West Africa: new perspectives on theory and practices*. Leiden: Brill.

2018. *Transfers of Belonging: child fostering in West Africa in the twentieth century*. Leiden: Brill.

Alber, E., C. Coe, and T. Thelen (eds). 2013a. *The Anthropology of Sibling Relations: shared parentage, experience and exchange*. New York NY: Palgrave Macmillan.

Alber, E., J. Martin, and C. Notermans (eds). 2013b. *Child Fostering in West Africa: new perspectives on theory and practices*. Leiden: Brill.

Alber, E., S. van der Geest, and S. R. Whyte (eds). 2008. *Generations in Africa: connections and conflicts*. Berlin: Lit Verlag.

Alverson, H. 1978. *Mind in the Heart of Darkness: value and self-identity among the Tswana of Southern Africa*. London: Yale University Press.

Appadurai, A. 1986. *The Social Life of Things: commodities in cultural perspective*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Archambault, C. 2010. 'Fixing families of mobile children: recreating kinship and belonging among Maasai adoptees in Kenya', *Childhood* 17 (2): 229–42.

Archambault, C. and J. de Laat. 2010. 'Social mobility in children's mobility? An investigation into child circulation among the Maasai of Kenya' in M. O. Ensor and E. M. Gozdziak (eds), *Children and Migration: at the crossroads of resiliency and vulnerability*. Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan.

Biehl, J. 2004. 'The activist state: global pharmaceuticals, AIDS, and citizenship in Brazil', *Social Text* 80/22 (3): 105–32.

2007. *Will to Live: AIDS therapies and the politics of survival*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Bierschenk, T. and J.-P. Olivier de Sardan. 2014. *States at Work: dynamics of African bureaucracies*. Leiden: Brill.

Bledsoe, C. 1990. '"No success without struggle": social mobility and hardship for foster children in Sierra Leone', *Man* 25 (1): 70–88.

Bloch, M. 1992. *Prey Into Hunter: the politics of religious experience*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

284

1995. 'The resurrection of the house among the Zafimaniry of Madagascar' in J. Carsten and S. Hugh-Jones (eds), *About the House*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Block, E. 2014. 'Flexible kinship: caring for AIDS orphans in rural Lesotho', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 20: 711–27.

Bochow, A. 2017. 'Ethics of life in the context of death: the emergence of ethical fields in HIV prevention', *Africa* 87 (3): 554–71.

Bodenhorn, B. 2000. '"He used to be my relative": exploring the bases of relatedness among Iñupiat of northern Alaska' in J. Carsten (ed.), *Cultures of Relatedness: new approaches to the study of kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2013. 'On the road again: movement, marriage, mestizaje and the race of kinship' in S. McKinnon and F. Cannell (eds), *Vital Relations: modernity and the persistent life of kinship*. Santa Fe NM: SAR Press.

Borneman, J. 2001. 'Caring and being cared for: displacing marriage, kinship, gender and sexuality' in J. D. Faubion (ed.), *The Ethics of Kinship: ethnographic enquiries*. Lanham MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

Bornstein, E. 2001. 'Child sponsorship, evangelism, and belonging in the work of World Vision Zimbabwe', *American Ethnologist* 28 (3): 595–622.

2005. *The Spirit of Development: Protestant NGOs, morality, and economics in Zimbabwe*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.

Brada, B. 2013. 'How to do things to children with language: language, ritual, and apocalypse in paediatric HIV treatment in Botswana', *American Ethnologist* 40 (3): 437–51.

2019. 'Between discipline and empowerment: temporal ambivalence at a sleep-away camp for HIV-positive children in Botswana', *Anthropological Quarterly* 92 (1): 173–202.

Bray, R. 2003. *Predictions of the Social Consequences of Orphanhood in South Africa*. Working Paper 29. Cape Town: Centre for Social Science Research, University of Cape Town.

Brightman, R. A. 2013. 'Hierarchy and conflict in mutual being', *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3 (2): 259–70.

Brown, H. 2013. '"Home-based care is not a new thing": legacies of domestic governmentality in western Kenya' in R. J. Prince and R. Marsland (eds), *Making and Unmaking Public Health in Africa: ethnographic and historic perspectives*. Athens OH: Ohio University Press.

Burke, C. 2000. 'They cut Segametsi into parts: ritual murder, youth, and the politics of knowledge in Botswana', *Anthropological Quarterly* 73 (4): 204–14.

Butt, L. 2002. 'The suffering stranger: medical anthropology and international morality', *Medical Anthropology* 21: 1–24.

Campbell, A. C. 1972. '100 Tswana proverbs', *Botswana Notes and Records* 4: 121–32.

Carrithers, M., S. Collins, and S. Lukes (eds). 1985. *The Category of the Person: anthropology, philosophy, history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Carsten, J. 1989. 'Cooking money: gender and the symbolic transformation of means of exchange in a Malay fishing community' in M. Bloch and J. Parry (eds), *Money and the Morality of Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1991. 'Children in between: fostering and the process of kinship on Pulau Langkawi, Malaysia', *Man* 26 (3): 425–43.

1995. 'The substance of kinship and the heat of the hearth: feeding, personhood and relatedness among Malays of Pulau Langkawi', *American Ethnologist* 22 (2): 223–41.

2000. *Cultures of Relatedness: new approaches to the study of kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2004. *After Kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

2013. 'Ghosts, commensality, and scuba diving: tracing kinship and sociality in clinical pathology labs and blood banks in Penang' in S. McKinnon and F. Cannell (eds), *Vital Relations: modernity and the persistent life of kinship*. Santa Fe NM: SAR Press.

Carsten, J. and S. Hugh-Jones. 1995. *About the House: Levi-Strauss and beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cavric, B., A. C. Mosha, M. Keiner, and D. Salmeron. 2003. 'DIMSUD synthesis report: towards sustainable urban development in Gaborone' [online], www.forschungsnetzwerk.at/downloadpub/Gaborone_SynthReport_2003.pdf, accessed 25 April 2015.

Cavric, B., A. C. Mosha, and M. Keiner. 2004. 'The case study cities: Santiago de Chile, Johannesburg, Gaborone' in M. Keiner, C. Zegras, W. A. Schmid, and D. Salmerón (eds), *From Understanding to Action: sustainable urban development in medium-sized cities in Africa and Latin America*. New York NY: Springer.

