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BEYOND 'FLUIDITY': KINSHIP AND HOUSEHOLDS AS SOCIAL PROJECTS

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Beyond ‘Fluidity’: Kinship and Households as Social Projects

Abstract

Urban and rural households in South Africa are fluid (in that individuals move between households) and porous (in that individuals may be members of more than one ‘household’ at the same time). One important consequence of this fluidity and porosity is that the effects of AIDS-related disability and death may be mitigated, as households are reconstituted to provide care as well as to protect the welfare of dependents. This paper argues that our understanding of household dynamics needs to go beyond asserting the fact of fluidity (or porosity). Precisely how fluid and porous are households, and (in particular) how ‘extended’ are families in terms of the obligations and claims that kin can make on each other? Are there moral or normative constraints on the decisions made by individuals with respect to householding and kinship? The paper reviews the extant literatures on these questions in South Africa as a basis for further empirical research. Whilst inconclusive, the secondary literatures suggest that the claims entailed in kinship are more and more often evaded, especially by men (and paternal kin), and that responsibilies and obligations are increasingly conditional. Children – including, but not only, orphans – are readily accommodated by kin. South Africa’s social assistance system means that the elderly are financial breadwinners rather than dependents, helping to perpetuate the practice of extended family-households. Perhaps the most striking shift in household and kinship has been the decline of marriage and the crisis of patrilinearity. There is indirect evidence that people not only prioritise the claims of children but also see the elderly and sick as more deserving than able-bodied adults of working age. Overall, ‘fluidity’ and the claims made in the name of kinship have clear limits. The paper concludes with the suggestion that further empirical research be informed by the methodologies used in studies of kinship in the UK and USA, notwithstanding the substantive differences between householding and kinship in different settings..

Researchers examining many aspects of South African society use 'household' survey data whilst at the same time acknowledging that the 'household' in Southern Africa is often a flawed basis for considering aspects of individuals' well-being. Poverty rates are typically constructed taking household income (or expenditure) and dividing by the number of household members, perhaps using a formula that takes into account the age of each member and economies of scale in expenditure in larger households. The assumption here is that aggregate household resources are divided equally between members (or at least according to a formula), such that you do not find poor individuals in non-poor households (or, conversely, non-poor individuals in poor households). The characteristics of poverty are presented on the basis of the same assumption. This conception of the household is not only implausibly monolithic and egalitarian, but also static. It assumes that individuals are fixed within households and cannot move easily between them – and certainly not in response to the income or health of any household member. Household membership is also assumed to be unambiguous. Insofar as household composition is fluid, it is assumed to be exogenous to issues of income, wealth or health.

This unitary, egalitarian and static conception of the household is often rooted in an idealised model of a north-west European, nuclear-family household. In its ideal form, this comprises of a married, heterosexual couple and all of their dependent children; insofar as the members of the household have more than one income, incomes are pooled; no one is a member of any other household; and, for the adults, the conjugal bond is at least as important if not more important than those of descent. The only circumstances in which any member of this household would leave to form or join another household would be when a dependent child became independent or in the event of separation or divorce. This kind of household informed the design of surveys in Europe and North America. When researchers began to conduct surveys in other parts of the world, they often replicated the assumption that households took this form.

In Southern Africa, such assumptions are, at best, 'heroic' (i.e. are presumed to be better than any alternatives), or, more likely, are deeply misleading if not simply wrong (see Russell, 2003a). A series of studies have drawn attention to the complexity and 'fluidity' of urban and rural households in South Africa. Historically, fluidity was primarily a result of long-distance labour migration, from rural areas to farms, mines and towns. More recently, fluidity is much more complex. On the one hand, the membership of both urban and rural households is often 'fluid' in that individuals change their relationships with other clusters of individuals ('households') over time. On the other hand,

households are often ‘porous’ in that individuals are often members of more than one household in the same area, eating with or sleeping under the same roof as or sharing their own resources with more than one other residentially-rooted group of people or ‘household’.

The fluidity and porosity of households are especially important for the study of how HIV and AIDS impact on people in Southern Africa. In a static and stable nuclear-family household system, the illness or death of a breadwinner or caregiver is disastrous to all members of the household. But in a society in which ‘households’ are fluid and porous, the consequences of illness or death may be mitigated by individuals’ links to people normally resident elsewhere. They may also be mitigated by the movement of people between ‘households’: dependents may be moved into the care of others, or other breadwinners or caregivers might move into an AIDS-affected household.

Little is known about how household dynamics interact with poverty and health in Southern Africa. This paper explores this topic through reviews of several distinct literatures. The paper revolves around the meaning of kinship in the choices that people make about household formation and composition.

If South African households have become porous and fluid, have the norms and practices of kinship also changed over time? Forty years ago, Fortes described the *ideal* of kinship (the ‘axiom of amity’) in stark terms in his classic *Kinship and the Social Order*: ‘Kinship is binding; it creates inescapable moral claims and obligations’ (Fortes, 1969: 242).

> What the rule posits is that ‘kinsfolk’ have irresistible claims on one another’s support and consideration in contradistinction to ‘non-kinsmen’, simply by reason of the fact that they are kin. Kinsfolk must ideally share – hence the frequent invocation of brotherhood as the model of generalized kinship; and they must, ideally, do so without putting a price on what they give. Reciprocal giving between kinsfolk is supposed to be done freely and not in submission to coercive sanctions or in response to contractual obligations. (*Ibid*: 238)

Fortes contrasted the responsibilities between kin with the conditional relationships between non-kin, which entail ‘a sort of book-keeping’ and ‘an element of deliberate calculation’ of reciprocity (*ibid*: 246; see also Radcliffe-Brown, 1950).

The reality or practice of kinship in the 1960s in societies across Africa and elsewhere in the global South would surely not have reflected the ideal precisely, but it seems likely that the norms of kinship were less easily 'escaped' then than now (although it is unclear what is cause and what is effect). Russell (2003b) shows that urban African households in South Africa have norms and values that are in many but not all respects different to African households in deep rural areas, which she imagines are more 'traditional' in the sense of having probably changed less in the recent past. But Russell did not ask about norms and values around responsibility for dependent kin. From other parts of Africa there is evidence that many people now restrict their responsibilities or obligations to a narrower range of kin than in the past. They will support their parents, for example, but not elderly aunts and uncles (see, for example, Aboderin, 2004, on Ghana).[1] Ansell and Van Blerk (2004: 678) write that, in Malawi, 'cultural rules and practices have long been somewhat fluid'. They point to the blurring of differences between matrilineal and patrilineal societies, not least because of inter-marriage. Some of this change may be due to, or at least exacerbated by, AIDS. Dilger (2006) found that considerable social and cultural flux in rural Tanzania in the late 1990s and early 2000s. He writes of 'social and moral crisis' and 'the dissolution – or, in some cases, the modification – of family bonds'. Whilst the precise pattern of responsibility to kin in South Africa remains uncertain, it seems likely that kinship is much less 'binding' than in the past.

Both 'householding' and 'kinship' now entail *choice* and *agency* (as is emphasised by, especially, Ross, 2003). Neither households nor kinship are cast-iron structures within which individuals have clear responsibilities and claims. Now, individuals can contest and negotiate the claims made on them, and the claims they make on others. Insofar as households and kinship retain coherence and salience in the lives of individuals, this is because their individual members choose to invest in or share a *common project*. Household-formation and the practice of kinship thus entail 'social projects' among groups of individuals. Choice, however, does not mean the absence of constraint. Choices are likely to be made in a moral or normative framework that shows continuities from the past, and in the context of material constraints.

[1] Concerns about the decline in kinship-based support for the poor are not new in South Africa. Non-contributory old-age pensions were extended to the poor African majority in 1944 in part because of a perception among state officials, employers and other elites that kinship-based support had broken down (see Seekings, 2005). This was more than a century after similar perceptions were recorded in Britain, in the 1832 Royal Commission on the Poor Laws.

This paper reviews a variety of literatures relevant to the exercise of choice and agency in householding and kinship. It examines, first and in brief, the experience of migration and the widespread phenomenon of what I call 'bi-residential' households. It then turns to debates in the late 1990s on 'domestic fluidity' in urban areas, pointing to the neglect of choice and agency in this literature. The third and fourth sections examine literatures on the provision of care for children (especially orphans) and older adults. The following sections introduce the study of norms around kinship, drawing on a comparative literature to focus attention on what I call the 'radius of responsibility': who accepts responsibilities for whom, under what circumstances, and on what conditions; how these are rooted in social, cultural and economic conditions; and how the respective responsibilities of state, kin and 'community' (i.e. neighbours) are demarcated. In clarifying the need to go 'beyond' the fact of 'domestic fluidity', to issues of choice and agency, the paper seeks to provide a basis for further quantitative and qualitative empirical investigation.

Migration, the life-course and bi-residential households

Through most of the twentieth century, changes in household composition generally corresponded to changes over the life-course. For women, this meant moving from a paternal household to the household of parents-in-law and later to the independent household headed by the husband. For men, it typically entailed dividing time between two households, one at the workplace (possibly in a hostel or compound), the other in the rural area of origin. In practice, this generally meant that 'households' were split between two sites, with the migrant worker spending most of the year at his workplace and his dependent kin remaining in the rural homestead. 'Choice' and 'agency' were framed by the life-course, with little scope for variation.

The expansion of commercial agriculture and especially the discovery of minerals in the second half of the nineteenth century resulted in a rising demand for labour, and opportunities for young men to migrate to work to earn enough to buy a gun or pay for *lobola*. The state increased the supply of migrant labour by imposing taxes in rural areas and restricting alternative opportunities for earning cash (notably, farming for the market). Later, the state imposed tight restrictions on who could migrate, and who could live where, both preventing a worker's dependents from joining him and compelling most workers to return to rural areas once their period of work was complete. The consequences of this

were, first, a large number of single men living in hostels, and secondly a large number of rural households with absent 'members'. Male migrant workers would remit a share of their wages to their rural dependents. In some cases, the employer would even do this for them. Migrant remittances were crucial to avoiding poverty through most of the twentieth century. The rural poor typically comprised those households that did not have absent 'members' working as migrants in town or on the mines (Houghton and Walton, 1952; Iliffe, 1987; Seekings and Nattrass, 2005).

Agency was very constrained, in that many men faced little real choice (because they needed cash) and the choices facing women and children were constrained by the pass laws that regulated whether they could accompany or follow the men. Migrants did face a choice over whether, how much and to whom they should remit a share of their earnings. As is documented in many classic South African novels (such as Alan Paton's *Cry, the Beloved Country*), some migrants did 'choose' to stop supporting their rural kin and cut off ties. In the early apartheid period, before the rise of mass unemployment, rural poverty was typically confined to households that had no able-bodied men who could do migrant work or households where the able-bodied men had been 'swallowed up' by the city and were failing to remit to their rural dependents.

The state's attempts at 'influx control' in urban areas, through the 'pass' laws, confined many women and children to rural areas. As unemployment grew, influx control confined people to rural poverty. But the apartheid state was ultimately unable to stem rural-to-urban migration and urbanisation. Work-seekers and dependents alike migrated to the towns in defiance of the state. Eventually, at the very end of the apartheid period, the state abolished most legal restrictions on mobility – in large part in recognition that they were no longer working. The national political transition to democracy resulted in further urbanisation.

In post-apartheid South Africa, therefore, migration has two forms. First, many people in urban areas have migrated there from the rural areas where they were born and, in many cases, went to school. Figure 1 shows the proportion of African people in Cape Town who were born in Cape Town, by age, using data from 2002. Only among children do Cape Town-born people outnumber immigrants, almost all from the Eastern Cape. This dimension of migration entails urbanisation. Secondly, and despite the rapid growth of urban housing and public services for African migrants to town, many people in town continue to travel backwards and forwards to and from the rural areas. Indeed, Posel and

Casale found that, nationally, permanent migration did not seem to be replacing temporary or circular migration, and that migration by households was not replacing migration by individuals. The proportion of households reporting absent members actually rose in the decade after 1993 (c.f. their own studies cited in Casale and Posel, 2006: 14). Overall, according to the 1996 Population Census, about one-quarter of all South Africans had migrated across the borders of a magisterial district, whilst one in eight South Africans had done so over the previous five years alone. Migration rates were highest among young men, although rates for young women were catching up rapidly. Migration rates were, surprisingly perhaps, highest among white South Africans. Most migration was into metropolitan areas (Kok *et al*., 2003, as summarised in Casale and Posel, 2006).

