Pregnant Pauses:
How Urban Women Compose Connections, Health, and Modern Belonging
in Postcolonial Uganda

Anna R. Eisenstein
Patterson, NY

B.A., Lafayette College, 2013
M.A., University of Virginia, 2015

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China Scherz, Co-chair

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Ira Bashkow, Co-chair

_____
Eve Danziger, Committee Member

_____
Ellen Contini-Morava, Committee Member

_____
Christopher C. Moore, Graduate School Representative

"Time to us is sarcasm.
A slick treacherous monster with a jaw like a furnace
incinerating every moment of our lives.
Shrinking therefore from facing time,
we escape for shelter to things of space."

-- Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Sabbath: Its
Meaning for Modern Man*, prologue

Abstract

This dissertation is an ethnography of pregnancy. In it, I draw on participatory photo, video, and voice recordings produced over the course of twenty-one months of fieldwork with twelve middle-class women (ages 18-28) in a fast-growing urban center in southwestern Uganda. As I consider how pregnancy figures in these women's narratives and practices of personal and family wellbeing and progress, I argue that pregnancy in Uganda is one part of a broader process of composing a network of care around oneself and one's (expected) children, and that this is because good health/life (*amagara marungi*) is understood to spring forth from good relationships. Further, since pregnancy is such a transformational period in one's life and social relationships, I suggest that it offers a special window into the concerns surrounding kinship and relatedness in contemporary Uganda. And because women in Uganda are so closely identified with their fertility, focusing directly on pregnancy helps highlight how deeply gender contours experiences, temporalities, and trajectories of composition.

In my use of the term *composition*, I hearken to Jane Guyer and Samuel Belinga's (1995) efforts to discuss wealth-in-people not in terms of the typical idiom of "amassing" or "accumulating" followers, but rather, in terms of the "composition" of networks of specific individuals with complementary characteristics and offerings. I build on their insight by theorizing composition as an emergent, interactional process that unfolds in real time as social actors read and respond to one another. Far from falling back on a set of preconfigured relationships, women in urbanizing Uganda actively pursued some social bonds and closed themselves off from others through gendered forms of interactional labor, that would become key to their ability to secure health and wellbeing. Grounding my approach in linguistic anthropological perspectives on language as social action, I show how the risks and promises of

different kinds of relationships call for different forms of care, and how these forms of care influence the politics of what kind of life becomes possible, and for whom. With this argument, I participate in a medical anthropology that gets beyond the clinical gaze to instead trace relational practices of fostering life, wellbeing, and care as they lead both into and out of spaces typically cast as therapeutic.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Three months into her pregnancy, Eunice[1] began feeling debilitating pain below her waist. It made her unable to sit, to bend over, or even walk, without struggling. Puzzling over why this was happening to her, she called her mother, who told her that the pregnancy might be "sitting" – that is, in the wrong position – both physiologically and in a deeper spiritual sense. Eunice's mother sent her some herbal medicine from the village, and told her how to prepare it and rub it on her stomach. Eunice tried it for a week, but it helped little.

She decided to go to the public hospital's antenatal clinic to investigate further. The doctors could not find her child's head. "I went for the scan [sonogram], still they could not find the head and they told me that if I am a prayerful person that I should pray so much because they were puzzled."[2, 3] And pray she did. One night shortly thereafter, Eunice woke up in the middle of the night thinking her bedsheets on fire. She woke her husband up but he couldn't see the fire. The sight she saw that night made her question even more deeply "what was happening upon this pregnancy."

After seeing the vision of fire, Eunice didn't know where to turn for help. Fortunately, a traditional bonesetter whom she visited for a different reason referred her to an herbalist who was familiar with cases like hers.

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[1] All names are pseudonyms.

[2] Some of my conversations with my interlocutors were in Runyankole and others were in English. I provide Runyankole glosses in parentheses where I am quoting or paraphrasing statements originally told to me in Runyankole. Where I do not provide a gloss in Runyankole, that is because I am quoting phrases/statements originally uttered in English.

[3] This advice Eunice received from the hospital healthcare provider parallels what Stacey Langwick (2008) has described in Tanzania: that biomedical staff sometimes refer patients to nonbiomedical healers, depending on their understanding of the nature of the affliction and the hospital's capacity to treat it. However, while Langwick describes referrals to traditional healers, much more common in Ugandan hospitals are suggestions that patients turn to Christian prayer.

"Now my other child had a fractured hand and I took her to a bonesetter. That woman took me to an herbalist who healed me. He put my legs in a small basin and I saw things running out of my legs like herbs. I vomited black even when I had already eaten food. He got the black things and burnt them. But after burning them I saw a strong wind that I did not understand, you know that thing we call the ghost. Then that strong wind and that ghost came and took away everything that was burnt, and it went away. But when the wind was blowing, my baby inside was turning all the time. The baby stopped rotating when the wind stopped. My friend I do not even know these things."

Once the "black things" (euphemism for bewitched substances) had moved out of her body, the baby rotated inside Eunice's body in synchrony with the ghost wind.

When Eunice returned home from the herbalist, she found the reason behind what had just transpired at the herbalist's place: her neighbor, whom she had suspected of being envious of her, had gone "mad" that very day, which indicated to Eunice that she was the one who had bewitched her. Eunice decided to move to a different rental compound immediately, away from this enemy.

After moving, she went back to the doctor for another scan. The child's head was now visible. The doctors couldn't believe it, and over the coming weeks, they called her several times to keep coming back for checkups, to ensure that the "complications" had not returned.

In the final days of her pregnancy as we talked about these events, Eunice told me, "That is why you see most of the women this side [in Mbarara] have a C-section. They do not have a normal delivery; they are operated on. Because the people they live with are envious and they sometimes do things to them, and *when you do not know it* you find yourself operated on" (emphasis added). I asked Eunice if she was worried that she might have to have a C-section

too. She replied, "No, *I came to know about it* and got treatment for it. If I had not removed the pregnancy from where they had put it,[4] I would also have been operated on. Since I removed it from where they had put it, now I am very normal and I can do everything very well" (emphasis added).

Eunice delivered her baby, vaginally, two days after her due date. While she labored, she saw a vision of the Virgin Mary; even though her husband was Muslim, after seeing all that had happened, with this final event, they agreed to name their newborn daughter Mary, in recognition of what must have been the Virgin's involvement, and in hopes that She would continue helping this child to move and grow.

By cleansing her body of the witchcraft and moving away from its sender, and then aligning the baby's life with the Virgin Mary, Eunice extracted the pregnancy from the evil relations that had been manipulating it, and reinserted it into relations of positive concern and protection. Eunice's efforts to care for her pregnancy speak to the way that a pregnancy is understood to be in connection with social others, and further, how processes of gaining knowledge and insight are crucial to composing connections that bring help and not harm.

This dissertation focuses on these networks of connections surrounding a pregnancy, looking at the ways women work to compose the kinds of relationships that will enrich their lives and the lives of their children, in urban, southwestern Uganda. In doing so, I ask what it means to be pregnant in a setting where personal relationships serve as a primary mode of securing wellbeing.

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[4] Here Eunice referenced the particular (and very common) form of witchcraft whereby her neighbor had "hung up" her pregnancy, that is, pinned it to a particular socio-spiritual location so that it could not grow, develop, and move as it should. I discuss this further in chapter 4.

Wellbeing, Movement, and Composition in Southwestern Uganda

Amagara Marungi

As the famously rich literature on misfortune in Africa has shown -- from Evans-Pritchard (1937) to Jean and John Comaroff (1980; 1985; 1999; 2001) – threats to health, including sickness, accidents, witchcraft, and poverty, follow from disordered social relationships. Alongside misfortune, I am interested in practices of fostering life, wellbeing, and care, in line with scholars like Susan Reynolds Whyte (2002, 2019), Stacey Langwick (2018a and b), and Judith Farquhar and Qicheng Zhang (2012). In this dissertation, I suggest that mothers work toward flourishing by securing good relationships with others who will bring various forms of support into their children's lives.

In Runyankole, the phrase for "good health" is *amagara marungi* (lit., health/life that is good), and it carries the image of having good food to eat, a good place to live, and access to opportunities such as schooling and work. It might be best translated into English as "good life". (As in many African languages, there is no separate word in Runyankole to refer to physical health; *amagara* is something more holistic.) Thinking in terms of *amagara marungi* allows me to follow their lead out of spaces typically cast as therapeutic, in favor of a broader view of the relationships through which good life springs forth. As China Scherz (2018a) has pointed out, the vast majority of medical anthropology in sub-Saharan Africa since the turn of the millennium has focused on biomedicine and global health; however, with my focus on *amagara marungi*, I participate in a humanistic medical anthropology, anchored in the relationships that lead both into, and out of, therapeutic spaces. I use the term "humanistic" here in Edith Turner's (2007) sense; she writes, "The purpose of anthropology is to supply humankind with information about itself. However, *humanistic* anthropology draws nearer to the living human being. It seeks to

give humankind an understanding of the heart of the human being in relation to his or her fellows" (p. 108). As Turner goes on to say, "the humanistic anthropologist is also a healer, concerned with what the social body cries out about – sickness, concerned with what parts need to be touched in healing, if only by showing that we are conscious of them and that we want that greedy pain removed" (2007: 112). I aspire to be such an anthropologist, and to contribute toward such an anthropology.

On a second level, rather than taking up a clinical or biomedical gaze, the lens of *amagara marungi* leads me to think through pregnancy as something that is first and foremost relational. Anthropological studies of reproduction have typically focused on reproductive technologies, assisted reproduction, and childbirth, rather than pregnancy itself (but see Ivry 2009, 2015 and Han 2013 for exceptions). Further, anthropologists have rarely written about pregnancy in the same frame as marriage, family, or other intimate relationships, the exception being the literature on the exchange (but see Johnson-Hanks 2006 and Reece 2019 for exceptions). This is shocking, since both pregnancy and marriage are so explicitly related to the production and reproduction of the family, and since conflicts about one are often embedded in conflicts about the other. In my ethnography of pregnancy, then, I place my focus directly on pregnancy as a social relation that reorganizes and transforms other social relationships.

This approach cross-fertilizes the literature on health in East Africa, with its distinctive emphasis on *collective* wellness, both contemporarily (Hoesing 2017) and historically (Janzen 1979; Feierman 1985, 1995; Schoenbrun 1998; Kodesh 2010). While health is always and everywhere nested within social relationships, this may be especially true for people living in Uganda, for whom much of life is organized through relationships of inter-dependence. Within the framework of patronage relationships, so canonical in the Africanist literature as "wealth in

people," value materializes in the form of relationships, especially relationships between patrons and clients. Patrons have a moral obligation to take on clients; meanwhile, people with limited resources must actively try to attach themselves to others as dependents. Recent work by James Ferguson (2013) and others (Scherz 2014; Devlieger 2018) suggests that these relationships of interdependence are increasingly difficult to secure in the contemporary moment. Now perhaps more than ever, mass unemployment, widening gaps in education levels, and an increasing gulf between rural and urban settings (in terms of the forms of labor, foods, and amenities found in each) mean that claims of belonging via personalistic dependence are taking on new urgency.

Children, and by extension, pregnancy, occupy a complicated space in this framework. Although historically, children have been considered dependents and thus wealth,[5] contemporary circumstances of ever-climbing school and healthcare costs have turned children into wealth that is expensive. In the urban setting, where families purchase their food from markets and pay for the water they use, where there is more pressure for children to be well dressed, and where schools charge higher fees, it is even more expensive to raise children. While deeply loved, treasured, and desired, children can become a heavy weight on their mothers' shoulders. And it is only by distributing this weight across multiple supporters that it can be born successfully. In this regard, marriage is one of the most common and most serious threats to good life, and efforts to improve disordered marriage relationships comprise a crucial genre of interventions meant to

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[5] In the typical formulation, children figure as a means of ensuring future wealth and status, especially of women. By providing agricultural labor, children build a household's economic productivity; and by bespeaking the general fertility of their parents, they bring strength and honor to the family. When they are of age, they also help support their parents materially. This perspective suggests that the more children a woman produces, the more secure her status becomes (e.g., Meillassoux 1981, Peel 2002, Kalu 2006). Further, to date in rural, patrilocal southwestern Uganda, a woman only gains control over food production for her own household, and access to farmland for that purpose, after she has given birth to her first child, and that access expands with more children (Nyakato and Rwabukwali 2013). The value placed on children is also captured in the Runyankole proverbs, "Children are wealth," (*Abaana neitungo*) and "Children are a gift from God," (*Abaana bari ekirabo kuruga ahari Ruhanga)*.

promote wellbeing (see also Whyte 1997 on failures of gender as a category of affliction in Eastern Uganda; Schuetze 2010 on Mozambique).

As I show throughout the pages of this dissertation, in Uganda, <u>who</u> you are attached to determines the kind of life you will have access to, and the flows of support you will receive: it will show in your cheeks, the shape of your stomach, the strength of your arms, in a kind of co-embodiment across multiple persons' bodies. One who fails to secure attachments and marshal resources in the urban setting is forced to go back to the village, to dig. For the women I came to know in Mbarara, there would be nothing more shameful than going back to the village, while the rest of the world seems to be moving forward, without you.

Movement

In composing networks of care around a pregnancy, women living in southwestern Uganda are working to pursue *movement* of several kinds. They speak of moving forward (*kugyenda omu'maisho*, lit. going in the direction of the eyes) through the life course, moving upward (*kukurakurana*, lit. growing or growing up) in terms of socioeconomic class and status, and moving outward (*kuhanguha,* lit. expanding or getting bigger) in terms of one's connections with others. Although these concepts are not semantically related in Runyankole, people living in southwestern Uganda use the English word "movement" to describe all three.[6] In their usage, "moving" is inflected with an aura of unmistakable positivity (cf. Haynes 2017), and where speakers of American English might refer to moving backward or downward, people living in southwestern Uganda instead speak of "falling down" or simply "failing". Thus, throughout this dissertation I use the terms *movement* and *moving* in the sense that my interlocutors used them in

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[6] There are also many other words in Runyankole that pertain to moving. I made the ethnographic decision to focus on these particular kinds of movement.

Ugandan English. This usage also helps me capture my interlocutors' sense that movement along any one of these planes of life cannot be disambiguated from movement along the other planes. Nonetheless, each encodes a different directionality, and comes about in a distinct way.

Moving forward *(kugyenda omu'maisho)* through the life course comes by achieving the socially desired markers of forward motion, especially in relation to one's age. These include markers of childhood maturation (like having underwear, a lunchbox, a water bottle, and a school uniform); markers of entry into social adulthood such as getting married, having children, and building a house; and, once one has entered adulthood, markers of successful "movement" through it, like having more children and attaining financial prosperity and/or further scholastic degrees (even at an advanced age). How one has moved forward in these various ways throughout one's life determines the retrospective statements one is able to make in old age regarding "where [one] has reached in life". This "reaching" in English – *kuhika* in Runyankole – is the same way one speaks about arriving at a destination. To ask someone how life is going, one may ask whether things are walking well (*kutamburagye*); the reply can be, "We are progressing". *Reaching* the desired markers of age and success bleed over into *moving upward*.

Moving upward (*kukurakurana*) was often glossed in English as "developing" . A person's "development" becomes evident as they obtain markers of class distinction, including dress and bodily display, white collar jobs, imported foods, prestigious home goods, and most iconically, driving in cars and flying in planes (notably, high <u>up</u> above the ground). Some activities are considered "developmental," and "so building" in their nature, such as education, Bible study, attending health sensitization sessions and life skills programs, and participating in the genre of conversation called "counseling". These are all efforts which someone takes to

better themselves and improve their chances at "moving up a level" in life[7]. An oft-cited Runyankole proverb declares, "The people who move, see." (*Abagyenda bareeba;* lit., the people who go are the people who see.) Those who gain exposure to new places, people, and practices gain critical insight into their own household, community, and culture's ways and thereby become wise and able to incorporate new tactics to bring them even more success.

Moving outward (*kuhanguha*) or "expanding" refers to a person's relationships, reach and influence: in other words, wealth-in-people. Large families and patron-client relationships contribute to a person's capacity to flourish. In addition to the underlying social-spiritual causes of misfortune, personal relationships also drive the less enchanted aspects of one's life, like what kinds and quality of food, shelter, and regular activities and interactions make up one's everyday.

These different kinds of movement – forward, upward and outward – are all relational and sometimes they come into tension with one another. For instance, achieving upward mobility personally may stand in conflict with one's obligations to redistribute wealth and thereby expand outward. I discuss further how women engage the tensions between these different kinds of movement through the lens of pace in Chapter 3, and through the lens of information management in Chapter 4.

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[7] It is also worth noting that metaphors of vertical movement correspond with spiritual/religious imagery of God dwelling in the heavens above, and evil spirits residing "underground." People living in southwestern Uganda interact with "local" spirits who co-inhabit their environment – including cows, rocks, bodies of water, and forests. These local spirits are understood to interact with persons and families through inheritance (relationships you're born with), or through a human or spirit intentionally striking up a new relationship. In addition to local spirits who live in the local environment, they also speak of "underground" spirits which are not of local origin, but rather, are from elsewhere. (Nigeria, South Africa, and transnational Illuminati groups were often cited points of origin for these spirits.) Underground spirits wield greater power than local spirits. In this way, magnitude of spiritual power maps onto geographical distance. People whose names are known by spirits at far remove (whether in heaven or the underworld) as well as people who travel far distances (only reachable by plane or by car) are those who *move*, in the fullest sense of the word, in the best ways and to the greatest extent in life.

In my attention to local imaginaries of movement, I am deeply inspired by Nancy Munn's (1992a and 1992b) formative theorization of "intersubjective spacetime" constituted and reconstituted in and through acts and practices that instantiate self-other relationships. It is through interactions with objects, practices, dispositions, and others in relation to vernacular senses of local/global (cf. Piot 1999), traditional/modern (cf. Newell 2012), past/future (cf. Ferguson 2006), and black/white (cf. Bashkow 2006) that women in southwestern Uganda work to generate movement.

Ultimately, there are several kinds of desirable movement wanted for oneself, one's child, and one's family. It is to this end that women compose relationships surrounding and during pregnancy. More than just some general notion of having good relations around them, or even being safer because others are there to help with care, mothers invest their compositional labor in cultivating the potential for these three kinds of movement. Bad connections threaten to bring outcomes that are inimical to movement – such as the threat of a stillbirth in Eunice's case above. Good connections facilitate movement, and movement cannot happen without certain kinds of relationships. Yet crucially, although a relationship itself can be a means to movement, movement is also inseparable from a relationship that helps facilitate it, and the relationship is also a value for other reasons. In other words, people are forming relationships and using them for projects of moving through life and improving health, but the relationships are not simply means to that end. The relationships are also ends in themselves, indispensable and multivalent. Further, relationships precipitate their workings in and on the body itself, in turn a sign that others can read. As a person *moves* in these various senses – forward, upward, and outward – her relationships change and *amagara* accrues over and through multiple planes and temporalities.

Pregnancy is far from the only time in life during which one is composing relationships; in fact, I will argue that composition is a perpetual, provisional, ever-unfinished process in which everyone is always involved, and that pregnancy is one part of this broader process of composing a network of care around oneself and one's expected children. But because pregnancy is such a transformational period in one's life – which I discuss as a vital conjuncture (Johnson-Hanks 2006) in Chapter 2 -- I suggest that it offers a special window into the broader set of concerns around composing networks. Further, because women in Uganda are so closely identified with their fertility, pregnancy constitutes a vital stage in women's lives, revealing a defining component of gendered experiences and trajectories of composition.

Finally, in claiming that women are seeking movement through their efforts to compose networks of care, I want to resist the conceptual split between interest and material gain on the one hand, and pure, selfless love on the other. This opposition has rightly come under criticism by anthropologists working in Africa in recent years, who have convincingly shown that notions of "selfless" love rest upon a Euro-American Christian notion of the self, and that over the longue durée, as in present times, material benefit and affection are inextricably bound up together across the African continent (Cornwall 2003; Chernoff 2003; Swidler and Watkins 2007; Cole and Thomas 2009; Hunter 2010; Mains 2013). In keeping with these scholars' work, in my approach to composing networks of care, I wish to highlight the simultaneously affective and material dimensions of connections. Moreover, I build on their discussions by showing that as much as romantic, sexual, or friendship relationships entail both material and affective dimensions, so too do harmful, antagonistic relationships, which both drain resources and cause pain as they exert destructive force. Attending to the material *and* emotional vulnerability

involved in all relationships is a significant move because it underscores the vitality of the work that women (and others) must do to read, discern, and probe the others with whom they engage.

Composition

In my use of the term *composition*, I hearken to Jane Guyer and Samuel Belinga's (1995) efforts to move away from an idiom of "amassing" or "accumulating" followers (Rey 1970; Miers and Kopytoff 1977; Meillasoux 1981) – which has become so iconic in the literature on wealth in people – in favor of an idiom of "composing" networks of specific individuals with complementary characteristics and offerings. Whereas Guyer and Belinga write of the process of composition in pre-colonial Equatorial Africa, I find it an apt way to capture the strategy and flexibility involved in the principles and processes of social organization operative in contemporary southwestern Uganda. While I articulate the ways my ethnographic account of Uganda departs from Guyer and Belinga's historical ethnography of Equatorial Africa more fully in Chapter 5, here, allow me to highlight the ways my work builds on theirs theoretically. First, I build on their contributions by suggesting that composition not only includes carefully choosing which relationships to *advance*, but also, which ones to *eschew*, and further, involves breaking relationships as much as making them. This point leads me to highlight the subtractive aspects of compositional processes, which are crucial to attend to in order to capture and account for the ambivalence that characterizes all attachments, and the vulnerability that haunts social interaction, intimacy, and belonging.

The ambivalence of attachments is experienced particularly acutely by women who are choosing a spouse. In the shift to companionate marriage, women have gained independence from parental and clan control in marital matters in no small measure. However, the women I

came to know in Mbarara who were eligible for marriage do not find their position an easy one to occupy. It is fraught and heavy with the responsibilities of choosing a spouse and forming a family. In this way, I suggest that the shift to companionate marriage might be seen as an abdication of a form of care. While women find themselves with much more freedom and choice, they find they also have a much greater burden of responsibility. Add to this the dynamics of respectful avoidance of discussing matters of courtship and sex with kin; risks of incurring jealousy and judgment from peers, neighbors, and men's ex-girlfriends; and desires to arrive at something that will be acceptable before one's church. At the core of all of this, women find themselves alone. Most often, they live in small, single-room dwellings made of cement, where they spend a lot of time by themselves.

Yet all around this profound aloneness, there are the deep and extensive projects of sociality in which women are involved. I theorize the composition of networks as an emergent, interactional process that takes shape as social actors read and respond to one another. While some relationships are more emergent than others (a point I expound upon in Chapters 6 and 7), even the most given relationships become interactional, as they obligate and mark particular forms of participation – the *doing* of the relationship – and thus I maintain that composition is always and inherently alive and unfolding in real time. Through this compositional praxis is, of course, how my interlocutors were relating to me as an ethnographer as well. My interactional approach to composition takes the concept into new territory, speaking simultaneously to the growing literature at the intersection of medical and linguistic anthropology, to the feminist study of capitalist modernity, and to postcolonial theories of meaning.

Care as Interaction, Composition as Care

Recent studies at the intersection of medical and linguistic anthropology have begun to account for the ways that care is performative (Wilce 1998; Harvey 2013; Perrino 2002, 2007; Brada 2013; Black 2013; Corwin 2014; Clemente 2015); embodied and emplaced (Mol 2008; Throop 2012; Pritzker 2014; Goodwin 2015;), and enacts biopolitical lines of inclusion and exclusion (Kuipers 1989; Brada 2011; Guzman 2016; Briggs 2005, 2011; Briggs & Mantini-Briggs 2003, 2016; Wilce 2009). Building on this essential work, I contend that care is the product as much as the source of interaction. As such, sensations of care are produced, and subjectively felt and experienced, in relations *between people*. While the anthropological literature on care has offered accounts of the way care emerges within the dyad of care giver and care receiver (Mol 2008; Taylor 2008; Kleinman 2013), and in interactions between the state and its citizens (Stevenson 2014; Aulino 2019), I suggest that there is a crucial intermediary sphere of connections missing from these accounts. Recognizing the fundamentally interactional and intersubjective nature of care leads me to think about its instantiation not only within the dyad of care giver and care receiver or with the state, but across networks of interconnected individuals.

Susan Reynolds Whyte (2019) has recently argued that care is composite, meaning that family and friends potentially form a composite of care givers, who cooperate to provide care for someone, and among whom there are often conflicts. Like Whyte, I am interested in these composites and the dynamics of cooperation and conflict that flow within them, producing care and failures of care. But as much as care is composite, I argue that composition is care. It is in the interest of caring for and fostering *amagara marungi* that the women I came to know in Mbarara worked to compose their networks. In doing so, they carefully managed how others

would shape their movements – between therapeutic alternatives as well as through the different planes, levels, and stages of life.

Attending to the way that mothers foster life and wellbeing through composition has implications for the way we think about social support networks and therapy managing groups. The way that relationships and networks affect health, sickness, and movements between different therapies have typically been discussed in the literature on therapy management. In *The Quest for Therapy in Lower Zaire* (1978), John Janzen introduced the concept of the "therapy management group" to draw attention to the whole set of individuals involved in "sifting information, lending moral support, making decisions, and arranging details of therapeutic consultation" (1978:4) surrounding a sick person, including members of the person's maternal and paternal kin, lineage heads, friends and associates, as well as biomedical authorities, diviners, and prophet-seers. Thus, a patient is not an isolated, autonomous actor, but rather, is often suspended in a whole matrix of stakeholders – therapy managers -- who have a voice in shaping the therapeutic process.

Subsequent scholarship on therapy management tended to model the patterns of therapeutic decision-making, sometimes taking a comparative approach (Fabrega 1979; Bibeau 1985; Pfleiderer and Bichman 1985). Since then, research on therapy management has taken up how therapeutic techniques, practitioners, and perspectives gain authority and legitimacy through processes of institutionalization and professionalization, and the relationship of these processes to the state (Feierman 1981 and 1985; Janzen 1987; Augé & Herzlich 1995; van Wolputte et al. 2002; Augé 2004; Le Marcis & Inggs 2004; Korling 2005; Bierlich 2007).

But whereas previous discussions have treated therapy managing groups as given, preexisting entities, I suggest that such networks come about through an emergent, interactional

process. Far from falling back on a set of preconfigured relationships, pregnant mothers in Mbarara actively composed their network, pursuing some social bonds and closing themselves off from others. Networks of care unfolded in turn as social actors read and responded to one another.

In using close attention to interactional practice to work against the taken for granted-ness of networks of relatedness and care, I participate with scholars like Rupert Stasch (2009), Constantine Nakassis (2014, 2018), and Christopher Ball (2018). Like them, I want to resist assuming who is part of one's network to instead attend to the critical and reflexive semiotic work that social actors are doing to realize the presence or absence of others in their lives. To this end, I analyze how moments of connectivity between people may convert into more enduring, abiding forms of connection, and conversely, how people work to break social bonds with specific others and differentiate or bound forms of relatedness through semiotic practice. In doing so this dissertation highlights the lived, practical stakes of connection and connectedness as well as disconnection and disconnectedness to social and political life, examining how the presencing of specific forms and qualities of relatedness creates the grounds for the distribution of resources and risk, and shapes regimes of belonging.

In this approach, I align myself with the position and project of the Gens collective for the feminist study of capitalist modernity (Bear, Ho, Tsing, & Yanagisako 2015) and their forebears (Schneider 1972, 1984; Yanagisako and Collier 1987; Yanagisako and Delaney 1995; McKinnon and Cannell 2013). In this dissertation I actively subvert the boundedness of the domain of "the economic" and the ensuing false binary between "the economic" and "the affective" or "communicative" by centering my analysis squarely upon the communicative dimension of all human action that *generates* forms of social inequality and intimacy. I do this

by bringing attention to two intertwined aspects of social interaction that are fundamental to

Kinyankole[8] processes of composition and care: seeing (*kureeba*) and touching (*kukwata*).

Locally, *kureeba* and *kuwata* are simultaneously embodied, face-to-face interactional moves, and

more metaphorical *kinds* of interaction through which transformative processes of recognition

(or misrecognition or invisibility) come about. Recognizing this, I make what is the loftiest

suggestion of this dissertation: that *seeing* and *touching* may point to a fundamental dialectic at

the core of human sociality. To the Gens cause, then, I bring the suggestion that seeing-and-

touching may be useful for thinking about transformations of space, time, and senses of personal

and familial growth and development in relation to conditions of capitalist modernity not only in

southwestern Uganda, but also much more broadly.

Finally, by engaging directly with processes of social interaction – albeit at various scales

– this dissertation speaks to postcolonial theories of meaning which have described the

"overheating" (Eriksen 2016) and "unmooring" (Jameson 1984) of signs from their referents and

ensuing experiences of uncertainty in social life. In what lies ahead, I offer a portrait of the ways

women living in urban Uganda actually engage that uncertainty in and through interaction. I

show that it is through careful processes of pace, display, and disguise, that they confront and

engage the ambiguities of relationships with others, paths to modern belonging and progress, and

even their own felt bodily sensations.

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[8] As I explain more fully in chapter 2, Banyankole are people from the Nkole region; their language is Runyankole; and things pertaining to their culture and customs are considered Kinyankole.

Method

This dissertation is based on ethnographic fieldwork I conducted in Mbarara, a fast-growing city of some 100,000 people in southwestern Uganda. Between 2015 and 2017, I was in Mbarara for a cumulative 21 months, distributed across trips of varying lengths (the shortest being one month and the longest being twelve months).

During my first summer in the field, I lived with a well-to-do local family in their single-family home/compound on a quiet road on the outskirts of town. The parents, Beatrice and Issac, were both university professors, at that time they had two children under the age of twelve (soon to be three) and a maid. Living with them gave me my first glimpses of the importance and frequency of visiting in Ugandan culture, and especially, sleepovers, without which no visit between close friends or family is quite complete.[9] I learned how to participate in the work of welcoming and receiving visitors, preparing food and serving it to them, cleaning the dust off of their shoes and polishing them while they were inside, and washing mountains of dishes and bedsheets once they left. Even more than growing in my abilities to speak Runyankole, or gaining familiarity with daily household rhythms and genres of interaction (Sanjek 2014), I felt that this family's comfort with me grew most significantly as I learned how to embody and perform the kinds of physical movements and postures necessary to washing dishes without much water, scrubbing laundry by hand, stirring boiling water into millet flour at just the right speed to produce porridge of the right consistency, peeling endless bunches of *matooke* (the savory cooking bananas that were served at breakfast, lunch, and dinner in their household and indeed many Banyankole's households), and arching my back with the right curve that would enable me to stay bent over long enough to pull a towel across the entire floor to mop it. They

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[9] I have been told by friends from other parts of Uganda (Buganda and Acholiland, specifically), that the importance of spending the night is unique to Banyankole.

never demanded or expected my help with housework, but in my view, helping with it and gaining new muscle memory as my body engaged with new substances and quantities and formats was the most significant step through which I became part of their household.

My first connections to people in Mbarara came through this family, and thus, through Mbarara University of Science and Technology. Most significantly, I developed close relationships with several of these professors' graduate and undergraduate students, who shepherded me to their churches, hostels, and inexpensive eating places, and taught me how to navigate the town, ride a *boda-boda* (motorcycle taxi), and bargain in the market. Knowing that I was interested in health and healing, they kindly brought me to many herbalists, traditional healers, and health centers throughout town, and put me in touch with their own relations who were ill or in the process of seeking care. I was surprised to find that even in the elite, university community, many of these students and their families participated regularly and often openly in herbal, traditional, and spiritual forms of healing care. Concurrently, I began developing my own network of connections through the traders from whom I purchased everyday items in town, as well as through the churches and health centers I had found with students' help. Even though my project had begun with interest in care-seekers' perspectives on and experiences of healing, as I began actually conversing with people who were sick and seeking care, I found it a big ask to shadow them and study them as they were going through deep personal challenges that were often life threatening. The question of resources – which I had, and could hypothetically give them, but would change their whole care trajectory and potentially their chances of survival -- made this especially fraught.

In the meantime, in light of my own age and gender, women between the ages of twenty and thirty were the easiest and most appropriate population for me to interact with, and those

relationships seemed to move along generally quite easily. I began spending long afternoons sitting in shops and cell phone stalls with shop attendants, and in time, visiting these women's homes and meeting their families, friends, and neighbors. I also built some close relationships through the churches I attended. It didn't take long for it to become apparent to me that much of these women's lives circulated around questions of pregnancy, marriage, and family formation.

When I came back to Mbarara for my longest stint of fieldwork, I decided to re-orient my project to focus on pregnancy directly. In fact, on arrival, I found many of the women I had come to know during my pre-fieldwork -- including Beatrice, Beatrice's maid, Sarah (who had since moved out), and Beatrice's cousin Olivia who had easily become my most trusted friend in Mbarara – all pregnant. This time, I lived in a two-room rental unit closer to the heart of town, owned by the boyfriend of one of the shopkeepers with whom I had become close during my pre-fieldwork – who, it turned out, was also pregnant! Living in a compound with other singles and couples, and in particular, my friend the shopkeeper, Pamela, provided the opportunity to observe a living situation much more typical for less well-to-do people living in Mbarara, as well as the freedom to come and go as I pleased. I continued to visit Beatrice and Issac regularly – sleeping over at least once or twice each month and coming whenever I was called for functions – throughout my time in Mbarara.

In the interest of centering my study of pregnancy on women's own experiences and perspectives (rather than conducting an ethnography of obstetric care or traditional birth attendants, for example), I approached pregnancy through a series of case studies. Beatrice, Sarah, Olivia, and Pamela (all mentioned in the previous paragraph) became my first four case study participants. They were joined by a single mother I met at the Anglican Church, Abigail; a stay-at-home mother, and the wife of a teacher, Judith, who was the sister-in-law of one of the

students from MUST (who himself had become my research assistant); Lillian, who I came to know through crossing paths repeatedly first at her shop which sold basic household goods and vegetables, then at Marie Stopes reproductive health center, then at a Pentecostal church; Grace, who sold samosas outside the hospital, and who I met through a savings circle[10] to which I had been introduced by one of the MUST students I had come to know well; and Helen, the wife of a waiter at my favorite lunch canteen in town.

In order to expand the breadth of my research, about halfway through that year of fieldwork, I conducted a survey and 42 semi-structured interviews with women seeking care at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital's free, public family planning and antenatal clinics, and at a popular, inexpensive NGO-run reproductive health center called Marie Stopes. Some of the women I met through these interviews were especially eager to share their stories and to continue meeting with me. I welcomed the opportunity for follow-up interviews, and some of these women became additional case studies for me in their own right. These included: Eunice, with whose story about the ghost-wind I opened this chapter, who was a stay-at-home mother whose boyfriend worked in Kampala as a taxi driver; Imelda, who actually lived in Kampala with her husband but was back in Ankole, where she was from, staying with her younger sister throughout her pregnancy; and Angela, who sold chips by the roadside in the evenings.

Evidently, these women occupied a range of class positions. Some of them were married, others were not. And while some were actively seeking to become pregnant, others had found themselves pregnant despite their best efforts, some for the first time, others for the fifth. My inquiry into pregnancy was shaped by their lives, and I structured my fieldwork around any

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[10] Savings circles will be explained in more detail in chapter 2.

opportunity I could get to accompany[11] them in their everyday activities, sitting in shops, washing clothes, preparing food, doing errands, hosting visitors at their homes, and going with them to visit friends and family and to attend weddings, burials, and graduation parties both within the town and in their home villages (these visits to the village often lasting at least several days). The different timelines of their pregnancies allowed me to see every stage of the nine-month period, as well as the before and after. I actually began to think about pregnancy less as a fixed-duration bodily experience, and more as a time of life – a perspective I say more about in Chapter 3.

At various points, I also loaned small tabletop 360-video cameras to my participants and they produced recordings of important parts of their lives which they wanted me to include as part of my project, in the tradition of photovoice (Mitchell 2008). After they captured recordings, we would watch them together and I would audio-record our conversations, so as to record their interpretations of the interactions in the videos; I paid them for their time. In some cases, we chose especially rich videos or parts of videos to transcribe together, but this was incredibly laborious and time-consuming, so we were only ever able to do few. In addition to the video recordings, my case study participants also took (and continue to take) a seemingly endless stream of photos which they enthusiastically wanted me to have and to include in my research;

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[11] I use the word *accompaniment* in Paul Farmer's (2011) sense: "'Accompaniment' is an elastic term. It has a basic, everyday meaning. To accompany someone is to go somewhere with him or her, to break bread together, to be present on a journey with a beginning and an end. There's an element of mystery, of openness, of trust, in accompaniment. The companion, the *accompagnateur*, says: 'I'll go with you and support you on your journey wherever it leads; I'll share your fate for a while. And by 'a while,' I don't mean a little while.'" While Farmer uses the term to advocate a particular approach to providing health care, I found it a useful way to think about my position and relationships in the field. (http://www.foreignaffairs.com/articles/68002/paul-farmer/partners-in-help)

several of them appear in the pages to come. Snapping cell phone photos is a major part of

Mbarara culture, so this was an easy sell. I also suggested that they could record their voices

speaking about events that happened, in kind of an audio journal, and share the voice recordings

with me, if ever I wasn't able to answer their phone calls when they wanted to tell me about

unfolding events. Sometimes they did so, but taking audio recordings seemed less natural for

them than snapping and sending photos and it never quite took off in the same way; they'd rather

just wait until I called back.

Toward the end of my fieldwork, I began to think about how unfortunate it would be to

suddenly cut off my analysis of the networks of relationships that were unfolding around these

women, and through which these women were growing and moving. A small grant from the

University of Virginia African Urbanisms Lab came through at the end of my fieldwork that

allowed me to provide smart phones and a year of mobile phone data to six of the above women,

in order to facilitate our continued interaction at a distance. I gave the phones to the least well-off

women, as those who were more able financially already had smartphones and generally, no real

problem affording data. Although we certainly feel the distance, with all of them, I continue to

remain in touch.

Outline of Chapters

The chapters that follow explore how women pursue *amagara marungi* by working to

compose networks of care, and how pregnancy figures in this process. In the first half of the

dissertation, I describe how pregnancy figures in young women's narratives and practices of

personal and family wellbeing and progress. I address the ambiguities that beset paths to success

in contemporary Uganda, and the way these ambiguities affect the meaning of pregnancy. In the

second half, I look at the ways women actively work to compose the networks of which they are

a part, pursuing some relationships and closing themselves off from others. In doing so, I explore

how the risks and promises of different kinds of relationships call for different forms of care, and

how these forms of care influence the politics of what kind of life becomes possible, and for

whom.

Chapter 2 describes the history of practices of composition in southwestern Uganda,

tracing how women's positions within networks of care and interdependence have changed over

time. With my focus on the gendered dynamics of responsibility, I show how since the 1970s,

the burdens of composing have been placed more and more onto women's shoulders. At the

same time, I build a case that women who are eligible to become married mothers constitute an

important category of persons in Mbarara.

In Chapter 3, I describe how women navigate the pressures to marry and form their

families in relation to a network of others by deliberately pausing, waiting, and slowing down to

allow good connections with others to grow and ripen. I suggest the analytic of *pace* to help key

us in to women's commitments to moving in relation to specific kinds of others. I also point out

that their temporal orientation is at odds with images of unfettered velocity often associated with

modern life.

Chapter 4 explores pregnancy as an incontrovertible sign of the relation between a man

and a woman, as against a range of other communicative and semiotic uncertainties surrounding

romantic and sexual relationships. Because pregnancy is a sign that speaks for itself and is one

that is not easily kept hidden, and because it is considered sensitive information that will

inherently reorganize relationships, women work to carefully frame the revelation that they are

pregnant. I claim that the dynamics of information management surrounding pregnancy articulate a set of ambiguities surrounding fertility, prosperity, and growth in Uganda.

Chapters 5, 6, and 7 engage the ways that women in Mbarara go about making and breaking relationships.

In Chapter 5, I describe charismatic Christian discourses and practices of breaking bondages, which are ubiquitous in Uganda. Positioning my discussion at the intersection of the anthropological literatures on dependence and misfortune, I argue that women's efforts to break bondages are aimed at managing the risks and dangers of having the wrong relationships, which would threaten their movement. Thus, I recognize breaking bondages as a compositional activity, geared toward pruning one's network and thus, one's paths toward success. In doing so, I extract discussions of breaking bondages from their location in the literature on Christianity and re-contextualize them within the broader set of genres of compositional activity in which they are embedded in Ugandans' everyday lives.

Chapters 6 and 7 contrast the ways women work upon relationships that are given (chapter 6) and relationships that are made (chapter 7). I show that these different kinds of relationships have different bases, stakes, and hopes attached to them, and thus call for different modes of care, which I call prophylactic care and propagative care. Taking these two different kinds of care together illustrates how moving toward *amagara marungi* turns upon a politics of seeing and touching, or recognition and merging. Attending to the politics of touch/merging leads me to consider composition as a form of labor.

In the eighth and final chapter, I reflect on composition as an interactional process of cultivating openness and closed-ness to others: that is, relations through which blessings and curses flow, and people move. Relations constitute possible paths forward, upward, and outward

in Ugandans' lives, and it is through these paths that wellbeing and care move into and out of reach. Because of the changeability of others' hearts and circumstances, "you never know" who will help or harm you until it actually happens. Unpredictable as they are, networks of care have aspects of both latency and activation, some relationships being accessed and called upon for some kinds of flows at a given moment, while others may turn sordid. A good network of care, then, consists of a plurality of different connections, paths, options.

Chapter 2: Rural Foundations, Urban Ambition

High Street, Mbarara, Uganda. Photo by Anna Eisenstein.

Mbarara, An Orientation

Mbarara is a city of some 100,000 people in southwestern Uganda. It is located south of

the equator, 266km from Uganda's capital city of Kampala, with the Kampala-Kabale highway

running right through its center. The city is the main municipal, administrative, and commercial

center of Mbarara District, and its shops, homes, buildings and industries pour over hilly areas

separated by shallow valleys. To the east of the city lies the Ankole plateau, with its small rolling

hills that descend into extensive flat, dry, savannah grasslands. To the city's west, the landscape

gives way to bigger and bigger rolling hills, rich with vegetation. The hills of western Ankole

receive much more rainfall than the eastern parts of the district, but in recent years, climate

patterns have been changing, and the seasonality of the rains and dry heat have become less

predictable, disturbing the subsistence and commercial farming that feeds much of the country.

Mbarara is located in the former Ankole kingdom, which was abolished in 1967 and its

kingship never restored.[12] People born in the region, or whose parents were born in the region,

identify as Banyankole; their language is Runyankole; and things pertaining to their culture and

customs are considered Kinyankole. Banyankole have long been famous in historical and

ethnographic writing for the two distinct groups into which they fall: Hima and Iru. Historically,

Hima were pastoralists and Iru, cultivators, but today the once extremely sharp division between

these groups has broken down significantly (a history I trace below), and the two mingle deeply

and regularly in marriage, business, and friendships throughout the city of Mbarara. Even in the

countryside, Hima now do some agriculture, and many Iru own at least a few cows. Both

cultures continue to shift and homogenize in relation to status and identity markers associated

with modernity, especially in the city. Although the vast majority of Mbarara's inhabitants are

Banyankole, the city is also home to many Bakiga, Baganda, and in lesser number, Acholi, Teso,

Langi and Basonga, as well as sizable populations of immigrants and refugees from neighboring

Congo and Rwanda.

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[12] The abolition and lack of restoration of the Ankole kingdom has been the subject of much political debate and scholarship. For more information, see Karugire 1971, Doornbos 1978, Karamura 1998.

Map of Uganda showing Mbarara District.
By © OpenStreetMap contributors, Jarry1250, NordNordWest/Wikipedia, CC BY-SA 3.0,
https://commons.wikimedia.org/w/index.php?curid=60384936

Ankole plateau to the East. Photo by Anna Eisenstein.

Hills to the West. Photo by Anna Eisenstein

Language

Most Banyankole speak many languages, but the language they consider their own is Runyankole (also called Nkole, Nkore, Nyankore, Nyankole, Orunyankore, Orunyankole, and Runyankore), a Bantu language of the Niger-Congo language family. Runyankole is quite closely related to Rukiga (84-94% lexical similarity), and less so, to Runyoro and Rutooro spoken in Western Uganda; Nyambo, Zinza, and Haya spoken in Tanzania. Many speakers can understand if not speak many of these languages.

In the city of Mbarara, Runyankole is the most widely spoken language, although English, Luganda, and Rukiga are also often heard. Most children learn to speak one or more of the vernacular languages first, as most households in Mbarara speak in vernacular at home, except for some very elite and/or interethnic married couples, who may speak English at home. According to national language education policy, primary schools may provide instruction in a relevant local language of the school's choice, up to Primary 4, after which all instruction must be in English. In many schools, though, English is used throughout, even from the early years.

As the national language of Uganda, English is the language of government affairs, education, and to some extent, medical care. Uganda's public health care system assigns intern-level doctors to a post in any region of the country, where they may or may not speak the vernacular language. Moreover, one's medical specialization may lead them to seek employment in one of the country's few major hospitals, such as Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital (MRRH). Thus, English is often the shared language across teams of healthcare professionals at MRRH, and in cases where doctors do not speak the language of their patients, they may speak to patients in English, hoping they will understand some if not all of what is said. For this reason, rural patients often ask educated family members to accompany and guide them as they seek healthcare. Many churches, too, transcend the problem of different languages by offering English services in addition to Runyankole services, and this works as a catch-all for all those congregants who do not speak Runyankole but have received at least some schooling.

If English is synonymous with being formally educated, for Banyankole, speaking Luganda is associated with cosmopolitanism and mobility. Luganda – the language of Baganda – is the most widely spoken language in the nation's capital city of Kampala. Many Banyankole learn it early on while attending boarding school in Buganda (which is especially popular for

secondary and other post-primary schooling). Having a parent and/or domestic help who speak

Luganda is another way of learning the language while young. Even if someone does not learn it

as a child, opportunities are plenteous throughout life to interact with Baganda, and most people

living in Mbarara have at least some fluency in Luganda.

Literature, newspapers, periodicals, radio, TV, and films are available in Runyankole,

Luganda, and English throughout Mbarara. Ultimately, Ugandans are commonly socialized in

families and communities where, to varying degrees and in different situations, communications

call for multiple languages. To meet this need, speakers must often learn as they go, and rely

heavily on grabbing a family member, neighbor, colleague, or even a passerby, to help provide

translation where there are gaps in interlocutors' linguistic knowledge. Even with the many

languages spoken in Mbarara, Runyankole remains widespread and well-loved, and its number

of native speakers (3.42 million in 2014) is only growing (Ethnologue 2019).

Navigating Vital Conjunctures from an Urban Position

Uganda is home to one of the fastest growing populations in the world (3.4 percent).

Although the country is small in area – only about the size of the state of Oregon – it is home to

over 37 million people. Yet surprisingly, Uganda has just one city that has a population of over a

million (Kampala), and the next four largest cities -- Mbarara being one -- have populations that

are around only 100,000 (World Bank 2015). Because 84% of the population of Uganda lives in

rural areas, these small cities and towns, rather than large urban centers, are a much more

significant kind of space in the experience of most Ugandans today. Further, although the ratio of

rural to urban populations may not be increasing quickly or significantly, nevertheless, with pure

population size growing so quickly, the populations of both kinds of spaces – rural and urban –
are indeed multiplying quickly.

By anchoring my fieldwork in the city of Mbarara, I came to appreciate the continued
salience of the village in urbanites' lives. In particular, as I focused on women's engagements
with pregnancy – including their efforts to achieve pregnancy, avoid pregnancy, and ensure a
healthy pregnancy – I explored how urban-rural linkages refract through experiences and
meanings of reproduction. With one of the world's total highest fertility rates (approximately six
children per woman) – a figure which has changed very little in almost half a century (Doyle
2013) -- women in Uganda are quite frequently pregnant. This is particularly true in Ankole,
where cultivators' strong pronatalism has been sustained and reinforced by the regional social
and economic transformations brought on by colonial and postcolonial situations, as I will
discuss below. As Uganda's population has increased more than five-fold since independence,
and as the population is projected to increase a further five times over in the next 30-35 years,
hitting 130 million by the middle of the twenty-first century (WorldWatch 2019), Ugandan
women, more and more of whom live in towns and small cities, will continue to be pregnant,
very frequently.

My study revolved around twelve women who lived within Mbarara municipality. Their
ages ranged from 18-28; they held various statuses vis-à-vis marriage; and they occupied various
class positions, the wealthiest being a university professor, and the poorest, a seller of roadside
snacks. Despite these differences in age, marital status, and class position, I want to argue that
these women were of a type. What unified their experience was 1) their residence in the urban
setting, and 2) their position within the life course as *eligible for* married motherhood. In
conceptualizing this position in the life course, I draw on the notion of the *vital conjuncture*,

developed by anthropologist and demographer Jennifer Johnson-Hanks (2002) to refer to those moments in life when more than usual is on the horizon and when one's life might plausibly move toward any of multiple points on that horizon – that is, when "potential futures are under debate and up for grabs" (872). Johnson-Hanks argues that although institutions and rites of passage structure idealized notions of life stages, in practice, such passages through institutions (like marriage and motherhood) are only variably achieved, and most often through long-term negotiations and social and economic disruptions. This is certainly true of marriage and motherhood in Uganda, and further, one's status as married is rarely so final (cf. Golomski 2016). Thus, following Johnson-Hanks, I understand my informants to have all been inhabiting the vital conjuncture during which they were no longer youth, per se, but were eligible to be – or to become, or to continue to become -- married mothers. It is this *potentiality* for pregnancy and marriage that defined their social position. Across their social differences, they all faced tremendous pressure to compose networks of care around themselves and their children and/or children to be. The weight riding on their compositional activities was made heavier by their position as urban, instead of rural, women.

Like the vast majority of Mbarara's inhabitants, all of my informants were born in rural settings and had moved to the city to escape the hardships of village life. Moving away from rural kin produces an alienating effect. By and large, women in Mbarara found themselves *alone*. Rural kin and parents would not be involved in arranging their marriages, nor would their husbands' family members be nearby to provide much oversight. In navigating business, marital, sexual, and reproductive relationships, urban women were very much on their own. While these interrelated shifts to women's work, urban life, companionate marriage, and independence have

typically been associated with empowerment and emancipation in all their positive valences, the women I knew in Mbarara did not find their position an easy one to inhabit.

In many ways, this position echoes the one that Ilsa M. Glazer Schuster famously wrote about in *New Women of Lusaka*. Published in 1979, Schuster's book described "a new type of African woman" appearing in African cities: she was educated, employed in a "modern" and white-collar job, and symbolized modernity and achievement. As such, she was a role model for younger girls in both cities and villages. But, the defining feature of these women's lived experience, Schuster argued, was a "pernicious ambivalence". Although city life – where "money, drink, and music flow freely, where her looks are appreciated, her achievements rewarded, and her presence on the lively urban scene celebrated" (1979:67) – made independence and status available to elite and sub-elite women, at the same time, those very same aspects of city life that were so liberating also brought disillusionment. Attachments to jobs, to men, and to other women in the city were often fleeting and fraught with suspicion. And attachments to rural kin, especially the older generation, often became more and more strained as urban women often disagreed with their parents, aunts, and uncles about matters of fashion and style, health and medicine, marriage procedure, and relationships with the living dead,[13] and at the same time, were expected to contribute unending financial support to their rural family members. As Eugenia Shanklin put it in her review of the book, the women of Lusaka were "caught in a struggle with (not *for*) independence, in which the goals are short-term and the rewards short-lived" (1980: 665).

