15 A Global Family

This week, Batswana have welcomed into their family twenty-nine ambassadors from Canada. In diplomatic work, relations can be nurtured at personal level; nation-states are composed of individuals, and the international system is composed of nation-states, so it follows that individual relations facilitate better international relations.

The Deputy Permanent Secretary for Botswana's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stood at a makeshift podium, incongruous in his sharp business suit among the trees. Flanking him to his right sat a small phalanx of similarly well-dressed officials, suited or uniformed, the women wearing high heels despite the deep sand. To his left ran a long, open white tent, under which a handful of elite personages sat on office chairs at long tables covered in cloth and Botswana-blue bunting, fronted by an impressive display of baskets, gourds, and woven mats. Facing the tent, across an open performance area, three rows of Canadian high school students wearing tailored shirts and skirts of blue German-print[1] cloth shifted uncomfortably on small iron chairs brought from a local primary school for the occasion. Everyone else – a crowd of people from the nearest village, including elders, young men and women, and gaggles of children to whom the speaker gestured inclusively but vaguely as 'the community' – sat and stood around the edges, behind the ranks of officials and Canadians. Children darted in to check the proceedings, and back out to play in the surrounding bush.

The Deputy Permanent Secretary was outlining the president's goals for national development, and appreciating the Canadian group for situating their work so well within them. 'That these students can demonstrate this kind of love and care for other human beings gives me hope that coming generations will inherit a more caring world,' he continued. 'I wish to pay a special tribute to the parents of these young people … we

[1] This 'traditional' indigo cloth was first manufactured Lancashire, England, and made its way to Botswana via German settlers in South Africa.

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hold in high esteem parents who can allow their small children to travel to a far place and live among strangers for a week.' He spun together development goals, love and care, inheritance, global humanitarianism, parenthood, and cultural exchange as effortlessly as he had envisioned ambassadors in families in his opening lines. His audience listened impassively.

We were an unlikely group in an unlikely spot. We sat in a semi-cleared, wooded area next to a deep, dry riverbed, tucked behind a range of unusual rock formations in a remote corner of the country. A well-respected national NGO had acquired the area as a campsite in which to host its therapeutic retreats for orphaned children. Its programme had been modelled explicitly on the tradition of initiation, which had long since lapsed in most of the areas the NGO served (including, until not long before, Dithaba); a group of children participating together from one community were even called a *mophato*. But unlike the *bogwera* undertaken in Maropeng, the retreats were also cast explicitly in funding proposals as a means of 'creating kin'. I had helped broker the government's partnership with the NGO in my previous incarnation at Social Services, and I had attended training sessions and part of a retreat in the past. The programme now spanned the country and was being implemented by government social workers in half of the nation's district councils. It had already enjoyed a long history in Dithaba, where the NGO had been working for years with many of the children and families I knew.

The Canadian students, looking alternately bored and bewildered as the speeches continued, had fundraised to help build a meeting hall – modelled on a *kgotla* – to be used for ceremonies at the new campsite. They had come for a week to help finish its construction before making a short tour of the country, and an agreement had been struck to mark the occasion with an official opening event. And so a remarkable number of senior civil servants – from the tribal administration and schools in the nearby village; the district council and land board in the main town a couple of hours' drive away; and the Department of Social Services, the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Local Government in distant Gaborone – had made their way along the red, sandy roads and down the narrow track that led into the site. Many had come from the capital, a day's drive away; some had come during the week to camp and help with the work of finishing the site and preparing for the event, much as they might have done for a wedding or funeral. The head of the country's orphan care programme had even been tasked with chaperoning the Canadian group for their entire stay. As I had enjoyed long-standing relationships with both Social Services and the NGO, and being Canadian too, I was invited to tag along.