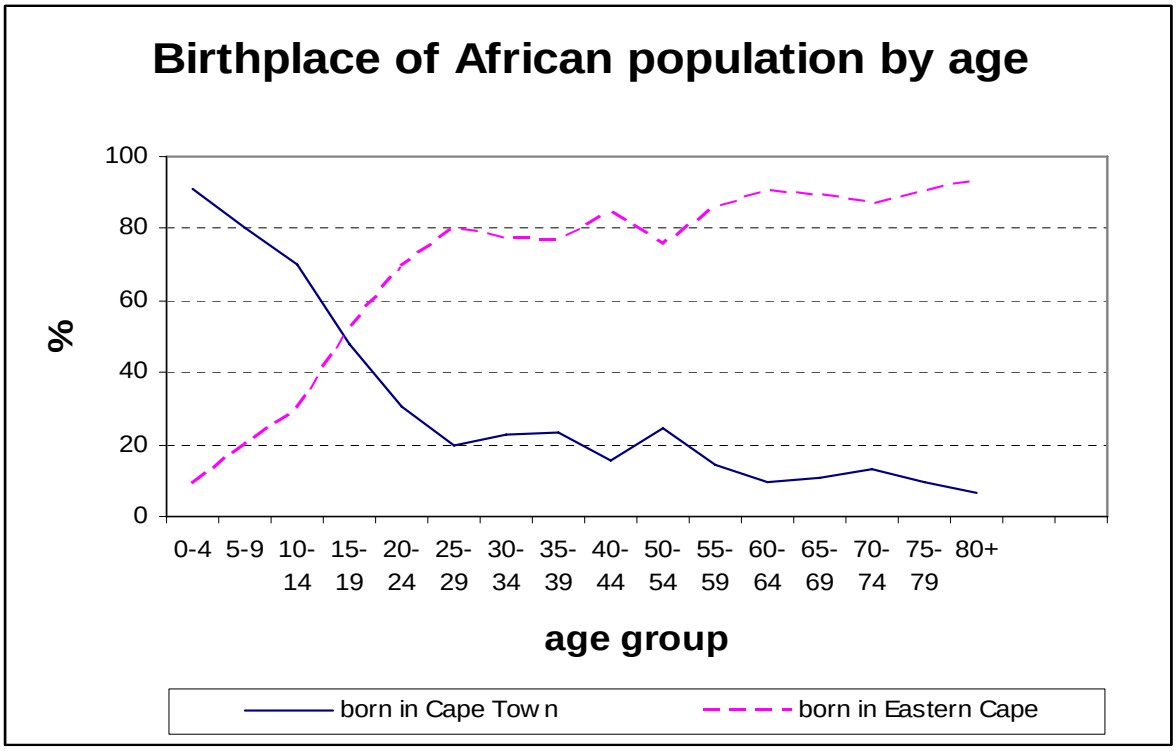


Figure 1: Migration into Cape Town

Despite their continuing importance, migration and remittance behaviour remain under-researched since the end of apartheid. The rapid expansion of research into many aspects of life in post-apartheid South Africa has not been matched in the field of migration, largely because of the difficulties in collecting good data on migration and remittances in surveys. Household surveys typically collect data on people who are resident, and more occasionally on household 'members'

who are (temporarily) absent elsewhere.[2] But they have not matched up data on migrants themselves with data on the households they have 'left'. The analysis of migration requires longitudinal data, preferably from panel studies, and a more elastic conception of the 'household' than has informed most 'household surveys'.

Surveys collect some data on remittances sent and received, but typically does so at the household level. In other words, surveys do not identify precisely who in the household sends remittances or receives them. Nor do most surveys identify who sent remittances arriving in a household in the sample, or to whom remittances from the household were sent. Casale and Posel (2006) note that even series of surveys often collect data inconsistently (for example, the October Household Surveys conducted by Statistics South Africa between 1995 and 1999). Survey data do show the continuing importance of remittances. More than three out of four rural African households report receiving remittances.[3] Data collected on the remittances sent by migrants show that migrants remit considerably more to immediate kin – spouses and children – than to more distant kin, and also that they remit less if they have any of their children living with them (Posel, 2001a). Using cross-sectional data, Jensen (2004) calculated that public pensions crowd out private remittances, i.e. that migrants remit less to kin who receive a pension than to kin who do not, controlling for other factors (see also Posel, 2001a, 2001b).

Posel and Casale find that the existing, rather inadequate data suggest that the real value of remittances declined after 1993. They suggest several possible reasons, including rising unemployment and stagnant or declining earnings, the rising value of government pensions and grants, and the migration of many rural dependents to live with a breadwinner in town (Posel and Casale, 2006, cited in Casale and Posel, 2006: 19). Remittances are of much less importance than pensions and grants for the alleviation of poverty.

The end of influx control in the last years of apartheid brought new complexity to household dynamics among poorer sections of the population. Women,

[2] One practical reason for counting only people who are actually resident is the concern to avoid double-counting some people who might be considered to have multiple household membership. The national Population Census records people who spent a specified night in the household, although the 1996 census also asked who was 'usually' resident but was absent on census night because they were working elsewhere. See Casale and Posel (2006) for a review of how migration has been examined in censuses and surveys.

[3] Everatt and Solanki (2007: 63) found that more than half of the respondents in their survey reported giving to family members outside of their household.

children and the unemployed could move to towns more easily than hitherto. A rapid expansion in urban housing – through both government subsidies for housing and massive rezoning of agricultural land for residential purposes – made possible household fragmentation and accelerated intra-urban mobility. Many 'extended families' are now dispersed across several urban residences as well as rural 'homes'. The result has been a great expansion of choice over who lives where, and with whom – and hence of agency within the constraints of poverty and inherited norms of kinship.

'Domestic fluidity': Debating the household in the 1990s

The relaxation of constraints on urbanisation among African people at the end of apartheid was accompanied – and perhaps contributed to – increasing complexity in the structure of the households formed by African people in urban areas. Just as social scientists were beginning to conduct large-scale surveys that assumed that people formed discrete, stable households, anthropologists and others began to demonstrate the fluidity, porosity and instability of these very households. In this context, choice and agency grew in importance with respect to the ways in which households were constituted and operated, and kinship practiced.

Anthropologists Spiegel, Ross, Ramphele and Henderson have pioneered the analysis of the contemporary urban African household. Spiegel (1996) emphasised 'domestic fluidity', by which he meant both the extended and the changing nature of domestic arrangements. In an article written with Watson and Wilkinson, Spiegel reports that ethnographic research revealed 'a level of domestic diversity and fluidity among Africans in Cape Town that throws any model of a "standard", nuclear family based household into question' (Spiegel, Watson and Wilkinson, 1996: 25). Ross also emphasised how the residents of an impoverished informal settlement on the eastern periphery of Cape Town 'created domestic relationships that were not stable over time'.

> Children lodged with relatives and friends while their parents were mobile; adults moved between domestic units; people ate in different units to those in which they slept. … Residents created extensive but short-lived networks of support which stretched across and beyond the settlement, linking individuals into complex and extremely fluid social interactions. So rapidly changing were these compounded knots of

> interacting individuals that they often appeared to have no boundaries save those imposed by situational immediacy. (Ross, 1996: 66)

Like Spiegel *et al*., she emphasised the roles of poverty and apartheid in creating what she terms 'diffused domesticity' (see also Ross, 1993, 2003).

Henderson (1999) and Ramphele (2002) also examined domestic fluidity from the perspective of adolescents in the formal African township of New Crossroads (also in Cape Town). Henderson explores the fragility of children's domestic worlds, as they moved not only between places but also between caregivers. Ramphele emphasised the costs of fluidity, as children's relationships with mothers were disrupted. She also found that children living with other kin are often discriminated against in terms of both material and emotional resources. In her account, extended-family households are often sites of jealousy and resentment as well as discrimination. One of her informants, Dumo, lived with his uncle, who supported a large extended family, but resented having to do so. One day, without announcement, the uncle moved to Khayelitsha with his girlfriend and their children (Ramphele, 2002: 67-8; see also Henderson, 1999: 73-7). Ramphele emphasises that fluidity was rooted in part in the migrant labour system, but she also points to its cultural roots in the custom of separating children born before marriage from their mothers. Men, in Ramphele's account, were often hostile to any children born to their wives or girlfriends in prior relationships with other men.

Spiegel *et al*. and Ross emphasised social and economic pressures (and opportunities) driving household dynamics. Russell (2003a, 2003b) emphasised instead cultural preferences behind the continuing prevalence of porous and fluid, extended family households. Spiegel *et al*. and Ross portray poor people as remarkably devoid of cultural traditions and influences. De Bos, where Ross conducted her research, is surely atypical of urban Cape Town. However, Russell does perhaps tend to underestimate the incentives to change that arise – and hence the choices that need to be made – in the urban environment.

The persistence of complexity and fluidity within African (and perhaps other) 'households' does not mean that these households are unchanging. There is evidence that South African households have been shrinking over time, and debate over the extent to which the extended-family household form has been giving way to a nuclear-family household form among the African population. The evidence with respect to both size and structure is inconclusive, primarily because of the absence of sufficient longitudinal data.

The challenge of constructing a historical series of data on household size defeated Simkins (1986) because of changes in coverage and definition (see also Ziehl, 2001). Since the early 1990s there has been much more detailed and reliable data, but it remains difficult to identify trends with precision. Census and survey data suggest that there has been a rapid decline in household size since the end of apartheid. The 1995 October Household Survey indicated that the mean household size was 4.3 people. The 2001/02 Labour Force Surveys suggested that it had declined to about 3.8 people. The decline was evident in all population groups, but was more rapid in African households (Pirouz, 2005). The 2006 GHS suggests a mean household size of 3.8 people, with white South Africans living in slightly smaller households (mean of 2.6) than Indian, African or coloured people (means of 3.7, 3.8 and 4.1 respectively).[4]

The rural area of Agincourt in the Limpopo Province is one of the few areas for which detailed and probably consistent data exists on households across several years. Starting in 1992, a series of cross-sectional data has been collected as part of a demographic surveillance study. Between 1992 and 2003, the mean size of households declined from about 6.5 members to just 6 members. Amidst a generally high rate of turnover in the membership of existing households, many more new households form than old ones dissolve. Wittenberg and Collinson (2007) decompose the overall changes into a 'within household effect' (meaning that existing households shrink), a 'replacement effect' (meaning that new households are smaller than dissolving ones), and a 'dilution effect' (meaning that there are many small, new households, such that the overall distribution shifts towards smaller households). They find no evidence of the within household effect, weak evidence of the replacement effect, and very strong evidence of the dilution effect. In sum, therefore, declining average household size in this one rural area is driven by the rapid formation of many new and small households (Wittenberg and Collinson, 2007; see also Madhavan and Schatz, 2007).

African households have not only been declining in size but have also, if some scholars are to be believed, been shifting in terms of structure, from an extended-family to a nuclear-family structure – at least in urban areas. This argument – which sits uneasily with the work cited above on domestic fluidity – was made first by Steyn (1993), and was later supported by Amoateng (1997) using data on the predominantly African township of Mfuleni in Cape Town.

[4] It is not clear that the definition of 'household' has been invariate. Ziehl reports, for example, that the 1991 and 1996 censuses counted live-in domestic workers differently. This resulted in a big increase in single-member urban African households!

Not only were households in Mfuleni not markedly larger than white households in South Africa as a whole, but about two out of three households comprised a nuclear family (or a variant of this, such as a mother-child unit). Amoateng saw this as evidence for Steyn's 'convergence' thesis, i.e. that urban African households were converging on a western-style nuclear-family household model. Such arguments have been hotly contested, however.

Russell (1994) accused Steyn of Eurocentrism in her conceptualisation, her data collection, and her analysis. Koen (1998) and Russell (1998) criticised aspects of Amoateng's methodology. Russell charged him with the same error made by Steyn, of assuming that the existence at a particular moment in time of households that comprised a 'nuclear family' necessarily means that the prevailing family system is converging on the western model. Also, without knowing much more about his fieldworkers' definition of 'household', it was difficult to understand precisely what it was they were measuring.[5] Most recently, Amoateng and Richter (2003) analysed the 1996 Population Census and concluded that urban African people were divided between nuclear family households (less than one-half), extended family households (one-third) and non-family households (one-fifth). Only among rural African people did extended family households predominate.

Russell (2003a) subsequently expanded her general critique, identifying more fully the differences between the nuclear-family household structure that has predominated in Western Europe (and its Diaspora) and the extended-family household structure that has predominated, historically, in southern Africa. The culturally-specific west European model – which preceded urbanisation and industrialisation – is based on the conjugal relationship of marriage, and kinship is defined by birth and marriage (with the result that only unmarried siblings have identical kin). Insofar as descent is important, it is bilateral, with no distinction between maternal and paternal kin. The basis of the African model is the consanguinal relationship of descent, which is unilinear, through the male line (i.e. is patrilineal or agnatic). Kin is defined by birth, and marriage framed around reproduction (and bridewealth exchange). These differences have important consequences for understandings of (for example) illegitimacy, extra-'marital' sex, the sharing of resources, and the salience of distant kin, as well as for the composition and stability of households. Russell acknowledges the changing context:

[5] Amoateng (1998) responded to these criticisms, agreeing with some, ignoring others.

