INTRODUCTION: THE PRACTICE AND PROSPECTS OF GRANDPARENTING IN THE PACIFIC

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The contributors to this special issue represent the orientations and approaches of several social science disciplines and are variously involved in interdisciplinary endeavors. However, anthropology is the primary discipline and ethnography a shared methodology. It is a main task of any ethnography to make the exotic familiar and to treat the familiar as though it were exotic. The papers in this special issue achieve this for grandparenthood in the Pacific. The familiar concept of grandparenthood is shown to have multiple meanings in close examinations of how the status is achieved, for example, what it means for a person's position in society, what roles are attached, and how grandparents may contribute to the survival and development of their communities and societies and adaptations to sociocultural change.

ALL OF THE PAPERS in this special issue draw on firsthand field research in the society or societies the papers feature. The authors represent a diversity of disciplines, but anthropology is most authors' primary discipline and ethnography a shared methodology. One major task of ethnography is to make the exotic familiar and understandable and to treat the familiar as though it were exotic. The papers in this special issue achieve this for grandparenthood in the Pacific, a familiar concept that is multivalent when we carefully examine how the status is achieved, what it means for the person's place in society, what roles are attached in Pacific societies, and how grandparents may contribute to the preservation of traditional knowledge and, indeed, perhaps the survival of a generation of children.

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The papers draw from a variety of sources. Sela Panapasa's paper on Fiji uses a combination of household census data and case studies. The data for Sally Keeling's paper were acquired in a longitudinal study of European aging in a semirural setting in New Zealand, while Jocelyn Armstrong's research was conducted with Maori and European women in urban New Zealand. Jeanette Dickerson-Putman's data were collected on Raivavae in French Polynesia. The papers by Vicki Torsch, Laurence Carucci, and Juliana Flinn are based on interview and participant-observation research in Micronesia.

What's in a Term?

Many years ago, during a lecture in a graduate anthropology course at the University of Texas, Gilbert McAllister observed that kinship is the diaper pin of human society: it holds everything together. Among other things, kinship terminology suggests common patterns of behavior expected of people who share a kin term. The "diaper pin" metaphor is particularly appropriate for a discussion of grandparenthood, as diapers are usually reserved for the very young and the very old. The variation in kinship terms for grandparents in the societies discussed in this collection demonstrates that grandparents hold societies together in many different ways.

For example, the people of Pollap in Micronesia described by Flinn (2007) have no way to say "my grandparent." The term for a grandmother is the same as for mother and, indeed, grandmothers continue to have the responsibilities that accompany motherhood. Caring for her grandchildren is part of a woman's role of mother to her child, the mother of her grandchildren. The terminology signals that the Pollapese approach to grandparenthood blends roles and responsibilities and extends into the next generation the parenting role of the domestic cycle (Goody 1958). On Pollap, the term for grandmother/mother or—as it may be glossed—senior woman describes an active, knowledgeable leader and household manager. Pollapese call a woman who manages a household the term that is also glossed "grandmother" even if she is young. These women are recognized as being knowledgeable, experienced managers and are expected to be outspoken and to scold juniors—including their grandchildren—when it is appropriate to do so. The practice of calling a mature woman by the term also used for "mother" or "grandmother" signals the behavior that Pollap society expects of women as they move through the domestic cycle.

According to Keeling (2007), in Mosgiel, a small-town community in New Zealand, grandparents say their role is inclusive and extends beyond strict descent, with kin and nonkin accepted as grandchildren in many cases. One woman told Keeling: "The kids all call me grandma" and suggested that there should be a specific collective noun for a group of grandparents: "a pride of . . . should not be restricted to lions!" she said.

In her study of European and Maori women in the city of Wellington, New Zealand, Armstrong (2007) observes that both groups may distinguish terminologically between biological and nonbiological grandchildren, although it is a more common practice among European grandmothers. European women used the terms "proxy," "deputy," and "substitute" to identify nonbiological grandchildren. Although Maori might use the English word "adopted" to specify grandchildren acquired by the Polynesian tradition of older people fostering grandchildren, they more commonly use the inclusive Maori word *mokopuna* to refer to biological grandchildren, fictive grandchildren, and groups that include some of both. In public settings mokopuna can refer to all the grandchildren of all the grandparents in attendance regardless of actual relationships. As one woman explained: "The little ones are all looked at as mokopuna. . . . We don't wait around to see whose child it is."

