

This is an Accepted Manuscript of an article published in *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* on January 2015, available online at

<http://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15350770.2015.1110511>

Reference:

Tafere, Yisak (2015) 'Intergenerational Relationships and the Life Course: Children-Caregivers' Relations in Ethiopia', *Journal of Intergenerational Relationships* 13.4, 320-333

## Intergenerational Relationships and the Life Course: Children-Caregivers Relations in Ethiopia

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### **Abstract**

Drawing on three rounds of survey and qualitative data of the Young Lives study in Ethiopia among children born in 1994 and their care givers, this article investigates intergenerational relationships by means of the life-course perspective.

With the expansion of modern education and children's exposure to different experiences outside the family, many of them contest parental values, norms and expectations. Competing agents of 'socialization' have contributed to increased intergenerational conflicts and negotiations.

In the context of rapid social changes, intergenerational relationships are becoming dynamic and the life course perspective needs to adapt to understand the changing features of such relationships.

**Key Words:** Ethiopia, Intergenerational relationships, life course

## INTRODUCTION

Intergenerational relationship is the bond between generations of differing ages within the family. Family connections ‘extend across the generations and serve to integrate the young and the old’ (Elder, 1998, p. 6). Intergenerational theory helps in understanding “the combination of two people at different phases of development that will interact with each other, usually in a way involving others, in various situations and contexts, with the expectation of a relationship” (Vanderven, 2011, p. 30).

Relationships within the family serve as “conduits by which values, resources, and behaviors are transmitted across ... generations” (Putney and Bengston, 2004, p. 158). In comparing generations, there is a general consensus in the literature that relationships in the past were marked by the ‘obedience’ of the younger generation to the ‘authoritative’ older generation. In Ethiopia, Poluha (2004) documented that adult–child relationships used to be more ‘hierarchical’. Children were expected to be ‘obedient and respectful’ towards adults, who exercise control and supervision over their children (p. 67).

Today, children have increasingly been exposed to external influences, mainly through education, and consequently their relationships with adult generations have been altered. Socialization, which inherently considers adults as socializers and children as recipients, has gradually been challenged giving place to ‘negotiation’ between generations.

Understanding changing relationships requires investigation of intergenerational relationships through the life course. In recent years, the concept of *the life course* has increasingly been used in understanding the temporal aspects of intergenerational relationships. The life-course “considers how family relationships change or remain stable across individual lives and families and how these processes are linked to multiple and evolving historical contexts” (Putney and Bengston, 2004, p. 157). At the individual level, the life-course perspective underlines the events and decisions of earlier ages that have a

persistent impact at a later age. At the macro level, it highlights how social changes generate different patterns of social change and personal biographies across the generations (George and Gold, 1991). In a fast-changing world, relationships are becoming dynamic, and a life-course study is broad enough to contain and integrate intergenerational study (Vandervan, 2011). And the family is ‘an ideal context for application of life course perspectives’ (George and Gold, 1991, p. 68).

However, the application of life-course theory to the study of intergenerational relationships faces a major challenge. As it strives to understand intergenerational relationships in changing contexts, longitudinal and empirical evidence is needed. Unfortunately, “longitudinal data spanning long periods of time are very scarce” (George and Gold, 1991, p. 70). And the challenge is even greater in developing countries, where particularly longitudinal qualitative data are limited. Thus, “the collection of case studies by intergenerational researchers could be a step in further advancing intergenerational theory” (Vandervan, 2011, p.24).

The objective of this article is to investigate changing intergenerational relationships, using the life-course perspective. Drawing on longitudinal data of the Young Lives study in Ethiopia, I attempt to show how social changes in Ethiopia have influenced relationships between caregivers and their children, and how adult socialization to maintain the domination of older generation is gradually being replaced by negotiations.

## DATA AND METHODS

This article draws on data generated by the Young Lives household and child surveys and qualitative fieldwork. From the survey, descriptive statistics are used to establish the family structures, and parental expectations of their children. The data is drawn from 999

children born in 1994, and their caregivers sampled from 20 sites located in five administrative regions (Amhara; Oromia; Southern Nationalities, Nations and People, SNNP; Tigray; and Addis Ababa city) in Ethiopia. The survey data was collected in 2002, 2006 and 2009 when the children were aged 8, 12, and 15, respectively.