CEIC. 2019. 'Botswana unemployment rate 1991–2019', Census and Economic Information Center (CEIC) [online], www.ceicdata.com/en/indicator/botswana/unemployment-rate#:~:text=Botswana%27s%20Unemployment%20Rate%20increased%20to%2018.19%20%25%20in,2019%2C%20with%20an%20average%20rate%20of%2018.19%20%25, accessed 9 July 2020.

Clifford, J. 1986. 'Introduction: partial truths' in J. Clifford and G. E. Marcus (eds), *Writing Culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

Clifford, J. and G. E. Marcus (eds). 1986. *Writing Culture: the poetics and politics of ethnography*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

Coe, C. 2013. 'Disputes over transfers of belonging in the Gold Coast in the 1870s: fosterage or debt pawning?' in E. Alber, J. Martin, and C. Notermans (eds), *Child Fostering in West Africa: new perspectives on theory and practices*. Leiden: Brill.

Cohen, A. 1969. *Custom and Politics in Urban Africa*. London: Routledge.

Colclough, C. and S. McCarthy. 1980. *The Political Economy of Botswana: a study of growth and distribution*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Comaroff, J. 1985. *Body of Power, Spirit of Resistance: the culture and history of a South African people*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

2007. 'Beyond bare life: AIDS, (bio)politics, and the neoliberal order', *Public Culture* 19 (1): 197–219.

Comaroff, J. and J. L. Comaroff. 1987. 'The madman and the migrant: work and labour in the historical consciousness of a South African people', *American Ethnologist* 14 (2): 191–209.

1989. 'The colonization of consciousness in South Africa', *Economy and Society* 18 (3): 267–96.

Comaroff, J. L. (ed.). 1980. *The Meaning of Marriage Payments*. London: Academic Press.

1981. 'Bridewealth and the control of ambiguity in a Tswana chiefdom' in J. L. Comaroff and E. J. Krige (eds), *Essays on African Marriage in Southern Africa*. Cape Town: Juta Press.

Comaroff, J. L. and J. Comaroff. 1991. *Of Revelation and Revolution*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

1997. 'Postcolonial politics and discourses of democracy in Southern Africa: an anthropological reflection on African political modernities', *Journal of Anthropological Research* 53 (2): 123–46.

2001. 'On personhood: an anthropological perspective from Africa', *Social Identities* 7 (2): 269–83.

2012. 'Theory from the South; or, how Euro-America is evolving toward Africa', *Anthropological Forum: A Journal of Social Anthropology and Comparative Sociology* 22 (2): 113–31.

Comaroff, J. L. and S. Roberts. 1977. 'Marriage and extra-marriage sexuality: the dialectics of legal change among the Kgatla', *Journal of African Law* 21 (1): 97–123.

1981. *Rules and Processes: the cultural logics of dispute in an African context*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

Course, M. 2013. 'The apple is grown, the grape is given: two modes of Mapuche exchange', *Journal of Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology* 18 (1): 1–13.

Dahl, B. 2009a. 'Left behind? Orphaned children, humanitarian aid, and the politics of kinship, culture, and caregiving during Botswana's AIDS crisis'. PhD thesis, University of Chicago.

2009b. 'The "failures of culture": Christianity, kinship, and moral discourses about orphans during Botswana's AIDS crisis', *Africa Today* 56 (1): 23–43.

2014. 'Too fat to be an orphan: the moral semiotics of food aid in Botswana', *Cultural Anthropology* 29 (4): 626–47.

Das, V. 2015. 'Ordinary ethics' in D. Fassin (ed.), *A Companion to Moral Anthropology*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Dilger, H. 2006. 'The power of AIDS: kinship, mobility and the valuing of social and ritual relationships in Tanzania', *African Journal of AIDS Research* 5 (2): 109–21.

2008. '"We are all going to die": kinship, belonging, and the morality of HIV/AIDS-related illnesses and deaths in rural Tanzania', *Anthropological Quarterly* 81 (1): 207–32.

2009. 'Doing better? Religion, the virtue-ethics of development, and the fragmentation of health politics in Tanzania', *Africa Today* 56 (1): 89–110.

2010. '"My relatives are running away from me!": Kinship and care in the wake of structural adjustment, privatisation, and HIV/AIDS in Tanzania' in H. Dilger and U. Luig (eds), *Morality, Hope and Grief: anthropologies of AIDS in Africa*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Dilger, H. and U. Luig (eds). 2010. *Morality, Hope and Grief: anthropologies of AIDS in Africa*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Dilger, H., A. Kane, and S. A. Langwick (eds). 2012. *Medicine, Mobility and Power in Global Africa: transnational health and healing*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

Donzelot, J. 1979. *The Policing of Families*. New York NY: Pantheon.

Douglas, M. 2002 [1966]. *Purity and Danger: an analysis of concepts of pollution and taboo*. New York NY: Routledge.

Dow, U. 2002. *The Screaming of the Innocent*. Melbourne: Spinifex Press.

2004. *Juggling Truths*. Cape Town: Double Storey Books.

Dow, U. and M. Essex. 2010. *Saturday Is for Funerals*. Cambridge MA: Harvard University Press.

Dumont, L. 1985. 'A modified view of our origin: the Christian beginning of modern individualism' in M. Carrithers, S. Collins, and S. Lukes (eds), *The Category of the Person: anthropology, philosophy, history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

1986. *Essays on Individualism: modern ideology in anthropological perspective*. Chicago: University Press.

Durham, D. 1995. 'Soliciting gifts and negotiating agency: the spirit of asking in Botswana', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 1 (1): 111–28.

2000. 'Youth and the social imagination in Africa: introduction to Parts 1 and 2', *Anthropological Quarterly* 73 (3): 113–20.

2002a. 'Love and jealousy in the space of death', *Ethnos* 67 (2): 155–79.

2002b. 'Uncertain citizens: Herero and the new intercalary subject in post-colonial Botswana' in R. Werbner (ed.), *Postcolonial Subjectivities in Africa*. London: Zed Books.

2004. 'Disappearing youth: youth as a social shifter in Botswana', *American Ethnologist* 31 (4): 589–605.