On Ujelang and Enewetak Atolls in the Republic of the Marshall Islands, Carucci (2007) reports that a reciprocal and multireferential term, *jibw-*, is used to link grandparents–grandchildren. This term is also the address term for grandchildren and means "the relationship path that interconnects me and you (an endeared person, two generations apart, a relationship typified by lightheartedness and indulgence)." Most often, the term refers to grandchildren, while grandparents are most commonly addressed (and sometimes referred to) by terms that translate as "grandmother" or "grandfather."

In summary, we see that kinship terminology signals the variety of ways in which Pacific people identify and relate to relatives (or, indeed, all members of the community) who are of the alternate generation. When grandparents call or refer to all children of the alternate generation by the term for grandchild—as Maori do—it is clear that grandparents are responsible for all those children who are theirs to love, discipline, and protect. In some societies grandparents and grandchildren call each other by the same term, a recognition that one generation is the replacement for the other. In others there is only one term for mother and grandmother. In these societies the role of grandmother appears to be an extension of the role of mother.

Becoming a Grandparent

The papers in this collection document the variety of ways in which people become grandparents. People become biological grandparents when their children become parents and, as Armstrong (2007) observes, one of the implications of increased life expectancy is that people can expect to spend more years as grandparents than did earlier generations. However, in some societies fewer people become grandparents because more young couples choose work or careers instead of children, or because of social factors such as divorce, single status, or late marriage and childbearing (see Szinovacz 1998). These trends have changed the nature of grandparenthood.

Carucci (2007) describes a situation in Ujelang in which a woman in her twenties achieved the status of grandmother by adopting the first child of an age-mate who alternatively referred to her as mother or grandmother. Because of the death of her family's elders, the young woman was the decision maker for her larger family and held responsibilities usually given to a much older woman. The adoption, which emphasized her authority within her family, was accepted by her siblings, who often reinforced her status of grandmother to their children by referring to her as *būbū* (grandma).

In some societies grandparents adopt their grandchildren as their own children. As discussed by Dickerson-Putman (2007), it is common for middle-aged Raivavae couples to adopt a grandchild. Often it is the grandparents who initiate the adoption, for the Raivavae feel that grandmothers have the right to ask to adopt a grandchild, especially the first-born grandchild. Dickerson-Putman reports that Raivavaen women told her that because mothers become lonely when their adult children leave home, they ask for a grandchild who will bring life and joy back into the household. Raivavaens expect the grandparent/grandchild relationship to be characterized by strong bonds of affection, with grandmothers receiving more affection and being given more authority than are grandfathers. Indeed, many grandmothers refer to their grandchildren as their pearls.

Grandmothers may also adopt their grandchildren if they feel that the parents lack either the resources or skills for caregiving, or if their children request the adoption because they are moving to an urban area where the expenses of child care are more than they can handle. Maternal grandmothers also often adopt the children of their unmarried adolescent daughters as adolescence is seen as a time to experience sexual freedom and shy away from responsibility. Raivavaen parents have jural responsibility for their children so, if a grandparent adopts a grandchild, the adults negotiate how rights, resources, and responsibilities are apportioned at the time of adoption. Usually jural responsibility for the children is passed to the adopting grandparents. If the situation changes, for example, if the parents are unable to have children, the adoption may be reversed.

Armstrong (2007) found that among European and Maori women in her urban New Zealand study there were sizeable numbers of both biological grandchildren and nonbiological or "fictive" grandchildren. One of the older European women presented herself as grandmother to her five biological grandchildren and to "a marvelous collection of deputy grandchildren" she had acquired across the years. "They're not a burden," she was quick to explain. "I love 'em all."

In addition, there were both Maori and European women who identified themselves as being grandmothers solely on the basis of relationships with the biological grandchildren of siblings, other kin, friends, or other nonkin. Several of the European women had developed significant fictive grandmothering relationships as a result of chance encounters in a work, educational, or organizational setting.

