

CONTINUING TO BE A MOTHER: GRANDMOTHERING ON POLLAP

Juliana Flimm

University of Arkansas at Little Rock

Perspectives from human evolution and life cycle development frame this paper on grandmothering in a Micronesian setting. On Pollap Atoll in the Central Caroline Islands, being a grandmother is part of a developmental process that involves aging and a changing parental role. Being an older woman is interwoven with being a grandmother in much the same way as being an adult woman is interwoven with being a mother. Much of the work of a grandmother toward grandchildren involves continuing responsibilities to one's adult child. Today's grandmothers continue to carry out these responsibilities in the context of adaptation to migration. The result is a degree of contact with and awareness of the wider world Pollapese have become part of. Grandmothers are not isolated, out of touch, or seen as irrelevant.

MUCH OF THE LITERATURE on grandparenting has focused on the role of grandparent as distinct and separable from the role of parent (e.g., Drew and Smith 2002; Mueller, Wilhelm, and Elder 2002; Neugarten and Weinstein 1964) without regard for the extent to which grandparenting roles may at least in part be altered parenting roles, as one's adult children bear children of their own, rather than new roles created with the birth of grandchildren. Evolutionary perspectives, especially on grandmothering, even suggest that helping to provision one's adult children—daughters especially—and assisting in the care of grandchildren serve to enhance reproductive fitness (Hawkes et al. 1998; O'Connell, Hawkes, and Jones 1999; Smith 1991; Turke 1988); "elderly parents should be strongly predisposed to invest in their offspring throughout life" (Turke 1988, 185). In other words, continuing to

parent one's adult children, shifting the nature of that parenting through the developmental cycle, has adaptive value. These perspectives suggest that rather than viewing the role of the grandparent as discrete from the role of parent and almost exclusively focused on grandchildren, we need to examine the circumstances under which and the extent to which the role of the grandparent is a developmentally transformed parental role and focused at least as much on the adult child as on the grandchild.

On Pollap Atoll in the Central Caroline Islands of Micronesia, being a grandmother is part of a developmental process that involves aging and a changing parental role. Being an older woman is interwoven with being a grandmother in much the same way as being an adult woman is interwoven with being a mother. This is not to say that all grandmothers on Pollap are defined culturally as being "old"; some younger women are technically grandmothers but clearly not in the category of older woman. In 1998, for example, nine of the twenty-nine grandmothers (not including those who were also great- or great-great-grandmothers) were in their forties and considered mature women but not old.

On the other hand, an older woman on Pollap is always simultaneously a grandmother, just as being an adult woman encompasses being a mother. This is because all adult women are mothers, whether biological or adoptive (the lone exception at the time of the study was a woman who had chosen to become a Catholic nun). Since all women have children, all older women in effect become grandmothers as their children in turn all become parents. Thus, much of what is associated with being an older woman—such as being a repository of history and specialized knowledge—is also in effect associated with being a grandmother, and it can be difficult to isolate just the "grandparenting" piece. Attempting to do so may also be inappropriately superimposing Western categories of kinship onto Pollapese conceptions.

Furthermore, in many respects, being a grandmother is simply the continuation of being a mother and part of the normal progression of moving through the life cycle and aging. The specific responsibilities shift over time as part of a developmental process, but the overall responsibility to care for one's children and to contribute to the sustenance and well-being of the household persist. With aging and decline in physical abilities, women tend to shift their activities away from the heavier work of gardening to lighter work such as keeping an eye on children in the household, which often means grandmothers in effect tending to their grandchildren. Moreover, even old and somewhat feeble women are likely to be household managers, and there is almost invariably some sort of contribution, such as softening pandanus strips for making mats, that even the oldest can make. Perhaps most important, the older members of society are valued for their knowledge and expertise, which they may pass on to relatives such as grandchildren.