Even though forty years passed between Schuster's fieldwork in Zambia and mine in Uganda, the problems that haunted the social position of urban women in both cases bear

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[13] See p. 60 for a fuller explanation of what I mean by "the living dead."

remarkable similarity. In Mbarara, those in the urban setting typically have, and are imagined and understood to have, more access to cash than their rural counterparts, and thus, are expected to contribute significantly to village family members' agricultural, educational, and ceremonial expenses (cf. McQuaid et al. 2019; Bashkow 2006 on the *wantok* system in PNG). Further, because labor in the village setting remains so distinctly gendered, urban workspaces that mingle male and female labor alongside one another often become sites where norms of gendered interaction are underdetermined and open for negotiation. Relationships with male bosses, coworkers, neighbors, and friends are overlaid with uncertainty, anxiety, tension, suspicion, and potentiality of romance, sex, marriage, and/or material exchange. It is in crossing these social distances -- that is, in relating across generations and genders -- that women in Mbarara must exercise great skill and creativity in composing the network of connections surrounding them.

While Schuster attributed the challenges facing the "new women of Lusaka" to the rapid growth and change in cities, the fact that such similar challenges persist suggests that the teleology is misleading. I suggest that more than a juxtaposition between new and old, the predicament of urban women in Mbarara stems from the fact at least for the case of Uganda, the village remains a salient foil to the urban setting. Because such a large percentage of Uganda's population continues to live in the village and to pursue agriculture as their main form of economic activity, those who live in the urban setting must maintain relationships with rural people and places, regularly crossing what is often great social distance. As for relationships within the urban setting, "pernicious ambivalence" continues.

Living in Mbarara in 2016 and 2017

The center of Mbarara is its High Street, running from Mbarara University of Science and Technology (west) to the upscale Agip Hotel (east), along which are numerous restaurants, bars, mobile phone and electronics shops, housewares shops, clothing stores, pharmacies, hair and nail salons, a post office, five banks, two gas stations, two gyms and three small supermarkets. This downtown area is almost always bustling with activity. Early in the morning, shopkeepers rush to work and children traipse by in their uniforms, on the way to school. People line up to do their banking, the queues stretching out the doors to the banks and down the sidewalk by midday, usually. Restaurants serve food all day and into the night, and sellers of boiled eggs, tea, fresh milk, samosas, and nuts and seeds move about the street, offering their foods to any and everyone on the go, or stuck in a shop. Hundreds of *boda-bodas* (motorcycle taxis) – by far Mbarara's most popular mode of transportation -- park in pods along High Street, some drivers actively offering passersby rides, others chatting with fellow drivers, and some lying out and dozing on the back of their bikes during slow moments. Traffic in this central part of town is usually jammed, especially given the ever-growing number of cars that seem to be making their way onto Mbarara's streets. In the evenings, these sidewalks fill up even more as salespeople set down their displays of secondhand shoes, *kitenge* fabric, fruits and vegetables, roasted meat, and depending on the season, raw or roasted grasshoppers, or slices of fresh, sticky jackfruit. This downtown section is the only part of Mbarara with multiple buildings of more than three stories. While a few of these buildings on High Street include apartments, the more residential areas of the city are found by following one of the four roads radiating out of the town center.

The most common kind of house in Mbarara is a single-story room or two – a rental unit -- attached to a few other units, with shared pit latrines, shower stalls, and water taps outside.

Although almost all houses have electricity inside, cooking is usually done outdoors, over small charcoal cooking stoves, and laundry washed outside and hung on communal clotheslines. The shared water spigots and shared water bills are sources of never-ending controversy between tenants, or landlords and tenants. Quarters are close and neighbors, gatemen (*askaris*), and maids see a lot of each other's lives. These rental units may simply be alongside a road or path, where passersby also see a lot. Or, a living space may be connected to a storefront, rented with the room(s) if not run by the building's owner's wife. Slightly more expensive rentals may be enclosed within a security/privacy wall or hedge and gated, and sometimes landlords build their own homes within the same compound with their rentals. Constructing one's own house is a major milestone for males, and young men start saving as early as they can to buy land and then building materials, bit by bit. Even after they are inhabited, housing construction projects often continue for decades, as funds for adding on rooms and building security walls become available. The pattern is clear: more prosperity buys one more distance and barriers from others. Maids and gatemen are the exception to this rule, and their proximity to family affairs must be carefully managed.

Kinship

Because this dissertation takes up the perspective of young women living in the urban Mbarara setting, most of the information presented about kinship and expectations for relationships to the rural village space comes through that lens. Rather than offering an omniscient, bird's eye view of a system of kinship and exchange, the pages that follow look at urban women's relationships from an experiential, interactional, person-centered point of view. Nevertheless, having some sense of Kinyankole kinship customs is helpful as background

information, and I will briefly rehearse it here, highlighting how the current urban situation compares with what was described in the older literature, most of which is from the colonial era. Where I have drawn from historical literature, I have focused on the customs described for Iru and not Hima (a distinction I say more about on page 74) because all of my case study participants considered themselves to have come from Iru families.

The Runyankole kinship terminology reflects the unity of those connected through *obuzaare*, meaning relationships through birth. *Tata* means father, *tatento* literally means little father and refers to the father's brother, and *tatenkazi* literally means female father and refers to the father's sister. *Mawe* is mother, *mawento* means little mother and refers to the mother's sister, and *marimi* means male mother and refers to the mother's brother. The mother's sister's husband is called *tata* (father). The mother's brother's wife is called *mawe*. The word *mutabani* means son, and *muhara* means daughter, and these are extended to the children of one's brothers, sisters, and parallel and cross cousins undiscriminatingly. If ego is male, *mukuru* is his older brother, *murumuna* is his younger brother, and *munyanyazi* is his sister. If ego is female, *mukuru* is her older sister, *murumuna* is her younger sister, and *munyanyazi* is her brother. These terms are extended to brothers and sisters as well as to parallel and cross cousins on both the father's and mother's side. The spouses of one's brothers, sisters, and cousins are all called *muramu*. Thus, one's *obuzaare* comprise a bilateral sphere of kinship including both the mother's and the father's side. Kinyankole rules of exogamy prohibit a Munyankole from marrying anyone with whom he has *obuzaare*; that is, anyone who is descended from his four grandparents. But that is where exogamy ends: a Munyankole is permitted to marry his second cousins who are descended from his grandfather's sister.

Patrilineal and virilocal, in the traditional[14] Kinyankole kinship system, one's elementary political rights as a member of the community traditionally came through one's father side, while economic and emotional support came through one's mother's side. One's relationship with relatives on his father's side are politically binding, while relationships with his relatives on his mother's side were and are described as "free." Traditionally, a man leaned on his father and brothers when someone had committed a crime against him: for assistance laying court claims, forcing compensation, or avenging his death. His father and/or brothers also helped intervene and settle his marital and household quarrels. However, a man leaned on his mother's side in the event of quarrels with his father's side, or economic hardship (Oberg 1938).

Nyineka is the head of the family, and this is the oldest living male. The group over which he is head has no specific name but consists of his sons and daughters, brothers and sisters, and sons and daughters of his younger brothers. This group may be distributed across geographical space because there is no common ownership of land nor compulsory residence near one's extended family. Traditionally, *nyineka* represented the group in its dealings with the village community and with ancestral spirits. He was responsible for the members' fruitfulness and numerousness, and so, he held the power of cursing, made offerings to the ancestral spirits, disciplined unruly members of the group, settled family disputes, and ensured that young men got wives and young women got married off. Today, families continue to recognize someone as their *nyineka*, but that person's role and influence in everyone's lives varies from family to family and from individual to individual.

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[14] I use this word in the sense that my interlocutors did. In doing so I recognize it as a device of social memory and speech with real creative force in the world, rather than an indicator of a precise historical distinction between past and present, and rather than an indicator of a static system that did not change over time.

In addition to and encompassing one's *obuzaare* is one's *oruganda*, literally meaning extended support.[15] Sometimes this word has been translated into English as clan, and other times as sub-clan, but its varied local usages suggest that it refers to an amorphous group of people to whom one considers oneself related in some way, shape, or form. (I say more about this on p. 66; see also Willis 1997.) Perhaps due to the ambiguity of this term, and the presence of a variety of other terms, there is no consensus on how many clans there are in Ankole. As Justin Willis (1997) writes:

> John Roscoe, missionary and amateur ethnographer, made a first brief visit to Ankole in 1907, and reported that there were fourteen clans. After another visit in the early 1920s, he described a system of three major clans in Ankole. All other clans, he said, were sub-clans of these. Gorju, writing at the same time from considerably more experience, suggested five major clans with multiple sub-clans, and several smaller clans. Stenning, working in the 1950s, argued rather that there were four major clans, and all others were sub-clans of these. Mushanga, writing in the early 1970s, asserted that all previous authors were mistaken—he argued that the only way to identify clans was through their totems, not through their names, and he produced a list of about a dozen different clan totems, and therefore clans. Karugire, with characteristic self-assurance, wrote that 'All traditional accounts are agreed that there are four primary clans in Ankole.' (p. 589)

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[15] Interestingly, the root word -*ganda*, meaning support, shows up in the words for the central hut-posts (*emiganda*), millet (*enganda*) and extended family (*oruganda*). During the annual millet-harvest feast (*okurya omwaka*, lit. to eat the year), when every member has eaten some of the new millet, the head of the family (*nyineka*) smears some of the millet porridge on the *emiganda* saying, "We are as strong as the posts, we are as fertile as the millet." This seems to suggest that in the same way that the *enganda* (millet) supports life, the *emiganda* (hut-posts) support the sheltering roof, and the *oruganda* (extended family) supports the security of the individual. (Oberg 1938).

While it might be possible to explain the great variations in the relationships between the different *enganda* (plural of *oruganda*) as a symptom of the breakdown of a system, that explanation "assumes there once was a system, and elevates those kinship groups that have been called 'clans' to the status of the oldest, fundamental units of kin […] this assumption of historicity and of special status rooted in the English terminology of kin units, is not supported by local terminology" (Willis 1997: 593). It is for this reason that Willis (1997) has suggested that there never was an orderly system of clans and sub-clans in western Uganda, but that the varying *enganda* existed alongside each other and jostled for position as alternative social constructs, rather than fitting neatly into one another. This perspective (about which I say more on pages 74-75) aligns well with the local practice I observed of describing having one *oruganda* on one's father's side, and another *oruganda* on one's mother's side (this was also the case observed by Oberg 1923; see Willis 1997 for more on the nature of clanship in western Uganda).

In addition to the *obuzaare* and *enganda*, *bataka* groups – local burial societies – also play an important role in village associational life. *Bataka* groups were once known as *bataka kwezika* (self-burial by local people), and are said to have "always" existed, but to have become more important and prominent during the AIDS epidemic. During that time, the names of such groups evolved and they began to be called *bataka twebiseho* (self-help for local people), *bataka twimukye* (local people rise up), and *bataka tukwatanise* (local people cooperate) (Twesigye, Twikirize, Luwangula and Kitimbo 2019). Most everyone in the village belongs to a *bataka*, and membership is sometimes based on kinship, and other times on residence in a particular area. The size of these groups varies widely, and the members pool resources in order to cover the costs of hosting funerals, including a coffin, food, firewood, and water, if not chairs and tents for hosting the guests. Some *bataka* groups have actually purchased these items and own them

communally. *Bataka* groups sometimes also extend their support to relatives of their members who live elsewhere, for example, hiring a vehicle to transport mourners to attend a faraway funeral. Recently, *bataka* groups have begun expanding their activities to include assisting with medical bills, or making loans to members to help with house-building and/or business projects. While these groups have sometimes been romanticized for the mutuality, aid, and support they offer, as with any group of people, they can also be sites of tension and conflict.

It is not with the help of one's *bataka*, but of one's *enganda*, that a man can enter into marriage, because bride-price (*enzhugano*) has historically been and currently is typically more expensive than one man can afford on his own. So, he borrows or is gifted goats, cows, and today, cash, from his friends and relatives.[16] After the groom agreed upon the bride-price with

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[16] See Roscoe 1923, pp. 130-133 for a fuller description of the Iru marriage process. Briefly, when a young man decided he wanted to marry, he sent a friend to go to the prospective wife's parents and tell them of his wish. If they accepted, then the young man and several of his male relatives came to the wife's parents bringing pots of beer, which they all drank together as they discussed the brideprice. In Roscoe's (1923) account, the standard brideprice (among Iru) was "a cow-calf and a young bull, but, should the youth be unable to procure these, he was asked for fourteen goats, which were divided thus: seven for the father, three for his brother, two for the mother's brother, one for the father's sister, and one for a younger brother of the father" (p. 130). The expense would sometimes take the man several years to meet. Only after the brideprice had been paid would the bride be made ready for marriage, including being instructed by her father's sister (*tatenkazi/shwenkazi*) in sexual matters. The bridegroom then came on the agreed upon date or when sent for by the bride's father. The groom, the groom's friend, and the bride's father and brother drank a large pot of beer together, provided by the bride's father. After they finished the first pot, it was refilled and made available to other friends. The groom returned to his home, where he hosted a feast for his friends who celebrated with him all night. In the morning, he brought a goat to his grandfather's shrine and killed it there, and he and his friends ate the meat. Then his friends went to fetch the bride, bringing another goat with them and leaving the groom at home. The groom's representative entered the bride's parents' hut, where the bride's parents were waiting with her. They said goodbye to her and then her father presented her to the groom's representative, who then called for the other friends and relatives who would carry her back to the groom. In front of the bride's parents' hut, the bride held to the posts of the hut and the bride's friends surrounded her and endeavored to protect her from being taken away. (Roscoe wrote, "This struggle is to-day but rough play, representing what was doubtless at one time a real fight to defend a girl from capture" (1923:132).) Eventually the groom's company succeeded in putting her in the carrying basket, and brought her to the groom's home with three men and a girl, if possible brothers and a sister, and some girlfriends, accompanying her. At the groom's home, the father and mother-in-law received her and she sat on each of their laps in turn. Then the bride and bridegroom sat on a mat that the bride had brought with her and someone brought them millet flour, which they puffed in each other's faces. Then they boiled water on the fire, sprinkled millet flour into it, and made porridge together, which they then ate. The people who had accompanied the bride were given food and beer outside, and then they all went into the house to greet the bride; the men went back outside and danced into the night, while the women remained and drank beer inside with the bride. The bride and groom retired to bed and the groom's younger brother slept on one side of them, and the bride's younger sister slept on the other side. The marriage was not consummated until the second night. On the third day, some of the bride's relatives came bringing food gifts such as millet, bananas, and wine, which the husband drank and then offered to his wife and guests. He then sent her family away, giving a goat to each guest and a hoe to the

the bride's father, even in colonial times, it would sometimes take the man several years to come

up with the fee. Roscoe (1923) wrote that only after the man paid the full bride-price would the

bride be made ready for marriage; while that might still be considered ideal, it is far from the

norm in contemporary Mbarara. There today, many fathers allow the bride to go with the groom

before the full bride-price has been paid, and allow it to be paid gradually, and perhaps never

even finished. In other cases, young women live with a man and the man only comes to her

parents to make the marriage formal and discuss bride-price much later. These kinds of scenarios

echo what Whyte (2005) has described in Bunyole (eastern Uganda), and as she has pointed out,

they generate questions and sometimes quarrels when the husband or wife dies before the bride-

price has been fully paid.

In marriage, a woman becomes not only a wife but a partial member of her husband's

extended family. When the bride-price has been paid, she is buried there on her husband's land;

when the bride-price has not been paid or only paid in part, the burial place is less

straightforward and, in some cases, her own kin might insist that her body be brought back to

them and buried there. While she is living, her husband's family – especially her mother-in-law

(*nyinazaara*) – oversees her wellbeing and fertility. (I discuss women's relationships with their

mothers-in-law more on pages 123, 161, and 164).

Traditionally, a husband and wife would live together in a hut that the man built with the

help of his *oruganda*. The husband and wife, along with their children, formed an almost

independent subsistence unit. The husband was responsible for the heavy garden work, care of

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sister of the bride. The bride remained in seclusion in her own house for the next three months, making sure the fire
did not go out. At the conclusion of the three months, the husband made a feast. The man and wife, accompanied by
his brother and her sister, who had remained with her until this time, went to visit her parents, who, upon seeing that
their daughter had been well taken care of during this time, killed a goat and made a feast for them, the marriage
ceremonies being thus completed.

the banana grove, upkeep of the structures, and making banana beer. He provided his wife with tools, and she cultivated the food gardens and did the cooking.

Even in polygynous families, each wife had her own hut, granary, gardens, and section of the banana grove, and the wives did not cooperate in economic activities; rather, each wife grew their own foodstuffs and managed their own household affairs (Roscoe 1923). The husband would circulate between his wives' huts and whichever one he was currently sleeping with is the one who cooked for him and whom he helped with agricultural labor and caring for her children. Co-wife relationships were – and today still are – characterized by *ihari*, malice, as wives compete(d) for their husband's help and attention, and as their sons compete(d) for the succession and inheritance of their father. Wives were and are not accorded rank nor has there ever been a strict primogeniture-rule.

In this system, competition and jealousy between a woman and her co-wives and the wives of her husband's brothers (who are also called co-wives) made it easier for a woman to seek aid from her own mother and sisters. In sickness, economic stress, and family quarrels, a woman was likely to turn to her own mother, aunts, and sisters for help. Even though children grew up on their father's land, in proximity to their father's *oruganda*, as their mothers call on the help of their own female kin, children build up strong bonds with their mother's *oruganda*, on which they in turn can call later in life. If a woman felt she was being mistreated, she could leave her husband's homestead at any time and go and live with her mother or sister; even if she left, the bride-price was not refundable except in cases of infertility.

Children, in this framework, constituted crucial agricultural labor and provided their parents' most important source of insurance in old age. Some old men would turn their land over to their sons while they were still alive, and the sons worked the land and provided for their

father and mother. While a barren woman was stigmatized, a "mother of many" was highly esteemed by her husband's *oruganda*, her own *oruganda*, and the community at large. A man who had no children became an *enchweki*, severer, and the *entachweka* millet would not be placed on his abdomen at death, nor would anyone offer to his spirit (Oberg 1938). A man offered to his grandfather's spirit, and perhaps some other ancestral spirits, but the connections with one's mother's people held only during their lifetime. When a woman died, any clothing, utensils, and magical objects she brought with her into the marriage would pass to her daughter. Everything else belonged to the husband, and he passed his belongings and land to his sons upon death.

Because my project was not primarily an in-depth village ethnography, I cannot speak to the current status of these customs in Kinyankole villages. What I know about the village mostly comes through what urban women and men told me, and their accounts varied widely. Sometimes they sounded like they were describing exactly what I had read in the colonial ethnographies; other times, they mentioned unstoppable, egalitarian husband-and-wife teams in the village with a sense of nostalgia; others still spoke of frequent divorce and instability as characteristic of village marriages and families, or the village as the site of rampant witchcraft. The virtues and vices of village kinship and relationships seemed to shift with the conversation, a foil against which urban life was compared and contrasted, imagined, and made sense of.

Class

Mbarara is dusty. Or muddy. But hardly ever does the fine, red clay of the roads and soil fade into the background of everyday life (cf. Stoner 2017). Many women's mornings begin with making breakfast, and then sweeping, mopping, and wiping down all the surfaces in the house, where a barely perceptible orange film has settled over night. Shopkeepers and restaurant owners

do the same, first thing. Drivers wash their cars and *bodas* – either at home or for a small fee at one of the numerous washing bays sprinkled throughout the town.

Before leaving the compound, everyone's shoes must be brushed and shined, clothes clean and pressed. In the dry season, those walking to town often carry a shoe brush with them, along with a small towel to wipe the dust from their ankles before entering their next destination, as well as a handkerchief to wipe away the dust that sticks to sweat on the face and neck, especially when walking beside traffic, or riding on a *boda*. In the rainy season, movements from place to place stop and go, opposite the rain, and moving with a heavy scarf to drape over one's shoulders if not head, and a towel to wipe the mud off oneself is a must. As Anne Nelson Stoner (2017) writes, "To have a clean body, to wear wrinkleless unstained clothing and dustless shoes, to drive a shiny car and occupy a dustless space, all vulnerable to the every gust of wind and movement of vehicles and bodies, displayed a level of ability, discipline and diligence that meant for greater possibility, socially, economically, and politically." In Mbarara, an important aspect of these displays of discipline over dirt and dust is to signify one's distance from agriculture.

Over seventy percent of Uganda's population is engaged in agriculture (CIA World Factbook), and the western region in particular is affectionately known as "the nation's food basket." More than two thirds of households in Mbarara district derive their livelihoods from subsistence farming (UBOS 2014, Mbarara District Profile), and in the surrounding districts (which were part of the former Ankole region and from which come many inhabitants of the city of Mbarara), those proportions are even higher. Uganda is Africa's largest exporter of coffee, and in addition to that, other cash crops grown in the western region include tea and tobacco. Many small farms grow food crops, like millet, rice, *matooke* (bananas), cassava, sweet potatoes, corn, beans, and groundnuts that are sold throughout the country and the broader region.

Although many members of Mbarara's urban middle class own rural land that is farmed and/or are engaged in the chains of relationships that bring agricultural produce to market, the middle class defines itself through its distance from "digging" (*okuhinga*). Coming to town is an important step in this narrative. For the women I came to know in Mbarara, little could be worse than failing to make it "in town" and going back to the village to dig, while the rest of the world seemed to move on without them. Although rural and urban continue to serve as idioms of differentiation (Ferguson 1999), as Maia Green (2015) writes of the rural district of Ulanga in southern Tanzania, "relations between the middle classes and rural producers are no longer remote and mediated through middle-class positions in the 'bureaucratic bourgeoisie' […] but are highly personalized relations of exploitation" (p. 295, 299). Many people in East Africa today – Mbarara included -- derive their middle-class identity (including not only their purchasing power but also their aspirations, expectations about what constitutes normal life, and styles of cultural performance (Amin 2002; Leichty 2003; Shove 2004; Heiman et al. 2012)) precisely through everyday transactions with small farmers that allow them to bring produce to market, and to bring manufactured goods to "trading centers" in rural villages. As these spaces get closer together, cultural modes of articulating one's place in relation to them, may be becoming more finely differentiated.

Many Ugandans hope for formal sector employment -- and sow toward this hope by investing in secondary, postsecondary, and higher education for themselves and their children – but jobs in the formal sector are few and far between. The jobs that do exist are with NGOs (though those jobs there are said to be usually awarded purely through patronage networks), banks, the district administration, or one of the local radio stations. Lower brow work is available at two dairy processing plants (Lato and Pearl), a medicinal drinks factory (Kazire), and two

drinks bottling and distribution centers (Nile Breweries and Coca-Cola). In 2014, a Chinese

parastatal company opened Mbarara Steel Plant. More typically, the middle class seeks income

through some combination of petty urban trade, rental properties and vehicles, brokering real

estate deals (mostly done by men), and some forms of skilled labor such as hairdressing,

tailoring, or repairing electronics, especially mobile phones. There are also low paying civil

service jobs, such as teachers, nurses, or other kinds of educational and medical assistants.

Across all these kinds of occupations, income comes irregularly, so being involved in a diversity

of income-generating activities is crucial (cf. Jones 2010).

Savings groups are ubiquitous, and are important for storing up against both the stop-and-

go nature of one's wages, as well as the continuous demands on any "coins in the pocket".

Having deposited one's money with a savings group makes it morally unproblematic to say, "I

don't have," when asked. Friends, neighbors, and workmates often ask one another for gifts,

financial assistance and repayable loans; however, claims based on kin obligations often pose the

greater threat to the middle class's cash. Much like Deborah Durham (1995) describes in

Botswana, persons on relatively equal footing often make playful requests of one another – for

soda, snacks, and clothing – with the understanding that these requests are equally likely to be

granted or denied. It is when requests hearken to a frame of need and hierarchical inequality that

they are trickier to deny, both morally and pragmatically. Middle class people in Mbarara reckon

with the moral dimensions of inequality with rural kin usually first, by giving quite a lot, but

secondarily, by setting themselves up as judges of what is causing villagers' poverty (cf. Gewertz

and Errington 1999). In Mbarara, in individual conversations, church services, and public health

messages alike, I heard rural poverty attributed to moral failings in the form of polygamy,

overindulgence in alcohol, and reliance on quack witchdoctors. While middle class people in

Mbarara continue to organize their lives through networks of interdependent relationships, some of which are quite hierarchical (Scherz 2014), achieving and maintaining middle classness relies at least in part on releasing oneself from too many obligations to give. Having one's money locked up in a savings group, where it is inaccessible until the agreed upon date, helps facilitate this detachment from too much redistribution of personal finances.

In Mbarara, most but not all savings groups are segregated by gender. They tend to remain small and informal, and they may be formed by coworkers at the same workplace (be it a factory floor, office, or market place), neighbors, or members of a larger association like a church group or Rotary Club that has already brought people together (Tripp 1994). These groups have different formats and purposes. Some groups are specifically geared toward particular expenses, like paying school fees, building houses, or buying medicine (whether for a specific disease or for medical expenses in general). Others communally decide on a different item they would like to purchase each cycle, and everyone gets the same consumer good when the cycle ends. Savings groups, as well as other women's organizations (including the well-established Mother's Union, the YWCA, and the Catholic Women's Association), often offer periodic training sessions in personal, financial, and business strategies; allow members to take out loans (and many people I knew juggled loans from numerous savings groups); and become the grounds for relationships in which members provide assistance to one other in times of need (such as visiting one another in the hospital, and contributing to funerary expenses at the death of a group member's loved one).

The Rwizi Women's Savings Group, which I attended throughout my fieldwork and with whom I saved 5000 schillings weekly, was located in a relatively poor part of town and had been formed to help the women of Kashanyarazi Cell avoid the domestic violence that they found so

often followed their requests for money for school fees and household items. We met on Sunday afternoons – between church and before it was time to cook dinner – and the members each contributed 5000 schillings each week (or more shares, saving multiples of 5000 schillings, if they so chose). The sum of their contributions was paid out on a designated day quarterly (timed so that it would be around when school children's fees were due). They also had a luncheon together each year, into which everyone paid in. In addition, members of the group were divided into four subgroups. Each week, what each subgroup would bring would rotate -- either a large bar of soap, 1 kilogram of rice, or 1 kilogram of sugar – and the fourth group would not bring anything but would instead receive that week. (Each person in the fourth group went home with a bar of soap, a kilogram of rice, and a kilogram of sugar.) This part of the group's practice was less intuitive to me since the costs of those items were relatively low and did not fluctuate by more than 1000 schillings over 2016-2017, but group members explained that "at least you know you will have something to give your children." Over time, I came to appreciate the feeling of having a week off from bringing one of these items (and thus, a few extra coins in the pocket), and yet, receiving three household staples all at once. When I asked a more affluent friend, who was not part of this savings group, for her thoughts on this, she was quick to distance herself from the concerns of the participants of Rwizi Women's Savings Group. She told me that she, too, had been looking to join a savings group but she still had not found one with whom she had "shared interest." She went on to explain that her mother had been part of a savings group for years that enabled her to afford high end household goods, like a set of dishes, and curtains for her home. My friend already had all those things; she hadn't yet found a savings group whose class concerns matched her own. In this way, savings groups reflect and refract the

multidirectional, multiscale forms of differentiation involved in being and becoming middle class in Mbarara.

Schooling

The Ugandan government has offered "free" University Primary Education (UPE) since 1998, and Universal Secondary Education (USE) since 2007. As a result, hundreds of new primary and secondary schools have been established across the country. But over the same period, the population of young people in Uganda has also grown dramatically, and despite the investment in education, the public system has struggled to accommodate the growing numbers of students. Public schools, especially at the secondary level, are known for enormous class sizes, appallingly inadequate resources, and high drop-out rates.

The private education sector has also expanded, and provides a range of choices for wealthier families and engendering new forms of educational inequality. Some of these schools are funded by donor organizations, and in 2014, 750 such schools were registered and funded under a public-private partnership agreement (Vokes and Mills 2015). Private schools vary widely in both the quality of education they offer and the cost of attendance, but they are almost always better performing than the closest government school. If there is any way they can afford the additional fees, then, most parents will do it. It is hard to know the percentage of students enrolled in state schools as compared to private schools, because UPE/USE school leadership and district heads are often inflated by officials.

The 2012/2013 Uganda National Household Survey (UNHS) showed that, from a sample of 100 families in Mbarara, total monthly spending on education varied from less than $2 to more than $1200; the distribution was heavily skewed by around 20 households with a total

expenditure of more than $300/month, and spending on education was shown to increase proportionally with income (Vokes and Mills 2015: 328). While poorer households pay very little for school fees, the costs of school uniforms and stationary are also significant especially when compared with expenditures on other household items. In addition, even the poorest households, whose children attend "free" UPE and USE schools, are required to pay for extra (after hours and Saturday) tuition fees, "summer school" enrollments, "one-off" fundraisers, and extra-curricular activities charges; contribute to "building funds"; and donate cleaning materials, paper for printing, and produce for lunch in kind. Students will also need "pocket money" for "up-keep", incidental expenses, and extras, especially when attending boarding rather than day school (boarding school is the norm, and is generally cheaper when the costs of feeding children at home are taken into account).

Saving up for school fees is not easy for most people, and the same survey showed that almost one in five Ugandans took out a loan – typically through a savings club -- to help cover the costs of education. A smaller proportion of students gain access to school fees through patrons. It is standard practice for the children who are identified as having the greatest chance of scholastic success to be supported by local political figures, priests, missionaries, or even schoolteachers. Other students find a patron in one of their relatives, such as an auntie or uncle. In such arrangements, it's common for the student to show his/her appreciation by visiting the patron to show their love, providing labor for the patron's family functions, assisting with political campaigns, and providing support in times of sickness or hardship in the patron's life. Although savings associations and patronage make education possible for some, and although education is compulsory between the ages of six and twelve, nationally, primary school completion rates hover around only 50% (equal for males and females).

13% of women and 15% of men living in Uganda have an incomplete secondary school education. Only 6% of women and 8% of men have completed secondary school or gone on to higher education. Urban women (5.6 years) and men (6.1 years) spend longer in school than rural women (2.9 years) and men (3.5 years) (UBOS 2016).

Every child I met in Uganda desperately longed to attend school, to wear a uniform, and to carry a backpack. Many children can only attend school intermittently, and adults often recalled to me their shame at having to "sit" at home for a term while older or male siblings and/or village-mates were off studying. (The disparity in attendance between females and males at the primary level is 0.88 in the Ankole region (UBOS 2016)). This sitting – stasis – was perceived to be inimical to movement both now and in the future. At the beginning of the term, many students begin to study as they and their parents try to bide time from the administration to get their funds together. As school fees come due, students and their parents may call or text message anyone and everyone they know, asking for contributions and making known their desperation. Frustrated educational aspirations weighs heavy on children's hearts, as it is taken as a direct reflection of the value that others have or do not have for them, as well as the life chances that will be open to them. My housekeeper's eight-year-old nephew actually committed suicide (by poison) when his parents failed to pay school fees and he was "chased" from school.

Healthcare

Healthcare options are many in Mbarara, and individuals and families often engage with multiple modes of care (Janzen 1982; Feierman and Janzen 1992; Whyte 1997; Geissler and Prince 2010; Langwick 2011; Scherz and Mpanga 2019). Navigating this pluralistic landscape is often a family affair (Janzen 1978, 1987), and it is common for people who live in the rural

setting to temporarily relocate to town when they are unwell, staying with urban kin who not only provide hospitality, but also guidance, oversight, financial assistance, and company throughout the care-seeking process.

Government medical services and facilities in Uganda work on a referral system comprised of four levels. Level one services are provided by volunteer community health workers who are members of Village Health Teams (VHTs). They are supposed to provide health education, preventive services, and distribute basic medicines (like malaria medicine) out of their homes or in the homes of the members of their community. In practice, however, many people do not even know who the members of the VHT are in their area. In other cases, VHTs do not have even the most basic medicines, and the advice they offer seems outdated or just wrong. Village and interpersonal politics may further shape how much or little a VHT does, and for whom. Health Center II is an outpatient service run by a nurse in a government-owned building; officially, there is supposed to be one HC II for every 5,000 people. Health Center III is managed by a clinical officer with a small staff and ideally serves 10,000 people with simple diagnostic, laboratory, and maternal health services, and some basic inpatient services. Health Center IV provides all the services provided at HC II and HC III, as well as surgeries, blood transfusions, emergency care, and comprehensive obstetric care.

A busy day in the maternity ward at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital.
(Photo credit: Ojara Sande)

Mbarara's most prominent medical facility, Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, is a

Health Center IV, and as such, receives patients from throughout western Uganda. It has 600

beds, and is a teaching hospital affiliated with Mbarara University's School of Medicine. There

are several level two and three health centers within Mbarara, and it makes sense to go to these

for help with simple health concerns, since the Referral Hospital is usually so crowded, and wait

times so long. Even at Referral, though, crucial medical supplies like gloves, razor blades, and

oxygen are often not available; diagnostic machines are often missing or broken; and drug

stockouts are common. Healthcare providers are notoriously rude. Signs posted throughout the

grounds warn patients not to pay bribes because service in the hospital is supposed to be offered free of charge.[17] Those patients who have personal connections to hospital staff have the best chance at being seen promptly, and receiving the medicines they need. What may be worst about seeking care at Mbarara Hospital, though, are the sights and smells of sickness and injury borne by fellow patients, hobbling through the grounds, sitting out on the grass for lunch, or sleeping on one of the beds in the crowded wards. Even while – or perhaps in part because -- patients suffer so acutely from substandard care at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital, it remains a major site of American and European global health science and training, as numerous universities conduct medical research and send medical students there for training opportunities (Crane 2013; Brada 2011).

Mbarara's mission and private healthcare facilities are considerably less offensive, and more expensive, for the patient. There is Ruharo Mission Hospital, an Anglican based 100 bed hospital located at Ruharo Cathedral; Mayanja Memorial Hospital, a private 100-bed hospital; Divine Mercy Hospital, a 150-bed private hospital affiliated with the Catholic church; and Holy Innocents Children's Hospital, private 100-bed general pediatric hospital administered by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Mbarara. There are numerous small, private medical clinics throughout the town as well. Finally, people sometimes access disease-specific biomedical care providers through NGOs, and this is an especially popular approach for HIV/AIDS treatment and care (Whyte, 2014).

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[17] It is worth noting that these forms of lack do not characterize the HIV clinic, which is always stocked with plentiful free medicines and condoms, pristine high-end machinery, and its own laboratory. It even has some rooms that are air conditioned. Perhaps I shouldn't have been so surprised when an informant told me she would rather have HIV than diabetes. (See Crane 2013, Geissler 2015, and Benton 2015 on the exceptionalism of HIV in Africa.)

In order to bypass the costs of consulting a doctor, many people go straight to one of Mbarara's many pharmacies and ask the attendant there what kind of medicine they recommend. Some of these attendants are government trained health workers simply working in private practice, while others have no training in medicine or pharmacy at all (Whyte 1992). The medicines available for purchase in pharmacies throughout Uganda are sometimes good quality, but other times, are "fake" or expired (cf. Peterson 2014).

The shops, offices, and shrines of indigenous healers of various kinds are also found throughout Mbarara – some clearly marked and advertised for, and others, more hidden and tucked away, found only through personal connections and introductions. Uganda's indigenous healers not only treat narrowly defined illness and disease, but a much broader range of misfortunes (cf. Langwick 2011). Their expertise is curative and preventive, and moreover geared toward generating and regenerating wellness for both individuals and groups of people, often through ritual (Janzen 1979: 318, Waite 1987, Schoenbrun 1998, 2006, Kodesh 2010, Hoesing 2011, Scherz and Mpanga 2019). In southwestern Uganda and northern Rwanda especially, narratives and practices of health and wellbeing have been anchored in a robust concept of fertility, which ties together the fertility and fecundity of the land and people with the legitimacy of political leadership (Geraud 1972, Taylor 1992, Feierman 1995, Schoenbrun 2006, Vokes 2009); and the emergence of this fertility paradigm has been traced to sometime between the thirteenth and sixteenth century (Berger 1973, Tantala 1989, Schoenbrun 1998, 2006, Doyle 2007). In Mbarara today, engaging with fertility, wellbeing, and prosperity may involve a range of indigenous practitioners, who use herbs and/or interaction with various spirits to discern the causes of supplicants' problems and help them overcome them. The most general term for practitioners of Kinyankole medicine and healing are *abafumu* (sg. *omufumu*), but this word is

sometimes taken to imply the practitioner's engagement with spirits, and thus becomes a label from which some herbalists want to distance themselves. Other kinds of Kinyankole therapeutic practitioners include fortune tellers (*abarangi*), interpreters of dreams (*abashomi*), those who can remove witchcraft/poison from the body and some of whom can also set spells with their words (*abaromiki*), those who are blessed in looking for and administering herbal medicines, often whose saliva contains healing properties (*abagaburizi*), traditional bone-setters (*ababungi*), traditional birth attendants (*abazarisa*), and rain-makers and stoppers of rain (*abajubi*). Spirits called *emandwa* (which include *abacwezi*, a very powerful and important set of spirits) generally have ongoing relationships with a particular clan, having interactions of different depth and nature with different members of that clan. The living dead (Mbiti 1969) in the form of specific deceased people are closer to *emandwa* than are the living, and often act as intermediaries for beseeching *emandwa* or appeasing them (Ndyabahika 1997). *Emandwa* can also be invited into one's own life, family, or clan through sacrifices, usually with the help of a medium. In addition, underground and underwater spirits from abroad offer access to spiritual power, and especially wealth, to those who enter ongoing covenants and commitments with them (cf. Victor 2019).

This distinction between practitioners who do or do not draw on spiritual power is not reflected in the Runyankole terminology, but it certainly comes to matter for some care-seekers, particularly those who are committed to particular Christian or Islamic ideals. However, others who identify as Christian or Muslim have no qualms at all about participating with, or even being practitioners of, indigenous Kinyankole healing (cf. Hoesing 2017, Scherz and Mpanga 2019).

A pastor (who often walks around the hospital grounds) prays for a woman in labor at Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital. Photo credit: Ojara Sande.

Christianity

Religion is a central part of personal and collective life in Uganda (Scherz 2014, Boyd 2015). Approximately 84% of Ugandans are Christian: 39% Catholic, 32% Anglican, 11% Pentecostal, 2% Seventh Day Adventist, and 0.3% Baptist. 14% are Muslims (UBOS 2014, NPHC Main Report). My research participants identified as Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal in roughly equal portions; however, in practice, many of them crossed denominational

boundaries intermittently if not regularly to attend services hosted by other churches.[18] My

project did not include Muslim women, although two of my case study participants' babies'

fathers were Muslim.

I counted over one hundred churches in Mbarara. The "mainline" churches are the

Catholic and Anglican churches, and these have historically been linked with Uganda's main

political parties (Karamura 1998), although that association has waned in recent years. Most

Ugandans are born into an Anglican or a Catholic family, and are baptized into whichever church

their father belongs to. Nevertheless, moving between different denominations is common, and is

a matter about which different people feel differently. Much like seeking healthcare, people who

live in more rural settings often come to Mbarara when facing particularly acute challenges in

their lives, in order to visit the bigger churches and more prominent religious leaders located in

the city. Religious pilgrimages to sacred sites, retreats, and crusades, recapitulate this movement

from rural to urban, and again, place added expectations on those who live in the city to host and

accompany their relatives.

My engagements with Ugandan Catholicism and Anglicanism mostly through Uganda

Martyrs Catholic Church and All Saints Church (Anglican), although I also attended services and

interacted deeply and at length with members of Nyamitanga Cathedral (Catholic), Corpus Cristi

[sic] (the Catholic Church associated with Mbarara University of Science and Technology), St.

James Ruharo Cathedral (Anglican), Mbarara Kakiika Church of Uganda, and St. Peters

Kamukuzi Church of Uganda. I also had substantive involvements with the following

Pentecostal churches – which have had a growing presence and influence in Uganda since the

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[18] This is common practice in Uganda, especially given the increasing similarities across all three denominations'
styles of performance and worship, which have contributed to the disintegration of boundaries between different
denominations in lay people's perspectives (Ravalde 2019).

1980s when President Museveni relaxed restrictions on nonmainstream churches in the country (Jones 2009) -- as some of my participants sought pastoral care and healing and wellbeing there: Daystar Cathedral, Holy Spirit Fire Church, King of Kings, and Full Gospel Worship Center.

Many Christians living in Mbarara are skeptical of Pentecostal churches, worrying that their health and wealth gospels can only be made efficacious by demonic spiritual power (underground spirits), or that the leaders of such churches are motivated by the desire for financial profits. Against these dangers, the mainline churches provide some sense of safety. Yet the effect of Pentecostalism on Ugandan Catholic and Anglican practice has been significant. The Charismatic Catholic Renewal and the Healing and Deliverance services within the Church of Uganda echo many aspects of Pentecostal doctrines and practices--such as praise and worship sessions with song and dance to loud, trendy beats, and healing and deliverance services to fight witchcraft and bring inner healing, as well as financial prosperity and physical health. Many Christian prophets and prayer teams (both denominational and interdenominational) make their prayer and discernment services available for consultation, sometimes for a fee.

Small Bible study groups and fellowships are also ubiquitous, and here, the influence of the Balokole movement (also called the East African Revival) cannot be underestimated. This was a conversion movement that began in the Anglican Church in northern Rwanda in the mid-1930s and swept throughout southwestern Uganda, northwestern Tanzania, and western and central Kenya. Revivalists emphasized techniques of self-accounting for one's Christian faith, emphasizing spiritual reflection, repentance of one's sins through confession before fellow believers, and preaching the word of God so as to win souls for Christ (Peterson 2012). Further, *balokole* means saved or born-again people, and the movement never broke from the Anglican church, but rather, was said to renew and revitalize it from within. It also spread to churches of

other denominations so that today, a person who identifies as a *mulokole* (saved one) may be a member of any church so long as s/he is committed to maintaining a lifestyle of salvation reflected in true and honest speech, sexual purity, non-imbibing of alcohol, and shunning of witchcraft and ancestor worship. Small fellowship groups – often within the home or family (Bruner 2014, 2017) – have been crucial to this undertaking since the early days of the Revival and remain a vibrant aspect of Christian life in Mbarara today. Selecting a Bible study group to join repeats many of the concerns over "shared interest" mentioned above in reference to savings organizations, as the power of a corporate group is often seen to lie in the strength of its constituents' relationships with God, which is read through various markers of one's lifestyle. Opinions on which markers are important here vary, but ultimately, most everyone seems to agree that *who* prays for you is consequential, as God is more likely to answer some people's prayers than others. Linking yourself to godly people is vital.

Finally, across the many denominations and forms of Christian religious practice in Uganda, Christian relationships both with God and fellow humans continue to draw on older ideals and principles of social organization such as patron-client relationships (Scherz 2014), mediumship (Vokes 2009, Ravalde 2019), and gender complementarity (Boyd 2014, 2015). This will become clearer in the chapters to follow.

At the nexus of concerns about and aspirations toward wellbeing, prosperity, and spirituality, women in Mbarara navigate the vital conjuncture of their marriage-and-pregnancy by carefully and conscientiously laboring to achieve good relationships with desirable others and to minimize the harm that potentially flows from relationships that can never be fully negated.

Histories of Gendered Composition

In order to understand why there is so much pressure riding on women's compositional activities in Mbarara, we must consider the interlinked histories of marital and sexual practices, disease, and urbanization in the region.

Ankole at the Turn of the Twentieth Century

The kingdom of Nkore[19] came into being sometime during the sixteenth century, but the precise origins and timing are unclear (Karugire 1971; Morris 1962, 1964; Reid 2017). Nkore consisted of a confederation of clans headed by the royal clan, *Hinda*, who were cattle-keepers who claimed direct descent from a man named Ruhinda. Beyond the royal clan, Nkore was economically and culturally divided into cattle-keepers (Bahima) and cereal farmers (Bairu), who shared the same religious beliefs and spoke the same language (Doornbos 1976, 1978; Kagume 1993; Kasenene 1993). However, they looked different (Bahima having lighter skin, and being taller), and, at least by the turn of the twentieth century, held animosity and resentment toward each other. Bahima mocked Bairu for their sweat and stupidity, while Bairu cast Bahima as idle, rootless, and sexually profligate in contrast to their own Iru values of land, industry and self-control (Doornbos 1973).

The nature of the differences between Hima and Iru, their origins, and their interrelations, has been discussed and debated in terms of classes (Karugire 1971), ethnicities (Buchanan 1978), and clans and sub-clans (Mushanga 1970; Berger 1973; Buchanan 1979). However, the Runyankole terms for kinship units and social groups – *empaako, ekibunu, omuryango,*

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[19] Prior to colonialism, the kingdom was called Nkore. Ankole was a colonial creation that included the territory of Nkore as well as several small states to its west: Buhweju, Igara, Mporo, and Bosongora.

ekicweeka, ekiika, and *oruganda* – are used with great interchangeability and ambiguity of reference (Tantala 1989, Willis 1997). The lack of clear hierarchy between these concepts has complicated the way that Kinyankole social groups have been represented and counted in scholarship written in English. Terminological debates aside, what seems clear is that *enganda* (sg. *oruganda*) – while sometimes *presented* as kin groups – have actually been constituted rather as groups of clients with a particular relationship to a particular patron (Willis 1997). This explains how Hima and Iru can claim membership in the same *oruganda*, and yet, maintain that Hima and Iru are distinct descent groups. Since colonial times, population censuses have shown Bahima to make up less than 10% of the total population of Ankole (Mushanga 1970).

Clientship in Nkore and the small kingdoms to its west included arrangements of cattle-giving and cattle-loaning among pastoralists, as well as arrangements in which agriculturalists worked for pastoralists in return for an eventual gift of cattle (Roscoe 1923; Oberg 1940; Taylor 1962; Steinhart 1977). By all reports, in Nkore even more than other kingdoms throughout the region, relationships between pastoralists and agriculturalists were particularly antagonistic. Pastoralists maintained economic and political control over agriculturalists through their wealth in cattle, and tightly restricted the number of cattle that agriculturalists could acquire. The possibility of an agriculturalist acquiring sufficient livestock and prestige to achieve pastoralist status was extremely rare. Nonetheless, clientship allowed agriculturalists access to manure, which enriched their crops, as well as a small number of livestock that could be used for bridewealth to gain an Iru wife. Intermarriage between Hima and Iru was unheard of, except when a Hima woman got pregnant before she was married, in which case she was banished from the camp and had no choice but to seek refuge among Iru (Elam 1973). Agriculturalist and pastoralist women alike were completely excluded from accumulating cows and establishing

their own households. Yet Hima and Iru cultures differed widely with regard to their sexual and reproductive practices.

As anthropologist Yitzchak Elam (1973) has argued, Hima sexual mores articulated closely with the precarious nature of the cattle economy. Not only concepts of wealth in cattle, but also the almost exclusive milk diet on which Bahima lived, made a very high ratio of cattle to humans very favorable. For poorer pastoralists especially, maintaining household size was crucial. While families needed to secure sons for the patrilineal inheritance of cattle to continue (else the man's cattle be relinquished to the king), more human mouths to feed diverted milk from calves to children. With this, female fertility was recognized to have a destabilizing effect that had to be closely regulated through ritual, wife-sharing, and a concept of fatherhood defined by the *pater*, instead of *genitor*, relation. Premarital pregnancy was especially despised. Whereas girls worked hard in the camp and had slender muscular bodies, wives were exempted from all but very minimal housework and food preparation, and encouraged to develop fat, soft bodies that would be a testament to her husband's care; since corpulence was the standard for beauty, the thinness of girls and the fatness of wives is said to have discouraged adolescent boys from having sexual relations with girls by establishing the attractiveness of their married female relatives instead, who were supposed to welcome adolescent nephews and stepsons into their beds in a community-wide attempt to divert pregnancies outside of marriage, which would "'kill the cows' by bringing an extra mouth to feed and closing down an opportunity to enlarge the family herd by bringing in bridewealth" (Doyle 2013: 42). Further serving to limit family size, post-partum abstinence was up to three years long. Widows and divorcees seldom remarried, especially as polygamy was uncommon, since household heads often opted to save their bridewealth cattle for their sons (instead of spending it on acquiring additional wives) (Roscoe

1923; Elam 1973). Hima wife-sharing, however, stretched across remarkably wide sexual networks, and played a central role in solidifying male-male bonds within the camp (kraal). These bonds were crucial because cattle herding, keeping, and milking were cooperative endeavors, in which a man's relatives and friends provided the labor necessary to care for his cattle if ever he was absent or incapacitated. Thus, a woman had sex with her husband, her father-in-law, and any of her husband's friends or relatives, on both paternal and maternal sides, regardless of age (Elam 1973). So too, when visiting the camps of friends and distant relatives – a necessary means of securing access to waterpoints, labor, and loans of cattle – sexual encounters were a usual part of the exchange (Roscoe 1907). In the Hima paradigm then, camp solidarity, achieving cattle wealth, and pastoral dominance were underwritten by a model of gender complementarity in which women's fertility and sexuality was carefully managed and completely essential.

Iru sexual culture, on the other hand, prized fertility maximization and sexual restraint. Rather than seeking to marry for beauty, Iru men valued industrious women from hardworking families with *amara marungi* – good insides – shown forth in a family record of producing numerous, healthy children (Mushanga 1970). Marriage ceremonies celebrated female fecundity, both in terms of bearing children and providing agricultural labor, and the ceremonies concluded with the woman's family presenting her with a hoe at the husband's homestead. Marriage meant the transfer of bridewealth in the form of goats or cattle, which was considered clan property; in return, the woman, her fertility, and her industriousness belonged to the groom and his relatives. Although the groom's brothers had some socially legitimate sexual access to the wife, this was something that should nevertheless be done discreetly (Doyle 2013). A marriage was not considered official until the birth of the first child (Kanyadago 1991), and women who were

barren were said to feel so much shame that they returned to their parents' home out of shame even before they were asked to leave (Doyle 2013). In the case of infertility, bridewealth was fully refundable. Other than that, divorce was extremely rare. In the case of marital challenges or disputes, elders were called upon to serve as counselors, and were intent on helping solve just about anything.

Iru culture considered sex between married couples extremely powerful and sacred. Premarital sex was punished by ritual execution or banishment, and widow inheritance was standard practice. Severe spiritual consequences were understood to follow from adultery, especially during times when the marriage was under extra strain, like pregnancy or while the woman was breastfeeding. Retribution for extramarital affairs could come in the form of miscarriage, stillbirth, future infertility, and/or the child might suffer from a respiratory illness (*amkire*), be unable to walk or talk, or die. Husband and wife were supposed to continue having sex throughout a pregnancy, as male water (*amaizi g'omushaija*) mixing with female blood (*eshagama y'omukazi*) inside the woman's body was understood to create male blood (*eshagama y'omushaija*), which nourished and grew the fetus (Neema 1994). Sexual relations were supposed to resume only four days postpartum, in part because the sperm was understood to carry healing power. James Ntozi's (1993) interviews recorded thirty-three separate occasions for ritual sex (and couples reported to be following these customs as late as the 1980s).

Iru women were expected to continue producing children throughout their reproductive years. In contrast to many African societies, there was no requirement that a mother's reproductive life should stop when her daughter's began (Doyle 2013). There was a special name -- *mugole* – bestowed upon women who had more than seven children (Schoenbrun 1998). Family size was understood to have reached its maximum at 12-14 live births, and it is likely that

women deliberately used the rhythm method and extended breastfeeding periods to suppress their fertility and space births in order to maintain their children's health as well as their own. Strong pronatalism during the precolonial period was articulated in terms of personal protection (Doyle 2013). In the face of near constant Hima aggression and attempts at expansion, Bairu living in western Ankole and the small states to its west faced extreme instability, against which a large number of children helped provide physical protection. Although Nkore's Hima had long attempted to expand their dominance over these territories as well, they only succeeded with the aid of British firepower at the end of the nineteenth century (Steinhart 1977).