2005. 'Did you bathe this morning? Baths and morality in Botswana' in A. Masquelier (ed.), *Dirt, Undress, and Difference: critical perspectives on the body's surface*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

2007. 'Empowering youth: making youth citizens in Botswana' in J. Cole and D. Durham (eds), *Generations and Globalization: youth, age and family in the new world economy*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

2020. 'Morality in the middle: choosing cars or houses in Botswana', *Africa* 90 (3): 489–508.

Durham, D. and F. Klaits. 2002. 'Funerals and the public space of sentiment in Botswana', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28 (4): 773–91.

Edwards, J. and M. Strathern. 2000. 'Including our own' in J. Carsten (ed.), *Cultures of Relatedness: new approaches to the study of kinship*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Evans-Pritchard, E. E. and M. Fortes. 1940. *African Political Systems*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Farmer, P. 1992. *AIDS and Accusation: Haiti and the geography of blame*. London: University of California Press.

1999. *Infections and Inequalities: the modern plagues*. London: University of California Press.

Fassin, D. 2007a. *When Bodies Remember: experiences and politics of AIDS in South Africa*. London: University of California Press.

2007b. 'Humanitarianism as a politics of life', *Public Culture* 19 (3): 499–520.

2007c. 'Humanitarianism: a non-governmental government' in M. Feher, G. Krikorian, and Y. McKee (eds), *Nongovernmental Politics*. New York NY: Zone Books.

2008. 'Beyond good and evil: questioning the anthropological discomfort with morals', *Anthropological Theory* 8 (4): 333–44.

2009. 'Another politics of life is possible', *Theory Culture Society* 26: 44–60.

2010. 'Inequality of lives, hierarchies of humanity: moral commitments and ethical dilemmas of humanitarianism' in I. Feldman and M. Ticktin (eds), *In the Name of Humanity: the government of threat and care*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

2012. *Humanitarian Reason: a moral history of the present*. Translated by R. Gomme. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

2013. 'Children as victims: the moral economy of childhood in the times of AIDS' in J. Biehl and A. Petryna (eds), *When People Come First: critical studies in global health*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Feldman, I. and M. Ticktin (eds). 2010. *In the Name of Humanity: the government of threat and care*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Ferguson, J. 1994. *The Anti-Politics Machine: 'development', depoliticization, and bureaucratic power in Lesotho*. Minneapolis MN: University of Minnesota Press.

1997. 'Anthropology and its evil twin: "development" in the constitution of a discipline' in F. Cooper and R. M. Packard (eds), *International Development and the Social Sciences*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

2006. *Global Shadows: Africa in the neoliberal world order*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

2013. 'Declarations of dependence: labour, personhood, and welfare in Southern Africa', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 19: 223–42.

Ferguson, J. and A. Gupta. 2002. 'Spatializing states: toward an ethnography of neoliberal governmentality', *American Ethnologist* 29 (4): 981–1002.

Fonseca, C. 1986. 'Orphanages, foundlings, and foster mothers: the system of child circulation in a Brazilian squatter settlement', *Anthropological Quarterly* 59: 15–27.

Fortes, M. 1949. *The Web of Kinship Among the Tallensi: the second part of an analysis of the social structure of a trans-Volta tribe*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

1969. *Kinship and the Social Order: the legacy of Lewis Henry Morgan*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

1973. 'On the concept of the person among the Tallensi' in G. Dieterlen (ed.), *La Notion de Personne en Afrique Noire*. Paris: Éditions du Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique.

Foucault, M. 1997. 'Technologies of the self' in P. Rabinow (ed.), *Ethics: subjectivity and truth*. New York NY: New Press.

Geertz, C. 1973. *The Interpretation of Cultures: selected essays*. New York NY: Basic Books.

Geertz, H. and C. Geertz. 1964. 'Teknonymy in Bali: parenthood, age-grading and genealogical amnesia', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 94 (2): 94–108.

Geissler, P. W. and R. J. Prince. 2004. 'Shared lives: practices of amity between grandmothers and grandchildren in western Kenya', *Africa* 74 (1): 95–120.

2013. *The Land Is Dying: contingency, creativity and conflict in western Kenya*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Geschiere, P. 2003. 'Witchcraft as the dark side of kinship: dilemmas of social security in new contexts', *Etnofoor* 16 (1): 43–61.

2013. *Witchcraft, Intimacy and Trust: Africa in comparison*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

Gluckman, M. 1940. 'Analysis of a social situation in modern Zululand', *Bantu Studies* 14 (1): 1–30.

1982 [1956]. *Custom and Conflict in Africa*. Oxford: Basil Blackwell.

Goody, E. 2013 [1982]. 'A framework for the analysis of parent roles' in E. Alber, J. Martin, and C. Notermans (eds), *Child Fostering in West Africa: new perspectives on theory and practices*. Leiden: Brill.

Goody, J. 1962. *The Developmental Cycle in Domestic Groups*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gordimer, N. (ed.). 2004. *Telling Tales*. London: Bloomsbury.

Gough, K. 1968. 'New proposals for anthropologists', *Current Anthropology* 9 (5): 403–35.

Gow, P. 1989. 'The perverse child: desire in a native Amazonian subsistence economy', *Man* 24 (4): 567–82.

Graeber, D. 2012. *Debt: the first 5000 years*. London: Penguin Books.

Grant, S. 1984. 'The revival of Bogwera in Kgatleng: Tswana culture or rampant tribalism? A description of the 1982 Bogwera', *Botswana Notes and Records* 16: 7–17.

Griffiths, A. 1997. *In the Shadow of Marriage: gender and justice in an African community*. London: University of Chicago Press.

2013. 'Re-envisioning the local: spatiality, land and law in Botswana', *International Journal of Law in Context* 9 (2): 213–38.

Gudeman, S. 2009. 'Necessity or contingency: mutuality and market' in K. Hart and C. M. Hann (eds), *Market and Society: the great transformation today*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Gulbrandsen, Ø. 1986. 'To marry – or not to marry: marital strategies and sexual relations in a Tswana society', *Ethnos* 51 (1): 7–28.

1995. '"The king is king by the grace of the people": control and exercise of power in subject-ruler relations', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 37 (3): 415–55.

1996. 'Living their lives in courts: the counter-hegemonic force of the Tswana *Kgotla*' in O. Harris (ed.), *Inside and Outside the Law*. London: Routledge.

2012. *The State and the Social: state formation in Botswana and its precolonial and colonial genealogies*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Guyer, J. I. 1993. 'Wealth in people and self-realization in Equatorial Africa', *Man* 28 (2): 243–65.