Grandparenting and Aging

There are a number of ways in which people are classified as old. These include chronological age, functional ability, historical age, and social time (Neugarten and Datan 1973, 57) or social age (Counts and Counts 1992, 6). The definition of old age that is based on social age is not synchronous with chronological age or with an individual's stage of maturity but involves the person's state in the life cycle or the domestic cycle, such as the birth of grandchildren and great-grandchildren or the death of middle-aged children. In some of the societies discussed in this collection, when people become grandparents they are automatically categorized as elders or senior members of society without reference to their chronological age or their physical condition. For example, Dickerson-Putman (2007) observes that Raivavaens place grandparents in two life course categories: wise, mature, respected adults, and old people who stay home, withdraw from work, enjoy leisure time, and have reduced voices in community affairs. A person's behavior is the critical criterion for defining their position in the life cycle. Most Raivavaens become grandparents after the age of about forty when their children become parents. Those grandparents who have settled down with one partner to raise children, and whose behavior is mature, are considered to be adults. In contrast, those who spend much time at home and withdraw from work are considered to be old persons. The general decrease in physical vitality and social engagement that leads to this withdrawal also reduces the old person's voice in community affairs. Elsewhere in Polynesia, for example Niue and Tahiti, a third category of elderly person is reserved for those who are weak, feeble, senile, and decrepit. This category overrides the status of grandparent, and people who are so classified are objects of contempt (Barker 1997; Levy 1973; Oliver 1981).

Armstrong (2007) argues that neither New Zealand European nor Maori women necessarily consider becoming a grandmother as a primary factor in their entering old age. They recognize that others often consider the role of grandmother to be part of being socially old; however, the women themselves think that the simple fact of being a grandmother is less important than its meaning for other themes of social aging such as social generativity and social integration. Among New Zealand Europeans in Mosgiel, Keeling (2007) found that the self-definition of "old age" is based on a person's social age. An eighty-five-year-old woman whose daughter becomes a grandmother is reminded of her own progression through her life course. Movement through the domestic cycle is evidence of advancing age and defines Mosgiel residents as seniors.

As noted above, Flinn (2007) recounts that Pollapese consider the grandmother role to be a continuation of the role of mother, and the term for senior woman/grandmother describes a household manager who is knowledgeable, experienced, and a disciplinarian. One Pollapese term that may be translated as grandmother means "hardened, strong, mature woman" or "senior woman." Women in this category are active, strong, and hard working. They are considered to be wise, knowledgeable, and experienced and, consequently, they are leaders. According to Flinn, these qualities are applied to women because of their advanced age and experience and not because they have grandchildren. Instead, these older women are also grandmothers. The behavior expected of active seniors contrasts sharply with the inactivity that people consider to be appropriate for those who are termed "elderly person" or "great-grandmother." These women are often physically and/or mentally infirm and are content to stay at home watching children and making mats.

Aging brings grandmothers in many cultures more authority, fewer restrictions, and more opportunity for achievement and recognition as they live past their childbearing years (Brown 1982). As Keith observes

> A glass of beer with the boys, freedom to let out a four letter word, or let go in a public dance are privileges of old age for many women in the world. The liberty to ignore previous constraints is the compensation available especially to old women in many cultures (1980, 350–351).

The Pollapese grandmothers described by Flinn enjoy the right to clown and be outspoken and confident. For example, at a holiday feast, a group of grandmothers performed spontaneous taunting, teasing songs and dances directed at the men, behavior that would not be acceptable for their daughters. In addition to being assertive, both maternal and paternal grandmothers on Pollap have the responsibility to advise and scold their juniors, including their grandchildren. Because a Pollapese grandmother has more knowledge and experience, people often consider her views to be important and Pollapese expect parents to defer to the wisdom and seniority of grandparents in almost all matters.

As discussed by Torsch (2007), there are basically two words in the Chamorro language that apply to people in their later years. *Saina* is the Chamorro word for elder. It signifies the qualities of wisdom, knowledge, activity, respect, and power in the family and community. The term *manamko* has the opposite connotation, that of being old and worn out. Individuals labeled manamko are not respected and have no one to care for them. These terms express the bipolar nature of aging experienced by old Chamorro. Those who behave as active, traditional grandparents are considered to be saina; those who do not are termed manamko.

What Does It Mean to Be a Grandparent?

