

Living with adult children: a benefit assessment of co-resident living arrangements among black and white older South Africans

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Abstract

South Africa serves as an instructive case for the study of living arrangements. Co-residence with a child is the rule for the black elderly and the exception for the white elderly. The article analyses the living arrangements of black and white elderly drawing on a national database (Ferreira et al., 1992). The focus of attention is the co-resident living arrangement. The article explores the determinants of co-residence and discusses the specific benefits accruing to the older person and the adult child. The findings suggest that traditional social security arrangements for the black elderly are adapting to the rapid social change taking place in South Africa. Notably, daughters as well as sons are involved in carrying out filial piety duties, especially in the urban areas. There are signs in the data that poor housing conditions and a lack of choice in housing place family relations under severe strain in the urban areas. Overall, co-residence is generally perceived as a positive experience by the elderly. It is recommended that the extended family living arrangement deserves consideration as both an acceptable and a viable option for the care of the elderly in South Africa in the foreseeable future.

Living arrangements represent critical choices for the well-being of the elderly in society (Hermalin, Chang, Lin *et al.*, 1990; Kinsella, 1990). The composition of households which shelter the elderly is a crude indication of the availability of informal care for the aged. A database which contains information on intergenerational exchanges occurring within and between households is a further refinement.

This article examines two aspects of shared living arrangements in South Africa from the viewpoint of the older party to the agreement. The discussion reviews caregiving advantages and the personal satisfactions derived from various co-residence situations.

Theoretical considerations

Living arrangements typically differ around the world. However the need for love, care and personal space for the parties to these contracts is universal. Family solidarity is a convenient reference concept which summarizes the benefit assessments of family living arrangements. Research into family solidarity (Mangen, Bengtson & Landry, 1988; Roberts, Richards & Bengtson, 1991) was initiated to examine correlates

and consequences of intergenerational cohesion in terms of the psychological wellbeing of family members. According to Mangen *et al.* (1988) family solidarity is multidimensional and can be described in terms of family structure, contacts, affection, agreement on basic values, interactions and exchanges. The multigeneration household represents a special case of family solidarity. Parent-child interaction largely reflects availability. When members of the extended family live under the same roof, they are more available for interactions than would otherwise be the case. The residential proximity factor was also found to have a major influence on the other dimensions of solidarity (Mangen *et al.*, 1988).

For purposes of the discussion here, a broad distinction is made between popular living arrangements in developing and Western-industrialized societies.

In developing societies filial piety is still the norm. Social security in old age is provided by the kinship system (Cowgill & Holmes, 1972). Filial piety is an integral part of the mutual support system operating between the generations throughout the life course in traditional society. Although there is widespread concern that the extended family system is breaking down under the strain of rapid industrialization and urbanization, the high incidence of multigeneration households in rapidly developing countries suggests the contrary (Hashimoto, 1991).

In Western-industrial societies the trend is for the elderly to live independently. Industrialization has undermined the traditional role of the extended family in providing a safety net for its elderly members. There is evidence that independent living for the elderly is socially acceptable and often the preferred living arrangement in Western society (Alwin, Converse & Martin, 1986; Kendig, Hashimoto & Coppard, 1992). Higher standards of living ensure that the elderly have the financial means to care for themselves. Formal support services are available to complement or, if necessary, to substitute for family support. However independent living does not necessarily mean that there is a lack of solidarity among family members. Advanced technology makes regular communication possible between family members who live apart.

Improved quality of life for the elderly appears to be associated with both higher living standards, and filial love and care. There is a tendency to presume that there is a trade-off between these two factors; as societies develop, so the elderly lose out on one count or another, depending on the

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level of development of society. Paradoxically, failure to modernize may threaten the financial support of the elderly in some developing countries, although care may still be forthcoming in terms of the filial piety norm (Mason, 1991).

In Western society co-residence of parents and child is atypical but not unusual. The incidence of multigeneration households in the United States is approximately 18 %; this proportion has remained fairly constant between 1975 and 1985 (Ward, Logan & Spitze, 1992). It is usually assumed that co-residence is primarily a response to the needs of the elderly for companionship, care and financial assistance. However recent research (Ward *et al.*, 1992; Crimmins & Ingegneri, 1990; Lawton, 1992) challenges this common assumption. In the co-residential households studied by Ward and colleagues, helping behaviours and housing needs indicated that child needs appeared to be the main determinant of co-residence. Older members were more likely to perform household tasks than younger members, and never-married children dominated co-residence situations.