Heidegger, M. 1971 [1950]. 'The thing' in *Poetry Language Thought*. Translated by A. Hofstadter. New York NY: Harper and Row.

Henderson, P. C. 2006. 'South African AIDS orphans: examining assumptions around vulnerability from the perspective of rural children and youth', *Childhood* 13 (3): 303–27.

2011. *AIDS, Intimacy and Care in Rural Kwa-Zulu Natal: a kinship of bones*. Amsterdam: Amsterdam University Press.

Hirsch, J., H. Wardlow, D. J. Smith, H. M. Phinney, S. Parikh, and C. A. Nathanson. 2009. *The Secret: love, marriage, and HIV*. Nashville TN: Vanderbilt University Press.

Howell, S. 2007. *The Kinning of Foreigners: transnational adoption in a global perspective*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Hunter, M. 2007. 'The changing political economy of sex in South Africa: the significance of unemployment and inequalities to the scale of the AIDS pandemic', *Social Science and Medicine* 64 (3): 689–700.

2010. *Love in the Time of AIDS: inequality, gender and rights in South Africa*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

Ingstad, B. 2004. 'The value of grandchildren: changing relations between generations in Botswana', *Africa* 74 (1): 62–75.

Ingstad, B., F. Bruun, E. Sandberg, and S. Tlou. 1992. 'Care for the elderly, care by the elderly: the role of elderly women in a changing Tswana society', *Journal of Cross-Cultural Gerontology* 7: 379–98.

James, D. 1996. '"I dress in this fashion": transformations in Sotho dress and women's lives in a Sekhukhuneland village, South Africa' in H. Hendrickson (ed.), *Clothing and Difference: embodied identities in colonial and post-colonial Africa*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

1999. '*Bagagešu*/those of my home: migrancy, gender, and ethnicity in the Northern Province, South Africa', *American Ethnologist* 26 (1): 69–89.

2012. 'Money-go-round: personal economies of wealth, aspiration, and indebtedness', *Africa* 82 (1): 20–40.

2015. '"Women use their strength in the house": savings clubs in a Mpumalanga village', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 41 (5): 1035–52.

2017. 'Not marrying in South Africa: consumption, aspiration, and the new middle class', *Anthropology Southern Africa* 40 (1): 1–14.

Keane, W. 2014. 'Freedom, reflexivity, and the sheer everydayness of ethics', *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 4 (1): 443–57.

Klaits, F. 1998. 'Making a good death: AIDS and social belonging in an independent church in Gaborone', *Botswana Notes and Records* 30: 101–19.

2005. 'The widow in blue: blood and the morality of remembering in Botswana's time of AIDS', *Africa* 75 (1): 46–62.

2010. *Death in a Church of Life: moral passion during Botswana's time of AIDS*. London: University of California Press.

2011. 'Asking as giving: apostolic prayers and the aesthetics of well-being in Botswana', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 41: 206–26.

2016. 'Grasping, trust, and truth-on-balance', *Hau: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 6 (3): 413–18.

Krawitz, A. 2013. 'Global diamond production −10% to $35B in 2012', Rapaport, 9 July [online], www.diamonds.net/News/NewsItem.aspx?ArticleID=43736, accessed 25 April 2015.

Krige, D. 2015. '"Letting money work for us": self-organisation and financialization from below in an all-male savings club in Soweto' in K. Hart and J. Sharp (eds), *People, Money and Power in the Economic Crisis: perspectives from the global South*. New York NY: Berghahn Books.

Kuper, A. 1975. 'The social structure of the Sotho-speaking peoples of Southern Africa: Part I and Part II', *Africa* 45 (1): 67–81, 139–49.

  1980. 'Symbolic dimensions of the southern Bantu homestead', *Africa* 50 (1): 8–23.

  1982. *Wives for Cattle: bridewealth and marriage in Southern Africa*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

  1987. *South Africa and the Anthropologist*. London: Routledge and Kegan Paul.

  2016. 'Traditions of kinship, marriage, and bridewealth in Southern Africa', *Anthropology of Southern Africa* 39 (4): 267–80.

Kuper, H. and S. Kaplan. 1944. 'Voluntary associations in an urban township', *African Studies* 3 (4): 178–86.

La Fontaine, J. S. 1985. *Initiation: ritual drama and secret knowledge across the world*. Manchester: Manchester University Press.

LaGuardia, A. 2000. 'African president warns of extinction from AIDS', *The Telegraph*, 10 July, www.telegraph.co.uk/news/worldnews/africaandindianocean/botswana/1347791/African-president-warns-of-extinction-from-Aids.html, accessed 8 December 2021.

Laidlaw, J. 2014. *The Subject of Virtue: an anthropology of ethics and freedom*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Lallemand, S. 2013 [1988]. 'Adoption, fosterage, and alliance' in E. Alber, J. Martin, and C. Notermans (eds), *Child Fostering in West Africa: new perspectives on theory and practices*. Leiden and Boston MA: Brill.

Lambek, M. 2011. 'Kinship as gift and theft: acts of succession in Mayotte and ~~Ancient~~ Israel', *American Ethnologist* 38 (1): 2–16.

  2013. 'Kinship, modernity, and the immodern' in S. McKinnon and F. Cannell (eds), *Vital Relations: modernity and the persistent life of kinship*. Santa Fe NM: SAR Press.

Lambek, M. and J. Solway. 2001. 'Just anger: scenarios of indignation in Botswana and Madagascar', *Ethnos* 66 (1): 49–72.

Lazar, S. 2018. 'A "kinship anthropology of politics"? Interest, the collective self, and kinship in Argentine unions', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 24: 256–74.

Leach, E. R. 1967. *A Runaway World?: The Reith Lectures 1967*. London: BBC Books.

Leinaweaver, J. 2007a. 'On moving children: the social implications of Andean child circulation', *American Ethnologist* 34 (1): 163–80.

  2007b. 'Choosing to move: child agency on Peru's margins', *Childhood* 14 (3): 375–92.

Leinaweaver, J. and C. Fonseca. 2007. 'The state and children's fate: reproduction in traumatic times', *Childhood* 14 (3): 291–9.

LeMarcis, F. 2004. 'The suffering body of the city (trans. J. Inggs)', *Public Culture* 16 (3): 453–477.