Early Colonial Period, 1900-1924

In the context of Britain's emerging "sphere of interest" in east Africa (c. 1884), the British established presence in Buganda, the kingdom to the northeast of Nkore, in 1894, and in Nkore and surrounding areas by way of the Ankole Agreement of 1901. The British ratified their expansion through "treaties" with royal Nkore chiefs, but they did not grant them as many powers and prerogatives as they had to Buganda rulers, creating political inequality between the two areas that persists to the present. Establishing British dominance in Nkore did not involve prolonged violence, and colonial administrators often commented on how "polite" and "agreeable" they found Banyankole (Doornbos 1978).

The Nkore kingdom included only about two thirds of the territory that would become the colonial-era kingdom of Ankole. Along with Nkore, Ankole incorporated Buhweju, Igara, Mporo, and Bosongora – all of which were weak states to the west of Nkore, populated by cultivators in much greater proportion than agriculturalists. Combining the populations of these kingdoms meant that Ankole included many more Bairu proportionally than Nkore had. At the

same time, British force backed the extension of Bahima administrative rule directly to many Bairu communities for the first time (Doornbos 1978: 67). The artificiality of this move significantly reduced the legitimacy of the kingship over these territories, and provoked struggle between clans for positions of privilege (i.e., access to land ownership, education, and religious training), resulting in profound and lasting divisiveness. Although subsequent Ankole political history is marked by the absence of dramatic or violent events, socioeconomic and political stratification would proceed along the Hima/Iru boundary until the 1930s. "The colonial situation" (Balandier 1951) – the total social fact of colonialism – constitutes a vital origin point for contemporary social and spatial relations in southwestern Uganda.

The city of Mbarara would grow up near the place where the Hima traditional ruler's camp positioned during initial European incursions into Uganda's western region. Although pastoralists moved their camps every few years (once the pasturage had been exhausted), present-day Mbarara includes the location where Ntare II was camped in 1898 when John Macallister, a senior administrator of the Protectorate arrived and appointed the site for the district headquarters (Weekes 2014). Macallister dubbed the area Mbarara, mistaking the local word for the grass that grows in the eastern plateau, *mburara*. Backed by a small body of British-officered Sudanese troops, Macallister encouraged the rapid development of the area surrounding the administrative post. Within a few years of his arrival, Mbarara had a thriving market, a post office and a police force (Weekes 2014).

Throughout this period, Ankole remained relatively isolated. Caravans from the Swahili coast were routinely refused passage through Ankole by chiefly hierarchy. (However, Nkore traders purchased merchandise from the Swahili coast from Karagwe, Tanganyika, and traveled along the commercial networks that for generations had brought salt from Lake Katwe across

Nkore to Buganda, Buhaya, and Rwanda, so Banyankole still had access to these goods.)

Meanwhile, colonists' efforts during this time were focused on developing cash cropping centers in Buganda and Buhaya, and Ankole remained relatively marginal to their interests for now. Ankole's economic peripherality and political weakness insulated the people in this region from the heightened conflict, famine, and introduction of new epidemic diseases that lead to devastating population loss elsewhere in the Protectorate (Doyle 2013). Nevertheless, Ankole did benefit from modest investment in preventive medicine introduced by the colonial government; coupled with the relatively low malaria prevalence in Ankole's savannah grasslands, death rates dropped surprisingly early, even despite Ankole's much lower levels of wealth, education, medical provision, or missionization than the surrounding territories. Beginning in the 1920s, Ankole began to experience one of the fastest population growth rates in human history (Doyle 2013: 381).

The colonial state was so marginal in Ankole that there is no mention whatsoever of the policing of sexuality in this society, whereas elsewhere in Uganda, the early colonial system was absolutely obsessed with diagnosing, monitoring, and treating syphilis, and so, passing and enforcing laws to reform marriage, gender relations, and sexual behavior (Doyle 2013: 116).

The churches also seem to have been less interventionist in Ankole than elsewhere in Uganda, and Ankole was the last kingdom in Uganda to be evangelized. While initial contact with Christianity came through Christian fugitives of the Buganda religious wars of 1886 and 1887 who sought refuge in Ankole (Obed 1995), it was not until 1902, after multiple failed attempts by Catholic and Anglican evangelists, that the king was baptized (Anglican). Also in 1902, the White Fathers arrived in Ankole; seeing that the Anglicans had already established a strong position among the Bahima, the Catholics chose not to compete with them, and began

relationships only with Bairu (Shorter 2006). The legacy of these original affiliations persists to the present, as very few Bahima are Catholic, but the Bairu are divided between the two churches.

Throughout the period from 1890-1920, the Anglican Church Missionary Society (CMS) and the Catholic missions established hospitals and schools across the country. They built hospitals in Mengo, Kabarole, Ngora, Gahini, and Kigeme, advancing a Christianity that healed diseases (Tuma and Mutibwe 1978). Christian missions provided the only educational institutions in the country, holding a "monopoly" until 1921, which "the missionaries thought of as one of the most effective instruments for salvation of man and the change of his society" (Wandira 1978: 81). Indeed, the missionaries recruited most of their converts through the schools, and in Ankole, the CMS far outweighed the Catholics in providing education. Following the First World War, Uganda's government determined that the country needed more schools, including those that offered more technical and advanced training, in order to train enough workers to meet the country's labor needs (Hansen 1986). Thus, the colonial government established an education policy for the country in 1923, regulating the missions' role for the first time. During this period, the relationship between the CMS school system became increasingly regulated by the government, the education it provided was increasingly secular, thus producing a well-educated Protestant, mostly Hima, elite.

The early years of the churches in Ankole also saw the beginning of several church and civil society associations, such as the Mother's Union and the Catholic Women's Association, which would become strong, significant organizations, especially for women, throughout the rest of Ugandan history to date.

From Labor Migration to Cash Cropping in the Later Colonial Period, 1925-1961

As the nascent cotton and sugar cash cropping centers around Lake Victoria grew, Ankole became one of East Africa's major labor reserves. Labor migration facilitated the rapid transmission of smallpox across the region, and unsanitary conditions in rest camps led to recurrent outbreaks of dysentery and relapsing tick-borne fever. Yet, despite increasing male mortality rates, widow inheritance made marriage remain nearly universal in Ankole up until the mid 1970s. A large-scale rural survey conducted in 1968 found not one female-headed household in Ankole (Ministry of Planning and Economic Development, Rural Food Consumption Survey, cited in Doyle 2013).

Labor migration quickly became the dominant economic activity for Banyankole, which meant that men were away from their spouses for long seasons. Male labor migrants working on thousands of rural cash crop farms in Buganda developed sexual ties with Ganda women,[20] and Banyankole today still joke about the exchange of sexual practices that occurred during those days as a form of globalization. Even if they impregnated them, Nkole men hardly ever intermarried with Ganda women, questioning their fidelity and fertility and fearing their men's infamous litigiousness and greed (Doyle 2013).

Meanwhile, back home in Ankole, socially sanctioned wife-sharing grew in popularity among both Bahima and Bairu, as it was understood to keep women from going "outside" while their husbands were away, and at the same time, served to increase the likelihood that the wife of an infertile man would fall pregnant, and thereby give her infertile husband progeny to raise up

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[20] Even though the spread of HIV in Africa has usually been attributed to sexual networks that took shape alongside labor migration, in Uganda, cash cropping was never done on large plantations, but rather, took place on thousands of individual families' farms in Buganda. As Shane Doyle (2013) argues, rather than labor migration, cash cropping seems to have set the conditions (improved roads, urbanization, spread of bars and dance clubs, more cash, and more transactional sex) that laid the networks through which HIV spread in Uganda.

to his own name. However, it was not uncommon to abort an ill-timed pregnancy that removed any chance of the labor migrant husband's genitorship (Doyle 2013: 208). Illegitimate adulterous affairs remained deeply associated with ritual consequences. And as for premarital pregnancy, although ritual execution was outlawed by this time, a girl who fell pregnant before marriage was typically exiled, if not least to keep her away from people's gardens and livestock, "lest [her] abuse of [her] fecundity cause crops to wither and cows to cease milking" (Doyle 2013: 205). The extreme pronatalism of this region continued. Yet, the average marriage age increased.

Many men postponed marriage until after they had worked long enough as migrant laborers to save up enough money for bridewealth, which was extremely high by regional standards (Doyle 2013). While men were away from Ankole, they could not perform the agricultural work required to earn cattle gifts from their Bahima patrons, and the Hima/Iru system of interdependence broke down. As bridewealth gradually shifted away from the transfer of clan property and toward cows paid for individually by the grooms, one might think kin-group interest in resolving marital disputes and discouraging divorce would have waned. However, when a marriage dissolved, children invariably stayed with the father as they belonged to his clan, and for this major reason, women in bad marital circumstances often chose to endure rather than leave. Church women's groups grew in popularity in Ankole during this time, and although they focused on socializing women into late Victorian ideals of domesticity, perhaps these new spaces for female sociality also helped wives mediate some of the tensions of modern married life (Kyomuhendo and McIntosh 2006).

Other than bridewealth, Iru migrant laborers used their newfound cash to invest in the two factors that defined their subservience to Bahima: education and cattle. Education developed relatively slowly in Ankole, but by the 1940s, as many agriculturalist as pastoralist children were

studying in Ankole's secondary schools. Notably, a large minority of these students were girls, and mixed schooling also led to new kinds of same- and cross-gender social encounters. All students of missionary schools had to cultivate in the school gardens, regardless of Bahima's distaste for this activity, and in some small way, this may have helped to further break down the animosity between the groups (Kyomuhendo and McIntosh 2006). By 1947, Bairu owned three fifths of the district's cattle. As academic achievement became key to administrative appointment and then shifted to incorporate ideals of representative local government after the Second World War, Bairu gained more and more chiefship positions. In 1952, Bairu became a majority on the kingdom's ruling council (*eishengeyro*) (Karugire 1971, Doornbos 1978, Karamura 1998).

In the 1950s, labor migration declined, and with it, wife-sharing practices began to decline too. Historian Shane Doyle hypothesizes that it was during this time, as wife-sharing became less socially and economically necessary, that companionate ideals took hold in Ankole.

At the end of labor migration, Ankole was Uganda's least urbanized society. Mbarara's population was only 20% larger in 1959 than it had been in 1911. Nonetheless, returning migrants had been bringing ideas and practices back with them from Buganda for decades by this point, and the number of bars, shops, and restaurants in Mbarara had been increasing. Instead of the traditional Kinyankole alcoholic beverage of fermented millet, a growing number of bars and shops in Mbarara had begun selling beer made from bananas, like they drank in Buganda. Nkole men had also been exposed to new styles of dancing (specifically, couple dancing), new sexual styles, and new STDs – all of which they brought home with them, and shared (Doyle 2013). The South Asian community that had earlier begun importing goods and opening stores in Uganda, expanded and began opening stores in Mbarara during this time.

Cash cropping in Ankole began in 1960, and the sudden wealth from coffee ushered in a decade of celebrations and greater sexual freedom (often, at those parties paid for by coffee). During the 1960s, the network of roads in Uganda majorly expanded (a project begun in the final years of colonialism and continued by Obote), and with the roads, modern bars and dance clubs slowly spread. It was during the 60s that a small number of sex workers from Buganda came to Mbarara and other large trading centers in Ankole (which were mostly for trading cattle). Women who owned or worked in bars in Mbarara also became known for having sex with their customers during these years. In Doyle's interviews, he found that because the concept of a prostitute was so stigmatized by missionaries, women who worked in bars would not accept cash for sex, but instead, would require a small token like perfume: "'there was nothing for nothing'" (2013: 211). Material transactions surrounding sex increased throughout the 60s as Ankole's conservatism gradually loosened. With expanding communications, education, and prosperity from cash crop farming, sexual networks widened and offered women not only the pleasures and dangers of sex, but also new opportunities to compose relationships with men outside of their own husband's family and their own ethnic group. At the same time, the conditions surrounding cash cropping -- improved roads, the spread of bars and dance clubs, more wealth in the form of cash, and more transactional sex – led to establishing networks and norms through which HIV would spread in Ankole.

Finally, the late colonial period saw the multiplication of various civic organizations and cooperative groups throughout Uganda, including the local branches of nationalist and ethnic political movements, old boys' and old girls' associations, hundreds of community clubs and women's clubs, interest groups such as the Uganda Council of Women, and myriad religious organizations like Catholic Action and the Legion of Mary (Doyle 2013: 386). Such

organizations and associations have remained key venues for public discussion and mobilization, and have likely contributed to breaking down the inhibitions around discussing taboo topics.

Early Independence, 1962-1971

Uganda gained political independence from Britain in October 1962, with Apolo Milton Obote as Prime Minister. As Mahmood Mamdani (1976) has argued, drawing on Uganda as his principal example, political independence in Africa did not bring an end to the colonially created forms of tribe and ethnicity that served to control "natives."

The decade following independence was marked by continuity with the late colonial period in the main economic, social, and religious activities going on in Uganda. There were no prominent campaigns to destroy the remnants of colonialism, as occurred in some other former colonies. However, in 1966-7, Obote abolished the kingdoms, unilaterally set a new Constitution in force, and took the Presidency. Political tensions began brewing and before long, would become violent; in the meantime, however, most Ugandans enjoyed a sense of improvement in their quality of life and access to opportunity under Obote's leadership.

Under Obote's government, the Ugandan economy remained dependent on subsistence farming and cash crops (coffee, cotton, tea, tobacco, and sugar). South Asian and multinational corporations expanded their importation of manufactured domestic goods and employed a growing number of male wage earners, who formed a labor aristocracy (Ingham 1958). Education and healthcare developed considerably in Ankole under Obote. In addition to the already established tradition of private Christian schooling, the Obote government built many new schools and spent an increasing proportion of public funds on education. In 1970, 39% of primary school pupils nationally were girls. However, secondary schooling options for girls

remained limited, and stories of girls coming home from school pregnant calcified into a firm reputation that discouraged many parents from "wasting their money" (Kyomuhendo and McIntosh 2006).

In their expanded commitment to healthcare spending, the Obote regime prioritized family planning and opened two family planning clinics in Mbarara – one inside the government hospital. In the late 1960s, the clinic inside Mbarara Hospital had the highest usage of family planning per capita of all the clinics in Uganda (Doyle 2013: 376). This indicates the interest of women in Mbarara in limiting their family size and spacing their births during the 60s. This might be linked to the expanding opportunities for women to work in the city of Mbarara, as well as a growing desire to have money to send one's children to school.

While the vast majority of women in Ankole continued to work as subsistence farmers, for whom having more children was advantageous in that it provided more labor, a limited number of women began to work as wage laborers on coffee and tea plantations (Kyomuhendo and McIntosh 2006:124). The population of Mbarara was growing more quickly now (it went from 3,884 in 1959 to 16,078 in 1969: an increase of 15.4% (Mugabi 1992). In town, work options for women were beginning to expand. Teaching and nursing (at least at the lower levels of these professions) were becoming accepted occupations for women. Women in town could also brew and sell local alcohol, and sell cooked food in restaurants. The Obote government also began legislating against South Asian business models that excluded Ugandans from profiting, and in Mbarara (earlier than in other parts of the country), Ugandans began taking over shops that had been owned by South Asians; through these positions, Mbarara became one of the first parts of the country where shop-keeping was an option for women (Kyomuhendo and McIntosh

2006). A steadily rising level of wealth in Ankole also led to the first elite families in Mbarara employing house-girls to help with housework and look after children.

Illicit Prosperity During Political Turbulence, 1971-1986

In January 1971, General Idi Amin Dada led an army coup that ousted Obote. Amin's military regime ushered in a period of political violence during which 800,000-1,000,000 lives -- approximately one tenth of Uganda's population -- were lost to military violence.

The sequence of political events was as follows. Amin's regime lasted until 1979, when the Tanzanian army invaded Uganda (Uganda-Tanzania War), leading to Obote's return to power. Over the next two years, tensions between Obote and younger, more radical nationalist movements grew. In 1981, the National Resistance Movement, led by Yoweri Kaguta Museveni split from the government and led a people's war on the Obote regime, during which the NRM engaged in guerilla warfare against the government troops (Bush War). In 1985, Tito Okello led a military coup against the Obote government, which resulted in six months of even greater instability and violence, until the NRM took control of Kampala in 1986 and Museveni was sworn in as President.

During Amin's reign, the formal economy collapsed, South Asians were expelled from the country in 1972, and government education and healthcare deteriorated dramatically. Uganda's medical system was characterized by drug shortages, intermittent pay for health workers, and deteriorating facilities during this time, leading to a brain drain during which many physicians left Uganda, exacerbating the demand on the ones who stayed (Dodge and Wiebe 1985). By some accounts, the brain drain was not only due to poor working conditions, but direct persecution by Amin's government who threatened (and in many cases did) disappear

intellectuals if they were suspected of sympathizing with Obote. During this era, alternative providers of Western drugs grew in popularity (Whyte 1992), and indigenous healing saw something of a revival (Obbo 1996).

Mbarara's two family planning clinics closed in the early 1970s; while Mbarara Hospital's unit reopened later in the decade, it was largely neglected by overworked medical staff (Doyle 2013). Although strong pronatalism in Ankole continued into the latter years of the twentieth century (Ntozi 1993), the unavailability of modern methods of fertility control helped contribute to Ankole's average total fertility rate reaching 8.7 in 1985.

Amin's military rule came with coercive sex and powerful displays of unrestrained abuse in public places, especially in the increasing number of bars in Mbarara (Decker 2014). Not only did these events bring trauma to individuals who experienced them, but they also changed mores around gender relations and performances of masculinity, eroding the values of respect and discreetness that had surrounded marriage, parental control, and female virtue in Ankole (Leopold 2009).

Despite sometimes violent encounters with soldiers, the 1970s were a period of prosperity in Mbarara. In the early 70s, the expulsion of Asians (who had run most of the industrial sector in Uganda) opened up numerous business opportunities for Ugandans (and patronage opportunities for Amin). But many of the businessmen who Amin appointed lacked adequate training, capital, or expertise, and the industrial sector soon plummeted. Government neglect meant that the country's roads and railways declined and declining trade with Kenya, Tanzania and Congo followed. The state printed more and more money, and inflation skyrocketed, undercutting the profitability of cash cropping (Mugabi 1992). That is, if farmers were to sell their crops officially.

As the formal economy collapsed, *magendo* (a black-market economy) took hold -- smuggling coffee into Rwanda, Congo, or Kenya, and scarce consumer goods to and from Kenya and Tanzania and providing the vehicles and spare parts that were necessary for that trade – and bringing "a lot of fat" (*mafuta mingi*) by which those days are remembered. It was during *magendo* that Mbarara became a center for collecting the produce of local farms. Whereas prior to *magendo*, Mbarara had been little more than an administrative and political center with a few schools and bars, during the 1970s, the small town came to support an urban petty bourgeoisie (Mugabi 1992). The phrase *mafuta mingi* came to refer to a class of people who made money by holding offices or official favors, and using their positions to execute smuggling deals and/or accept bribes from others involved in smuggling in exchange for allowing them to continue. Beneath these big men, another class of men (*bayaye*) made the smuggling happen by making connections with army men to provide escort to *magendo* vehicles, forging travel documents and papers, arranging for and coordinating the movement of vehicles, spare parts and consumer goods, and sanctioning those who refused to cooperate in their deals (Mugabi 1992).

Magendo and military rule came with radical changes in family and sexual culture in Mbarara. New images of masculinity, violence, and visible disregard for marriage in the form of affairs and rape (previously kept extremely secret and controlled by threat of ritual consequences), coupled with new prosperity, brought significant changes. The number of bars in Mbarara continued to grow, and sex work became much more pervasive in Ankole than it had been before (Doyle 2013). In rural settings too, more women began exchanging sex for material items (Doyle 2013). Nonetheless, by the end of the 1970s, most women in Ankole continued to cite stories about ritual execution as a powerful deterrent to premarital sex, and adulterous affairs were still understood to damage the unborn child's development (Ntozi and Kabera 1988).

Female membership in clubs and societies also grew, and these new opportunities for socializing may have contributed to the loosening codes of moral behavior. Further, although Amin's government is widely associated with the decline of education in the country, that decline did not come until the end of the 70s, and primary schooling in Ankole became almost universal during the 1970s. This facilitated a culture of dating and courtship, and an increase in premarital sex. Perhaps most significantly, Doyle's review of church records in Ankole during this era revealed that there was a marked increase in the number of cases where genitors refused to accept the responsibilities of fatherhood outside marriage (2013: 335). For the first time, single mothers began appearing in Mbarara.

From 1979 to 1986, political warfare intensified, and economic destitution followed, bringing women into new roles and situations. Some women in Ankole participated in the war that helped oust Amin by harboring Tanzanian soldiers and hiding weapons in their homes. Mbarara was pillaged during the liberation war of 1979, leading to significant population losses. Although statistics were not collected annually or did not survive this period, records do exist from 1980, which record Mbarara's population at 23,255, up only 3.4% from 1969, likely reflecting the events of 1979.

During the Bush War in the early 80s, women joined the NRM and fought beside men, sometimes carrying both guns and babies on their backs. They were also involved in spying and smuggling guns into the bush (Tripp 1994:115; Watson 1998). Many of those who were not directly involved nonetheless watched their brothers, husbands or sons "disappeared" by the state's security forces (Decker 2014). In Mbarara, husbands taught their wives to drive and run their businesses in case they had to disappear into the bush – the possibility of this necessity profoundly affecting women's self-perception as well as men's perception of women (Tripp

1994). The events of the 1980s brought added responsibility upon women to sustain their households and often kin by providing not only food (growing food crops had long been women's work), but also clothing, school fees, and health costs. Women in Mbarara expanded their involvement in urban farming, and out of necessity, many more entered the cash economy through self-employment and joint ventures.

It was during the early 1980s – just before Museveni took power -- when HIV emerged in Uganda. Moving through the networks and practices laid during the 1960s and more firmly established during the 1970s, the disease ravaged the population of Uganda. Uganda was the place where HIV was first a mass *rural* epidemic, reflecting the way that personal networks often extended beyond the urban milieu, crossing small towns with trading centers and even single families' rural farms (Obbo 1993 Iliffe 2006; Kuhanen 2010). By the late 1980s, 13% of the population of southern Uganda was HIV positive (Whyte 2014).

Peace is a Relative Term: The Early NRM Period, 1986-2000

Museveni's presidency brought a period of relative peace to Uganda as military and political stability were restored in much of the country in 1986. The NRM Government sought to advance economic development by restoring property to South Asians and welcoming foreign investment, along with implementing Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs). The beginning of Museveni's presidency coincided with reforms in World Bank policies in the late 1980s and early 1990s to increase Uganda's gross domestic product by forty percent between 1987 and 1997. As China Scherz (2014) sets out, Museveni implemented a market-based agenda, reduced public spending, devalued currency, and liberalized the coffee market. By these successes, Uganda established itself as a model for international development, a good investment for loans,

and a worthy recipient of aid. However, for people living in Uganda, the SAPs have led to drastically reduced household income levels, and increased costs for education and medicine (Hansen and Twaddle 1998, Reinikka and Collier 2001). These added burdens have meant that women, in particular, have had to assume increased financial responsibilities, whether to supplement the income of their husbands, or as household heads—in addition to their domestic responsibilities. In this milieu, small civil society and financial associations have assumed even more importance to assist in generating income, and in providing opportunities for training toward income-generating projects and business skills (Tripp 1994; Kyomuhendo and McIntosh 2006).

NRM leaders were influenced by socialist thought and its emphasis on gender equity, and so, have promoted affirmative action policies for women in government and education. Government policies set aside seats for women in government at all levels, and introduced an affirmative action measure designed to increase the number of women entering public universities (Kyomuhendo and McIntosh 2006).

Even more significantly, the government also established Universal Primary Education in 1997, by which all children could study at government-supported primary schools without paying fees. (The family was/is still responsible for providing a uniform and some school supplies though.) The program resulted in an enormous increase in primary school enrollments (especially of girls), but class sizes are very large, and school buildings, libraries, and numbers of desks and books, often inadequate.

With the expansion of schooling, many young people's hopes and expectations for formal sector employment have also expanded (cf. Masquelier 2019). But the private sector jobs most people imagine obtaining are few and far between. At the same time, although Uganda's national

economy was strongly committed to liberalization in the 1980s, the emphasis has gradually

reduced, and the few formal sector jobs that do exist are beset by expensive licensing

requirements and complex bureaucracies, often riddled with corruption. Although the NRM

period has seen an increasing number of women involved in work outside the home, only very

few have attained employment in high status professional work; much more commonly, women

have been working as retailers of food, drink, cloth, and clothing.

In the realm of health and healthcare, government involvement increased. Between 1980

and the early 2000s, Uganda famously led the way in reducing HIV prevalence in Africa, the

prevalence dropping to about 4% in 2003. This success likely came about, at least in part, due to

the willingness to discuss HIV at all levels of society, and above all, within the local community

(Low-Beer and Stoneburner 2003). From the time Museveni took power, he mobilized the

country around the AIDS epidemic as a way of bringing more of society under national purview

(Swindler 2009). The country embraced a policy of openness about HIV/AIDS, acknowledging

the centrality of donor involvement as a strategy of state-building rather than a sign of weakness

(Whyte 2014:143). Perhaps the many organizations, associations, self-help groups, and Bible

study fellowships that had become so firmly entrenched since the early colonial era provided

venues that allowed Ugandans to talk openly about the disease.

Along with the government's focus on HIV/AIDS and procuring foreign aid through it,

the NRM government also expanded the national regulation of traditional medicine. In 1988, the

government authorized Uganda's Director of Medical Services to establish a national

organization called "Uganda N'eddagala Lyayo" (Uganda and Its Medicines) means to regulate

all traditional medicine in the country. The organization's stated aims are to "protect traditional

healers from involving themselves in killing people through spiritual powers and dangerous

herbs" (Ministry of Youth, Culture and Sport, note to all Culture Officers, cited in Peterson

2015). Through a series of meetings in 1988, Uganda N'eddagala Lyayo became a way of

establishing 'traditional medicine' as something bureaucratic, scientific, and entirely separate

from witchcraft, which remained (and remains) illegal and demonized. Taking a cue from

neighboring Tanzania, where similar efforts had been under way since the mid-1970s, Ugandan

officials and healers began working together to test, regulate, and market herbal medicines (see

Langwick 2011 on Tanzania). As Derek Peterson documents, in the early 1990s, "Uganda

N'eddagala Lyayo's leaders appointed 'health inspectors' in each district, charging them to

ensure that healers worked hygienically. There was also a 'Religion and Traditional Affairs

Secretary', who was responsible for 'narrowing or eliminating the differences' between the

association and the Christian churches" (Peterson 2015:22). The organization's work might be

seen as part of a broader movement to establish "traditional medicine as cultural property, as part

of an assemblage of artefacts that could represent Uganda's culture," and to capitalize on its

distinctive national essence (Peterson 2015:22). The organization continues to operate to date.

The early NRM period was also marked by increasingly Pentecostal and Charismatic

forms of religious life. In the 1980s, Museveni relaxed regulations on non-mainstream churches,

leading to an efflorescence of Pentecostal churches. In response to falling numbers, the Catholic

Church launched the Charismatic Catholic Renewal, and the Catholic and Anglican Churches

both began adopting more charismatic styles of worship, along with new emphases on fighting

witchcraft and providing spiritual healing. Increasing similarities across all three denominations'

styles of performance and worship since that time have contributed to the gradual disintegration

of boundaries between different denominations in lay people's perspectives (Ravalde 2019).

Beyond churches themselves, there has also been a rise of charismatic authority more generally

across East Africa from the mid-1980s onward, which has been facilitated by the increasing

ubiquity of radios (Vokes 2007)

President Museveni and his NRM government remain in power today. In 1993, Museveni

restored at least most of the traditional kingships (with the exception of the Ankole kingship,

which is notably Museveni's own home region), giving them political recognition but not

political power. Under the NRM government, amendments to the constitution established direct

presidential elections, but incrementally increased presidential term limits until removing them

altogether in 2018.

Unknowability and Indeterminacy, 2000-Present

Uganda remains financially dependent on development assistance to meet its national

budget and the international economic community regards Uganda as the country that has

adopted the neoliberal reform package most extensively (Harrison 2006). For agricultural

producers, the dynamics of privatization and liberalization in Uganda have been shrouded in

uncertainty, unpredictability, and propaganda and misguided state advice (Weigratz 2010, 2016).

This deception – or at least under-information -- has resulted not only in undue material losses

for many people, but also exaggerated emotional upheaval (Tangri and Mwenda 2001, 2003,

2006; Mwenda and Tangri 2005; Mwenda 2007). Insecurity and uncertainty have been part of

everyday life in Uganda for a long time, especially during the years of political conflict, but this

upending of economic and social production and reproduction, has introduced radical

unpredictability to new realms of life. For example, as Jorg Wigratz (2010, 2016) has argued for

the Bugisu region in Eastern Uganda, as neoliberal reforms dismantled agricultural cooperatives

in the 1990s, commercial agricultural quality control practices have shifted to become the

purview of traders (many of whom are agents for the larger national and foreign exporting corporations) instead of community members. This change in structure rendered local moral economies of accountability moot, leaving rural farmers with little choice but to accept traders' malpractice. Face-to-face rural trade practices have been characterized by more and more fraud, deception, and trickery, leading to the sense that the current moment is defined by the normalization of *faking*. Further, throughout my fieldwork, it was common for employees' paydays to be deferred indefinitely, and this happened to brick-makers, domestic workers, schoolteachers, bankers, insurance agents, shop attendants, restauranteurs, doctors, and university professors alike – who then had to turn to other ways of "finding money" to meet their needs, frequently leading them to pull together diverse income portfolios in a pinch. They enter into risky deals, and these deals often go bad. Through these experiences, people learn to cautiously evaluate others before moving forward with the wrong employer or business partner.

The ever-delayed progress in Uganda's nascent oil sector further contributes to the sense of an unpredictable economic terrain. Major oil discoveries in the Lake Albert region suggest that total oil reserves in the area may be as high as 2.5 billion barrels, making this one of the largest onshore oil fields in sub-Saharan Africa. Once oil production is up and running, it has the potential to transform Uganda's agriculture-based economy and to generate thousands of local jobs. But the politics surrounding all of this are, of course, complex. In particular, legal wrangles between oil companies, a series of bribery scandals amongst high-up government officials, and hot debate over oil legislation have slowed the process (Vokes 2012). Although long-anticipated drilling for oil began in earnest in 2006, visions of full-scale oil production seem to crystallize and then fade, crystallize and then fade, coming into and out of view on Uganda's horizon.

Further, government policies on imports and relationships with China and India have led to reductions in the price of technologies like mobile phones, which have played and continue to play a central role in facilitating the movement of goods into and out of rural districts, shaping imaginaries concerning physical and social mobility, and contributing to the growth and stylistic distinction of Mbarara's middle class (Vokes 2018). At the same time, these mobile communication technologies make possible new forms of interpersonal deception and secrecy (Archambault 2017) – both with regard to business and to romantic relationships and friendships (and of course, the lines between these can be blurry).

Romantic, sexual, and marital relationships have also become increasingly uncertain and contested in contemporary Uganda, as evident in the ubiquitous campaigns, debates, and NGO and church programs about issues of marriage, family life and sexuality. These have included the controversy surrounding the internationally infamous Anti-Homosexuality Act (introduced as a bill in 2009 and briefly passed into law in 2014), protests against the 2013 Marriage and Divorce Bill which some said would make divorce "too easy", efforts to limit the sale of pornography, a national ban on wearing miniskirts, and the support of youth abstinence and marital faithfulness as AIDS-prevention strategies (Boyd 2014). These conflicts reflect a sense of moral insecurity pervading gender and family life in contemporary Uganda.

Issues of male-female intimacy are especially fraught in the urban milieu where rising rates of cohabitation, diminishing rates of formal marriage, and a climbing average age at marriage contribute to growing fertility anxieties, alongside the enduring risk of HIV (Boyd 2015; Parikh 2016). These patterns are not the automatic result of urban modernity, but rather, follow from the way that residents imagine and experience this specific urban setting. Features of urban living – including lack of supervision by elders, easy access to abortion services, and wide

exposure to interrelated temptations of alcohol, drugs, and prostitution – are understood to set the scene for an incredible amount of sex. In turn this is understood to furnish extramarital affairs, premature sexualization, and a vast number of abortions. Statistics on abortion rates in Uganda suffer from a high response bias and estimates range widely, saying that anywhere from 18% to 50% of women have aborted, many of them while in secondary school (Prada et al. 2016, Natukunda 2018). Abortion is illegal in Uganda, and is often carried out at home with the help of one's mother or sister, or by a traditional healer who may or may not have the necessary resources to complete the abortion safely. There are such high numbers of incomplete- and post-abortion emergencies that Mbarara Regional Referral Hospital has established a permanent "Fertility Clinic" whose express designation is to receive these cases. By my count, botched abortions send ten new women to the Fertility Clinic in critical condition every day. Abortion complications often do indeed endanger a woman's future fertility. In light of this sense, many men refuse to marry, or are forbidden by their parents to marry, until their girlfriend proves their fertility by first bearing them children. Yet while men may insist on children-before-marriage, women often worry that the man may "disappear" when the baby is born and the responsibilities set in. (I discuss the tensions surrounding the marriage-pregnancy sequence in further detail in Chapter 4.)

The dangers of transacting and relating with unknown and/or unreliable others often animate and are animated by church sermons in Mbarara, and I heard warnings of "soul ties" and "spiritual bondages" in Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal churches alike during my fieldwork. These doctrines warn believers of the dangers of affiliation with demons, into which one can enter without even knowing it, through familial inheritance, sex, close friendship, or business partnership. Such affiliations become "drains" on one's life, which funnel vital flows of money

and sentiment away from you, preventing you from "moving" through life as you should. The concern surrounding relations with others and their invisible spiritual ties has been reinforced through the social memory of millenarian movements that have caused great harm and mass death in nearby regions, most notably the Movement for the Restoration of the Ten Commandments of God in Kanungu District which resulted in the death of 395 people (roughly 150 km away from Mbarara, but held widely in memory) (Vokes 2009). Other illustrations of others' dangerous unknowability include churches that are secretly privately-owned proprietorships and take collections for personal gain, and prosperity doctrines that have bankrupted many. (An oft-cited example during my fieldwork was a particular pastor who had blessed rice and was selling it, very expensively, promising that those who ate it would receive physical healing; some families decided to spend what little money they had on this rice, instead of transportation to the hospital.) On an interpersonal level, entering into a business deal (such as a truck-driver for your logging business) or employing someone (like a domestic servant or a shopkeeper) who has relations with devils could result in a curse upon you that brought physical, marital, and/or financial hardships. Across all of these examples, the point is that you cannot know others' true spiritual affiliations, until you have received wisdom, guidance, and discernment from God.

With regard to health and healthcare, over the past two decades, Uganda's therapeutic landscape has come to intertwine nationally and internationally funded so closely that they are indistinguishable. Uganda is a major site of global health science (Crane 2013), and this has created an "archipelago of well-protected islands of modern science and government" in a sea of underfunded sites of biomedical care (Geissler 2015:14). International funding takes various forms -- medicines, buildings, medical tourists, training – and is directed at various health issues

-- immunization, essential drugs, malaria control – but is most evident in HIV/AIDS treatment

centers. Given the piecemeal distribution of donor funding for healthcare, biomedical care is not

available to everyone equally. Further, health care in Uganda is "notorious for poor service,

understaffing, stock-outs of medicines, inadequate equipment, and indifference or rudeness to

patients—at least for those who were not known to the staff or willing to supply 'tea' in the form

of a little cash" (Whyte 2014:150). Throughout Mbarara Hospital during my fieldwork, signs

were posted in Runyankole warning patients that they should not be asked to pay anything

because care was provided for free there. But in practice, giving health workers or other people

in power some "tea" or "waterbottles" might be one of the only avenues available for influencing

health workers' hearts to your benefit; in this context of severely limited resources, their favor

might mean the difference between life or death. Traditional healers are also ubiquitous in

Mbarara, but their practices are often shrouded in mystery and even confused with witchcraft by

many Ugandans (cf. Hoesing 2017).

The pervasive sense of instability and insecurity in contemporary Uganda – and the fact

that many personal relations explicitly include practical efforts to gain a greater measure of

security over one's life – makes deception an expected aspect of relationships with almost

everyone. While the rich Africanist ethnographic record suggests that this is nothing new (cf.

Evans-Pritchard 1937; Piot 1993; Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; Geschiere 2013; Cole and

Thomas 2009; Ravalde 2019), in Uganda today, the widespread sense of faking, deception, and

distrust have resulted in intergenerational accusations of moral degeneration and decay. It is

perhaps in relation to strained cross-generational relationships, and heightened intergenerational

tensions over what constitutes moral behavior, that talk and openness about sexuality have

become more inhibited in recent years, perhaps contributing to rates of HIV increasing again (Reddy 2005; Parikh 2007).

These Women are a Set

This brief history of the gendered dynamics of composition in and around Mbarara has shown how over time, there has been a funneling of risks and responsibilities more and more onto the shoulders of women in this urban setting. The population of Mbarara municipality has increased by 338% since 1984, changing the dynamics of anonymity and familiarity, perhaps especially among the emerging middle class. I have argued that, surrounded by agricultural areas, Mbarara is imagined by its Banyankole inhabitants first and foremost through its contrast with the rural. It is a place where modern belonging is within reach, not only because of the goods and services available in the city, but also through the kinds of relationships that can grow there. Living so close to a plurality and diversity of others furnishes opportunities to create social bonds with them (see Bayart 2000 on the value of "extraversion"). However, the very aspects of urban relationships that fill them with potential -- proximity, plurality, and anonymity -- also make them risky. In this setting, women's increasing independence is haunted by rampant deception (whether new or not). This danger compounds with the way that responsibilities have been shifted more and more onto women to multiply the pressure riding on women's compositional activities.

At the same time, because women in Uganda are so closely identified with their fertility, the ways they negotiate their entrance into married motherhood highlights an irreducible aspect of these women's lives. Thus, even with the forms of sociological breadth that the women of Mbarara represent, I view them as inhabiting a powerful common category, defined by their

shared position within the "vital conjuncture" (Johnson-Hanks 2006) when they were eligible to

enter married motherhood.[21] Across differences in age, socioeconomic position, and marital

status, women in Mbarara all faced pressure to marry and begin bearing children before age

thirty, and to form their families in relation to a network of others, by whom, through whom, and

with whom they would *move*.

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[21] Although several ethnographic and historical accounts have demonstrated the distinction between biological and social motherhood (Johnson-Hanks 2006, Stephens 2013), I have not found any historical nor living sources that suggest that social motherhood can be achieved through anything but biological motherhood in southwestern Uganda. Therefore, I treat giving birth as the locally relevant entrance into the social category of "motherhood", and the adjoined moments of marriage and giving birth as the threshold for entering social adulthood for women in southwestern Uganda.

Chapter 3: Pace

Hello dear.

How are you?

Fine, how are you?

I'm ok. How is the day?

It's fine. How is there?

Here is very fine. We have rain.

Yes, we are also having rain.

Ok dear, I was just greeting you.

     --Online exchange between Abigail and a potential male patron, Mbarara, Uganda

Like many mothers of young children in Mbarara, Abigail spent most of her time at home washing clothes, preparing food, and cleaning up after her baby. While doing so, she almost always had her phone in hand. She and her neighbor – both single mothers – had chipped in together to afford a phone that could support the web-based application WhatsApp, which provides the most popular mode of text-based interaction in Uganda. Whenever it was her turn with the phone, Abigail was chatting on WhatsApp with men whom she had met through church, school, or friends of friends. Many of them figured as potential marriage partners or financial providers, and chatting with them, Abigail explained, was part of "working for good life for [her] son."

Their WhatsApp conversations usually amounted to extremely repetitive versions of the exchange above. If monotonous, this regular contact encouraged the possibility of advancing

relationships. At any moment, any one of these WhatsApp relationships might scale up into a business or marriage opportunity; as she often said, "You never know."

Budgeting money for airtime to engage in brief but regular exchanges on WhatsApp figures as an everyday priority for almost all of the young adults I have come to know in Uganda. Their investment in regular contact with one another reflects their understanding that good life (*amagara marungi*) springs from a network of good attachments with others. Over time, I have come to see their repetitive conversations as part of a kind, which I call pregnant pauses: moments where intentionally pausing to check in with each other and come together opens up a contingent space where "you never know" what might happen next.

Waiting Willfully

In this chapter, I consider how this willful waiting on others figures in young women's efforts to advance through the life course and achieve married motherhood in Uganda. I argue that this temporal orientation is at odds with the forms of agency often assumed to underlie effective social action. In so doing, I bring arguments from the anthropology of agency into dialogue with discussions of delayed entry into social adulthood. Rather than viewing pauses in progress as an obvious outcome of material lack, I consider pause as an alternative orientation to time and movement, chosen quite intentionally.

A burgeoning literature on "waithood" explores how forces of capitalism have closed off young adults' opportunities for social and economic advancement that were available to earlier generations, in both the Global South and the Global North. Soaring unemployment rates and increasing socioeconomic inequality make it increasingly difficult for young men and women to achieve the markers of social adulthood: namely, to marry, establish households, and support

their relatives (Durham and Solway 2017). Across ethnographic situations, the literature documents a sense of shame, tedium, and restlessness that pervades the experience of waithood, whether youth pass their time talking politics in barbershops (Weiss 2009), holding elaborate tea ceremonies (Masquelier 2013, 2019), or watching foreign films together (Mains 2011). In turn, the literature suggests, their prolonged suspension between childhood and adulthood threatens the stability of national governments and economies as waithood tempts youth toward anomie, violence, and prostitution (e.g., Singerman 2007; Dhillon and Yousef 2009; Hansen 2005; Jeffrey 2010; Honwana 2012, 2013). In this way, the waithood literature encodes an assumption that humans' natural state is to want to move forward through the life course as quickly as possible.

In contrast to the youth represented in the waithood literature, many of the young women I came to know in Mbarara deliberately punctuated their movement through the life course with periods of patient waiting, choosing to abide in waithood until the right circumstances to emerge from it came along. I argue that this was because their first priority was not to advance through the life course as fast as they could, but rather, to advance the right connections with others, which take time to build. In vivid contrast to the ideal of speed, these young women chose to pause and allow time for gradual processes of coming together.

The other-directed quality of willful waiting points to a conception of agency that exceeds self-determined individualism. In recent years, anthropologists have dismantled the notion of agency as freedom from external pressures (Ahearn 2001a, 2001b; Mahmood 2005; Keane 2007; Laidlaw 2014; Scherz 2014; Khan 2018). In sub-Saharan Africa specifically, the ethnographic record has shown how alternative ideas of agency unfold through orientations to time (Bledsoe 2002; Johnson-Hanks 2006; Scherz 2013, 2018). Like these scholars, in this

chapter I show how Ugandan women's willful waiting for the right connections to form helps us think about how culturally and historically variable ideals of agency affect the ways people experience and negotiate their place in the world through temporal practice.

Instead of reading waiting as a purely passive position (Crapanzano 1986), nor merely as productive of emergent regimes of value (Kwon 2015; Melly 2017), I point out that waiting can be chosen for its own sake. Even so, who waits for whom, for what, and under what conditions, are acutely political questions, revealing how different social actors are positioned vis-à-vis hierarchies of power (Munn 1992; Bourdieu 2000; Knauft 2002). As Adeline Masquelier (2019) has recently argued, multiple temporalities and forms of futurity unfold simultaneously, converging, intersecting, and layering atop one another. Like Masquelier, I am interested in the ways that waiting not only signifies "enforced inactivity," but also becomes part of the "daily micropolitics through which forms of being-in-the-world and spaces of belonging are elaborated" (p. 5) against a backdrop of severely narrowed futures in the face of economic insecurity and widespread joblessness.

To date, the literature on youth temporalities has focused almost exclusively on men, and with this chapter I join the few scholars who have written on young women's temporal practice (Johnson-Hanks 2006; Weiss 2009; Cole 2010; Moore 2018). Because women in Uganda are so closely identified with their fertility, focusing directly on the ways they negotiate their entrance into married motherhood helps highlight an irreducible aspect of their experience that has no direct comparison in the male experience. Moreover, because pregnancy is such a transformational period in one's life and social relationships, I suggest that it may offer a special window into the commitments, strategies, and resources through which women living in southwestern Uganda draw near to, and distance themselves from various possible futures.

Further, by exploring how women in Mbarara make use of waiting to orchestrate the timing and sequence of the marriages and childbirths, I suggest that *pace* offers a useful analytic frame for thinking through the relationship between time and agency without assuming or privileging forms of agency that look like speed and self-actualization. In seeking to explain why women in Mbarara choose specific patterns of stop-and-go, I point out that they engage in time-sensitive processes of arriving at insight about, and earning favor from, others – and that these processes are necessary for identifying and pairing oneself with the others alongside whom one wants to walk through life.

An anthropology of pace draws inspiration from a rich genealogy within social theory. In Meyer Fortes's (1949) "Time and Social Structure," he described the composition of households and lineage groups as shifting over time, based on the constituents' ages and life stages in relation to one another. Also dealing with processes of interpersonal synchronization, though on a much more micro-interactional level, Alfred Schutz (1951) developed his theory of social relationships based on the coordination of separate persons' "inner time" shown outwardly to one another through signs, as in members of a string quartet making music together. Thinking of such processes in terms of pace allows me to recognize the timing of movement as fundamentally interpersonal and relational. Further, while the concepts of tempo and rhythm emphasize external temporal stimuli (Durkheim 1965; Evans-Pritchard 1969; Mauss 1979; You 1994; Bourdieu 2008; Guyer 2007; Bandak 2014; Archambault 2015), and while the concept of entrainment refers to the syncing up of internal bodily rhythms with external temporal cues (Collins 2014; Coe 2015a, 2015b, 2016), pace offers something different in that it draws attention to the intentionality involved in linking one's own life up with others'. Through the lens of pace, I make use of ethnography to show how vernacular patterns of agency-in-interaction are

central to the interplay between movement and stasis in the particular sociohistorical experience of women living in urban Uganda today.

The Moral Discourse of Movement

The problems of relationships in Mbarara – marital and otherwise – have been articulated largely through a moral discourse of *movement* (cf. Haynes 2017). Hardships follow when one *rushes* into an attachment with the wrong person, and conversely, when one *gets stuck*, failing to advance good relationships. Successful movement, then, hits the right pace between these two contradictory imperatives – *don't rush* and *don't get stuck* – which stand in productive tension. The dangers of acceleration and the threat of getting left behind echo familiar narratives of capitalist transformation (Harvey 1989, Rose 1996), but I do not wish to read orientations toward time in Mbarara as merely *reflecting* universal properties of capitalism; rather, increasingly capitalist conditions *refract* and become meaningful through longstanding regional idioms of social action, in relation to national economic shifts, changing marital and sexual norms, and vernacular Christian discourses on discernment (cf. Cole and Durham 2008, Chua 2011).

Idioms of flow – "the rivers of life" (Turner 1967) – have organized social processes of production, exchange and fertility in East and Central Africa since well before colonialism and continue to reverberate throughout the region (Janzen 1979; Waite 1987; Feierman 1985; Taylor 1990, 1992; Neema 1994; Schoenbrun 1998; Geissler and Prince 2010; Vokes 2013). In this emic paradigm, flow is positively valued and irregular movement (whether overflow or blockage) is considered negative.

In contemporary Mbarara, this cultural vocabulary is inflected by stoppages and flows of economic opportunity and resources. In relation to the contracted employment and economic

opportunities described in the previous chapter, throughout my fieldwork, it was not uncommon

for employees' paydays to be deferred indefinitely, leading them to engage in what they called

kugiiya, "moving up and down, looking for something, anything, from which to 'squeeze' [out]

money" (cf. Jones 2010; see also Archambault 2015). In the process, it is all too easy to fall into

bad deals, working for what doesn't pay or getting scammed outright. Through these

experiences, people learn to cautiously evaluate others before moving forward with the wrong

employer or business partner.

Romantic, sexual, and marital relationships, too, have become especially uncertain in the

urban milieu, where rising rates of cohabitation, diminishing rates of formal marriage, and a

climbing average age at marriage contribute to growing fertility anxieties, alongside the enduring

risk of AIDS (Parikh 2010, Boyd 2015). Unmarried men I spoke with voiced concerns that

women may have previously had an abortion that compromised their subsequent fertility and

thus might lead the man into a childless marriage; women worried that outside of wedlock, a

man might "disappear" when a baby is born and the responsibilities set in. This gendered

distribution of risk led in many cases to considerable anxiety and negotiation over couples'

marriage-pregnancy sequence – a negotiation which men usually won, particularly in cases

where women really needed to get married (e.g., in cases where they had fewer connections and

less access to resources).

Further, vernacular Christian doctrines on the promises and dangers of opportunities and

relationships shape and are shaped by discourses of movement and flow. Despite theological

differences between Ugandan Catholicism, Anglicanism, and Pentecostalism, all three of these

denominations share an emphasis on God's temporal agency and autonomy, and humans'

obligation to acknowledge and interact with God over their personal relationships and life trajectories, or else miss out on blessings if not incur curses, in both this life and the next.

Under these sociohistorically particular circumstances, pause provides a crucial stop-valve on the flows of life, allowing the ambiguities of urban relationships to resolve. To this end, the tension between not rushing and not getting stuck becomes the site on which social actors work to coordinate with others, to entrain their own senses with someone else's, to tap into the right flows: to pace themselves.

Don't Rush

When Mariam married Gerald, she didn't know what she was in for. Shortly after they got married, he was caught accepting bribes at work and lost his contract. He had lied to Mariam about his financial situation, telling her that he was much better off than he actually was. And she had fallen for it. She saw that he drove a car, but she didn't notice that there was oil leaking from it because he couldn't afford to fix it. She appreciated his fancy apartment, but failed to realize why people so often came around it looking for him: to collect debts. His clothes were always neat and clean, but Mariam never recognized the gateman's rudeness as the sign that it was that Gerald had not paid him for washing clothes in several months. Signs of wealth and moral character are easily faked, and the untrained eye that is not used to "looking at money" might fail to pick up on the true evidences of it.

The figure of the conman (*omuyayi*) not only haunts romantic relationships, but also business deals and religious encounters alike. He may wear fancy clothes, drive a car, and attend church regularly. But those clothes may be borrowed, the car may have been purchased while neglecting to feed his children or send his siblings to school, and even "children of the devil" can

be found inside Christian spaces. Representing the dangers of relationships with strangers, the conman reflects the vulnerability in knowing, trusting, and connecting with those unknown to you.

Throughout my fieldwork, I heard the admonition "*Topapa*," meaning "Don't rush," expressed between peers, as well as in more hierarchical relationships, to caution against the dangers of haste in many areas of life. For example, one should be careful not to travel too fast – whether speeding while driving, or taking sub-optimal modes of transportation that may promise to get there quicker. When moving by *boda-boda* (motorcycle taxi), if the driver is speeding too fast, the driver should gently remind him, "*Mporampora, mporampora*" meaning -- "Slowly, slowly; slowly, slowly" – the beginning of the best-known Kinyankole proverb – "Slowly, slowly, the earthworm reaches the well" (*Mporampora, ekahisya omunyongororwa aha iziba*), which also has many other variations beginning with "Mporampora." Driving too fast doesn't allow time for the driver to see others on the road, or hazards in his way. One should also avoid choosing a *boda-boda* too quickly, especially when you don't know the driver or he or his motorcycle do not look clean and well-kept: "That is risking your life." He might be doing drugs, fail to see thieves on the way, or intend to rape you. The temptation to get into an overstuffed taxi (*matatu*) – though it may bring you to your destination faster or be cheaper since the conductor has gotten so many passengers – should also be avoided since it weighs down the vehicle dangerously, suggesting that the driver-conductor team are more committed to profit than safety and can't be trusted to drive safely.