In today's context of increasing migration, grandmothers continue to carry out their responsibilities to care for their children. This is the case not just for Pollapese children and grandparents resident on the atoll but also for those residing elsewhere in Micronesia. As young people move to the port town in Chuuk and to Guam and Saipan for school and work, and as they start having children, grandmothers move to join them at least for periods of time. By doing so, these grandmothers enable mothers and fathers—their adult children—to continue in school and work by caring for grandchildren in much the same way as they enable mothers and fathers to continue with subsistence activities on Pollap. The result is a degree of contact with and awareness of the wider world Pollapese have become a part of. Grandmothers are not isolated, out of touch, or seen as irrelevant.

Setting

The islet of Pollap is the northernmost of two inhabited islets of Pollap Atoll in the western part of Chuuk State in the Federated States of Micronesia. A sizeable Pollap community also lives and works in the port town of Weno in Chuuk Lagoon, and a number of other islanders live on Guam, Saipan, and even in the United States, where they are involved in a money economy. This paper draws on long-term ethnographic field research conducted during a series of visits between 1980 and 1999, and much of the information relevant to grandmothers was collected during fieldwork conducted in 1998–1999. At that time, about half of all Pollapese resided on the atoll during the American academic year, with the rest scattered; secondary school students were off the island from September through May, and other Pollapese were living, working, or attending college elsewhere in Micronesia and the United States. Among the 228 adult Pollapese living both on and off the atoll, there were twenty-nine grandmothers, six great-grandmothers, and one great-great-grandmother. Nine of the grandmothers, almost a third, were under fifty years old and not considered socially “old.” It is possible only to estimate the age in years of those older than fifty due to lack of good birth-date records for Pollap before the advent of the U.S. administration in the late 1940s.

Although many Pollapese off the island are pursuing paid work, the atoll economy is still largely based on subsistence horticulture and fishing. Imported rice is becoming a staple, but most food consumed on the island still comes from the local gardens or the sea. In the subsistence economy, women are responsible for gardening and men for fishing, although women also collect reef creatures, especially octopus. In a survey I conducted of how women defined their roles, I was not surprised to find that working in the taro gardens was the most salient. Although caring for children was less salient,

Pollapese woman conceived of growing food as fundamental to everything else and a part of caring for others, including children. Local notions of being an adult woman center on cultivating and providing food, the major point of which is to be able to feed, nurture, and care for children. Strong, healthy women continue to garden even when they become grandmothers, and they continue to participate in related subsistence activities to the extent possible even when they weaken with age. Furthermore, caring for children, including adult children, is a lifelong commitment. No one sees grandparenting as a cessation of parenting responsibilities: aging adults continue to care for their adult children, nieces, and nephews, and they expect to be involved in caring for the children born to those adults.

As descent is matrilineal and residence typically uxorilocal, women are usually working and living with sisters, mother, maternal aunts, and maternal grandmother. These household members reside together on the same plot of land, sometimes together in one building, sometimes in two or three smaller buildings adjacent to each other. Some houses are made of thatch and not subdivided with walls, while others are constructed of imported materials and may have separate rooms for sections of the extended family and/or the adolescent males.

Pelina is an example of a contemporary grandmother on Pollap. In 1998 she was a widow in her early fifties and lived in a single-dwelling household with her younger sister, two of her younger sister's daughters, three married daughters of her own, two unmarried daughters, one son in elementary school, husbands of two of the married daughters, and ten grandchildren. Another daughter was away attending secondary school elsewhere in Chuuk State, a son was in the United States, and a daughter was working on Guam, married, with a child. The younger sister had four children living off-island—two working on Guam and two attending secondary schools in Chuuk. Although some grandmothers continue to work in the taro gardens, Pelina's physical condition prevented her from such heavy work; her sister and daughters were the active cultivators in the household. Thirteen of the twenty-two people residing in the household were under fourteen years of age. Pelina, as senior woman, was household manager.

All of the women in a household collectively are responsible for the well-being of the household, which includes the care of children. The most senior woman (who is also still mentally competent) is the manager of the household and likely to be a grandmother, and work is shared among the members. This work includes parenting. Women have parental responsibilities toward the children of their brothers and sisters, as well as the children of their own adult children, many of whom live in the same residence. All would be referred to as *neyiy* (my child).