2012. 'Struggling with AIDS in South Africa: the space of the everyday as a field of recognition', *Medical Anthropology Quarterly* 26 (4): 486–502.

Livingston, J. 2003a. 'Reconfiguring old age: elderly women and concerns over care in southeastern Botswana', *Medical Anthropology* 22: 205–31.

2003b. 'Pregnant children and half-dead adults: modern living and the quickening life-cycle in Botswana', *Bulletin of the History of Medicine* 77 (1): 133–62.

2005. *Debility and the Moral Imagination in Botswana*. Indianapolis IN: Indiana University Press.

2007a. 'Productive misunderstandings and the dynamism of plural medicine in mid-century Bechuanaland', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33 (4): 801–10.

2007b. 'Maintaining local dependencies: elderly women and global rehabilitation agendas in southeastern Botswana' in J. Cole and D. Durham (eds), *Generations and Globalization: youth, age and family in the new world economy*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

2008. 'Disgust, bodily aesthetics and the ethic of being human in Botswana', *Africa* 78 (2): 288–307.

2012. *Improvising Medicine: an African oncology ward in an emerging cancer epidemic*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

2019. *Self-Devouring Growth: a planetary parable as told from Southern Africa*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Long, C. 2009. *Contradicting Maternity: HIV-positive motherhood in South Africa*. Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

Low, A. 1995. *A Bibliographical Survey of Rotating Savings and Credit Associations*. Oxford: Oxfam UK.

Lye, W. F. and C. Murray. 1980. *Transformations on the Highveld: The Tswana and Southern Sotho*. Totowa NJ: Barnes and Noble.

Madhavan, S. 2004. 'Fosterage patterns in the age of AIDS: continuity and change', *Social Science and Medicine* 58: 1443–54.

Makgeng, M. R. T. 2004. *Tsedimosetso ya Setswana*. Gaborone: Botsalano Press.

Malkki, L. 1996. 'Speechless emissaries: refugees, humanitarianism, and dehistoricisation', *Cultural Anthropology* 11 (3): 377–404.

Masiela Trust Fund. 2015. 'Financial aid' [online], www.masielatrustfund.org.bw/financial-aid, accessed 25 April 2015.

Matumo, Z. I. 1993. *Setswana–English–Setswana Dictionary*. Gaborone: Macmillan Botswana.

Mauss, M. 1985. 'A category of the human mind: the notion of person; the notion of self' in M. Carrithers, S. Collins, and S. Lukes (eds), *The Category of the Person: anthropology, philosophy, history*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Mayblin, M. 2010. 'Learning courage: child labour as moral practice in northeast Brazil', *Ethnos* 75 (1): 23–48.

McKinnon, S. and F. Cannell. 2013. 'The difference kinship makes' in S. McKinnon and F. Cannell (eds), *Vital Relations: modernity and the persistent life of kinship*. Santa Fe NM: SAR Press.

McNeill, F. G. 2011. *AIDS, Politics and Music in South Africa*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Meier, B. 2013. 'Relating affiliation and descent: brother's daughters as co-wives among the Bulsa in northern Ghana' in E. Alber, J. Martin, and C. Notermans (eds), *Child Fostering in West Africa: new perspectives on theory and practices*. Leiden: Brill.

Meintjes, H. and S. Giese. 2006. 'Spinning the epidemic: the making of mythologies of orphanhood in the context of AIDS', *Childhood* 13 (3): 407–30.

Midweek Sun. 2012. 'The duty of the regiments is not to beat up people, but to help in the village', *Midweek Sun* [online], http://themidweeksun.co.bw/news/3652-the-duty-of-the-regiments-is-not-to-beat-up-people-but-to-help-in-the-village, accessed 25 April 2015.

Miers, S. and I. Kopytoff (eds). 1977. *Slavery in Africa: historical and anthropological perspectives*. Madison WI: University of Wisconsin Press.

Miller, C., S. Gruskin, S. V. Subramanian, D. Rajaraman, and S. J. Heymann. 2006. 'Orphan care in Botswana's working households: growing responsibilities in the absence of adequate support', *American Journal of Public Health* 96 (8): 1429–35.

Miller, D. 2007. 'What is a relationship? Is kinship negotiated experience?', *Ethnos* 72 (4): 535–54.

Moffat, R. 1842. *Missionary Labours and Scenes in Southern Africa*. London: J. Snow.

Mogalakwe, M. 2008. 'Botswana: exploding the myth of exceptionality', *Africa Insight* 38 (1): 105–17.

Mogalakwe, M. and F. Nyamnjoh. 2017. 'Botswana at 50: democratic deficit, elite corruption and poverty in the midst of plenty', *Journal of Contemporary African Studies* 35 (1): 1–14.

Morton, C. 2007. 'Remembering the house: memory and materiality in northern Botswana', *Journal of Material Culture* 12 (2): 157–79.

Mosse, D. 2004a. *Cultivating Development: an ethnography of aid policy and practice*. London and Ann Arbor MI: Pluto Press.

   2004b. 'Is good policy unimplementable? Reflections on the ethnography of aid policy and practice', *Development and Change* 35 (4): 639–71.

   2006. 'Anti-social anthropology? Objectivity, objection, and the ethnography of public policy and professional communities', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 12: 935–56.

Mosse, D. and D. Lewis (eds). 2005. *The Aid Effect: giving and governing in international development*. Ann Arbor MI: Pluto Press.

Motzafi-Haller, P. 2002. *Fragmented Worlds, Coherent Lives: the politics of difference in Botswana*. Westport CT: Bergin and Garvey.

MVA. 2018. 'Annual road crash trends (1981–2016)'. Motor Vehicle Association of Botswana (MVA) [online], www.mvafund.bw/index.php/mva-content/cid/40/annual-road-crash-trends-(1981-2016)/, accessed 15 February 2019.

NACA. 2014. 'Botswana 2013 global AIDS response report'. Gaborone: National AIDS Coordinating Agency (NACA) [online], www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/BWA_narrative_report_2014.pdf, accessed 25 April 2015.

Narayan, K. 2012. *Alive in the Writing: crafting ethnography in the company of Chekhov*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

Nguyen, V.-K. 2010. *The Republic of Therapy: triage and sovereignty in West Africa's time of AIDS*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Niehaus, I. 2007. 'Death before dying: understanding AIDS stigma in the South African Lowveld', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 33 (4): 845–60.