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The Deputy Permanent Secretary finished his speech and made way for the first of six local choirs performing that day. Dressed in matching T-shirts printed with the choir's name, they danced and sang their way into the performance area to the shouts and ululations of the audience, some of whom came forward to dance with them in encouragement. The choir, singing a greeting song for *bagolo* (the elders), initially faced the podium and tent – until an enterprising social worker, no doubt noticing the disappointed expressions of the Canadian contingent, induced them to move so that they could be seen by everyone at the same time. They sang, '*Modimo, o thusa bana ga ba na batsadi*' – God, help the children without parents. It was the first reference to the children for whom the campsite had been built. The song painted a vivid picture of orphans' helplessness, vulnerability, and isolation, as well as the threat they posed to the nation's future. The choir sang boldly and danced energetically, at one point prostrating themselves – as if they were the helpless children about whom they sang – until a well-dressed man came forward from the ranks of dignitaries to drop cash in the dirt in front of them. They refused to go on performing until money had been left by others as well, at which point they gathered it up triumphantly, ululating.

The story I have told about Tswana kinship so far has gravitated around the home, or *gae* – the expansive, multiple, and interlinking spaces in and between which families and selves are made. As we have seen, social workers and NGOs, and the programmes of intervention they run, have claimed an increasingly prominent role in that context, with mixed success. I have suggested that the work of these agencies and the families they serve adheres to a certain common logic and practice, which links them intimately. Both agencies and families focus their energies on enabling and managing movement, for example; both prioritise building as an important gesture of self-making and kin-making; and both locate care, in part, in the provision of specific sorts of material goods (food, clothing, cash, and so on). Both are concerned with managing the recognition of relationships (as we will see further below); both take the care and circulation of children as a primary responsibility; and both rely on the public performance of success to solidify their relative priority in relation to one another. Given that most social workers and NGO staff or volunteers at the projects I have described are Batswana, share experiences and understandings of kinship with their clients, and are even bound up with the communities they serve through kinship ties, the close alignment between the services they provide and the needs they seek to address should come as no surprise. At the same time, the preceding chapters have detailed how social work and NGO practice serve to disrupt, invert, and muddle Tswana kinship practice in each of

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the spheres above – knocking it out of sync, stretching or collapsing its boundaries, and in some cases displacing it altogether. These disruptions have been most evident in the sort of *dikgang* (conflicts, risks, or issues) that arise and in the availability of responses to them. Such disruptiveness is only possible because of the close links of ideology, experience, and relationality that organisations and kin enjoy; but it also speaks to a fundamental divergence.

What generates this divergence? In this chapter, I turn my attention to the dynamics evident within and between NGOs, government agencies, and donors to pursue that question. While the opening ceremony was a singular event, it condensed the attitudes and assumptions that pervade the work of these agencies in Botswana and that animate the relationships among them. It also draws together the trends we have seen in practice in their programmes over the course of this book. Following the clues of their unexpected resonances with kin practice in previous chapters, and the trail of *dikgang*, I ask whether and to what extent we might better understand these institutional endeavours in kinship terms.

While these institutions may cast themselves as iterations of a recognisably modern, liberal, and perhaps 'Western' political project (in the sense used by McKinnon and Cannell 2013), I suggest that we might reconceptualise them as being fundamentally informed by kinship ideals and practices, and as being in constant, unmarked negotiation with both. Unlike the *morafe* initiation, however, the work of these organisations both ignores and rejects the possibility of their interdependencies with kinship. Indeed, in performance and practice, they cast themselves in opposition to kinship and the family, which become corrupt, dysfunctional remnants of an immodern era – requiring the intervention and benevolent guidance of these agencies. And this opposition, like the distinctions made by the *morafe*, is a question of ethics: it seeks to escape, avoid, or transcend the fraught interdependencies of community life, and thereby offer equal service to all. Assuming the distinctions between the domains of politics and kinship are given, and that the realm of the political naturally encompasses that of the family (Ferguson and Gupta 2002), these organisations focus instead on deploying a kinship idiom to naturalise and depoliticise their claims, to forge links, and to contest hierarchies among themselves. But, as they do so, it becomes clear that the shared, universal terms in which they think they are working are shifting and unpredictable – suggesting both that there may be more than one sort of kinship at stake, and that it may permeate their institutional practice in unexpected ways. Paradoxically, in failing to recognise the imbrications of their political projects with kinship, to negotiate

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and produce appropriate distinctions between those domains, these modern agencies prove decidedly 'immodern' (Lambek 2013).