In a 2016 Baptist youth retreat on the theme, "True Love Waits," the church distributed red t-shirts with the word *topapa* printed across the chest in white lettering, all capitals. Although borrowed from Luganda, in Mbarara (where the main language is Runyankole) the word *topapa*

is widely thought to be Kiswahili. The majority of Swahili speakers in southwestern Uganda are Congolese immigrants and refugees, whom Ugandans often cast as untrustworthy others whose desire to live the high life leads them to theft, witchcraft and crime. While *topapa* is not actually from the Swahili language, it is "Swahili" in the sense that it reminds hearers of dangerous others whose hidden behaviors may harm those who engage too closely with them. Printed on the red t-shirts distributed at the church retreat, *topapa* cautioned young believers not to jump into relationships that looked attractive, but rather, to wait for God's match for them before marrying, and to remain abstinent until that time. In the weeks and months following the retreat, young believers could be seen wearing the t-shirts proudly throughout Mbarara, showing others who saw them that they were not inclined to engage in marriage or sex before God so sanctioned it (cf. Boyd 2015).

When someone is schooling, elders encourage them to pace themselves through the long journey. If the student tries to push through without taking the time necessary to study for exams, they won't earn high marks. Although the journey is long, one shouldn't even wish to jump a class (skip a grade), because in doing so they will fail to get the deeper lessons of the class they are in, and forego good relationships with their peers.

The logic of "topapa" also helps explain the plethora of half-built construction projects that overwhelm Uganda's landscape. Constructing too quickly, my interlocutors explained to me, doesn't give the materials time to harden and settle into each other; if you rush, your house will fall. Moreover, spending too much too quickly on your own project will leave you financially unable to contribute to others' needs, and their resentment will crumble the home you meant for this house to become.

Since breaking ground, this modest construction project was already two years in the making when this photo was taken. (Photo credit: Tukundane Charles)

Starting a business also requires patience. If you invest too much at the beginning, before the business has become sustainable, you may "spoil your investments, your name, and your heart," as one young business-owner told me. You may have brought people something great, but if they weren't ready for it, then it will fail. You have to start slowly so that they come along with you and help you build the business you have been dreaming of. When you move forward with your own ideas before others are with you, you will fail and they will say, "But he didn't ask [us for our input]."

Sex is another activity that shouldn't be rushed. By moving too quickly during sex, the partners fail to "synchronize," and when one loses out on enjoyment, they both lose the

opportunity that sex offers to "bring some connection" by teaching them to "work together," as an old couple explained to me.

In interpersonal relationships generally, to rush another person to do something that you want them to do before they see it for themselves and willingly choose to do it is to overstep their autonomy. The bonds that grow up out of such pressure are understood to be weak and particularly vulnerable to breaking. In the context of growing inequality in Uganda, two persons who were once moving side-by-side may find themselves rather suddenly in quite different positions across social space: under such circumstances, only a strong, "genuine" bond that has been born out of the mutual free choice of both parties, can abide.

Through these various aspects of life in which *topapa* is imbued with meaning, it becomes clear that rushing carries risks on two levels. Against the backdrop of possible unseen dangers, rushing might cause someone to fall into a bad situation instead of reaching their destination, as in the case of falling for a conman, or getting into a traffic accident because your driver sped right into someone he didn't see. On a second level, rushing threatens to alienate others, as evident in the examples of failing to cement relationships with schoolmates, focusing your resources too closely on your own construction project, allowing others to see and support your business's growth, and having rushed, unsynchronized sex. The dual dangers of moving with bad others or moving without good others – and the willful waiting that comprises the wisest alternative to rushing – come through in the case of Abigail, with whose WhatsApp conversation this chapter began.

Waiting on God

When Abigail got pregnant, she had been a university student and an active member of the Anglican Church of Uganda. She had approached a church leader with questions about Scriptures, and he proposed they discuss them at her home. But while he was there, before she even really knew what was happening, he impregnated her.[22] When Abigail later let him know she was carrying his child, he insisted she get an abortion. But Abigail resisted his demands. As her pregnancy unfolded, it reorganized her relationships drastically. The baby's father refused to take financial and religious responsibility for his son. Abigail's parents and siblings, likewise, said they could not help support the child. Only her sister Miranda was willing to have mercy on her, and allowed Abigail and her baby to move in and share her rented room.

It was while living with her sister that Abigail met the neighbor with whom she decided to go in together for a phone. As she WhatsApped with her various male contacts, the fact of interacting regularly opened up the possibility of advancing these relationships.[23] To encourage the scaling up of their connection, Abigail's role was to provide enjoyable conversation so that when a man thought of her, he would remember how they always "talked and laughed" – in contrast to women who disrespected men by prying. By closely aligning with whatever her conversation partners expressed, Abigail invited them to feel comfortable enough to "really talk" with her, and share about their businesses, religious commitments, and relationship intentions. Thus, while Abigail constructed herself as good marriage material, she simultaneously listened critically to assess her WhatsApp conversation partners' material and spiritual ties.

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[22] I do not call this rape because Abigail herself never termed it rape. Through her descriptions I was never clear on the degree to which the sex they had was consensual.

[23] Abigail also engaged in WhatsApp conversations with women, but when I asked her she told me she deemed them less directly relevant to her prospects for marriage and employment.

Month after month went by, and one after another potential WhatsApp boyfriend and business opportunity fell through. Discouraged, Abigail told me, "Every time I think I may move, something happens. I find doors which look open, I knock, I find they're locked. And really, I don't know why." The reasons why a Ugandan man might not want to marry Abigail were not insignificant: she already had a son from another man and the boy had no source of support, and she refused to have sex again before being formally married. Although Abigail acknowledged these factors, she held that they should not be impassable because she had God on her side.

Shortly after we celebrated her son Silas's first birthday, conversations with a wealthy banker finally began to look promising when he offered to give her a business. Which business would she like to do, he asked her. Excited and hopeful, Abigail had taken a few days to muster up the courage to tell him she had been wanting to become a tailor. He responded by telling her that dream wasn't big enough, and sent her back to the drawing board to think of a career of which he could be proud. Abigail was taken aback. His response made her feel embarrassed about class differences, but more so, it made her wonder what was behind his offer. She was wary of getting into a situation that appeared "developmental" on the outside, but would "tie" her to obligations – sexual or spiritual – that she did not want. She needed God's discernment to be able to perceive whether this person "had an attachment" to which she would become beholden by accepting his gift of a business.

As she often did, Abigail entered a period of prayer and fasting to seek God's insights about this man. This consisted of several days during which Abigail would not eat or talk on the phone in the daytime, in the interest of focusing more closely on God in order to hear and be heard by Him. On the last day of a week of prayer and fasting, Abigail told me that she could not

pretend she had received an answer from God. She was still "confused" as to whether he had a good heart or if he was an enemy with evil "connections." Yet the prayer and fasting had not been in vain; she had developed "the spirit of listening." I could hear her smiling over the phone as she told me, "I'm learning to wait for God's word in me before I proceed. God help [sic] me understand His voice and I follow." Abigail's time of waiting was not to be rushed.

Eventually, the man got tired of waiting. After upping the ante to include marriage, he presented Abigail with an ultimatum: his offer would soon expire if she couldn't decide what she wanted. Abigail's sister was about to get married and without any means of paying the rent, she didn't know where she and Baby Silas would go. I sympathized with Abigail that it must be especially hard to wait for God's answer when the man seemed to be offering everything she wanted. But she replied by referring to a verse in Deuteronomy, telling me, and maybe herself, "The things we don't know, we don't waste time [on], because God has not revealed them to us yet. They belong to Him, He has not yet given them to us." She told the man that she could not understand why he was rushing, for God had not yet spoken. She decided to keep waiting, and he went his way. Abigail did not count this as a loss. Crucially, the motion she wanted was forward motion *with God*.

Abigail did desire to move into married motherhood, expressing frustration that "[her] life is slow", and that she had been waiting for something good, for so long. Yet at least in part, her waiting was willful, deliberately chosen in contrast to rushing into situations without God's blessing. It was not only a matter of waiting for opportunities, but also for insight, for wisdom, for information. For Abigail and indeed many Christian women in Uganda, the often extended, uncertain period of waiting for one's life to come together is a waiting on God.

There is a difference between waiting for movement, and waiting on others before moving. Instead of rushing to get out of waithood, the examples of patient waiting I have considered in this section have shown that incorporating desirable others (like God), and not undesirable others (like conmen), into one's life takes time. It takes time for their wills to align with yours. And it also takes time for their identities and intentions to become evident. Choosing to wait directly affects which connections materialize – whether good ones or bad ones. As such, waiting itself becomes a resource, used and leveraged to achieve good life through good movement. Yet, willful waiting is counterbalanced by the care one must take not to get left behind.

Don't Get Stuck

In a setting where marriage and children are so highly desired, women who do not bear children and do so within the context of marriage, are considered failures. A woman who does not get married is said to have "fallen in the cooking stones" (*kugwa amahega*). My interlocutors in Mbarara used this phrase to describe women they knew who had exceeded the age of thirty without marrying. In a traditional Kinyankole homestead, women cook over a special set of cooking stones given by the mother-in-law to a new wife shortly after she has married into their family. The wife uses those cooking stones to feed her marriage, and in time, her children. Her daughters soon join her in performing cooking duties, and it is over their mother's cooking stones that they too learn to make fire and prepare food for the time when they will have their own families. If a daughter "falls in the cooking stones," she has fallen into the work of her mother's household and not gotten up again. She remains stuck behind the house (the kitchen is always a separate structure behind the house), laboring there and never moving outside of the

compound, and thus, hidden from any potential suitors' view. As a Kinyankole proverb says, "What remains inside the homestead beautifies the back of the house." (*Ebiguma omu nda bishemeza amarembo*.) Out of view and connection with others, her labor never graduates to feed her own family as it should, so she remains subservient to her mother and father, working for something that is "theirs" and never her own.

Instead of falling in the cooking stones as such, women today might just as easily fall into their books or their office if they prioritize education or career at the expense of a timely marriage. Hidden behind the cover of a book or within the walls of an office, their beauty can't be recognized by those to whom it might matter.

Age thirty is considered a hard "deadline" by which all – men and women alike – should be married. As a young person approaches age 27, their marital prospects become the topic of anxious discussion during family meetings, and sometimes the family investigates possible underlying spiritual causes for the delay. Spiritual forces may be blocking a person from "moving forward," such as witchcraft thrown by an adversary that has "pinned" the unmarried one to some out-of-the-way location and its associated relationships, or spirit spouses who have "locked up" someone in a marriage in the spirit world so that they cannot marry someone on earth. As the deadline creeps nearer, extended family members' comments can become quite pushy, and all those I knew in their late twenties described the intense pressure they felt to somehow become "unstuck." One 28-year-old woman who worked as a research assistant at the university and lived with her widowed mother told me that, as a strategy to marry her off, her mother made her dress up and walk around in town every single day so that men would see her, so that she would waste no more time attracting a husband.

Marriage deadlines also become the topic of jokes, like this image that circulated widely on Whatsapp in July 2018. The money pictured was used in Uganda until 1996.

What is at stake in hitting the marriage deadline is the kind of family network in which one will become enmeshed. Couples who are not well matched and on a similar socioeconomic and educational "level" face disproportionate challenges. In addition to the specter of a disorderly home life, more immediately, spending too much time chasing a relationship with someone who is "not the same" as you carries a greater risk of not materializing into marriage. Equally important, as time proceeds, the pool of eligible bachelors decreases. In turn, a woman's prospects for socioeconomic mobility also diminish. In other words, marrying someone "on your level" is not only about moving *forward* through the life course, but also about moving *upward* socioeconomically by becoming attached to a man with whom you are likely to be successful,

and to have strong connections to others who are upwardly mobile. Moving forward and upward is achieved in and through connections through moving *with others.*

In the effort to tie oneself to a man, becoming pregnant with his child can sometimes figure as a woman's best strategy. This became especially clear to me when Angela, a single mother of two young children, got into a new relationship and two weeks into it, decided to get the injectable contraceptive removed from her arm in hopes that she would soon conceive. As many women do, Angela had faced a false start en route to social adulthood in that her previous marriage had failed; now she was driven to pick up her pace. Leaving her two young children in the care of her mother and never mentioning them to her boyfriend, Angela planned to become pregnant and thereby elicit her new boyfriend's love, and all that might follow from it. In this sequence, pregnancy became a means of bringing the couple together into deeper, and Angela hoped, more permanent, emotional and financial connection. Through this pregnancy, Angela would move forward in the life course to become a productive mother within a marriage, and those to whom she was already attached (her children and her parents) would move "up a level" to a more stable financial situation.

Moreover, beginning to have children relatively early in one's life "while you still have energy" is considered socioeconomically advantageous in another way too. Although the preferences for having children sooner rather than later echoes Caroline Bledsoe's (2002) Gambian interlocutors' view that it is better to produce your divine allotment of children before your bodily capacity has eroded for health reasons, my own interlocutors articulated the advantage of having children "before you are old" in a decidedly economic register. As one 28-year-old woman told me, "if you at least start [having children] when you are young, then when you have finished you can get out of the house and do other things"; she herself intended to go to

law school and then practice refugee law. Another mother of young children told me somewhat desperately, "I need to finish with the times of pregnancy. I finished schooling nine years ago. For nine years I have been with no job. *Nine years*." She wanted to complete the season of life in which she was pregnant on and off again, so that she could move on to employment. In both this situation and the prospective lawyer's, if a woman fulfills her responsibility to bear children, she then becomes free to develop into a productive member of the household in other ways. Indeed, many women I met both with businesses in town and studying in the upper levels of the university had started these endeavors after bearing their children.

Further, a 29-year-old man explained, "I need to get a child so that it inspires me to work hard. If you get children and work money when you are young, life becomes sweet when you are old." Children and the love they evoke thus also stimulate parents to achieve higher socioeconomic heights.

Because this ideology is shared by many, timing the arrival of children relatively early in one's life also coincides with other success-oriented young couples' child-bearing years. By keeping up with others who are also marrying and having children, working hard, and poised for success, your friendships with them are likely to grow. In turn, those friendships can serve as a source of socioeconomic, social, and emotional support, as well as inspiration to keeping one's priorities in order. Ultimately, the couple who marries and begins having children while they are "still young" generates the flexibility, motivation, and connections to propel them to the "next level" socioeconomically. This plumbs with the will to wait by showing that it is not purely postponement of married motherhood that women want, but rather, the proper pacing that will allow them to move out of the house and associate themselves with progress through activities and others.

While girl child campaigns advance the message of "schooling first" and espouse the notion that childbearing puts an end to educational and career advancement, women living in Mbarara reverse schooling and childbearing in their formulation, instead opting to "start and finish" bearing children first, so that they can move into educational and career opportunities during middle age. This reversal might have significance for the way early childbearing is talked about by NGOs and others who seek to "empower" women. Further, international development projects of population control in Uganda have specifically targeted the ways women spend their time as a site of intervention, seeking to train young women away from "idling" (which is understood to lead to sex and pregnancy, early and often) and instead transform them into productive economic subjects (Moore 2018). In stark contrast to the assumption that lack of household or entrepreneurial labor leads to boredom and boredom leads to sex, much like the young women in Kampala about whom Erin Moore writes, women in Mbarara, too, "interrupted their productive labor in order to build networks for sharing semiotic and material resources" (Moore 2018:83). Time spent waiting, pausing, idling – is pregnant with potential.

Pregnant Pauses

Pausing was among the most important temporal practices on which women in Mbarara drew in their efforts to sync up their movement through the life course with others. In the interest of not rushing, pausing allows time for gradual processes of arriving at insight, information and alignment – whether through waiting for enough evidence about a person to emerge, giving one's own senses the time to acclimate and develop a discerning palette, allowing someone else's will to come into harmony with yours, or receiving revelation from God. In the interest of not getting stuck, pause provides the occasion to be seen, to remind others of your presence, and

to allow others to appreciate your situation. Striking the right pace – neither rushing nor getting stuck – depends crucially on moments of pause.

In addition to the kinds of digital greeting exchanges with which this paper began, pregnant pauses also took many other forms. Of course, there were in-person greeting exchanges, such as when someone stopped to greet when crossing paths on the street or in the market. Regular phone calls, too, served as a way of keeping up connections. I was repeatedly amazed at how many phone calls everyone (myself included) received for no apparent reason other than to "check on" the person and make sure they were well. Such phone calls were often quite short and as phone service in Uganda works on airtime by the minute, many callers seem to know exactly how long a minute feels and expertly wind down the call and hang up the phone at exactly fifty-nine seconds. Again, the fact of communication and its regularity rather than its duration is what serves to maintain a social bond. Visiting – often phrased in colloquial English as "giving you a visit" – is another occasion where persons pause to come together into a shared experience, and what might emerge remains open-ended. Another form of pregnant pause is prayer, when a believer pauses to commune with God; hundreds and hundreds of people living in Mbarara attend church in the early morning every day, and many consider this time to be crucial for punctuating their successful movement through life. Pregnant pauses allow for social actors to mutually "tune in" (Schutz 1951) with one another – seeing and hearing each other, and merging for a moment.

I got another glimpse of the importance of this tuning in with others – composing a "we" (Schutz 1951) – or a "with" (Goffman 1947) -- when my longtime friend Rachel wedded her husband in church. Although her husband had given her father the full brideprice and completed the traditional marriage ceremony fourteen years earlier, and by this point they had three

children, nonetheless, Rachel told me that she saw the wedding as a "major spiritual breakthrough". She said that they should have wedded long ago, and that having failed to attach their family to God for this long had been holding them back; "We don't always move as we should." With this wedding, they would connect their union to God. In turn, having God in the midst of them, so to speak, would catalyze further progress in their family's life.

While this story also speaks to "white weddings" as a marker of modern belonging (cf. Pauli 2013; Solway 2016; van Dijk 2017), here I think about it as one of many pregnant pauses, or relational technologies of pace, that help to bring others – in this case, God – into one's movement in and through life. Calling and sending messages to "check on" others, visiting friends and family, and attending church regularly are all pregnant pauses that provided the space in which women could come together with others to synchronize, to orchestrate, to deliberately entrain their lives with others' and foster the emergence of favorable circumstances in which to move forward. These pregnant pauses punctuate the flow of life.

Investing in Relationships

As ordering principles for female movement through the life course, "Don't get stuck" and "don't rush" both point to the same underlying value: that good movement is mutual movement. The outcome of hitting the right pace is ideally realized in "an organized family" (*eka y'obuteka*), that is, a household composed of between dutiful spouses who "work together" to accommodate each other's strengths and weaknesses, and share responsibility for their mutual advancement and the advancement of their dependents. But rather than simply reflecting socioeconomic status, being "organized" is a quality of relationships. In fact, material prosperity is viewed as an outcome, not a cause, of an organized family.

"Blessings flow from the bedroom" was an oft-repeated truism throughout my time in Mbarara, and it indicates that successful relationships enable increasing forms of entrainment that in turn, bring compounding benefits. Harmony between husband and wife in the bedroom is understood to lead to order in the other rooms of the house, and beyond. From the bedroom, blessings flow to the kitchen, where the woman should cook for the man. From the kitchen, blessings flow to the sitting room, where the man eats the food his wife has prepared and where the family receives visitors. Blessings in the sitting room turn into blessings in the family's business pursuits, where the food and conversation shared in the sitting room energize the success of the business. In turn, success outside the home loops back to increase the stature of the family, and those to whom they are tied. In this way, blessings flow as entrainment increases in scale: wife with husband, to both with visitors, to the entire household with those outside the household.

In stark contrast to the assumption that modern life is experienced as a speeding up, it is the continual, gradual, punctuated process of coming together over time that allows organized families to emerge. It is slowing social connections down to allow for processes of coming to see, know, and trust others that safeguards against the dangers of conmen, fakes, and steps off the narrow road. It is the pregnant pause that allows people to compose networks and thereby cultivate paths to personal progress, modern belonging, and wellbeing in a world that is always threatening to exclude those who can't keep up.

Considering the reasons women living in Uganda have to slow time down, and to move only at specific moments has shown that young women in southwestern Uganda do not experience waithood as the direct and unavoidable result of the forces of capital restraining them from realizing adulthood at an unfettered pace. Instead, these women actually *use* waithood as a

sociohistorically particular mode of addressing and potentially even transforming the precarity of their relationships and economic circumstances. Here waithood is not only the result of economic dispossession, but in fact may help generate the possibility space in which interactions and networks might emerge that in turn lead to new, different, and possibly better, material conditions.

My findings present a counterexample to Jane Guyer's (2007) now famous observation that the near-future temporal frame has been hollowed out by complementary emphases of macroeconomic and evangelical time, both of which focus on the immediate present and far future. In contrast to a preoccupation with the rapture and/or macroeconomic risk, women in contemporary Uganda focus on the more immediate neighbor, businessman, religious leader, or romantic partner, who could be trying to scam them, or who could become the key to their movement. Instead of identifying the rapture as the "moment of truth" when one's immediate actions would be tried before God's judgement, the young women I knew considered one's life circumstances to be a kind of truth. One's circumstances show forth one's position in a social and spiritual network through which blessings and curses flow, not only reflecting God's blessing, but also promising economic returns through the looping effects that accrue to an organized family. In their attempts to pace themselves, then, those I met in Mbarara were very actively invested in the midrange future, demonstrating the importance of an ethnography of pace for revealing how particular sociohistorical circumstances in specific locales contour the meanings of waiting, and distribute the politics of its uses.

Chapter 4: Framing Pregnancy

Pregnancy as Authoritative Knowledge

Pregnancy is a true index. In Mbarara, a near-complete lack of access to new reproductive technologies means that with very few exceptions, pregnancy comes into existence through a sexual relationship between a woman and a man. A woman's protruding stomach – and before that, Banyankole say, the glow in her face and swelling in her hands – show forth the evidence of a sexual relationship. In turn, pregnancy functions as a sign that reorganizes the social relationships it touches.

Pregnancy-as-a-sign speaks against the backdrop of many semiotic and communicative indeterminacies in Mbarara. Scholars of postcolonial theory have described how multiple, shifting systems of meaning in postcolonial settings generate deep doubts about the definition of reality. As the conditions of postcolonialism have destabilized local economies of value, this has resulted in changing social representations of power, as manifested in the rising importance of genres of social interaction like the ruse, the con, the bluff, and even the miracle (de Sardan 1999; Hasty 2005; Marshall 2009; Smith 2010; Newell 2012), and the figures who perpetrate them, such as the huckster, the criminal, the witch, and the pastor (Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Geschiere 2000; Banegas and Warnier 2001). In this situation, "signs and their referents [have] become increasingly unmoored, giving rise to a heightened sense of social insecurity, a growing quest for moral mastery and the ability to control what were seen as untrammeled and dangerous powers" (Marshall 2009:107).

Several anthropologists working in urban Africa have suggested that the ways people engage with this postcolonial experience of unpredictable powers, "overwhelming flux" (De Boeck and Plissart 2014), "floating signifiers" (Devisch 2002), is first and foremost through the

locus of the body. Where unreliable words – including rumor, gossip, radio, prayer, blessings, and incantations – are ubiquitous, the human body provides the most stable site through which to come to truths about uncertain processes of accumulation, sexuality, and kinship solidarity and reciprocity. In Mbarara, pregnancy offers one such embodied mechanism for producing truth. Refining the above scholars' point slightly, I suggest that in Mbarara the pregnant body is where un-ignorable evidence is located.

In this chapter, I address pregnancy as a sign that speaks quite unambiguously indeed, declaring to all that a woman has engaged in reproductive sexual relations. Therefore, it transforms uncertainties into certainties, and I suggest viewing pregnancy as "authoritative knowledge". The concept of "authoritative knowledge" (AK) has a rich history in and beyond the anthropology of reproduction. Brigitte Jordan (1977) first introduced the phrase to flag the "knowledge that counts" in a childbirth situation where there are always many different knowledges that could potentially be applied (e.g., the woman's own knowledge of her body, the nurse's knowledge of what the technological monitors are showing, and the doctor's knowledge of the medical significance of what he is seeing). Summarizing the concept and its evolution throughout her career, Jordan retrospectively writes, "The central observation is that for any particular domain, several knowledge systems exist, some of which, by consensus, come to carry more weight than others, either because they explain the state of the world better for the purposes at hand, or because they are associated with a stronger power base (structurally), and usually both" (1997:56) Others building on Jordan's insight have shown that authoritative knowledge is co-produced, reinforced, and resisted in actual interactions (Browner and Press 1996); that different social territories and environments shape and are shaped by the physical processes of labor and birth and women's experience of these processes (Fiedler 1997); and that the

construction of authoritative knowledge participates in the erasure of some genres of work, activity, and embodied experience (Joyce 2005). These studies focus on how authoritative knowledge shapes the moment of childbirth. With this chapter, I co-opt their line of inquiry to consider the ways that long before childbirth, pregnancy itself becomes "the knowledge that counts" in Mbarara, transforming social bonds as it speaks of itself. In so doing, I join Tsipy Ivry (2015) in critiquing the anthropology of reproduction's almost exclusive focus on reproductive technologies, assisted reproduction, and childbirth, at the expense of producing much ethnography or theory of pregnancy itself. The alternative in which I participate here is to contextualize pregnancy in the social-semiotic field of relationships, and concerns about relationships, into which it enters.

Although pregnancy is a sign that speaks for itself, its addressee is unspecified; as a speaker, pregnancy is brazenly undiscriminating. Anticipating the transformational effect that pregnancy will produce upon the whole matrix of relationships into which it speaks, women invest a great deal of social work into framing the revelation of their pregnancies. This is interesting because although on the one hand, there is the irrefutable, concrete, truth-telling baby bump, on the other hand, there is a tremendous amount of social work people do to construct *which* truth the pregnancy is telling. The truth itself is not given. The message remains ambiguous until the social work has been done. Although we might be tempted to think of truth as a quality that inheres in particular statements, and is thus impossible to manipulate through framing, the truth of a truth that a pregnant belly tells cannot and does not exist outside of frames. A pregnant belly says different things to different people, depending on the frames through which they read it.

In what follows, I trace the many unknowns against which knowledge of a pregnancy becomes known. My discussion follows the trajectory of a pregnancy from uncertainties about fertility before conception, to finding out one is pregnant, to framing the disclosure of pregnancy-as-a-sign to parents, siblings, friends, and anonymous others in the urban milieu. I show that framing pregnancy-as-a-sign is something that is carried out not by an individual but by a collective. Throughout the course of my discussion, I suggest that the careful processes of managing the flows of information about pregnancy articulate a set of ambiguities surrounding fertility, prosperity, and growth in postcolonial Uganda. [24]

Before Pregnancy

Fertility and Fertilization as Outside One's Control

According to the 2016 Uganda Demographic and Health Survey, 36% of women in the Ankole region use contraception (figures not available for rural vs. urban contraceptive use). But even those who actively use modern contraceptives explain that birth control does not always work as promised. In June-July 2015 (the summer of my preliminary fieldwork), none of the eight female faculty members, nor the five female staff members, in the Institute of Interdisciplinary Training and Research at Mbarara University of Science and Technology (my in-country host department) were pregnant. When I returned to MUST in 2016, I was surprised to find that three of the faculty members and two of the staff members had newborns, all conceived around the same time (August-September 2015). The women who had fallen pregnant had all been using the same contraceptive method – an implant – and they had been misinformed

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[24] Whereas fertility pertains most directly to forward motion, prosperity has to do with upward motion, and growth has most to do with outward motion. The ambiguities I outline in this chapter, however, illustrate how movements along these different planes are deeply interrelated.

that it would provide effective protection for three years, when in fact, it was only good for two years! The children bore names like Boonabaana, meaning "They're all children [and should thus be well received]"and Nuwahereza, meaning "God is the One who gives [so we should accept them]". These names recognize God as the ultimate giver of lives and pregnancies (cf. Bledsoe 2002), even if His timing was contrary to their intentions. (In the US a similar naming scheme might have resulted in children named "Technological Malfunction" or "Biomedical Failure"!) As one female employee of MUST told me, "I thought I had finished with bearing children! But when you find God has given you another one, you have nothing to do [no other option] but accept it and thank Him."

Just as uncertain as the effects of contraceptive methods on actually preventing pregnancy, was the project of successfully obtaining and taking contraception. During my observations and interviews in the Family Planning Clinic at Mbarara Hospital, I often saw the same women come back to the clinic multiple times in the same few weeks. After their visit they found, for example, that the nurse had not actually removed the implant from their arm as requested. (The woman graciously chalked this up to me as, "Maybe she was doing many things at once.") That they had waited but the nurse had left for the day before getting to them (and making appointments was not a service offered at this clinic). That the hospital pharmacy had not had the prescribed pills in stock (so they had to come back to the clinic so that the nurse would "write for them" again so that they could try again at the pharmacy because the prescription was only good for one day). The unreliability of biomedical care for family planning care seemed to anger me much more than it did my research participants, who were used to this set of conditions and approached them with pragmatism.

Some women were not well informed about the way that their contraceptives actually worked. One woman told me how she had accidentally fallen pregnant because she had been confused about how often to take her birth control pills. She had originally been prescribed the pills in order to reduce severe menstrual pain, and thus, the nurse had instructed her to take the very low dosage of one pill, once per week. But for the patient's part, she thought that as long as she was taking the pills as instructed, she would be protected against pregnancy, since they were, after all, birth control pills.

Further, the various modern contraceptive options – pills, injectables, implants, and IUDs – were all understood to potentially cause effects long after a woman stopped using them (cf. Johnson-Hanks 2005). For this reason, I met women from all class backgrounds and education levels who hesitated to use modern contraception at all before they had "finished" giving birth to the total number of children they desired. In the meantime, many considered traditional contraceptive methods -- such as wearing herbs in one's underwear, or drinking particular herbal teas after sex – to be "natural," "safer," and worth a try because they only produced very short-term effects. However, the traditional methods could not be counted on and were considered even more unpredictable than biomedicine in their efficacy.

In some cases, abstinence was an option (i.e., for very religious couples), but in others it wasn't. One newly married woman described to me the relief that marriage had brought to her sex life. She told me that before getting married, she had been completely unable to enjoy sex, always hating it and deep dreading and fearing what might happen. She thought of the shame a premarital pregnancy would bring her family, and the way her very conservative father would hate her for it. But she found herself in a catch-22. In order to keep a good man interested in her long enough to allow their connection to build and for him to propose, she had to give him sex.

Yet in order to avoid compromising her reproductive future, she couldn't take birth control. So, she told me, she would make excuses about having her period to get out of sex as often as she could. And every time they did have sex, she would beg God to not only understand her position but also to grant her divine contraception.

Ultimately, the biomedical, traditional, and spiritual contraceptive apparatuses might or might not bring about their intended effect, depending on many variables. Faced with the limits of their self-efficacy in this matter, women took up a rather fatalistic approach to preventing pregnancy. If these ambiguities surrounding fertility and fertilization hung in the air – making it thick and heavy with doubt and uncertainties – a pregnancy would cut through them with a definitive answer.

Children are heavy weights. From the painted glass privacy windows enclosing the Family Planning Clinic at Mbarara Hospital, hangs this sign. It is the sole décor adorning the waiting room. It reads: "Don't accept [to let] them to break you. You can care for them if you control your births. Have a family with good life where there is joy." (Otakabaikiriza bakakuhenda. Nobaasa kubare berere waaba obazaire nobaririra. Ba na eka y amagara marungi kandi erimu amashemererwa.) Photo by Anna Eisenstein.

Falling Pregnant

Pregnancy as a Dual Demonstration of Authenticity and Submission

One day after a long morning of participant observation at the Anglican Church's Healing and Deliverance service, Ronald and I went to our usual spot for lunch.[25] But Ronald was not his usual chatty self. Over steaming hot plates of posho, beans, and *matooke*, he told me what was on his mind. He and his beloved girlfriend of three years, Charity, had been fighting.

Ronald and Charity had been dating since shortly after Ronald committed his life to Christ, and they had always kept their vow to sexual purity. Now Ronald wanted to marry Charity, but his father disapproved. Ronald's father did not want them to wed until Charity first bore him a child so that they could be "sure the woman can produce." But for Charity, premarital pregnancy would mean participating in a sinful act, entailing bowing to someone other than Christ. Ronald reported his father's threats: "[Do] you think if you come here with a woman before you have a child together we will respect her?!"

Ronald's father did not value Ronald's Christian commitment to abstinence until marriage, feeling that more important issues were at stake. His father complained that since Charity was from an elite religious family, she would likely feel that she didn't need to respect Ronald, and Ronald might not "be the man in the relationship". If he were to wed her before she bore him a child, the threat of disrespect would be all the worse, his father said, because wedded women think they can say and do whatever they want because their "condition" (in marriage) is more permanent.

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[25] As a condition of allowing me to include All Saints' Church (Anglican) as one of my research sites, the canon requested that I allow Ronald to help me, and to escort me as I moved through the church. In addition to becoming a means for Ronald to make some money, this allowed the church leadership to keep tabs on me.

Tears welled up in Ronald's eyes as he told me that he might have to end his relationship with Charity. He explained, "Here in Africa, if you marry without the blessing of the parents, you will never have peace." I asked specifically what he meant, that you would never have peace; he said the parents would meddle and make things difficult for Charity. Young and delicate as she was, Charity would not be able to handle that, he feared. As the firstborn and the only male amongst his siblings, Ronald was under the burden to carry on the family. "If I were part of a bigger family with other men and I was like, the third born, then maybe Charity could feel like my family would forget about me and leave us alone." But in relationship with their firstborn, Charity would face tremendous pressure from them until she not only bore a child, but a son for him, he said. Until she did so, she would constantly be haunted by the question, "What if, what if?"

The pain and stress permeating this scenario point to several ambiguities surrounding fertility, prosperity, and growth. First, there is the concern that a woman might not be able to reproduce, and that this could leave a man locked into a childless marriage. The reasons why a woman might not be able to reproduce are typically explained in terms of her being cursed, or previously having had an abortion that damaged her internal organs and rendered her infertile (as I discussed in the previous chapter). (In the case of a childless marriage, traditionally, men would have the prerogative to marry additional wives, and/or to divorce the woman and be refunded the brideprice, but neither of these options remains open once a couple has wedded in church. Given Charity's elite status and religiosity, nothing short of a church wedding before children would be acceptable to her and her family.) Against these questions of whether a woman is "working," pregnancy offers a demonstration that she is really a reproductive woman. On a second level, Ronald's father voices the concern that marrying up, and especially doing so before the woman

produced a child, would lead his son into disordered gender roles, being stripped of his masculine right to power, respect, and authority over his household. Here, premarital pregnancy reflects a woman's acceptance of her relation to the man as subordinate, submissive, and conditional. On a third level, Ronald's response to his father's perspective – to break up with Charity – reflects his understanding of the intergenerational movement of blessings and curses. Without his parents' approval of his spouse, his marriage and family could not be blessed; they would "never have peace." This lack of peace had begun to manifest already in the current weight of the situation that Ronald was feeling, and he anticipated that if he allowed it to continue, it would mean subjecting Charity to deep agony and uncertainty until she bore a son to Ronald and his family and clan.

Here the ambivalence surrounding pregnancy pertained to different opinions on the marriage-pregnancy sequence. Because they could not agree on the ideal conditions in which pregnancy should emerge, nor on what pregnancy-as-a-sign would signify outside of marriage, this particular configuration of people (Ronald, Charity, and Ronald's father) could not reach a harmonious resolution that would allow them to proceed together.

Pregnancy as a Demonstration of Sincerity

Another way in which pregnancy as an indexical sign becomes significant can be elaborated through the case of Pamela, who conceived her first child outside of wedlock, and worked to frame the sign of this fact in ways that would encourage her baby's father and her own mother to respond favorably.[26]

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[26] My descriptions in this section are based on many conversations I had with Pamela, over the three years I knew her in Mbarara, some of which were recorded. The story I tell echoes her narrative(s) and perspective.

Pamela was twenty-four years old when she and Sam began seeing each other. He had been married before, but she never had. About three months into their relationship, Sam began asking Pamela for a baby. Men in contemporary Mbarara are known to desire children even more than women are. They especially long for sons, to raise up to their clan. Sam told her that if she would just give him a child, he would marry her – not an uncommon proposal.

Pamela herself was eager to marry and have children, too. Her father had died when she was a little girl, and she was his only child. When her grandmother was on her deathbed, she had encouraged Pamela to produce many children in order to recover the ones that her father had never brought into the world. Feeling this sense of duty alongside Sam's desire for a baby, she decided to stop getting contraceptive injections.

When she began feeling sick just a few weeks later, she was in denial. She went to a doctor; he looked at her eyes, tongue, and thighs, and then asked if she was married. She replied that she was not. He then asked his question more directly: could she be pregnant? She told him there was no way. He sent her to the lab for a urine test anyway, and when he shared the results with her, she went into shock. "My ears stopped hearing and I was just there, shocked," she told me. The doctor called her name several times before she came to. He asked again if she was married; this time she replied that she was.

With the knowledge that she had conceived, she knew "a change had come on [her] life (*amagara*)," she told me. As changes transpired within her physical body, her social relationships would also transform. This moment of *seeing* that she was pregnant was the turning point at which her relationship with Sam, which was much more ambiguous before, first became concrete and irreversible. It was the first moment at which their relationship became a "marriage", as her response to the doctor's question on that went from no to yes.

But to bring this pregnancy into a good family would take great care on her part. Pamela went home from the doctor with her mind spinning. She doesn't remember how she got home, but she remembers entering the house and closing the door so that no one would know she was home or come to call. She switched off her phone, laid down on her bed, and cried, and cried, and cried. She told me, "I asked myself, 'What is going to happen? How am I going to do this? Who am I going to tell? Should I tell Sam? Should I tell Mother?' I wanted to keep it a secret, but the stomach would tell it."

She was afraid that Sam might not respond well to the news. She doubted whether he truly wanted to become husband and wife with her, and worried that he would "disappoint" her, that is, refuse to support her and the child materially.[27] Over the course of that agonizing afternoon, she strategized and re-strategized how to tell him, and asked God for His help. Finally, she put the test results inside a drawer. Until he opened the drawer and saw the results for himself, she would pretend everything was fine.

Not having been able to reach her by phone, Sam showed up at Pamela's apartment that very evening. The whole time he was there, she was feeling shy and scared. Finally, she told him to open the drawer. He opened the envelope. "HCG Positive?!" he read aloud. He repeated it excitedly, happily, in disbelief! As she narrated:

> He shouted, 'Oh my God! Yes! This is it! This is it, this is it! Thank you, Jesus!
> Come, come, come, come!' He lift[ed] me up. He said, 'Pamela, thank you, thank
> you! Pamela, you're not a *muyayi* (con artist). You have never cheated on me.

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[27] Throughout my time in Mbarara, I heard this concern often, that the man would "disappoint" the woman or that he would not "accept" the pregnancy. I also learned of many cases where that is exactly what happened; for example, Abigail.

> Girls of today, they can lie you, lie you. But now, the gift I'm going to give you,
>
> just to build you a home.'

It was upon learning of the pregnancy that Sam determined that Pamela was not conning him – that is, pursuing a relationship with him for profit instead of productivity -- but would actually raise up children to him as his wife.[28]

Pregnancy was the indexical sign of Pamela's genuine intentions in the relationship, which Sam could read. But Sam's response to the pregnancy signified an acceptance: acceptance of her, acceptance of the child, and acceptance that they would build a home and a family together. Against the backdrop of uncertainties held by each of these partners about the other, pregnancy was the declaration of their relationship, an undeniable index of their connection. In turn, mutually accepting the pregnancy indeed led to their building a house and a family together. It was with this pregnancy speaking forth within their relationship that they became "married" and Pamela would become a mother.

It is worth noting that even though the pregnancy signified Pamela's sincere intentions, she did not produce the index of this sincerity intentionally. In other words, she did not exactly try to get pregnant. Rather, by letting her contraceptive injections lapse, she opened her body up to the possibility of producing a future with Sam. Or perhaps rather, she stopped actively closing herself off to that possibility. When she found out she was pregnant though, she was shocked, then worried about how Sam would respond to the extremely vulnerable position in which she suddenly found herself. In this way, the meaning of this pregnancy would be defined not by Pamela alone, but relationally.

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[28] In situations where women are not interested in reproductive relations with their sexual partners, many secretly use contraception and/or obtain clandestine abortions. This becomes dangerous to a man when a woman only pretends to be interested in a reproductive relationship in the interest of extending the length of time over which the man gives them material gifts and support, a practice called detoothing (see Moore 2019 on seductive economies).

"Once You're Pregnant, It's A Done Deal"

Taking the examples from Ronald and Pamela together, we see that pregnancy produces authoritative knowledge: that the woman is physiologically capable of producing a child (authenticity), and that she is willing to do so (submission and sincerity). For the man and the woman who are already well aware that they have been sexually involved, the authoritative knowledge generated by a pregnancy is most importantly authoritative knowledge about the future. Once a child has been conceived, there is no going backward in the relationship; in the words of one of my participants, "it's a done deal." Continuing with this metaphor of a business deal, it would be up to the business partners to follow through on the obligations they had assumed by participating in the conception. The woman must decide whether to accept the pregnancy (by choosing not to abort it), and the man must decide whether to accept the moral and legal responsibility to provide for the woman and the expected child, and to pay brideprice if he had not already.

While the window on the woman's acceptance of the pregnancy was rather short, the proofs of the man's commitment to the "deal" would really only become evident over a much longer period of time. Women I knew in Mbarara who were only married through traditional marriage (not wedded in church), and to an even greater extent, those who were not married at all, carefully watched and noted the man's gifts during the pregnancy. If the man consistently bought the woman all the foods she was craving, bought outfits and bedsheets for the expected baby, and paid for transport and medical costs throughout the pregnancy (preferably from somewhere other than the public hospital), these were all counted and cited as evidence that he was "caring," happy about the pregnancy, and committed to doing "what he is supposed to do."

But as much as evidence of care in the current moment, these gestures watered women's hopes of being cared for by committed, responsible husbands as the future unfolded.

Framing Pregnancy

Pregnancy as Sensitive Information

Within the context of marriage, pregnancy is generally considered a very good thing in Uganda. At the same time, a pregnancy is a very vulnerable thing: with regard to the woman's health, the expected child's health, and the health of the couple's relationship. As such, pregnancy presents enemies with a prime opportunity to work against the man, the woman, their relationship, and their extended families (as these stakeholders are seen as the ones with the most to gain from an expected child) (Sargent 1989: Allen 2004; Chapman 2010).

Throughout my time in Mbarara, I heard countless stories of prolonged labor, C-sections, and maternal and child death explained through the malice of others. In addition to hanging up a pregnancy, malice could come through "medicine that is not medicine" – that is, poison – so women should take care not to eat the herbs given to them by anyone except their mothers or sisters while pregnant. As a woman named, Penelope, told me, "Even if she is my friend from the same village but even I could not trust her. She would bring something for me to chew on [herbal medicines] and I tell her to go and be preparing [cooking]" – the implication being that while her village-mate went off to cook, she would get rid of the herbs.

Although someone close to you could bewitch you, so too, evil might come from anonymous others who simply saw your pregnant body. The interpersonal proximity and anonymity of the urban setting provide the network – of eyes, ears, and mouths -- through which rumors and witchcraft are understood to move:

"For us Africans, among the people we stay with, they can do things."

"The people we live with [among]…"

"There are these women on rentals…"

"Your man can have had girlfriends, ex-girlfriends; they are here around."

"Our Africa is not good."

In this setting, female social actors organize their movements through space in such a way as to avoid, manage, and counteract the gaze of others.

During her pregnancy, Helen enjoyed the support of her mother and her older sisters, who sent herbal medicine from the village to help her stomach feel better, as well as sending money to buy clothes for the baby, and calling her often on the phone to check on her. Her husband also treated her with special care during that time, buying whatever fruits, milk, and meat (all luxury foods) she yearned for. But when Helen's due date came and went, she knew the wrong person had seen her pregnant. "I went to someone who is strong in prayer," she told me. While praying, the prophet told her that another woman had "hung up her pregnancy," a particular form of witchcraft which refers to pinning the pregnancy so that it cannot move down and out of the mother's body naturally for labor and delivery (as mentioned in the vignette about Eunice at the beginning of chapter 1). Helen was solemn as she told this part of the story, "It was so sad," she said. "That's why they had to operate [on] me for me to deliver." She delivered by Cesarean section, because someone who did not want her life to move, had impeded the natural movement of the baby through her body. In this way, the pregnancy had functioned as authoritative knowledge, the knowledge that counted, in that it 1) was concrete evidence of a vulnerable situation in Helen's life, and 2) produced or contributed to evil intent on the part of the one who bewitched her, and 3) provided the grounds on which this witchcraft could work.

In addition to speaking to enemies, pregnancy brings sensitive, authoritative information into a woman's relationship with her parents. If she is already married, the woman's family tends to see pregnancy as a great thing, signifying the blessing of fertility and the expansion of oneself that it brings. And if it is the first pregnancy, news of it is often met with jubilant relief, as it shows that the woman is not barren and thus she won't be "chased" from her husband's family for this reason. However, if she is not married, the pregnancy may provide a great source of shame and dishonor to her parents, and in extreme cases, may be taken as reason to completely disown their daughter. Alternatively, in light of contemporary circumstances under which formal marriage is often delayed (the reasons for which I described in chapter 2), some parents have become lenient on the issue of premarital pregnancy. While they may meet premarital pregnancy with pragmatism and acceptance, at the same time, they typically recognize their daughter's vulnerability in the situation, and their concern for her wellbeing and the stability of her relationship, may kick into high gear.

In relation to the sensitivity of pregnancy, and the fact that sooner or later, others *will* come to know about it (can't hide it forever), the issue becomes *framing* pregnancy-as-a-sign in just the right way. The notion of "framing" – as introduced by Gregory Bateson (1972) – refers to that which 'is (or delimits) a class or set of messages (or meaningful actions)' (Bateson 1972:186). Inspired by Bateson, Erving Goffman (1974) understood a frame as the set of principles by which we define, categorize and interpret social action; and Goffman went on to develop the concept of "keying" as the process by which the same activity can be understood within one meaningful frame as opposed to another. Upon the foundation of these two scholars' work, a rich body of sociolinguistic and linguistic anthropological studies have documented the ways in which participants in interaction key frame-shifts and thereby co-produce social meaning

as they take up different orientations and stances to unfolding interactional moves (Goffman 1981). Judith Butler (2009) writes about framing in a more capacious sense, thinking of it as a matter of delineating, highlighting, and recognizing particular definitions and categories – in the same way that the frame of a photograph determines what falls in or out of view, and the way that different elements of a picture seem to pop out or recede depending on the picture frame (as well as other metaphors and senses of framing).

I find framing a useful way to think about the activities through which mothers and others in Mbarara endeavor to shape the social meaning of a pregnancy. As they anticipate the ways in which the pregnancy-as-a-sign could be taken up by others, they work to discourage some possible interpretations and to encourage others. My use of the term framing draws together the Bulterian and Goffmanian senses to suggest that social actors work to nest the sign that is pregnancy within other signs, in order to determine the frame in which the pregnancy will be read. In their framing efforts, timing the disclosure of the pregnancy becomes a crucial tool.

Sustaining Ambiguity

Recently, anthropologists working in eastern and southern Africa have begun to chronicle the many ways in which ambiguity in interpersonal relationships is productive (Archambault 2017; Ravalde 2017; Moore 2019; Reece 2019). Their work shows the reasons social actors have to deliberately sustain ambiguity, thereby sustaining possibilities for respect, coexistence, and romance that would be foreclosed upon if all the circumstances and allegiances at play were brought clearly into view. Pregnancy introduces an interesting wrinkle into such projects, because it makes visible what could be kept hidden before. If pregnancy produces a

transformative effect on the communicative space into which it speaks, those closest to it sometimes have reason to postpone the revelation of the pregnancy.

To avoid the risk of being seen by anonymous, dangerous others, like neighbors and ex-girlfriends, one pregnant woman I knew stopped using the outhouse. Instead, she bought a sturdy, expensive bucket for the same purpose, which she kept inside the house with her during the day. She would only go outside to dump it in the evenings when it had gotten dark. Likewise, as delivery dates approached, I often heard women express the hope of going into labor when it was dark outside, so no one would see; and after beginning labor, waiting until darkness fell, if at all possible, before departing for the hospital.

Sustainding ambiguity instead of revealing the pregnancy was not only preferable in relationships with "the people around," but also, in relationships with parents, at least in some cases. Julie Archambault (2017) has described the ways Mozambican parents and siblings often exercise a "willful blindness" toward their unmarried family members' sexual relationships, sometimes even seeing these males pass through the house or compound, yet not greeting them or acknowledging their presence, in this way sustaining the pretense that they do not know what is going on, since it would be outside the cultural demands of respect.

In Uganda, parents are said to assume that their sons and daughters who are of age do have sexual partners, "of course"; however, until they formally introduce those partners, the parents practice a willful ignorance toward the relationship. That plausible deniability, however, expires when a pregnancy becomes evident; pregnancy becomes the authoritative knowledge upon which parents become compelled to act. For this reason, suspending the revelation of a pregnancy to one's parents until one can frame the pregnancy in the most favorable light, can be advantageous.

Let Them See for Themselves

Finding themselves pregnant before being married, some women who lived at a distance from their parents chose not to inform their parents that they were pregnant at all, so as to avoid incurring their parents' anger. Sometimes parents who were in the village might not understand the realities of relationships "of today," and in such cases, women might opt to visit their parents only after child was a few months, or even a few years old: that is, only after the uncertainties of the pregnancy had settled and the baby's life had "stabilized". Although this was considered disrespectful, a woman might deem this act of disrespect less socially corrosive than her parents' prospective anger. Other women told me that they shared their pregnancy with their mothers via phone, but never with their fathers; the logic here being that woman-to-woman, mothers are much more likely to understand their daughter's situation and obligation to produce a child despite not yet being married. Mothers would generally be relieved at the confirmation that their daughter was not infertile, so they would not be "chased" by their men. Their fathers would only find out when they next saw their daughter with her child(ren), whenever that might be, and even then, the daughter would not be the one to initiate the conversation about this topic; rather, her father could choose at that point to ask what had happened, or not. This strategy of not speaking about the pregnancy, but rather, letting the pregnancy speak, was a way of respectfully initiating a sensitive conversation.

Because they got pregnant before carrying out the customary Introduction (*okuhingira*) ceremony, Pamela had to be especially careful in how to tell her mother that she was pregnant. The Introduction ceremony is the formal ritual mode through which a woman introduces her spouse to her parents in Uganda, and ideally it takes place at the woman's ancestral home. If a

couple has fulfilled this ritual, then disclosing pregnancy to one's parents is welcome and expected information. However, without this ritual having been established in Pamela's case, her pregnancy was much more vulnerable. She decided not to tell her mother that she was pregnant, or even that she "had a man" until she was six months along; this way, she could respectfully initiate a sensitive conversation by not speaking about the pregnancy, but rather, letting the pregnancy itself speak as her mother beheld her daughter's pregnant body.