> Contemporary black South African ideas about appropriate patterns of co-residence and family behaviour have been shaped in the tumult of the last hundred years. Expectations, derived from the agnatic kinship system evolved over centuries as pastoral cultivators, have been confronted by a transformed – increasingly, urban and industrial – political economy, undercutting the material base on which kinship practices were originally constructed. They have also come up against Western expectations, powerfully propagated by Christian missionaries acting as the gatekeepers of social mobility in the colonial era, and more recently urban American ideas of individualism and consumerism. (Russell, 2003a: 11)

But, she continues, pre-colonial cultures of kinship and lineage continue to exert strong influence in the present.

These debates on households were stymied by the lack of good data beyond the rich but very localised anthropological studies (by Spiegel, Ross, Henderson and Ramphele). Censuses use inconsistent definitions of the household and collect inadequate data on composition (Ziehl, 2001). Even with good cross-sectional data, it would be hard to assess the extent to which there was any convergence on the nuclear-family model because, at any one point in time, some people might live in nuclear-family households but without adopting the nuclear-family 'pattern' (Ziehl, 2001, 2002). In her 1994 article, Russell noted that an extended-family household 'may momentarily consist of only two generations'; 'what matters is not the form which the household presents at any one moment, but the rules about co-residence which determine the range of relatives likely to be found within a household *over time*' (Russell, 1994: 60; emphasis added). Ziehl (2001, 2002) subsequently discussed this in more detail, ostensibly in critique of Russell. Household structure changes over the lifecycle within both nuclear- and extended-family systems, such that people might live in nuclear family *households* even within an extended-family *system*. In nuclear-family systems, children grow up with their parents, later leave home to get married and establish their own households, then have children, and the cycle is repeated. Viewed over time, they live in households that are nuclear, then comprise only the couple, then become nuclear once more, and later still return to comprising the couple only. In extended-family systems, children might grow up in a three-generation household, with their grandparents as well as their parents (and, perhaps, other kin also), but that when the grandparents die the household might become for a while two-generational, even appearing nuclear in composition. It is only when members of this younger generation themselves have children that

the household becomes three-generational once more. The importance of this is that some people living within a nuclear-family system will be living in couple-only households, whilst some people living within an extended-family system will be living in what appear to be nuclear-family households. Data from censuses or cross-sectional surveys therefore needs to be treated with some caution, as the prevalence of what appear to be nuclear-family households might not indicate the shift to a nuclear-family household system. Nonetheless, the proportion of households that at any one time include any non-nuclear kin (or non-kin) is surely a good indicator of the prevalence of extended family dynamics over time.

Russell also expanded the debate to the analysis of family norms, i.e. people's normative assessments of family structures, responsibilities and obligations (Russell, 2003b). Russell's objective was to examine whether urban African adults retained the norms associated with the African model or had adopted instead the norms associated with the west European model. She developed a set of indicators that distinguished between the attitudes towards household and family form of African people in deep rural areas, who were assumed to adhere most closely to the African model, and white people in the suburbs of major South African cities. Rural African adults, for example, agreed strongly whilst urban white adults disagreed strongly with the statements that 'a married woman should put her mother-in-law before her mother', 'it is natural and to be expected that a man will never be content to restrict sex to one woman', and 'a child who is deceived about who its actual biological father is, is likely to get sick or worse'. Russell then used these indicators to examine the norms of urban African adults, and found that 'in matters of family and kinship, urban blacks are still influenced by a distinctive African cultural approach to kinship, as well as adapting their views in light of new urban experiences' (Russell, 2003b: 153). Thus urban African adults disagreed that 'a married woman should put her mother-in-law before her mother', but agreed with the statement about the consequences of deceiving a child about his or her paternity (*ibid*: 165-6).

There is less research on households in rural areas in the 1990s than in urban areas. Research on rural households in previous decades tended to emphasise that rural 'households' could not be understood – and were not understood by their members – without reference to absent members living and working elsewhere. What appear to be 'women-headed households' in rural areas were households in which the male breadwinner was a migrant worker, but nonetheless was considered a member and probably the head of the household. Murray's classic account of Lesotho was thus titled *Families Divided* (1981).

His analysis was echoed in the later work of, for example, Spiegel (1990) in Matatiele, Baber (1998) in Sekhukuneland, and Townsend (1997) in Botswana. Such studies tended to emphasise the apparently continuing web of kinship obligations on migrant workers within 'extended' families. For men in Botswana, for example, 'moving through the life course is a process of negotiating a way through a series of overlapping and competing claims for the products of his labour'.

> Men have claims on them from their parents and siblings as well as from their partners. They also have obligations both to their own children and to their sisters' children. The claims of the sisters' children are more pressing if those children's fathers do not support them. (Townsend, 1997: 419)

As this final sentence indicates, however, men sometimes do not recognise their responsibilities even to their own children. Indeed, Townsend writes, 'some men may … evade most of the claims on their time and income'. But, because 'social life is constituted by reciprocity and mutual interdependence, a life of complete isolation is economically precarious and psychically costly' (419).

Both urban and rural studies tend to emphasise the persistence of kinship and the reality of 'extended' families. Neither urban nor rural studies pay much attention to the limits to the practices of kinship, or how these limits might have changed over time. They do not tell us how men or women rank different claims made on them, or what are the implications of such ranking for the well-being of poorer or less healthy kin. If it were true that there is a growing preference among African people in urban areas to limit co-residence to the close kin, i.e. to live in nuclear-family households, then this would have profound implications for responses to the AIDS pandemic. There is, however, other evidence that this is either not happening or happening slowly, and that the kinship system is continuing to provide care. The strongest evidence concerns the large numbers of children in South Africa who do not live with their biological parents. Among these are many orphans, including AIDS orphans, who have not been abandoned on the rocks of nuclear-family indifference.

Orphans and other children living apart from their mothers

Untreated AIDS kills, and by the end of 2007 had killed more than 2 million South Africans. These were people whose lives were cut short, generally at a young age. Even after their death, AIDS can continue to exact a toll, because of the enduring consequences for their former dependents and, especially, their children. With the number of AIDS orphans rising steadily, it is not surprising that considerable attention has been paid to this particular group – to their living arrangements and to the consequences of orphanhood for their schooling and other measures of their well-being.

In the early 2000s the AIDS pandemic prompted a flurry of apocalyptic assertions about the crisis of orphanhood. High mortality rates would produce large numbers of AIDS orphans, who would grow up in deprived social environments (perhaps even on the street), become mal-socialised, and end up as juvenile delinquents precipitating a breakdown in the social fabric (see the critical review in Bray, 2003). Such assertions may have served a purpose in increasing the attention paid to the pandemic and its victims, but they were based on little or no evidence. African societies have long cared for large numbers of orphans as well as the very much larger number of children living apart from their biological parents, through the extended family. As Bray argued, the moral panic around AIDS orphans underestimated the capacity of the extended family to raise children, including orphans, and misrepresented the real challenges facing orphans and other children (Bray, 2003).

Ardington (2007) identifies trends in the prevalence of orphanhood using twelve countrywide cross-sectional surveys conducted between 1993 and 2005.[6] She notes the difficulties in constructing a clear series because surveys ask questions differently (for example, some specify *biological* parents, others not) and respondent (invariably an adult) sometimes do not know whether the absent father of a co-resident child is dead or alive. In addition, child-headed households and street children are generally excluded from household survey samples (see Ardington, 2007: Appendix). These difficulties notwithstanding, surveys do indicate a clear rise over time in rates of orphanhood (even taking into account 95 percent confidence intervals). The proportion of children whose mother had died tripled over twelve years, the proportion whose fathers had died

[6] The surveys used were: 1993 PSLSD, OHSs (1995-1998), 1998 DHS, GHSs (2002-05) and the 1996 and 2001 Population Censuses.

doubled, and the proportion who were double orphans (i.e. with deceased mothers and fathers) had risen faster still (Ardington, 2007: Fig 2). In 2005, by the age of seventeen, more than a quarter of children have a deceased father, more than one in ten have a deceased mother, and 6 percent are double orphans.

Figure 2 shows Ardington's summary of household survey data on children with deceased mothers, and compares these findings with the estimates made by Dorrington *et al*. (2006) using the ASSA2003 model.[7] The Ardington data are rates (left-hand axis) and for the 8-17 age group only, whilst the Dorrington data are actual numbers (right-hand axis) and for all children up to the age of 18. The trends are almost identical. Dorrington *et al*. (2006: 25) project that the number of maternal orphans under the age of 18 would rise to about 2.5 million in 2015. Note that the series in Figure 2 are for all orphans, not specifically AIDS orphans – because survey data cannot be used to distinguish between these.

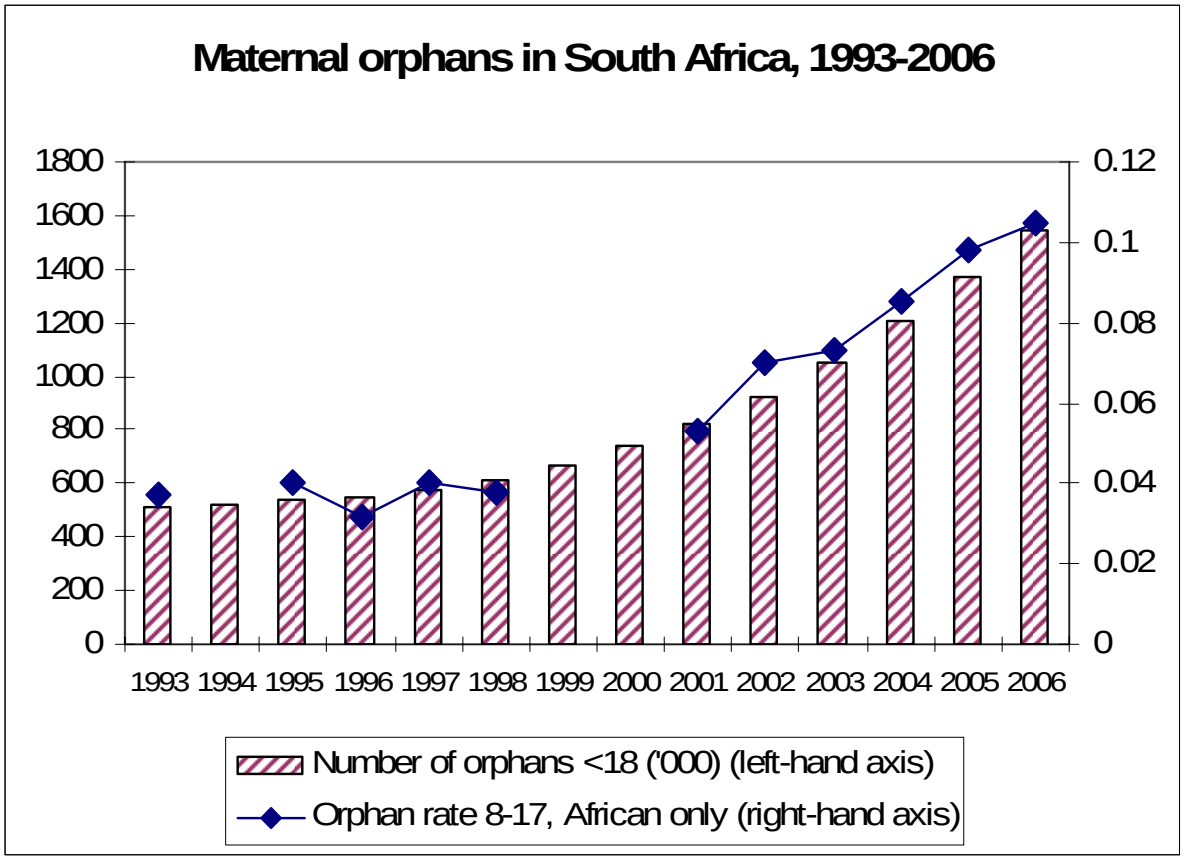


Figure 2: Maternal orphans, numbers and rates, 1993-2006

[7] I have extended the series by including data from the 2006 GHS.

Orphaned children still comprise, however, a small proportion of the total number of children living apart from their parents. In 2006, according to the General Household Survey, 74 percent of African children under the age of 14 lived with their mothers. Twenty percent lived apart from their mothers but their mothers were alive, living elsewhere. Only 6 percent were maternal orphans. The proportions for African children under the age of 18 were 71, 21 and 8 percent respectively. For every maternal orphan, there are three children living apart from their living, biological mothers.

Zimmerman (2003) used South African data from 1993 – i.e. before there were large numbers of AIDS orphans – to examine the effects of child 'fostering' on school enrolment. By fostering, Zimmerman meant children who were not living with their biological parents; he did not mean only the small number of children who had been through a legal fostering procedure. He divided the effect on schooling into two components: a 'migration' effect, referring to the probability that enrolment rises because children are being sent from areas where there is poor access to school to areas with better access; and a 'Cinderella' effect, referring to the probability that children are discriminated against in their new households relative to the biological children of the adults in the households. Zimmerman found a large and positive migration effect that easily outweighed the small and negative Cinderella effect. The Cinderella effect was especially weak when children were fostered by close kin, but stronger when they were fostered by distant kin. If school enrolment is one measure of children's well-being, then being sent to live with close kin is often good for children, although the net benefits of being sent to live with more distant kin are more muted. Cichello (2003) built on this research by using panel data from KwaZulu-Natal from 1993 and 1998 (from the KwaZulu-Natal Income Dynamics Study, or KIDS), and examining progression through school grades rather than just enrolment. He found that, in the longer term, the Cinderella effect is very muted: fostered children do not appear to be disadvantaged relative to biological children in the same households. The migration effect was also muted in the long term. Overall, children living apart from their parents do not appear to experience either advantages or disadvantages relative to children living with their parents.