Studies of adoption in the Pacific have already indicated that latent parental rights may be shared among a number of relatives (e.g., Flinn 1985; Goodenough, R. G. 1970; Goodenough, W. H. 1970; Marshall 1976). A biological mother is not expected to be the exclusive caregiver of her children; she can count on assistance from a number of female kin, including her own sisters and the child's grandmothers. Grandmothers do not normally expect to be free of child-care responsibilities when their children are grown and begin having families of their own, unlike many grandparents in the United States (Kornhaber 1996).

In fact, it is even misleading to think of "grandparent" as a distinctive cognitive category on Pollap. Certainly in the Pollapese language, there is no specific term for grandmother as opposed to the word for mother (or aunt or great-aunt, for that matter). The same term, *in*, is used for both mother and grandmother and also applies to aunt and great-aunt, although *inelap* can distinguish lineal mother/grandmother from collateral aunt/great-aunt. The only way grandmother in the Western sense of parent's mother can be distinguished is by context or by specifying "mother's mother" or "father's mother." Sometimes *inelap* is used to designate the senior woman responsible for household decisions, sometimes a child's mother, sometimes a person's grandmother, with context the only way to distinguish which one. In the same vein, there is no distinctive word for grandchild as opposed to child.

The Pollap term *Mama Chi* is the closest to a term for grandmother, although a better translation of the term is probably "Old Mother." *Chi* comes from the word *chillap*, which applies in general to an old person. When I asked what defines women as *chillap*, I was told that "they just stay in the house and they watch children." In other words, a key part of the definition of being an older woman is someone who takes care of children, and these will primarily be grandchildren, with grandnieces and grandnephews as well, and in some cases great-grandchildren. Pollapese mentioned that some *chillap* may perform other work in the house, such as making sleeping mats or preparing pandanus for other women to use. Yet in reality, many grandmothers are still quite strong, healthy, relatively young in years, and still actively working in the taro gardens; in other words, the category of *chillap* includes only some grandmothers.

Another category of women that includes grandmothers is *finimmóng* (or *finilikkep*). The first term translates as "hardened, strong, mature woman," the second as "senior woman." Some Pollapese women said that this category could be translated as "grandmother." Women in this group are still active and strong, carrying out the work of adult women, particularly cultivating taro. All of the Pollapese women said to be in this category when I asked for a list were indeed grandmothers. A key characteristic of this category of

woman is that they are *repiy* (wise, experienced); they lead younger, more junior women, and they are said to be the most knowledgeable, along with older and more frail women who are still mentally active. These characteristics apply because of age and experience, however, not because of having grandchildren.

The Grandmother's Role

Whether healthy or frail, grandmothers usually reside with their daughters and their daughters' children, and they assist in caring for children in the household, some of whom are likely to have been adopted. Furthermore, residence is quite fluid and flexible, so that other children—such as a brother's children—are also likely to be around, at times for a few hours, at times for weeks or months or more.

In 1998, all grandmothers on Pollap lived as members of extended families. All but one grandmother had at least one adult daughter resident as well; the one exception had only an adult son resident, and relatives were generally critical of the woman's other adult children for not returning home to assist with household work and for leaving the grandmother without a resident adult daughter. A few households technically lacked a resident grandmother. Of the thirty-four households at the time, three had recently experienced the death of a grandmother and were at a point in their developmental cycle in which they temporarily lacked one. They nonetheless had competent senior women in their forties to manage the households, and these women were likely soon to become grandmothers themselves once an adult child had a baby. Two other households consisted of nuclear families who had recently set up residence nearby the very large extended family they had previously been a part of; one was headed by a woman of thirty-eight, the other by a woman of forty-four. Two more households had women under thirty as the most senior, but each of these cooperated very closely and on a daily basis with the households of their sisters and mothers. No young woman would be expected to manage on her own.