2013. 'AIDS, speech and silence in South Africa', *Anthropology Today* 29 (3): 8–12.

Nyati-Ramahobo, L. 2009. 'Minority tribes in Botswana: the politics of recognition'. Briefing. London: Minority Rights Group International (MRG) [online], www.minorityrights.org/7635/briefing-papers/minority-tribes-in-botswana-the-politics-of-recognition.html, accessed 25 April 2015.

Parry, J. 1989. 'On the moral perils of exchange' in M. Bloch and J. Parry (eds), *Money and the Morality of Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Parry, J. and M. Bloch (eds). 1989. *Money and the Morality of Exchange*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Parsons, J. D. 1984. *Botswana Liberal Democracy and the Labour Reserve in Southern Africa*. Boulder CO: Westview Press.

Parsons, N. 2006. 'Unravelling history and cultural heritage in Botswana', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 32 (4): 667–82.

Pauli, J. and F. Dawids. 2017. 'The struggle for marriage: elite and non-elite weddings in rural Namibia', *Anthropology Southern Africa* 40 (1): 15–28.

Pauli, J. and R. van Dijk. 2017. 'Marriage as an end or the end of marriage? Change and continuity in Southern African marriages', *Anthropology Southern Africa* 40 (1): 257–66.

Peletz, M. 2001. 'Ambivalence in kinship since the 1940s' in S. B. Franklin and S. McKinnon (eds), *Relative Values: reconfiguring kinship studies*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Pigg, S. L. 1992. 'Inventing social categories through place: social representations and development in Nepal', *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 34 (3): 491–513.

2005. 'Globalizing the facts of life' in S. L. Pigg and V. Adams (eds), *Sex in Development: science, sexuality and morality in global perspective*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Prince, R. and P. W. Geissler. 2010. *The Land Is Dying: contingency, creativity and conflict in western Kenya*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

Prince, R., P. Denis, and R. van Dijk. 2009. 'Introduction to special issue: engaging Christianities: negotiating HIV/AIDS, health, and social relations in East and Southern Africa', *Africa Today* 56 (1): v–xviii.

Prince, R. J. 2013. 'Situating health and the public in Africa: historical and anthropological perspectives' in R. J. Prince and R. Marsland (eds), *Making and Unmaking Public Health in Africa: ethnographic and historic perspectives*. Athens OH: Ohio University Press.

Prince, R. J. and R. Marsland (eds). 2013. *Making and Unmaking Public Health in Africa: ethnographic and historic perspectives*. Athens OH: Ohio University Press.

Radcliffe-Brown, A. R. 1950. 'Introduction' in D. Forde and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (eds), *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

    1971. *Structure and Function in Primitive Society*. London: Cohen and West.

Redfield, P. 2005. 'Doctors, borders, and life in crisis', *Cultural Anthropology* 20 (3): 328–61.

    2012. 'The unbearable lightness of ex-pats: double binds of humanitarian mobility', *Cultural Anthropology* 27 (2): 358–82.

Redfield, P. and E. Bornstein. 2011. 'An introduction to the anthropology of humanitarianism' in P. Redfield and E. Bornstein (eds), *Forces of Compassion: humanitarianism between ethics and politics*. Santa Fe NM: SAR Press.

Reece, K. M. 2019. '"We are seeing things": recognition, risk, and reproducing kinship in Botswana's time of AIDS', *Africa* 89 (1): 40–60.

    2021a. '*Go fiwa molao*/giving the law: marriage, law and social change in Botswana' in J. Carsten, H.-C. Chiu, S. Magee, K. M. Reece, and E. Papadaki (eds), *Marriage in Past, Present, and Future Tense*. London: UCL Press.

    2021b. 'Telling families, telling AIDS: narratives of crisis in Botswana', *Ethnos* [online] DOI: 10.1080/00141844.2021.1965640.

Richards, A. 1995 [1956]. *Chisungu: a girl's initiation ceremony among the Bemba of Zambia*. Abingdon: Routledge.

Republic of Botswana (RoB). 1951. *Adoption Act*. Gaborone: Government Printer for Republic of Botswana (RoB).

    1981. *Children's Act 1981*. Gaborone: Government Printer for Republic of Botswana (RoB).

    1999. *Short Term Plan of Action on the Care of Orphans, 1999–2003*. Gaborone: Government Press for Ministry of Local Government, Lands and Housing, Social Welfare Division, Republic of Botswana (RoB).

    2005a. *Children in Need of Care Guidelines*. Gaborone: Government Printer for Republic of Botswana (RoB).

    2005b. 'Statement by Honourable Ambrose B. Masalila, Assistant Minister, Ministry of Local Government, Head of Delegation, to the Forty-Third Session of the Commission for Social Development on the 10th Anniversary of the Copenhagen Summit for Social Development' [online], www.un.org/esa/socdev/csd/2005/Statements/Bostwana.pdf, accessed 25 April 2015.

    2009. *Children's Act 2009*. Gaborone: Government Printer for Republic of Botswana (RoB).

    2015. 'Population and housing census', Central Statistics Office, Republic of Botswana (RoB) [online], www.cso.gov.bw/index.php/sector-statistics/population-housing-census, accessed 25 April 2015.

Rosaldo, R. 1989. *Culture and Truth: the remaking of social analysis*. Boston MA: Beacon Press.

Sahlins, M. 1972. *Stone Age Economics*. Chicago IL: Aldine.

    2013. *What Kinship Is – And Is Not*. London: University of Chicago Press.

Schapera, I. 1933. 'Premarital pregnancy and native opinion: a note on social change', *Africa* 6 (1): 59–89.

    1940. *Married Life in an African Tribe*. London: Faber and Faber.

1950. 'Kinship and marriage among the Tswana' in D. Forde and A. R. Radcliffe-Brown (eds), *African Systems of Kinship and Marriage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

1953. 'Southern Africa Part III: the Tswana' in D. Forde (ed.), *Ethnographic Survey of Africa*. London: International African Institute.

1955 [1938]. *A Handbook of Tswana Law and Custom*. 2nd edition. Oxford: James Currey.

1957. 'Marriage of near kin among the Tswana', *Africa* 27: 139–59.

1963. 'Kinship and politics in Tswana history', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 93 (2): 159–73.