Ardington examines the living arrangements of orphans, compared to non-orphans. Again, there are methodological difficulties, primarily because of inconsistent definitions of the household and residency. Ardington finds that single orphans are less likely to live with their surviving parent and more likely to live with grandparents. A negligible proportion of orphans live with non-kin.

> With respect to living arrangements, the extended family network appears to be accommodating the increasing number of orphans with no increase in the percentage of orphans living in households headed by a non related person. Within the family network there do appear to have been some shifts in the living arrangement of orphans with single parent orphans being less likely to co-reside with the surviving parents and all orphans more likely to live in a household headed by a grandparent. (*ibid*: 15)

Ardington's concern is not so much with the prevalence of orphanhood as much as with the effects of orphanhood on the well-being of children. Her first finding is that the effects on economic well-being – measured in terms of household income per capita in households containing orphans, compared to households not containing orphans – are unclear. Paternal orphans are poorer but maternal orphans not, compared to non-orphans. This pattern still holds when one controls for some other factors – although it is not possible, using the available cross-sectional household survey data, to control for poverty prior to orphanhood, and it is very possible that paternal orphans are more likely to come from poor households, i.e. that poverty preceded orphanhood rather than being consequential to it. It is easier to identify the effects of orphanhood on schooling, or at least on enrolment and grade attainment in school. Cross-sectional and longitudinal studies elsewhere in Africa found that orphanhood is correlated with lower school enrolment and/or slower progression through school.[8] The studies of child fostering in South Africa by Zimmerman and Cichello did not find this to be the case for fostered children. Ardington examines the schooling of orphaned children in particular. She finds that fostered, non-orphaned children are somewhat disadvantaged relative to non-fostered, non-orphans, but double orphans (and, presumably, maternal orphans in general) are even more disadvantaged. Maternal death seems to have bigger effects than paternal death. Ardington does not decompose migration and Cinderella effects for orphans.

A series of studies by Young/Van Blerk[9] and Ansell examined the impact of AIDS on orphans in Lesotho and Malawi in 2001. They cite the claim made by international agencies that AIDS is eroding the extended family system, and refer to efforts by some states to expand fostering by non-kin. They collected

[8] Ardington cites and discusses a number of studies elsewhere in Africa that I have not examined myself. She also points to methodological reasons to be skeptical about some earlier studies that found little or no effect (*ibid*: 7-8).

[9] Young later wrote under her married name of Van Blerk.

information from AIDS-affected children aged 10-17, on local as well as long-distance migration, through a variety of qualitative methods. Van Blerk and Ansell report on the reasons given by children for migration. Detailed discussions revealed that sickness or death were frequently the indirect cause of migration:

> Numerous children had, for instance, moved home not because of the absence of a carer but because a parent became unemployed (because he or she was sick), because there was no money for rent (as a result of the death of a wage earner), or because their guardian was evicted by her in-laws (when her husband died). Children sometimes related their migration to inability to pay school fees, family conflict, or employment reasons, which were later revealed to be consequences of parental sickness or death. Other children moved to care for sick relatives in other households. (Van Blerk and Ansell, 2006: 458)

They continue to discuss some of the consequences of migration for AIDS-affected children. Most migrant AIDS-affected children experience disruption to old friendship groups, disorientation in the new neighbourhood, and a decline in the quality of care relationships. Their schooling is often disrupted. And sometimes, especially in cases of urban-to-rural migration, children are burdened with additional domestic chores (see also Young and Ansell, 2003b; Ansell and Young, 2004).

This research succeeds in demonstrating that children are engaged in migration, sometimes with perceived negative consequences. They show that children migrate in response to both household dissolution and as a coping strategy. But their research has several limits. They provide suggestive qualitative material but little in the way of a clear overall picture. First, they are unable to compare AIDS-affected with other children, because they did not conduct any research among the latter. Also, they identify only in very general terms *which* kin do and do not accept responsibilities of care for dependent children. Ansell and van Blerk also interviewed some adults caring for orphaned children in Malawi and Lesotho. In the matrilineal societies of southern Malawi, where families live with mother's kin, then maternal death 'ought' to result in children being raised by maternal uncle; the father, if he is still alive, might migrate away and have no further contact with his children. In the patrilineal societies of Lesotho and central/northern Malawi, where a woman lives with her husband's kin, a woman is expected to remain living there even if her husband dies; if not, the children will remain, generally with the paternal grandparents or a paternal uncle (Ansell

and Van Blerk, 2004: 678; Van Blerk and Ansell, 2006: 453). In practice, most of the adults were maternal grandmothers – even in supposedly patrilineal Lesotho. Ansell and van Blerk (2004: 681) hint at the importance of conflict, when a man dies, between his kin and his widow, couched in the discourse of witchcraft (see Ramphele, 2002; Niehaus, 2001; Ashforth, 2005). 'Most' of the adults caring for orphans explained that they considered it their responsibility to take orphaned children into their homes. 'Some relatives, however, seek to divest themselves of the guardianship of children', perhaps because of the cost of additional dependents; one in four of the guardians interviewed said that the children in their care 'had nowhere else to go', suggesting limits to kinship (Ansell and van Blerk, 2004: 681). Ansell and van Blerk represent responsibility as a very individual attitude, rather than something structured by broader norms and conventions (although they also warn against 'dismissing the significance of tradition' – *ibid*: 680).

Orphanhood in South Africa is generally understood in terms of maternal orphanhood, because it is assumed that fathers are absent or even dead themselves. Fathers respect few responsibilities to their children (Ramphele, 2002; Richter and Morrell, 2006; Bray *et al*., 2008). Madhavan, Townsend and Garey (2008) examined data from Agincourt on paternal support for their children. They found that older fathers frequently provided financially for their children even when they were not living apart, and maintained social connections. But this was much less true for the fathers of children born in the 1990s than for the fathers of children born in the 1980s. In urban areas, moreover, there seems to be more of a crisis of paternal responsibility – deepened, probably, by the AIDS- and unemployment-fuelled pandemic of witchcraft (Ashforth, 2005). Empirical research by other CSSR researchers suggests that the crisis is not simply of paternal responsibility, but of responsibility in the entire parental lineage (Neves, 2008a, 2008b, 2008c; Bray, 2008).

Adult dependents

In most societies, the elderly are the category of dependents who pose the most challenges to society. At some age, hitherto independent people become too infirm to support themselves through work. In the advanced capitalist democracies, the elderly rely either on past individual savings or on socialised retirement pensions. In most developing countries, they become the dependents of kin (or, less often, neighbours or co-congregants in churches), or they die.

Research in other parts of Africa suggests that material support for elderly kin is declining. In Ghana, where the obligation of adult children to support elderly kin was 'enshrined in the customary moral code', there is growing concern over families' 'abandonment' of their elderly (Aboderin, 2004: 211). Adult children seem to retain a sense of responsibility for their own parents, but not for other elderly kin, and the norms of filial support for parents have shifted from entailing an unconditional obligation to becoming highly conditional on parents' own efforts in the past. Aboderin explains this in terms of the declining capacity to support many kin and the priority that is attached to supporting children, which itself is driven in part by a growing recognition of the 'rights' of children. In response to trends such as these, the Organisation of African Unity recommended in 2001 that member states 'enact legislation requiring adult children to provide support for their parents … the principle being that, in the same way parents have a duty of care towards their children, children should have a duty of care towards their parents' (quote in *ibid*: 213).

South Africa's exceptional system of generous, non-contributory old-age pensions means that elderly parents required little material support from their children (with the exception in the years immediately prior to reaching the age of eligibility for pensions, i.e. 60 for women and 65 for men). Although pensions are notionally means-tested, only the obviously very rich are excluded. The availability of old-age pensions means that inter-generational transfers in South Africa do not entail children supporting parents, but rather parents (or grandparents) supporting children (or grandchildren). Møller and Sotshongaye (1996) report how, in KwaZulu-Natal, pensioners support extended families, including especially grandchildren (even to the point of neglecting their own needs): 'My family eat this money too', said one. Sagner and Mtati (1999) similarly found that pensioners in Khayelitsha (in Cape Town) 'act as magnets for economically weaker persons' (399). South Africa's non-contributory old-age pension system enjoys strong support. Indeed, despite the fact that the pension is now worth well over US$100 per person per month, there is strong support for increased benefits across *all* sections of the population – i.e. including among rich taxpayers as well as poor actual or prospective beneficiaries (Seekings, 2007a, 2007b).

Studies such as the ones by Møller and Sotshongaye (1996) and Sagner and Mtati (1999) emphasise the broad benefits of the pension system, and pay little attention to the limits to pensioners' beneficence. They do not tell us about the limits to, i.e. who pensioners do *not* support, and why. Reading between the lines, Møller and Sotshongaye might imply that pensioners favour younger kin

(especially grandchildren) and regard adult dependents as, in general, less deserving. Indeed, some of the women quoted suggest that some adults are undeserving because they do not take responsibility for their own children, instead passing the responsibility to the grandmother. The fact that there are many poor pensioner-less households indicates that many people are not the direct dependents of elderly kin, perhaps because the pensioners in their family prefer not to support them.

There are hints also that elderly women are a more reliable source of inter-generational support than elderly men. Møller (1993: 12) found that elderly black men are less likely to live with daughters than elderly black women, whilst Duflo (2003), in a now-famous study, found that girls benefitted in physical or health terms more if they lived with grandmothers receiving pensions than if they lived with grandfathers receiving pensions. Grandmaternal beneficence is important not only because parents cannot support their children, but also because many fathers choose not to do so. Responsibility is often the antithesis of irresponsibility. What is unclear is whether different norms of responsibility influence elderly men and women respectively, or whether elderly men are simply more likely to fail to comply with norms that are not gendered. It is unclear, in other words, whether the norms themselves are gendered or is it that the relationship between norms and behaviour is gendered.

South Africa also has a generous system of grants for the disabled. AIDS is a major reason why the number of disability grantees rose from about 600,000 in 2000 to almost 1.3 million in 2004. The grant pays the same benefits as the old-age pension (Nattrass, 2006a, 2006b).

Unemployed, able-bodied adults represent the major gap in South Africa's public social safety net. Such adults only benefit indirectly from the social assistance system, if they become the dependents of others, that is if they live with an elderly pensioner or disabled person, or if they have a child on whose behalf they can claim a child support grant. In practice, most unemployed people are the dependents of working kin. Almost all unemployed people are the dependents of some or other kin.

There is a limited literature on the relationship between unemployment and household structure. Klasen and Woolard (1998) and Simkins (2001) found that unemployment was associated with delays in marriage and independent household formation. Young unemployed people are typically residents in large households, whilst young, employed people live in separate, smaller households

(Wittenberg and Pearce, 1996). Research in the early 1990s found that unemployment put a strain on friendship: almost all unemployed people agreed with the statement 'People who lose their jobs, lose their friends' (Møller, 1992).

Most recently, Klasen and Woolard (2005) examine data from 1993-98 and find that 'the unemployed respond to their plight by attaching themselves to households with adequate means of private or public support to ensure access to basic means of survival. These location decisions often lead the unemployed to stay in, or move to, rural areas where the nature of economic support tends to be better …' (*ibid*: 3). Panel data from KwaZulu-Natal indicates that unemployed people are less likely to form their own independent households, instead remaining dependent on parents or other kin. Multivariate regression analysis shows that unemployed men (and, to a much lesser extent, women) are much less likely (than their employed peers) to be household heads (or the spouses of the head) and are more likely (than the employed) to live with kin, even controlling for various other variables. Such decisions about householding may be one reason why unemployment rates are so high in rural areas. Klasen and Woolard do not examine which kin unemployed people live with, as dependents. They show that many unemployed people remain with their parent(s), but do not explore why or when some unemployed people remain with their parent(s) whilst others move in with other kin.[10]

Dependency rates rose in South Africa because of the triple burden of unemployment, disability and disease. Occupational disability and disease were the first major cause of adult dependency, as significant proportions of workers on the mines 'retired' early after occupational accidents or miners pthisis. The rise of mass, open unemployment, especially in the 1980s, resulted in large numbers of able-bodied adult dependents. Most recently, AIDS has swollen further the ranks of dependents. In South Africa, because of the old-age pension, the elderly are often bread-winners with dependents of their own. Ageing is not therefore a factor in dependency rates. Some disabled or sick people have grants that make them financially independent. But most unemployed adults are dependent on other kin.