The qualitative data illustrate the experienced relationships between the caregivers and children and some changes over the years. Thirty children (15 girls and 15 boys) and their caregivers were selected from five sites drawn from each region included in the survey. Two sites were from urban areas (*Bertukan* from Addis Ababa and *Leku* from Hawassa, capital of the SNNP region) and three were from rural areas (*Tach-Meret* from Amhara, *Leki* from Oromia and *Zeytuni* from Tigray). The data was collected in three rounds of fieldwork in 2007, 2008 and 2011 when the children were aged 13, 14 and 17, respectively.

During the qualitative fieldwork, caregivers were first asked to compare their own childhood with that of their children. This was to establish the differential contexts for both generations. Second, caregivers and children were asked about their obligations towards and expectations of each other. Thirdly, both were inquired about their relationships and any changes taking place as the children grew older. The purpose was to explore the quality of relationships between caregivers and their children, and to establish key transitions and the intergenerational negotiations. For children, we used a *life course draw-and-tell* tool. Children were asked to draw a timeline on which they indicated the ‘happy’ and ‘sad’ memories in their life. This tool was useful in highlighting family matters such as illness, death, migration, conflicts or happy memories. Individual interviews further explored children’s drawings.

Asking children and caregivers about their relationship was not an easy task. We had to seek an ‘informed consent’ emphasizing that respondents could only participate voluntarily. To respect their anonymity, pseudonyms are used in this article. The same

researchers were used in all rounds of field-works which helped to establish a good rapport with the respondents.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### *Relationships between Caregivers and Children*

The relationships between the caregivers and their children, established from the survey data, are presented in Table 1. Most children live with their biological parents whereas fewer live with other caregivers, including grandparents, a partner of their biological parent, or relatives. Over the years, the number of children living with biological parents has decreased. At the age of 15, about 15% of them no longer live with their biological parent(s).

Table 1. Primary caregivers' relationship with children

Primary caregiver	Round 1 N (%)	Round 2 N (%)	Round 3 N (%)
Biological parent	896 (89.7)	843 (86.2)	817 (85.0)
Grandparent(s)	53 (5.3)	47 (4.8)	40 (4.2)
Partner of biological parent	11 (1.1)	22 (2.3)	24 (2.5)
Uncle/aunt	13 (1.3)	19 (1.9)	32 (3.3)
Sibling(s)	10 (1.0)	20 (2.1)	22 (2.3)
Other	16 (1.6)	27 (2.8)	26 (2.7)
Total	999 (100)	978 (100)	961 (100)

The figures are much closer to the national data. The 2011 Ethiopia Demographic and Health Survey (EDHS) shows that 19% of Ethiopian children live with non-biological parents. Younger children (aged 10-14) are more likely to live with both parents (65.7%) than older children (aged 15-17), of whom only 54.1% do so (CSA, 2012). The reasons reported were death, illness, migration or divorce of biological parents, as well as migration by children themselves.

Among the 30 children included in the qualitative study, 21 were living with their biological parents. Six of them lived with their mothers because their fathers were either dead

or divorced. Another four lived with their grandparents, due to either death of their parents (2), or illness (1) or migration to town (1). The remaining five children were living with other relatives or friends of parents after their parents had either died or had abandoned them in childhood.

For some children, establishing their relationships with their caregivers took some time. During our qualitative fieldwork, I found about five children who came to know the identity of their caregivers at later age. For example, Netsa from the Bertukan site, at the age of 14, reported that she was assuming that her caregiver was her biological mother but later discovered that it was not the case. At the age of 16, she said: ‘Now, I know my caregiver is not my biological mother but somehow related to my mother. I do not know whereabouts of my biological parents.’ Her caregiver, who used to claim that she was Netsa’s mother in earlier fieldwork, later confirmed that she was not the biological parent. She said: ‘Her mother is my relative. When she was living with me, she gave birth to *Netsa* and ran away soon after delivery. ... Her mother visited us recently and I told Netsa that she was her biological mother. She felt very sad and she does not want to talk about it again. She says ‘what I know is that you are my mother and I will remain as your child’ (Netsa’s caregiver, Bertukan).

As they grow older, children get to know who their caregivers were. For some it has become a time of re-establishing relationships, and for others a cause of contention. The life-course perspective helped to establish intergenerational relationships that take different forms over the course of the life of both generations.

### *Intergenerational Bond: Obligations and Expectations*

Familial bond dominates the relationship between generations, but at later stages relationships may also be negotiated. Both generations enter into some implicit understanding

of each other's 'expectations and obligations'. When their children were aged 12, caregivers were asked their expectations from their grown up children. Almost all caregivers hoped to get financial assistance, emotional support and care when they become old. With slight variations, expectations of support in old ages were strong (Table 2).