The theory of fertility decline put forward by Caldwell (1982) has relevance for the kinship exchanges which are associated with traditional and Western living arrangements for the elderly. The theory posits that wealth typically flows up to the oldest generation in traditional societies, whereas in Western societies wealth flows downwards. Therefore, a large number of offspring makes good sense in traditional society in terms of old-age security. In developed societies where raising children requires large financial outlays and social security provisions are a state concern, large families are not a requisite to financial wellbeing in old age. The finding cited earlier that child needs dominate in US co-residence situations supports the Caldwell thesis that wealth flows tend to benefit the younger generation in Western society.

The South African case

South Africa serves as an instructive case for the study of the relationship between living arrangements and the subjective wellbeing of the elderly. First and Third Worlds live side by side in South African society. From a demographic perspective South Africa's different subpopulations comprise different levels of development. The situation of the white elderly is comparable to that of people living in First World societies; that of the Indian, coloured and black elderly is similar to developing countries around the world. The disparity between South Africa's population groups in demographic terms is indicated in average life expectancy. A white woman can expect to live to 75 years, a black woman to 65 years.

The Multidimensional Survey of Elderly South Africans aged 60 years and older conducted in 1990-91 (Ferreira, Møller, Prinsloo & Gillis, 1992)¹ shows that living arrangements vary for the different population groups. White elderly South Africans, who tend to enjoy a higher standard of living and live independently, conform to the First World lifestyles outlined above. The majority of Indian, coloured and black elderly South Africans live in multigeneration households which conform to trends in the non-Western world. The indicators in Table 1 highlight these differences in lifestyles.

Research aims

The relationship between living arrangements and intergenerational relations warrants further examination. The family relations topic is one which has received little attention to date in South Africa (Gerdes, 1987). The discussion here draws on data collected for the baseline study of South Africa's elderly referred to earlier (Ferreira *et al.*, 1992). For ease of reference

Table 1

Selected social indicators: Multidimensional Survey of Elderly South Africans, 1990-91

Indicator	Urban black	Rural black	Coloured	Indian	White
Socio-economic indicators					
No formal education %	50	79	30	46	0
Monthly income > R500 (%)	11	3	14	15	79
Made provision for old age (%)	18	7	25	23	79
Health indicators					
Self-reported good health (%)	29	24	46	43	66
Psychosocial indicators					
Very satisfied, satisfied with life (%)	39	65	91	78	90
Very happy, happy (%)	45	43	87	79	90
Social support and living arrangements					
Number of living children (median)	4	4	5	2	3
Receives financial support from children (%)	68	66	59	61	15
Gives financial support to children (%)	59	60	40	41	25
Lives alone/with spouse (%)	5	6	10	8	79
Multigeneration households (%)	92	93	87	90	17
Satisfaction with living arrangements (%)	49	65	86	87	91
N	997	401	978	999	989

the discussion is limited to the case of the white and black elderly. The selection of these two groups is considered the optimal one for the task at hand for the following reasons: The choice of the white elderly is given. For historical reasons only whites have attained First World levels of development and population ageing. The black elderly represent the numerically largest subgroup among South Africa's Third World cases. Elderly blacks account for some 60 % of all elderly South Africans but only 3 % of blacks over 65 years. In terms of living standards and lifestyle the contrast between the life conditions for the black and white elderly is greater than that of all other population groups (see Table 1). Black South Africans have experienced rapid urbanization during the past decade which has led to the decline of the patrilineally-extended household (Dubb, 1972). The Multidimensional Survey collected data on black subjects living in both the urban and the rural areas, which allows for an examination of the possible effects of urbanization on the living arrangements of the black elderly.

Living arrangements

The incidence of multigeneration households is between 92 and 93 % for urban and rural blacks but only 17 % for whites (see Table 1). Mason (1991) argues that the critical indicator of the propensity for the generations to co-reside is the percentage of elderly who reside with children rather than the percentage of households that are multigenerational.² For the purpose of this article, a distinction is made between older persons currently living with a son (and/or a daughter-in-law), with a daughter (and/or a son-in-law), and with both a son and

a daughter. Co-residence is compared with the situation of the elderly living independently, i.e. alone or with a spouse only.