Pamela asked Sam for money to go and visit her mother, and he provided money for bus fare, as well as gifts. When Pamela disembarked from the bus with sugar and soap and matchboxes and paraffin, her mother could not think that her protruding stomach had been conceived in a fleeting relationship. By the man's gifts she carried, Pamela's mother could see that she was "not alone." Although her mother might have been angry to find out that her daughter had fallen pregnant before ritually introducing a man, she wasn't, and Pamela explained that this was because her mother saw by the gifts that the relationship was likely to be on good footing. By allowing her mother to see for herself that Pamela "had a man" – both in the sense that a man had impregnated her, and in the sense that he was providing for her – Pamela assuaged her mother's fears that their daughter might be falling into a dishonorable situation. While the pregnancy was a true index that she was having sexual relations with a man and that there would be a future relationship (whether positive or negative between them), the indexical sign of the pregnancy was nested within signs of Sam's socioeconomic stature, his care for Pamela and her mother, and the promise that her daughter would move well through life -- forward, upward, and outward -- with him.

Judith used a similar strategy to "show" her pregnancy to her father. Judith was well-educated, having graduated from Mbarara University of Science and Technology. She had met

her man, Vincent, there, and had convinced him to come to her father's office in town to meet him, thereby showing both Judith and her father that he was "serious" about marrying her when he got the money. Then, when she got pregnant a few months later, her position was not so precarious: "I waited for the stomach to show. Then I went to my father's office and I talked to him as normal. He saw the stomach and he said, 'Judith! Are you pregnant?' I just looked at him and said, 'Any problem?' He said, 'No.' Good enough, he had already seen the man," she laughed. In this case, Judith disclosed her pregnancy to her father very boldly, finding it possible to do so from her privileged position. A graduate of Mbarara University, Vincent "looked responsible," and her father had *seen* him. Even though they had not yet gone for Introduction, her future honor was not really in question. "In this dot com era," Judith explained, "parents have to be a bit understanding." *She* didn't tell her father she was pregnant; her bulging belly did, and this respectful way of conveying authoritative knowledge about her union with Vincent was met with acceptance because Judith and Vincent had already set the scene in which this pregnancy would enter harmonious relationships.

By nesting pregnancy-as-a-sign within symbols of husbandly presence and care, a man worked to show a woman and her family members that he would love and provide for this woman and this child. Especially in cases of premarital pregnancy, conveying these messages to women's families and others was a process of shaping the frame in which the meaning of this pregnancy would be defined. Further, it was a collaborative process carried out through the carefully coordinated and sensitive back-and-forth of the man and the woman's actions and movements.

Framing as a Relational Activity Carried out By a Collective

Telling one's parents, however, was not always so easy. Lillian's father died in 1995, when she was just five years old. Her mother raised Lillian and her seven brothers and sisters on her own, with a harsh hand; "So because she had been alone, being both the father and the mother, you are not just going to show up pregnant before introducing the man at home." Lillian explained that she and her man, Benjamin, had wanted to go for Introduction the previous year. She told her mother of this intentions, but her mother had replied, "We don't have time for you." One of Lillian's adult sisters had fallen sick with a severe mental illness, brought on by evil spirits in her husband's family, and had come home to be taken care of by her mother. Her condition had kept them in and out of hospitals and churches seeking treatment for over a year. The family's resources and energies were already occupied. But in the meantime, Lillian fell pregnant.

Even though her family was unofficially aware that she was as good as married, since her family's circumstances had not allowed her to go for introduction, she could see no way to tell them that she was pregnant. But one of her brothers came to visit unexpectedly. He was on his way home from Kampala to their natal village for Easter, and he stopped in Mbarara on his way, to come by Lillian's house, thinking they could go together. "He found me pregnant." He was angry! Lillian explained that she had been very close with this brother, and they had previously told one another about their romantic relationships, so when he found that she had "left him behind," not keeping him informed about her life, he felt abandoned.

Lillian did not accompany him home, not wanting her mother to see her; but he told their mother and the other family members present what he had seen. Soon after, her mom called her on the phone. She said, "Lillian, I want to see you pregnant!" and insisted on coming to visit her.

Even if her mother was angered by the news, she overcame it, seeing that Lillian's brother was already upset. Lillian explained, "She had to keep it cool, [seeing that] if my brother and mother both get angry at me, who would I go to when I needed help? And who would I go to when I come to visit?"

Lillian's mother controlled her reaction to the news, in response to foreseeing the social effects of her prospective anger. Indirectly, then, Lillian's brother provoked their mother to know of, accept, and come and see the pregnancy without expressing anger toward Lillian. Two of Lillian's sisters came with their mother to visit her when she was about seven and a half months along. Lillian felt overjoyed about being able to come together with her mother and sisters during this time. After the pregnancy was known by her family, her sisters called her often, checking how she was feeling, and offering advice. Before this time, she had been profoundly alone with her pregnancy. Recall that upon conceiving, she had moved to other side of town away from her friends. Her husband worked in another part of the country (Jinja), only coming home for a few days every month or two. When I first met Lillian, it was at a reproductive health center, and she was accompanied by her brother-in-law, which was not a scenario I often saw, and may have spoken to the lack of female support in her life. Lillian told me that she had expected to give birth by herself, never wanting to inconvenience her family, especially given that this pregnancy was badly timed, in their view (in that it was outside of marriage and while they were prioritizing their other sister's mental healthcare). Thankfully, as things unfolded, when the time came to give birth, her sister traveled to Mbarara to help her in the hospital and the first few days at home with the baby.

So then, Lillian's brother did her a great service by showing up at her home, seeing that she was pregnant, and telling the rest of her family about it. Where Lillian herself could not tell

the information or "just show up [at home] pregnant" within the bounds of respect, her brother spoke on her behalf. Further, by taking on the emotional response to Lillian's pregnancy, he freed up the other members of the family to take on other roles that spoke of Lillian's continued acceptance and welcome.

This example demonstrates how the framing of a pregnancy is a collaborative activity, carried out by the therapy managing group as a unit. For Lillian's part, rather than overstep the bounds of respect for her mother and deference to her family's focus on her sister's healing, she suspended the disclosure of her pregnancy indefinitely. Her brother took on and expressed the family's anger, making it so that other family members didn't have to. And her mother and her sisters showed affection, recognition, and assistance. It was a collective effort to frame this pregnancy as something that ultimately, would not divide them from Lillian. It is through this process of regulating the conditions under which a pregnancy becomes seen and touched – known and related to – that the collective entities that make or break care, come into being.

Out of the Womb and Out of the House

Giving Birth

When the time came to give birth, fears and uncertainties multiplied. Pamela described how worried she felt about dying when she went into labor. She did not want to go to the hospital, and she delayed to leave the house so long that her husband became very angry. Just before leaving, she put her three-year-old son to bed and quietly prayed, "God, that is my baby. I don't know if I am coming back for him, so if I don't, You care for him."

When a woman arrived at the hospital or health center to deliver, would she find it already full, without a spare bed for her? Would the nurses ignore her, speak rudely to her,

charge her for things that were supposed to be free, or ask outright for bribes? They might, or might not. Would the senior doctors be on duty? Or would it be only students? The uncertainties of seeking biomedical antenatal care further contributed to the overall aura of unpredictability surrounding pregnancy. Fickle medical personnel, as well as stockouts affecting the availability of both drugs and basic medical supplies like gloves, were unpredictable. Those who had the financial means and/or connections to seek antenatal and delivery care in private or mission hospitals, did so. But the odds of finding reliable care were little better.

One very wealthy woman, Beatrice, contracted an expensive private doctor to oversee her pregnancy. The antenatal care visits went smoothly, and whenever she came to his office he saw her immediately instead of making her wait in the line with his other patients. However, when she went into labor at night, she called his personal number and he told her to meet him at his clinic. She arrived at the clinic before he did, and the nurses showed her to a private suite on the top floor. Busy attending to other patients, they left her in her suite and assured her that they would show the doctor directly to her room when he got there, and in the meantime, they would be back to check on her shortly. Perhaps she was out of sight and out of mind in that top floor private suite, because she labored for two hours without anyone coming to check on her at all. Through this time, she called the doctor's direct line many times, but he wasn't answering. She decided to be patient. Finally, as she began to push the baby out, she reached for her cell phone and called the clinic itself – informing the nurse who answered the phone that she was up on the top floor and needed help, fast! By the time the nurses came up to her, followed shortly by the doctor, she had already pushed the baby out completely.

A middle-class woman, Olivia, whose pregnancy I followed closely during my fieldwork loved to remind me that, "Even our MP died in childbirth. Your money cannot protect you in this

Uganda." She referred to the 2017 death of Grace Hailat Kaudha, a Minister of Parliament. The cause of her death was severe pre-eclampsia, and sources disagree on whether or not she was actually in childbirth when the pre-eclampsia escalated. (Some sources say she was only five months pregnant at the time.) What is clear, however, is that at the onset of symptoms, which came at night, she initially sought care from a private clinic in a Kampala suburb, which referred her to the high-end Case Clinic in the city center, where she was told that there was no one on duty with the expertise to handle her case. From there she was rushed to Mulago National Referral Hospital (Kawempe extension) where she died 30 minutes after arrival (Kyeyune 2017; Ssali 2017). With Kaudha's death often on her mind, Olivia was haunted by the thought of going into labor at night, and thus chose to schedule a C-section in advance of her due date. She told me, "At least then I know I will find the doctor there. If he can't make it, then we reschedule."

Multiple women with whom I talked also expressed worry that their pregnancy might not actually be human. I heard stories of women giving birth to snakes, fish, frogs, goats, and rats. While I did not meet anyone who had personally had this experience, I met many women who believed this could be possible as a result of witchcraft or ancestral spiritual action. When a close interlocutor, Imelda, exceeded her due date, she became worried over what kind of creature she might be carrying, as non-humans rumored to take longer to gestate inside a human mother's womb. A woman from her village, she said, had given birth to six fish, but after showing them to her, although she wanted to keep them and felt they were her children, the doctors disposed of them. Imelda refused to go to the hospital (for a C-section) until her body went into labor naturally, perhaps scared of what she might find; she concluded that she would find out when she delivered it. Others dismissed the idea of non-human pregnancies out of hand as a complete

hoax. Regardless of its truth value, I often heard women joke with one another about this possibility as a way of mocking the many voids of knowledge that shaped pregnant life.

Another source of anxiety was the role of the mother-in-law at the birth. Traditionally, the man's mother would be the one to oversee the pregnancy and the birth. The woman would have been living in the man's village since the marriage, and thus throughout the pregnancy the mother-in-law would coordinate the woman's diet, her interactions with *abazarisa* (birth assistants), and the gathering and preparation of whatever traditional medicines she took (Neema 1994: 49). Mothers-in-law would often be present if not in charge at the delivery. But the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law has always had the potential to be tense, as the two are seen to compete for favors from the son (Neema 1994: 116). This may be all the more true under the contemporary circumstances surrounding marriage and pregnancy sequences in the urban setting. Most urban dwellers' mothers-in-law reside in the village and thus at a distance. Yet, women in Mbarara sometimes worried that their husbands/boyfriends would tell their mothers when they went into labor, and that the mother-in-law would show up at the delivery! Even if the man's mother had never met his wife/girlfriend, she might show up at the birth to stake a claim over the new life entering their clan, and/or, if she resented the woman, to cause her harm in this vulnerable moment.

Calling the Name: Questions of Ownership

To name a baby before it is born is presumptuous. But once the child arrives, traditionally, the oldest members of the baby's father's clan are the ones to call the name. In many cases, this remains the practice. When Lillian gave birth, for example, her baby remained nameless for several months until she and her husband could bring the child to his natal village

to present the newest member of the family member to the oldest. However, in other cases, there

may be more question about who holds the right to name the child. I suggest that the questions

surrounding naming pertain to changing notions of responsibility for the expected child's

wellbeing. The following exchange between two pregnant friends in Mbarara illustrates how

who calls the child's name speaks to questions of who owns the pregnancy, and on what

grounds.

Joanne:	Nare bayanga niimweta[29] ayinomugisha Amazing Treasure
	If I see that they have refused I will call her[27] Ayinomugisha Amazing Treasure

Penelope:	Amazing Treasure?

J:	Mmm. Ninga baryanga ryona nimweta Amazing Grace
	Yes. Or if they refuse I will call her Amazing Grace

P:	Mm

J:	Nogira enda oza kuronda iziina // reru abokuza kutuzibira
	You get pregnant and you start looking for a name // and there are those who refuse us
	P: // You get pregnant and--

kweta abaana baitu amaziina! Oshangu obu nabiire nindumwa okankwatiraho ((LAUGHS))
from calling our babies' names! As if they helped me when I was in labor ((LAUGHS))

P:	Naryanga! ((SHAKES HEAD)) Ozara omwanawawe. **Nyowee** nzare omwana wangye reru
	I refuse it! ((SHAKES HEAD)) You produce your baby. **Me** I produce my baby and

iwe omunyetere iziina nguiwe ori mazaara?
you name her for me just because you are my mother in law?

J: Manya Tom okabeteresa ab'omukyaaro ngu omwana tumwete oha //ngu imwe
You know Tom called to ask those in the village how will you call the baby// that you guys
P: // Mm

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[29] Runyankole has gender-neutral pronouns, but I have chosen to translate the third person pronouns throughout this dialog as "she/her" because the names Ayinomugisha Amazing Treasure and Amazing Grace are girls' names, indicating that the women speaking in this dialog were identifying Joanne's baby as a girl.

tukukukyenda ngu ebyahati? shi bakyeta abaana amaziina abantu bakuru
don't you understand what's happening nowadays? do old people still call children's names?

ngu imwe nimwe muku gerondera.'Ahamutima ni ahuuu. Nyowe nkagira nti obeterese
You are the ones to get the names.' My heart rested. Me I told Tom to just call them

abagambire atagirangu twesire omwana iziina kandi tomwijukuru wokubaanza?
and tell them so that she doesn't say that we named the child, isn't she her grandchild?

P: Mm—

J: Eee . Ekirungi kubaterera ngu nebya dot com
Yes . The good thing is that when he called they said it is this dot com

P: Shi kabetegyrize abaantu abo
P: These people are literate

As the exchange begins, Joanne is coming up with backup names in case her husband's parents

refuse the names she has chosen, indicating that the process she expects is one of negotiation.

She positions herself, and her conversation partner, Penelope, in contrast to "those who refuse us

from naming our babies." Such people are not participating in the norms of the "dot com" era.

Penelope agrees with Joanne, recognizing elders who allow the couple to name their own child

as "literate", that is, participants in modernity. But even though Joanne distances herself from

tradition, she reports nonetheless having had her husband Tom call "those in the village" – the

grandparents – and ask what they should call the baby, so as to avoid the grandparents'

resentment or disapproval. As relieved as she was that they would not act on their right to name

the child, it was still a right to which Joanne felt it important for the sake of keeping the

intergenerational harmony, peace, and blessings flowing.

However, Penelope and Joanne both emphatically gesture toward an alternative logic

according to which they would prefer naming rights be distributed – a logic which they associate

with modernity through their references to "old people," the "dot com" era, and "literacy". As Joanne says, "You get pregnant and start looking for a name, and there are those who refuse us from naming our babies! As if they helped me when I was in labor!" – Penelope overlaps her speech, saying "You get pregnant and—" and then when it's her turn, "I refuse it! You produce your baby. **Me**, I produce my baby and you name her for me just because you are my mother-in-law?" This is also the portion of the conversation during which both women emote most dramatically, Joanne laughing at how ridiculous it is that someone other than the one who went through labor would call the name, and Penelope vigorously shaking her head no at this thought. Both of them seem to hold the position that through the act of producing the baby, the mother accords special rights over the child which should include calling the name. Yet while that was their shared personal point of view, Joanne maintained the importance of recognizing elders' naming rights, and Penelope agreed with this position.

Although this process of calling the name takes place after the child has exited the womb (and thus no longer squarely within the pregnancy period), articulating the ownership of the child by its clan by deferring to elders' naming rights is a crucial step in continuing to nest the pregnancy in relations of care and not resentment.

The Seen and the Unseen

As the same conversation between Joanne and Penelope continued, the core issues shaping their concerns around naming became even clearer, and showed forth in concerns about other practices besides naming as well. The following section of their conversation occurred about five minutes after the discussion of naming above. In the two minutes between these excerpts that I have not featured in this chapter, the women exchange amazements about how

much smaller a pregnancy of three months is than a baby of three months. Then Joanne shifts

back into a discussion of the knowledge she accumulated through her former pregnancy, and is

now sharing with Penelope (who is pregnant for the first time).

J: Ngu manya omwana waza kumushohoza nibabanza ba yerura amahega
That before you take the baby outside you should first sweep the cooking stones

P: Omwana waka kumushohoza?
Before you take the child outside?

J: Mm. Ngu ebyo ngo nkore emigyenzo
Yes. That me I should do those Nkore rituals

P: Byaki?
For what?

J: Omwana wangye obwo obwiire akaba aba abyami-- nkamuzara nti ba gira ngu
My baby was asleep at that time—I gave birth and they told me that when

yacwa enkundi nomuwaara aheeru omwana akakyeka anyaraho.
the umbilical cord falls off, you lay a mat outside for the baby and she urinates there.

Nkagira ngu tinkuza kubikora
I said I will not do them.

In this portion of the conversation (which occurred just after the part about naming

excerpted above), the women are discussing how to best care for newborn babies, and

specifically, taking the baby outside the house for the first time. Much like in the naming sub-

conversation, here they continue positioning themselves against traditional practices.

P: Noha wabigambire?
Who said that?

J: Hariho abakazi be mizigo
There are these women on rentals

P: Ah!

J: Omwana wangye akacwa akundi nagihaho nagibiika nyakwenkuru weye akagirangu ngibiike
When my child dropped the umbilical cord-- her grandmother had told me to keep it-- I picked it up and kept it

P: Nangwa enkundi yo tokaginaga
For the umbilical cord yoou can't throw it

Here, in contrast to the way they have been eschewing other ritual injunctions, the women agree that the umbilical cord cannot be disposed of. Crucially, they differentiate between the source of this injunction (the grandmother) and the source of the injunctions previously mentioned (these women on rentals). Again, intergenerational harmony is the orienting logic.

J: Omwana wange yabyaama yabyaama yabyama ahakwezi nibwe // yashohwire aheeru
My baby slept, slept, slept, slept. At one month   // that's when she went outside
P: // Mm

J: kureba aheeru. Kushohora ahabwokuba nkamwihayo ndikumutwara aha polio
to see outside. I took her outside because I was taking her for polio.

Yagaruka omunju yagumayo yagumayo!
She went back inside and stayed there, stayed there, stayed there!

P: Nambwenu muka bother wange--
For that reason my brother's wife—

J: Nambwenu, ogu omwana nanshwaza takutukura. Weena akabiire nashana nkomunekye.
For that reason, this child makes me shy, she is not brown. She should be like a yellow banana.

P: Mm!

J: Takushohora. Eshaha yoona we atuura omunju
She doesn't go out. All the time she is ever inside the house

P: Muka brother wangye nawe akagira enda, yazaara omwana, yamuta omunju omwe
My brother's wife also got pregnant, she gave birth to her child, she put her in their house

Joanne goes on to show that she did not take her neighbors' ritualistic thinking to heart in the way she arranged for her baby to go outside the first time. She did not bring the baby outside when the umbilical cord fell off like they advised. Instead, Joanne emphasizes, her baby stayed inside the house for the entire first month of her life, and then, only went out to get the polio vaccine. Being associated with biomedicine, health, and modern care, bringing the baby outside for vaccinations as opposed to fulfilling Nkore superstitions furthers Joanne's self-positioning as a participant in modernity.

Moreover, she says that because the baby spends so much time inside, her skin should be as light as a yellow banana, but it is not! Here Joanne alludes to the preference for light skin – the lighter the better – saying that she feels shy about others seeing her baby's dark skin tone. If babies' of modern mothers stay in the house longer than their superstitious or ritual-minded counterparts', then their phenotype also (ideally) comes to reflect their modern behaviors, reflecting the overt racialization of these practices of newborn care.

Then, Penelope chimes in with the example of her brother's wife, who, she wants to suggest, also remained in the house for a prolonged portion of her early life.

J: Oba ya muterize ekikatu ka polio?
Did she go for polio?

P: Kanosha tarakumuterize, oba baka kimuteera yahaza kuzaara
It seems she didn't immunize her, or they vaccinated her at birth

J: Zero polio?

P: Nibabaasa kuba bakimutiire. Konka omwana we kuza kumushohoza Melisa baka mushohoza
They might have vaccinated her. But that child to go out Melisa they took her outside when

ari kwajura
she was crawling

Here, Penelope hedges on her answer that her brother's wife didn't immunize her baby, sliding to say they might have vaccinated her, and making her point that the baby was kept indoors until she was crawling! A vaccinated, indoor baby is a modern baby.

J: Nyowe omwana wangye yaguma ati nemicwe mirungi tinkubaasa kumushohoza aheeru
For me if my baby stays with this good behavior I cannot take her outside

Nomushohoza? Manya abaantu bakeega okuroga. Mbweshi kahiine omwana aherize
You take her outside? You know people learned how to bewitch. Now there is a child who has just

kufa aha ahakikaari recently hati hati.
died from the fenced-in building recently now now.

P: Ayisirwe kyi?
What killed her?

J: Akazaara ekyaana kyiboniire kyihaango kya brown, eh!
She produced a very beautiful child, big, the way she was brown, eh!

P: Everyone would want such children

Joanne has just introduced another reason to keep babies indoors: to avoid witchcraft. Again, in reference to this baby who passed away, light skin (brown, as opposed to black) is called beautiful and desirable.

J: Omushaija— omushaija-- omwana abiire ayine emeezi etaano. Omushiija ati ninyeenda
The husband--- the husband—the child had five months. The husband said I want

kutamburamu nomwana wangye. Amujweka agenda. Akamutwara aha murimo.
I want to walk with my baby. He prepared her and left. He took her to his work place.

Nakora aha roundabout aha washing bay. Omwana akamugarura atakiri mwana.
He works at the roundabout at the washing bay. He brought the baby back when it was not a baby.

By saying that he brought the baby back when it was not a baby, Joanne indicates that a life-threatening change took place in the baby while at the washing bay with the father. Recall that she began telling this story directly following her assertion that "people learned how to bewitch". This reference to learning is a common construction by which to point to a change. In the case of this conversation's recurring juxtapositions of tradition and modernity, the change to which Joanne points, I believe, is that *nowadays*, more than previously, people have learned how to bewitch, making leaving the house with a newborn a more dangerous proposition. Thus, the claim is that even though traditional practices may be declining, the dot com era requires increased vigilance due to increased threats of witchcraft (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 1999; Geschiere 2000).

P: Omushija ishe womwana?
Was the husband the baby's father?

Interestingly, Penelope's first response to hearing that the man brought the baby back when it was not a baby was to ask whether the man was the baby's father. Omushiija means (married) man, whereas ishe womana means the father of the baby. If the baby had had a different father than the woman's husband, perhaps he would have had jealous motives to mess with the baby's wellbeing.

J: Ee. Omushija takumanya oba akaki. Ninka oku nakugiranti 'reeta omwana' nkamutwara,
Yes. The man doesn't know what happened. It's like to say, 'Bring the child,' I take him,

niiwe okamwakiira oka mu twaara. Nkebyo. Buryome wena akakikira omwana.
then you, you also receive him and take him. Like that. Everybody carried the child.

Akarara ebiro bingahi yaafa. Ngu ekiintu kikaba kiri nkaaha. Oba ngu bakamuriisa
She didn't stay long, she died. That something was like here. Or that they fed her

obwoya bwakapa. Ebya babantu nabyo kotakubikenga. Ngu obwoya bwa kappa, omuntu
a cat's hair. Things of people also you can't understand them. A cat's hair, if a person

yakakwata kakata aha ruromi// rwomwana akakamira naafa
gets them and puts them on the tongue// and she swallows them she dies.
P:// Mm

P: Mm!

J: It kills you! . . . Eventually

P: Nkamugurirwa
I felt pity for her

J: Ekyana kyange nomubiru gwakyo ninkita omunju ((LAUGHS))
My baby with her skin I put her in the house ((LAUGHS))

Konka omuntu naaba atiine mbabazi yaheza kutweka
But a person can be truly merciless when someone gets a pregnancy

P: **Ego.** Nkonka naba yabire arazireho shi?
Yes. But had she produced before?

By feeling bad for the bereaved mother and taking the precaution of keeping the child in the

house, Joanne and Penelope recognize that rather than having mercy on those who are pregnant,

people use their vulnerable situation against them.

J: Mbweshi nonda kungira ngu mba batarazire ho.
So you want to tell me that they can't be merciless once they have produced?

Konka shana tokumanya. Nomanya nkabashija biitu aba bakagira kare girl friends
But it seems you do not know. You know like our husbands can have had girlfriends

ex-girlfriends bari omu around.
ex-girlfriends they are here around.

P: Ozaaara omwana wawe, amwita.
You produce your baby, she kills it.

J: Hati we apretending ati omushija akamureka yashwerwa nomushija yashwere konka--
Now for her she pretends she left the man to marry and she also gets married but--

P: Kagumamu
P: Something remains there

J: Kagumamu. Hati nosha omushija akaba nakwana omukazi aho biki biki.
Something remains there. Now it seems the man was seeing a woman there things like that

The reasons behind the witchcraft now emerge. Husbands' concurrent girlfriends and ex-girlfriends may have continuing ties to the man. In this case, a baby by another woman makes them jealous and leads them to be merciless.

J: Nyowe? Kuza kutwara omwana wangye! Tom nti nyowe kukwata omwana wangye
For me? To go and take my child! 'Tom,' I say, 'for me you take my baby

ngunomutwara wenka?
and you take her alone?'

P: Oruguru kuriya baze kumutwarira?
Up there and they take her?

J: Orikumutwarira oha baitu?
But you are taking her to who?

In the story of the baby who died, the husband had wanted to walk with his baby. Seeing a man walking with his baby was not an uncommon sight in Mbarara, and men and women alike told me that when you are out walking with your baby and everyone is seeing you, it makes you feel nice. But here, Joanne explains that she would not allow her husband to take their baby somewhere without her, not trusting to whom he would be taking the baby if Joanne could not come too. I add that this would not be an easy position to take up in response to one's husband wanting to take the baby out, as resisting the husband's desires/demands or suggesting that he

might not be faithful are not comfortable or welcome conversations in any Ugandan marriage of which I am aware; much more commonly I heard of the virtues of silence and deference to a man's authority.

| P: By the way omukazi akagirangu omwanawe takumuhereza buryomwe namugiranti, 'Konka |
| By the way a woman said for her baby she cannot just give it to any one and I told her, 'But |

| oyine omweryo ahabwenki otakwenda bamukikire?' Banamwe enda oku orikushasha! |
| You are proud. Why don't you want people to hold it?' For sure the way pregnancy is painful! |

| Enda kwe kuruma. |
| Pregnancy bites. |

After hearing Joanne's words of caution, Penelope revises a position she had previously held on the topic of allowing others to hold one's baby. Before, she had found the concern over allowing others to hold one's baby to be a sign of pride, not understanding the risk in doing so. But in this moment Penelope says, "For sure the way pregnancy is painful!" seeming to refer simultaneously to the pain of feeling that those around her might be merciless toward her condition, as well as the embodied physical pains she was feeling during this interaction, which took place when she was super pregnant. Together, these pains made her feel that all the more, she would have to protect what she had been suffering for.[30] As the child came out of her womb, she now understood, the child would need to be kept under the protection of her house, her presence, and her supervision as much as possible. Much like the increasing size of her stomach

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[30] What Susan R. and Michael A. Whyte (2004) have written of relationships with children in Eastern Uganda may also be true in the southwestern part of the country where I work: "It is not simply that you struggle [for them] because you love, but you love because you have suffered" (p. 88). Having suffered on someone's behalf, or having gone through difficulties with them, fortified the bond between them and led to the willingness to do more on that person's behalf.

that told all who saw her that she was pregnant, the newborn baby, too, would enter a vulnerable communicative space, with both seen and unseen dimensions.

The only way to protect the child against the disharmony that emanates from unsatisfied grandparents, the spiritual ties to demonic forces forged through rituals, the sicknesses to which one was susceptible without vaccinating, the dark skin that came from too much sun, the indiscriminate carelessness of male hubris, and the malevolence of jealous neighbors – would be through vigilant maternal care. It would be through the careful efforts to frame the pregnancy in just the right way that mothers could shape others' interpretations of, responses to, and effect on the expected child's life.

Having tracked the many anxieties and ambiguities that beset fertility, prosperity, and growth in postcolonial Uganda in this chapter, in the next chapter, we turn to consider how women in Mbarara go about undoing the effects of bad relationships on their pregnancies and families.

Chapter 5: Breaking Bondages

Ambivalent Attachments

As the previous chapters have begun to demonstrate, relationships are the key to success in Mbarara, but they are also laced with danger. We have seen this through the concerns surrounding pacing one's entrance into married motherhood in relation to others in chapter three, and in the concerns surrounding how pregnancy-as-a-sign will be read by others in chapter four. I now turn to directly consider women's efforts to avoid, manage, and break harmful social bonds. Positioning my discussion at the intersection of the literature on relationships of dependence and the literature on misfortune, I point out that the very same interdependent relationships that bring the promise of good things also present the continual possibility of harm, lack, and ill-health. Personal ties are thus inherently ambivalent. This ambivalence must be reckoned with, with special urgency and intensity, during a pregnancy, as a pregnancy brings new life into an already unfolding set of attachments.

What would it entail, then, to consider desired dependencies alongside undesired, even detrimental relationships – thinking of these as two outcomes of the same set of processes of interacting and relating?

Thinking Together Dependence and Misfortune

Scholars of precolonial Africa have argued that an abundance of land and a relative scarcity of people to work that land led to a situation in which an investment in people constituted the basis of social and political power, a model famously known as "wealth-in-people" (Miers and Kopytoff 1977; Guyer 1993; Vansina 1990). Given the value of people, leaders consolidated power not by conquering but rather by incorporating slaves, captives, and

wives as followers, with whom they secured lasting relationships of mutual obligation (Barnes 1967; Hanson 2003). These relationships of inter-dependence were thus not only key to political power, but to assembling networks of affiliation at all levels, from the marriage, to the family, to the lineage, to other collective social units. As such, relationships of hierarchical interdependence constituted the principal mechanism for achieving social personhood (Radcliffe-Brown 1965; LaFontaine 1985; Fortes 1987; Piot 1991; Englund 1996; Comaroff & Comaroff 2001). As follows, intimate processes of fashioning the self and the family were often shot through with explicit concerns over the stakes for the collectivity (Prichard 2013).

In contrast to what emancipatory liberal thinkers might assume, in the wealth-in-people framework, relationships of hierarchical interdependence did not devalue the dependent (Ferguson 2013; Scherz 2014; Haynes 2017). Rather, dependence constituted a powerful "mode of action" by which to improve and enhance one's social position (Bayart 2000). In fact, as James Ferguson (2013) has recently argued, the existence of multiple opportunities for affiliation actually *generated* free choice for followers. In turn, the need to retain followers meant that patrons had strong reason to regard followers' needs and desires, lest they lose them to their rivals.

In recent years, there has been an efflorescence of interest in hierarchical forms of inter-dependence in anthropology, particularly in relation to concepts of agency, inequality, and value. Drawing on the lineage of Africanist scholarship I have just traced -- as well as genealogies of thought inspired by Louis Dumont (1970) (e.g., Mosko and Jolly 1994; Rio and Smedal 2009; Peacock 2015; Haynes & Hickel 2016) -- the current conversation focuses especially on voluntary, intentional "declarations of dependence" (Ferguson 2013). Scholars working in this vein have inspired a radical rethinking of freedom and domination through ethnographic

examples including Catholic charity recipients in central Uganda (Scherz 2014); self-subjection according to an ideal form of parasitism that colonizes the hierarchy of the boss/servant relationship among Paumari people living in native Amazonia (Bonilla 2016); efforts to re-order instead of escape kin-based dependence through antiviolence counseling in North India (Kowalski 2016); and dodging debts on the basis of voluntary submission in the interethnic Sanema-Ye'kwana relationship in Amazonia (Penfield 2017), among others. These "desired dependencies" (Devlieger 2018) raise pressing questions about morally good forms of inequality, and how specific persons achieve or fail at achieving them. One of the most important insights to emerge from this line of inquiry has been that in many parts of the world, contemporary circumstances of surplus labor, individualist capitalist accumulation, and the privatization of property have meant that the opportunities for securing patronage have been shrinking, and with them, the checks on patrons' power.

But in the effort to better attend to desired forms of hierarchical dependence, the ways people engage with the less savory and less optional aspects of the same relationships have fallen out of view. I suggest that the rich anthropological literature on misfortune deals with just that, and thus, I make the case for considering dependence and misfortune in relation to each other.

With the publication of Evans-Pritchard's (1937) book on Zande witchcraft, he opened a rich field of anthropological research. In that book, he explained how Azande in the 1930s differentiated between primary and secondary causes of misfortune. Whereas they understood affliction to have an immediate cause in the physical world, they interpreted those events in the physical world to have been set in motion for an underlying social-spiritual reason. In this way, in dealing with misfortune, Zande recognized and engaged with problems of power and social conflict. With this point, Evans-Pritchard's work inspired several generations of Africanists,

many of them quite influential, especially in the anthropology of religion (Middleton 1960;

Mitchell 1965; Turner 1967, 1968; Harwood 1970). But, as Susan Reynolds Whyte (1989) has

pointed out, if misfortune was once the purview of scholars of religion and cosmology, with the

growth of medical anthropology in the 1970s, an important shift occurred; "what we knew as

divination now appears to be diagnosis; what we analysed as ritual is termed therapy…one is

tempted to speak of the medicalization of African religion" (Whyte 1989: 289). With medical

anthropology incorporating the study of misfortune into its territory, questions and terminologies

turned to focus on sickness rather than misfortune in general; on the effects of rituals and

medicines upon sickness as treatment, rather than their symbolic and cultural consequences; and

on the individual body as the locus of disorder, rather than the social structure. This very medical

medical anthropology continued until the pendulum began to swing back the other way with

publication of several works on spirit possession in relation to affliction in the late 1980s and the

1990s (Stoller and Olkes 1987; Devisch 1993; Boddy 1994; Davis 2000; Masquelier 2001). But,

as pointed out by China Scherz (2018a), over the past two decades, these works have largely

been eclipsed by the burgeoning anthropology of biomedicine and global health in Africa, on the

one hand, and the discipline's treatment of witchcraft as a metaphoric critique of modernity and

capitalism, on the other.

 If recent writings on misfortune and healing in Africa have been cloaked in the

anthropology of biomedicine, the relevance of misfortune to thinking more broadly about inter-

personal dependencies may not have been apparent to contemporary scholars of dependence.

That is, until now. I put forth that, insofar as people often diagnose misfortunes as a function of

disordered interpersonal relationships -- a point on which the literature has been consistent from

Evans-Pritchard to the present (Whyte 1997; Luedke and West 2006; Langwick 2011; Geschiere

2013) -- their engagements with misfortune have much to teach us about lived experiences of, and changing ideas about, dependence.

There is strong historical precedent for this move. The historical ethnography in East Africa shows that divination and healing provided a powerful mode of critiquing pre-colonial political leaders' power. Diviner-healers participated centrally in political leadership's task to reproduce the social group by providing subjects with various kinds of "fertility," from rain, to healthy pastures and soils, to cows, to children. Kings and chiefs employed spirit mediums to this end, and independent healers provided a powerful commentary on political leaders' ability to prosper the people (Janzen 1979, Waite 1987, Feierman 1985 and 1995, Schoenbrun 2006, Kodesh 2010). This shows that in addition to the flexibility clients had to affiliate with alternative patrons, that reparative social processes of healing also constituted perhaps less drastic means of recourse.

Scholarship on the modern state in Africa has shown that political legitimacy continues to be evaluated through local metrics such as the productivity of the land, the bringing of rain, and "eating" vs. "feeding" the people (Lan 1985; Feierman 1990; Bayart 1993; Malkki 1995; Schatzberg 2001; Sanders 2002; Ferguson 2006). Yet, recall that relationships of inter-dependence configured not only polities, but networks of affiliation all the way down, so to speak, to the marriage, the household, and the family. If we were to take seriously the idea that relationships of many kinds (not just relationships to a political leader) were and are organized through logics of mutual obligation, engaging with misfortune would emerge as an important mode through which people sought, and seek, to remedy disordered dependencies.[31] Issues of

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[31] Although I am claiming that anthropology has not thought these together yet, the scholarship on making money social in the locally appropriate ways is an exception in that it speaks to failures to redistribute in the right ways as a potential cause of misfortune (Ferguson 1985, Shipton 1989, Hutchinson 1992).

scale, repetition, duration, and severity of unmet obligations (and the ensuing consequences), would come to the fore. Intimate processes of interpersonal evaluation and interaction – surrounding the negotiation of personal inter-dependencies with their obligations, entitlements, volatilities, and expectations – would be recognized as key sites where efforts to compose collectivities take place.

Composition

In their formidable critique of the literature on wealth-in-people, Jane Guyer and Samuel Belinga (1995) point out that the widely used trope of "accumulating" followers is rooted in a Marxist conceptual framework, originally applied to African societies in the 1970s (Rey 1971; Miers and Kopytoff 1977; Bledsoe 1980; Meillassoux 1981). This specific intellectual project sought to translate foundational scholarship on African societies, which had identified lineages and gender/generational equality as structural principles, into the analytical vocabulary for capitalism, with the explicit purpose of developing a single general theory. Almost by definition, then, this move sacrificed historical particularities and ethnographic originalities. Although subsequent users of wealth-in-people abandoned the Marxist intellectual agenda, they retained the idea of accumulation (e.g., Miller 1988; Berry 1989; Vansina 1990; Moore and Vaughan 1994), leading them to flatten a vast and varied range of social phenomena according to which people organized collectivities into "simple arithmetical processes of addition and compound interest" (Guyer and Belinga 1995:108). As a solution, Guyer and Belinga propose rethinking wealth-in-people as a process of *composition* rather than accumulation, explaining that "the two concepts focus on very different dynamics, one quantitative and one qualitative, one additive and the other synergistic, one achieving numbers and the other patterns, one risking loss and

isolation, and the other courting the dangerous tensions of centrifugality" (1995:108). They draw

on historical ethnography from precolonial Equatorial Africa to demonstrate that for this region

specifically, composing wealth-in-people turned upon a principle of composing wealth-in-

knowledge; that is, bringing together and mobilizing specific people with complementary kinds

of knowledge, skill sets, and powers.[32]

I find composition a useful concept for thinking about the processes through which

women in Mbarara endeavored to enmesh themselves and their expected children in networks of

personal inter-dependencies which would allow them to move. They were not just seeking the

greatest number of connections possible; rather, they invested in particular connections

according to a more nuanced combinatorial logic.[33] Thinking with the concept of composition

allows me to attend closely to their intentionality, deliberateness, and strategy. If I were to follow

what is perhaps the dominant local idiom for talking about social network-building and personal

interdependency in Mbarara, I would have used the term "cultivation" in place of "composition"

throughout this dissertation; indeed, I follow out how cultivating one's network includes aspects

of planting seeds, watering, weeding, and pruning. But I have opted to use composition to

associate my work with Guyer and Belinga's, and the broader conversation on dependence as a

mode of social organization in which they intervene. Further, as Guyer and Belinga write,

composition "affords a view of networks and collectivities of shifting shape and spatial reach …

[having] fluid, even anarchic, qualities attendant on temporary and conjectural access"

(1995:118). In light of the unstable nature of relationships in Mbarara, the open-endedness of

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[32] Note that Equatorial Africa does not include Uganda, but is to Uganda's west. Uganda is considered East Africa.
[33] That said, for my research participants, in certain ways, having a multiplicity of connections could prove advantageous. I deal with the aspect of achieving a plurality of connections, as well as how those connections work as a set of complementary offerings, in my conclusion.

composition becomes especially useful for thinking through the ways that women stand to gain from coming together with others, even if for a short time and specific purpose.[34]

Although Guyer and Belinga's work has given us a stunning starting point, scholars of dependence have yet to account for the ways that composition actually unfolds as a process of interpersonal evaluation and interaction. In fact, there has been remarkably little subsequent theorizing of composition beyond Guyer and Belinga's initial piece, with most works simply using the idea of composition as background information to say that wealth-in-people has never been all about numbers (e.g., Kodesh 2010, Prichard 2013). In what follows, I contribute to the theory of composition by thinking about how it works as an actual process of interpersonal assessment and evaluation; I do this by bringing attention to the ways women in Mbarara reflected about and decided which connections to pursue. I show that as they worked to gain attachments to others and their particular knowledge, personal capacities, and extended social ties, they also had to engage with others as opaque, fickle, and potentially dangerous. Further, I show that these women's compositional activities included not only building relationships, but also breaking them. By thinking about the ways women in Mbarara actively worked to manage unwanted relationships and their deleterious effects, I suggest that composition entails not only connective acts, but also disjointive ones.

I treat the bases, philosophies, modes of expression, and concomitant social processes that animate composition as questions whose answers will differ across historical and ethnographic situations. Although one of Guyer and Belinga's arguments is that the high value placed on certain kinds of knowledge in Equatorial East Africa was ethnographically and

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[34] "Free-standing elements have necessary connective interfaces that are accessible to one another only situationally. Society is not integrated; it is a constant improvisation along a continuum from centrifugality to brilliant synergism" (Guyer and Belinga 1995:103).

historically particular, this point seems to have been lost in the ways their work has been taken up; most scholars have only gone as far as to make the general point that communities were strategic about incorporating an individual based on her capacity to bring some unique contribution (often glossed very nonspecifically as "knowledge" in the literature, in contrast to Guyer and Belinga's original usage) to the community. In order to push this crucial point further, I offer a portrait of the sociohistorically particular ways that women in Mbarara assess, pursue, and resist connections to the particular knowledge, personal capacities, and extended social ties of others.

As they sought to move forward through the life course -- upward socioeconomically, and outward in terms of their social reach -- I will argue that they pursued relationships that they perceived to be compatible with modernity (and I reflect more fully on what this means in my conclusion). Their active involvement in pruning their networks, especially, lends further credence to the point that building networks of interdependence cannot be about pure accumulation. At the same time, it raises questions about the sociohistorical circumstances under which breaking particular kinds of bonds becomes viable and necessary. By attending to the elements of relationships from which women want to distance themselves, we stand to gain insight into their views of what are, and are not, desirable forms of personal inter-dependence. The examples which I present here all include engagement with Christianity as a means of addressing their problems and misfortunes. A full exploration of the significance of their practices to arguments in the anthropology of Christianity is beyond the scope of this dissertation; however, in incorporating these women's interactions with Christianity in the context of my discussion of the broader set of their compositional activities, I endeavor to remain

true to the ethnographic context at hand, in which private and collective life are shot through with religion.

Soul Ties

Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal churches alike in Mbarara taught the concept of "soul ties." It is hard to overstate the effect of these doctrines, which were absolutely ubiquitous throughout Mbarara, both inside and outside of church spaces. That is not to say that everyone wholeheartedly embraced them or abided by them; but rather, that they were very present. Thus I discuss them at some length here.

In this doctrine, the flows of blessings and curses relied on the idea of a spirit, separate from one's body, which occupies a parallel universe.[35] What someone does in her/his body, has correlates and consequences for her/his spirit. Consider this excerpt from a sermon on "Soul Ties" delivered during a charismatic Catholic retreat in April 2017:

> Do you know sexual sin is one of the major silent killers of many dreams, unending debts and lack of financial breakthrough? […] Every time we have sex outside the confines of marriage we create deep rooted bonds with the other individual […] Man was created in three parts, body, soul, and spirit. The soul and spirit live in a tent called the body […] When you have premarital sex you share your soul with your partner. The deepest soul tie is forged when people become one flesh. It's called comingling of souls in the spiritual realm. When souls mingle spirits are transferred

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[35] This resonates well the indigenous cosmology, in which every living person has a shade, which lives on after death and continues to relate to the living. What is different, however, is that in the indigenous cosmology, the shade becomes relevant after death (understood as the departure of the spirit from the body); in the Christian cosmology of soul ties, the person's spirit is a relevant dimension of the person that is bound up in relationships that affect the person while s/he is alive.

too. These spiritual bonds are highly demonic […] Whenever sexual sin happens you

open yourself to a curse. The knitting of two souls can bring tremendous destruction

[…] The pleasure you enjoy for five minutes can bring you a lifetime bondage […]

So today you are praying for a good godly marriage. The question is, are you single in

the first place? Many people are single in the physical but polygamous in the spirit

[…] When you want to finish a tree, don't trim it, uproot it by its roots. Do you come

from a polygamous family? Break the generational curse. Do you come from a

broken home? Do the same.

The relatedness, yet discreteness, of a person's body, soul, and spirit, mean that a person may be

subject to spiritual bondages they are unaware of, either through their own previous actions or

those of their "forefathers".

Although the excerpt I have included above pertains to sex, spiritual bondages can also

grow out of other forms of involvement with others such as practicing traditional rituals, going to

witchdoctors, or entering or maintaining ties with family members or business partners who do.

While there are important differences between witchcraft and relating with ancestral and other

spirits through ritual, Christian doctrines on soul ties lump these together as both being inimical

to devout relationships with Christ, and as both containing the danger of soul ties.[36] Colonial

anti-witchcraft laws likewise lumped together witchcraft with a range of other ways of relating

with spirits. Today, many people living in Mbarara, as well as many popular media accounts,

confuse traditional medicine, witchcraft, and engaging with ancestral spirits, and consider all of

these things to pose the potential risk of tying one's soul.

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[36] In practice, however, there are many people who consider themselves faithful Christians and who continue to interact with the living dead (if not the longer gone and more powerful ancestral spirits).

Soul ties are set in place through covenants, into which one may enter knowingly or unknowingly. I heard of covenants being established through rituals done with a child's umbilical cord once it falls off; through naming[37]; through accidentally touching, eating, or drinking oil or water that has been secretly consecrated to another god; through giving someone a goat, which he then sacrifices to another god with or without your awareness[38]; through allowing your body or clothing to come into contact with an animal who has been bewitched; through friends or lovers drinking each other's blood; through sex (whether consensual or not); and through marriage.[39]

In the soul ties framework, definitionally, a covenant is an agreement to which one is bound indefinitely; as Ronald (who was helping me with research at the Anglican Church) said, "I believe the many agreements you make are written somewhere, and maybe spirits are taking note of them. They do not just fade." As covenants remain in effect, the spirit or shade to whom someone is bound can continue to affect them, for instance, by causing nightmares, traffic or other accidents, "failure to marry," infertility, poverty, problem drinking (Scherz and Mpanga 2019), and any other sinful behavior or undesirable or state. In order to stymie these consequences, the spirit or shade to whom someone was tied would be able to make claims and demands on the person, such as requiring them to carry out rituals, have sex with the spirit, and/or to sacrifice animals, children[40], or food and drink in the spirit's honor. When the spirit was satisfied by the person's offerings, they might bring the person blessings. In this way,

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[37] As a lay preacher at All Saints Church (Anglican) said during a sermon on covenants, "You may not know why you're called what you're called. But sometimes people who give these names have their own intentions."
[38] In fact, several people I spoke with maintained that this was the reason why going to witchdoctors was so risky; they wanted payment in the form of animals, which they would then sacrifice, and when they did so, your animal's blood would be dedicated to another god and therefore, God would curse you.
[39] Perhaps it is noteworthy that many of these covenants are set in motion via vital liquids (enchanted oil/water, blood, sweat, saliva, semen), hearkening back once again to the regional emphasis on fluids and flows.
[40] Note "sacrificing" a child did not necessarily mean killing him/her; see Scherz and Mpanga (2019) for a more elaborate example of what this might entail.

covenants with spirits other than the Holy Spirit are understood to bring not only bad effects, but also good ones, depending on one's interaction with them. The bad part about these covenants, however, was their unendingness (Scherz, pers. comm.). A covenant would remain in effect, rendering the person continually subject to the spirit's demands and whims, until the covenant was cancelled. For this reason, covenants were also called chains, bondages, shackles, and ties: you're not only stopped from moving if you fail to perform the spirit's demands, but you're also locked in to the continual possibility that they will make more demands. In the process, you might not only lose out on the material costs you spent in fulfilling those demands, but at the same time, participating with non-holy spirits and "small gods" would close you off from the blessings and protection of God and corrupt your character in the process – "because one demand leads you to follow others; it doesn't end there," as Adam, one of my Runyankole/research assistants put it. You would only get more entrenched and the spirits would only get more invested in your allegiance the more you participated in that relationship. The churches were unanimous: the only way to break a covenant is through spiritual warfare. Further, if the chain is not broken by the affected person before s/he dies, the covenant will be inherited by the person's living family members.

Thus many (although not all) of these covenants could be entered into without you knowing it, before you were born, against your will, or under deceit: "It's like when you go to get medicine and it has been coated with sugar, but inside it's bitter. The devil knows how to coat all kinds of sin and temptation. Satan usually has won because he brings things sugarcoated and you again depart from God. That's when you find frustration because things don't work out as you wanted." Also recall the dangers of rushing into relationships before carefully evaluating others discussed in chapter three. It is for this reason that it is so important to be vigilant,

prayerful, and watchful about the ways others around you are affecting, or might affect you. This is evident in the local idiom of "studying" or "watching" someone. In more religious spaces, I often heard statements like, "There are those who make covenants without knowing it, but [you all should not make that mistake because] God has given us the gift of discernment!" and, "Anyone can be part of these bondages, even in the church, even anywhere. Be cautious. First pray for yourself, otherwise you may have no idea about these leaders [who are part of the illuminati]. God can reveal to you Satan and his schemes which we may not be able to see." Much as God might grant someone this kind of wisdom or information about a person or a situation, other times, He might keep one safe from unseen covenants through a more general guiding of one's path (away from harm), and for this, regular prayer and devotion were the necessary preventative medicine.[41] If one were to find themselves in a covenant, however, there could be no substitute for discernment or "tracing" – necessary causing someone to "realize" or "recognize" the source of their troubles. Only after having insight into that particular bondage could the remedy for that particular situation be determined.

Depending on their specific nature, bondages can be broken through prayer, general Christian devotion, the Christian ritual cleansing of items and spaces (such as chairs, rooms, and compounds), and family reconciliation meetings. Through each of these kinds of interaction, one invites God into her network of attachments, to exert His power and influence over the persons, areas, and forces where blockages have locked up someone's blessings, preventing them from moving and breaking through. A female lay leader at All Saints Church giving a sermon that I attended about covenants in November 2017 explained, "Sometimes God has no power over your covenant because it's you, your parent, your forefather who did it. And until you **invite**

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[41] Lillian stated this as the reason why she went for Morning Glory services for two hours every morning throughout her pregnancy: "Things of witchcraft, you can't trace them."

Him, He cannot enter that covenant and break it. It will not heal or give you a breakthrough until you, or someone outside, recognizes you need healing and deliverance. That's why you need someone to help you, to pray for you. Through much prayer you invite God into your situation." Attachments are thus the cause of bondage as well as the way out of them.

Olivia: Foreclosure

When I entered the creaky, rusted, baby blue metal gate to Olivia's compound, I saw a *boda-boda* (motorcycle taxi) driver knocking at the door to her rental unit. Olivia opened the window and extended her hand outside, the drawn curtain still concealing the rest of her body and face from view. "Thank you, Francis," she said, handing him a twenty-thousand-schilling note in exchange for the groceries that he placed on the veranda. Only after Francis was outside the gate did she move out from behind the curtains to open the door and welcome me, and collect the bags Francis had left outside.