[10] The first of these questions is difficult to answer using household survey data. It is difficult even to identify who is supporting an unemployed person. It is easy to identify who in the household has an income, but it is often hard to identify clearly the relationship between the dependent and the breadwinner (because the relationship of household members is only recorded vis-à-vis the household head, who might not be the breadwinner) and an individual's sponsor might even live outside of the household. The second question – of motivation and reasons – would require highly nuanced questions in a questionnaire or qualitative research.

The decline of marriage and the crisis of patrilinearity

One gendered dimension of the changing pattern of both child and adult dependents has been the decline of marriage – and especially of stable, enduring marriage – and the rising number of 'single parents' (almost all being 'single mothers') and children living apart from fathers.

Data on marriage in South Africa is imprecise for a number of reasons (Budlender et al., 2004). The 2007 Community Survey asked about current marital status using the following set of possible responses: (1) Married civil/religious; (2) married traditional/ customary; (3) polygamous marriage; (4) living together as married partners; (5) never married; (6) widower/widow; (7) separated; or (8) divorced. Respondents were required to select one of these, even if more than one might be applicable to them (for example, someone could be separated from one person whilst living with a second). Figures 3a and 3b show the responses for the whole adult population and for African women only, divided by age group, including 'polygamous marriage' (very rare) in the customary marriage category, and combining the separated/divorced categories.

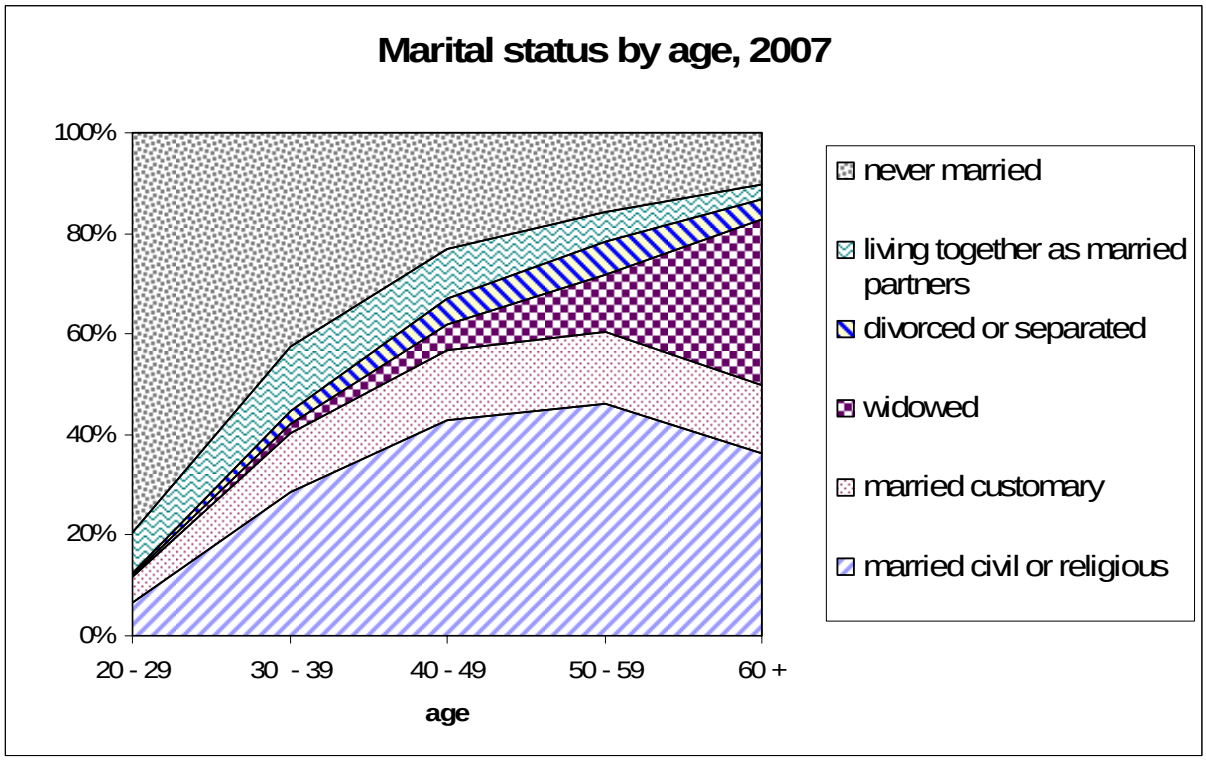


Figure 3a

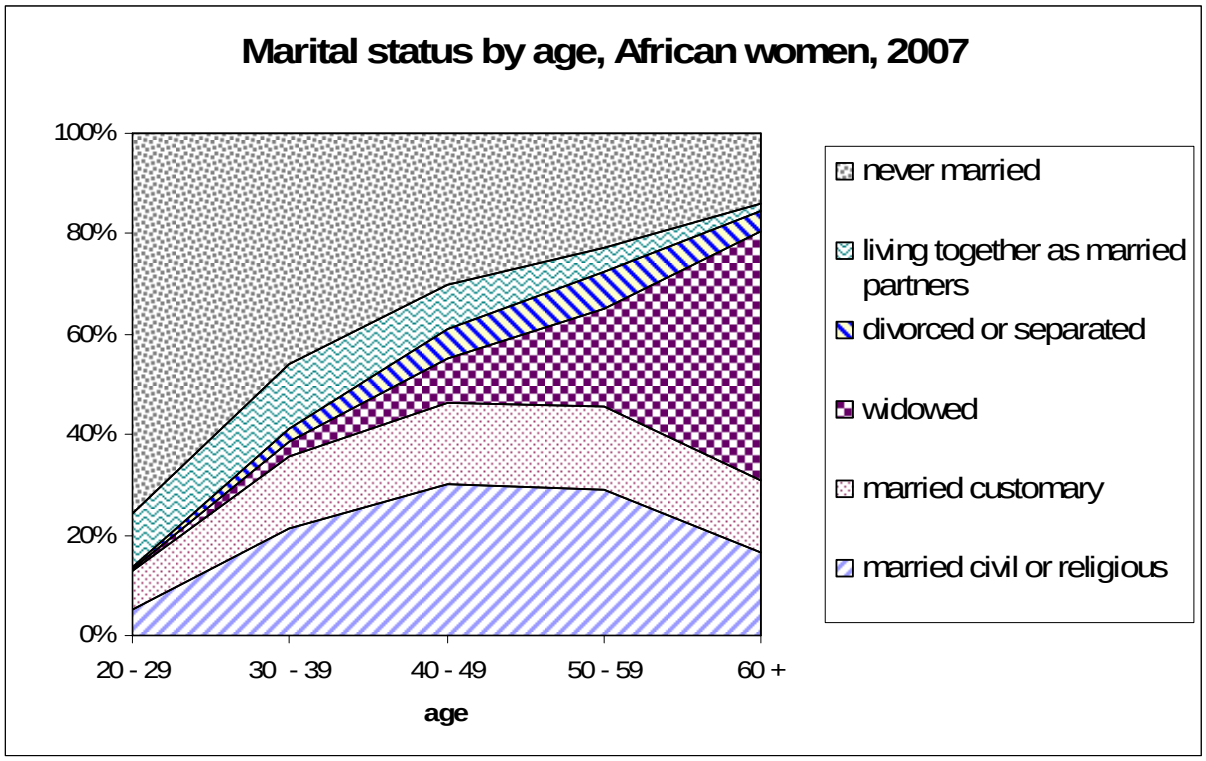


Figure 3b

Among the elderly, at least four out of five people are or have been married. Among people in their 40s, however, it appears that only about 60 percent are or have been married, and the figure is much lower still among people in their 30s. In no age category is a majority of African women currently married. These figures do not show conclusively that marriage rates are declining over time, but they do indicate that very many women are living in non-marital arrangements of one kind or another.[11]

In addition, even 'married' women are often married without the completion of the rituals used in the past. In areas of KwaZulu-Natal, for example, few marriages are concluded with the full payment of *lobola*. Instead, men often pay only 'damages' when a woman becomes pregnant; the first step in the traditional marriage process, known as *ganile*, is now often the only step.[12]

In societies which are historically patrilineal (i.e. the paternal line of descent is privileged), virilocal (i.e. married women and their children generally live with the father's family, unless or until they form an independent household) and

[11] It would be interesting to examine data on marriage from successive censuses over a long period of time.

[12] Information from Ben Cousins, in seminar presentation at PLAAS, UWC, August 2008.

deeply patriarchal, the rising number of unmarried women poses all sorts of cultural, social and economic problems, especially for the women themselves. Claassens and Ngubane summarises some of the difficulties facing unmarried women in rural areas:

> Women are often evicted when their marriages break down or end. In particular, widows are often evicted from their married homes by their husbands' families. Divorced or widowed women who return to their natal home when their marriages end are often made unwelcome and are evicted by their brothers. Unmarried sisters are often evicted from their natal homes by their married brothers after their parents die. This occurs because sons assert that they alone inherit the land, even where the father may have chosen his daughter to be responsible for the family home. …. Women, particularly single women, struggle to access residential land because traditional leaders generally refuse to allocate land to women. (Claassens and Ngubane, 2008)

Unsurprisingly, a rising number of rural women seem to prefer securing their own, independent access to land, and if necessary avoiding marriage entirely so as to avoid the ensuing insecurity.

Survey data on whom lives with whom are generally difficult to analyse. The 2007 Community Survey suggests that almost all married African women live in household headed by their husbands (or, in about one-third of the cases, themselves, presumably indicating absent husbands). A small minority – 12 percent – of young married African women (i.e. aged in their 20s) report living in households headed by their father- or mother-in-law. Unmarried women are much more likely to identify themselves as the head of the household – especially unmarried women above the age of forty.

Unmarried women subvert and sometimes challenge directly patrilinearity, but the most severe challenge will come from their children. In case after case, men – and paternal kin more generally – decline responsibility for children, many of whom end up living with maternal kin. Whilst such children might be aware of their paternal descent, and the paternal kin might observe some of the cultural rituals associated with patrilinearity, it seems likely that there will be – or perhaps already is – a collapse of patrilineal inheritance. Children may be more likely to make claims on land through their maternal than through their paternal descent.

The ethics of responsibility

Studies of South African 'households' have demonstrated that they rarely conform to the stable model of the western nuclear-family household, frequently including a variety of kin and even non-kin, in a variety of ways. In contesting the imagery of the nuclear-family household, the existing literature tends to imply that 'households' are broadly encompassing. Just how encompassing is unclear, however. Russell and most studies – including most studies of orphans – imply that the cultural legacy of kinship opens the metaphorical 'doors' into 'households' to a wide range of kin, especially children. At the same time, however, there are many pointers to changes in the ethics of kinship. Precisely how the ethics of responsibility to kin – or to non-kin – have changed remains largely unexplored.

Children, including orphans, and dependent adults generally live with adult kin. They have little choice but to find breadwinners, because living alone means deprivation (given the gaps in South Africa's system of public assistance). But their kin probably exercise some choice in deciding whether to accept responsibility, and children and dependent adults presumably exercise some choice over the selection of kin on whom they make claims.

Fortes, Radcliffe-Brown and their peers understood that kinship was governed by unconditional altruism whilst relationships between non-kin were governed by expectations of reciprocity (i.e. I'll help you now in the expectation that you'll help me when I need help). In practice, it is unclear whether the norms and morality underlying kinship are even entirely unconditional (as has been pointed out by Sagner and Mtati, 1999: 401). Rather, it is more likely that relationships between kin are at the less conditional end of a continuum, rather than on one side of a binary divide. In post-apartheid South Africa, it seems likely that claims and responsibilities among many kin are decided on the basis of *both* expectations of reciprocity *and* the norms and obligations of kinship, i.e. kin help each other because both they feel that they *ought* to do so and they expect reciprocal 'rights'. Householding and kinship as projects are therefore, to some extent, inherently normative. Unfortunately, we know very little about the norms of householding and kinship projects in South Africa.

It is difficult, in practice, to distinguish between norms and practices, given that practices often result from sincere attempts to implement norms within strong material or social constraints. People might acknowledge a *moral* responsibility to care for or support certain kin, but be unable to give effect to this

responsibility because of material *constraints* (perhaps combined with social constraints, e.g. someone might be subject to demands from close kin to use scare resources to support them and to neglect more distant kin). There might, of course, be other reasons why people are unable or unwilling to live up to their ideals – for example, poor health or personal hostility.

Insofar as the obligations of kinship can be separated from expectations of reciprocity, it is likely that the relative importance tends to vary with the strength of kinship. Norms are of more importance among close kin than among more distant kin. Patterns of obligation can be thought of in terms of a 'radius of responsibility', which can be represented in terms of concentric circles of kin (see Figure 4).[13] In an ideal extended-family society, in which the radius of responsibility extends beyond close kin to distant kin, and families are large, then the number of kin on whom one might make claims is large (as shown by the Xs in Figure 4a). In a nuclear-family society, the radius of responsibility will be narrow. In extended-family societies, the radius of responsibility is unlikely to encompass kin evenly. In patrilineal societies, the radius is likely to extend more widely among paternal kin; in matrilineal societies, among maternal kin. In South Africa, the more AIDS-affected sections of the population are historically patrilineal, but – as we shall see in the case-studies below – there are many signs that they have become de facto matrilineal, with maternal kin bearing most of the responsibility. In addition, the radius of responsibility appears to have shrunk. The consequence is fewer kin on whom one can make claims (see Figure 4b, which shows significantly fewer Xs, especially on the paternal side).