Slightly less than 80 % of whites live independently (see Table 2). Half in this group live alone, the other half with their spouse. Slightly less than 16 % live with a son or a daughter, a figure comparable to the US one cited earlier. Only about 5 % of elderly whites are party to a different arrangement.

Table 2
Living arrangements: residence with sons and daughters (black and white subsamples)

Arrangements	Urban blacks		Rural blacks		Whites	
	%	%	%	%	%	%
Lives with child		82,8		76,6		15,5
Son and daughter	43,6		32,2		0,7	
Son ^a	18,4		27,2		7,6	
Daughter ^b	20,8		17,2		7,2	
Lives apart from child		17,2		23,4		84,5
Independent ^c	4,6		6,2		79,2	
- Alone	2,5		3,5		38,7	
- With spouse	2,1		2,7		40,4	
With other persons	12,6		17,2		5,4	
Total	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0	100,0
N	997		401		989	

^a In a very small number of cases includes son's spouse in the case of the son's absence.

^b In a very small number of cases includes daughter's spouse in the case of the daughter's absence.

^c Independent living arrangements include living alone or with a spouse only.

) Summate.

)

Black society is patrilineal in South Africa (cf. Dubb, 1972; Preston-Whyte, 1972). The reference norm for the present analysis will therefore be for one son to remain with his ageing parents to care for them. At the outset of the inquiry, it was assumed that the traditional pattern would be for the black elderly to live with a son, with family life-cycle factors determining the exact timing of the departure of other children from the parental home. The Multidimensional Survey database shows that three in four elderly rural blacks and four in five elderly urban blacks live with children (see Table 2). In half of these cases the older generation co-resides with both the son and the daughter. In town blacks are just as likely to live with a daughter as with a son. In the country, living with the son appears to be the more common living arrangement. Less than one in four elderly blacks live away from their children. Living alone or with a spouse only rarely occurs. The elderly blacks who live apart from their children usually live with other relatives. Many of the households in this last category will be skip generations consisting of the grandparent and grandchild generations only¹ (see Table 2).

In terms of the filial piety norm one would expect an increasingly higher proportion of each age cohort to live with a son only. The data does not confirm the expected pattern. The distribution of co-residence with sons, daughters and children of both sexes is similar for all age groups in the black subsamples. However in town, housing shortages might influence the higher incidence of co-residence with both sons and daughters.

Among whites, co-resident living arrangements do not appear to be gender or age specific. The majority of white men (63 %) live independently with a spouse; the majority of white women (50 %) live alone. The proportion living alone increases with each age cohort (22 % in the 60-64-year age bracket, to 69 % in the over 85+ age bracket). However the proportion of men and women living with children remains fairly constant, between 10 and 21 % in each age bracket. Widowed (1 %) and married (14 %) persons are more likely to live with children than never-married (11 %) and divorced (3 %) persons. A quarter of never-married and 19 % of divorced persons live with persons other than children.

Although the numbers are very small, there appears to be a similar trend among urban blacks for more men (8 %) than women (3 %) to live independently. In contrast to the white pattern, the proportion of urban blacks living independently decreases with each age cohort. About twice as many persons in each age cohort live with sons and daughters.

Rural black co-residence patterns differ from urban black ones. If we exclude the oldest age bracket (85+ years), the trends become clearer. There is a shift from co-residence with son and daughter in the 60-65-year age bracket, to co-residence with a son only in the 80-84-year bracket. The trend to live with sons is more evident among Sothos living in Lebowa than among Zulus. The proportion living independently (alone or with a spouse only) and with other persons increases from the youngest to the oldest age bracket. It is possible that the rural pattern is a truer reflection of the societal ideal in terms of co-residence with sons. However circulatory migration may have distorted the clear pattern by introducing the need to live independently or with grandchildren and other relatives according to availability, especially in the oldest age bracket, i.e. over 85 years.