Much of the care of grandchildren, however, is a continuation of caring for one's children as they become adults and parents. In fact, it is often made quite explicit that caring for grandchildren benefits the child's parent. For example, taking care of an infant allows the mother to tend to personal needs such as bathing, and caring for an older child allows the mother to garden and carry out other work responsibilities. Pollapese expressly say that grandmothers take care of children so that "the mother can go work—like in the taro gardens or on making a mat." Women's work—such as gardening, cooking, making mats, caring for children—is vital to the survival of the household, viewed as caregiving behavior, and generally shared among the

women of the household, with the most senior having most responsibility for ensuring the welfare of everyone.

Caring for grandchildren is more than just a way of ensuring that essential work gets done, however. Pollapese contend, for example, that part of the job of a grandmother is to hold a baby because the mother can get tired of doing so. In fact, the biological mother is not expected to have to care for a baby by herself; grandmothers are expected to assist as part of their ongoing responsibilities towards nurturing their children, even when those children are adults. Furthermore, if a young woman becomes pregnant and for some reason does not want to care for her child, then her parents would do so. This might happen, for instance, if a child is born to an unmarried woman who is still quite young or planning on attending school. Pollapese have no understanding of why an American woman would choose an abortion, because they can't conceive of how or why one of the grandmothers, or other female kin, wouldn't care for an unwanted child. In reality, there is a continuum of care, such that in some cases a grandmother takes on essentially all the mothering responsibilities and in others the role is shared in varying degrees, and these change over time with particular circumstances.

Another dimension of a grandmother's responsibilities dovetails with the role of what I call "managing" the household. The more senior a woman becomes in a household, the more managerial a position she holds. With people living in extended matrilineal households, the typical pattern is indeed for a grandmother to be the active, senior woman in the household, so that a key part of a grandmother's responsibilities involves managing the household. A wide array of work activities needs to be coordinated, including gardening, gathering pandanus, preparing food, making roofing panels, working on mats, bathing children, tending to illness, sending food to relatives, and taking children to school. In making decisions, younger sisters defer to older sisters, and sisters to mothers. In many respects, a better translation than "grandmother" or "old mother" for "Mama Chi" is actually "manager." One woman of only about thirty was nicknamed "Mama Chi" precisely because she took on such grandmotherly managerial responsibilities on Guam and Saipan when living with fellow Pollapese, taking care of them as well as taking care of their children. Pollapese explained that this young woman *téttemu-muw* (cared for) the other adults and their children, and she took charge of ensuring that people were fed and cared for; it was these actions that earned her the nickname of "Mama Chi." Since she was the woman in charge, managing affairs, and attending to household needs, she was "Mama Chi," the grandmother.

Just as being a mother and caring for children involve subsistence activities, so does being a grandmother, with the specifics of the work varying with physical ability. Depending on chronological age and health, grandmothers

are likely to still be involved in cultivating taro and performing other heavy work, rotating and coordinating responsibilities with other women in the household. Even as they become frail and housebound, however, grandmothers can remain involved in household work, and they are highly valued as caregivers of children as other women bear the heavier work. Certainly, they direct activities. In a visit to a household one morning, for example, I noticed the grandmother admonish an elementary school child to finish an assignment before going off to school, urge the other grandchildren to eat, feed the youngest, charge a daughter to clean up after another one, take two grandchildren to their Head Start class, and then start organizing food in preparation for the main meal.

Aside from managing the work of others and keeping an eye on children—their jobs *par excellence*—grandmothers regularly help with preparing food as they also supervise the work of their daughters and grandchildren. In addition, even if they no longer work in the taro gardens, they can prepare pandanus for making mats, construct mats themselves, gather scraps for feeding to pigs, wash young children, and direct a host of other chores.

Taking care of daughters and the children of daughters is part and parcel of managing the household, yet a grandmother also cares for sons and the children of sons. In one way or another, older women are grandmothers, caring for children of both sons and daughters, and managing households with resident children. Furthermore, this residence is fluid, with children eating and sleeping in a variety of relatives' households. At times, then, the household also includes children of the men who have married into other households, so that grandmothers have access to a wide array of grandchildren, grandnieces, and grandnephews.