Hiding her pregnant body like this was part of Olivia's efforts to protect the twins growing inside her. In fact, during the latter seven months of pregnancy, she only left her house to go to doctors' visits, and she only left by car. Unlike walking or moving by *boda-boda*, a car provided added privacy by hiding her body from onlookers. To achieve the kind of life she wanted for her family – a life with cars, a modern home, and elite education -- she could not afford to let the news that she was carrying twins spread. If her parents or elder relatives (e.g., aunties) found out that she was carrying not only one baby, but two, they would be likely to perform rituals to tie the twins to their ancestors.

According to Kinyankole tradition, since conception typically results in one baby, conceiving twins indicates special blessing and special vulnerability: there is something extra-

ordinary that brought two children where there would have been one, so you need to take care.

As such, twins bring with them the obligation to carry out special rituals both before and after

they are born, to welcome them (*okwarura abarongo*: to welcome twins). Specific ritual

knowledge about twins is shrouded in secrecy, passed down from parent to parent, and varies

from one clan to the next; overall, though, the rituals are geared toward satisfying the clan

spirits' desire for acknowledgment as the source and protectors of the twins. If the rituals are left

undone, tradition has it that misfortunes (*amahano*) will fall upon the family, and could include

the sickness and death of one or both twins (who might "jump" back to the other side, not

wanting to remain in this world), and/or cause any variety of other hardships among any of the

members of the clan. Olivia's relatives might have thought that if the rituals were neglected, the

twins would "burn" their family members as well as neighbors, causing them to lose the pigment

in their skin and developing pink spots and patches; plot to kill the father (if the twins are both

girls), plot to kill the mother (if the twins are both boys), disagree on which parent to kill (if the

twins are a boy and a girl); or kill the entire family by causing a catastrophe[42] (Neema 1994).

But Olivia and her husband Willis wanted to distance themselves from their ancestors

and clan spirits. They identified themselves as "strong Catholics" and they believed that ancestral

rituals were inimical to Christian development. It was for this reason that they concealed the

news of their twins from Olivia's family (among whom there were already several sets of twins).

Olivia feared that if they had this information, her mother and her aunts would begin performing

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[42] The oldest ethnographies explicitly report that there were no special ceremonies for twins in Ankole, unlike in other interlacustrine tribes (Roscoe 1923: 117; Taylor 1962: 103). There is no mention of twin rituals in Edel's (1957) work on the Chiga either (who shared and share many cultural similarities with Banyankole). However, everyone I met in Ankole certainly acknowledged that there were special rituals for twins, and that these had always been passed down within the clan. Stella Neema's (1994) doctoral thesis, however, includes a brief discussion of the fears and expectations surrounding twins, and the need to properly ritually welcome them. Neema also explains that the special names borne by the mother of twins (Nalongo) and the father of twins (Salongo) in Ankole are borrowed from Luganda, and this makes me wonder if the other rituals surrounding twins, too, might have been learned through interaction with Baganda.

rituals without her knowledge or consent. Another one of Olivia's sisters had given birth to twins just a few months prior, and Olivia had been horrified that when she went to visit, her aunt asked her to wash her hands in an herbal rinse before entering the house. "I don't believe in those things," Olivia told me hotly. She explained that that if they were to begin following the demands of "those things," more demands would only follow. If her family members began performing twin rituals, it would "tie" her twins to the ancestral spirits, who would then be able to continue making claims on their lives.

And so, Olivia remained inside the house. She didn't want anyone to see that she looked especially large, and thus perceive she was carrying twins. Even if her size didn't give it away, she maintained that some people would somehow be able to see it in her face and in her hands. Many pregnant women I came to know in Mbarara – who were pregnant with only one baby, not twins – did the same thing, staying inside their house where the walls shielded their pregnancies from the eyes and intents of others. By hiding themselves in this way, they sought to avoid incurring the jealousy of neighbors who might throw witchcraft, as well as, in some cases including Olivia's, ties that could be activated by ancestral rituals. Being seen would communicate information that might provoke others to instantiate unwanted bonds, whether malevolent (witchcraft motivated by jealousy) or benevolent (ancestral rituals motivated by genuine concern for the family's wellbeing).[43] Being seen would share information that would allow others to affect her situation.

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[43] Taking Olivia's example together with the material on hiding in chapter 4 shows that hiding offers a means of foreclosing upon the misfortunes that could follow from both of them. However, whereas the women in chapter four were hiding from anonymous others who might see them in public, Olivia's keeping her family at in informational distance is much more radical because it is explicitly concerned with rejecting customary relationships of mutual obligation, in favor of new relationships with God and His family.

So, inside the house she stayed. She enlisted her trusted friend Rose, who she knew to share her Christian values, to move in with her and Willis for the last four months of the pregnancy. This way, when family members came to call – (Olivia's parents and their brothers and sisters all lived in Mbarara) – Rose could entertain them so that Olivia could hide away in the bedroom. Even as Olivia moved through the most intimate of spaces – the three small rooms that comprised her house – she was managing who could access what information, and who would be part of the network to which her twins would become attached.

In the final two months of her pregnancy, Olivia suffered terrible discomfort and began having contractions far too early. Concerned, her physician suggested that she plan to deliver by C-section at 34 weeks; she scheduled the surgery, but went into labor at 33 weeks, on a Saturday evening. They called their doctor and Willis rushed her to the hospital; on the way, she called her sister, a nurse who lived three hours to the west, who boarded a bus to come and help Olivia. Even now – especially now – she did not call her mother, though she lived just minutes away. She delivered by emergency C-section that night, bringing two tiny baby boys into the world. Rose sent me a photo of them with the message, "Olivia has twins!" late that night. The next morning, Olivia called me to come to the hospital.

As I walked into the inpatient ward, I bumped into Willis who was on his way out. He was going to receive the Catholic priest at the hospital's gate and show him to Olivia's room. We were about to baptize the twins, he told me.

I ran up to see Olivia before the baptism began. Inside the room, I found Olivia with Rose, Olivia's cousin and business partner Joseph, and one of Willis's aunts. When Willis came back, he brought with him the priest, along with two workmates who would be the twins' godfathers. He quickly whispered to Olivia the baptism names he had chosen, and she gave the

okay. With everyone huddled in the small room, seated on two hospital beds, the priest opened

his bag and set out his Bible, a crucifix, a bottle with anointing oil, and a water bottle containing

holy water on the bedside table. We became a choir, singing hymns in Runyankole, and with

that, the baptism was underway.

As it concluded, Olivia expressed her relief; they had wanted to baptize right away from

the hospital because "baptism puts you in the right position," she said, so that you are "seated

where you want to be seated" -- spiritually. In this way, baptism achieves a kind of positioning

whereby through ties to God and other Catholics – performed through naming, through spiritual

kin accepting ownership and responsibility, and through contact with enchanted items – the

babies were situated within a particular set of *obukwate* (touches/relationships).

Further, the sequence of ritual ties here, matters. In an act of prevention, Olivia remained

hidden in the house – and further sequestered in the bedroom when visitors came -- so that others

could not perceive she would have twins and set in motion the rituals and relationships that

might follow from that perception. Then, an act of foreclosure: before her family members could

exert any unwanted spiritual action that would tie them to other spiritual networks, the baptism

functioned to close off the twins' vulnerability by tying them instead to a different spiritual

family. In this way, baptizing their children before they ever left the hospital room set the

dominance of relationships and obligations that would be upon the twins. On behalf of her

babies, Olivia thus rejected one set of relationships for another. By keeping her family at an

informational distance, she resisted customary relationships of interdependence and mutual

obligation. But this was not simply to become unattached; rather, the means by which she refuted

the old ways and relationships was by substituting a new set of relationships in their place.

After the priest and others left, I remained with Olivia in her hospital room. "Now they are part of God's family," she said with satisfaction. Finally, she called her mother.

Pamela: Revelation, Cancellation, Substitution

I met Pamela during my very first trip to Uganda. Over the course of my various fieldwork trips, Pamela and I developed a very close relationship, and over that time, she carried two pregnancies. I wrote about the first in chapter four, and I now draw on material from her second pregnancy.

Pamela and Sam were markedly more settled when Pamela conceived for the second time. By this point, they lived in the home they had built, had constructed several apartments units from which they collected rent, and their centrally located cell phone business had been booming. Their firstborn son, Liam, was one-and-a-half, and he stayed at home with a maid while Pamela worked at the small cell phone shop that Sam owned, and Sam followed other business pursuits. Pamela and Sam had not yet done a formal introduction ceremony or a wedding, but by this point Pamela's mother had met Sam and the couple often sent her financial support. Pamela had also accompanied Sam to his parents' rural home several times and they recognized her as his wife. Everything seemed to be in order as they continued building their family together. But shortly after Pamela conceived the second time, things began to change.

On top of terrible morning sickness, Pamela's relationship with Sam declined dramatically. When she called him on the phone, he would answer rudely, "What?", not even asking how she was doing. She would request items for the household, like soap and rice, but he stopped bringing them. He began staying out late at night, coming home drunk, and quarreling with Pamela over small things: her cooking, her management of the shop, and her failure to work

hard during those early months of the pregnancy. He began telling Pamela, "Go from my home, I don't want you."

Sam didn't pay Pamela for working in the shop, but seeing that things were "in a critical condition," she scraped together the spare change that she had and boarded a taxi to Sam's parents' home area. By going there, she appealed to Sam's father as the elder in the family of which she was a part. She told them that Sam was sending her home. They called Sam to come as well to discuss the issues at hand. He came, but when they asked him what the problem was, he could not explain his behavior. He didn't have grounds that justified his actions toward Pamela. Yet he did not see his error. They went back to Mbarara but Sam continued to hold this hatred for Pamela.

During this very difficult time, Pamela asked me to accompany her to a healing and deliverance service at a new church she had begun attending. Healing and deliverance services are specifically geared toward helping congregants achieve "spiritual breakthrough" in the issues of movement through life, including physical and mental illness, marital and family problems, and slow progress in business or other financial woes. Throughout my fieldwork, healing and deliverance services were extremely popular in Mbarara, being held by Catholic, Anglican, and Pentecostal churches alike, usually on a weekly basis in addition to special conventions and conferences geared toward the same. The major churches in town each offered their healing and deliverance service on a different day of the week, so it was actually possible to attend a healing and deliverance service at a different church every day, and I came to know several people who did just that. While I focus in this section on one specific healing and deliverance service that I attended with Pamela at an unnamed church, throughout my discussion I include notes about how this particular service compared with the other versions I encountered in Mbarara.

Pamela and I shared a *boda* to the place where her pastor, Pastor Alex, offered services. We appeared to be at someone's home, but we walked around to the back of the single-family dwelling, where there was a sort of pavilion constructed out of wooden poles with a blue tarp stretched over the top of them. About 200 plastic chairs were set out in rows facing one end of the pavilion, about 100 of them occupied by people wrapped in colorful scarves and fabrics on this chilly, rainy morning. We sat down, greeting those around us, most of whom Pamela knew from her previous times worshipping here.

Soon the group began to sing, though no one really led the songs and they somehow had just seemed to begin. Some songs were in English, others in Runyankole, and most included descriptive images of God being positioned above, Satan being below, and the believers in the middle. This seemed to invoke the congregants' positionality in relation to the spirit world with which they were present here at church to interact. During a favorite song sung during almost every single healing and deliverance service of any denomination that I attended in Mbarara, "Lift up Jesus Higher", congregants sang standing up, and raised their hands up (kind of a raising the roof type of thing) as they sang of lifting Jesus higher, and they pushed down toward the ground and stomped their feet to subjugate Satan. In this way their dancing embodied their position vis-à-vis the unseen spirit realm above them, below them, and all around them.

Lift Up Jesus Higher

Higher, higher, higher, higher, higher, higher, higher
Higher, higher, lift up Jesus higher
Higher, higher, higher, higher, higher, higher, higher
Higher, higher, lift up Jesus higher

Lower, lower, lower, lower, lower, lower, lower
Lower, lower, stomp down Satan lower
Lower, lower, lower, lower, lower, lower, lower,

> Lower, lower, stomp down Satan lower
>
> Super, super, super, super, super, super, super
> Super, super, supernatural power
> Super, super, super, super, super, super, super
> Super, super, supernatural power
>
> Cast your burdens onto Jesus, for He cares for you
> Cast your burdens onto Jesus, for He cares for you

During other songs, like *My Jesus Has Power* (*Aine Amaani Yesu Wangye*), *I'm for Jesus*, and *Fire Come Down*, some congregants sat down in their seats and prayed silently, while others danced and passionately beat the air, their punches directly hitting satanic beings; in another common song, they grabbed at blessings and shooed witchcraft away; in another, they opened themselves up to receive blessings and stomped down any curses that might be trying to attach to them. It's almost as if the curses are already out there, floating in spiritual space, and seeking a point at which to latch onto the woman and her family. These various ways of engaging in "praise and worship" were all understood as calling upon the holy spirit to shower them with the power to break through the captivity of those holding them back.

This battle continued to escalate during the next phase of the service, which consisted of intercessory prayer, sometimes called spiritual warfare or deliverance prayer. This was an intensive period of prayer during which everyone prayed individually but aloud all at once, either in a language they knew or in tongues – the din becoming quite loud. (At many churches, though not Pastor Alex's, during this portion of services, multiple leaders shouted into different microphones, praying in tongues, rebuking Satan, or directing the congregants in what to pray for. This occurred on multiple occasions during my attendance in Catholic, Anglican, and

Pentecostal services alike.) In these prayers, people addressed God, Satan himself, demons, ancestral ghosts, and/or enemies who had thrown witchcraft.[44]

That day at Pastor Alex's, Pamela prayed passionately: whispering angrily, tightening her fists and punching hard, as tears streamed down her cheeks. I couldn't see or guess who or what exactly she was reckoning with. But a skit put on by a group of volunteers under Alex's direction brought into relief the dynamics involved in breaking bondages.

Pastor Alex called for six volunteers to encircle a young man at the front of the pavilion. Then he had a group of four additional volunteers stand off to the side. He told the young man to try to break out of the circle, but those surrounding him held him in their midst, preventing him from moving. The people surrounding him represented those who were blocking him, Pastor Alex explained: "They may block you from taking your sick baby to a healing place [where efficacious healing occurs]. They are doing many things to stop you from getting to that thing you want. What is stopping you from getting out might be witchcraft or enemies, or the deeds of your fathers/mothers, whatever rituals they carried out. If people are starting to say you don't make progress in your life, you are ever the way you are, you don't change and make developments, you don't get married, you don't produce…" He went on to say that the young

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[44] At points, either solemn private prayer or vibrant song-and-dance could equally turn into violent encounters with spirits, who were being confronted by the believers' harnessing of God's power. In an encounter at another church (Uganda Martyrs) with one of my other informants, Penelope, fell on the floor in front of our pew and started convulsing. Four staff members from the healing and deliverance team came and scooped her up, carrying her to the front of the church and placing her before the altar and the large crucifix on the wall behind it. They tied her hands together with a scarf, and tied her feet together with another one, so that she wouldn't strike anyone as her body flailed about: to get untied from the spiritual bondages that had taken hold of her body, her ability to conceive, and in this moment, her flailing limbs, the church team had to bring the body under the control of another power instead. One of the lay leaders ran up the aisle toward Penelope carrying a golden crucifix about one foot tall. He pressed it against different points on Penelope's body – her shoulder, her forehead, her calf – to incite holy spirit fire, said to be burning ties that had linked her to curses and demonic spirits as he shouted, "Go! Go! In the name of Jesus!" until Penelope's body stopped writhing and fell limp. The leaders carried her – some holding her by her arms and others by her legs – and laid her body off to the side until she woke up about ten minutes later and returned to sit beside me in our pew and listen to the sermon.

man was locked in one place and could not move to another situation, but that God could "open a way out." The four volunteers standing off to the side represented those praying for the young man. They linked arms one with another and one of them reached between the people who had encircled the young man, joining hands with him. The chain of four then moved together linked like a chain to pull the young man out from within the circle in which he had been enclosed. Pastor Alex explained, "Through prayer, God helps the child[45] and those holding him." Pulling together, the chain of four successfully weaseled the young man out of the circle, breaking him free. Pastor Alex said, "Today, God wants to get you from that captivity […] I want to tell you that if God blesses you, you can move from one place to another!" Everyone cheered. As this skit so vividly showed, attachments are the cause of bondage, as well as the way out of them. Prayer (in the broad sense of this word, meaning not only speaking to God but seeking Him more generally) and having others praying with and for you is the mode through which someone invites God into his/her network, and the movement he/she is manifesting in his/her life

After the skit was over, Pastor Alex called for people with physical sicknesses and diseases who wanted to be prayed for to queue at the front of the pavilion. There were about forty people who got on the line. One by one, he quietly prayed for them, placing his hands on their foreheads, back, stomach, or chest – depending on their ailment. While being touched in this way some people fainted, others flailed about. For all, Pastor Alex asked for God's healing, and from some, he commanded away demonic spirits. After interacting with each person, he asked them whether they were healed. Every single one replied that yes, they had been. Someone

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[45] This skit was not specifically about children and babies. I think the Pastor referred to him as "the child" because it was a young boy playing the part. However it should be noted that if a mother was in bondage, then it could easily affect her babies/children (hence the Pastor's statement above that "they may block you from taking your baby to a healing place." Likewise, someone wanting to harm an adult might deliberately target his/her child, for example, causing the child to fall mentally ill so that the child's father would spend all of his money on remedies and find himself "finished" instead of having engaged in more "developmental" forms of spending.

who had lost his hearing found it restored. Someone whose neck and upper back were so stiff he could not turn his head became limber and moved his head and neck freely. A woman who had been vomiting and feeling chest pain had a spirit cast out and felt relieved. And many more. After their turn, some of these sick ones (especially those out of whom demons had been cast) appeared very tired, and sat down on a mat spread on the ground by the side of the pavilion for several minutes as they regained their composure.

When he finished the line, he told those who were facing other challenges (not predominantly issues of physical healing) that they could meet him inside the house for counseling. Pamela and I waited nearly an hour for him, sitting on the ground in the hallway of the house. When it was our turn, we went into a small, barren room with woven mats on the floor and one chair. We sat at Pastor Alex's feet as Pamela told him that she had been having challenges with her pregnancy: not only physical pain but also that her husband had begun hating her. Pastor Alex told her he could pray for her, but that she would have to bring her husband there if they wanted deliverance for their family. Pamela said she would try. With that, he placed one of his hands onto Pamela's forehead and the other at the nape of her neck as she sat up on her knees. He prayed silently and I saw her body collapse and she fell forwards toward the ground. Thankfully his hand on her forehead caught her weight before she hit the concrete floor. Unconscious, he laid her down on the floor gently and saliva pooled out of her mouth. Pastor Alex commented to me that this indicated that the Spirit was producing a change in her – already, the evil was beginning to come out. A moment later, she came to. She thanked him and we left. As we walked back toward town, Pamela seemed tired but hopeful.

She and Sam returned to Pastor Alex the next day. I wasn't with them, so the remainder of my account here relies on Pamela's narrative account of her experience to me.

Finding Pastor Alex at the little rented house again, they entered and greeted him and told him simply that they had been finding challenges in marriage and family. Pastor Alex prayed for them. As he implored God to deliver Pamela's life, she began convulsing and fell on the floor. Then Sam's ex-wife began speaking through her as she marched around the room, shouting "I know you are pregnant! Do you think you can produce that child? I have tied it!" Continuing to speak through Pamela, she explained that she had sent her son to bring witchcraft to their home. Sam had another son, Lucas, from his previous marriage, who had just started attending primary school near Pamela and Sam's house, so he often came by after school let out before going to home to his mother's. Lucas's mother (that is, Sam's ex-wife) had sent bewitched herbs with him in his school bag, and instructed him to put them around Sam and Pamela's home: in the kitchen, in the bedroom, and in the sitting room, to prevent the two of them from continuing to achieve a "genuine" connection with each other. After inviting God into the situation that Pamela and Sam were facing, this revelation became possible. With God present in the network, He could reveal where the blockages were located.

After she finished speaking out and thrashing about, Pastor Alex held Pamela, and the spirit quieted. Pamela's body collapsed on the floor. Pastor Alex put his hands on her shoulders, and commanded away the powers of sickness, confusion, and hatred which Sam's ex-wife had sent. With that, Pamela woke up. She didn't remember anything that had just happened, but she saw tears streaming down her husband's face. Sam had recorded a video of Pamela while the spirit of the ex-wife had possessed her, so he showed it to her. Pamela cried too.[46]

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[46] The videos that Sam took provided the way for Pamela to learn about what the spirit had said when it spoke through her, as she personally had no recollection of these events. Perhaps the videos would also serve as a reference material in the future, in case anyone's vision were to become blocked again. I asked Pamela many times to ask if Sam would let me see the videos, and she would always say that she would ask him, but unfortunately, the outcome of my request never materialized one way or the other. Perhaps this is evidence of the virtues of sustaining ambiguity; I don't know why Pamela wouldn't want me to see the videos, or didn't want to ask Sam to let me see the videos, but since she never asked him (to my knowledge), Sam could go on thinking that his wife was being

The pastor prayed for them both again. This was a prayer of cancellation, breaking the bondage that had now been revealed. Then Pastor Alex addressed Sam solemnly, explaining that the devil had covered Sam's vision, putting a covera (black polythene bag) over his face so that he couldn't see his wife and all she does for him. In this way, a bad attachment/touch from an ex-wife blocked Sam's vision and thus his ability to see and relate to others in his life accurately and appropriately. But now, the black plastic bag, Pastor Alex declared, had been removed. Sam agreed with the pastor that his wife was indeed beautiful, and hardworking, and humble, but sometimes he couldn't see it. That's the devil, Pastor Alex explained. And to move out of the situation that the devil had brought, Sam would have to decide he didn't want to be like that anymore, he wanted to be like this. He would have to choose God. It was through relationship with God that the advances of unwanted attachments would be rendered ineffectual in a kind of substitution of one power and mode of seeing (which was distorted), for another (which was accurate).

The bondage had been broken through a process of revelation, cancellation, and substitution. By inviting God into their situation, they first had to see where the bondage actually came from (revelation), then they had to nullify it by calling on the greater power of Jesus (cancellation), and finally, replace the negative attachment with an ongoing relationship with God (substitution). To break a bondage was to alter one's vision -- to see -- to become aware of the presence of spiritual actions that were unseen by the naked eye.[47]

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discreet instead of sharing sensitive/private family matters with me (although he knew she was participating in my research), and insofar as it was all I had to go on, Pamela's narrative of the event could be the account of record. One-sided as it may be, her narrative nevertheless offers rich information about the mechanics and motivations of breaking bondages.

[47] The taking and viewing of possession videos helps highlight an interesting step in this process. Taking the videos was necessary because Pamela would not remember what transpired while she was possessed. In this way, as her body became an instrument in the process of cleaning her husband's vision, her own ability to see and bear witness to the spiritual presences was temporarily sacrificed.

In the days that followed, Pamela reported to me about her husband's changed behavior. Where their communication had been "dead," it was now restored to mutual understanding. Sam no longer drank heavily in the evenings or came home late. He greeted Pamela warmly when they spoke on the phone. Whatever his wife told him they needed at home, he would bring. And when she spoke to him, he could really hear her. "Now Sam has a clean knowledge," Pamela told me. He could once again see things as they really were, instead of seeing as if through a black polythene bag. Her physical suffering with the pregnancy resolved, and she began to love her man again.

Shortly thereafter, Pastor Alex came to their house to pray for them there as well. Again this time, the same sequence of revelation-cancellation-substitution would hold true. When the pastor prayed, the ex-wife spoke through Pamela, telling them the specific places in the house where she had put the medicine. Sam took another video of the encounter, to show to Pamela when she came to. Together, Sam, Pamela, and Pastor Alex cleansed their home from evil. Pastor Alex poured olive oil into his hands, and then allowed it to run out of his hands onto different areas and items in their house; through contact with his hands, which God had blessed, Pastor Alex explained, this oil carried the healing, cleansing power of God and canceled the evil effects of the charms that Sam's ex-wife had sown.

Pamela knew that the remainder of the pregnancy would not be easy, for Sam's ex-wife would not be likely to stop sending attacks upon them. She did not want Pamela to successfully produce this pregnancy, so she would keep going to witchdoctors. But if she and Sam continued going for prayers with Pastor Alex, continuing to clean their knowledge and perception of one another and of the spiritual forces in play, then the ex-wife would not be able to prevail against them. In this way, the process of substitution would need to be ongoing. Continual affirmations

of relatedness with God would at the same time work as continual denials of relatedness with

Sam's ex-wife and the power of the witchcraft she threw.[48] This would be a process of keeping

clean, so that their vision and relationships could remain clean as well.

Penelope: The Limits of Breakability

Penelope had been married for eight months and she still hadn't been able to conceive.

As a devout, Catholic woman, her barrenness caused her no small concern. Children were

considered a blessing from God, and those without children, cursed by God. This point of view

sowed together the longstanding cultural emphasis on fertility with a particular strand of Catholic

theology which highlighted God's command to humankind to "be fruitful and to multiply."

In her attempts to become pregnant, Penelope visited a charismatic Healing and

Deliverance Service at Uganda Martyrs Catholic Church every week. Through her participation

at these events, she endeavored to harness Christian spiritual power to actively break whatever

ties were hindering her from conceiving. But her attempts in church never seemed to succeed. At

one of these services which I attended with her, Penelope fidgeted as we listened to the first few

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[48] Traditionally there were several different types of husband-wife separation: 1) the wife could leave her marital home and go back to her natal home temporarily to protest poor treatment and give the spouses both time to reflect, which would hopefully facilitate the healing process of reconciliation (*okwangana*: the wife protesting the way she is being treated); 2) the husband could send the wife back to her natal family for bad behavior (*okubinga omukazi*: dismissing a wife); 3) only as a last resort, after the failure of both healing through separation and the traditional arbitration process with relatives and elders from both sides, would there be divorce and return of brideprice (*okutaana*) (Murembe 2015: 22). In the case of divorce, the children, belonging to the father's clan, would typically remain in their natal village, while the mother returned to her own natal village. It should also be noted that men could have multiple wives while the only way to set the woman free for re-marriage was through divorce. In contemporary cases where cohabitation minus brideprice is counted as a form of marriage – as in this case between Sam and his "ex-wife" – the status of the relationship is less prescribed. Sam's ex-wife was evidently resentful of Pamela and her position. Sam's ex-wife was also Lucas's mother, and because children are born to the father's clan, Lucas belonged to Sam and his family more than to the mother (in the sense of property and responsibility). Further, because she and Sam had a son together, the ex-wife remained in close communication with Sam over school fees and other expenses to support Lucas. Whereas previously co-wives might have competed for a man's resources, an ex-wife being separated from the man yet holding custody of his son and continuing to make claims on the man's material resources, is a newer situation. I am also reminded of Penelope and Joanne's conversation in the previous chapter in which they spoke of "something" remaining between men and their ex-lovers, perhaps a soul tie.

words of a sermon on how having the blessing of one's parents is the prerequisite to receive blessings from God. As the preacher went on, Penelope soon took my hand and led me outside, where we wrapped around to the back of the church to meet with a counselor.

Like in the example with Pamela above, here again, conversing with a counselor was a completely optional aspect of the service, but it could be useful for gaining additional insight into what was behind someone's struggles. Penelope explained to the counselor that she had been married for nearly a year now and had failed to produce a child, and didn't know why. He listened understandingly, and then took her hands in his own as he prayed for her. As he concluded the prayer, he opened his eyes and asked her where she was from. "Rwampara, Bugamba." Did she have grandparents there? "I have my Mother, and also my *Shwento* [paternal uncle]." "Ah HAH!" he replied, "This *shwento* is the one who is causing issues." Apparently working off of inspiration he had received while praying, the counselor advised her to visit her paternal uncle. So to Penelope's natal village we went…

Although the journey was only 16 kilometers, it took more than half the day to get there. Before leaving town, we had to go to the market to get bread, sugar, and soap for Penelope's *shwento* and her mother in the village. Then we went to the taxi park and waited inside a taxi for three hours in the sweltering heat of the day for the car to fill up with enough people for the driver to finally agree that he would make enough money to make it worthwhile to set off. As we drove out of town and wound slowly through the hills on rough, rocky, dusty, dirt roads, we had to stop every couple of kilometers along the way to stuff more people – along with more dirt, sweat, and stench – into the taxi.

When we finally arrived at the small road leading to Penelope's village, we got out of the car and walked the rest of the way – about an hour – to her mother's home. There we refreshed

with some tea and shared our purpose in coming: to remedy the relationship with Penelope's paternal uncle. Her mother was unhappy, but unsurprised, to hear that he had been the one interfering with her daughter's fertility; he had always been jealous of his brother's family, she said. She and Penelope went about preparing a gift to present to him, to pacify him: a big woven basket, heaping full with avocados. For his gift I found avocados an interesting choice, as they are often referenced locally for their lubricating properties, and the whole point of visiting Shwento was to get him to remove any blockages he had set on the flows of life in Penelope's body.

After dressing up, the three of us walked through the banana plantation and up the hill to Shwento's home. Seeing us approaching, he came out of his house to greet us with the customary embrace and words of welcome. "You have brought me the *muzungu* [white person]," he said. "I am happy." One of his daughters silently took the basket of avocados from Penelope's arms and disappeared with it behind the house to the kitchen. Shwento welcomed us inside and offered us a seat. His daughter and wife soon served us lunch, which we all ate from a common plate, followed by water served to all of us in a single glass.

Penelope's eating with both her uncle <u>and</u> her white friend at once, her presence in her uncle's home, and her presence in the village generally, all generated signs of Penelope's continued membership and co-participation in the collective body of her kin. Although she had moved a considerable distance across social space over the past year by moving to the city, getting married, and becoming involved in a white person's research project, here she was: incurring the financial costs and physical discomforts associated with traveling home to the rural village, engaging in embodied rituals of physical touch to greet and visit her family members there, eating and drinking together, and exchanging food gifts. All of this signified her

recognition of her own physical body's ongoing connection to these people's bodies, and to this land they shared. Rather than moving on without them, by maintaining these material practices of embodied connection, Penelope acknowledged that her movement was their movement. Before we left Shwento's home that day, he placed his hand on her shoulder and spoke a blessing over her. The following month, she fell pregnant.

In this case of visiting Shwento, what transpired was a conversion in the valence of the sentiments that were flowing from Shwento to Penelope. Negative sentiments had set a blockage in her body's capacity to reproduce, and when neutralized through affirmation of connection, those negative sentiments converted into positive ones. The flow now positive -- conducted through Shwento's hand on her shoulder and his words of blessing -- enabled Penelope to get pregnant.

This case illustrates how, with kin, breaking bondages (or said differently, cutting soul ties) is not really an option. Despite Penelope's attempts to engage with her delay to conceive through spiritual warfare as if it was caused by a soul tie, she remained unpregnant until she went out behind the back of the church, talked to the counselor, and turned to actually engage in more traditional mechanisms. Unlike relationships with spirits and shades – established through soul ties and covenants – there may be no way out of kinship relationships.[49] Thus, they have to be managed and cared for through performative acts of co-embodied collectivity, which bring flows of vitality. Left undone, those flows turn to impotence. In this way, Penelope's capacity to become able to exercise agency over her own body, to get pregnant, and to fulfill God's call to be fruitful and multiply was actually be *furnished by* her performances and enactments of continued consubstantiality with kin. Achieving modern, Christian womanhood in this case,

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[49] In Eastern Uganda (Bunyole), there is a proverb which says, "Kinship is like your buttocks: you can't cut it off!" (Whyte & Whyte 2004: 22).

then, came through acknowledging and interacting with the various others present in oneself and part of one's body.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have described the ways that women in Mbarara work to assess ambivalent attachments, resist the wrong relationships from forming, break bondages, and undo the effects of disordered dependencies by reordering them. I have shown how attempts to manage misfortune include but are not limited to attempts to break some kinds of obligations, and I have suggested that these are all important dimensions of composition. Perhaps Christianity is the main catalyst of the idea that one should *break* ties as well as creating them, and perhaps this explains why this element of compositional processes did not emerge in analyses of precolonial composition.

Yet, if one's movement through life will be hindered or propelled through one's attachments, I argue that the mostly-Christian efforts discussed in this chapter are not about achieving individualism, but rather, substituting one set of relationships for another. Olivia opted to seal her twin sons off from the unending demands of ancestral relationships by inserting them into God's family instead. Pamela recognized that she and Sam would have to actively maintain spiritual cleanliness so as not to fall victim to what would surely be his ex-wife's continuing attacks. Penelope was forced to reckon with the fact that some relationships are not optional, and cannot be undone by choosing Jesus. To break bondages with one is to become part of another, as the power to break bondages can only be supplied through relationship with someone outside of oneself.

Interlude: Becoming One Person

"Becoming One Person"

In the next two chapters, I consider the ways in which women in Mbarara actively advance good relationships with others as they pursue *amagara marungi*. Through my analysis of relationship-building, I demonstrate the central role played by specific forms of indirect communication, locally understood as acts of touching *(kukwata)* and acts of seeing (*kureeba*). In Runyankole, a relationship is literally a touch (*akakwate*) and to care for is literally to look at (*kureeberera*). In this culture of relatedness (Carsten 2000), it is the recursive movement between moments of *kukwata* (touch, merging, coming together) and moments of *kureeba* (seeing, recognizing) that produces good forms of connection and togetherness, even while social actors may be separated by various forms of social distance. Generating and asserting relatedness in these ways serves to move networks of interconnected people – not just individuals – across social space.

This process of achieving positive forms of mutuality and movement both points to and refines a model of African personhood that emphasizes the relational aspects of persons (Leinhardt 1985; Riesman 1986; Taylor 1990, 1992; Karp 1997; Piot 1999; Comaroff and Comaroff 2001; Eramian 2017). Specifically, I show that different kinds of relatedness entail different basis and potentialities, and thus, call for different forms of care. In describing how urban women actively work upon their relationships with neighbors, kin, patrons, and friends, I show that what is at stake in these projects of cultivating good connections is not greed of gain, nor social respectability per se, but rather, the social position and placement that enables a woman to promote the wellbeing of her family. This poses an important corrective to images of female relational practice as either economically maximizing or fundamentally vain and

pleasure-seeking. By suggesting that collective wellbeing is both the anchor and the destination guiding women's care for relationships, I hope to tap into the subversive power of the concept of care to bring together the affective, the emotional, and the economic dimensions of social action, under one lens.

In making this argument, I engage the idea of "becoming one person" (*kuba omuntu omwe*) in three ways. I first think about the increasing threats to shared humanity (*obuntu*) posed by increasing class differentiation in Uganda. At a second level, I build on the long history of kinship theory that distinguishes between forms of relatedness that are given, and others that are made (Wagner 1967, 1977; Strathern 1980, 1988; McKinnon 2001, 2016; Carsten 2004). I draw this line of theory together with linguistic anthropologist Michael Silverstein's (1967) touchstone theorization of indexicality, which conceptualizes some indexical signs as relatively presupposing, while viewing others as relatively creative. Building on perspectives on language as a mode of social action through which people change social reality by indicating through speech (Malinowski 1923; Austin 1962; Goffman 1959, 1967, 1974), Silverstein suggested that indexical signs might be thought of on a gradient with regard to how "performative" (Austin 1962) they are. In the same way, I posit that different kinds of relationships, too, offer more and less wiggle room for generating social realities. Viewing the given/made distinction in kinship as a continuum (rather than a dichotomy) in which some relationships are more given than others, I show how the degree of given-ness has implications for the kinds of risks and promises that different categories of relationships hold. Finally, I think about how women in Mbarara protect and promote their families' wellbeing and progress through "indigenous pragmatics of social bonds" (Stasch 2009) that presuppose, construct, and prescribe particular ideologies of interaction. For this, I draw on the work of linguistic anthropologists Nicholas Harkness (2015),

Andrew Carruthers (2017), and Sabina Perrino (2002) to show how qualia, quantia, and temporality become important loci through which relatedness and social belonging are established. Young mothers in Uganda deliberately work to cultivate networks of care at the level of interaction, leading me to reflect on the generative moments of merging involved in the politics of recognition.

Processes of Recognition

As I trace the intertwined dynamics of seeing (*kureeba*) and touching (*kukwata*) throughout these chapters, I contend that practices and moments of productive merging with others form a constitutive dimension of *recognition* as a basis for belonging.

The subject of a vast literature from psychology to philosophy and other fields, the notion of recognition has long been a rich site for thinking through on the politics of identity and the boundaries of social inclusion and exclusion. Intervening in this conversation, an important body of work in linguistic anthropology has shown recognition to be the product as much as the source of linguistic and other forms of semiotic interaction. Detailing the strategies of adequation and distinction through which persons' membership in racialized, gendered, and classed categories are negotiated, contributions by linguistic anthropologists have demonstrated that recognition is an irreducibly sociocultural, interactional process (Bucholtz and Hall 2005; Wirtz 2007; Mendoza-Denton 2008; Hill 2009; Dick and Wirtz 2011; Smith and Eisenstein 2016; Rosa 2019). In its focus on identity categories, this scholarship has largely focused on processes of differentiation or becoming alike.

Inspired by this literature, I ask how historical and *in situ* semiotic processes of recognition work in the realm of kinship and relatedness. Whereas scholars of identity have often

focused on processes of becoming alike, my concern is rather with processes of becoming

attached. Attachment or relatedness, I point out, does not necessarily rest on similarity, but is

sometimes finds its very foundation in difference.[50] This is particularly true in the relationships

of hierarchical interdependence, where the complementarity of patron and client becomes the

reason for their relationship. Many additional forms and ideals of complementarity (rather than

equality or sameness) also figure prominently in the Africanist ethnographic record; for example,

ideals of gender complementarity, interspecies relationships, and interactions with the land (cf.

Geissler and Prince 2010). In my focus on assembling networks of care, I shift away from

considering categories of person (the subjects of identity categories), to think about categories of

relations between them. In so doing, I join scholars such as Rupert Stasch (2009) and Kathryn

Goldfarb (2016) in their attempts to theorize kinship and relatedness in terms of semiotic

processes through which people self-reflexively interpret the signs that are understood to indicate

relatedness.

Further, in considering how processes of recognition become important to practices of

kinship and relatedness (cf. Reece 2019), I suggest that recognition only becomes possible

through concomitant processes of touch, merging or coming together. Here I take my cue from

the interrelated Kinyankole concepts of seeing, touching, and care, mentioned above. It is

through moments of mutuality and merging that people ask and are asked to reflect on, enact,

and recognize their interconnections with others. With this point, I build on Wenzel Geissler and

Ruth Prince's (2010) attention to the Luo concept of *riwo* which designates moments of "coming

together, mixing, and merging" between persons through physical touch and associated forms of

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[50] To this point, a vivid Runyankole proverb says, "Pieces of firewood of the same size in the hearth cannot light."
(*Ezingana omu mahega tizaaka.*)

material contact. As they describe of *riwo* in nearby western Kenya is certainly true of *kukwata*

as well: such moments of merging are understood to release creative or transformative force

fundamental to both destruction and growth, and thus, life itself. While this points to similarities

in ontology across the region, I put forth that comings-together may also be a fundamental part

of processes of recognition more generally.

Although Euro-American tropes of recognition are typically ocularcentric, Stefan

Helmreich (2018) has pointed out that we might think of vision *as* a kind of long-distance touch,

and many theorists have done just that. Here I quote from Helmreich at length:

> Plato, writing around 400BCE in the *Timaeus*, posited that human vision operated
>
> through the eye emitting beams of light, which then touched upon objects the eye
>
> beheld – a theory advocated later by Ptolemy and Galen. The *extramission* theory
>
> of sight still has a metaphorical life in the phrase "piercing eyes" – to say nothing
>
> of the word "behold." To "behold," etymologically, means to *hold* around –
>
> though wait, not so fast, "hold" itself leads etymologically back to meanings that
>
> have it as "to keep watch over," so there's a looping vision-touch regress here.
>
> Vision has a multiple history, enspiraled with notions of touch.

Rather than contrasting vision with touch, Helmreich suggests that touch enfolds vision. This can

be seen (felt?) in work on protactile deaf-blind communities (Edwards 2018), proprioceptive

sociality (Rutherford 2013), bureaucratic projects of biometric registration (Nair 2019), and

aesthetics and ethics of vision and film in which images 'grab' their viewers and induce affective

responses (Strassler 2010; Thomas 2019). With these many interwinings of touch and vision in

mind, perhaps it should be no stretch at all to begin theorizing recognition itself as a process in

which touch is deeply embedded.

I will show that in the Kinyankole framework, the key distinction between seeing (*kureeba*) and touching (*kukwata*) is that seeing is done by an individual (with her/his own eyes, for her/himself), whereas touching is mutually experienced by multiple persons in the same moment. In other words, touch differs from sight in that touching is felt by both parties at once: there is mutuality and simultaneity of sensation. I suggest that by this definition, touch also transpires when someone *feels seen* by another. This involves the other seeing you, and then mirroring, witnessing, or reflecting back what they have seen of you. If the other's reflection resonates with you and you feel understood, then a transformative moment of merging/touch has occurred. It can be transformative in a destructive sense, if the other sees and understands you, but then turns away. It can be transformative in a wounding sense, if the if the other sees but misunderstands you; this is misrecognition, and while painful, it does not foreclose upon the opportunity for repair. It can be transformative in a regenerative, healing sense, if the other sees and understands you, and does not turn away from you; this is recognition.

This process functions at numerous scales. Psychologists and psychoanalytic theorists discuss mirroring and attunement as important processes for healthy infant development and attachment. Philosophers write of witnessing as ethical practice. Political theorists describe the politics of recognition for social groups, where they are granted cultural legibility, legitimacy, and membership. The sociologist Allison Pugh (n.d.) is developing the concept of "connective labor" to describe forms of labor which, in order to produce the desired outcome, rely on intimate knowledge of another's particular needs and desires, met with empathy (a shared understanding of their feelings), and mirroring or witnessing back what the practitioner sees of the other. She writes:

> "[T]here is an important social space between the caregiver-and-child's hearth and
> the political coliseum, a space where work, play and commerce take place in

mundane exchanges between people. This is the realm of what we might call 'social intimacy,' where everyday dignity, belonging and recognition are made, as well as misrecognition, exclusion, and – what might be worse than stigma for some – invisibility. Connective labor, and the work of reflecting, takes place in this realm …By attending to social intimacy, we highlight the modes of quotidian life in which dignity, belonging and recognition are generated by interactions with known and/or embodied others, felt and experienced every day, made meaningful by the relationships and institutional contexts in which they occur, and accumulated over time." (Pugh n.d.:13-14).

Through interactions with others, one comes to know oneself, socially and personally. I suggest that it is also here in the zone of social intimacy – that is, where seeing and touching occur -- that one's movement forward, upward, and outward, and ultimately, one's membership and belonging in modernity is made real.[51]

In what follows, I explore the unfolding of recognition as a process that emerges between people over time. There are necessarily elements of separation and reunification, latency and activation, and concealment and revelation that contour relationships that endure through any length of time.[52] As such, moments of coming-together and being co-present with another serve to prune the path between two people, generating the pleasures and dangers of togetherness, as well as affording opportunities to observe others carefully and seek insight about the nature of

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[51] The transformative and potentially healing power of recognition also echoes in the purpose of humanistic anthropology as defined by Edith Turner when she says, "the humanistic anthropologist is also a healer, concerned with what the social body cries out about – sickness, concerned with what parts need to be touched in healing, if only by showing that we are conscious of them and that we want that greedy pain removed" (2007:112).

[52] Sometimes recognition is not immediate, and requires separate. Banyankole have long recognized this, for instance, in traditional dispute resolution mechanisms of separation. When a wife was being treated badly by her husband, she would leave her marital home temporarily; or, when a husband was dissatisfied with his wife, he could send her back to her natal family temporarily. As Neema Murembe (2015) writes, "Temporary separation would facilitate the healing process of reconciliation. Absence from each other was a moment for … reflection, for the couple to realize the worthiness of being together in the home, hitherto taken for granted" (Murembe 2015:22). This stepping back to see the big picture, so to speak, would allow the partners enough space to see one another from afar and appreciate them and to allow the relationship to begin to "naturally heal" (ibid.). Similarly, when Abigail had a fight with a close friend, she told me that she had to "remove herself from him" and that for now they were "just watching each other". When I myself had a disagreement with someone in the field, Olivia told me, "Okay, now let us keep an eye on him and see what he does."

your connection, how it has or has not changed, and where it is going. In both relationships that are relatively made and relationships that are relatively given, the active recognition of those relationships through both seeing and touching carries definitive stakes. Specifically, processes of experiencing and reflexively recognizing signs of relatedness carry implications in terms of who is and who is not part of your network of care, and the attendant politics of distribution of resources, health, and movement. It is through the recognition of oneness – that has come, is coming, and will come through productive moments of merging – that not only individuals but a set of connections between individuals *move.*

Chapter 6: Prophylactic Care

Ethnography of *Obuntu*

"If you have *obuntu*, *obuntu* gives you people and people give you things." This proverb is often repeated in songs, formal admonitions, and everyday conversations in both English and Runyankole. Runyankole speakers define *obuntu* as "the humanity personality" or "[recognition of] common humanity" that leads someone to receive others into their hearts and homes, to say, "If you're not okay, then I'm not okay," and to support one another through interdependent relationships.[53]

The concept of *obuntu* – spelled *ubuntu* in some other Bantu languages and sometimes equated with the Setswana *botho* (e.g., Metz and Gaie 2010) – has given way to a rich tradition of scholarship on Bantu sub-Saharan Africa, particularly in the field of philosophy. The key conversation in this literature pertains to the viability of *obuntu* as an alternative to Western moral frameworks such as utilitarianism, Kantianism, and capitalist individualism, in fields of scholarship spanning from national peacebuilding, to education, to healthcare. This line of argument encodes the assumption that postcolonial violence, capitalist modernity, and Developmentalism are eroding *obuntu*, such that there is now less of it than there was previously.

This argument about declining *obuntu* finds echoes in anthropological accounts of personhood in Africa and elsewhere. In the essay that inaugurated personhood as a topic of anthropological inquiry, Mauss (1938) distinguished between *le moi* (the experience of having a

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[53] In many ways this is similar to the Kiganda concept of *omutima omuyambi* (a heart for helping). Yet it should be noted that Banyankole also use the borrowed Luganda phrase, *omutima omuyambi*. In the course of my fieldwork I only ever heard Banyankole mention *omutima omuyambi* in Catholic charity contexts, but this could be a byproduct of the fact that my research did not take me into NGO offices or functions, where it might also have been used. However, I never heard it in Anglican or Pentecostal charity settings. A conclusive discourse analysis comparing the use of the two phrases – *obuntu* and *omutima omuyambi* – would be most interesting, but is outside the scope of this dissertation.

self) and *la personne* (the shared, social aspects of one's being). Anthropological interest in these dimensions of personhood has continued since, the central debate being over the degree of universality of the dominant model of the person in "Western" thought – namely, the person as isolated, cohesive, autonomous individual – in contrast to another figure, who is never a complete, discrete entity but always in the process of being built out of relations with others. The "individual" is often associated with capitalism and neoliberalization, while the more relational forms of personhood have oft been cast as the outgrowth of more "traditional" values. The Africanist anthropological scholarship has largely upheld this binary, suggesting that the individualistic, independent forms of personhood that are more highly valued by world systems pose a threat to the quantity and quality of interdependent relationships that people have (cf. Comaroff and Comaroff 2001, Ferguson 2013, Eramian 2017).

In contrast to both of these approaches, I argue that in southwestern Uganda, the realities of postcolonial life do not reduce the quantity of *obuntu* that persons put into practice, nor the extent to which they are relational persons. Rather, in line with Marilyn Strathern's (1992) approach to personhood as always both individual and relational in practice, I engage contemporary discourses and practices of *obuntu* as a way of exploring the intersubjective bases upon which attachments between persons become possible and desirable in contemporary southwestern Uganda. In doing so, I join scholars such as China Scherz (2014) and Clara Devlieger (2018) in their attempts to think through the processes and politics according to which some forms of dependence have become more viable than others in the contemporary moment. Further, with this approach, I move away from philosophical discussions of *obuntu* as an abstract set of values, to instead highlight the actual lived practices and stakes of *obuntu* in a specific ethnographic context.

Without claiming that there is less *obuntu* in circulation or that people in Uganda have become less relational than previously, I suggest that increasing class differentiation poses a particular set of threats to *obuntu* that are manifested in particular forms. Specifically, threats to *obuntu* in contemporary Uganda become evident in and on the body, and through bodies' relative location and placement in social space. The forms of labor, foods, and amenities associated with rural life produce different kinds of bodies than those associated with urban life (cf. Bashkow 2006). Rural life brings about hard bodies, formed through agricultural labor, gathering heavy stacks of firewood (collecting firewood is women's work), hauling water across long distances in jerrycans, eating slow-cooked "Kinyankole" foods, and climbing a mountainous landscape while going about everyday life. Dry, cracked skin comes from often going barefoot, working with one's hands, and being outdoors in hot sun. Meanwhile in town, sitting at a desk, eating foods prepared in "cooking oil", and moving by car or *boda-boda* rather than walking produce smooth hands and feet; soft, weak bodies reminiscent of portly buffalo or sheep[54]; and protruding stomachs with a shape I often heard referred to as the "corruption curve" (cf. Bayart 1993). The differences between rural and urban lifestyles, and the moral value placed on each, generates a particular set of physical, bodily indicators that say that people who don't look the same, are not the same.

In addition to the embodied markers of difference, the physical location and mobility of others' bodies through social space – relative to yours – generate more challenges to *obuntu*. There is the worry that others on whom you depend may simply "get lost" (*kubura*, to disappear, become invisible, get lost) and stop being available to meet you and to share with you. For example, there is a very real sense that your brother who usually helps pay your rent may

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[54] Kugomoka nka embogo – to put on weight like a buffalo; ori nka entama – you are like a sheep

disappear to Dubai to work at any time without telling anyone, or that your friend who you knew to be of the same status as you are may save up a bunch of money totally secretly and then buy a car, attract new friends, and forget about sharing with you. In such cases, the other has moved so far across social space away from you, that your bond breaks, or at least enters a period of latency, potentially to be re-activated when the two of you reunite at some undetermined future time. The increasing frequency of traffic accidents coupled with persisting high levels of disease and death (especially HIV) further contribute to this sense that anyone could go at any time. It is in this milieu, where those to whom you are attached might reject you (*kwanga*, to hate or reject) or simply disappear at any moment, that it becomes so important to come together with others regularly, for visits, or at least by a phone call, "just to check on you", "to see if you are there".

In the context of these specific threats to *obuntu* – located in and on the physical body, and in the relative location of bodies in social space – particular practices of enacting and recognizing shared humanity have taken on redoubled significance, new articulations, and new urgency. To work against the fragility and breakability of social bonds, people in Mbarara worked to produce and display *obuntu* through acts of *kukwata*. *Kukwata* can be translated as touching, catching, holding, connecting, attaching, and understanding, and as mentioned above, to have a relationship (*akakwate*) with someone is literally to be touching them. Within this category of *kukwata*, many different acts are understood as forms of touch. Laughing together, praying aloud, and singing together produce overlapped sounds that constitute aural modes of merging with one another. Eating the same foods, participating together in manual labor, and sharing financial burdens create similar physical sensations which remind participants that they are members of the same social body. Dressing alike, achieving the same smooth skin and well kempt hair, and owning similar belongings creates the visual effect of sameness. These various

kinds of similarity and simultaneity across bodies – sounding, feeling, and looking alike – are all understood as signs that multiple persons are one. And it is through acts that cultivate these kinds of co-embodiment that relationships solidify and *obuntu* brings about its effect of giving you things. <u>Who</u> you are attached to determines the kind of life you will have access to, and the flows of support you will receive: it will show in your cheeks, the shape of your stomach, the strength of your arms, in a kind of embodiment that stretches across persons. Further, your connections will be evident in the schools, healthcare providers, jobs, and modes of transportation through which you move, alongside whom.