Humanitarian and development interventions have been convincingly described in terms of their anti-politics (Ferguson 1994; Ticktin 2011), but seldom in terms of the work to which kinship and families are put in their depoliticisation. I suggest that the family provides a key depoliticising, dehistoricising, and universalising space in and through which an international humanitarian community – a global family – can construct itself (see a description of refugees in these terms in Malkki 1996: 378). As Erica Bornstein noted in her work on World Vision in Zimbabwe, the health and safety of the family mark a universal moral good that transcends national politics, opening up new avenues for NGOs, states, and donors to reconfigure and extend their power (Bornstein 2005: 97–118). In both the speech of the Deputy Permanent Secretary and the choir's performance, deploying the discourse of family is a powerful means of downplaying (or justifying) fundamentally political aims. The family provides a powerful metaphor that government, NGOs, and donors can – and do – tap into as a means of naturalising their work, relationships, and power. But attempts to operationalise kinship to further the ends of governance are frequently foiled by the 'superfluity … and excess' of kinship (Lambek 2013: 255; cf. Ticktin and Feldman 2010: 5). Kinship is, after all, more than a metaphor; and I argue that it features just as powerfully in the daily practice and lived experience of 'official' spaces as in their programme delivery. Government and NGO programmes that intervene in the family, attempting to contain and reshape it, are themselves suffused and animated by kinship ideals and practices. These ideals and practices are neither clear nor consistent; they are left unmarked and opaque. In this sense, kinship is as crucial to understanding development and humanitarian programmes as development and humanitarianism are to understanding kinship.

In this chapter, I explore these possibilities by focusing on the ways in which relationships within and among NGOs, government, and international donors are publicly performed and delimited. I argue that the ceremony described above simultaneously enacts *multiple* notions of kinship; and I suggest that these multiple notions have also been contested and at work in the NGO and social work office described in previous chapters. This multiplicity exacerbates the superfluity of kinship, which tends to overwhelm, outstrip, and evade the constraints imposed by both workplaces and bureaucratic systems. Keeping this multiplicity in mind, I ask whether kinship can be 'encapsulated in and by the state' (Lambek 2013: 257; see also Ferguson and Gupta 2002 on assumptions about the state's encompassment and verticality) and by

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other transnational political agencies; or whether it not only permeates but also generates and animates those agencies.

The choir finished its rousing performance, weaving its way off the sandy stage and singing until its members broke formation and dispersed among the audience. From the podium, the master of ceremonies thanked them with great enthusiasm and warmly welcomed the lead teacher of the Canadian school group to speak next.

The lead teacher was a contentious figure, having offended many government and NGO representatives over the course of the week with his brash, demanding manner. The previous day he had insisted on separating water for his students from the water supplied for everyone else, suspecting theft; senior government figures watched with bemused resignation as he first berated the NGO director and then instructed his students to relocate dozens of water bottles from the kitchen into their tents. Now at the podium in his custom-tailored German-print shirt and a baseball cap, he consulted with the translator to ensure that he would be translated phrase by phrase. After speaking about what the retreat campsite – which he framed as a 'humanitarian project' – represented for bonds between Botswana and Canada, the teacher thanked the host NGO and government departments and ministries in a perfunctory, non-differentiating fashion. He added offhandedly, 'We consider everyone here to be like surrogate parents for us.' The translator followed with '*Re le tsaya jaaka batsadi ba rona tota tota*' – we take you like our real, real parents.

He then called all 29 of his students in front of the podium – although it meant that their backs were to the dignitaries and most of the community, and they faced only the VIPs under the tent – and presented them as the best Canada had to offer. They were a visibly mixed group, as the line-up was meant to emphasise, of largely South Asian, South-East Asian, Chinese, and mixed European descent. He intoned: 'A country without its culture is lost.' It was an accidentally apt echo of the words of Botswana's first president, Seretse Khama, who warned that 'a nation without a past is a lost nation, and a people without a past is a people without a soul' – a sentiment that has shifted to incorporate a warning against the loss of culture instead of just the loss of history (Parsons 2006; see also Dahl 2009b). Indeed, a similar sentiment pervaded the revival of initiations back in Maropeng, as well as the NGO's own initiation-oriented model. Attached to such a diverse group of children, however, from a place no one knew much about – but that presumably had greater prosperity and fewer social ills to cure – it caused obvious confusion. The teacher elaborated a vision of what defined Canada as a nation: multiculturalism, a history of peacekeeping instead of war, the assurance of