Never-married black persons in the urban and rural areas tend to live with persons other than their children. This pattern appears to be common to all groups under study. Availability may be the decisive factor here. It is noteworthy that never-married blacks (who are mainly women) rarely live with a son.

The results of regression analyses⁴ confirmed that co-residence is determined largely by life-cycle and child-availability factors. Among blacks urbanization and gender also appear to influence co-residence decisions. Younger and urban-domiciled black elderly are more likely to live with both sons and daughters; rural-domiciled elderly with sons only. Black women are more likely than men to live with adult daughters. As a rule, whites living with children are younger and have an above-average number of children.

Antecedents of co-residence: child or parent needs?

This section reviews the indicators in the Multidimensional Survey which contain clues as to whether co-residence is meeting parent or child needs.

Parent needs in co-residence

Disability represents a major parent need which might determine co-residence. There appears to be little evidence in the Multidimensional Survey database that the health status of the elderly living with children is very different from those living alone. The poorer health of rural blacks living with a daughter only appeared to be the exception here. The lower household incomes of female-dominated households may be a factor. Seventy-one per cent of rural blacks living with daughters (versus the subsample average of 63 %) indicated that their poor health often interfered with their daily activities. How-

ever co-residence is the norm in black society, where 71 % of urban blacks and 77 % of rural blacks, compared to 34 % of whites complained about their health. The practice of co-residence appears to be an appropriate societal response to the health needs of the black elderly.

There are signs in the Multidimensional Survey data that co-residence may be dictated by financial need on the part of elderly parents. The white elderly in co-residence were less likely than others to have prepared for retirement. Black elderly living with daughters were also less likely than other co-resident elderly to have prepared for retirement but the difference was not statistically significant.

Child needs in co-residence

The literature cites housing and contributions to household tasks as telling signs that co-residence may be as attentive to child needs as parent needs. Home-ownership indicators in the Multidimensional Survey database suggest that the older generation makes housing available to the younger generation. Between 44 and 48 % of urban blacks indicated that they owned the home in which they were residing. This figure is slightly below the national average of 50 % of blacks living in houses (1991 census statistics). Among whites, a higher proportion of co-residents (51 %) lived in their own home than in one owned by a member of the household or one put at their disposal by a relative (37 %).

In co-resident households the parent generation usually assumes the role of head. The only exception is in the case of white women in co-resident households, who are less often awarded the status of head than black women.⁵ In all types of co-residential households, sons, where available, were most likely to replace the older generation as the household head.

Child care represents an important contribution of the grandmother in traditional society (cf. Hermalin *et al.*, 1990). Only a minority of white co-resident households (36 %) in South Africa include grandchildren. In contrast, 68 % of urban black and 78 % of rural black co-resident households include grandchildren. It can be assumed that the women in households with young children will be involved in child care.

Subjective indicators also suggest that elderly co-residents feel that they pull their weight and contribute to the welfare of the household. Black and white co-resident elderly were more likely than others to feel that people made too many demands on them. However these differences were only significant in the case of whites. Assuming that older people are responding to social pressure, the "being in demand" indicator can be interpreted as a positive contribution on the part of the elderly to the economy of the co-resident household. Interestingly, the elderly were least likely to feel the pressure of demands if they lived with a same-sex child. In the black community women are called upon to contribute as house and child minders well into advanced age. Greater value may be attached to female helping roles in male-dominated households. The practice of older men handing over headship to their sons may account for their feeling less in demand than women. In all instances, intra- and intergenerational role competition may influence feelings of "being in demand".

There were further indications that older persons living in co-residence evidenced feelings of self worth. Among urban and rural blacks the proportion of persons who felt "useful to others" was highest among the small number of persons living independently, followed closely by persons living in co-residence with sons. The proportion of whites indicating feelings of usefulness was highest in the co-resident group. Rural blacks living with sons were less likely to indicate that "being unwanted" was a problem for them. Admittedly, the

subjective evidence cited here is slight in that the data is based on self-reports of the elderly. The question of parent-child needs requires further research from the viewpoint of adult children.