The maternal grandmother typically lives in the same household and will be of the same matrilineal descent group as her daughters and their children, unlike the paternal grandmother, who because of clan exogamy will be of a different descent group, and is also likely to be living in a different household from her son's children. Although in some matrilineal societies, this may mean structured differences in roles between the two grandmothers (Schlegel 1999), on Pollap there is ideally not supposed to be a difference. In terms of caring for grandchildren, "It shouldn't make a difference if it's a child of a daughter or the child of a son," in the words of one grandmother voicing the conventional wisdom. Both grandmothers should be involved with their grandchildren, participate in making important decisions about them, and share responsibility for their well-being. In reality, the maternal grandmother is in effect almost automatically involved in her grandchildren's lives when they are resident in the same household, whereas the paternal grandmother usually has to more consciously make an effort to establish and sustain the tie.

A paternal grandmother is expected to find ways to spend time at the household of her daughter-in-law, particularly with a newborn and especially if the daughter-in-law's own mother is away. In practical terms, however, Pollapese say that with an adult son and child of a son, the grandmother might not visit or spend as much time in her son's household if there are otherwise plenty of women in residence to help. Pollapese do believe, however, that it is hard for a mother of young children, especially newborns, if her own mother is not around, and that is an occasion for the paternal grandmother to make a point of spending as much time as possible helping a baby's mother and father. As one grandmother in that situation said of her daughter-in-law, "What if she wants to go shower? And what about food?"

Grandparents and their adult children both make efforts to ensure that a son's child visits the paternal grandmother's household on a regular basis. A son or daughter-in-law should regularly bring a grandchild to a paternal grandmother, sometimes leaving the child to be tended, but sometimes just to visit in order to maintain and even strengthen the relationship. All of this is consistent with the more general pattern of working to explicitly maintain patrilineal ties, which should be as strong as matrilineal ones but can't be taken for granted as readily (Flinn 1992, 61–64). A son or daughter-in-law bringing a grandchild to visit and a woman tending her son's children are behaviors that nurture the relationship between a child and its father's matrilineal kin, a relationship that is valued on Pollap but more fragile and tenuous than the matrilineal ones. These patrilineal relationships must be more consciously and explicitly maintained through specific behavior demonstrating the commitment. Adoption is another and more formal mechanism, since the preferred and most common form is to adopt a "brother's child," or in effect, a child of a man of one's matrilineal group. Younger adult women following this pattern are likely to adopt the child of a brother; grandmothers are more likely to choose the child of a son. Women maintain it doesn't make as much sense to adopt a sister's child, since that child is likely already to be living in the household and cared for like a child, unlike the child of a brother, who resides elsewhere; in the same vein, they say that it makes more sense to adopt the child of a son, living elsewhere, than the child of a daughter, who is already in the household. Some even contend that a father's adoptive mother has priority in adopting the father's child as a replacement for the father.

Grandmothers, as older women, are more knowledgeable and experienced and therefore more responsible for managing junior women, and as a whole are more outspoken and assertive than their quieter daughters. For example, at a holiday feast, a group of grandmothers led some spontaneous taunting, teasing songs and dances directed at the men. In addition, they

have responsibilities to *ffén* (advise, scold) their juniors, including their grandchildren. And both maternal and paternal grandmothers are expected to do so. A grandmother's views and opinions may be even more important than a mother's, especially considering the older woman's knowledge and experience compared with those of the parents. In almost all matters, in fact, parents are expected to defer to the wisdom and seniority of the grandparents. This is part of a broader kinship pattern of junior kin deferring to senior kin (Flinn 1990, 45–71).

A specific example I was given concerned decisions about schooling. Leaving the atoll to attend college is a major decision, and one not left to a child. A number of relatives participate in such decisions, including senior siblings, parents, grandparents, and probably at least some of the siblings of the parents and grandparents—in other words, senior kin in general. When comparing the role of a mother and a grandmother in particular, a child's mother should defer to her own mother. If, for example, the mother wants her child to leave for college but the grandmother dissents, the mother may attempt to make her case but in the end is expected to acquiesce to the decision that the child stay if the grandmother remains adamant.