1970. *Tribal Innovators: Tswana chiefs and social change, 1795–1940*. London: Athlone Press.

Scherz, C. 2014. *Having People, Having Heart: charity, sustainable development, and problems of dependence in central Uganda*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

Schneider, D. M. 1980. *American Kinship: a cultural account*. 2nd edition. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

1984. *A Critique of the Study of Kinship*. Ann Arbor MI: University of Michigan Press.

Schrauwers, A. 1999. 'Negotiating parentage: the political economy of "kinship" in central Sulawesi, Indonesia', *American Ethnologist* 26 (2): 310–23.

Setlhabi, K. G. 2014a. 'I took an allegiance to secrecy: complexities of conducting ethnographic research at home', *Africa* 84 (2): 314–34.

2014b. 'The politics of culture and the transience culture of Bojale: Bakgatla-baga-Kgafela women's initiation in Botswana', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 40 (3): 459–77.

Shever, E. 2013. '"I am a petroleum product": making kinship work on the Patagonian frontier' in S. McKinnon and F. Cannell (eds), *Vital Relations: modernity and the persistent life of kinship*. Santa Fe NM: SAR Press.

Sillery, A. 1974. *Botswana: a short political history*. London: Methuen.

Simpson, B. 1994. 'Bringing the "unclear" family into focus: divorce and re-marriage in contemporary Britain', *Man* 29 (4): 831–51.

Smith, D. J. 2009. 'Managing men, marriage, and modern love: women's perspectives on intimacy and male infidelity in southeastern Nigeria' in J. Cole and L. M. Thomas (eds), *Love in Africa*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

Solway, J. S. 1990. 'Affines and spouses, friends and lovers: the passing of polygyny in Botswana', *Journal of Anthropological Research* 46 (1): 41–66.

1994. 'Drought as a "revelatory crisis": an exploration of shifting entitlements and hierarchies in the Kalahari, Botswana', *Development and Change* 25: 471–95.

2017a. '"Slow marriage", "fast *bogadi*": change and continuity in marriage in Botswana', *Anthropology Southern Africa* 40 (1): 309–22.

2017b. 'The predicament of adulthood in Botswana' in D. Durham and J. Solway (eds), *Elusive Adulthoods: the anthropology of new maturities*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

Stack, C. B. 1974. *All Our Kin: strategies for survival in a black community*. New York NY: Harper and Row.

Stasch, R. 2009. *Society of Others: kinship and mourning in a West Papuan place*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

Stirrat, R. L. and H. Henkel. 1997. 'The development gift: the problem of reciprocity in the NGO world', *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 554: 66–80.

Stoler, A. L. 2002. *Carnal Knowledge and Imperial Power: race and the intimate in colonial rule*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

Strathern, M. 1988. *The Gender of the Gift: problems with women and problems with society in Melanesia*. London: University of California Press.

  1992. *After Nature: English kinship in the late twentieth century*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

  2014. 'Reading relations backwards', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 20: 3–19.

Strong, T. 2016. 'The axiom of enmity: a Papua New Guinea example'. Unpublished manuscript presented at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting.

Suggs, D. N. 2001. *A Bagful of Locusts and the Baboon Woman: constructions of gender, change, and continuity in Botswana*. Belmont CA: Wadsworth and Thomson Learning.

Taylor, I. 2004. 'The HIV/AIDS pandemic in Botswana: implications for the "African miracle"' in N. Poku and A. Whiteside (eds), *The Political Economy of AIDS in Africa*. Aldershot: Ashgate Publishing.

Thornton, R. J. 2008. *Unimagined Community: sex, networks and AIDS in Uganda and South Africa*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

Ticktin, M. 2011. *Casualties of Care: immigration and the politics of humanitarianism in France*. Berkeley CA: University of California Press.

  2014. 'Transnational humanitarianism', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 43: 273–89.

Ticktin, M. and I. Feldman. 2010. *In the Name of Humanity: the government of threat and care*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Tlou, T. and A. C. Campbell. 1984. *History of Botswana*. Gaborone: Macmillan Botswana.

Townsend, N. W. 1997. 'Men, migration and households in Botswana: an exploration of connections over time and space', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 23 (3): 405–20.

Tsing, A. L. 2005. *Friction: an ethnography of global connection*. Princeton NJ: Princeton University Press.

Turner, V. W. 1967. *The Forest of Symbols: aspects of Ndembu ritual*. New York NY: Cornell University Press.

  1996 [1957]. *Schism and Continuity in an African Society: a study of Ndembu village life*. Oxford: Berg.

  2017 [1969]. *The Ritual Process: structure and anti-structure*. New York NY: Routledge.

UNAIDS. 2001. 'Population mobility and AIDS: technical update'. Geneva: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) [online],

http://data.unaids.org/Publications/IRC-pub02/JC513-PopMob-TU_en
.pdf, accessed 25 April 2015.

2003. *Stepping Back from the Edge: the pursuit of anti-retroviral therapy in Botswana,
South Africa and Uganda*. Geneva: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/
AIDS (UNAIDS) [online], http://data.unaids.org/Publications/IRC-pub06/
jc1012-steppingback_en.pdf, accessed 25 April 2015.

2017. 'Country factsheets: Botswana, 2017'. Geneva: Joint United Nations
Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) [online], www.unaids.org/en/region
scountries/countries/botswana/, accessed 13 February 2019.

2019. 'UNAIDS data 2019'. Geneva: Joint United Nations Programme on
HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) [online], http://rstesa.unaids.org/documents/publica
tions/77-2019-unaids-data-en/file, accessed 8 July 2020.

2020. *Seizing the Moment: tackling entrenched inequalities to end epidemics*.
Geneva: Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS)
[online], www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/media_asset/2020_global-aids-
report_en.pdf, accessed 8 July 2020.

2021. 'HIV estimates with uncertainty bounds, 1990–present'. Geneva: Joint
United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) [online], www.
unaids.org/en/resources/fact-sheet, accessed 20 October 2021.

UNAIDS, UNICEF, and USAID. 2004. *Children on the Brink 2004: a joint report
of new orphan estimates and a framework for action*. New York NY: Joint
United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), United Nations
Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF), and US Agency for International
Development (USAID).

UNICEF. 2006. *Africa's Orphaned and Vulnerable Generations: children affected by
AIDS*. New York NY: United Nations Children's Emergency Fund
(UNICEF), United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), and
President's Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief (PEPFAR).