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equality for all. 'We teach our children to celebrate other cultures and values,' he explained, describing his students as the future leaders of Canada. He added: 'They are an example of what youth should be throughout the world … committed to making change.' The students tried to look grave and inspiring. Behind them, many in the crowd looked politely baffled. On the one hand, it seemed, the audience was being encouraged to preserve their culture; on the other, they were being encouraged to adopt a rather inscrutable but ostensibly successful Canadian model. On the one hand, these children had respected and taken their hosts as parents; on the other, they seemed to suggest that parents were incidental or unnecessary to the exemplary individuals these children had already become. I thought back to the teacher's comment to his students late the night before, which I had overheard from across the campsite: 'I'll be honest with you, I don't really care about Botswana or Botswanans or whatever. The important thing here is you guys, and the experience you're getting.'

The Canadian teacher stepped down from the podium, leaving it to the last and most highly ranked speaker – the Assistant Minister of Local Government. His ministry oversaw everything from Social Services to district councils and village *kgotla* administrations. He made his way out from under the VIP tent, dressed in sharp khaki trousers and a multi-pocketed photographer's vest and flashing a good-humoured smile. He waved away the translator jovially and settled in at the podium, beginning with an unexpected injunction: 'I would like to invite you all to rise, and observe a moment of silence for those orphans we have lost to HIV and to abuse.'

His sombre invitation – in English – caught us all a little off guard, although we rose dutifully and bowed our heads. Indeed, for all my years of attending such ceremonies and events, I had never heard such a discursive combination of catastrophes. Holding orphans up for pity over the loss of their parents and the assumed neglect of their overburdened families, and rallying cries to rescue them and the future of the nation, constituted the usual rhetoric. But in the context of successful, free programmes for the provision of ARVs and the prevention of mother-to-child transmission, orphanhood was seldom posed as a cause of HIV infection, and links between orphanhood and death were virtually never made. While abuse was connected with orphanhood frequently enough and had become a major focus of social services discourse, I had never heard it connected to death either. The request for silence was unsettling in the complexity of social ills it subsumed; more than that, it was jarring in its dislocation from the reality to which most of us in the audience were accustomed, in what felt like a dramatic inflation of the stakes of orphanhood in particular.

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After the silence, the Assistant Minister continued for a while in English, congratulating the Canadian students, and their parents, for the spirit of love and giving they had shown, and calling upon all present to learn from their example. He did not bother to translate. Before long, however, he had shifted into Setswana – and he began a different speech altogether. The exhortative thrust of this parallel speech was *kgokgontsho ya bana*, child abuse, and on this topic the Assistant Minister spoke at great length, with great conviction and passion. He confronted his audience: 'Child abuse is there in our homes and families, though we are turning a blind eye to it and pretending it is not. Men! Uncles! Check yourselves! Check yourselves, look into your hearts.' It was the deliberate echo of a nationwide HIV and AIDS behaviour change campaign launched a few years previously, dubbed *Oicheke*! – Check yourself! (USAID 2010). 'We appreciate these Canadian children for coming to look after our children,' he continued, still in Setswana, 'but we have a responsibility to look after our children too, so that one day they might go to Canada to help children there, or even to any other place in the world.' He did not bother to translate this part of the speech either.

It was a spellbinding oration. And yet the audience did not look altogether engaged. The ranks of community members listened attentively but wore bland expressions. Children continued to run in and out, and choir members joked with one another on the sidelines. The Canadian contingent had begun to glaze over; most looked bored and a few looked frustrated, or perhaps offended. Just at the point when he had almost lost them, the Assistant Minister switched back into English – to describe his hope that, one day, one of the Canadian students before him would meet a doctor on their travels and find that she had grown up in Botswana; had attended a camp run in the very place they sat now; had come to grips with her loss and grief, had found hope, a sense of self and direction, and had made something of her life. The students lifted their heads, and some began to smile warmly. They were, of course, unable to decipher the strange double register that had emerged: in Setswana, families were abusive, irresponsible, corrupted, and broken; while in English, they were sources of love, giving, and hope for the future.