Benefits of co-residence

The Multidimensional Survey findings indicated that care and financial security for blacks represent the most important benefits for the elderly living in co-residence. As mentioned earlier, with the possible exception of the rural black elderly living with their daughters, health appeared not to be a problem peculiar to the co-resident elderly. Nevertheless, the elderly living with children indicated that if they fell ill, they were able to count on their children's assistance to a greater extent than those living independently or with other relatives. In all population groups living with a daughter appeared to be most advantageous in terms of health-care benefits. As might be expected, loneliness appeared to be less of a problem for persons living in co-residence than for persons living alone.

Co-residence appears to facilitate intergenerational financial exchanges. The majority of urban (77 %) and rural (72 %) blacks received a social (mainly a state old-age) pension. Persons in receipt of a social pension were fairly evenly distributed among the various living arrangements. Among blacks, variations in the rates of exchanges by living arrangement are insignificant. The very small number of persons living alone were most likely to be excluded from financial exchanges. The level of exchanges in co-resident households of whites was higher than in other living arrangements of whites but still very low in comparison to the levels of blacks in general. The proportions of older blacks who indicated that they gave a great deal or quite a lot of money to their children, were higher than those who stated that they received comparably large amounts of money from their children. The proportions giving and receiving were about even among co-resident whites. It is difficult to establish unambiguously, whether child or parent needs dominate the exchanges. In some cases, pooling financial resources may be beneficial to both generations in co-residence.

Incidental financial assistance for older members may also be more forthcoming in co-resident households. Results indicated that blacks living in co-residence were more likely than others to receive money from their children to pay their medical expenses. This was not the case among whites.

In terms of financial benefits, it appears that living with daughters is less advantageous than living with sons. This rule seems to apply to all groups under study. Although the number of cases is very small, white persons living in co-residence with daughters were more likely than other whites to indicate that money was a serious problem. Money was a serious problem for the majority of blacks in all living arrangements, but rural blacks living with daughters were less likely than others to receive income from children.

Subjective indicators confirm the advantages of living with sons. The highest percentages indicating satisfaction and happiness among blacks were persons living in co-residence with sons. Rural blacks living with daughters tended to be most dissatisfied and unhappy with life in general.

Dependence

There is a catch with the parent benefits listed above. Dependence is feared by all older persons. A caring environment such as the co-resident living arrangement can become patronizing or oppressive for its members. The literature cites the danger of persons becoming smothered, or losing their identity in a too caring social environment (cf. Roberts *et al.*, 1991).

There were few manifest signs of overdependence among co-resident elderly. The majority of persons living in co-residence indicated that they managed their own money. Nevertheless, the incidence of money being managed by children was higher for co-residents than persons living independently or with other relatives. Money of co-residents was managed by children in 10 % of cases of co-residence among whites and up to 20 % of cases among blacks. Nevertheless, a subjective indicator suggested that feelings of independence are not stifled in co-resident living arrangements. The proportion of co-residents stating that they felt in control of their lives was not very different from persons in other living arrangements.

Social integration indicators suggested that the co-resident elderly conform to the life-style patterns of their group in terms of having access to a confidant, belonging to a club, and feeling respected by their families. However it was observed that a substantial number of persons living independently avoided giving an answer to the last item concerning respect. This response suggests that some persons living independently may have had doubts about their children's filial piety and their own social standing.

Satisfaction with living arrangements

As is the case all over the world, older people express satisfaction with their housing which does not always reflect the objective conditions in which they live (Lawton, 1980). In this sense, housing satisfaction may be considered a sign of positive adaptation. In the Multidimensional Survey the subjects were specifically asked to indicate satisfaction with living arrangements rather than with their housing situation. The intention was for the cue to elicit responses to the social as well as the physical housing situation.

Levels of satisfaction with living arrangements varied markedly by population group, as is shown in Table 3. Whites were most satisfied and urban blacks least satisfied. However within population groups similar proportions expressed satisfaction with each type of living arrangement. Correlation and multiple regression analyses indicated that satisfaction with living arrangements is closely associated with psychological wellbeing and positive intergenerational relations.⁶

In all groups the lowest level of satisfaction was indicated by persons living alone. Whites as a group were more inclined to want to move in spite of being satisfied with their living arrangements. Previous residential mobility for whites was higher than for other groups, suggesting that the disposition to move may be one carried over from mid-life. The opposite trend holds for blacks who were more inclined to want to remain in place even if they were dissatisfied with their situation.