Otherwise, people assert that the roles of mother and of grandmother are very much the same regarding responsibilities towards a child, both in terms of physical care and *ffén* (advising). The grandmother's advice, however, is expected to have a little more weight because of the additional years of knowledge an older woman has accrued. Although in mainstream U.S. society, the role of grandparent is not usually seen as being a reservoir of family wisdom (Neugarten and Weinstein 1964), it is nonetheless highly valued among the Pollapese, as also seems to be the case with Native Americans (Weibel-Orlando 1997). It is by virtue of their age in years, however, that Pollapese grandparents have acquired this wisdom, and there is not otherwise a distinction made between the role of parent and the role of grandparent, such as that described by Metge for the Polynesian Maori, where “parents lay the ground-work, developing basic character and practical skills in their children; senior relatives complete the process by nurturing the children's self-image, linguistic competence and special talents” (1995: 175–76). Pollapese grandparents by virtue of their years of experience have more wisdom, but they care for, guide, and advise a child along with a child's other “parents.” Even though a grandmother today is not expected to be able to aid a child with arithmetic homework or prepare a teenager for the perils of high school, college, or work, she is nonetheless still expected to play a role, along with other caregivers, in nurturing behavioral traits congruent with Pollapese norms and values, which in turn are expected to stand young people in good stead in the outside world as well.

Neither maternal nor paternal grandmother appears to have priority over the other. In fact, the idea of discord between the grandmothers over a decision concerning the child is abhorrent to the Pollapese. The grandmothers ideally should not disagree; discord between grandmothers—between any relatives, in fact—is likely to cause illness in the child. In general, it is considered shameful for there to be *hoong féngan* (anger among) relatives. This was routinely the answer given when I asked if one grandmother's view was supposed to have priority over another's. Individual grandmothers maintained that they would defer to the other grandmother, but I never detected a specific pattern of paternal or maternal grandmother routinely deferring to the other. It seems that the point is to avoid discord. Whenever possible people speak of deferring to others and showing humility rather than exerting authority over others. A maternal grandmother will almost always spend more time with grandchildren because of the residence pattern, but culturally she is not presumed to have more authority than a paternal grandmother.

Despite all this emphasis on grandmothers caring for children and managing the household and the work of other women, these aging women are not expected to fend for themselves or to be left alone very long. Young men and women can expect help, advice, and guidance from grandmothers in caring for young children, but these young men and women also have obligations towards those grandmothers. At the very least, they should carry out work expected of them and acquiesce to the wishes of their parents. They are expected to help in the care of their parents and to shoulder much of the burden of the heavier work. In addition, grandchildren and children both are expected to attend to grandparents who have become sick, weak, or disabled. As Donner (1987) describes for a Polynesian community on Sikaiana in the Solomon Islands, it is not one particular type of relative who bears responsibility for old people, but rather a range of kin. A frail older woman might be able to watch small grandchildren or great-grandchildren for a period of time during the day but should otherwise not be left to garden, hunt octopus, or cook. Her job may be to direct and manage, even work at nonstrenuous tasks, but the harder work of caring for the household and grandchildren should be in the hands of the able-bodied, especially the mothers and the fathers. Unlike the Fijian case (Panapasa 2007), it would be inconceivable that grandparents would be abandoned and left uncared for, regardless of any inability to participate in the work of the household.

Education, Migration, and Jobs

In recent years with increasing migration and more and more young people looking for work off-island, some grandparents are having to shoulder more

responsibilities. Certainly, older Pollapese are quite critical of the young people who remain on Guam and Saipan even when asked to return to the atoll and help with the household. Many grandparents have explicitly asked for adult children to return; in the words of one local critic, the grandparents have “called their children to come back and help them with work at home, but the children refuse.” Such behavior in recent years has left grandparents to fend for themselves, often with grandchildren to attend to who are typically too young to be of much help. This is still not common, but it could become so. Decisions about young people going off-island to school, which often results in the students then looking for work off-island, are usually made at the family level and not by the individual student, and most families try to arrange for only some of the young people to leave while others remain, especially one of the young women. In this way, continuity of the descent group is secure, and aging parents can be assured of care when they are no longer strong and healthy.

