

With One Child Here and One Child There: Is There Specialization and Complementarity in Children's Support Related to Their Place of Residence? The Mexican Case

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As societies age, individuals tend to depend more on family support for their economic survival and for help with their daily activities. This is especially true in cases such as Mexico where family ties are strong and institutions are only marginally involved. Past research has shown that most of the monetary and functional help for the elderly comes from family members, especially from children. It has also shown that coresident offspring are more likely to provide instrumental support, while non-coresidents are more likely to provide economic. However, these studies have not analyzed whether there is a specialization according to place of residence among children in the kind of help they provide, that may also talk about coordination and complementarity. This is of particular relevance in contexts where fertility is declining and there is high migration. If different specialize in certain activities or types of help, parents with few children or with migrant children might be in disadvantage when in need of specific kind of support. In this paper we focus on this issue, as we analyze whether the type and amount (in terms of number of hours) of help that parents receive depends on how far away their children live.

Introduction

Mexico, like many other countries in Latin America, is undergoing a rapid ageing population process. Projections show that individuals aged 60 and older, who in the year 2010 were 9% of the population (INEGI 2010), will come to represent more than 25% in 2050 (Ordorica, 2010). This change will bring many demands in services, especially health-related, and an increased burden to families who are nowadays responsible for the caregiving of the elderly. Several studies have shown that because of Mexico's weak pension system and the importance of the informal labor market, it is common for the elderly to continue working until late in life (Ham *et al* 2003). It has also been

demonstrated that in order to make ends meet, many adults receive economic support from their family members, mostly from their children (Ham *et al* 2003). Moreover, when individuals age and their health deteriorates, it is their kinship who cares for them (Montes de Oca 2005, González, 2011 and Cantú, 2009).

Both economic and time transfers depend on the place of residence of the children: As the number of coresident children increases, individuals are more likely to receive instrumental help. At the same time, when individuals have children who are internal or international migrants, their likelihood of receiving economic support increases (Cantú 2009).

Cantu's findings imply that there may be a specialization among children in the kind of help that they provide to parents. However, this question has multiply implications and needs to be fully addressed, especially in a context of high migration (including internal and international) as is the case of Mexico. For example, do elderly with only coresident children, or with children living in the same city receive the same kind of help that parents who have only internal migrant children? What happens with parents who have children distributed among different locations? Is there a possibility that children who are living in other cities and other countries specialize in economic support while those who live in the same city provide domestic support and help with activities of daily living?

In this paper we analyze these issues using the Mexican Health and Aging Study 2001 (MHAS, 2001), a national sample of individuals 50 and older and their partners. Our analysis is at the household level and focuses is aimed to contribute to the understanding of the way that children organize for the caregiving of their parents, and how this varies according to their place of residence.

We have two particular objectives:

- 1) Analyze how the type of help that disabled parents receive varies according to where their children live.
- 2) Explore whether having migrant children affects the probability of receiving different types of help.

Why is it important to study the relationship between children's place of residence and the support that their parents receive?

- In Mexico the care of the elderly lies mainly **on the family**.
- Demographic changes in Mexico will increase the proportion of the elderly in the near future.
- If we consider migration and the decrease of fertility, many of these will depend on **fewer children** and many families will be **geographically disperse**.
- Past studies have not analyzed whether there is a specialization according to place of residence among children in the kind of help they provide.

It is important to understand how caregiving is divided among children, and how this may affect the vulnerability of the elderly in different situations (for example, those with only migrant children).

Theoretical background

Adult children to parents' proximity and intergenerational transfers

The concept of intergenerational relationships is abstract and complex and is best presented by multiple dimensions, such as norm, function, power, and structure (Hogan, ggebeen, & Clogg, 1993; Silverstein & Bengtson, 1997 in Keong-Suk *et al* 2005). Some studies have such as Keong-Suk *et al* (2005) have focused in some subdimensions of intergenerational relationships such as geographic proximity, exchange of support, and cultural norms of family support. The relation between family geography and intergenerational transfers (monetary and time transfers) has recently increased with different emphasis.

Some papers are focused on the determinants of living arrangements of old parents and their children, for example Rainer and Siedler, (2012). Families, and adult children, in particular, provide care to the elderly in a variety of ways. Some families do this via a network where more than one sibling takes responsibility for elderly parents. In other families, one adult child is the sole provider of care. Whether adult children form networks or one sibling provides the care needed conflict between siblings is a likely result of filial care. This has also been studied, mainly from economics approaches interested in how this decision is taken. This approach claims that in families with more than one child, the well-

being of elderly parents is a public good, and caregiving becomes a contribution game played between siblings (Rainer & Siedler, 2012).

