

# Fragmenting the family?

## The complexity of household migration strategies in post-apartheid South Africa

Katharine Hall

Children's Institute, University of Cape Town

[kath.hall@uct.ac.za](mailto:kath.hall@uct.ac.za)

*Prepared for the UNU-WIDER & ARUA Development Conference on Migration and Mobility*

*Accra, Ghana*

*4 – 5 October 2017*



# Purpose and structure of paper

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

- How might migration theory (and the mechanisms of migration) be considered from the perspective of children?
- What are the patterns of child migration and how to they differ from adults?
- How is child migration related to maternal migration?
- What can qualitative research add to our understanding of child migration as a part of household strategy?

# SA context and departure points

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

# What might mechanisms of migration mean for children?

- **Temporary** / circular migration: family members at home of origin serve to sustain ties between urban and rural nodes

“The uncertainty of entry into the labour market and ever growing competition within the informal sector creates and imperative for migrants to maintain significant linkages to rural homes. These act as buffers or safety nets in time of economic or health related crises.” [Williams et al 2011]

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

- **Cumulative** causation: migration is self-perpetuating, facilitated by kinship and social networks.
- **Informality** as stepping stone: transitional spaces as initial points of access to the city. Not always transitional. Risky for children.
- **Chain** migration: v chain reaction for children: co-migration (simultaneous), sequential migration (delayed), reverse migration (sent away), non-migration (left behind); autonomous.
- **Involuntary** immobility [De Haas 2014] – lacking the capability or agency to migrate.
- Broaden from rational choice to consider household strategies (meso level of focus) – a child-focused perspective helps to do this. Children help us to “see beyond” the household.

# Data

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

Longitudinal surveys in surveillance sites – cannot capture national migration patterns

National Income Dynamics Study – national panel survey over four waves (2008 – 2014/15)

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

# Defining the household

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

1. Every person who is considered to be a member of the household
2. + “**narrow** definition”: Stayed here at least four nights a week for the last four weeks  
+ “**broad** definition” : Stayed here at least 15 nights in the last 12 months
3. And shares in / contributes to a common resource pool / eats together

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

Labour migrants are defined as non-resident household members who are away for employment purposes.

# Parental co-residence with children 1993 – 2014

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

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

Source: Own calculations from PSLSD 1993 and GHS 2014. Based on African children under 15 years.  
Standard errors in brackets.

# Parental contact and financial support to children

	MOTHER		FATHER	
<i>How frequently does [parent] see the child?</i>	Non-resident HH member	Absent – lives elsewhere	Non-resident HH member	Absent – lives elsewhere
Every day	0.4 (0.32)	4.3 (0.89)	0.0 (0.0)	5.4 (0.56)
Several times a week	9.9 (2.97)	13.8 (1.77)	16.5 (6.29)	13.0 (0.99)
Several times a month	55.3 (5.08)	39.4 (2.52)	49.5 (5.88)	24.8 (1.07)
Several times a year	32.1 (2.73)	34.6 (2.56)	32.7 (5.67)	26.2 (1.26)
Never	2.4 (1.06)	8.0 (1.05)	1.2 (0.71)	30.6 (1.05)
<i>[Parent] supports the child financially</i>	70.3 (5.03)	50.4 (2.33)	82.5 (3.99)	38.3 (1.44)

Source: Own calculations from NIDS 2008. Based on African children under 15 years.  
Standard errors in brackets.



# Sending and receiving geotypes for adult & child migrants

Sending place of origin	Receiving place of destination						
	ADULTS 15+				CHILDREN <15		
	Urban	Rural former homeland	Rural farms		Urban	Rural former homeland	Rural farms
Urban	85.0	10.0	5.0	100	63.6	36.4	-
Rural former homeland	26.1	71.3	2.6	100	46.7	51.6	1.7
Rural farms	23.8	11.5	64.8	100	24.2	73.9	1.9
Total					53.1	46.0	0.9