Relatively Given Relations

Having laid out the particular threats to *obuntu* in this historical moment in southwestern Uganda, I now turn to discuss the kinds of relationships upon which urban women work to achieve and maintain *obuntu*: relationships with kin and neighbors (relatively given), and relationships with patrons and friends (relatively made). In this chapter, I deal specifically with relationships that are relatively given, turning in the next chapter to think about relationships that are relatively made. It is important to note, however, that in practice, the various kinds of relationships may overlap, with the same person being one's aunt and patron of school fees, for example; such overlaps lead to multiple intersecting logics at work in establishing and maintaining good relationships; for the sake of clarity, I do not deal with these intersections here, but future work on this would be welcome.

In considering relationships that are relatively given, I show how understandings of shared physical spaces and shared bodily wellbeing undergird the forms of care in which women engage in order to make for health and security. There are several different Runyankole words

translated into English as *care*. *Kureeberera*, derived from the verb *kureeba* (to see), means to be physically present, to see another person face to face, and to look after or keep watch over her/him. *Kufayo* is (to be willing) to serve or provide for. *Kujanjaba* is specifically to care for the sick or helpless. *Endebeerera* (noun form of *okureeberera*) is the kind of care most relevant to this dissertation, as the arguments I present pertain to reading and responding to others.

As I explore the specific ways in which kinship and neighbor relationships are understood to influence the security of shared spaces and the health of the body, I show how moments of merging are vital to processes of recognizing neighbors and kin as having *obuntu*, and thus, discouraging antisocial impulses. Specifically, I demonstrate how good forms of relatedness with neighbors are forged through practices of neighborly sharing that work against appearances of inequality by generating sights, sounds, and scents of common humanity; that is, qualia of *obuntu*. Good relationships with kin, on the other hand, require qualia of *obuntu* in greater magnitude, and at regular intervals and specific moments, demonstrating the relevance of temporality (specifically, timing and repetition) to the performance of relatedness.

Neighbor Relations: Sameness as Security

In the urban setting, neighbors, maids, and gatemen often dwell alongside one another in a single compound, usually enclosed by a gated security wall with barbed wire at the top. Most often, the houses are single- or double-rooms adjoined to others' rented rooms – with shared walls, latrines, outdoor cooking spaces, clotheslines, and water taps. Inside the compound is also coded as intimate space in the ways it is separate, and inhabited differently, from space outside the compound. When "moving out" of the compound, crisp, clean, carefully pressed clothing and dressy sandals or close-toed shoes are essential, whereas inside the compound, neighbors wear

very casual house clothes and flip flops ("open shoes"). Cooking and washing clothes take place in common areas of the compound, as do many personal hygiene activities like brushing one's teeth (it's common to spit on the grass), cutting nails, braiding hair, dusting and polishing one's shoes, and walking to and from the shower or toilet wrapped in nothing but a piece of fabric. Front doors typically remain open with just a curtain hanging there, for easy entrance and exit, fresh air, and in case a neighbor (or neighborhood kids!) want(s) to duck in -- from sunrise to sunset, only to be closed and locked if the people inside are sleeping, or if no one is home.

Neighbors' spatial proximity to one another affords them access to the same sights, sounds, and scents – smelling neighbors' food being cooked, seeing the possessions they own, and observing their patterns of coming and going. Where there is inequality and disharmony, this intimate knowledge can, in turn, become the impetus for jealousy, while at the same time providing the necessary materials and information to facilitate witchcraft and theft. To work against these dangers inherent to spatial proximity, I suggest that people living in urban southwestern Uganda engage in practices of neighborly sharing that produce outward displays and inward sensations of equality and sameness. Specifically, sharing food, amenities, and rides allow neighbors, maids, and gatemen to partake in similar embodied experiences, which help discourage jealousy and the antisocial actions that might spring from it. I highlight how neighborly sharing produces physical similarity that in turn activates social harmony and connectedness, even across hierarchical social distance. I argue that the manner in which sharing produces similar embodied effects is a self-evident performance of multiple persons' one-ness, and that in this way, these semiotic productions of relatedness enact a vital mode of security in the space of the urban compound in contemporary Uganda.

While the hierarchical relationship between employers and their maids and gatemen is obvious, what may be less immediately evident is that neighbors may also have vastly different levels of affluence than one another. At first, I assumed that living in the same compound in nearly identical rental units would also indicate a similar socioeconomic status, but over time I came to understand that this was not necessarily the case, since a person with a relatively low level of personal access to cash may live in a house whose rent is paid for by someone else. Inequalities between neighbors are common and hard to camouflage. Because of this, a neighbor with a car is compelled to offer a ride to neighbors who do not have cars if s/he sees them when preparing to depart, or walking on the way down the road. A neighbor with a TV is compelled to allow those without TVs to watch theirs. Food, in its limited quantity is a bit different; a neighbor cooking chicken (the most expensive meal) is not compelled to offer some to his/her neighbor, but if the neighbor sees the chicken being cooked (which is likely because only the wealthiest households have stoves on which to cook inside), s/he may very well ask for some, and then one is compelled to give it. (This also leads to clandestine cooking operations, in the corner of the compound or out behind someone else's house who is not home!)

This sometimes-cumbersome compulsion to share with one's neighbors comes through in a parodic video which circulated widely on Ugandan social media in December 2018, in which popular Ugandan comedienne Ann Kansiime acts as a disgruntled neighbor, throwing a temper tantrum because her neighbor is always cooking chicken but does not invite Ann and her family to eat it. As a result of her neighbor cooking chicken, and the scent wafting into Ann's bedroom where her children are sleeping, torturing them, she insists that her neighbor share the meal she is preparing with Ann, who then phones her husband and wakes up her children to call them all to the meal as well!

Figure 1. A still from the comedic video in which Ann Kansiime insists that her neighbor share the chicken she is cooking with Ann and her family.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hOIHcsXE5NI

A neighbor who "has" but does not share may garner resentment, and is at risk for witchcraft. In the same way that maids have access to intimate items, neighbors also have access to the intimate spaces through which one moves daily, and can easily "plant witchcraft" (that is, a bewitched item such as a sprig of enchanted herbs) where they know you will step over it, like at the threshold to your kitchen, or in the path you walk to the latrine. Alternatively, they might nab your knickers off the clothesline and bring them to a ritual specialist, to bring harm on you through them. And further, with their awareness of your movements, your neighbor can also become your thief, or the accomplice to your thief.

Gatemen

Against the foil of the rural, relationships with gatemen and maids are particularly marked as urban phenomena, and there is a kind of un-givenness about the way to interact with these figures.[55] Like neighbors, gatemen (also referred to askaris or security guards) also wield power through their knowledge of your comings and goings and their ability to facilitate access to the compound. While not all compounds employ security guards, many do; they are hired and fired at the landlord's will, not the tenants', even though in some cases the tenants might be asked to pay his salary directly to the gateman, and separately from their rent payment. In this space, the tenants' relationship with the gateman is underdetermined and invites creativity.

The gatemen I came to know often talked with me about the ways their employers showed or failed to show *obuntu*. Mark was one gateman I came to know well, and since he didn't guard my own living place, I felt less constrained to personally make his employment comfortable, and from him, I learned much about the challenges of inequality in the compound. Mark worked as a gateman for a compound that included five luxury apartments, including one where my informant Natalie lived. Each month, the tenant of each unit contributed toward Mark's salary. But they often failed to pay him as much as they were supposed, and gave him his salary several weeks late. After knowing Mark for about six months through my comings and goings at Natalie's, I ran into him one day at Mbarara's Central Market while shopping with my other informant, Abigail. Mark greeted us politely, and then shyly asked me if he could borrow money, which was quite uncharacteristic. He explained that his employers had not paid him for

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[55] This is true even though in contemporary villages – and I cannot say how far this practice goes back – households sometimes hire day or live-in workers to help with agriculture and sometimes even housework, for example, if the parents' children are away in boarding school, if they own and farm a lot of land, or if the couple is elderly.

nearly two months, and he was out of food. I gave him a small loan, and asked him how people who lived in such expensive rentals could fail to raise his meager salary. He didn't know, and he couldn't ask for the money, he told me, explaining that to do so would be very proud. "They see me as if I'm no one," he said, tears welling up in his eyes. Though they could rely on him to provide services, he was not on equal footing so as to be able to ask for payment for those services. Before we parted ways, Abigail suggested we pray for him. She prayed, "Oh God, cause Mark's employers to pay him. Of <u>all</u> the things they have to pay for, Oh King of Glory, of all expenses they are facing, Lord Jesus, help them find it in their hearts that they give Mark money. In the name of Jesus Christ we have prayed, Amen." Abigail's prayer spoke to her agreement that the impetus to pay Mark could not come from someone located below his employers, but would have to come from above. However, when we had separated from Mark, she mentioned to me that this why there was so much theft in Mbarara: because people did not pay their askaris, which rendered them more vulnerable to the temptation to steal or to allow others to steal from the compounds they supervised.

Another situation that called into question the one-ness, the common humanity, of Mark and his employers, occurred when the rainy season began. The compound was a newer construction with some parts not quite finished, and the askari's quarters did not have a door. I initially understood this to be because it simply had not been installed yet, but when the heavy rains began falling, Mark's situation grew dire. The rain came right into his small house, and he couldn't sleep at night, being hit being hit with rain and chilled by the wind. His floor flooded, ruining some of his few belongings. I asked my informant, Natalie, who lived in this compound, why they had still not finished putting the door on Mark's house. She said she hadn't really known it was a problem, and that Mark hadn't mentioned anything to her, but she called the

landlord, a prominent local judge, right then and there to ask: the landlord replied that putting a door on the askari's room would threaten the security of the premises because then the *askari* would not hear anything at the gate, nor would he feel self-conscious to get out and work, he would just stay inside his house and sleep all day and fail to do his job.

The door issue grew into a month-long negotiation, Natalie and I working together to develop different arguments to try to convince the landlord. We began by suggesting that being tired and unhappy, Mark wouldn't be able to do his job well either. The landlord didn't budge. Then Natalie thought to try saying that Mark would soon quit, and cycling through multiple *askaris* who know the property well and may have copied various keys, would further reduce his compound's security. (She had had success with this logic in past experiences.) Again, this landlord was uninterested. I proposed that Natalie and I could just buy the door, and Mark could install it himself, instead of going through the landlord, but Natalie said that doing so would be extremely disrespectful and dangerous. Finally, I asked a friend and professor at Mbarara University what she would do in this situation. She advised me that since this landlord took pride in his high level of education, and his prominent position as a high moral figure, that we frame our argument in those terms, and call this "a human rights issue," and say that every human being deserves shelter. *Obuntu*. In order to quell his point about the necessity of surveilling the *askari*, we could propose that he install a glass door, which would keep out the rain but still facilitate the panopticon effect. This accusation, that the judge was putting his interests above *obuntu*, embarrassed the judge and was the argument that finally resulted in a door. The process of waiting, and suffering through that time, however, had a lasting effect on Mark, who told me that from this experience, he understood that "they do not even see me as a person." The long struggle to get him a door had exacerbated his perception and acute experience of the

differentials between Mark and his employers, feeding his sense of isolation, anomie, and the

temptation to simply walk off, let alone take matters of justice into his own hands.

Maids

Like gatemen, maids are outsiders to the families for whom they work, yet they serve in

even more intimate spaces than do gatemen: inside the home, and particularly, in bedrooms and

kitchens. Washing clothes, making beds, and preparing meals, maids have access to the materials

that touch family members most closely: underwear, bedsheets, and food. These intimate items

are understood as prime conductors of witchcraft, and this recalls Peter Gescheire's (2013) point

that intimate circles are often the most riddled with risks of sorcery. In addition to supernatural

transference, maids may also steal from their employers (they touch what you have and channel

it out of your possession), abuse children in their care (a dangerous form of touch), or teach

children just plain bad manners (which children are said to catch from those who are positioned

above them hierarchically). Throughout my fieldwork, these risks commonly appeared in

newspaper articles and TV exposés featuring footage from nanny cams, as well as emerging in

many anxious discussions I had with informants and friends who were hiring maids, considering

firing maids, or in one case, a maid who had skipped town with all of her employer's husband's

shoes!

A very diligent mother of twins, Olivia Aineamaani invested tremendous effort in

establishing good relationships with her maids through performances of *obuntu*. Her biggest

worry was that a maid was likely to become jealous of her family, and this would lead the maid

to vengeful acts, such as stealing, throwing curses, or intentionally infecting them with diseases.

To discourage any ill-will, Olivia always allowed her maids to eat the same food as the rest of

the family. In many households, maids were forbidden to eat the more expensive food items, like bread, sugar, milk, and meat, but Olivia saw sharing her food – an act of *kukwata* – as a form of prophylactic care for her family. She told me, "If you let your maids feel they are part of you, they may be less likely to turn against you." Here, her fears led to performative acts of togetherness intended to prevent the maids from feeling too much of the dangerous pain of inequality.

Olivia hired and fired one maid after another during the first eighteen months of her twin sons' lives until finally a pair of maids -- Barbara and Prossy – settled in well with the family. Olivia began leaving the children at home with them, getting out of the house for the first times since becoming a mother. As a token of their growing bond, Olivia began buying luxury soap and skincare products for the maids, and paid for them to go to the salon and get their hair braided regularly. Olivia sometimes joked that her maids looked better than she did, but as she explained to me, "it shows them that they are really becoming part of us." The maids could see how being connected to Olivia's family was granting them access to the same eats, smooth skin, and stylish hairdos as those they lived with. As their connection with the family grew, they even began to look alike, and these similar appearances served as powerful signs that the maids and their patrons were part of the same whole. In these ways, Olivia worked to direct her maids' attention toward the ways they were the same as their employers, rather than the ways they were different, thereby discouraging jealousy and vengeance.

There are, however, limits and politics to who can assert sameness with whom. This became to clear to me when I was helping a young mother named Judith and her new maid, Rebecca, make lunch. Judith told Rebecca to begin peeling the *matooke*, and Rebecca responded that she would prefer rice. Judith snapped back angrily, "Eh! As if you were my sister!" By

voicing her preference for rice (which Rebecca knew that the family had in their pantry), she seemed to be suggesting that her desires, tastes, and thoughts were as important as Judith's when it came to determining what the family needed to eat. While *matooke* is well-loved and served at almost every meal in Banyankole's households, rice is often served in addition to *matooke*, and sometimes, instead. Rice is considered a more expensive, modern, international food than *matooke*. Rice is also much less labor intensive and time consuming to prepare than *matooke*, so it is possible that Judith thought Rebecca was shirking her duties with this suggestion.

Judith's response to Rebecca, scolding her for stepping into a position like Judith's sister – that is, into a position that was more equivalent to Judith's – points to the uneasy new relationships of class disparity, and yet shared spatial proximity, in which these women found themselves. Judith had privileges (for example, to select what the family would eat or what work Rebecca would do) that Rebecca, as her maid, did not. Despite the discrepancy in power and position on which Judith was keen to insist, at the same time, Judith always allowed Rebecca to eat whatever the family was eating. "If we are eating bread, she eats bread. If we are having meat, if we are eating chicken, she enjoys [some]," Judith told me. (In some households, maids were fed cheaper foods while the family members ate more expensively.) Further, Judith did not work away from the home, and she always worked side by side with Rebecca, partaking equally in the same chores, rather than making Rebecca do all the work herself. In these ways, Judith worked to generate a sense of Rebecca's shared humanity, even as she resisted Rebecca's attempts to assert equal footing with her in other matters.

Many times in our conversations over the weeks following the rice incident, Judith referred to Rebecca as "proud," citing how she asked to borrow Judith's clothes, requested money to buy soda and airtime, and used Judith's luxury bath soap. Eventually she sent Rebecca

away, and while it is difficult to isolate a particular reason, Judith said that she had "bad manners." Although Judith chose to recognize Rebecca's equality to her own in terms of eating and physical labor, Rebecca did not seem to have adjusted properly to the politics of those privileges, which mandated that Judith should be the one to set the terms on which they shared and the specific ways in which were the same.

Qualia of Obuntu

In the intimate space of the shared urban compound, neighbors, maids, and gatemen have considerable access to each other's personal affairs, habits, and material belongings. Seeing, hearing, and smelling signs of neighbors' relative privilege is widely understood to make those neighbors who have less, potentially envious, and this envy threatens personal and family security. It is for this reason that when moving into a new house, most people in Mbarara choose to do so at night, under the cloak of darkness, "so the things don't get shy" as they invite onlookers' attention.[56] Within the compound though, hiding the markers of one's wealth and status is almost impossible, and thus, practices of neighborly sharing become a crucial mode of working against the temptations that social distance (inequality) in spatial proximity, can generate.

Recent theorizations of qualia in anthropology help explain how practices of neighborly sharing produce their specific effect. Qualia are pragmatic signals that materialize phenomenally in human activity as sensuous qualities, imbuing relational and bodily practices with the 'feeling

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[56] I learned this when, after about two months of fieldwork, I moved during the day and my friend saw me and all my belongings in the back of a pickup truck en route to my new house. He called me immediately, exclaiming, "But everyone is seeing you!" and slowly calmed down to explain that, "In Uganda we usually shift at night so the things don't get shy." He concluded that it would probably be fine since I was the *muzungu* and everyone probably already knew I had many things; "But for us Africans, we don't do that!" From that moment on, I always kept my eyes out for a truck moving a person or family's belongings during daylight in Mbarara, and never saw one.

of doing' (Chumley and Harkness 2013; Harkness 2014, 2015). In urban compounds in Mbarara, neighbors endeavor to minimize tensions by generating qualia of *obuntu* though acts of touch (*kukwata*). That is, through offering rides, welcoming neighbors to join you in watching TV, sharing chicken, providing a door for the askari's house, and allowing maids to access some of the same luxuries as their employers, urban dwellers recognize their neighbors' shared humanity – namely, through sharing together in physical sensations of the same flavors and creature comforts.

Further, while scholars of kinship have begun to consider how care practices become embodied and bring about physical/biological similarities in people over time (Goldfarb 2016, n.d.), I suggest that introducing qualia to the theorization of embodied forms of resemblance is useful for identifying the specific qualities of practices that are laden with import in a particular cultural framework, and how these qualities in turn come to define the relationships in which they are enacted and experienced. As Nicholas Harkness writes, "Just as there are culturally stipulated kinds of persons, there are culturally stipulated kinds of relations among persons as well as normative qualities that people associate with these relations and in terms of which label them" (2015: 577). Qualia of *obuntu*, embedded in the neighborly acts of touch (*kukwata*) described in the examples above, serve to imbue the relations in which they emerge with a sense of connectedness and mutuality. Even in relationships that are quite hierarchical, such as those with gatemen and maids, positive practices of *kukwata* create signs of some degree of sameness, particularly surrounding the embodied dimensions of neighbors' shared humanity, and thereby layer hierarchical relations with a positive valence.

Kinship Relations: The Temporal Demands of Co-Corporeality

Relationships with kin are more given than are relationships with neighbors, and the qualia of *obuntu* are called for in greater magnitude, and at more specific and repetitive time intervals in relationships with kin. Instead of being constituted through shared space, relationships with kin start and end with the idea of a collective body of which kin are a part. As a Runyankole proverb puts it – "Family relationships are the stomach" (*obuzaare n'enda*) – the stomach (*enda*) being understood as both the womb where a fetus grows and the stomach where food goes and hunger and satisfaction are felt. The word for parents (*abazeire*) has its root in *kuzaara* (to give birth to/to produce a child). Although kinship in western Uganda is not simply about biology, Banyankole invoke metaphors of bodies and biological processes when they talk about kinship (cf. Whyte & Whyte 2004 on Bunyole).

For Banyankole, a child is said to inherit characteristics, blessings and curses, and relationships to ancestral and other spirits through the blood of both the mother and the father, and the people I came to know in Mbarara spoke of personal strengths and weaknesses as inborn qualities inherited from one's maternal or paternal family (cf. Scherz 2018 on Buganda).

The conception of a fetus is taken to emerge from the mixing of female blood (*eshagama y'omukazi*, blood of a woman) and male water (*amaizi g'omushaija*, water of a man) through sexual intercourse, which results in male blood (*eshagama y'omushaija*, blood of a man) (Neema 1994). When nursing a baby, the mother is understood to transfer part of her own blood in the form of milk to her child, and it is through this transfer that an indelible maternal bond develops (Vokes 2013). Thus, through blood, everyone is understood to be always and already connected to their biological families. The relevant relationships here are not only with one's biological parents, but also include aunts and uncles, grandparents, and ancestors. In turn, other

relationships one develops throughout his/her life – marriage being one – will layer on top of the inborn, inherited qualities and relationships to produce one's life circumstances. For example, one interlocutor told me:

> There are also entire lineages you find who are just blessed. It just moves like that. You find the whole clan is very wise, very, very wise. [There are also] blessings that come into a family come through intermarriages. If I marry a girl from a rich family, and that kind of wealth just seems to be in her blood because they are all rich. Then if she comes into my clan as my wife, and we produce kids, then by blood, the kids become rich. "Emigisha akagiha omuka y'omukazi." By blood I'm getting wealth from the lady's family [because as the children become wealthy they will help support their father]. Or let's say I was poor and she comes, and after a certain period of time, we find ourselves rich. Then people will say: "Jonah akafuna obugiga kuruga aha'mukazi." Jonah got rich from the wife, because the wife's family were very rich! So that is a blessing coming in. Even my brothers and sisters might get money from her and they start businesses, like that.

Throughout a person's life, their relatedness to kin will impact them, and they can choose to engage with those kin in any variety of ways, from maintaining close relationships, to attempting to weaken or break ties through ritual, to simply letting some relationships fall latent.

Growing Together

Banyankole say, "The family relationship is weeded by the knee," (*obuzaare bwonberwa omurundi*) which enables you to walk and visit your relatives. Just because someone is

biologically related to you does not mean they are automatically available to call on in time of need. If not much travelled, the path between two people can become overgrown by other plants, which are other relationships and the obligations they come with. Instead of coming together with your family member to water your relationship with them, you water other relationships and these grow up between you. This can be a good thing if those nonfamily relationships with others prove to be fruitful. But allowing the paths to your relatives to get too overgrown can also be risky, for there is always a possibility that those other relationships that have grown up in the path, will end up withering (by your friends 'disappearing' -- moving to Dubai, dying, changing their opinion of you, or moving so far ahead in life that they leaves you behind).

The proverbial water with which family relationships are watered include vital fluids of many kinds such as blood, sweat, beer, *obushera* (millet porridge), money, and love.[57] In other words, there are many kinds of obligatory exchanges and co-participation that are considered essential to family relationships, and many of these articulate in and on the body. Not showing up (or sending at least one person as a representative of one's family) for functions like burials and weddings, raises suspicions about what you might have had to do with the death, or what kind of curse you might be wishing on the marriage, and sometimes leads to vengeance from kin (whether living or the living dead). It is embarrassing to be better dressed than one's brother, and that seeing one's sister "not looking good" (for instance, thin and with shabby clothes and unkempt hair) brings a sense of pain and shame. The "transgenerational infrastructure" of flows of support in Uganda (McQuaid et al. 2019) is such that working-age adults (both male and female) – and especially those higher in birth order -- must manage competing care obligations towards (grand)children, (grand)parents, siblings and wider kin. Contributing toward burial,

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[57] With this point I revise and clarify previous findings on the cultural importance of flows of vital fluids in southwestern Uganda and in Rwanda (Taylor 1988, 1990, 1992; Vokes 2013).

wedding, education, and healthcare expenses are particularly crucial. Discrepancies across members of the same family are markers of failures to share and to recognize each other's common humanity and inherent connectedness. Not only do such signs of failures make the members of the family who are better off feel bad; they also invite scrutiny from non-family members; hence the proverb, "Someone who does not borrow [decent clothing to wear to an event in public] brings shame to his relatives." (*Etura etatiiza ehemura abaabo*.) Demonstrations of care redistribute burdens and resources amongst family members and create a sense of equality.

For the women on whom my research focused, then, caring for kinship relationships meant sending seemingly unending installments of financial support to siblings and parents (especially to help with educational and medical expenses), attending functions, and visiting family in the space of the rural village. Making sure that the members of one's own household (her husband, children, and anyone else living with them, such as relatives' children in her care) were well-dressed and well-mannered was also an important part of sparing one's relatives from shame.[58] Notably, these activities and practices of care are ever-unfinished and had to be maintained constantly, consistently, and on time.

Visiting

Mothers in Mbarara often live at a considerable distance from their relatives, and throughout my fieldwork I was repeatedly surprised by the large sums of money they spent to visit family members, quite frequently. But Banyankole call visiting a debt; if left unfilled, its

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[58] When men helped shoulder some or all of this burden, it was a noteworthy sign of their virtuousness. Again and again, I heard women who were expecting offer evidence of their man's caring, responsible character in terms of his bringing her clothes and bedsheets for the expected or newborn baby.

costs would be greater than the money spent on travel. Traveling while pregnant or with an infant, and often several other young children, is no easy feat, especially in Uganda. A mother, and her children, and their luggage, and gifts for her hosts, first piles onto the back of a motorcycle taxi to get to the bus or taxi park. There, she waits for a vehicle that meets the necessary criteria: going in her direction, can accommodate her party, and is willing to offer a price she is willing to pay. The process of bargaining with different drivers can take hours, often under hot sunshine, with children crying for snacks or because they need to pee. Everyone is dressed up in their best outfits for traveling, and the dust and sweat complicate things. Riding in the dilapidated buses and taxis over bad roads for long distances is uncomfortably hot, squished, and smelly. After reaching her destination, this mother and her children are likely to have to find another motorcycle taxi or car going her direction. But this whole experience of "feeling the journey" is part of visiting. The discomfort en route is part of sensing the weight of the relationship, and the pains of being apart.

Arrivals mean greetings, and Banyankole watch for their visitor, running to greet them when they see them (*kureeba*), and enveloping them in a huge embrace before they reach the house. The host opens and closes their arms around the visitor repeatedly, hitting them hard as they exchange words of welcome that often dissolve into mutual laughter. This greeting is a dramatic icon of the time and distance they have spent apart, being collapsed by coming together again. Following the welcome hug, children of the hosts carry the visitors' bags, which they won't carry for themselves again until they are departing. By arriving, they have begun reuniting with their relatives, and their burdens are already lighter because relatives are helping to carry them.

When the hosts take the visitors' bags, they place them in an unseen portion of the house, and notice which ones are gifts for them. (I learned this the hard way when I visited friends in Mbarara after shopping at the market for groceries…) They quietly receive the gifts, out of view of the visitors, and refill the basket or bag with a return gift that they will present as they escort the visitor away from the house at the conclusion of the visit. The gifts exchanged should be of comparable value (as encoded in the proverb, "What you removed from your head [when you arrived] is what they will give back to you" (*Mutuure niiyo murongoore.*)), and hence, the gift that visitors bring should be "big enough" but "not too big" so as to compel the hosts to "over-give." The exchange of gifts is a way of appreciating (*okusiima*) – that is, seeing (*kureeba*) and responding to (*kugaruka*) – one another.

Visiting involves many significant moments of *kukwata* as well, such as sitting close to one another on seats and floormats, holding hands, putting their arms around each other, and sometimes even cuddling. As one of my informants told me, "You whites don't know how to visit people, you're always sitting so far away. When I have my visitor here I want to feel her." Visitor and host may eat from a common plate, which nowadays when everyone has enough plates, has become a symbol of love, and of sharing the same stomach. The food that goes into one person's body might just as well have gone into the other person's, and the assertion in this act is that *it doesn't matter who ate more than the other, for they are one.* The health and vitality of separate bodies become further interconnected through the exchange of saliva that is understood to occur as people eat with their fingers from the communal serving bowl (Vokes 2013). Conversation during a social visit is usually filled with lots of overlapped speech, laughing together, speaking in unison, repeating each other's phrases, finishing each other's sentences, and layering backchannel sounds over each other's words. The whole experience of

visiting is one of overlap: overlapping bodies sitting almost on top of each other; overlapping hands, pulling food from the same plate that might have gone into any of their stomachs; and overlapping voices, harmonizing and becoming indistinguishable so you almost can't tell who exactly said what.

All the while, visiting is a way of showing care: literally, looking at someone face to face, and by extension, looking after them (*kureeberera*). The Runyankole word for caring is semantically related to the word to see (*kureeba*), and it means to be physically present, to see the person for yourself and look after him/her. In other words, to visit is to see for yourself how someone is doing; although you may have asked them on the phone, they may not have told you honestly or fully. Seeing a family member for oneself, then, carries moral implications as you are compelled to respond to what you have seen. For this reason, some of my informants postponed visiting their relatives, guessing that they were doing badly, and thus, the visit would be very expensive because they would find themselves confronted with the injunction to give their relatives a lot of money. So too, visiting is risky in that you might see a cousin sitting home from school; you might see the neighbors and be informed that they are about to have an introduction ceremony; you might find that the water pump your family relies on is broken; a nephew might be starting a chicken business. Seeing such things calls you touch. In this way, seeing (*kureeba*) ideally leads to touching (*kukwata*), which can make visiting an expensive proposition.

All of the seeing and touching involved in visiting enacts and makes visible and tangible the oneness of persons who have been apart, and is necessary for "keeping love flowing" between family members. Displays of *obuntu* through acts of *kukwata* and *kureeba* work to weed the connection between relatives. The closeness that may grow up out of this weeding is open-ended in terms of how it might come to matter. But the point is that keeping these relationships

well-weeded opens the possibility of that they might grow to share more in the future. Relatives can provide any of various kinds of support, for example, contributing money for school fees or medical expenses, helping do the work of hosting a graduation party, or simply being present in times of suffering and loss. Through these forms of support as well, Banyankole again emphasize how participating with one another yields embodied co-feeling. In order to contribute financially toward others' needs, they "squeeze" their budgets, and in doing so, share in the feeling of being constructed by the circumstances at hand. They talk of "sweating together" to carry out all the work that is required for a successful party or put the roof on a house. And when someone has died, helping to dig the grave, preparing the food for the guests, and singing send-off songs are all part of "paining together." Kinship relationships might be activated, and the flows of money, sweat, and sentiment between them deepened at some point, if and only if they have been weeded. Moments of seeing and touching here are generative, cultivating the ground where more might grow.

Being Seen

In chapter four (Pace), I introduced Abigail, who waited patiently for insight and wisdom from God as she pursued good life through good relations. At one point, after a period of intensive prayer and fasting with her paternal aunt (*shwenkazi*), Abigail "got the idea" (implicitly, from God) to visit her son's paternal grandparents. She called one of her former contacts from the Anglican church in Kampala, who knew Silas's father, and had him find out where the grandparents were located and how she could find them. She saved up money for transportation all the way to Kabale (a 3-hour drive and a roundtrip fare of 20,000 schillings), and then traveled there with Silas. Because of the controversial circumstances surrounding this

child's birth and her now severed relationship with Silas's father, she worried a lot in the days leading up to the visit. How would they respond to this news that their son had a child with a woman who was not his wife? Would they send her away, thinking she was simply after money? Or would they accept their grandson into their family?

When she came back she told me about the visit: "We were welcomed. They received us. They gave us food and they greeted Silas so well. They knew about him. And me, I told them my wish is for peace in the family of the dad to Silas." She showed me photos on her phone as we talked. I noted several in particular of the group sitting in plastic chairs in front of the grandparents' house drinking *obushera* (fermented millet porridge) together. *Obushera* is traditionally served as an *entacweka*, that is, a ceremonial drink served to guests when they first arrive to visit the home or function of their hosts; the word *entacweka* literally means "that which flows and never stops" and figuratively means, "always come to this family" or "we remain together." Abigail continued with her story; "finally, when we were to go, they said, 'We don't usually like to see our people suffer.'" In other words, members of their family should not be uneducated paupers, but rather, should display the same markers of status as they had attained. Although Abigail herself was not one of "their people," Silas was, so she was overjoyed by their statement, explaining to me that it meant they had seen by their appearance that she and Silas had not had an easy life, and that they intended to help them out financially. Further, at the end of their visit, the grandparents had discussed the possibility of having Silas stay at their home and school from there. While Abigail did not want to separate from her son, she was heartened by the prospect that Silas's grandparents had recognized Silas as "part of them." This recognition carried the potential for flows of financial support to open between them, so that he would come to display and embody his membership in their family.

In this instance, the maternal care Abigail exercised was to make herself and her son seen by those whose recognition could prove transformative to their situation. Over the months and years that have passed since her initial visit to Silas's grandparents, Abigail has continued to make it a priority to visit them regularly (around three times per year). Although they have not helped pay for Silas's school fees, they typically give Abigail small sums of money (50 – 100k schillings) when they visit, and she holds out hope that in the future, their investment in their grandson might increase if she continues to present Silas in his predicament before them.

A Delayed Visit

Failing to generate the qualia of *obuntu* through regular and/or well-timed visits to rural kin can lead to health consequences for the one who has failed to visit and/or her children. Although particular kinship relationships may fall latent for a period, the fundamental ineffaceability of kinship relationships became evident to me the experience with, Penelope, described in chapter five. Very briefly: Penelope had been married for eight months and she still hadn't been able to conceive. She regularly attended Healing and Deliverance services at the Catholic Church, seeking to be set free from whatever bondages were preventing her from conceiving. But it wasn't until she fulfilled her obligation to visit her paternal uncle and affirm her continued connection to him that the flows of vitality within her were restored.

She had been away from the village for almost a year, during which she had advanced in many ways: moving to town, getting married, and becoming involved in a white person's research project. Presumably, if she hadn't delayed to visit her uncle – to engage in the acts of touch that generated signs of her continued co-participation in and recognition of the collective

body of her kin – she would have gotten pregnant earlier. The flows of sentiment from him to her would not have turned bad, and her body would have functioned normally.

Timing and Repetition

Kin recognize their relatedness to one another by acting on it, in conjoined practices of *kureeba* and *kukwata* through which the qualia of *obuntu* are experienced. Crucially, good forms of relatedness grow out of the repetition of co-corporeality, as well as its enactment at specific moments like burials and weddings, and when school fees are coming due. It is the temporal frequency and specificity of these acts of *kukwata* that differentiate care for kinship relationships from care for neighborly relationships.

Prophylactic Care

In both of the kinds of relationships discussed in this chapter (kin relationships and neighbor relationships), practices of sharing locally understood as related acts of seeing (*kureeba*) and touching (*kukwata*) work to minimize the differences between people. In many small ways over time, these practices of seeing (*kureeba*) and touching (*kukwata*) produce the effect of sameness through both outward displays and inward sensations of co-experience – transmitted through qualia of *obuntu* that materialize phenomenally as signs that multiple persons are one, and that the one who initiated the act of touch recognizes their oneness. In turn, this one-ness ideally fosters goodwill and a closeness of attachment between these similar persons.

Both neighborly and kin relations are relatively given, with kinship relationships being more given than relationships with neighbors. While both these kinds of relationships carry

overtly embodied dimensions, they are fundamentally grounded in different shared physical

circumstances: shared space (neighbors), and shared bodies (kin). (While you can move to a new

compound, you can't change the source of your blood!) As relationships that are given, both will

necessarily exert an effect, and thus, must be managed and cared for so that the effect produced

is not a bad one. Whereas relationships with neighbors fundamentally take place against the

specter of insecurity, relationships with kin are haunted by threats of ill health ensuing from

blocked paths and thus blocked flows of vital fluids between family members. To protect the

security and health of themselves and their children, women engage in forms of prophylactic

care that work to manage the sharedness of physical spaces and bodies with relatively

presupposed relations. Under is transferred through touch – whether positive forms of mutuality

conveying qualia of *obuntu*, or negative forms of touch like theft, poisoning, or witchcraft – is

shaped through antecedent moments, signs, impressions – either of shared humanity, or of

asocial inequality.

The task of managing these relationships falls on mothers more than any other figure. In

relationships with neighbors, as women are the ones managing kitchens and clotheslines, and

overseeing maids and to some extent gatemen,[59] their position is the one from which to exercise

protection over themselves and their families from threats of jealousy. Sameness becomes

security as women manage their relationships with neighbors through prophylactic forms of

maternal care.

Women care for kinship relationships through repeated demonstrations of oneness in the

collective body. Visiting relatives for simple social visits, as well as showing up for burials and

weddings, are moments where family members come together and assert their oneness. Coming

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[59] Although sometimes husbands and landlords take charge of interaction with gatemen, women have also been
known to influence their husbands in these matters.

together to see and be seen, and to share food and drink, burdens, wealth, becomes a form of care that carries prophylactic effects for those who visit, helping to protect them from becoming the object of others' doubts and distrust, and the harm that can spring from that.

If relationships that are given call for forms of care that are protective and prophylactic, relationships that are made call for forms of care that are more proactive, progress-oriented, propagative. This makes sense, since health and security need to be in place in order to move. It is to the forging of these relatively made relationships that we now turn.

Chapter 7: Propagative Care

Relatively Made Relations

Different kinds of relationships entail different bases, risks and promises. While in the last chapter I considered relatively given relations, in this chapter I think about kinds of relationships that are relatively made: namely, relationships with patrons and with friends. In contrast to relations with neighbors and kin, entering and exiting relations with patrons and friends are much more optional. As such, relatively given and relatively made relations call for different forms of care.

The first half of this chapter focuses on relationships with patrons, which, I demonstrate, stem from an imaginary of intertwined paths. I then turn to discuss relationships with friends, and I show that the possibility of friendship depends on similar class positions demonstrated through signs of movement. These bases for belonging in patron-client relationships and in friendship relationships, I argue, both encode the idea of interconnected bodies moving through social space, and that is both the foundation and the promise of these relationships. Further, it is through relatively made relationships that women in Mbarara actively forge new ways forward for themselves and their families.

In thinking through relatively made relationships, I draw on two video recordings made by Abigail during a trip to Kampala, Uganda's capital city, where she had been pursuing post-secondary education at the country's flagship university, Makerere, and participating in the campus Anglican ministry, when she got pregnant. When Silas was one and a half, she journeyed there for the first time since giving birth to collect a letter from the parish where she had served; while in Kampala, she took the opportunity call on her the patron who had been supporting her studies, as well as a friend with whom she had been very close. The unique circumstances of

Abigail's conversations with her patron and her friend – calling on them after she had been away due to life-altering circumstances – might make her example seem unrepresentative. But I suggest that Abigail's situation actually offers the perfect opportunity to glimpse the logics at work in these relationships, precisely because the status and future of these relationships was in question and was being actively negotiated (Goffman 1967). As I will show, Abigail's visits with her patron and her friend were fundamentally arguments about why they should not cut her off.

Calling on Past Encounters: Patronage

When she was three months pregnant, without any support from the baby's father nor her own parents, Abigail had left the university and moved to Mbarara to share her sister's rented room. Although her sister shared her bed and provided food for Abigail when no one else would, she chastised and punished her for this pregnancy, making her do all the work at home, from cooking to cleaning, to collecting water, to washing clothes – like a maid -- even through the very end of the pregnancy.

Painful as it was, Abigail had been staying with her sister for over two years when she began having dreams at night in which she went back to school, found a job as a schoolteacher, and became able to give her boy good life. Around the same time, All Saints Church Mbarara, where Abigail had been involved in leading the children's ministry, asked for a letter from her former parish to prove her qualifications, especially since she was a single mother. Although she found this request hurtful, she saved up money over several months to go to Kampala to get the letter, as well as to see Birungi bya'Yesu, the prominent Anglican benefactor who had been sponsoring her studies before she got pregnant.

As I will show, visiting Birungi was an attempt to reattach herself to him. In my analysis of her visit with Birungi, I will demonstrate how the two tacked back and forth between interactional moments of hierarchical social distance and moments of merging. Tracing these dynamics, I will argue that both of these kinds of interactional moments – ones where social distance was instantiated and other where merging (or overlapping, social embeddedness) is instantiated – were necessary in order to re-activate the attachment between Abigail and Birungi. The tacking back and forth between moments of social distance and moments of merging is actualized through practices of seeing (*kureeba*) and touching (*kukwata*). These layer upon one another recursively over the course of the interaction.

In the local understanding, seeing is something that an individual does with her/his own eyes, for her/himself and separate from anyone else, touching is associated with social embeddedness and merging with another. Recall that *kukwata* is used to talk about not only physical touch, but also catching, holding connecting, understanding what another is saying, relating. It was through the back-and-forth of seeing and touching that Abigail's visit to Birungi became a successful compositional moment.

Styling Up

Abigail's sister usually left some money at home for groceries, and Abigail pocketed a coin here, a coin there, until she saved up enough to get a new *kitenge* dress made, have her hair braided in a fresh updo, and buy a bus ticket. These preparations were crucial aspects of the compositional work she would to undertake with Birungi. By "styling up," she would show him that she was not destitute, but rather, someone who was moving through life respectably. This was a matter of respecting *Birungi's* autonomy. If she had come looking bad, Birungi would be

compelled to give to her, but by buying the dress and getting her hair done, she would allow him to see that she respected his freedom to say yes, or to say no, to her request that he sponsor her to return to school once again. (In contrast to the classical Maussian approach to the gift, which so emphasizes the subordination of the recipient, here, Abigail works to construct her relative *equality* with the giver, Birungi, so that his potential gift could emerge unconstrained, speaking to the agency of the recipient (cf. Durham 1995, Klaits 2011, Scherz 2017)).

I saw Abigail just before she set off, and she insisted we pray together. By getting pregnant, she had disappointed Birungi, and his investment in her, turning off the path they had been moving on together. Now she needed God to open Birungi's heart so that he would accept her as his client once again. She prayed for a, "change on [her] life…that [she] would not come back the same." For this transformation in their relationship and Abigail's *amagara* to take place, it would require Birungi to personally see for himself and will to become "part of Abigail" once again.

Praying

Along with Baby Silas, Abigail showed up at Birungi bya'Yesu's office in Kampala. Birungi is a tall man with a round stomach and a jolly laugh. He likes to have everyone call him "Papa," and his wife, "Mami," for they envision themselves as providing hope to the hopeless and building the Christian families of Uganda through evangelism and school fees [Figure 2]. Although many prominent analyses of Christian expansion consider Christianity an atomizing, socially corrosive force – as, perhaps most famously, in Jean and John Comaroff's writings – Abigail and Birungi's relationship offers one example of Christian ideas being mobilized toward socially productive, rather than socially corrosive, ends. Indeed, the creative power of the

Christian God working in and through persons is one of the strongest driving forces in the composition of Ugandan networks (cf. Haynes 2017).

World Shine Ministries was founded in 2000 by **_Medad_** and **_Connie Birungi_** as Swallow Evangelistic Revival Ministries, with a burden of sharing the love of Jesus Christ in word and need to restore hope to the hopeless thus transforming communities from sin, poverty, injustice, abuse, ignorance, illiteracy and disease. WSM desires to reveal the truth of God's unconditional love through Jesus Christ to the people. _It exists to raise Godly men and women to lead Uganda and Influence the nations for Christ_. WSM is governed by a Board of Directors.

Screen shot of the homepage of Medad Birungi Bya' Yesu's personal ministry website.

After entering Birungi's office, Abigail asked him if she could take a video of their time

together with the small 360-camera I had loaned her, to which Birungi readily agreed. (Birungi is

a prominent public figure in Anglican Uganda, and is often recorded for television broadcasts

and inspirational DVDS, which are widely available at church markets and bookstores across the

country.) Abigail set the camera up on Birungi's desk between them, she standing on one side

and he standing on the other, holding Baby Silas. I embed in the text the most crucial snippets on

which I draw directly in my analysis.

Figure 1. Still: Praying. (From video recording by Abigail.)

As the video begins, Abigail finishes fussing with the camera, Birungi sings a worship

song to which Silas dances on the desk. [Figure 1] Then, Birungi suggests that he pray for Silas.

He holds the baby close in a hug, and prays that Silas will become a global leader, with a

wonderful family, and a preacher of the gospel. Abigail softly chimes in with "Amen"'s at the

end of almost every clause Birungi speaks. Then, however, Birungi begins commanding evil

away from Silas's life, calling on every sickness, every generational curse, every demonic covenant, every soul tie, every spiritual cell phone tower, and every decree and proclamation against Silas to "be broken in the name of Jesus." These forms of evil which Birungi sends away are understood to be the potential effect of Silas's sinful conception, which may have transferred ties to evil spirits to Silas, and through this part of the prayer, Abigail keeps silent. By personally commanding them away in the name of Jesus, Birungi enacts his spiritual superiority over Abigail, his closer allegiance to Jesus. Further, when he commands the evil ties to "be broken in the name of Jesus," he switches from English into Luganda, which is the language spoken in Uganda's central region, including the country's capital of Kampala where Birungi's office and ministry are based, but is neither his nor Abigail's mother tongue. By using Luganda to break spiritual bonds, Birungi indexes his association with the power of the cosmopolitan capital, and simultaneously, his recognition of the non-modern, non-Christian, and thus non-English nature of the spirits to whom he is speaking.

B: So I pray for you Silas . . . alright?
---------------------------→ *(Birungi closes his eyes and tightens his arm around Silas)*

Father in the name of Jesus I dedicate Silas ((SMILING AT SILAS)) to you Lord .
(Birungi still holding Silas) ---→

I pray that you release a blessing upon him . a blessing from God Almighty . I pray that
--→

he may become a Joseph of the land . May he get the favor of the Lord . Like Joseph .
--→

That the Lord will be with him . In the name of Jesus // I pray that You will make him a
//Amen
--→

great leader like Joseph // an international figure // in the name of Jesus //   I pray that
// Amen   // Amen   // Amen
--→

wisdom and honor and power will be around him // That in the name of Jesus he . will
// Amen
---→

influence the nations // of the world // Silas's calling is global // it's not local // he's an
// Amen   // Amen   // Amen   // Amen
---→

international figure //   So I PRAY in the NAME OF JESUS that he will grow
// in the name of Jesus
---→

in the knowledge and favor of you, Lord // He will be a great man of God // influencing
// Amen   // Amen
---→

millions . He will grow and study and become a great lawyer . and a great judge. In the
---→

name of Jesus of the high court//   I pray that he will work in international high court //
// Amen   // Amen
---→

in the name of Jesus // and when he grows he will have a WONDERFUL family //
// Amen   // Amen
---→

WONDERFUL children . and he will be a PREACHER of the gospel // as well
// Amen
---→

PROCLAIMING the gospel // of Jesus Christ //   I pray, oh Father, that Silas will live
// Amen   // Amen
---→

to see his children, he will live to see his great grandchildren, in the name of Jesus //
// Amen
---→

((ADDRESSING SILAS)) Say Amen! I pray that this boy will be healed from every .
---→ (*Puts one hand on*

generational sickness . EVERY sickness gutuka mulina lya'Yesu . EVERY generational
be broken in the name of Jesus

Silas's stomach, the other on his back, shaking him)-- →	

curse kutuka mulina lya'Yesu . Every demonic covenants kutuka mulina lya'Yesu .	
be broken in the name of Jesus	be broken in the name of Jesus
---→	

EVERY soul tie gutuka mulina lya'Yesu . EVERY decree and proclamation against you
be broken in the name of Jesus
---→

Silas, I cancel it in Jesus' name. I render powerless every power of witchcraft and
---→

sorcery, EVERY demon assignment, and every mulongoti, I pull down.
cell phone tower
---→

(Lines 8-29)

Further, he prays for Silas's hands to touch the markers of modernity and success throughout his life. As reflected in the transcript below, for this part of the prayer, Birungi takes the Baby's hands in his own. In doing so he seems to imply that through contact with his hands in this moment, Silas would become like him in the future. In keeping with the way he opened the prayer, as he again switches back to praying for modernity and mobility here, he prays in English.

B: To bless, the Lord will bless you abundantly, exceedingly. I PRAY that He will enlarge
---→

your borders . I pray for these hands, that these hands will be <u>rich</u> hands. That Silas
----------------→ *(Taking Silas's hands in his)* -- →

will be a multi millionaire // That everything you touch will be blessed. That Silas, you
// Amen
---→

will <u>touch</u> degrees and certificates and masters' degrees in the name of Jesus // I pray
//Amen

---→

that these hands will get appointment letters and promotion letters // That these hands will be-
// Amen
---→

wear a ring from a woman of God // These hands will <u>touch</u> your children and
// Amen
---→

grandchildren in the name of Jesus // I pray that these hands will drive the cars of your
// Amen
---→

dreams. These hands will touch the keys of houses // for rent // and for residence // These
// Amen   // Amen   // Amen
---→

hands will touch many gates of airplanes as you travel the nations of the world // and
// Amen
---→

these hands WILL give to the poor, the orphans and the widows //
// Amen
---→

(Lines 33-42)

When he prayed that these hands will wear a ring from a woman of God, Birungi's own wedding band almost seemed to glint. Later in the interaction, he takes out his iPhone to make a phone-call to his auto mechanic (showing that he has a car, the status symbol of all status symbols), while simultaneously looking at messages on his other phone [Figure 2]. Birungi certainly has rich hands. While I make no accusation that Birungi's prayer was insincere, I do point out the icons of wealth that Birungi mentions are ones that he himself wears. In this way, he seems to suggest that those who are in touch with *his own* rich hands – those who holding his hands literally, and figuratively – stand to achieve the same things.

Figure 2. Rich Hands. (Still from video recording by Abigail.)

Staying without invitation

As Birungi finishes praying, he assumes the interaction is over, and bids Abigail farewell, passing the baby to her and looking down to take a seat at his desk. Abigail, however, has other intentions. In one fell swoop, she takes Silas in her arms, her eyes dart quickly back and forth between the visitor's chair and Birungi, and she sits down!

[…] in Jesus's name. // May the Lord bless you abundantly, exceedingly, in Jesus's name
// Amen
---→

A: Amen
---------------→

B: Say Amen!
(*Lets go of Abigail's shoulder*)

A: Amen

B: Amen . . ((ADDRESSING SILAS)) Amen! Say Amen!

C: De

B: ((LAUGHS)) Okay . So hallelujah. So God bless you // have a great time, and the Lord
                                               // Mhm
                                          (*Passing Silas to Abigail*)

will take care . of the rest . in Jesus' name . Amen?
                     (*Sitting down at his desk*) (*Abigail glances down and back at Birungi 2x*)

A: Amen // Ssebo ninsiima Ruhanga,
         // Yes
           Sir I thank God
      (*Abigail sits down across from Birungi*)
      (*Birungi looks down to his right, then looks up and sees Abigail seated*)

B: Mukama~asiimwe
     Praise the Lord
         (*Birungi folds his hands on his desk; they remain there, still, until noted below*)

A: Ahabwokuba okemerera nanye
     Because you stood with me

B: I'm still standing with you
         (*Looking off to his right*)

(Line 62-74)

He thought they had come to be prayed for, but by staying in his office, Abigail moves to convert their meeting into a <u>visit</u>. As described in the previous, as a cultural form, <u>visiting</u> carries great weight and is understood as an act of touch (*kukwata*), copresence, merging. One does not need an invitation to visit someone else in Uganda, and choosing to visit when you haven't

explicitly been asked to is understood as a way of showing connectedness: of all the things you might have been doing, you yourself have seen and freely reasoned to go and visit this person. Abigail has switched to speaking Runyankole. This is no longer a prayer meeting characterized only by social distance, but a visit between two people who have been, and she hopes will continue to be, "part of one another".

Testifying

As soon as Abigail sits down, before Birungi even looks up, she immediately launches into the couplet that initiates the genre of *testifying* in the Ugandan Anglican tradition. The one giving testimony says, "I thank God," and their interlocutor replies, "Praise the Lord." The act of testifying itself is a mutual enactment of Christian co-participation.