The papers in this collection document the cultural variation that exists in the activities of grandparents: family and community responsibilities of grandparents (who are also often the elders of the society), the relationship between grandparents and the parents of their grandchildren, and the interaction between grandparents and their grandchildren. There may be a warm, mutually beneficial reciprocal relationship involving daily contact, or grandchildren may be caught up in the local culture and have little in common with their grandparents. Some grandparents share living quarters with their grandchildren, and others are grandparents at a distance.

This collection also speaks to Radcliffe-Brown's "grandmother hypothesis," which posited that grandparents were marginal to society (1940). Radcliffe-Brown alleged that both grandparents and grandchildren are peripheral to the society as a whole, the former because they are withdrawing from society and the latter because they are just entering it (see also Ikels 1998). An alternate interpretation suggests that female menopause and senescence are steps toward withdrawal from competition. This withdrawal assures that mature women will not compete with their children and grandchildren for resources, thereby contributing to their success in the process of natural selection (Washburn 1981; Weiss 1981; Williams 1957). Indeed, Lancaster and King have recently proposed that a woman maximizes her reproductive success if she ceases to produce children in middle age and concentrates instead on investing her energy and resources in her last-born child and her grandchildren (1992).

Caspari and Lee's recent work supports this argument (2004). They observe that a dramatic increase of older adults occurred about 30,000 years ago, a development contemporaneous with a cultural revolution involving rapid innovations in art and technology. They posit that two million years ago the proportion of the early hominid Australopithecine adults who lived to twice the age of sexual maturity was one in ten. This proportion went to one in five a million years ago with the appearance of early members of the genus *Homo*, and increased to four in ten for Neanderthals living 130,000 to 30,000 years ago. Then, about 30,000 years ago, the ratios dramatically changed to approximately two older adults for every young adult. Caspari and Lee suggest that this increase in the number of older people, particularly postmenopausal women, started a cultural revolution. The presence of enough older people to help rear children gave the group a survival advantage and allowed larger populations. These grandparents also had time to teach children skills, ideas, and traditions, thereby transmitting and preserving their group's culture. While Caspari and Lee do not argue that human females live past their reproductive years *because* their presence contributes to the survival of their grandchildren, their data do seem to support this argument. If these hypotheses are correct, older adults—especially older women—are central, not marginal, to the success of social life.

Dickerson-Putman (2007) discusses how help provided by Raivavaen grandmothers is critical, rather than peripheral, to their children's success. Grandmothers look after their grandchildren while the parents attend school or work. Grandmothers also act as "coparents" to grandchildren when their adult children are ill or undergoing a life crisis. The energy and resources that Raivavaen grandmothers invest in their grandchildren, regardless of the birth order of the children's parents, are critical for the educational and occupational success of the family.

The relationship between parents and children is often a formal one, as is the relationship between grandparents and their affines, the grandchild's parents. The affinal relationship may lead to tension between daughters-in-law and mothers-in-law, with dire results for the woman who has less power. This problem has been explored by Brown (1982, 1992). Indeed, affinal tension between grandparents and the spouse of their child may lead to hostile behavior that can destroy community peace or even lead to warfare. This dangerous aspect of the grandparent/affine relationship is explored in traditional stories, a point I have made for the Kaliai of West New Britain (Counts 1980).

Radcliffe-Brown (1940) contrasts the formality between parents and children with the easy familiarity, sometimes expressed as teasing or stylized joking characterized by insults and suggestive behavior, that frequently exists between grandparents and grandchildren; see, for example, Simmons (1942) on the Hopi. According to Carucci (2007), on Ujelang and Enewetak Atolls it is not uncommon for a newborn simultaneously to be related to others as both grandchild and grandparent. Grandparents jokingly suggest that they might be a subservient spouse to a young child or propose another member of the family as a potential marriage partner for the infant. As the child grows older they engage in joking and sexual banter with him or her. This form of joking erases the age difference between grandparents and grandchildren and suggests an easy relationship of equality between the two generations. The cross-generational joking and familiarity that typifies the grandparent/grandchild relationship is combined with the respect that is due to elders. This type of respect/joking relationship is usually reserved for people who are well respected and whom most of the members of the community refer to as grandmother or grandfather/respected elder.