Shortly after the speeches finished, the cooks and several volunteers from the village nearby called the Canadian students to help serve up the enormous meal that had been prepared – a gesture of inclusion that befitted children and young people at such a gathering. Their lead teacher was outraged, refused his meal in protest, and insisted that they all sit and allow themselves to be served like the VIPs, as he felt befitted respected guests. Everyone dispersed soon afterwards, the community members walking up the dusty road back to their homes and the

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government officials heading off in convoys of white four-by-four trucks. I learned later that the event, and the Canadians' week-long visit, had in fact cost the host NGO in Botswana more than three times as much as the students had fundraised – running into hundreds of thousands of pula. It cost Social Services as much again, in officers' hours, petrol, food, and so on; and both the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the district council would have had similar bills. I was shocked, but my friends at Social Services and the NGO shrugged it off. 'If someone was giving me only five pula I would still do everything to appreciate them,' one insisted.

The speeches recounted above show how discursively entangled the family is with the state, and with projects of development, humanitarianism, and international relations – a notable contrast to the careful way in which the *morafe* distanced the *mophato* from family, in discourse and performance. At the opening ceremony, community, national, and international relations were all – often awkwardly – cast in the idiom of family, with a special emphasis on parents and children. International diplomacy was framed as a familial fostering of ambassadors; humanitarian work was cast in terms of love, care, and the inheritance of future generations. The NGO took as its explicit mission the creation of kin for and among orphans, implicitly replacing lost parents. The Canadian students were thanked in part through their parents; acknowledged their hosts as parents; and were appreciated for helping raise Batswana children – a network of relatedness within and against which they then defined their culture and nationhood. As Elana Shever notes of national sentiments – to which we might easily add humanitarian and development sentiments more broadly – they 'rest on a trope of familial bonds as the authentic basis for solidarity, care, obligation, and sacrifice' (Shever 2013: 88). And this trope worked to refigure an otherwise distinctly odd combination of institutional characters in Botswana's backwoods, loosely and temporarily bound together by circumstance, as natural, unified, and enduring.

At the same time, these discursive formulations worked to separate the event's participants and to establish the terms on which they could relate. As Didier Fassin notes, compassion performed in public spaces is 'always directed from above to below' (2012: 4), both presupposing and reproducing inequality. The sharpest separation made was between the NGO, government ministries, and Canadian students on the one hand – sources of care, love, and compassion – and the families in attendance, whose lives these figures sought to protect, on the other. This performance, and others like it, 'was more of a theater for politicians than "for the people"' (Bornstein 2005: 112), a matter of contesting institutional hierarchies in which 'the people' were always already at the bottom.

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Thus, the Assistant Minister cast aspersions on his entire Setswana-speaking audience by purporting to publicly expose the abuse in their homes, upbraiding them collectively for their inability to look after their own children as effectively as the Canadian students – themselves children – could. The Tswana families (especially their men, and *bo malome*) were thereby infantilised, cast beneath the protective elderhood first of the juvenile Canadian contingent, and second of the government and NGO agencies that recruited the Canadians' assistance. The Canadian teacher's speech, while accepting the group's Tswana hosts as surrogate parents, underscored this infantilisation by emphasising the students' superior agency in addressing issues that afflicted the community.

