Fragmenting the family?
The complexity of household migration strategies in post-apartheid South Africa

Katharine Hall
Children’s Institute, University of Cape Town
kath.hall@uct.ac.za

Prepared for the UNU-WIDER & ARUA Development Conference on Migration and Mobility
Accra, Ghana
4 – 5 October 2017
Purpose and structure of paper

Focus on children as a substantial but often neglected part of the population affected by migrant labour. Children as “invisible” participants in migration processes.

• How might migration theory (and the mechanisms of migration) be considered from the perspective of children?

• What are the patterns of child migration and how do they differ from adults?

• How is child migration related to maternal migration?

• What can qualitative research add to our understanding of child migration as a part of household strategy?
SA context and departure points

- Disruption of family life through influx control & forced removals: children as part of the “surplus” population, along with women and the elderly.
- Repeal of the legal constraints to urban migration from the mid-1980s → expectations of permanent urbanisation and family reunification not realised; dual and stretched households remain.
- Mines decline as major employers; rise of insecure and poorly paid work in the informal sector and domestic services.
- Rise in the share of female labour migrants, driving an overall rise in labour migration
- Rates of marriage / union formation continue to decline → women bear financial and care burden.
- Motherhood prevents migration; labour migration is key reason for maternal absence
- Presence of family members who can care for children at a household of origin enables working-age mothers to migrate. Receipt of old-age pension associated with higher rates of labour migration in prime-age adults.
- Women aged 15-25 are major category of migrant: [Alone | With children | With men and children]
What might mechanisms of migration mean for children?

- **Temporary** / circular migration: family members at home of origin serve to sustain ties between urban and rural nodes
  
  “The uncertainty of entry into the labour market and ever growing competition within the informal sector creates and imperative for migrants to maintain significant linkages to rural homes. These act as buffers or safety nets in time of economic of health related crises.” [Williams et al 2011]

  Spatial dispersion a strategy to conserve the family? [Murray 1981]

- **Cumulative** causation: migration is self-perpetuating, facilitated by kinship and social networks.

- **Informality** as stepping stone: transitional spaces as initial points of access to the city. Not always transitional. Risky for children.

- **Chain** migration: v chain reaction for children: co-migration (simultaneous), sequential migration (delayed), reverse migration (sent away), non-migration (left behind); autonomous.

- **Involuntary** immobility [De Haas 2014] – lacking the capability or agency to migrate.

- Broaden from rational choice to consider household strategies (meso level of focus) – a child-focused perspective helps to do this. Children help us to “see beyond” the household.
Data

Population census and cross-sections surveys – limited use for migration analysis (reliance on recall; migration questions deprioritised)

Longitudinal surveys in surveillance sites – cannot capture national migration patterns

- Nationally representative: 7300 households; 28,000 individuals in the panel
  ➢ 9605 children under 15
  ➢ 7936 “African” children under 15
  ➢ 4206 African children under 8 in wave 1 (= under-15 in wave 4)
  ➢ 3750 children in balanced sample (African children under 15 years in wave 4)
- Migration defined as any cross-district move over the period: 14% children migrated
- Map mothers to children to explore maternal-child migration events & co-residence
Defining the household

Household surveys define the parameters of what a household can look like.

1. Every person who is considered to be a member of the household

2. + “narrow definition”: Stayed here at least four nights a week for the last four weeks
   + “broad definition”: Stayed here at least 15 nights in the last 12 months

3. And shares in / contributes to a common resource pool / eats together

Broad definition = “non-resident” household members / temporary migrants.

Labour migrants are defined as non-resident household members who are away for employment purposes.
Parental co-residence with children 1993 – 2014

SA has among the lowest parental co-residence rates in the world (along with Zimbabwe, Swaziland, Lesotho, Namibia...)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child lives with...</th>
<th>1993</th>
<th>2014</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>... both parents</td>
<td>34.6 (1.06)</td>
<td>28.7 (0.62)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... mother, not father</td>
<td>43.4 (0.90)</td>
<td>45.3 (0.57)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... father, not mother</td>
<td>2.7 (0.23)</td>
<td>3.1 (0.18)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>... neither parent</td>
<td>19.3 (0.72)</td>
<td>22.9% (0.44)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Parental contact and financial support to children

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>How frequently does [parent] see the child?</th>
<th>MOTHER</th>
<th>FATHER</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-resident HH member</td>
<td>Absent – lives elsewhere</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Every day</td>
<td>0.4 (0.32)</td>
<td>4.3 (0.89)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a week</td>
<td>9.9 (2.97)</td>
<td>13.8 (1.77)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a month</td>
<td>55.3 (5.08)</td>
<td>39.4 (2.52)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Several times a year</td>
<td>32.1 (2.73)</td>
<td>34.6 (2.56)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never</td>
<td>2.4 (1.06)</td>
<td>8.0 (1.05)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| [Parent] supports the child financially   | 70.3 (5.03) | 50.4 (2.33) | 82.5 (3.99) | 38.3 (1.44) |