Table 2. Care givers' expectations of grown-up children (%)

<i>Do you expect your child to provide support when grown up?</i>	<i>Financial assistance</i> N=980	<i>Emotional support</i> N=980	<i>Care when getting old</i> N=980
Not at all	2.1	4.3	1.7
A little	5.5	3.7	2.2
Somewhat	18.6	12.2	8.8
Quite a lot	34.6	31.3	29.5
A lot	38.7	48.1	57.0
NK	0.5	0.4	0.6
Total	100	100	100

Source: Young Lives Round 2 survey

The qualitative evidence illustrates the *expectations* and the *obligations* that the two generations owe to each other. Miki's grandmother from Bertukan stated that she has an obligation to provide her grandson with necessary things because he is *ye-akalekifay* (part of my body). She said that she is the closest person with a responsibility to stand up for the child after her son (Miki's father) became mentally ill and his mother ran away. Miki's grandmother expects that he could help her when she gets older, but she is more concerned about his life. She says: "If he has a better future after completing his education, I hope he will help me till I die. ... [But] I may die before he reaches that stage."

Caregivers usually assume responsibility for children from an early age, when the children rarely have the ability to contribute to the household. The motivation for caring seems more likely to be sympathy than expectation of some returns. A maternal grandmother of Bereket, from Bertukan, said: "Grandparents have more affection for grandchildren than for their own children. They consider their grandchildren as a gift from God." Miki's grandmother, stated: "you become too sympathetic. I love him more than my own children.

Particularly, when they come closer to you, your feelings are extreme and you become highly compassionate to them. After all, he is my own soul.” Grandparents consider their grandchildren as ‘gift from God’ because they are not immediately born to them.

Caregivers felt obliged to raise their children properly by providing them with food, clothing and other essentials and by sending them to school. Parenthood also carries obligations to advise, guide, discipline and control children who may ‘not know what is good and bad’.

On the other hand, children stated that it is the parents’ obligation to raise their children properly. Some also stated that they expect affection and some advice from their parents. Mihretu, from Zeytuni, interviewed when he was 13, established his own and his parents' obligations as follows. He said, “My parents should buy me exercise books, clothes and shoes until I finish my education. They also expect me to help them financially and I will give them my salary when I get employed.”

The children felt that they have filial obligations to provide support to their parents when they become independent. However, they were actually helping struggling families even before they finished school or established themselves. For instance, the survey data indicate that at the age of 15, on a typical weekday a child spends on average nearly five and half hours in school but nearly six hours in different types of work (Woldehanna et al., 2011). All children included in the qualitative study do some type of activity that supports the family. Half of them were engaged in paid work to subsidize their family and themselves. Some had to leave school to fulfill such obligations.

### *Social changes and altering Relationships*

Intergenerational theory investigates how two generations are linked and how the varied contexts influence their relationships. In other words, “broad social structures and large social contexts affect family life and relationships” (Putney and Bengston, 2004, p.157).

The influences are apparent in key life transitions (Kaufman and Uhlenberg, 1998). Here, schooling and early marriage of rural girls are considered to illustrate how the wider social structures and social changes affect intergenerational relationships.

During the childhood of the caregivers, religious education was complementary to the family socialization process. *Ye kestimhirt* (literally, priest education), besides its spiritual teachings, advocates for the transfer of religious and traditional family values to children. Priests and the religious institutions were supportive of parental effort in shaping their children. It also had the purpose of transferring the norms of gerontocracy for generations.

For the generation of children who were involved in this study, their school ages coincided with the expansion of schools in Ethiopia. It provided the opportunity for parents to send their children to school. The intergenerational disparity in outcome was so significant that the data from the survey of 2009 indicate that nearly all children have been to school, as opposed to just one third of their caregivers.

The transformation of education from religious into formal schooling has brought a significant change in the relationship between children and their caregivers. Through modern education, children got exposed to broader external experiences.