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

# Likelihood of child migration by mother migration and employment status

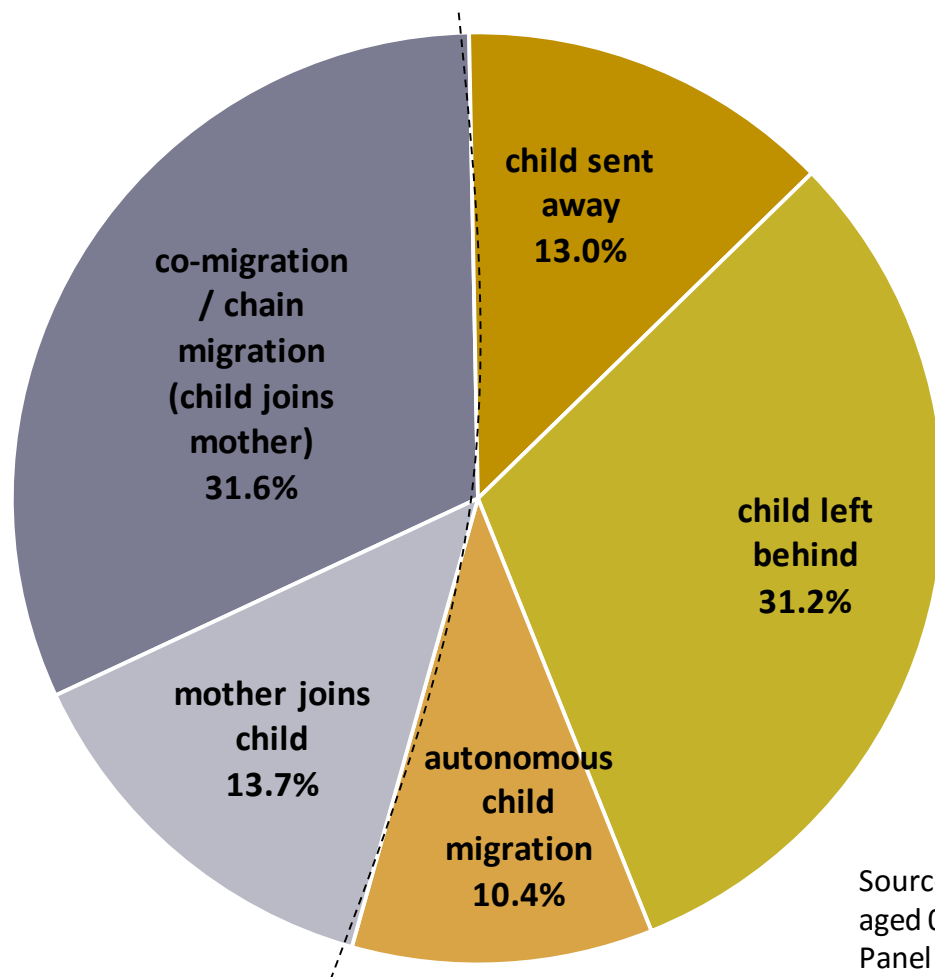
	Odds Ratio	Std. Err.
Mother migrated	42.952	0.178
Mother's w.1 employment status		
Discouraged work-seeker	1.090	0.007
Actively seeking work	2.386	0.012
Employed	1.420	0.007
Child's wave 1 age	1.224	0.003
Child's w.1 age squared	0.965	0.000
Child's w.1 geotype		
Urban areas	2.918	0.012
Commercial farms	8.850	0.065
Constant	0.013	0.000
Number of observations = 2433		
Log pseudolikelihood = -1143443.9		