Torsch (2007) reports that the Chamorro elders of Guam have a passion to preserve cultural values, maintain close kinship ties, and continue the ethic of caring and sharing. Some older adults accomplish this by maintaining traditional grandparenting roles. Traditionally, everyone on Guam worked hard all of their adult lives. Older household members contributed by gardening, performing domestic duties, and providing child care. There was no "retirement," and until the late twentieth century, there were no senior citizens' centers. Social activities were centered on family and church, both of which are still a significant part of the lives of older Chamorro. Today, the workload is lighter, and older adults on Guam have other choices. Many now attend programs at senior citizens' centers, which are located at the community center in each village, while others participate in the workforce. In modern Guam there are many choices that allow older people both to continue to be productive and to engage in leisure activities.

Grandparenting at a Distance

Most of the grandparents of previous generations in societies described in this collection expected to live near their grandchildren and develop close ties with them. Now children move away to work, to continue their education, or to live near the family of their spouse. Consequently, many of today's grandparents must be grandparents from a distance.

In an earlier work Keeling (2001) described the experience of distanced grandparents. She found that there were variations in the way that grandparents in small-town New Zealand define closeness when discussing their relationship with their grandchildren. She contrasts the relationships of grandparents who live near their grandchildren with those with grandchildren who live in other towns or even on other continents and whom they may see only once or twice a decade. She also describes what one grandfather calls the "distance in time" between him and his grandchildren whose lives and attitudes are different from his own when he was a youth.

Although it is not called by this term, the notion of a "distance in time" between grandparent and grandchild is expressed in Armstrong's paper on urban grandmothers in New Zealand (2007). Geographic separations were a common experience for both Maori and European grandmothers. However, there were grandmothers in both groups who had found that while geographic separation can impair a close relationship with their grandchildren, proximity does not necessarily promote one. They talked about grandchildren with troubling personality traits or living in broken families, for example, as difficult to relate to. These grandchildren may be described as being at a "distance in time"; the grandmothers' sense of contribution to the future of society through grandmothering may be diminished.

Being a grandparent usually means being an in-law as well, with the tensions that the relationship brings. There is cultural variety in the expectations that the community has of grandparents who are also elders. In some societies the work of grandparents is critical to the welfare of both family and community, while in others modern conveniences no longer require that people work hard all of their lives, and older people are free to enjoy leisure time. The papers in this collection document the rich diversity in the relationship between grandparents and grandchildren, which may be marked by easy relations of equality, joking relationships, and by the formal adoption by grandparents of their grandchildren. Others are grandparents at a distance and may seldom see or lack affinity with their grandchildren.

Grandparents and Change

Living Arrangements

As the paper by Panapasa (2007) details, the living conditions of Fijian grandparents vary greatly and may depend on the place of the household in the developmental cycle. If the grandparents are still young and head the household, then they control resources and may provide economically stable and supportive home conditions for their grandchildren. In contrast, if elderly grandparents move in with their children, they are less likely to be heads of the household than if their adult children move in with them. These grandparents are often economically inactive and less able to contribute fully to the economic well-being of the household. They may provide childcare in order to reciprocate for the support the household provides, but their ability to influence decision making is limited.

The papers in this collection explore variations in the living conditions of grandparents. Some are householders with their children and grandchildren living with them. Others live in their own homes with a grandchild and develop a reciprocal relationship. Grandparents care for their young grandchildren who, in turn, care for them in their old age. In these circumstances younger, active grandparents are likely to control family resources and play a significant role in household decision making. They may live with their children and grandchildren in a common residence or in a family compound where their circumstances depend on their ability to provide childcare, do domestic chores, or contribute in work or kind. Or they may be active, involved grandparents in ways that do not depend on coresidence or they may be happily independent, become increasingly socially isolated, or be victims of neglect and perhaps even violence (cf. Foner 1984; Morauta 1984; Zimmer 1990).