Meanwhile, both the Assistant Minister and Deputy Permanent Secretary – when speaking in English – were careful to position themselves and their agencies as the equals or elders of the Canadian group, whether thanking the students through their parents or positioning themselves as temporary parents. The insistence on appreciating the Canadian contribution no matter the expense required was, I suggest, a similar assertion of independence and equal agency, and an active refusal of the implicit hierarchies that emerge in gifting and international aid – a corollary to what Durham (1995) describes as the spirit of asking, and a means of absorbing gifts that have not been asked for (see Stirrat and Henkel 1997 on how development gifts reinforce difference and hierarchy). And both of the government keynote speakers deployed parallel professional discourses – one framed around international relations; the other in terms of social work assessments of societal dysfunction and its remedy – that reinforced this claim to equal consideration by establishing a suitable distinction between the corrupted, suspect realm of the family and the advanced, modern realm of the state. As China Scherz notes in reference to the model of sustainable development more broadly, this professionalisation allowed agencies to 'imagine themselves as separable and separate from those living in the places they work' (Scherz 2014: 8) – a hallmark of their modernity and their alignment with prominent global expectations in development work. This distinction echoed those made by the Canadian teacher, whose reference to family was peremptory and quickly superseded by a lengthy rumination on the Canadian nation, establishing common ground among the speakers and their agencies from which the families in whose mould they had earlier cast themselves were explicitly excluded. All of the speakers, in other words, were engaged in a form of ideological boundary-making work in separating the realms of politics and kinship (McKinnon and Cannell 2013) – although, unlike *bogwera*, there was no room for interdependence with kin, much less the potential for voluntary parity.

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These discursive deployments and repositionings of kinship are typical of a social welfare, development, and humanitarian genre as well as being familiar ways of speaking about the state. To the extent that they organise means of relating, however, they are more than simply metaphorical. Indeed, a closer look at the unfolding of the event demonstrates uncanny parallels with kinship practice and discourse. Echoes of the family feast – itself reminiscent of wedding celebrations and of the feast we saw in Chapter 13 – are perhaps most obvious: the white tent, housing *bagolo* (elders) around which the event was oriented (here government ministers instead of parents); the arrangement of celebrants around an open *lelwapa*-like space; the speeches, introducing key figures in terms of their relatedness to one another; and the collective contributions of money, goods, and work appropriate to a celebration, for entertainment, and of food sufficient to feed a village of guests. Like the family feast, the opening ceremony sought to perform the success of key figures – NGO, ministries, and Canadians – and the generative power of their relationships, while attempting to extend that success and remake those relationships in clear ways that distinguished them from the invitees.

Echoes of other dimensions of kinship practice are evident, too, including all of those we have seen throughout this book: geographical scatteredness and the mobilisation of movement, gravitating to a shared space of care work and contribution; the careful management of visibility, speech, and recognition; the anticipated circulation of children to the campsite for therapy, which was modelled explicitly on *bogwera*; and so on. But perhaps most significantly, *dikgang* were produced throughout: around imputations of stolen food and water; refusals to share, help serve, or eat; the public dressing-down of NGO organisers or purportedly abusive families; and many more besides – all of which echo *dikgang* we have encountered elsewhere, and draw the performance of relational success into question. Where dynamics of *dikgang* have previously highlighted limits on the ways in which social workers and NGO staff relate to the families they serve, here they suggest a performance of relatedness among rather unusual actors: national government, local government, international donors, and local NGOs. Indeed, we might even discern an attempt to create a collective, ethical subject (Lazar 2018: 268) in the process, one like the family, or indeed the *morafe*, interlinked and hierarchised, able to self-produce and reproduce. But, if this process is afoot, it is a different sort of ethics at work. It may provoke a collective reflection on who has done what for whom, through which specific relationships and relative seniority are asserted and recalibrated; but it takes the larger question of the correct relationship between self, family, and

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polity – which was at the heart of the ethics of initiation – as given, a natural matter of verticality and encompassment.

The Tswana family, meanwhile, is marginalised from this process, destabilised, even demonised. Parents and children sit on the edges of the ceremony, moving in and out; unusually, they have no real role to play in the proceedings. The only mention made of them is either in terms of orphans having lost parents to disease or in terms of the collapse and corruption of their relationships, beset by death, loss, abuse, and the constant threat of harm. While appreciation is afforded the Canadian students and NGO for their help, it is the Tswana family that bears the blame and responsibility for its own dissolution. Everything is done for them, but they have done – and can do – nothing for themselves or for the agencies that offer this withering vision. What families may have done for one another is obviated; the standard to which they are held here is one of international rights discourse and the self-improvement imperatives of sustainable development (see Scherz 2014 on the ethics of sustainable development in Uganda and similar dissonances with Baganda ethics of patronage).