How deserving are kin depends both on the relationship – with maternal and close kin accepting more responsibilities than paternal or more distant kin – and on the identity of the prospective dependent. It is likely that children and the elderly are seen as being more deserving than able-bodied adults – i.e. the radius of responsibility is larger for children than for adults.

Responsibility needs to be understood in terms of both fiscal relationship (such as the remittance of earnings to dependent kin living elsewhere) and decisions about whom lives with whom. Dependency can thus be either direct (in the same household) or indirect (through remittances).

[13] After developing this analysis, I discovered that Finch (1989) has this basic idea long before me.

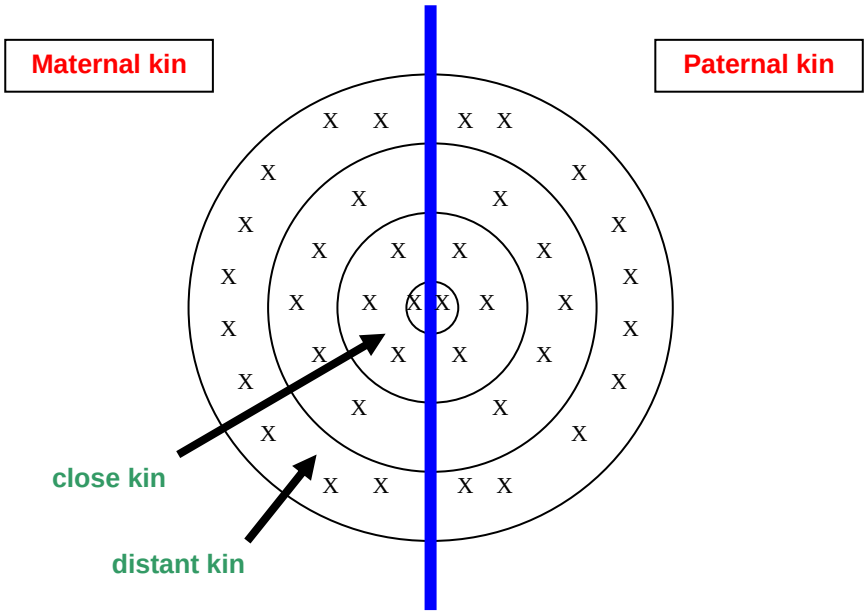


Figure 4a: An expansive radius of responsibility for kin

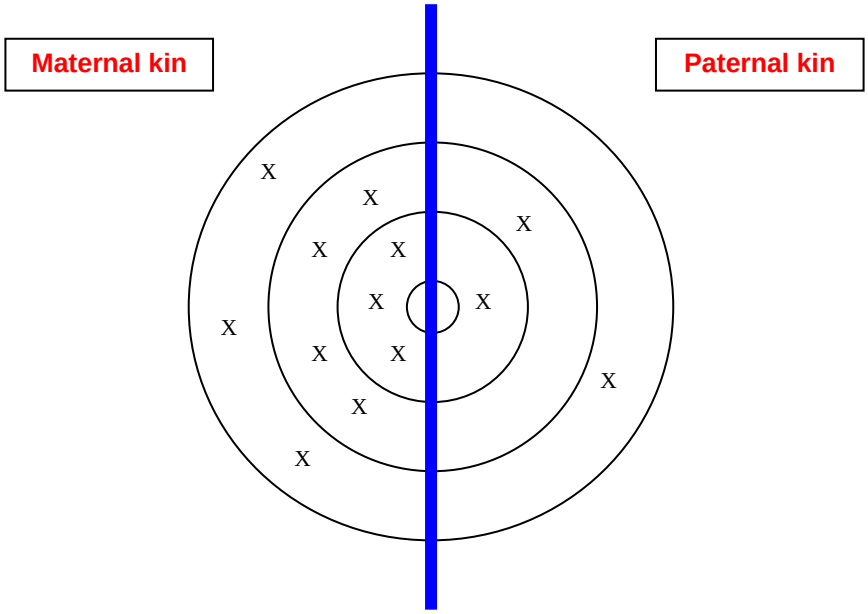


Figure 4b: A shrunken radius of responsibility for kin

Almost no research has been conducted hitherto on the radius of responsibility for 'deserving' *kin*, i.e. who can make claims on whom within kin networks. There is, however, some research on perceptions on how deserving are different *citizens* with regard to claims on the *state*. There are several reasons why perceptions of the state's responsibility may help us to understand norms of kin responsibility. First, there is some evidence that people view the state as playing a kin-like role. Møller and Sotshongaye (1996) report that elderly women pensioners described the government pension as 'doing the work of our husbands' or of doing what sons are supposed to do. In other words, the legitimacy of state action might correspond to the norms that are expected to govern kin interactions. Secondly, there is some evidence that kin see state support as a substitute for kin support (the so-called 'crowding out' effect). Analysing the hierarchy of desert (or radius of responsibility) with respect to the state might thus shed indirect light on norms of kinship also.

The most pertinent data on this comes from the 2005 Cape Area Study conducted in Cape Town (see further Seekings, 2007). This included the following 'vignette'-based question. Respondents were first told that:

> 'The government provides grants to some people in need, for example old-age pensions to elderly people. I am going to describe a situation, and then ask you what the government should do to help the person involved.'

A specific subject was then described (with the details of the subject varying between interviews). For example:

> 'Eddie is sick. He is a coloured man, aged 55, and is not married and has no children.'

The respondent is then asked:

> 'Should the Government provide a monthly grant or financial assistance to Eddie?'

The subjects varied between interviews in a long set of respects. Firstly, the *general circumstances* of the subject varied. Some subjects were described as retrenched workers, others as people who were sick; some were disabled and others abandoned by husbands; and so on. Other characteristics of the subject were also varied: *race*, *gender*, *age* and *family status* (single, with or without

dependents, or married). In some cases, the subjects were said to be in some way *responsible* for their situation (for example, a worker might have been retrenched because he or she was 'always late for work'). Subjects' names were changed appropriately to match their gender, race and age. The data allow for analysis of not only what kinds of individuals are considered to be deserving of public assistance, but also of how this construction of desert varies between respondents. For example, it might not be surprising if some South Africans discriminate racially in who they considered deserving.

The survey showed that people in post-apartheid Cape Town distinguish clearly between deserving and undeserving categories of poor people (at least in terms of state provision). There are high levels of popular approval for government financial assistance to the sick and disabled. Between 80 and 90 percent of respondents assessed that subjects who were "sick with AIDS and unable to work", or "disabled and unable to work", or just "disabled", should receive financial assistance from the government. More than 70 percent of respondents said the same for subjects who were "sick and unable to work", "sick with AIDS" or just "sick".[14] By comparison, only just over one half of our respondents supported financial assistance to subjects who "cannot find work" or who had been "retrenched because their employer closed". In assessing desert, incapacity due to health or disability seems be far more important than unemployment per se.

Subjects with dependants attracted support. About 75 percent supported assistance to women who had been abandoned by their husbands and had children to look after, and about two-thirds supported assistance to women who were looking after sick and elderly parents. Almost as many supported assistance to women who could not find work, having been abandoned by their husbands.

Our respondents were least supportive of the subjects whose behaviour was questionable. Less than 20 percent supported financial assistance to subjects who had "lost their jobs because they were late for work because they had been drinking", and only slightly more supported assistance to subjects who "lost their job because they were caught stealing" or who "do not want work". Some

[14] The assessment of desert for subjects described as sick with AIDS is the same as when there is no mention of AIDS. AIDS might be understood as a health condition for which people are themselves responsible (as smokers may be deemed responsible in part for smoking-related illness). But there is no indication of AIDS-related stigma that detracts from the desert of AIDS-sick subjects.

of this residual support is likely to reflect either fieldworker error or respondent disinterest in the question, so this '20 percent' support should probably be regarded as a baseline against which more deserving cases can be compared.

The various circumstances can be bundled into four broad categories of desert. There are clear and statistically significant differences between the assessment of desert of the 'least deserving' subjects (i.e. subjects in some way responsible for their predicament), those who 'cannot find work', 'care-givers', and the 'sick or disabled'. The mean assessment of the desert of subjects in these categories rises from 28 percent for the 'least deserving' to 54 percent (cannot find work), 69 percent (care-givers) and 81 percent (sick or disabled). The 95 percent confidence intervals for these different categories do not overlap.

Such research on the norms of state responsibility may provide pointers with regard to the entirely unresearched issue of the norms of responsibility to kin. People surely think that the state has different responsibilities to those that they themselves have, i.e. citizens can legitimately make different claims on the state than on kin. But there is no obvious reason why the perceived responsibilities of the state are less nuanced than those entangling kin. It is likely that South Africans have similarly discerning views on the legitimate claims that kin might make on kin: some kin, in some situations, are probably considered to be much less deserving than other kin, in other situations.

As part of its inquiry into philanthropic giving by private individuals and companies, the Centre for Civil Society commissioned a survey. Two questions are relevant to us here. First, respondents were asked an open-ended question, what is 'the most deserving cause that you would support if you could?' Approximately one in five respondents said children (or youth), the same said 'the poor', and the same again said something concerned with HIV/AIDS. The differences between men and women were negligible. Slightly more better-educated people prioritised HIV/AIDS than did less educated people, but the difference was small (Everatt and Solanki, 2007: 64-6). Secondly, respondents were asked to identify whether certain kinds of financial support entailed 'giving' or simply 'duty'. 'Over half (55%) felt that duty extended for both their own and relatives' children; giving began where they paid for children outside the family' (*ibid*: 63). This suggests that there are widespread – but not universal – norms in South Africa that poor people should be assisted and especially that people have a duty to child-kin.

The research above suggests that the pattern of grants paid by the South African state broadly conforms to popular perceptions of need: grants are paid to the elderly, the chronically sick or disabled, and (in more modest amounts) poor mothers. Grants like this are, however, paid to people based on general characteristics (such as age). Private citizens must make more elaborate distinctions when assessing the desert of kin. Unlike the state, private citizens consider the strength of their responsibility in terms of the closeness of the kin relationship, and the desert of the individual claimant in terms of very personal characteristics such as his or her behaviour and conduct (whether past, current or prospective).

Some aspects of kinship norms can be inferred from analyses of actual co-residence and household composition (such as the analysis of unmarried women, above). These can tell us who lives with whom. But they do not tell us who does *not* live with whom, or why. Whilst some conclusions can be inferred about patterns of responsibility, the limits to and hence precise patterns of responsibility remain obscure. The fact that remittances are targeted on close kin suggest strongly that close kin are considered more deserving than more distant kin, but we don't know how remitters actually weigh up the claims of different beneficiaries. The fact that many fathers make small or no financial contributions to the welfare of their children suggests severe tightening of the radius of responsibility.

Sagner and Mtati's account of Khayelitsha pensioners provides important pointers on the norms of support of kin. They refer to a clear 'normative hierarchy of who should be cared for': grandchildren first, adult children later, stepchildren later still, other kin last. The behaviour of recipients is also important. Their respondents justified 'their decision *not* to help a particular *needy* (grand)child or kinsperson' by reference to the 'unreasonable behaviour of the person needing support, be it that s/he had often eschewed her obligations in the past, or that s/he had severely defied gender and age-related roles'. They quote pensioners complaining about children who work but nonetheless fail to contribute to others, whether financially or in other, symbolic ways: 'Children of today, they are more occupied with themselves', said one; 'they are just children by name, they are snakes' (1999: 405-7).

The comparative literature on kin obligations

Kinship norms have been researched in other, nuclear-family-based societies elsewhere in the world. In Britain, Finch has examined 'who does what, for whom, and in what circumstances?' In her first book on this, Finch (1989) began by reviewing what people did for which relatives, in terms of financial gifts and loans, assistance with finding employment, accommodation, personal care, and emotional or moral support. She found that most care is between close kin: between parents and children, between grandparents and grandchildren, or between siblings. There is little evidence of support between more distant kin – although such support might be very important for the exceptional cases, and these exceptional cases are more likely to occur when someone does not have close relatives (for example, elderly people without children often form equivalent relationships with nieces, nephews or other kin). Her primary concern, however, was not so much what people actually do for others, but rather on what people believe they *ought* to do, i.e. on the basis of duty or obligation (and not affection).