The spontaneous reasons given for dissatisfaction with living arrangements and wanting to move or stay are revealing. Of the three groups under discussion here, the urban blacks expressed the greatest dissatisfaction with their living situation. Their reactions are singled out for more detailed review.

In all, 270 urban blacks, or 27 %, described what they disliked about their current living situation. In approximate order of mention, dislikes included the cost of housing (47 %), limited dwelling space and crowding (14 %), general unhappiness and misery (14 %), loneliness and neglect (9 %), and basic needs not being met (5 %). It is evident that dislikes focussed on the physical housing situation rather than on intergenerational relations.

Similarly, the reasons given by the minority of urban blacks who wished to move referred mainly to the housing rather than to the social situation. Most persons in this group wanted

Table 3

Indicators of satisfaction with living arrangements by type of co-residence (black and white subsamples)

Subsample	Percentage "very satisfied" and "satisfied" with living arrangements %	Percentage not wanting to move %	Total N
Urban blacks	49	75	997
Living with son and daughter	51	78	435
Living with son	48	71	183
Living with daughter	46	75	207
Living alone/with spouse	46	70	46
Living with others	52	75	126
Rural blacks	65	86	401
Living with son and daughter	63	88	129
Living with son	69	86	109
Living with daughter	64	81	69
Living alone/with spouse	48	80	25
Living with others	71	91	69
Whites	91	76	989
Living with child(ren)	95	77	153
Living alone	89	78	383
Living with spouse	91	74	400
Living with others	87	77	53

to move to a larger dwelling or to another location, usually away from the city. A few persons indicated that they owned their own home elsewhere. Compared to housing and location factors, personal relations and inability to cope figured insignificantly as reasons for wanting to move.

There appear to be few attractive features of urban living for elderly blacks. The main reason given for not wanting to move referred to a lack of alternatives (19 %). More positive factors were a sense of place and habit (17 %), satisfaction (15 %), home ownership (9 %), and the family and care situation (9 %). It is worth noting that under the "family and care" heading, reference was made to wanting to be with the family and to child-care duties. The proportion mentioning the lack of alternative housing options was higher among urban than rural blacks.

The urban black case study reveals that traditional social security arrangements for the elderly are no longer taken for granted. There were signs in the data that poor urban housing conditions and a lack of choice in housing placed family relations under severe strain in some cases. For example, when referring to dislikes associated with living arrangements, four persons living with children mentioned that there was no one to care for them; a further four persons indicated that their children neglected them; and three persons complained that their children took their pensions. Considering the many housing problems in urban areas, it is surprising that not more references to elder abuse were made. In black society institutional care for the elderly runs counter to traditional ideas of care for the aged (Chinkanda, 1987; Møller, 1988). Nevertheless, six persons expressed the felt need to live in a home for the aged or with other old people. Contrary to the norm of filial piety, a further three persons stated that they did not want to live with their children.

The reactions of rural blacks and whites to their living situations were more positive. There was less evidence of

housing constraints for rural blacks. A sense of place and familiarity was the single most important factor for not wanting to move for rural blacks, which may be interpreted as indicating positive satisfaction. The very small number of rural black persons living alone or with their spouse indicated that they suffered from loneliness and neglect but had no alternative place to stay.

White co-residents appeared to be at least as satisfied if not more so than persons in other living situations. Fewer co-residents (5 % versus a sample average of 9 %) expressed dissatisfaction with their living situation; a similar percentage of co-residents and other persons (18 % of co-residents versus a sample of average of 19 %) wanted to move if the opportunity arose. Persons living with children (3,9 % versus a sample average of 6,4 %) were less likely than others to want to move for personal reasons, such as not being able to cope on their own. Only one person indicated that she would prefer not to live with her child, whereas 13 persons living independently wanted to live with or closer to their children. The satisfaction derived from intergenerational relations in co-residence is highlighted in the case of the white elderly. For the white subsample as a whole, happiness and habit were the main reasons for wanting to remain in place, followed by factors referring to convenience, home ownership, lack of choice, family reasons, and neighbours. Co-resident whites ranked family factors in second place, immediately after happiness, as the main disincentive to move.