In discourse and practice alike, then, it seems that both the state and NGOs are involved in processes that we have seen to be characteristic of Tswana kinship – but in ways that are more about legitimising themselves as political entities and navigating their relationships with each other. They are engaged in a process of state-making, or NGO-making, or perhaps the making of a shared public sphere, *through* family and kinship processes but also against them, and in ways that exclude actual families. Their legitimacy is modelled on kinship, justified by their intervention in actual families and enacted in kinship idioms, practices, and ideals; but it is geared towards navigating relationships with other 'super-familial' actors, at local, national, and transnational levels, where relative influence is highly contested (Bornstein 2005: 98–9). And this disjunction is especially apparent in the different ways in which *dikgang* are identified and addressed. As distinct as the spheres of development and humanitarian policy and practice may be (Mosse 2004b), they are thus bound in part by an idiom and logic of kinship. Paradoxically, their deployment of that idiom and logic separates and excludes them from the sphere of the family, over which they attempt to assert authority but to which they enjoy little real access, which means that their programmes are often beset by failure and frustration.

What *is* the logic of kinship that seems to bind these actors? In the speeches above – as in the disjunctions evident between social work offices, NGOs, and families 'on the ground' – a certain mutual misunderstanding seems to be at work. While the Canadian head teacher imagines his hosts as 'surrogate parents', for example, his translator understands them as real parents; the links the teacher makes between

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individuals, culture, and nations against that backdrop visibly perplex his audience. The Assistant Minister's assessment of family breakdown, and his moment of silence for 'lost orphans', strikes a similarly confusing note. While these speakers assume a shared understanding of the biological realities of relatedness and the social relationships they underpin as indisputable 'facts of life', with clear epistemological and moral implications (Pigg 2005), this assumption doesn't quite hold. I suggest that these moments of misunderstanding result from a proliferation and confusion of different notions of kinship at work in the discourses above, and in the intervention practice we have observed. The speeches above weave together, take apart, and move between what we might identify as Tswana and Canadian – or at least Euro-American[2] – understandings of kinship, familiar enough to one another to be mutually recognisable, but disparate enough to be jarring. In this sense, it is worth considering political institutions as 'site[s] of contention … between competing normative ideas' (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014: 6) of kinship as much as of governance or bureaucracy.

A strongly Euro-American notion of kinship emerges from the very beginning of the ceremony. The Deputy Permanent Secretary of Foreign Affairs cast families as a background, contextual device for the production and reproduction of individuals and nations – prioritising the individuality of persons (Strathern 1992: 10–11). The Canadian lead teacher replicated this discursive technique, perfunctorily appreciating the group's Tswana hosts as 'parents', effacing the students' own families, and then presenting the youth as successful, agentive individuals, able not only to represent but to reproduce both their own nation and the nations of others. The Assistant Minister, too, in *both* his English and Setswana speeches, emphasised individuality as the key experience and aim of kinship. He individuated orphans first of all, cutting them off from their families in a way that explicitly prioritised their relationships with their biological parents over any other relatives (Strathern 1992: 12); he portrayed uncles and others outside the parent–child binary as the most insidious figures of the family; and he personalised responsibility for abuse, while suggesting that it will produce abusive individuals in turn. Indeed, having chosen to come halfway around the world to help other

[2] I am glossing the image or ideal of Canadian kinship here as an intersection of English and American folk models, as described by Marilyn Strathern (1992) and David Schneider (1980) respectively. There is no question that this ideal may diverge from the lived experience of Canadian kinship – particularly for a group of students who come from a range of predominantly Asian backgrounds. However, it is arguably the kinship ideology that underpinned the students' project and trip, and the one being presented by the lead teacher (himself of British extraction).

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people's children, and having enacted that commitment in a wild, isolated space – notably, in the absence of those children and their families – as an individual enterprise oriented mainly to their own growth, the Canadian students were bringing to life many of the fundamental imaginings on which English kinship is based (Strathern 1992: 12–13): choice, isolation, nature, and, above all, individualism.