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

# Child-mother migration events

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

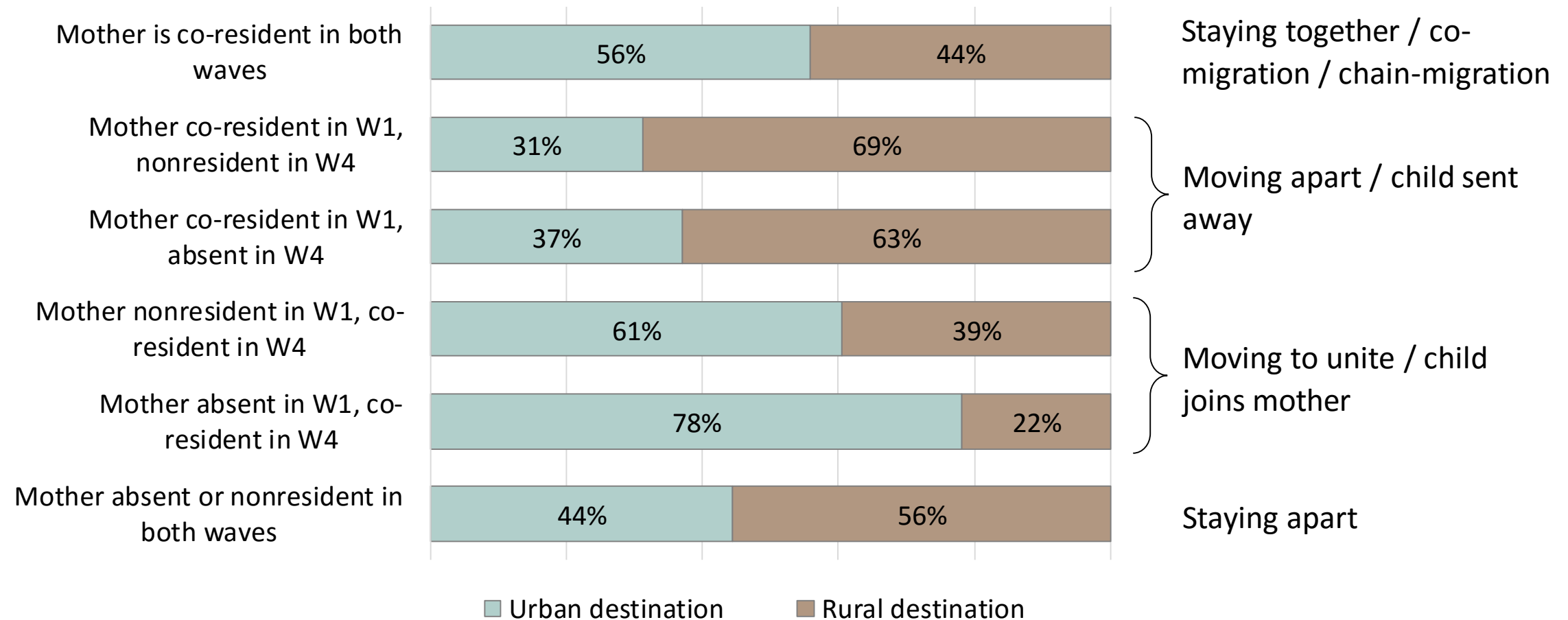
Nearly half of migration events result in co-residence of mothers and children



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

Source: NIDS waves 1–4, based on the balanced panel of African children aged 0–8 in wave 1, who experienced a child-mother migration event. Panel weights used.