Summary and conclusions

The survey evidence suggests that co-residence is mainly a positive experience for older persons. Living with family is cited as a disincentive to move. It is not clear whether co-residence is determined by adult or child needs, but the data indicate that both child and parent needs are being met in co-resident households. Child-care services are an example of child needs which are well catered for in black co-resident households. Co-residence facilitates intergenerational financial exchanges which tend to favour the elderly. Care in the case of illness is more readily available for the elderly in co-resident households. Nonetheless, the negative effects of urbanization on co-resident living arrangements for the black elderly are evident in low levels of housing satisfaction. It is apparent that crowding in urban homes aggravates good intergenerational relationships.

A starting point for the examination of living arrangements was the assumption that black elderly persons would prefer to live with sons as custom dictates and whites would prefer to live independently according to Western norms. It appears that urbanization has relaxed strict rules of filial piety for blacks. As a result elderly blacks appear to derive benefits and satisfaction from living with either sons and daughters, or both. In the case of whites the evidence suggested that the minority of white elderly living in co-residence tended to lose a certain degree of independence, for which other satisfactions of living with family might compensate.

There appear to be no special advantages attached to the different co-resident situations distinguished in this article. Overall, the elderly living with sons may be better off, especially in terms of financial support. On the other hand care in the case of illness was more often available in the case of co-residence with daughters.

To sum up, the extended family is alive and well and caring for its older members. There seem to be mutual benefits for parents and children in living together under one roof. In black South African society the family is still the most important safety net in old age. Black society has managed to adapt rules of filial piety to meet modern needs, while ensuring that the

elderly are properly cared for. The burden of caring for older parents is shared more equally between sons and daughters. Nevertheless, the tensions caused by social change are a cause for concern. There are subtle signs that urbanization has damaged the caring image of the co-resident black household. For white society co-residence represents a less popular but nevertheless important and satisfactory option for a minority. In all cases, the subjective wellbeing expressed by elders living with their children is proof of the viability of the extended family living arrangement in South Africa for the foreseeable future.⁷ However further research is required to assess the benefits of co-residence accruing to all generations party to the arrangement from the adult child's viewpoint.

Notes

1. The Multidimensional Survey of Elderly South Africans represents the first comprehensive study of South Africans of all population groups. The questionnaire survey was a partial replication of cross-cultural inquiries conducted in southeast Asian countries. The sample consisted of 4 000 equally represented black, coloured, Indian and white persons over 60 years, who were living in the community in metropolitan areas. In addition, an exemplary sample was drawn of 400 blacks living in the deep-rural areas of two homelands, Lebowa and KaNgwane. The survey was conducted in March 1990.
2. In most developing countries the average life expectancy is increasing. The survival of the elderly may maintain a constant proportion of multi-generational households even where the propensity of the elderly to live with children has declined (Mason, 1991).
3. Using the same database, it is estimated that 16 % of rural and 9 % of urban black households are skip-generation ones (Møller, in Ferreira *et al.*, 1992:106). The rural economy is dependent on the cash remittances of migrants who work in town. Rural skip-generation households are the result of the middle-generation household members leaving their children to be raised by their elderly parents while they work in town.
4. Variables included in the stepwise multiple regression analyses were age, gender, marital status, rural-urban domicile, headship, home ownership, number of living children, disability, locus of control, feelings of being helpful, satisfaction with living arrangement, respect shown by family, and the life satisfaction index A.
5. Between 78 and 89 % of urban black, 81 and 87 % of rural black, and 71 % of white males living in co-residence stated that they were the household head. The incidence of headship for females was lower but still substantial, with 54-69 % for urban blacks, 51-74 % for rural blacks, and 28 % for whites. If females or their spouses are designated household heads, the respective figures for parent-generation headship rises to 81 % for urban blacks, 88 % for rural blacks and 47 % for whites.
6. In both the black and white subsamples satisfaction with living arrangements was positively correlated with feelings of being respected by family, feelings of usefulness to others, and, in the case of women, feeling in control of one's life.
7. Steyn (1993) reaches a similar conclusion on the basis of her research into ideal and existing family structures. With reference to the high incidence of urban blacks (50,8 % of the sample population) living in multigeneration families, Steyn (1993: 25-26) notes that "the multi-generation family can be regarded as an important legitimate family structure amongst urban blacks".

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