At the same time, the migration of young adults to Chuuk, Guam, and Saipan has resulted in grandmothers having opportunities to spend time off-island and participate in the wider world Pollapese are a part of. Movement of Pollapese is not new, but the volume and destinations have been affected by political changes, education, and job possibilities. Young people are pursuing postsecondary education in a variety of places, including Weno (the capital of Chuuk), Guam, and Saipan. Many are also working or looking for jobs. Grandmothers today very commonly spend time in these places as well, in a pattern of circular migration, carrying out their responsibilities to children and grandchildren. Similar to the cases of the Micronesian Marshallese (Carucci 2007) and Polynesian Raivavaens (Dickerson-Putman 2007), grandparenting serves as a strategy for coping with migration. In 1998 twelve of Pollap’s twenty-nine grandmothers, a little over 40 percent, spent all or part of the year residing off Pollap because of their ongoing responsibilities to adult children. Regardless of whether a child’s mother continues to attend school or work, she is seen as in need of help, just as she would be on Pollap, and she is not expected to have to care for her child by herself. Even if she is living with other female kin in town, her own mother is likely to migrate for extended periods of time, even moving back and forth between atoll and town. In many cases, the help of grandmothers allows young parents, especially mothers, to continue in school or on the job in a pattern not much different from the situation on the atoll in which the work of grandmothers allows mothers to return to the taro gardens. The difference on Pollap is that in many cases grandmothers are also working in the gardens themselves; at least as of 1999, none had joined the workforce off-island.

Thus, in both the traditional context and the modern one, and both on the atoll and among migrants in town, older women move almost seamlessly from mothering into grandmothering, as they continue caring for their grown children. These responsibilities keep them in touch with daily life on the atoll and allow them to travel to other areas of Micronesia where their adult children pursue schooling and work. Like the women of New Zealand described by Armstrong (2007), Pollapese grandmothers remain socially integrated. Though not active in the workplace themselves, they learn enough of Chuuk, Guam, and Saipan to make informed decisions—or participate in making such decisions—about their children and grandchildren, especially about their education and future prospects. Like the grandmothers in Kenya described by Cattell (1994), the life course of many of today's Pollapese grandmothers contrasts sharply with that of their granddaughters. Since most grew up before the era in which high numbers left for secondary education and began pursuing jobs, they are not likely to have practical advice for how to deal with problems at school or on the job. They can and do participate in household decisions, however, about the impact on a household of allowing the young people to leave for school and to pursue particular vocations.

In addition, American research indicates that maintaining contact with grandchildren contributes to the psychological well-being of the grandparents and that loss of contact results in grief (Drew and Smith 2002). Continuing to pursue one's responsibilities to grown children in the context of migration presumably also helps maintain a degree of mental health and sense of connectedness for older women.

The Future?

It is unclear how long today's patterns will continue. The future may bring some of the cultural frictions Torsch (2007) describes for Chamorro grandparents on Guam with the rise of education, migration, and labor-force participation. The youngest of today's Pollap grandmothers was among the first of the young women to begin leaving the island for postelementary education set up by the American administration in Micronesia. With only one exception, these women did not finish high school or enter the work force but returned to Pollap to marry and participate in the traditional subsistence economy. This is not the case with many of the younger women—some only a few years younger and close to becoming grandmothers themselves. Many of them finished high school, took at least some college courses, and found jobs. Even when they married and had children, some continued to work at paid jobs. They have been able to do so, in fact, because of the assistance of

their own mothers, who came to help take care of the house and the children. As these employed parents become grandparents themselves, will they leave the labor force to play the traditional grandparental role? If so, will the role become primarily that of housecleaning and taking care of children, with managerial decisions in the hands of the parents who are bringing in the money? Will the circular migration pattern continue, with grandparents moving between town and atoll? Will grandparents remain available as sources of knowledge and specialized lore? It may be only a momentary phenomenon that the traditional grandmothering role has adapted reasonably well to the changed circumstances, as grandmothers enable their children to take advantage of schooling and work opportunities and as these activities help keep the older women from being isolated and perceived as useless.

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