Finch argued that there are no clear or pre-ordained rules, but rather kin support in Britain entails a process of kin figuring out how to apply general 'normative guidelines'. She identified five 'principles of selection' by which British people assess the merits of possible claimants on them. First, 'consider who this person is; what their relationship is to you in genealogical terms.' A spouse, children and grandchildren have strong claims, whilst and lateral links (even to siblings) are weaker than lineal ones. Obligations to in-laws depend on the health of the conjugal tie. Close ties with distant kin can form when they are co-resident, or when there are no closer kin (e.g. someone might say that they have 'inherited' responsibility for a parent's siblings after the parent's death). The second principle is: 'Consider whether you get on particularly well with this person'. This is much less important. If the relationship is good, it strengthens the obligation; but a bad relationship does not eliminate it. The third principle is: 'Consider the pattern of exchanges in which you and they have been involved in the past'. And the fourth is 'Consider whether receiving assistance from you would disturb the balance between dependence and independence in this person's family relationships'. This is primarily relevant to more distant kin, where relationships should entail a balance of intimacy and distance. The final principle is 'Consider whether this is the proper time in both your lives for you to give this type of assistance to this particular person'. Obligations are situational in that they depend, *inter alia*, on life-cycles. Finch refers to 'normative timetables' in her discussion of when kin are appropriately

dependent. For example, women 'should' be married (and become their husband's dependent) at a certain age. In practice, these guidelines are applied through an implicit process of negotiation:

> By this, I mean that gradually, over a period of time, an understanding emerges between two people that there are certain things which they would do for each other if necessary. Such understandings can be arrived at without being discussed directly, and of course there is room for misunderstandings in … these silent bargains. Commitments arrived at are not necessarily a private matter between two parties. They may well be understood in the kin network as a whole, so that when the situation actually arises where, for example, an elderly person needs to be cared for, it is "obvious" to everyone that a particular child (of course usually a daughter) will be the person who will do this. Obligation, duty and responsibility, as understood in this sense, are commitments developed between real people, not abstract principles associated with particular kin relationships. (181)

Negotiations may be conducted with a view to both external audiences (i.e. someone might worry, 'what would they say?') and internal ones. Power in negotiations is rarely equal, and men have more than women. Negotiations can include emotional blackmail. In conclusion, Finch suggested that negotiations can be seen in terms of establishing 'what counts as a legitimate excuse for not offering support in a particular set of circumstances?' (210).

In a second book, Finch and Mason (1993) report on new, original research on kinship norms in Britain. The Family Obligations Project comprised a mix of qualitative interviews and a survey in Manchester in the late 1980s. The survey comprised primarily vignettes (see also Finch, 1987). The new data suggest strongly that there is no clear consensus on obligations to kin, with very diverse responses to just about every vignettes and questions. The core of the book therefore focuses on the process of negotiation over obligations. Finch and Mason go beyond Finch's earlier study in emphasising the importance of reciprocity or 'give and take' alongside other considerations. This is important in part because of the imperative not to be too beholden, i.e. kin seek to maintain a balance between dependence and independence. One chapter is dedicated to 'making legitimate excuses', and another to 'reputations and moral identities in the negotiation of family responsibilities'. The focus is not on the *radius* of responsibility, i.e. who does what for whom, but rather on *how* responsibilities are negotiated.

Comparable research has been conducted in the USA by Rossi and Rossi (1990), also using vignettes. Rossi and Rossi included two kinds of vignettes: 'crisis events' and 'celebratory events'. 'Crisis events' are more relevant to the South African case. These vignettes entailed asking respondents about their perceived obligation to specified kin, in terms of financial assistance or personal comfort, in response to a specified traumatic crisis in the kin-person's life (such as major surgery). For example: 'Your unmarried sister has undergone major surgery and will be bedridden for a few weeks; this problem is straining her financial resources; how much of an obligation would you feel to offer her some financial support?' Respondents were asked to locate their response on an 11-point scale from 0 ('no obligation at all') to 10 ('very strong obligation'). 'Celebratory events' entailed situations in which the respondent might feel an obligation to demonstrate recognition or appreciation of their kin-person. For example: 'Your widowed father is going to have a birthday; how much of an obligation would you feel to give him something appropriate to the occasion?' Each respondent was presented with a booklet that included 32 different vignettes. The specifications of the vignettes varied in terms of (a) the kin relationship (as well as the gender and marital status of the fictional kin-person), (b) the situation (with 8 different 'crisis events' and 3 'celebratory events'), and (c) the form of the obligation (financial or comfort, for crisis events; gifts or visits, for celebratory events') (*ibid*: 164, Table 4.2). These combined to give a total of more than 1,600 unique versions.

Rossi and Rossi found that a high degree of correlation in respondents' assessments of their obligations to assist financially, to provide comfort, to visit, and to make a gift. They concluded that 'the normative order of kinship obligations is a highly general one', in the sense that 'the kin to whom you may be strongly obligated in any one respect are the same kin to whom you are obligated in other respects' (170, 171).[15] Unlike Finch, Rossi and Rossi pay considerable attention to the radius of obligation, i.e. to what they call the 'genealogical mapping of kin obligations'. They map their data onto what they call a 'wheel of obligation' comprising concentric circles defined not by the closeness of the relationship (as in Figure 2.4 above) but by the mean rating of obligations. They then populate this wheel or set of concentric circles with kin, according to the rated obligation. Parents and children are located at the centre of the wheel (and there is much less variation between respondents in their ratings of obligations to these than in ratings of obligations to anyone else). Close affinal kin (especially children-in-law), close step-kin (i.e. step-children)

[15] There was curiously little variation in responses according to the situation described in the vignette.

and selected consanguinal kin (siblings, grandparents, grandchildren) occupy the next rings, whilst more distant consanguinal kin (uncles/aunts, nephews/nieces, cousins), affinal kin (step-parents), and non-kin (friends, neighbours) are furthest from the centre (with ex-spouses on the very perimeter of the wheel!) (*ibid*: 175). These findings are also represented in terms of the mean ratings for different kin (see Figure 4.2 in Rossi and Rossi, 1990: 205). It is striking that, in the USA, obligations to children-in-law seem to be slightly more important than obligations to grandparents, and obligations are stronger to descendent than ascendant generations (e.g. to children-in-law over parents-in-law). Excepting very close kin, obligations were slightly stronger to women than to men, and to people living on their own rather than to married people. Obligations to maternal kin are very slightly stronger than to paternal kin. Female respondents were also more obliged than male respondents.

Rossi and Rossi proceed to conduct bivariate and multi-variate analyses of relationships between the characteristics of respondents and their ratings of obligation. A multi-variate regression reveals statistically highly significant relationships between age (negative), education (positive), ethnicity (negative for 'blacks'), attitudes on 'civic duties' such as voluntary work (positive), and 'expressivity', i.e. an index constructed out of respondents' self-assessments of whether they are 'generally open to others, able to express emotions, to care what others think' and so on (positive). Controlling for 'expressivity' (and other variables), gender was *not* significant. Respondents with cohesive family backgrounds were more likely to feel obliged, as were respondents whose families had experienced adversity. Divorce was correlated with weakened obligations, having children with stronger obligations. Using also interviews with both parents and children, Rossi and Rossi further analysed the consequences of family background. They show that people who grew up in affectionate and cohesive families are much more likely to form affectionate and cohesive families of their own, and to internalise strong commitments to both civic duties and obligations to kin.

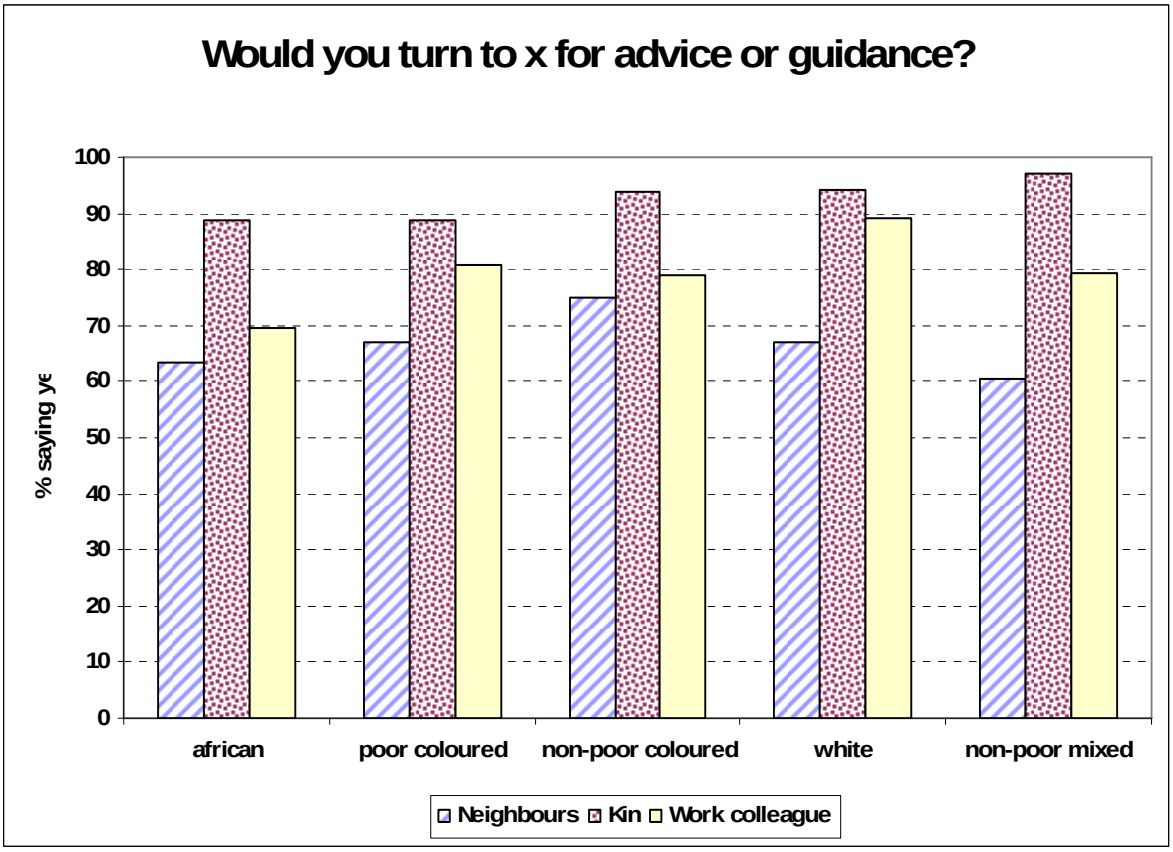
Unfortunately, we cannot find any similar research in developing country settings. There are fragments of research on obligations to the elderly, for example (e.g. Aboderin, 2004, on Ghana). But there does not seem to be any research on the overall shape of kin obligations. Given that societies outside North-west Europe and North America have very different social dynamics in general, we would expect different patterns and dynamics to kin obligations.

The quality of the residential 'community': what use are neighbours?

Kin are not the only possible source of support. Neighbours – or other members of a residential or religious 'community' – may be important sources of financial assistance, care, or personal support. Indeed, in many societies non-kin can become 'fictive' kin. It would be a mistake, however, to assume that neighbours substitute easily for kin with respect to the more demanding roles, claims and responsibilities. Figure 5 shows data from the 2005 Cape Area Study on whether people in different kinds of neighbourhood in Cape Town say they can turn to neighbours, kin or work colleagues (where applicable) for different kinds of assistance. Neighbours are clearly an important source of assistance to most people in Cape Town. But, in all of these categories of neighbourhood, more people report that they can turn for help to kin than to neighbours in each of the four cases. In general, also, more people say that they can turn to work colleagues than to neighbours, although the differences are smaller. Crucially, perhaps, the gap between kin and neighbours is largest with respect to borrowing R200. For smaller amounts (such as R20), many people feel they can borrow from neighbours. As the amount to be borrowed grows, so the willingness to ask either kin or neighbours declines, but the willingness to ask neighbours declines more dramatically. There would appear to be limits to the claims that most people can make on their neighbours.