Another area of change that has affected intergenerational relationships is girls' early marriage. Societal norms of marriage were actualized through families, who traditionally had control over the practice. However, following global advocacy for children's rights and the Ethiopian government's adoption of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1989) and the African Charter on the Rights and Welfare of the Child (1999), early marriage is now considered to be a harmful practice in the country. The 1997 Ethiopian Federal Cultural policy states that harmful traditional practices, mainly female early marriage and circumcision, should be abolished. The Revised Family Proclamation of 2000 Article 7 prohibits marriage under the age of 18, and the Criminal Code of 2005 prescribes penalties

for such practices. The legal sanctions and campaigns seem to have brought some positive results. For instance, the 2011 EDHS data show that the median age at first marriage among women aged 25 to 49 was 16.5 years, a slight increase from the 16.1 years reported in the 2005 EDHS (CSA, 2012).

What are the implication of these social changes over the relationships? Caregivers who took part in the qualitative research described how their relationships with their children differed from their own childhood experiences. A mother from Leki compares the childhood of the two generations as follows:

In the past, children strictly obeyed their parents. They had much respect for their parents and their elders. ... Parents had full control over their children. But these days, children can do whatever they want. ... They have freedom to decide on their own than the children of my childhood. (Hassen's mother, Leki, 2011)

The older generation believes that some children are becoming disrespectful and disobedient. In the past, those who misbehaved were subjected to harsh disciplining, but these days there is less physical punishment. Sefinesh's grandmother, aged 70, from Tach-Meret, says: "Before, children were beaten having their hands tied together with the pillar. Now, they are neither tied up nor beaten."

The data show non-biological parents and grandparents particularly find it hard to get along with their children. For orphans, the relationships with their caregivers have gradually become challenging. For example, Genet's caregiver from Bertukan began to sense the difficulty of continuing to have good relationships with the girl. She said: "Her mother died when Genet was 5 years old, her father died when she was 7. We brought her up with our children. But nowadays, she looks for her blood relatives. She has begun spending the summer vacation with her relatives although they do not support her!" Genet's father was a friend and colleague of her caregiver. The woman is not happy with Genet, and she has reported that some misunderstandings are developing with her husband because of the girl's

disobedience. The man wants to tolerate Genet until she finishes school, but his wife seems to have run out of patience. At earlier fieldwork Genet stated she was happy with caregivers but at the age of 17 she felt discontent mainly because she knew that they were not her biological parents and they were not doing enough for her. Now, she prefers visiting church than staying at home in her spare time.

Others, as they grow older, they sensed that they get exploited by their caregivers. For example, Beletech who lives with her aunt after the death of her parents, felt that her aging caregivers are exploiting her while they educate their own children. She said, “When I ask my caregivers for clothing and school materials, they say, ‘we don’t have any money’. I buy my clothes by doing paid work. ... They just expect me to get married and earn them bride wealth. They don’t care if I learn or not.” Beletech, has to do all types of work in order to contribute to the family income, and meet the cost of her own clothing. Due to heavy work she had to repeat classes and reached only Grade 4 at the age of 17.

Skipped generations also find it hard to maintain their good relationships over the years. The grandparents had the feeling that bringing up of grandchildren who are ‘gift of God’ was their happy obligation. At early age, it was so smooth that grandchildren were just recipients of support and comfort from their grandparents. At later age, grandchildren get influenced by external factors including schooling, children’s right advocacies, peers and others, tend to questions their grandparents’ socialization. One of them, a grandmother who reported in earlier field work that her grandson, Bereket, was obedient and shared her aspirations, said later that he turned out to be different at the age of 17 and began to annoy her. She says:

These days children became familiar with money and do not listen when they are advised. They are now behaving wrongly. If I had high blood pressure, I would have died away. ... I want him to abandon his friends and focus on his education so that he

will be successful. I don't want him to be careless and go with bad friends who chew *chat* ... He is saying, 'I know what is good for me'. He ignores what I say as useless. He says: 'you have already gone through your time and that could never happen again.' It could be better if they say, 'yes' and listen to their mother and pray to God to give them longer life like their parents. (Bereket's grandmother, Bertukan site)

Bereket, after he got engaged in a car-washing business, no longer shares his grandmother's aspirations for him to go to university and become a pilot or an engineer. He says: "My grandmother wants me to be successful in my education but I want to engage myself in a business ... If they give me a better idea, I would consider it but if I don't believe in it I don't agree even if they are older than me. My family wants me to focus on my studies which I don't accept it."

Other grandparents wanted to have control over the marriage of their granddaughters but they are finding it hard to exercise. Haftey's grandmother from Zeytuni, described disagreement with her granddaughter by saying: "When I tell my 14-year-old granddaughter to marry, she gets angry and threatens to report to authorities."