What I have glossed as the Canadian or Euro-American imagination of kinship is not, of course, entirely divorced from the Tswana notion of kinship, and links emerge at several points. These connections give the impression that everyone is referencing the same, universal notion of kinship, while also producing the distinct jarring noted above. So, for example, although an emphasis on the parent–child relationship would have felt familiar and 'natural' to Canadians and Batswana alike – since Batswana reframe a variety of relationships, including siblingship, in these terms, and since it is the critical nexus for biologised and emotional concepts of Euro-American family relationships as well (Schneider 1980) – the sense of mutual recognition it provides is quickly undermined by the stakes it represents. Thus, in Euro-American articulations of kinship, the parent–child relationship most strongly evinces uniqueness and individualism (Strathern 1992: 12); but in Tswana articulations, it is taken to underline lasting responsibilities of care, intersubjectivity, and mutual dependence. For the Canadian students, the parent–child relationship is fixed, given, and linked uniquely to birth (Schneider 1980); for Batswana, it is multiple, fluid, and linked to responsibilities of care, which may be applied equally to siblings, spouses, or other relationships.

This simultaneous familiarity and divergence also applies to references to love and care. Both Canadians and Batswana emphasised these qualities and used these words in English; both groups recognised them as key concepts in their understandings of kinship; and both assumed that they shared a common understanding of the terms. However, in Frederick Klaits' thorough description, the Tswana association of love with *lorato* involves 'action and sentiment directed toward enhancing the well-being of other people' (Klaits 2010: 3); it involves ways of speaking and acting that work in people's bodies (Durham 2002a: 159). Care, or *tlhokomelo*, emphasises the provision of material goods and work (Klaits 2010: 4). Both of these terms have sentimental dimensions, but they are expressed and generated in bodily, material, and work-oriented ways. The dominant tone of these terms for the Canadians, in contrast, is more likely to be emotional and private (Strathern 1992: 12) rather than materialised or enacted; and it will likely have been clearly separated from work (Schneider 1980).

What become clear in these observations are the fluid, almost invisible ways in which the Batswana speakers in particular shifted back and forth

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between Tswana and Euro-American understandings of kinship. This subtle shifting, I suggest, is indicative of the multiple ways in which Botswana's government policy, social workers, and NGO staff *see* families; and of the extent to which these different visions grow out of fundamentally different ways of *being* family. The ways in which social workers and NGO staff see their clients show strong elements of Tswana notions of kinship, but they also show strong Euro-American influences. This combination is perhaps unsurprising: the Ministry of Local Government, under which the Department of Social and Community Development operates, is a survivor of the colonial era, and many of its acts and policies – including a particularly outdated one on adoption (RoB 1951) – hark back to that time. So, too, do the principles that underpin those frameworks. The curriculum for social work taught at the university was also of British inspiration aligned with international standards of social work. And, of course, the work of social workers and NGO staff is framed by international conventions, policy frameworks, and 'best practice' promulgated by the United Nations and prioritised by European and American development and aid agencies, with a bent towards Euro-American ideals of kinship (see Mayblin 2010 on international conventions on child labour). The ethical register in which NGOs and social workers assess Tswana families, then, is by necessity an assemblage of the sort described by Scherz (2014) for Uganda, entangled with quite different notions of what families are and ought to be, and with the political-economic contexts in which those notions have changed and unfolded over time.

Where kinship seems to provide a common basis of mutual understanding – a natural, shared ideal, a common emotional register, a familiar set of practices, a 'fact of life' (Pigg 2005) – it instead provides a multiplex, muddled, and contradictory field of experience. In this sense, kinship describes a powerful but unstable register that simultaneously binds together and fractures the political, institutional realm. Kinship both saturates and evades the political, not because it taps into a naturalised, universal process, but because it *doesn't* – although these political projects expect it to do so. Where kinship is invoked to naturalise and stabilise institutionalised claims of power, its multiplicity and excess instead makes them awkward and unnatural, and *de*stabilises them. Kinship, then, does not simply escape or overwhelm bureaucratic attempts to contain it; it drives those attempts, permeates their logic, and disrupts their practice from within, rendering them ineffective for reasons that are difficult to grasp. And it is in this sense that I suggest kinship may be understood to generate and animate the purportedly modern, liberal political spheres of governments, NGOs, and donor agencies alike. Not only is the village in the home, but so too are a global array of political communities.

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