## Sending and receiving geotypes for adult & child migrants

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sending place of origin</th>
<th>Receiving place of destination</th>
<th>ADULTS 15+</th>
<th>CHILDREN &lt;15</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Rural former homeland</td>
<td>Rural farms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>85.0</td>
<td>10.0</td>
<td>5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural former homeland</td>
<td>26.1</td>
<td>71.3</td>
<td>2.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rural farms</td>
<td>23.8</td>
<td>11.5</td>
<td>64.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>53.1</td>
<td>46.0</td>
<td>0.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Sources: Adults - Schiel & Leibbrandt 2015 calculated from NIDS Waves 1 – 3; Children - NIDS Waves 1 & 4, based on the balanced panel of African children aged 0–8 in wave 1 who moved across district municipality boundaries at least once over waves 1–4. Panel weights used.
## Likelihood of child migration by mother migration and employment status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Odds Ratio</th>
<th>Std. Err.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mother migrated</td>
<td>42.952</td>
<td>0.178</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother’s w.1 employment status</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discouraged work-seeker</td>
<td>1.090</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Actively seeking work</td>
<td>2.386</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employed</td>
<td>1.420</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s wave 1 age</td>
<td>1.224</td>
<td>0.003</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s w.1 age squared</td>
<td>0.965</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Child’s w.1 geotype</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban areas</td>
<td>2.918</td>
<td>0.012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commercial farms</td>
<td>8.850</td>
<td>0.065</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0.013</td>
<td>0.000</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Number of observations = 2433
Log pseudolikelihood = -1143443.9

Source: NIDS waves 1–4, based on the balanced panel of African children aged 0–8 in wave 1, and their mothers. Analysis restricted to children whose mothers were alive in wave 4. Integer weights derived from wave 4 panel weights. Omitted categories: Not economically active and traditional authority areas.
Child-mother migration events

25% of children experienced child-mother migration events (i.e. child / mother / both moved)

Nearly half of migration events result in co-residence of mothers and children

Slightly more than half separate mothers and children, or retain their separation

Source: NIDS waves 1–4, based on the balanced panel of African children aged 0–8 in wave 1, who experienced a child-mother migration event. Panel weights used.
Receiving household geotype for child migrants, by change in maternal co-residence status over waves 1–4

- **Mother is co-resident in both waves**: 56% Urban, 44% Rural
- **Mother co-resident in W1, nonresident in W4**: 31% Urban, 69% Rural
- **Mother co-resident in W1, absent in W4**: 37% Urban, 63% Rural
- **Mother nonresident in W1, co-resident in W4**: 61% Urban, 39% Rural
- **Mother absent in W1, co-resident in W4**: 78% Urban, 22% Rural
- **Mother absent or nonresident in both waves**: 44% Urban, 56% Rural

Source: NIDS Waves 1 & 4 (mother & child co-residence status); waves 1–4 (child migrant status). Based on African children aged 0–8 in Wave 1 defined as migrants, whose mothers were alive in wave 4. Panel weights used.
Case study

Life history and migration experience of a migrant mother and her family, spanning three generations.

Illustration of an established rural-urban internal migration route

"Bantustans" or "Homelands" During Apartheid
Population pyramids for rural and urban sites

A. Lindiwe's rural village

B. Lindiwe's urban township

Own calculations from population census 2011 (100% census, using SuperCross).
Lindiwe’s childhood household (c.1988-1993)

Visual tools to assist recall:
- Life histories matrix
- Kinship diagrams
When you see the situation, you act. You get up and close it because life doesn’t stand still. For us people life changes... and so when life changes, you decide.... You can feel the hardship, but you also have to do whatever. What I mean to say is that when they are left alone it’s not that they are not loved, that is the truth. But it’s because of the situation.

- Noluthando (Lindiwe’s mother)
I thought that the following year I would go back to school, but it turned out that I should go and take care of my brother. I left the child behind. That’s how it started. My mother said ‘Go to Cape Town to look after your brother because he’s not well,’ you see. And when I arrived here I found that she had made it seem like a small thing, but it turned out that all along my brother was sick, and he was not going to make it. So I was forced to stay in Cape Town and find work in order to help those who come after me.

- Lindiwe
Imizamo Yethu fire leaves 240 homeless

MORE than 200 people were left homeless in Imizamo Yethu informal settlement yesterday after their homes were destroyed by a fire.

The city’s Disaster Risk Management Centre spokeswoman, Charlotte Powell, said the fire broke out at around 4pm, destroying 60 shacks.

“Sixty dwellings were destroyed, leaving 240 people displaced.”

Powell said the cause of the fire was still unknown. However, relief efforts had begun.

“The South African Red Cross is providing immediate relief and emergency shelters, such as community halls have been opened to shack fire victims.”
Lindiwe’s urban household (2016)

Share the two-bedroomed house

Lindiwe

Dumile

Sabelo

Noli

Asanda  b.1994  (Willowvale)

Sibile  b.1999  (Cape Town)

Babalwa  b.2016

Cocuka  b.2014

Share the one-room front yard shack
Conclusions

• The necessity of female migration, even at the cost of family fragmentation and absence from children’s households. Fragmentation as part of the household strategy.

• Child migration may be prevented (involuntary immobility), delayed, or premature— in relation to plans and aspirations.

• Both migration and immobility may be about a lack of choice (challenges notions of individual agency). Long-term intentions superseded by short-term necessity.

• The importance of extended families, especially grandmothers. Connectedness of rural and urban homes.

• Permanent v circular/temporary migration – intentions vary, not clear-cut.

• Surveys essential for describing broad trends, but not well suited to examining extended household arrangements and social networks.

• Child-mother migration events take many forms. Worthy of further research.