One frequently cited factor determining potential intergenerational transfers is the geographic proximity between adult children and parents. (Rainer & Siedler, 2012)

There is a body of studies that investigate this relationship, mainly using distance as the proximity indicator. Although proximity patterns are the result of migration behavior of adult children and their parents, these behaviors are usually studied separately. (Konrad et al 2002 in Compton & Pollak, 2009).

Geographic proximity facilitates the regular intergenerational contact that is important for exchanging social and economic support as well as for maintaining familial solidarity.

Specifically, it has been argued that coresidence helps promote daily contact and interaction and contributes to the maintenance of material and emotional exchanges between generations (Keong-Suk *et al*, 2005) and that the ability of family members to engage in intergenerational time transfers requires close proximity or coresidence while monetary transfers require neither close proximity nor coresidence (Compton & Pollak, 2009).

About time transfers Compton & Pollak (2009) found these are more likely when children live in close proximity and that this positive correlation between time transfers and close proximity holds not only for transfers that require a physical presence, but also for emotional help. The author emphasize proximity and coresidence differ qualitatively arguing if distance were the only relevant metric, then coresidence would be the limiting case of proximity. But distance is not the only relevant metric. For both adult children and elderly parents, living in the same household and living next door differ qualitatively because of their implications for cost and for privacy. (Compton & Pollak, 2009).

It has been shown that from family-related factors determining intra-family location patterns the presence of at least a sibling has an important role. It is imaginable that siblings who move to the same area can still use each other's social networks, reducing the cost of integration (Rainer and Siedler, 2012). Having a sibling may allow the responsibility of caregiving to be shared between two people, possibly decreasing individual involvement. The cost of moving away from parents may be higher for only children than for children with siblings. For example, siblings who move to the same area can still socialize with and support each other (Rainer and Siedler, 2012)

Data and Methodology

We use the Mexican Health and Aging Study (MHAS) 2001

- Household level analysis

- Sample restricted to:

1) Households where at least one of the individuals had at least one basic disability

2) Households with at least four adult children (25 years old or older)

Final sample size: 5,932 households

Our methodological strategy consists first in an exploratory analysis. The dependent variables are four types of help received in the parental household:

-Economic (monetary transfers)

-Household chores, transportation and errands

Help with Activities of Daily Life

Help with Instrumental Activities of Daily life

And as independent variables we identify the different types of families, according to the places where children live. For each child of the respondent and his or her partner, the survey captures their place of residence with the following options: with the couple, in a different household but in the same city, in a different city but in the same country, and in a different country. With this information, we identified, empirically, some categories of families varying from those where all children correside with their parents to those where all children where international migrants and all combinations in between.

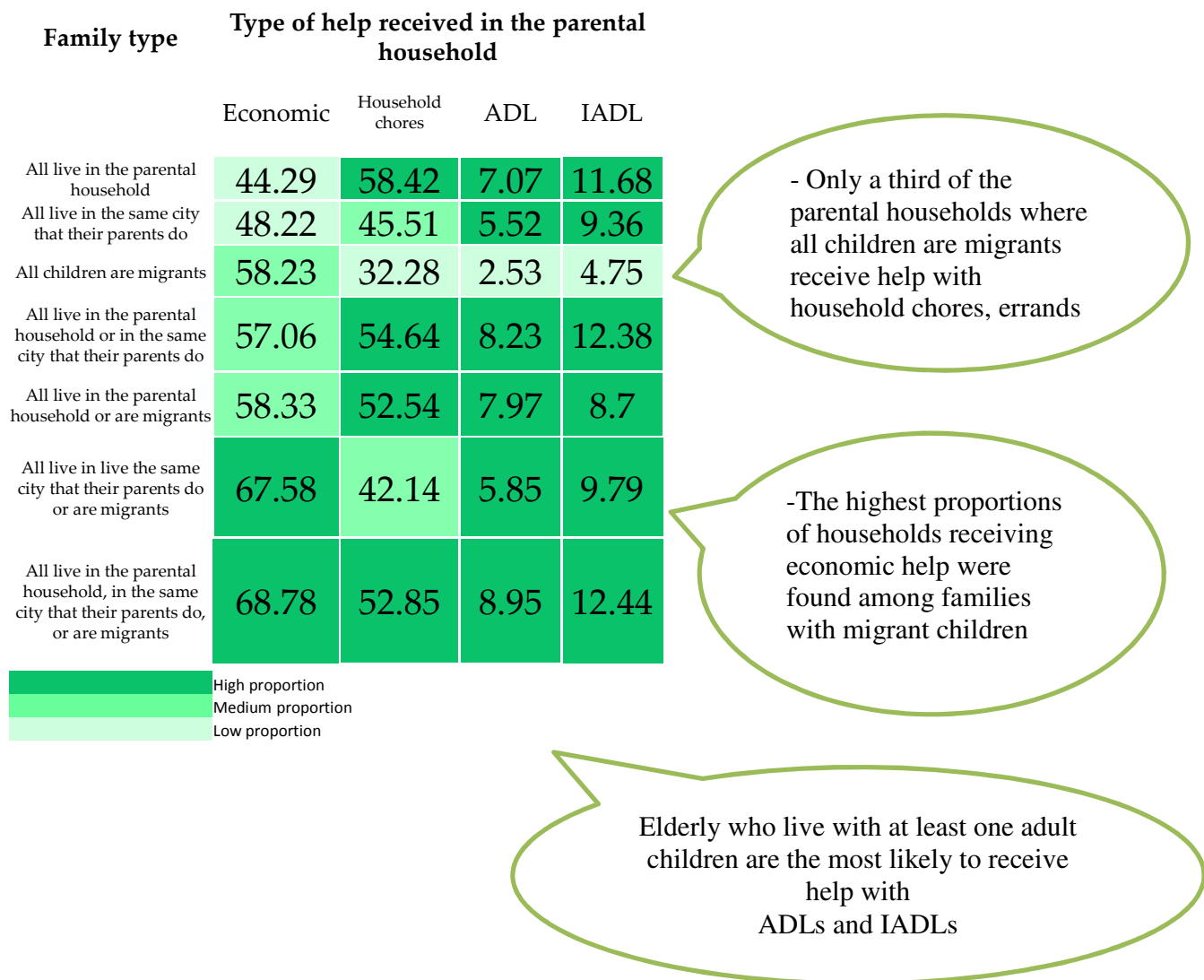
Once we had done this, we analyzed, whether the type of help that households received varied between family types.