It would seem unlikely that neighbours are a widespread substitute for kin when it comes to choices about such major undertakings as householding. Ross, however, argues strongly that this *is* the case in the poor shack settlement in Cape Town where she conducted fieldwork. This neighbourhood was characterised by a high level of instability over time in domestic relationships: relationships concerned with production, reproduction or consumption were repeatedly reconfigured 'to meet short-term material and social needs'. Ross identified clear patterns in the ways in which 'domesticity was diffused':

> Residents worked with clear ideas about responsibility, caring and what anthropologists call 'delayed reciprocity' to generate rights in households and to their products. Collecting firewood for someone might, for example, generate rights to a meal, or regular housekeeping might enable someone to claim a bed in that domestic unit. Exchanging labour or money for food was common, particularly among young adults. Sometimes a single structure housed more than


Would you turn to x for advice or guidance?
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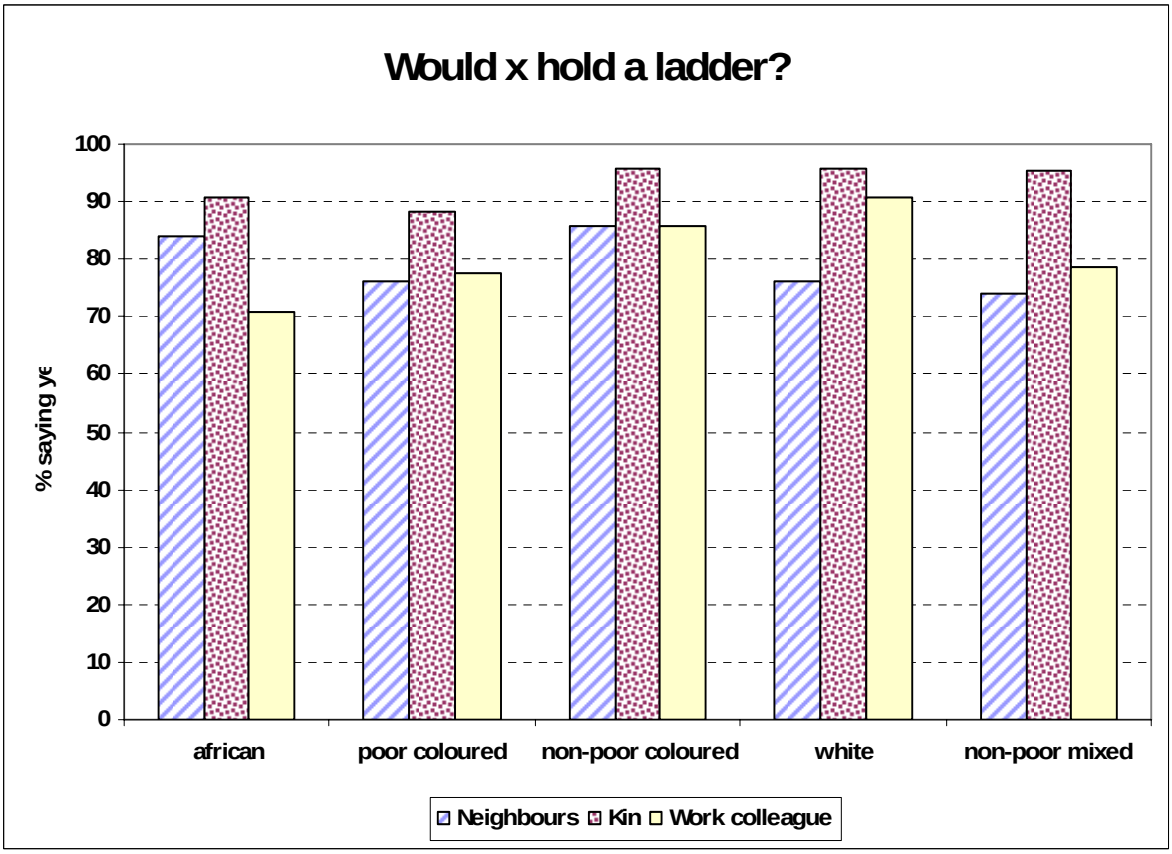
Neighbours
Kin
Work colleague


Would x hold a ladder?
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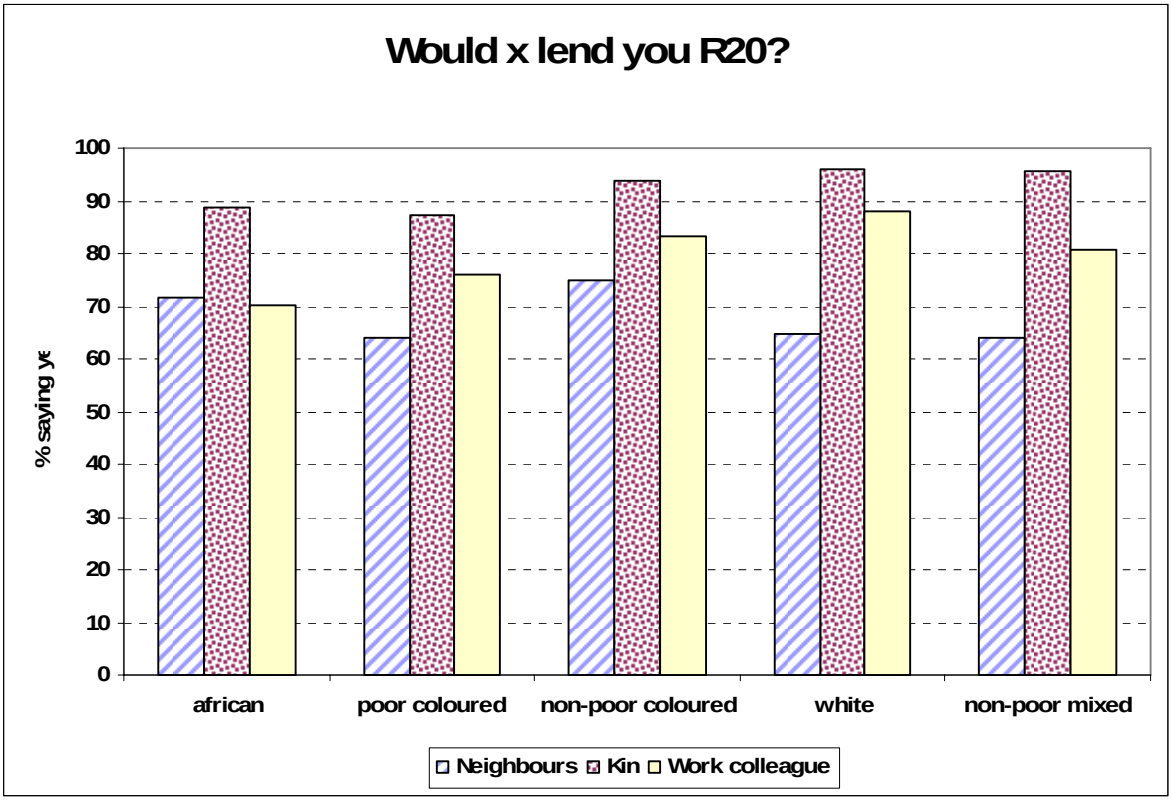

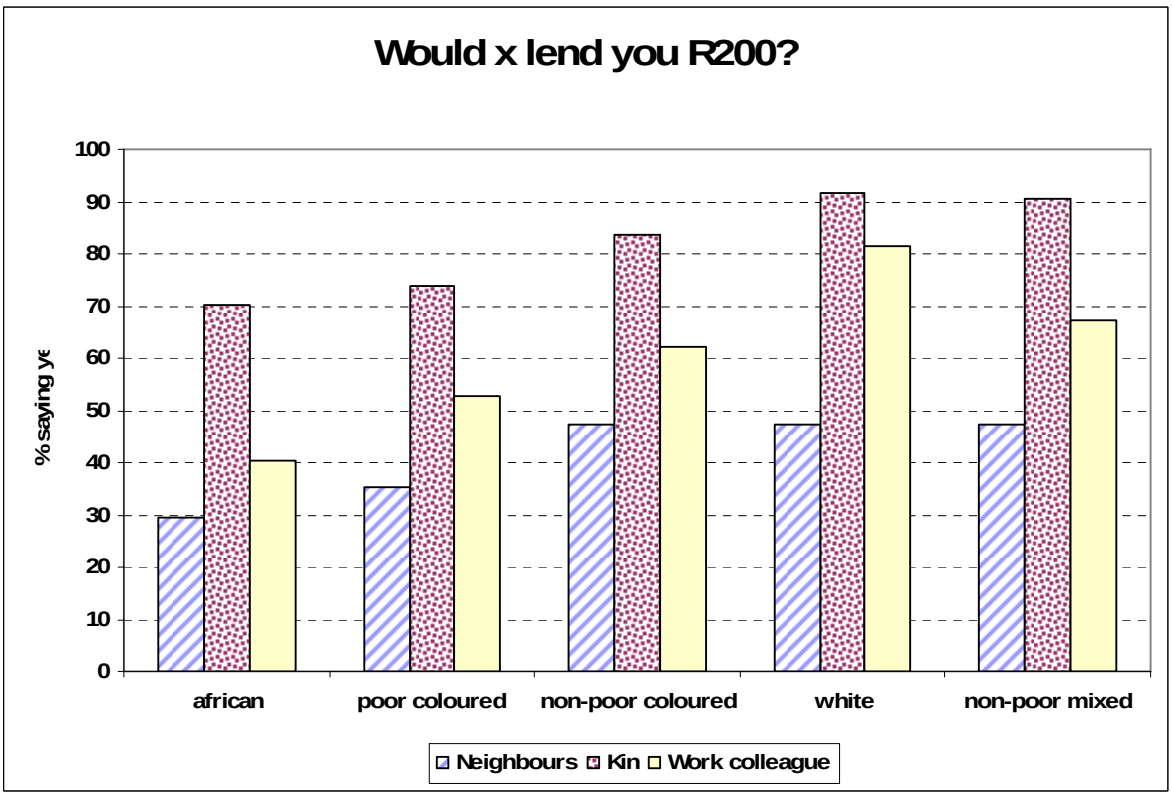

Figure 5: Do you feel comfortable asking a neighbour, kin or work colleague for assistance, by neighbourhood, Cape Town, 2005.

> one domestic unit while in other instances a single household was spread across several structures. Sometimes unrelated children were taken into domestic units and cared for as though they were blood relatives. In some instances, such children – *grootraak kinders* as they are locally known – held the same rights in households over time as did biological children. In other instances, rights dissolved, and with them, access to basic material and emotional resources. In such cases, children were cast upon their own ingenuity in finding new homes and creating new forms of relationship. The result of these diverse tactics was that the functions associated with households were frequently situational, and householding relationships were often fluid. This was compounded by domestic violence, which rendered relationships precarious and social institutions vulnerable. (Ross, 2003: 134-5, summarising Ross, 1995).

Ross here seems to describe a society, facing grave poverty, in which norms are based on exchange (of food for money, shelter for labour, etc) rather than kinship. Surprisingly, this extends as far as where people shelter, i.e. on the residential component of householding. Ross reports that claims are only made on kin in the most 'extreme' circumstances (*ibid*: 135). But it is unclear whether providing for kin (especially adolescent kin) is as conditional as providing for non-kin. Poverty might open up possibilities for all sorts of relationships between non-kin, based on exchanges over time, whilst at the same time relationships between kin are shaped by distinct norms of responsibility. Ross refers in passing to 'cultural conventions' (*ibid*: 139) but does not discuss these. The requirement that applicants for the state's housing subsidy have dependents also shaped processes of household-formation and composition.

It is perhaps unsurprising that material incentives are important in householding in a very impoverished neighbourhood. Also, it is perhaps unsurprising that networks of obligation among non-kin become more important as the radius of responsibility among kin shrinks (and changes shapes). But it would be surprising if the radius of responsibility among kin had vanished entirely, such that claims and responsibilities between kin are exercised on the same basis of conditionality as between non-kin. Ross' research demonstrates that it is important at least to ask about the possibility of non-kin playing important roles in decision-making about where and with whom to live. But it does not demonstrate that norms of kinship have been reduced to those between non-kin.

Conclusion: Constraints, choices and the dynamics of householding

The South African state plays a massive role in supporting poor people, primarily through the payment of pensions or grants to the elderly, disabled, and poor mothers. The design of the welfare system reflects assessments of what kinds of people comprise the (more) 'deserving' poor. Kinship operates the same way, with individuals making decisions about the desert of kin, and either remitting money (between 'households') or accommodating dependents (within 'households') accordingly. This benevolence is shaped by the state in many ways: directly, pensions/grants and subsidised housing serve to remove some people from the ranks of the needy, at the same time as allowing their recipients to share with other kin; also, legislation places some obligations (albeit weakly) on fathers. Benevolence is also shaped by norms and values. Indeed, the importance of norms and values may be increasing. The context of mass unemployment and persistent income poverty, AIDS-related mortality and morbidity, and the declining incidence of marriage and ensuing crisis of patrilinearity has imposed 'choices' on a wide range of people as to whom to support, when, where and why. Kinship as a generalised system of unconditional obligation seems to be giving way to a system of more selective and perhaps more contingent altruism.

Kin accept responsibility for – or the claims made by – children (and orphans) and (less clearly) adults, in part through the 'fluidity' of householding. The emerging literature on child fostering in general and orphanhood in particular points to the importance of moves between households. It is very likely that children are moved between households not simply to facilitate access to school but also to facilitate access to care and food. Such moves are not limited to orphans, nor even to children affected by AIDS or poor health in general. It is also very likely that such moves between households are not limited to children. Older household members might also move to access food, care or other resources. Furthermore, people may move in order to provide care or to bring resources into a 'household'. This might be true not only for adults, but also for children – who might be sent, for example, to a rural area to care for an elderly grandparent at the same time as benefitting from the grandparent's access to a pension income.

But this 'fluidity' has limits. In research published or forthcoming in other CSSR *Working Papers*, Neves (2008a, 2008b, 2008c), Bray (2008), Harper and Seekings (forthcoming) examine these limits, using a mix of quantitative and

qualitative data. The papers explore the ways in which kin do *and do not* accept claims made on them. They seek to understand better the choices that are made every day by people about who lives where and with whom. They focus on both the material and the normative dimensions of these choices: choices are made subject to very severe material constraints and in terms of evolving norms and values.

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