

Comments on Is the phenomenon of care reversal and self care happening in India?

The authors use the National Family Health Survey to explore patterns of living arrangements by applying a “generational approach,” which classifies households based on the number of generations living together. Using this approach, the authors study changing living arrangements to shed light on care reversal and self care in India. Below are comments that the authors may consider as they revise their manuscript.

The background section is generally well written; however, in several places, statements are made without references, and many of the references are quite old. I encourage the authors to buttress the background section with a more thorough citation of both seminal and more recent articles on living arrangements in India. Some of the articles, below, may be helpful.

Bongaarts, J. (2001). Household size and composition in the developing world in the 1990s. *Population Studies*, 55, 263–279.

Caldwell, J. C., Reddy, P. H., & Caldwell, P. (1984). The determinants of family structure in rural South India. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 46, 215–229.

Das Gupta, M. (1999). Lifeboat versus corporate ethic: Social and demographic implications of stem and joint families. *Social Science & Medicine*, 49, 173–184.

Dasgupta, S., Hennessey, S., & Mukhopadhyay, R. S. (1999). Caste, class and family structure in West Bengal villages. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 30, 561–577.

D’Cruz, P., & Bharat, S. (2001). Beyond joint and nuclear: The Indian family revisited. *Journal of Comparative Family Studies*, 32, 167–194.

Freed, S. A., & Freed, R. S. (1982). Changing family types in India. *Ethnology*, 21, 189–202.

Jeffery, P., & Jeffery, R. (1997). *Population, gender, and politics: Demographic change in rural north India*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Niranjan, S., Sureender, S., & Rao, G. R. (1998). Family structure in India: Evidence from NFHS. *Demography India*, 27, 287–300.

Ram, M., & Wong, R. (1994). Covariates of household extension in rural India—Change over time. *Journal of Marriage and the Family*, 56, 853–864.

Shah, A. M. (1996). Is the joint household disintegrating? *Economic and Political Weekly*, 31, 537–542.

Vera-Sanso, P. (1999). Dominant daughters-in-law and submissive mothers-in-law? Cooperation and conflict in South India. *The Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, 5, 577–593.

Results

The interpretation of changes in the percentage of households with older adults (60+) between the 1992-3 and 2005-6 NFHSs is a bit thin. The authors use life expectancies for men and women in 1990

and 2009 (a long time span) to argue that the increase in the number of households with an older adult is due to increases in life expectancy between the two cross-sectional surveys. One could argue that this change is due to a range of other things, such as greater survivorship along with greater disability, requiring older adults to live more often with their younger children (it would be interesting to see the percentage of oldest old who are living in joint households between the two waves to help with interpretation).

The arguments regarding increase in self-care is also a bit thin. The authors show that the percentage of older adults 'living alone' has risen between surveys from about 3% to about 6%; however, we know very little about exactly where older adults are living "alone". Might they be in a neighboring dwelling and receiving regular care from their children? The question of quasi-coresidence is starting to be addressed, given the limitations of standard household censuses, which tend to make invisible extensive exchanges between the generations across dwellings in close proximity. I encourage the authors to provide substantially more nuance to the analysis and its interpretation, given the above literature that I have cited.

The discussion about evidence for "reversal of care" is not substantiated from the available data on structural living arrangements. It may be that downward wealth flows from G1 to G2 have simply continued in a joint residence, or it may be that older adults have moved into an adult child's dwelling out of economic or health-related needed. Using structural information to infer intergenerational patterns of support is risky, given the increasing numbers of studies with details data on actual exchanges. In brief, I think the title of this paper suggests inferences or promises beyond the available data.

Thank you for the opportunity to read this important work. I hope the above thoughts are helpful in future iterations of this paper.