The experiences of early marriage and risks associated with late marriage puzzle families and may lead into intergenerational conflict. For example, a three-generation experience has provoked tensions within a family in Tach-Meret. The caregiver, a grandmother of Sefinesh, was herself married at the age of 13. Sefinesh's mother was also forced by her father (Sefinesh's grandfather) to quit school and get married to someone whom she did not know. She was divorced and finally had to run away to Addis Ababa to work as a maid, leaving her two daughters with her parents. She had a very serious conflict with her father and she warned him not to marry off her daughters before they finished school. The father, who preferred to avoid further conflict with his daughter, refrained from doing so. However, one of the girls (elder sister of Sefinesh) started a sexual relationship with

her boyfriend and had a baby then quit school. The grandfather was so angry that he initially refused to allow her to live in his house, but later he accepted the situation. Her boyfriend could not provide any financial support because he was a student and had no any income. Sefinesh has also already started a relationship with another boy and grandparents feared that she may have a child soon.

The grandparents are puzzled by two contradicting experiences. First, their daughter's early marriage was not successful and it has forced her to migrate by quitting her school. Second, avoiding early marriage may have unintended consequences, including early sexual relationships and childbirth out of wedlock, causing family humiliation. Ultimately, the grandparents are forced to take care of three generations, and relationships have increasingly been damaged.

The conflict between skipped generations is so apparent. Grandparents seem too weak to influence their grandchildren. As they face strong response from the children, they simply give up and pray for the better. On the other hand, immediate generations seem to understand each other. For example, Sefinesh's mother had better understanding than the grandparents of the changes coming due to schooling and child right discourses. Generational closeness provides better opportunity for sharing of changing relationships and venue for negotiations. This is discussed below.

### *From Socialization to Negotiation*

While some parents recognize children's right to make their own decisions, many still fear that unlimited freedom would increasingly expose them to more life risks and sometimes causing family disgrace. As a result, parents are obliged to invoke dialogue with their children to find a compromise between 'excessive' parental control and 'unlimited' children's freedom.

Biological parents seem more embracing than grandparents and other caregivers to the ideas of their children. They tend to recognize the changes coming over the generations. One cultural practice which is a cause of intergenerational contentions is girls' early marriage. Mothers across the study sites recount their past marriage experiences and get ready to share some of its negative aspects. Biritu's mother from Leki says:

Our parents used to give us to somebody we do not know and collect their bride wealth ... they cover our face with a shawl and put us on the horseback to ride us to the groom's house ... it was like sending us into a prison... Now, if I marry off my daughter out of her interest, she will refuse and oblige me to pay back any bride wealth I take.

The mother was cognizant of the hardship of early marriage considering it like a 'prison.'

This helps parents to understand the genuine concern of their daughters who refuse to marry early or out of their interest. Two experiences of early marriage explain this in more concrete terms. One relates to a harmonized marriage, and the other in which, after initial conflict, consensus was reached through renegotiation. In 2010, Haymanot, from Zeytuni, 16 at that time, was married in a family-arranged wedding to someone with whom she was well acquainted. As her family was so poor, her in-laws did not expect any dowry, despite being a cultural practice in the community. Her parents have convinced her, in the context of poverty and sex-related illnesses such as HIV/AIDS that she does not have any better option than to get married. Her mother says: "My daughter was working in a crusher plant for wages. I used to worry that male colleagues may rape her." Haymanot confirms: "I am happy about my marriage because it was arranged by my parents." The intergenerational relationship has continued smoothly, with the married daughter regularly visiting her mother, as they live in the same neighborhood. Both compromised some cultural norms and modern practices: mother giving up dowry and the child agreeing to early marriage.

The second story concerns Ayu, from Leki, who was married in the same year and at

the same age as Haymanot, but with a different arrangement. Ayu's parents wanted her to marry according to the traditional norms of the community where parents of the couple arrange the marriage, with all clan and family powers and the payment of due bride wealth respected. However, Ayu and her husband agreed for 'voluntary abduction', opting for elopement. The family was not happy about the process, because it was against the norms of marriage among the Oromo culture. The conflict continued for a while until the newly married couple reconstituted the relationship by making 'reconciliatory' bride-wealth payments. They provided blankets, clothing, drinks and some cash for her parents. Although much less than the normal payment, some form of bride wealth (*gabara*) was still paid, indicating that the tradition was still respected in some ways. Nevertheless, further bride wealth is expected before the marriage is 'formalized' (locally called *seerrakutuu*) according to traditional practices. This was not completed during the last fieldwork, because the husband had to work and save the necessary sum of money to meet the bride wealth. This story indicates that parents' control over the marriage of their daughter was initially disrupted, but the interests of the girl were later somehow accommodated.