To complete this paper, we run statistical models to associate the kind of help that household receive, with family type and with the presence of a migrant children (internal or international) once household characteristics are controlled for.

Results

The main findings from bivariate analysis of type of help received in the parental household by family type (constructed according to the adult children's place of residence are shown in figure 1

Figure 1. Bivariate analysis of type of help by family type



Source: Own elaboration, MHAS 2001

But these results may be affected by the life course stage and SES characteristics of the parents and the children. Do they hold up once we control for these? (Figure 2)

Figure 2. Logit model controlling for SES¹ analysis of family type (according to children's place of residence) and type of help received in the parental household

Family type	Type of help received in the parental household			
	Economic	Household chores	ADL	IADL
All live in the parental household		--1.0--		
All live in the same city that their parents do	1.17	0.59***	0.77	0.78
All children are migrants	1.75***	0.34***	0.34	0.38
All live in the parental household or in the same city that their parents do	1.67***	0.86	1.18***	1.07***
All live in the parental household or are migrants	1.76***	0.79	1.14	0.72
All live in live the same city that their parents do, or are migrants	2.62***	0.52***	0.82	0.82
All live in the parental household, in the same city that their parents do, or are migrants	2.77***	0.80*	1.29	1.07
Controls				

High proportion
 Medium proportion
 Low proportion

Results confirm that having migrant children, children living in the same city, or a combination of both increases the chances of receiving economic support while having only migrant children decreases elderly's odds of receiving help with household chores, errands and transportation by 0.66%.

Source: Own elaboration, MHAS 2001




Results in figure 3 confirm that having migrant children increases the chances of receiving economic help in 46%, when compared against families that do not have migrant children. On the other hand, having migrant children lower the odds of receiving household chores and help with IADLS.

¹ In this model we control for number of individuals in the parental household, the union status of the parent, an index measuring the health status of the parents, the income level in the parental home, the number of daughters older than 18 years old, the age of the eldest parent and the number of dependent persons other than the parental home, other than the parents.

Figure 3.

Results of logit model for estimating whether help was received, by presence of migrant children (OR)

Family type	Type of help received in the parental household			
	Economic	Household chores	ADL	IADL
Without migrants		--1.0--		
With migrants	1.46***	0.83***	1	0.74***

	High proportion
	Medium proportion
	Low proportion

Source: Own elaboration, MHAS 2001

Conclusions:

- Children’s place of residence is key for understanding the resources that parents have and the help that they receive from their children.
- Our research provides empirical evidence that children may organize to provide their parents with the resources that they have at hand, resulting in a specialization of help, where children who live with their parents turn into the main caregivers and non-corresident children specialize in economic and sporadic help.
- This specialization may represent a disadvantage for old adults that do not have children living close to them.
- Children support their parents with the kind of help available for them but it is not always what parents need.

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