Changing Styles of Grandparenting

Keeling (2007), Panapasa (2007), Dickerson-Putman (2007), and Torsch (2007) document the role of grandparents in the New Zealand community of Mosgiel, Fiji, Raivavae in French Polynesia, and among the Chamorros of Guam, respectively. In these societies the grandparental role is complex. It depends on the place and power that grandparents hold in family and household as well as on their relationship with their grandchildren. Those who live in the same household with their grandchildren usually influence the way the grandchildren are socialized and may be able to reinforce traditional values that emphasize the support of older members of the family. As Panapasa notes for Fiji, this may be critical to older people in developing societies; it may allow them to temper the rapid economic change that creates a society in which older people have little part.

Keeling discusses six styles of grandparenting in Mosgiel, New Zealand. Four of these styles refer to the behavior of grandparents (conserving culture, caring for grandchildren, attending ceremonies, and reciprocal support between themselves and grandchildren), one style refers to the status of fictive or proxy grandparent and the roles associated with it, and the sixth refers to the physical, cultural, and emotional closeness or distance between grandparent and grandchild.

Panapasa describes how Fijian grandmothers act as coparents when their children are ill or unable to parent because of work or school commitments or because they have moved away. In this situation, either grandchildren move in with their grandparents or a grandmother stays in the grandchildren's home during the day and returns home to sleep. Dickerson-Putman reports that the traditional Raivavae pattern of grandparent adoption has changed as young couples leave for the capital city of Papeete because of reduced economic opportunity on Raivavae. Many young parents anticipate that they may permanently live elsewhere, and this leads them to initiate an adoptive relationship between their child and a grandparent. Some young couples living in Papeete say that they want a grandmother to adopt an infant and raise it in her home because they want their children to learn the local language and culture. Others said that they asked the grandmothers to adopt young children before they left for Papeete because it is too expensive to feed and educate a child in the city. This is a significant change from the earlier pattern of adoptions initiated by grandparents for their own benefit.

In her discussion of styles of grandparenting among the Chamorros of Guam, Torsch notes that older Chamorros once said that the best part of being old was having grown children and grandchildren. This reflected the significance that Chamorros placed on kinship ties and continuity in intergenerational relations. However, the styles of grandparenting are changing in modern-day Guam. One underlying reason is change in the function of the extended family. Once, the family was the center of the household economy of fishing and farming. Now, more family members work away from home in wage-labor jobs, and the household is no longer the base for economic activity. Added to this, longer life expectancy is changing intergenerational relations because some families have five generations living and interacting, where at one time two to three generations was the norm. Consequently, today's relations between the generations range from the Chamorro traditional "ideal" to a radical and "shameful" adoption of American patterns of disrespect and neglect.

Grandparenting and Sociocultural Change

As Torsch's (2007) discussion of the changes occurring in grandparenting among the Chamorros of Guam documents, Pacific societies are experiencing rapid change that affects grandparents and the extent to which they are relevant to the younger generation. The papers in this collection describe the effects of change on the grandparenting role and on the experience of being a grandparent.

Flinn (2007) observes that the result of the migration of young Pollapese adults to Chuuk, Guam, and Saipan is that caregiving grandmothers have the opportunity to spend time abroad and to participate in the wider world. Pollapese movement is not new, but political change, education, and the search for employment have affected the volume and destinations of today's young adults and the mature women who care for their children and grandchildren.

What Does This Bode for the Future?

One path for the future suggested by data presented in this collection of papers is that as Pacific Islanders become more drawn into the global economy and move to urban areas, the knowledge and traditions preserved by the grandparental generation will become less relevant. A second possibility is that as the parental generation moves into towns to find work or educational opportunities, grandparents will be the ones to raise children and to pass on to them the traditions and culture that the parental generation rejects in favor of being Europeanized or Americanized.

A third eventuality, also suggested by conditions elsewhere in the world where most of an entire parenting generation is lost to war and disease, is that grandparents will be left to take up the duties and responsibilities of parents to their grandchildren. This situation is already in place in New Zealand communities where parents are imprisoned, suffering from drug addiction, or otherwise unable to provide the necessary parenting.

While any of these trajectories are possible, it seems likely that rather than being marginalized, as Radcliffe-Brown (1940) suggests, the nurturing role of grandparents will be critical to the health and well-being of their grandchildren as well as the preservation of traditional knowledge and culture. This is especially true if the third possibility comes to pass and the parental generation is decimated. In this case, the survival of a generation of children will depend on the strength and wisdom of their grandparents.

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