Abigail starts off by explaining that she is here today to thank God, because Birungi stood with her through something that Satan had brought to her: that is, her premarital pregnancy. Although Birungi is aloof in the first few seconds after seeing Abigail seated before him, this dramatic opening draws him in, and he begins back-channeling with Mm's as she speaks her first sentences, these cues iconizing his co-presence and co-feeling with her as she tells her story.

A:	Ahabwokuba okemerera nanye
	Because you stood with me

B:	I'm still standing with you
	(Looking off to his right)

A:	Omukintu ekistaani yaandetire okumara'maani. Nkija omwanya ogu // nka nimpurira
	// Mm
Through a thing the devil to brought me to finish my strength. I came to this place// I felt	

ntine masiko ahabwe enshonga yokugirangu abazaire bakabani baandeeba

I had no hope because of the reason that my parents were seeing me

nkekitarayambe // kandi nanye nyenka nka ninyereeba nkowawhayo.
// Mm
that I was useless // and me myself I was seeing myself as if I'm finished.

B: Hallo? Boy You go and write. Be a professor.
(Handing a pen to Silas)

A: Nahereze- Staani yayenda kunyijiramu kunyoreka ngu tihaine ekirabase kubasika
I have given- Satan wanted to come in me to show me that there is nothing that can make possible
(Abigail gesturing gently with her hand as she speaks, emphasizing some words and directionalities)

ebiyangye, byawhayo // Neija omwan'ogu washaba nanye, wangira kungyenda nkasiba
// Mm-
the things concerning me, it's over // I had come to this place and you prayed for me, you told me to go and fast

ebiro bishatu // Kunahikire omukusiiba kwebiro bishatu nahurira iraka ryangambira ngu
// Mm
three days   // When I finished three days of fasting I heard a voice saying to

ensibe ebiro munaana // Kunahereze ebiro munaana, ndi kubiheza, nafuna Scripture //
// Mm   // Mm
fast for eight days // As I reached eight days, I was finishing them, I got a Scripture //

erikuruuga omu Abarooma eri kugirangu Ruhanga niwaine ekisumorizo // ngu kwiyigura
// Ya!
from Romans which said God is the one with the key   // When He opens

tahaine ori //kurukyinga[60]
// Tahaine orukyinga
there is no one who // can close it [a door]
// There is no one who can close it

A: Natambura ndi kwikiriza omukyaandikirwe eki nizira omwanya ogu nokusiima- //
// Mm
I walked with faith in this that was written. I come to this place to thank-   //

neija omwan'ogu okusiima ngu Ruhana tarabihaire. // Anyikirize naba omwana'we
// Hm@

---

[60] Abigail thinks this might have been Romans 7:3.

I have come to this place to thank God that He did not lie. // He allowed me to be His child

ogundi'murundi.
for the second time.

B: Amen.

(Lines 73-88)

She explains how Satan had "come in her," and here, Abigail draws on an architecture of agency and responsibility that exceeds the intentionality that so often lies behind our models of autonomous agents who make decisions about their health. For Abigail, fostering good life involves working on relationships in response to the agency of spiritual beings who have acted upon her and her relations with others. Abigail responded to Satan coming in her by coming to see Birungi early in her pregnancy, and he prayed for her, and this initiated the process of her deliverance, as God made a way forward for her from her fall. Invoking and crediting God for Birungi's part has the effect of distancing Abigail from imputing Birungi's intentions: she merely cites what he did, and that she thanks God for it. Throughout this first part of her testimony, Birungi conveys agreement through overlapping sounds, words, and sentiments. When she is saying "When God opens a door, there is no one who can close it," Birungi is just two words behind her. Conversationally, touch is occurring. She has seen and reflected for herself on Birungi's role in her deliverance, and what she has <u>seen</u> is what has led her to come here today and initiate <u>an act of touch</u>. In turn, through what Abigail is saying, Birungi is also <u>seeing</u> it, and reciprocating her <u>touch</u> through overlapped speech.

Next, Abigail mentions another thing she's thanking God for by coming to this place today. Here she tells the longer story of her connection to Birungi, how they met, and how he came to sponsor her studies. She explains this through a recursive series of moments of seeing and touching.

| // Mhm |
| work." // We see God providing and I feel within me thanks toward God. Another thing |

| ekinkusimiira Ruhanga munonga kandi ekyayongera kundeeta omwany'ogu // Nkiiri |
| // Mhm |
| for which I am thanking God so much and moreover why you see me in this place // When I was |

| omwana muto okaburiraho Ntungamo. // Naakwetenga // Namanya byakomaho |
| // Yes!   // Mhm |
| a young chld you preached in Ntungamo. // I longed to be like you. // I knew it was blocked |

| tindigaruka kuboona. Kwonka nyowe naguma omuri Cristo. // Naasiima Ruhanga |
| // Mmm |
| I would not find you again. But me, I remained in Christ.   // I thank God |

| kugirangu ahinabire ntoora hoona okaba onshangaho kandi orikuburira ngire // kandi |
| // Mm |
| that whenever I would go you would find me and you would be preaching the gospel // and |

| naagaruka naahika omwany'ogu ndi kuburira ngire waija waanshangaho Makerere // |
| // Mm |
| again I reached this place when I was preaching the gospel and you found me at Makerere // |

| Waangambira oti ninyenda ngu ogumizemu ori kushoma oti oije onshange omu office |
| You told me that I want you to continue studying so you come and find me in my office |

| yangye nkusponsoring. // Obunabire naayakire aha ebipapura, mbitiireho nti engaro |
| // Mm |
| And I will sponsor you. // When I had picked up the papers from here, while they were still pressing (making an imprint) in my hand |

| kubaasa namara kuapplyinga, ekyo kutwara[61] nibwe kyatahamu // kukyatahiremu. |
| // Mm |
| and I finished applying, that's when I got pregnant in a way I did not plan // yet it happened. |

| Amasiko gangye gakoma. Kwonka ninsiima Ruhanga ahabwokugirangu anterireho |
| My hope was blocked off. But I thank God because He cut for me |

| omuhanda. Ekya amaani ekindi kumusiimira: angarwaire // okumanyangu nimbaasa // |
| // Mm   // Mm |

---

[61] Okutwara enda - to catch a pregnancy - used when pregnant out of wedlock
Aine enda / agizire enda - to become pregnant by your husband

a path. Another strong thing for which I am thanking: He restored me // to know that I can //

kwemerera kandi muhereze. // […]
// Mm
stand and serve him. // […]

(Lines 96-107)

Here is an analytical interpretation of the sequence of her narrative:

    i.   Abigail <u>saw</u> Birungi when she preached in her home village of Ntungamo, and she longed to be like him, wanted an attachment to him. SEE, TOUCH.

    ii.   Then, Birungi <u>saw</u> Abigail at Makerere – when we watched this video together Abigail explained that she was acting in a church theater production, and she was really good, and that's when Birungi piqued interest in her. After <u>seeing</u> her, he wanted an attachment, a touch, to her, and he proposed to sponsor her. SEE, TOUCH.

    iii.   They next <u>touched</u> when she had picked up the sponsorship forms from his office. After this moment when they came together over the forms, she was on her way to study! This was movement, progress, as a result of their connection, and everyone would <u>see</u>. TOUCH, SEE. This is not just a back-and-forth of seeing and touching, but a layering, a sedimentation, that has a momentum, a movement to it.

    iv.   However, that is when Satan entered her, to redirect her away from the path of progress she was on with Birungi.
        a.   The next time she <u>got in touch</u> with Birungi, it was to be prayed for, and indeed, his prayer initiated her deliverance.
            i.   Abigail has <u>seen</u> and understood this for herself, and that is why she has come to connect with Birungi in an act of <u>touch</u> today. TOUCH, SEE, TOUCH. The layering continues.

    v.   The occasion of today's visit allows Birungi to <u>see for himself</u> that she knows how to perform the part of a client, and that he is, in fact, already part of her. Then it will be his turn to touch again. SEE, TOUCH. More layering, more movement.

All in all, by citing Birungi's previous actions, Abigail suggests that he has been central to her personal development all along. She is an index of Birungi: her successes point to him, and her whatever good life she has is contiguous with his. Although pregnancy set her back from moving with Birungi and threatened to break their bond, she is currently in his office performing their

connection once again, working to reactivate it, without ever directly mentioning anything about the future of their relationship. Throughout this section of her testimony, Birungi's demonstration of merging – his overlapped speech – continues.

Then, Abigail turns to speak about the future she has been working toward in which her boy is provided for by knowing his paternal relatives. During this portion of the conversation, Birungi will fall completely silent, not uttering a single backchannel sound. His facial expression is still -- he even closes his eyes for almost a full minute – and his hands are stationary, folded on the desk. Abigail's hand motions, however, increase in both frequency and span. So too does her volume of speaking. <u>Here they are back to showing social distance.</u> Where she and Birungi are not sharing the support of this story – through sounds and movements – she must do more through her own body language and voice, to bear the story on her own, and perhaps to convince Birungi to receive and co-embody it with her. However, at the very end of her testimony, Birungi re-engages.

nakuura kandi ariyo namuprovidingira. // Eshara yangye eyinyizire ndi kushaba kandi
// Mm
growing and He is providing. // My prayer which I have been praying and

Ruhanga okwaizire nampabuura. ((TAKES A DEEP BREATH)) Nkashoma ekyaha- naza
God has come in guiding.   I read what was wr- I later

omukusiiba nkaija nagiramu okwetenga nti ebyabireho bikabaho- okusasira kwabaho
went for fasting, I later wished that what had happened happened- forgiveness happened

ninshaba Ruhanga omwan'ogu akure aine rukundo yishe ahakuba turiho tuhurire kwonka
And I pray to God that this child grows with love of the father because we are still alive but

naareeba kitari kumbaasikira. Kandi kwihaningira enda nokuhitsya obwire obwazarirwe
I see it's impossible for me. And since I got pregnant up to the time of giving birth

tinkagambahoga nishe. Naareeba hatariho'muhanda gunakubaasa- kugira nigubasika-
I have not spoken to the father. I saw there was no way that I could- that could be possible-

naza okusiiba kwebiro bishatu ekyetengo kya kumizamu nayeb-nashanga nyakwento
I went into fasting for three days and a desire kept coming that I- that I find my paternal aunt

wangye nabeera Isingiro. Kunamwihikire twagaruka omukisiibo kyebiro bishatu
who lives in Isingiro. When I reached her there we again fasted for three days
(Birungi shuts his eyes)- →

twaboona ekyahandikirwe kikuruga omu yeremia eshuri makumi na mushanju
and we found what was written in Jeremiah chapter seventeen
---→

watandikira ahamu shorongogwa gwi'ikumi na ogwi'kumi na naa mushanju. Then
when you begin from verse 10 through 17. Then
---→

ogwikumi na gumwe gukabani gutugambirangu oku nanka oku- okutwara abaana okuba
verse 11 told us what to do—to bring children to be
---→

na-naba-nabazaire babo. Ninsiima Ruhanga kugirangu kikabaho omwana namutwara
with- with their-parents. I thank God because it happened, the child I took him
---→

namutwara omubishenkuru kandi ekindukushaba Mukama ninshaba Ruhanga'ngu //
// Mm
I took him to his grandfather and what I'm asking the Lord, I pray that God //
-- *(Birungi nods)*------------- //-→ *(opens eyes)*

atemo'muhanda ogu ishe akabaasa kumanye omwanawe kandi ba // kacommunicatinga.
// Ya
will cut a path that the father can know his son and they // communicate
(Birungi makes cutting motion with his hands)------------- →

B: He will make [the way].
--------------------------- →

(Lines 116-130)

As Abigail wraps up, Birungi <u>catches</u> what she is saying. He first gives a little nod, then opens his eyes, and progresses from an "mm" to anticipatory hand movements, to a positive latched-on statement, "He (God) will make a way." Recall that *kukwata*, touch, can also be

translated catching, holding. Birungi had distanced himself interactionally until he <u>saw for himself</u> what Abigail is saying, and then he caught it – a form of touch.

So what was she saying? In southwestern Uganda, a child belongs to his father's clan. Abigail has explained that even though she does not communicate with her son's father at all, and hasn't since she got pregnant, she showed up at Silas's paternal grandfather's rural homestead. Doing so was bold and unusual, and shows she really must not have anywhere else to turn. Birungi *catches* her layered act of touch, co-embodying what she is saying, and holding and shaping it in his hands. As he re-connects to what she is saying is when God cuts a path, a way, a channel, for them to move forward together. Immediately next, before Abigail even finishes her concluding sentence, Birungi takes the floor in a complete non-transition, changing the topic abruptly to focus directly on Abigail's studies.

Asking

B:	He will make [the way].
	--------------------------- →

A:	Nikye- nibyebiyo naba nyine--
	That's what I had--

B:	Hati okushoma? Ninga?
	Now are you studying? Or?

A:	Aa-a . . tindi kushoma- tenda gumizemu kunagizirenda. Nakomaho.
	Uh-uh . . I am not studying, I did not continue when I became pregnant. I stopped there.

B:	Mbwenu hati omwana tiyakozire?
	As of now hasn't the child grown?

A:	Yakozire but--
	He has grown but--

B:	Nooza kushoma Makerere?
	Then are you going to study at Makerere?

A:	Mmm-ka nihonabire ndi
	Uhhh- that's where I was

B:	Nooza kushomera nkahi, kandi noshomaki?
	You are going to study where, and you are going to study what?

A:	Ninshoma Business nkaba ninshoma Business Management kwonka kurigirira
	I study Business I was studying Business Management but according to

ekyeetengo kyangye ahimpikire naashutama nayetenga mpurire nayenda'ngu nzomu okushomesa
My desire where I reached and sat I wish I felt I wanted to go for teaching

teachinga ahakuba nindeeba ndi involved munonga omu'baana ministry y'abaana ahakuba
teaching because I see that I am very involved with children, children's ministry because

nomuba nimba mba Sunday School.
I am always in Sunday School.

B:	So hati mbwenu hatiya noyenda kushomera nkahi?
	So then now you want to study from where?
	(Squirming and looking down to his right)

A:	Mbire ninyetenga ngu shomiere Mbarara.
	I have been wanting to study from Mbarara.

B:	Nkahi?
	Where?

A:	Ny-aa-ny-applying aha Institute ya teachinga.
	I'm-I'm applying to an Institute of teaching.

B:	Nkahi? ((BLINKS SEVERAL TIMES))
	Where?

A:	. . . Mbire ntakaharonzire.
	. . . I have not yet looked for one.

B:	Kare ((LOOKS AWAY, SIGHING)) Haronde then you let me know.
	Okay You look for one then you let me know.

A:	Kare ssebo
	Okay sir

| B: | Eeee ((SMILING)) |
| | Yes |

| Intruder (2'01"): | Waagira okugyenda shaha zingahi? |
| | You said you are going at what time? |

(Lines 130-152)

As Birungi asks this series of short, pointed questions about Abigail's schooling. Abigail's shrunken volume, diminished hand movements, and disfluencies throughout this part of the interaction iconize how the questions, and the topic, have re-asserted the social distance between them. But at this juncture in her life and in the conversation, this social distance is exactly what Abigail needs. Birungi has stepped back into the patron role. As they are agreeing that she will look for a school, someone comes to his office door and begins asking Birungi a question. While Birungi turns his attention there, Abigail lets out a big breath and whispers a triumphant, "okay," flashing a smile, glancing at the camera to make sure it's still recording, and then quickly regaining her composure and formality.

Ultimately, by citing Birungi's previous involvements in her life, Abigail has successfully recruited Birungi's continued participation in her wellbeing. She has done it without putting him under pressure, for she has allowed him to reason for himself as she has illustrated the outcomes of their prior connections as manifested in her life's journeys.

When Birungi finishes talking to the man in the doorway, he claps his hands bringing his exchange with Abigail back into focus. He repeats his instructions to her – that she should look for a school, and says, "then you let me know," repeating the same phrase as before. He will say this same thing again – "then you let me know" two more times (four times in all) before he and Abigail finish – always in English. Uttering this phrase after statements of *his* will is important

because it signals his recognition of Abigail's autonomous will, which is also required for their relationship to continue.

| Intruder: | Sok omaririze |
| | So okay, you first finish |

| B: | Rekamare ((CLAPS HANDS ONCE)) |
| | Let me finish |

B:	Hati // you go and look for the college . Where they can give you teaching--
	// Mm
	Now

((KNOCKS FOLDED KNUCKLES ON DESK ONCE)) and then you let me know

| A: | Ok Sir ((NODS ONCE)) |

| B: | Mm |

| A: | Amen |

| B: | Because there are some places here where you can do grade five, ((SMILING)) others |

where you can do grade three, ((LOOKING AWAY)) or you can continue with your course. I

don't know ((LOOKS BACK AT ABIGAIL))

| A: | Mm ((LOOKS AWAY DEFERENTIALLY)) |

| B: | Waaza Bishop Stuart, you can do . a degree . in education. |
| | You go to |

| A: | AH-h-no- at Makerere nkandiho mazire Senior Four. |
| | No—at Makerere I was there when I had finished Senior Four. |

| B: | Eeee ((NODS, CLOSES EYES)) |
| | Oh! |

| A: | Mm ((BEGINS PLAYING WITH HER PINKY)) |

| B: | Ahabwenki otakuza nankegi zaaa Kibingo TTC?-- |
| | Why don't you go to somewhere like Kibingo TTC? |

A:	Edyo omuri nkahi?
	Where is that?

B:	Teacher's Training College-- eryo muri Mbarara omu Ruti waahinguraho kakyaho.
	Teacher's Training College—it is in Mbarara in Ruti when you have passed by a bit
	(Gesturing moving past with left hand)

B:	Or Bushenyi Teacher's College // One of those //
	// Mm // Mm

B:	Eee . Hariho na Kyiora TTC // Nabukinda TTC . Okamara Senior Four?
	// Mm
	Yes. There is also Kyiora TTC // Nabukinda TTC . You finished Senior Four?
	(Opens, closes hands) *(Opens, closes hands)*

A:	Mm ((STILL PLAYING WITH HER PINKY))

B:	Okamara Senior Four?
	You finished Senior Four?

A:	Nkamara Senior Four naza Lira nashoma Certificate in Business Administration. So
	I finished Senior Four. I went to Lira and studied Certificate in Business Administration. So

nkanyizire aha Makerere.
I had come to Makerere.

B:	Eee // Okay . So you go and look for the college, then you let me know
	//Mm

A:	Amen

(Lines 169-195)

He has gone on to mention that there are various options for schooling, and *he doesn't know* which one Abigail will choose, saying everything in Runyankole except the phrase "I don't know," which he says in English. English is the language associated with mobility, movement, and between two native speakers of Runyankole, using English indexes social distance. At the same time as Birungi is deferring to Abigail's autonomy and the idea that her will is separate from his own, by switching into English he is simultaneously invoking the social distance

between them vis-a-vis his status. This dramatizes the weight of Abigail's assignment to *let him know.*

Finally, he suggests several options for schools, gesturing extensively during this portion of the interaction to simultaneously indicate the location of some schools and the openness of his hands, the openness of the channel, between himself and Abigail – openness at least on his end. She has the opportunity to show her agentic participation in receiving the flow of resources from him by following up to "let him know" which school she has selected. It is in this back-and-forth, that a social bond can emerge through the participants' mutual agency to choose it. And this is how a strong tie, channel, path between two people materializes.

Throughout this interaction <co-sounding, co-gesturing, and co-presence> intersperse with <codeswitches, authoritative questioning, and discrepancies of involvement>. In this way, moments of social distance and moments of social embeddedness – *kureeba* and *kukwata* – loop back upon one another to give the interaction itself the texture of hierarchical independence reaching forward and moving into the future. [Figure 3]

Interactional texture of social distance and embeddedness

1. Styling Up: Respecting Birungi's autonomy (distance)
2. Praying: Birungi's proximity to God (distance)
3. Staying: Co-presence (embeddedness)
4. Testifying (embeddedness)
   1. Overlapping sounds, words, and sentiments (embeddedness)
   2. Loud volume and big gestures vs. silence and stasis (distance)
   3. Catching (embeddedness)
5. Asking (distance)
6. Presenting alternatives (distance and embeddedness)

Figure 3. Interactional texture of social distance and embeddedness

Without pushing or pressuring, but by citing Birungi's own actions in the past, and through her performance of respect, appreciation, and submission in response to <u>seeing</u> Birungi's good patronage, Abigail successfully recruits Birungi into an active role in her network by suggesting that *she is him*. He is part of her. <u>And who would not want to give to oneself?</u> He agrees to send her to school once again, signifying through his words, sounds, and his gestures that the connection, the path, the channel, between them is open and active. The flow of his support can resume. The interaction ends with Birungi's gesture toward Abigail getting in <u>touch</u> once again, to "let him know" which school she has chosen, enacting the back-and-forth, the mutuality of free involvement, necessary for any genuine, durable bond between them to continue emerging.

Intertwined Paths

Throughout this interaction, *kureeba*, and the separation between persons that it encodes, and *kukwata*, and the connectedness that <u>it</u> encodes, intersperse and layer upon one another. This grants the interaction itself a particular texture that recognizes both the autonomy and the mutuality of the interlocutors. In thinking about the textuality of this interaction, I am inspired by Sabina Perrino's (2002) work on the ways that intimacy and hierarchy emerge out of patterns of co-occurrence of linguistic, paralinguistic and nonlinguistic semiotic devices in Senegalese ethnomedical encounters. Perrino is concerned with the ways that textuality contributes to the sense of efficacy in healing encounters, and I, too, have focused on the way that the textuality of the interaction above allows a kind of conversion to transpire, effectively reactivating the bond between Abigail and Birungi.

Further, I point out that the textuality of *kureeba* and *kukwata* brings forth the elements of personal autonomy and interpersonal mutuality. In this relatively made relationship, individual autonomy is a vital, if unanticipated, aspect of social bonds. Because paths between people can easily become overgrown by other obligations, only those relationships characterized by free choice will abide. Not only does the patron have to choose to continue investing in the client, but a client, also, chooses to continue subscribing to the obligations involved in moving with a particular patron (Scherz 2014, 2017).

Moreover, the relation of *kureeba* and *kukwata* – autonomy and mutuality – is not merely one of co-occurrence; rather, the two articulate in a layering, back-and-forth movement. In Abigail's narrative, it is the pastness of their connection that has set the conditions for the present moment, and becomes the basis on which their connection will continue moving forth from this moment. In other words, Abigail calls on the historicity of seeing and touching – of mutual recognition and comings together -- that brought Birungi and Abigail together to move on the same path, in order to suggest to Birungi that their paths ought to continue to intertwine. This is as much a path from the past into the future as it is a path between them.[62]

In the case of a patron-client relationship specifically, the recursive, mounting process of seeing and touching has a kind of forward motion to it that works to claim that this patron and this client have been, are, and ought to continue to be, fundamentally intertwined. While in other kinds of relationships (e.g., with neighbors, kin, and friends, to cite the other examples I'm working with in these chapters), the bases upon which relationships emerge and are built do

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[62] Writing of patronage in Ugandan state politics, Richard Vokes (2016) has documented how during the National Resistance Movement (NRM) party primaries that took place in rural Mbarara District in mid-late 2015, in their campaign speeches, candidates *always* explained and accounted for their connection to President Museveni in terms of the pastness of their connection and exchanges, in which Museveni had *previously* given them something (such as a job in the civil service, the tender for an infrastructure project, and a plot of land), and that Museveni's largesse had filtered down through the candidates and been distributed among ordinary people in return for their votes (p.666-7).

differ, what is similar across them is that the process of recognition encodes this fundamental

dialectic between seeing and touching. Ultimately, it is in this <u>movement</u>, this gradual, mounting,

back-and-forth of SEE-TOUCH-SEE, that social bonds are planted, rooted, and grow, and that

persons move toward *amagara marungi* together. Over time, persons come to co-embody their

connections to others and the bonds and flows that do or do not materialize between them.

Keeping Pace: Friendship

In addition to patronage relationships, friendships are another kind of relationship that is

relatively made. Friendships come about by creating and mutually recognizing class-based

likeness. Crucially, the kind of likeness between friends rests on relative equality: not necessarily

equality of means, but equality of movement. As will become clear through the examples below,

even if a person does not have access to the same amount of resources as her/his friend at a given

moment, the possibility of their friendship is configured by their mutual *capacity* to marshal

resources and thus, to move. In this way, it the potentiality for movement alongside one another

that allows for friendship.

One of a mother's most important responsibilities in Uganda is managing her child's

appearance. Mothers know that they should "style up" their kids so that they make friends with

other well-heeled children. The idea is that if your son befriends children whose parents are

driving, he is also likely to grow up to be someone with a car. Children's associations with others

are understood to shape their behavior, aspirations, and connections – so mothers work to make

their children look like the friends they want them to have. T This means always having a nice

outfit on hand, and since young children grow so quickly, the costs of clothes really add up. In

addition to clothes, when they're babies, mothers are compelled to buy diapers (which are

expensive imports) for the times when the child will be in public, as well as huge quantities of Vaseline so the children have smooth, shiny skin. As they get older and diapers become irrelevant, other items, like backpacks and water bottles, assume their place in the budget. School uniforms are another huge symbolic investment, highly prized by children and required for all students, even for two-year-olds who attend daycare, and uniforms often cost as much as 1/2 of a semester's tuition.

But all of this is easier done by some mothers than others. Managing to meet these costs is easily done in only the fewest of cases, and the very small incomes to which most women have access mean that even tiny differences in earnings have significant material consequences. Some, higher-earning mothers simply postpone getting their hair done in order to buy new shoes for their child; but for others, affording even one more diaper can require sacrificing a day's food. When a child resembles other children who are wearing diapers, or carrying backpacks, however, it erases the different degrees of maternal sacrifice it may have taken to get them to look like that. While looking alike influence who is more likely to develop more enduring connections with whom, by virtue of the immediacy of sensation, it simultaneously covers over hierarchies of opportunity and the distribution of labor that stand behind the visual assertion of sameness. In this way, display and disguise often work as a pair (cf. Archambault 2017).

That friendship is based in – and ideally contributes to – a similar capacity for movement is further illustrated by an occasion where Abigail worked to re-activate a former friendship. As mentioned above, during her visit to Kampala, Abigail stayed at her old friend, Emily's house. Like her relationship with Birungi, Abigail's relationship with Emily had been seriously

threatened by her pregnancy; during this visit, Abigail endeavored to re-establish the similarity

of where she and Emily had been and were going in life.[63]

As Abigail narrated their backstory to me: Abigail and Emily had first met in church

while Abigail was studying at Makerere, and when Emily became a Sunday School coordinator,

she asked Abigail to come and be one of the teachers, which she did. Through their involvement

together in Sunday School that year, they became close friends and started praying for one

another. Emily had been having issues with her husband, but the two women prayed together and

they saw God turn Emily's husband's heart away from the "evil things" he had once pursued.

When Abigail got pregnant with Silas, Emily would still welcome her at her home and prepare

food for her, but Abigail felt that Emily refused to really share in the pain of what she was going

through. During that time, whenever Emily would speak to Abigail, Abigail just felt that Emily's

words caused her pain and confusion. Perhaps it was because during that time, Emily's family

had already received God's deliverance, so she couldn't really be with Abigail in her pain. When

Abigail moved to Mbarara, the two of them had lost touch. So then, the conversation I describe

here was a time for these two women to catch up with each other, and it took place on the same

day that Abigail had visited Birungi, in the evening.

After serving food and sitting down in the sitting room with their plates, the two mothers

encourage their children (who would rather play) to eat. As everyone settles into the meal,

Abigail begins speaking about what God has been doing in her life. "God is answering all my

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[63] Although Abigail video-recorded this interaction for this research, the recorder was placed across the room from Emily and Abigail as they talked, so the voices are hard to hear and the video is hard to see because the large room was lit only by a single lightbulb. To make matters worse, they were conversing for several hours -- over dinner and through the course of the evening -- so at the beginning of the video there are babies and young children whose yells and cries drown out Abigail and Emily at points; and after they put the children to bed, the women drop their volume even further. It is only through many hours of assistance from Abigail that I have managed to transcribe as much of this interaction as I have. However, the recording conditions made it nearly impossible to transcribe much detail beyond the words they spoke, and sometimes even that was tough.

prayer. There is nothing that will remain [unanswered]." She explains that at first, she was

skeptical about whether God was really turning things around for her, but then, God gave her a

scripture.[64] The scripture He gave her was Isaiah 66, which she summarizes as saying, "Shall I

bring someone to the time of giving birth and not cause [her] to bring [the pregnancy] forth?"

Emily replies that when she was pregnant, God gave *her* the same chapter when she was about to

give birth. She explains that at seven months, the umbilical cord was coiled around her fetus's

neck and the doctors had said they would have to do a C-section, but the problem was resolved

(miraculously, it is implied) and she delivered naturally. Though Abigail and Emily had met

different challenges in their lives, God had given each of them the same scripture to bring them

through, and this is the first demonstration of their similarity in this conversation.

Abigail then tells Emily about some of the ways God has been turning her life around.

She tells Emily that she now has a ministry for street children in Mbarara; that she had brought

Silas to his paternal grandparents and they had been welcoming (as I described in the previous

chapter); that God had enabled her to become connected to a *muzungu* doing research; and that

today, Birungi bya'Yesu had said he would pay for her to go back to school for nursery teaching,

which is where she feels her calling is. In each of these situations, she explains, God gave her a

Scripture through a dream, and after each one, she has "made a step" and God has brought the

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[64] The process of personally receiving a scripture from God entailed experiencing God's presence through embodied cues like hearing His voice speak, seeing imagery, or feeling pressure pushing against some part of one's body (one's forehead, stomach, or shoulder, for example). Crucially, these personal communications from the spirit of God come across to a person *internally* through one's "inner ears," one's "mind's eye"/"eyes of my heart," or feeling a sensation of being touched within. Alternatively, a person could be "given" a scripture (or other information from God) by way of another person through whom He spoke, while at the same time, testifying directly to the hearer by His spirit that the message being spoken by the other person at that moment was from Him, for them. The communication received from God in these various ways could include a sense of "simply knowing" or realizing something about a situation or another person; or having received instruction about something one should do. In Abigail's case, being "given" this scripture on this occasion came as she was reading the Bible; unlike her typical experience of reading the Bible for general knowledge or understanding, on this occasion, as she read she felt that God was actively speaking directly and personally to her, in her particular situation at that moment in time.

result that He promised in the dream. Even the dream she had held from long ago – the one of going to school --- which she had given up on – now appeared to be coming true.

Emily counters Abigail's testimonies with some of her own. She begins by saying, "Now over the last year God has been lifting me to another step. I keep saying, 'I have added on! I have added on!'" In this way, Emily's story is built around the idea of hierarchical levels in life to which one moves, much like Abigail's testimony ended with the imagery of taking steps out onto the promises of God. Emily describes the ways in which, under her leadership, the Sunday School has become vibrant, growing in size to have many students, teachers, and even ushers (whereas under the previous coordinator, they didn't have enough teachers), and having put on several large, successful functions. In that both women are now running successful ministries in the church, their lives appear to have reached parallel heights – at least on that front.

Emily, however, does not stop there. She explains how, like Abigail, she had wanted to go back to school for further studies. But her plans failed. Only after she had failed out of school did she receive an invitation to begin providing sign language for the Sunday church service, and with that, the financial assistance to study sign language. By her third day studying sign language, God had begun making Emily "a victor," turning her initial disappointment at failing out of school into "wonders" (*bikuru*, literally, big/old things). She says, ""Let me tell you this time that sign language is taking me somewhere. I am seeing myself very far! […] I am showing where the grace of God can lift you from. Like the place where it places you, it is the one on top of the screen [billboard]. People from Kampala can observe what is on you." She goes on to say that this experience increased her love for children, and everyone can see the fruits.

Although Emily's testimony speaks of heights of success that are already starting to outweigh Abigail's, Abigail graciously joins in her excitement as Emily proclaims, "He doesn't

sleep!" The two of them break into laughter, as this is the phrase they used to say to each other often as they encouraged each other through their challenges. Emily wraps up by mentioning where she sees things going in the future, saying, "Just wait and see if I don't become the teachers' chairperson at Namirembe [the provincial cathedral of the Church of Uganda]. He [God] is putting me somewhere." Throughout her testimony, Emily speaks through an idiom of steps, movement, and being stopped, lifted, and placed by Another.

Abigail follows with an echo, attempting to continue to draw out how her own path has resembled Emily's. Whereas Emily's calling is in children's ministry, she says that her own calling is in families. She tells of how God put a gift in her whereby she can pray to God and demons go. She has seen God using her to establish prayer in families that don't know how to pray.

Without celebrating these latest testimonies of Abigail's, Emily latches on to Abigail's mention of demons to shift the conversation back to her own achievements. She says that in fact, there are two children staying here with her (her relatives) whom Satan had been attacking, partly through an evil maid who had been staying with them, but precisely at the moment when, through prayer, she figured out that the maid was causing issues and sent her away, God gave her a promotion at work (as a librarian at Makerere alongside her church roles as the Sunday School coordinator and sign language translator). Near her fancy new office, she even befriended a groundskeeper who offered to babysit her baby while she is at work. By this point in their conversation, it is as if Emily is trying to one-up Abigail, showing how she has moved higher up and farther forward in life.

Emily concludes this portion of the conversation about her promotion by saying, "There is nothing big in education without God." With all this testifying about promotions and

recognition without education, Emily's statements might be read as a corrective to Abigail's excitement about God having made a way for her to study once again. Somewhat desperately, Abigail says, "The fact is God has continued promoting us. I am stabilized. He has put me where He wants me and I am contented. The thing that Satan brought to take away my life is that one of Silas."

When Abigail and I watched this video together, she was laughing with embarrassment at this point. She explained to me that at this point she was like a child trying to stand up but shaking and falling down ("*Ndiyo kutengenena!*") She told me, "Although the Word is not yet manifesting great things for me, I am hoping that maybe they may happen. Fifty-fifty. Maybe one time I will also testify. But there is something that was supposed to kill my home completely, the Silas issue," and so she went on to testify about that, although Emily already knew this story well.

Feeling that she had little else to testify about compared to her friend's great successes, Abigail reiterates in great detail all of the temptations and challenges – to abort, to sin further, to feel alone, and to give up – that she went through during her pregnancy. Throughout this section of the dialogue, Abigail repeats the phrase, "at least", several times. She concedes that she is not yet on Emily's level, but that God is working on her behalf nonetheless, for "at least" she is a star at All Saints' Church in Mbarara now, "at least" she helps the street children, and "at least" she is looking better now than she did when she was at her worst a few years ago. By emphasizing the depths to which she had sunken in her pregnancy, Abigail seems to be arguing that perhaps God had brought her just as far as He had brought Emily: not in terms of the heights they had reached (since Emily had clearly outdone her), but in terms of the distance they had moved.

When Abigail and I watched this video together, she told me that Emily had always been like that: somehow "far away" from her. Feeling offended by Emily on Abigail's behalf, I asked why she wanted to continue pursuing a friendship with someone like that. She told me that the Lord had brought them together, and "you never know" what might happen in the future.

In the final minutes of the recording, as the women are wrapping up their conversation and preparing to go to bed, Abigail becomes confrontational toward Emily. She faults Emily for not standing close to her during the time she was pregnant, in this way seeming to lay some of the blame for her status on Emily: "I suffered in the heart because there was no one to talk to me because Teacher Emily, you could talk to me and I fail to understand. When you could talk to me I could take it as if you hate me or as if you are abusing me." By calling Emily, "Teacher Emily" in this moment, she invokes the social distance she feels between them, which is not appropriate for friends. In doing so, she takes recourse once again in the great distance God has brought her:

> And now, I was no one, but I see God has started opening [the way] for me because I had left studying. For studying it is something I had given up but now when I see that I'm being promised going back to school and not being the first time but the second, and by one [the same] person. I had given testimony for that thing but Satan fought it. The problems I have ever had, the first one is that of Silas. It is me who could make you strong, but this problem stole from me and squeezed me a lot, and I was like a dead person. Oh, you were not there. […] The testimonies are endless but I thank God for getting me from the pit.

If God had enabled Abigail to move such a great distance, even without help from those who were supposed to be her friends, surely, she would continue to move, and would attain heights comparable to Emily's. It was on this basis that their relationship should continue.

Quantia of Movement

In Abigail's claims to having moved, she does not suggest that she has reached the same place as Emily has, but rather, that she has moved a comparable *amount*. Here then, the argument for their continued relationship and for the possibility of moving together again, comes through a "semiotics of 'grading'" (Carruthers 2017). Rather than qualitative sameness, per se, the basis for equivalence that facilitates friendship lies in the relative amount of social space that these two women have traversed in their lives: in other words, in the quantia of movement (quantia being quantity prior to its quantification (Kockelman 2016a)).

Recent work by Paul Kockelman (2016a and b) and Andrew Carruthers (2017) has taken up Sapir's (1944) writings on "grading" to suggest that it is historically and culturally specific semiotic processes that result in the sense that anything is equivalent or commensurable (since anything is somehow like anything else). Thus, "while commensurate entities may share the same qualities, they may exhibit those qualities in *different intensities*," which are encoded in language, embodied interaction, and corporeal practice (Carruthers 2017: 126, emphasis in original). In this way, social actors' evaluations of equivalence hinge on acts of grading, which apply a scale and direction of increase and decrease in the quality being evaluated. As Carruthers writes, "we can argue that these back-and-forths upward and downward or toward and away from some equilibrated state establish *degrees of equivalence* between entities. In turn, efforts to grade some entity upward or downward with respect to another may be read as aims to indicate, settle, or unsettle equivalence. Crucially then, equivalence […] is a destination, rather than a condition, produced through kinaesthesia and movement (Carruthers 2017:136, emphasis in original). Not all sameness is the same.

In Uganda, I suggest that the possibility of friendship rests on the potentiality for mutual movement in the future, which is displayed and evaluated in quantia of movement already attained. However, while relatively equivalent quantia of movement set the conditions of possibility for friendship, friendship does not always or necessarily come into being, or continue, where there is equivalence; friendship's emergence and continuation grow out of acts of sharing – emotionally, spiritually, financially, or otherwise – in each other's lives. As in the other kinds of relationships we have considered in this chapter and the last, making and maintaining friendship relationships is a process that involves both seeing (*kureeba*) that someone has moved enough to be like you, and reaching out and touching (*kukwata*) that person – as comes through in Abigail's accusations that Emily was not "there" with her in her pain and had always been "far away" from her.

Propagative Care

In both of the kinds of relationships discussed in this chapter – patron-client relationships and friendship relationships – relatedness is relatively made. As such, participants can opt in or out of these relationships much more freely than in the relatively given relationships discussed in the previous chapter. Thus, whereas relatively given relationships call for prophylactic care, the kind of care involved in relatively made relationships is propagative. Propagative care seeks to increase the number of relationships one has, as well as to expand the range of social spaces across which one's relationships spread, as well as to deepen the extent of one' relationships.[65] In "becoming one" (*kuba omuntu omwe*) with others in these ways, a woman propagates herself in a

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[65] Here I draw on the multiple meanings of propagate: a) increase (as of a kind of organism) in numbers; b) the spreading of something (such as a belief) abroad or into new regions; and c) enlargement or extension (as of a crack) in a solid body (www.miriam-webster.com).

kind of extended personhood, as well as her capacity for achieving *amagara marungi* for herself and those who are dependent on her.

In this chapter, I have shown how patronage relationships entail the idea of intertwined paths upon which interconnected persons move, and how friendships can only emerge between people who have moved across commensurate distances, in the senses of forward, upward and outward movement that are so important to Ugandan life. Both of these kinds of relatively made relationships thus speak to a sense of interconnected bodies and paths, moving across social space, placed in relational networks that are fluid and dynamic. It is not only seeing or recognizing others' movement, but also touching them, that is central to constructing and maintaining such networks. Thus, seeing and touching are mutually constitutive processes in that interconnected movement has come, is coming, and will come, through moments of merging that propel the connected people forward, and the reflexive recognition of the significance of those touches.

Relational Labor: Caring for Connections

Attending to the different forms of care involved in collective wellbeing helps us recognize the multiplicity and range of relational processes in which a woman is embedded at any given moment. Since different relationships have different bases, risks, and hopes – as I have shown – it remains to attend to how to bring all of these together. For their children and themselves, women do this vital labor. In order to balance and work upon the many kinds of relationships that are necessary to *amagara marungi*, women must manage, apportion, and time her movements, and the movements of the resources at her disposal, in relation to others.

In relatively given relationships, the primary concern is with protecting against risks of alienation and asocial inequality. To this end, mothers undertake prophylactic forms of care to generate the qualia of *obuntu* in relationships with neighbors (so as not to make them jealous), and to continually and regularly repeat performances of *obuntu* with kin (so as not to allow the path between them to be overgrown by weeds, or poisoned or blocked by flows of ill-will and infertility). In relatively made relationships, on the other hand, the primary concern is with forging and sustaining connections that extend across social space and facilitate new opportunities for movement; to this end, mothers engage propagative forms of care that portray the historicity of intertwined paths, and commensurate quantia of movement with friends, both of which lead to linkages that can create mobility.

Taking up the conjoined analytics of recognition and merging has allowed us to see how collective wellbeing is what is at stake in women's relational labor. Insofar as practices like "styling up", visiting, and testifying carry implications for *amagara marungi*, they are not *only* about appearances, reputation, or self-esteem. Rather, they are potentially transformative actions – forms of *care* – with political and economic import. This is not to trade affect, emotion, and social relationships for a political-economic analysis, but to insist that all of these dimensions are bound up together in even fleeting, momentary acts of coming together to share food, offer a ride, or make a one-minute phone call to simply ask a friend, "How are you?". In stark contrast to the assumption that modern life is experienced as a speeding up, it is this continual, gradual, punctuated process of seeing and touching others over time that allows persons to come together out of mutual autonomy. And it is slowing social connections down in this way that actually safeguards against the dangers of conmen, fakes, and steps off the narrow road, allowing people

to compose networks and thereby cultivate paths to personal progress, modern belonging, and wellbeing in a world that is always threatening to exclude those who can't keep up.

Strikingly, the risks and hopes of achieving recognition – the weights and hopes of moving -- are felt most acutely by the worst off among us, borne disproportionately along the lines of race, gender, and class. Without doubt, Abigail bore the heaviest load of relational labor of all those who have appeared in the pages of this dissertation.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

Modernity with People

One of the images I began with in my introduction was that of an unmarried woman in Mbarara sitting alone in her rented room, a cement box. Her kin are some distance away, and the question of to whom she will become attached, and with whom she will move, seems to hang in the air. It is from this position that she will weave an intricate web of sociality around herself. Women residing in urban spaces of solitude and isolation embody the tension between sustained connection with the village, and the desire to move away from it. Throughout this dissertation, I have considered the position and perspective of these urban women. In the first half, I have looked at the problems they face, and in the second half, I have explored how they navigate those problems.

As we have seen, because rural agriculture remains, and is likely to continue to remain, such a central component of Uganda's economy, small towns like Mbarara – and not huge cities – are flourishing and multiplying. These small towns remain closely linked to the nearby agricultural areas, for the urban middle class actually makes itself through relationships with rural farmers and getting crops to market, and manufactured goods to trading centers in rural villages. I have argued that the enduring salience of the village means that women in Mbarara inhabit what is a remarkably durable position, suspended between the need to affirm continuity with the past, which is often imagined through the village space, and the desire to move away from it and into modernity.

I have also submitted that pregnancy is a crucial facet of these women's experience. Whereas pregnancy (within a marriage) once offered the unequivocal sign of more children and thus more wealth in Uganda, in contemporary Mbarara, pregnancy figures as both a promise and

risk. Children are heavy weights, wealth that is expensive. Thus, pregnancy under the wrong circumstances – with the wrong man, or without adequate resources – represents the danger of draining a woman's potential, her peace, her joy, and setting her and her child at a major disadvantage for achieving the forms of wellbeing, relatedness, and progress to which they aspire. In navigating these threats, women grapple with the possibilities of danger posed by the others surrounding them: others both intimately known and anonymous, rural and urban, human and spirit. They strive to define the right circumstances under which to become pregnant, to accurately identify when those circumstances have arrived in their lives, and then, when the time is right, to actually achieve pregnancy and successfully move toward the kind of family and life that they want. Insofar as pregnancy reorganizes relationships, it constitutes a defining moment in these women's lives, and it has offered us a lens into the processes by which Mbarara's growing middle class works to generate and foster life.

We have considered how women in Mbarara try to calibrate the pace of their movement through the life course with others with whom they want to move in life; how they work to manage the way others will interpret their pregnancies by carefully framing the news; and how they engage in striking forms of co-embodiment through practices of hospitality and visiting. We have also observed the importance of keeping up relationships through short phone calls, Whatsapp conversations, and simple acts of neighborly sharing. All of these kinds of interactional labor speak to the high value these women placed on connection, even where connection brought pressures, contradictions, dangers and disappointments. Along with the longstanding cultural value for relational personhood, perhaps it is because these women so acutely experience the aloneness and isolation that modern life can bring as they navigate their

entrance into married motherhood – alone in their houses – that they so actively work to move into modernity not as alienated individuals, but *with people*.

Further, I have argued that even as women pursue powerful senses of movement in their lives, at the same time, they work to maintain relationships with those "at home" in the village. That is, alongside elective affinities with friends, workmates, and fellow church members, women in Mbarara actively invested in a future that includes sustained connections to rural places and people – contrary to what much literature on becoming modern, middle class subjects would suggest (e.g., Gewertz and Errington 1999). They balance their desire and efforts to *move* with the commitment to remaining rooted in the land and relationships they came from. This necessarily involves maintaining old relationships as well as working to forge new ones.

But women not only worked to make and maintain relationships; they also worked to break relationships, as we have seen. In pruning their networks of bad relationships in order to allow good relationships to grow in their place, women in Mbarara engaged in Christian practices of spiritual warfare, as well as less extreme techniques of hiding, secrecy, delay, and ambiguity. We have seen how holding a relationship at bay for a while allowed circumstances to resolve, before that relation could interfere with them. And crucially, we have seen how efforts to break bondages are not efforts to terminate relationships with rural kin or other living persons, but rather, to close off living persons from unwanted ties to spirits who cause harm.

So then, one does not achieve *amagara marungi* (good health/life) by minimizing redistributions and maximizing receipts. Rather, *amagara marungi* emerges as one moves toward modernity with people, successfully inhabiting the tension between movement and rootedness – successfully traversing new forms and multiple directionalities of social distance

through everyday exchanges – with all the obligations and promises, hardships and joys, those relationships and exchanges bring.

Composition as an Interactional Process

On a theoretical level, this dissertation speaks to a longstanding set of concerns about power and personhood in anthropology. Building on the rich Africanist literature on wealth-in-people as a primary mode of social organization, I have argued that the composition of networks entails both additive and subtractive elements. Further, I have shown that we can observe how composition actually happens. Linguistic anthropology offers a set of tools for accessing the social mechanisms through which people make, maintain, and break relationships. This access is useful for theory-building because it allows us to center on the social work that people are doing, and to ask whether what we see aligns with existing perspectives on agency, temporality, and kinship and relatedness.

In chapter 3, which dealt with pace, we saw how women waited patiently to advance their relationships with others, holding open their communicative channels at a very low level through pregnant pauses, in which they came together with others through greetings, phone calls, and Whatsapp conversations. This incredible, slow, alert waiting is about potentiality: the potentiality of mobilizing these communicative channels, converting them into more, at some point. In chapter 7, when Abigail visits Birungi, she is able to do so because she has cultivated their relationship through thick and thin, keeping the pregnant pause open for long enough to allow her to re-visit the prospect of receiving his support. In addition to demonstrating how potential relationships are held open through observable, interactional strategies, viewing composition as an interactional process also offers to expand linguistic anthropology's perspective. Linguistic

anthropology overwhelmingly tends to focus on the moment of interaction (also known as a speech event), like the one between Abigail and Birungi that I analyze in chapter 7, but this elides the interactional work leading up to that moment which has kept the relationship alive -- sometimes for years -- none of which makes it into the analysis.

An interactional approach to composition is valuable for ethnography because it offers insight into the local set of values that animate social life. Looking closely at the different kinds of compositional labor that women in Mbarara are doing allowed me to identify the importance of seeing and touching – *kureeba* and *kukwata*. Tracking these two modes of social action closely revealed how the layering back-and-forth of see and touch is what generates the sense of movement. It is also in the social process of these comings together and then their dissolutions, that one builds a narrative of who they're moving <u>with</u>. Moving into modernity is not something one can do on their own. It's always dependent on someone else recognizing that someone has "really moved". So one's belonging in modernity, having a place in modernity, is experienced and made real in the space of these interpersonal interactions. In the process of separating and then coming together, one can see a change in the other and affirm that the they are still connected, and moving together.

Ultimately, the emphasis on seeing and touching points back to the way that ideals of moving – forward, upward, and outward – stand in tension with ideals of commonality, one-ness, being part of one another. As we have observed, as people are moving across social distance in all these ways, social bonds become uncertain and unstable. Across the various forms of compositional labor women were doing -- propagative care to build new relationships, prophylactic care to attend to pre-existing relationships so they didn't turn sour, and the pruning of the network that was necessary to get rid of unwanted spiritual attachments -- the twinned

importance of reflection, evaluation, discernment, on the one hand, and coming together, on the other, shone through.

On Perspective-Taking in Ethnography

By taking up urban women's perspectives on relationships in this dissertation, I have chosen to advance an experiential, interactional, person-centered ethnography, rather than an omniscient, bird's eye view of a changing kinship system. In doing so, the irreducible singularity of each woman's relationships has come center stage, affording us insight into the concerns, strategies, and experiences common to women in Mbarara. Specifically, we have noticed these women's own perspective on the importance of interpersonal evaluation. By constantly "watching," "observing," and "studying" others, and seeking revelation and insight from God, women exercised great care not to get deceived, bewitched, or tied to undesirable others. [66]

Whereas we might think that women would be able to trust their kin, we have seen how people have to discern *every* relationship – even their relationships with their paternal aunts, mothers, and sisters. Whereas we might think that women would want to advance through the life course as quickly as possible, we have considered the reasons why a woman might choose to move slowly in her relationship with a boyfriend. And whereas we might think these women would want to minimize relationships with rural kin, instead, we have seen how they make it a point to visit their village relations regularly. Perspective-taking in ethnography allows us to appreciate how social action is always positional and situated. From this view, we stand to gain insight into the stakes of various challenges, tensions, and alternatives, for particular sets of people.

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[66] The way women internalize, anticipate, and live in relation to the ways they expect others to perceive them recalls George Herbert Mead's (1934) theory of the Generalized Other.

Applied Significance

This dissertation carries practical implications in terms of the ways that particular forms of social connection and interaction facilitate or inhibit access to care. First, it begs for a re-conceptualization of who is responsible for making maternal and child health decisions. Rather than assuming that women are the sole important targets of women's health messaging, my research suggests that women may not be the ones making their health decisions anyway, as they are always and already nested within therapy managing groups. Hence, the projected audience of maternal and child health messages should be broadened. While the dynamics of the therapy managing group – its constitution, evolution, and politics – will vary from place to place, health programming would want to attend to the distributed nature of health decision-making across the therapy managing group wherever patients are not as individuated.

Additionally, as noted in chapter 3, this work has shown that some women in urban Uganda wanted to finish giving birth to babies while they were still relatively young, so that they could then go back to school and pursue careers: this finding introduces a major wrinkle into the suppositions of "Schooling First" campaigns that promote delayed onset of pregnancy.

Finally, health promotion programs that include home visitation components need to contend with the meaning of visiting, of seeing, and of touching in southwestern Uganda. What would it mean for a home visiting program to have health promoters or providers visit homes, seeing their need, but neglecting to touch? What might that do to their relationship? And what does the fact that this question even emerges say about the way we think of health and promoting it?

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