2010a. 'Botswana: statistics' [online], www.unicef.org/infobycountry/bot
swana_statistics.html, accessed 25 April 2015.

2010b. *Botswana: decimation and multiplication: the AIDS burden*. New York
NY: United Nations Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) [online], www
.unicef.org/infobycountry/botswana_1907.html, accessed 25 April 2015.

Upton, R. 2001. '"Infertility makes you invisible": gender, health and the negoti-
ation of fertility in northern Botswana', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 27
(2): 349–62.

USAID. 2010. 'The *Oicheke* campaign, Botswana', AIDSTAR-One Case Study
Series [online], www.aidstar-one.com/focus_areas/prevention/resources/
case_study_series/o_icheke_campaign_botswana, accessed 25 April 2015.

van Dijk, R. 2010. 'Marriage, commodification and the romantic ethic in
Botswana' in M. Dekker and R. van Dijk (eds), *Markets of Well-Being:
navigating health and healing in Africa*. Leiden: Brill.

2012a. 'A ritual connection: urban youth marrying in the village in Botswana'
in M. de Brujin and R. van Dijk (eds), *The Social Life of Connectivity in Africa*.
New York NY: Palgrave.

2012b. 'The social cocktail: weddings and the innovative mixing of compe-
tences in Botswana' in J.-B. Gewald, A. Leliveld, and I. Pesa (eds),

Transforming Innovations in Africa: explorative studies on appropriation in African societies. Leiden: Brill.

2017. 'The tent versus *lobola*: marriage, monetary intimacies, and the new face of responsibility in Botswana', *Anthropology Southern Africa* 40 (1): 29–41.

Van Gennep, A. 1960. *The Rites of Passage*. Chicago IL: University of Chicago Press.

Verhoef, G. 2001. 'Informal financial service institutions for survival: African women and stokvels in urban South Africa, 1930–1988', *Enterprise and Society* 2 (2): 259–96.

Verhoef, H. and G. Morelli. 2007. '"A child is a child": fostering experiences in northwestern Cameroon', *Ethos* 35 (1): 33–64.

Wagner, R. 1977. 'Analogic kinship: a Daribi example', *American Ethnologist* 4 (4): 623–42.

1991. 'The fractal person' in M. Godelier and M. Strathern (eds), *Big Men and Great Men: personifications of power in Melanesia*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Wanitzek, U. 2013. 'Child adoption and foster care in the context of legal pluralism: case studies from Ghana' in E. Alber, J. Martin, and C. Notermans (eds), *Child Fostering in West Africa: new perspectives on theory and practices*. Leiden: Brill.

Weiss, B. 1996. *The Making and Unmaking of the Haya Lived World: consumption, commoditization, and everyday practice*. London: Duke University Press.

Werbner, P. 2008. 'Introduction: towards a new cosmopolitan anthropology' in P. Werbner (ed.), *Anthropology and the New Cosmopolitanism: rooted, feminist and vernacular perspectives*. London: Bloomsbury.

2009. 'The hidden lion: Tswapong girls' puberty rituals and the problem of history', *American Ethnologist* 36 (3): 441–58.

2014a. *The Making of an African Working Class: politics, law, and cultural protest in the Manual Workers' Union of Botswana*. London: Pluto Press.

2014b. 'Between ontological transformation and the imagination of tradition: girls' puberty rituals in twenty-first century Botswana', *Journal of Religion in Africa* 44 (3–4): 355–85.

Werbner, R. 1990. 'South–Central Africa: the Manchester School and after' in R. Fardon (ed.), *Localizing Strategies: regional traditions of ethnographic writing*. Edinburgh: Scottish Academic Press.

1991. *Tears of the Dead: the social biography of an African family*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press.

2004. *Reasonable Radicals and Citizenship in Botswana: the public anthropology of Kalanga elites*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

2015. *Divination's Grasp: African encounters with the almost said*. Bloomington IN: Indiana University Press.

2016. 'The poetics of wisdom divination: renewing the moral imagination', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute* 23: 81–102.

White, H. 2017. 'The materiality of marriage payments', *Anthropology Southern Africa* 40 (1): 297–308.

Whyte, S. R. 2005. 'Going home? Burial and belonging in the era of AIDS', *Africa* 75 (2): 154–72.

2014. *Second Chances: surviving AIDS in Uganda*. Durham NC: Duke University Press.

Widlok, T. 2013. 'Sharing: allowing others to take what is valued', *HAU: Journal of Ethnographic Theory* 3 (2): 11–31.

Willoughby, W. C. 1909. 'Notes on the initiation ceremonies of the Becwana', *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute of Great Britain and Ireland* 39 (January–June): 228–45.

Wilmsen, E. N. 2002. 'Mutable identities: moving beyond ethnicity in Botswana', *Journal of Southern African Studies* 28 (4): 825–41.

Wolf, A. 2010. 'Orphans' ties: belonging and relatedness in child-headed households in Malawi' in H. Dilger and U. Luig (eds), *Morality, Hope and Grief: anthropologies of AIDS in Africa*. Oxford: Berghahn Books.

World Bank. 2015. 'Data: Botswana' [online], http://apps.who.int/globalatlas/predefinedReports/EFS2008/full/EFS2008_BW.pdf, accessed 25 April 2015.

World Population Review. 2020. 'Gini coefficient by country 2020' [online], https://worldpopulationreview.com/country-rankings/gini-coefficient-by-country, accessed 9 July 2020.

Wylie, D. 1991. *A Little God: the twilight of patriarchy in a Southern African chiefdom*. Johannesburg: Witwatersrand Press.

Yanagisako, S. J. 1979. 'Family and household: the analysis of domestic groups', *Annual Review of Anthropology* 8: 161–205.

Yanagisako, S. J. and J. F. Collier. 1987. 'Toward a unified analysis of gender and kinship' in J. F. Collier and S. J. Yanagisako (eds), *Gender and Kinship: essays toward a unified analysis*. Stanford CA: Stanford University Press.

Yanagisako, S. J. and C. Delaney (eds). 1995. *Naturalizing Power: essays in feminist cultural analysis*. London: Routledge.

Index

Note: Page numbers in italics indicate illustrations or maps. The suffix n indicates a footnote.

302

Titles in the Series