The study shows some gender disparity in parental expectations of maintaining cultural norms. Although, parents anticipate all their children respect cultural norms, the general pattern is, they tend to expect more of their daughters than their sons to adhere to cultural norms. For example, the illustrative cases presented in this article suggest only girls' marriages were the sources of conflicts and negotiations.

In general, parents seem to share the concern of their children and open for renegotiation. The evidence discussed above suggest that intergenerational relationships in the contexts of social change need negotiation. Settersten argues that 'family relationships continue over time but require re-negotiation as individuals assume new roles within or outside the family or as those relationships need to be renewed or reinvented over time'

(Settersten, 2002, p. 22). Negotiation requires partly altering the traditional setting in order to accommodate the interests of both generations, demonstrating children's agency.

The findings also challenge the traditional conceptualization of socialization. For developmental psychologists, relationships are grounded in family socializations, with the parent-child emotional bond having a strong effect on intergenerational transmission processes (Putney and Bengston, 2004).

Nowadays, socialization itself is increasingly changing from the traditional 'one direction' style, with parents dictating behavior, to more 'reciprocal' relationships. Criticizing the traditional model of socialization, Settersten argues that where families consist of different cohorts it is difficult to undermine the role of one or the other generation (Settersten, 2002, p. 34). The fact that each participant in the relationship is affected by the other participant confirms that 'one of the key features of intergenerational theory is the recognition that relationships are reciprocal' (Vandervan, 2004, p. 87). So socialization has become a two-way process in which the 'socializer' of the old days and the 'socialized' of the new days influence each other (ibid.). New sociology of childhood maintains that children have 'voice' on things essential for their lives (James, 2007; Clark, 2005). Recognizing their agency implies children's role in the establishment and maintenance of intergenerational relationships. Their exposure to world outside of the family through peers, education, school environments, child right advocates and other socialization agents provides children the power to negotiate with the older generations.

#### INTERGENERATIONAL RELATIONSHIPS AND THE LIFE COURSE

The life-course perspective helps to establish the link between generations. Elder states that 'historical events and individual experience are connected through the family and the "linked" fates of its members' (Elder, 1998, p. 3). As indicated in this article, family

relationships begin with very close bonds whereby all care comes from parents; followed by more explicit familial obligations and expectations, with children also beginning to establish their own filial obligations. But as key life transitions begin at later ages, intergenerational disagreements emerge.

The qualitative evidence indicates that, at the age of 13, children and their parents reported having smooth relationships, but data from later fieldworks show some orphans and their caregivers, including grandparents, complaining about each other. Skipped generations and non-biological caregivers and their children find it hard to maintain their smooth relationships as children grow older. Biological parents and their children, on the other hand, seem to find ways of keeping their healthy relationships. Parents see the risky past life transitions such as early marriage and appreciated the value of education, they become open for negotiation. The life course perspective catches all these changing relationships in the context of wider social changes and growing up children. It sheds light on the impacts of wider social contexts and the agency of children demonstrated over time.

## CONCLUSIONS

Where elders and parents enjoyed a form of gerontocracy for generations, most Ethiopian parents desire to 'reproduce' their own childhood. However, recognizing the fact that their past childhood has limited relevance to their own children, most parents are increasingly willing to listen to their children. Although children are increasingly influenced by external circumstances, they still remain connected with their parents, who brought them up in very difficult economic circumstances. In the absence of any external support, both generations remain the main source of security for each other.

Finally, I argue that the life-course perspective remains a strong tool for documenting any change in the nature of the relationships as influenced by individuals, family or other external factors. It investigates intergenerational relationships within the changing context of a specific time and place. In developing world like Ethiopia, where children's life transitions are more likely to be tangled, the life-course perspective needs to adapt to the changing features of intergenerational relationships. A cohort longitudinal approach, like the Young Lives research, on which this article is based, could contribute to it.

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## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Young Lives is an international study of Childhood poverty, following the lives of 12,000 children in four countries (Ethiopia, India, Peru, and Vietnam) over 15 years.

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## FUNDING

Young Lives is funded from 2001 to 2017 by UK aid from the Department for International Development (DFID), co-funded by the Netherlands Ministry of Foreign Affairs from 2010 to 2014, and by Irish Aid from 2014 to 2015.