# Receiving household geotype for child migrants, by change in maternal co-residence status over waves 1–4

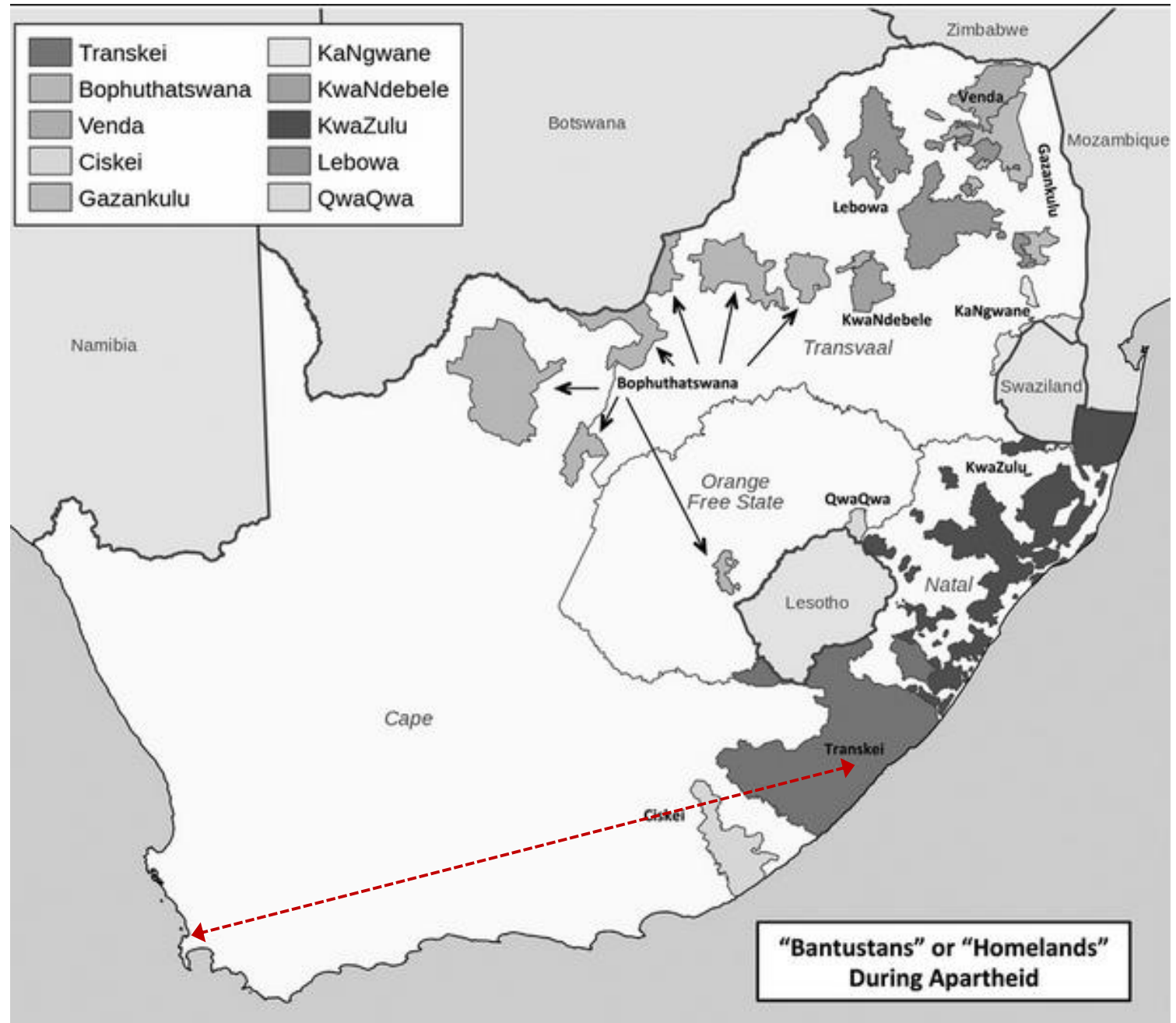


Source: NIDS Waves 1 & 4 (mother & child co-residence status); waves 1–4 (child migrant status). Based on African children aged 0–8 in Wave 1 defined as migrants, whose mothers were alive in wave 4. Panel weights used.

# Case study

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

# Illustration of an established rural-urban internal migration route

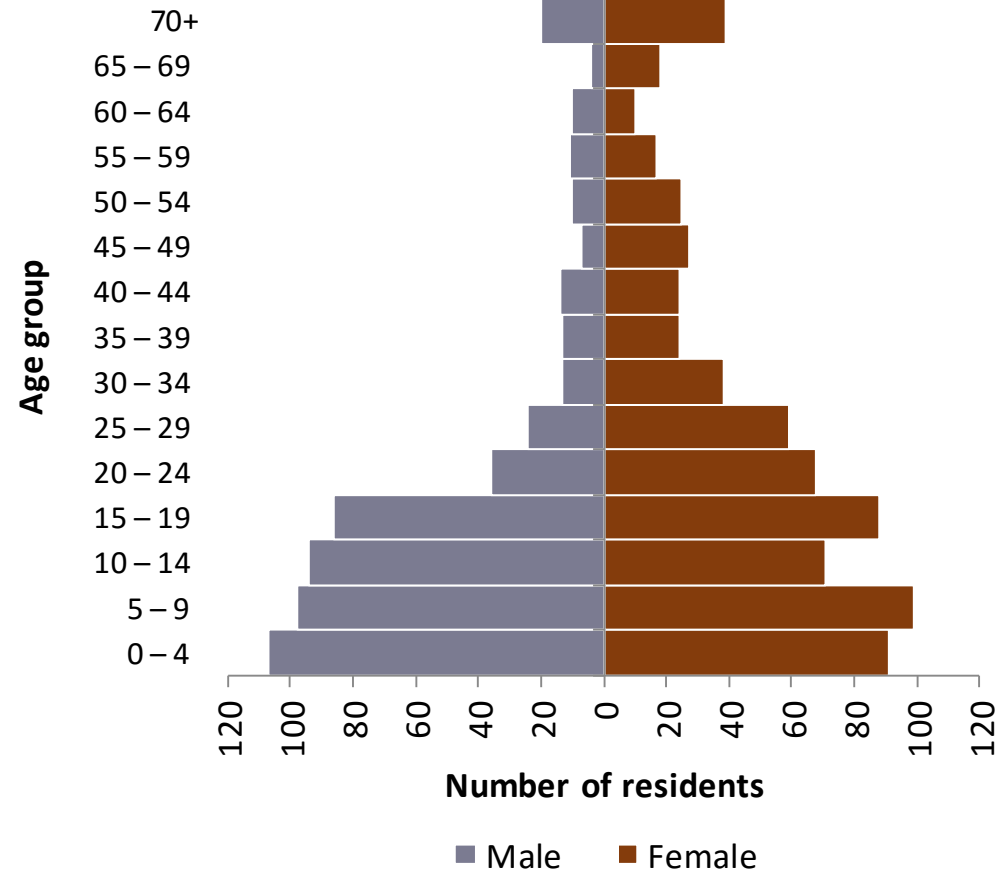




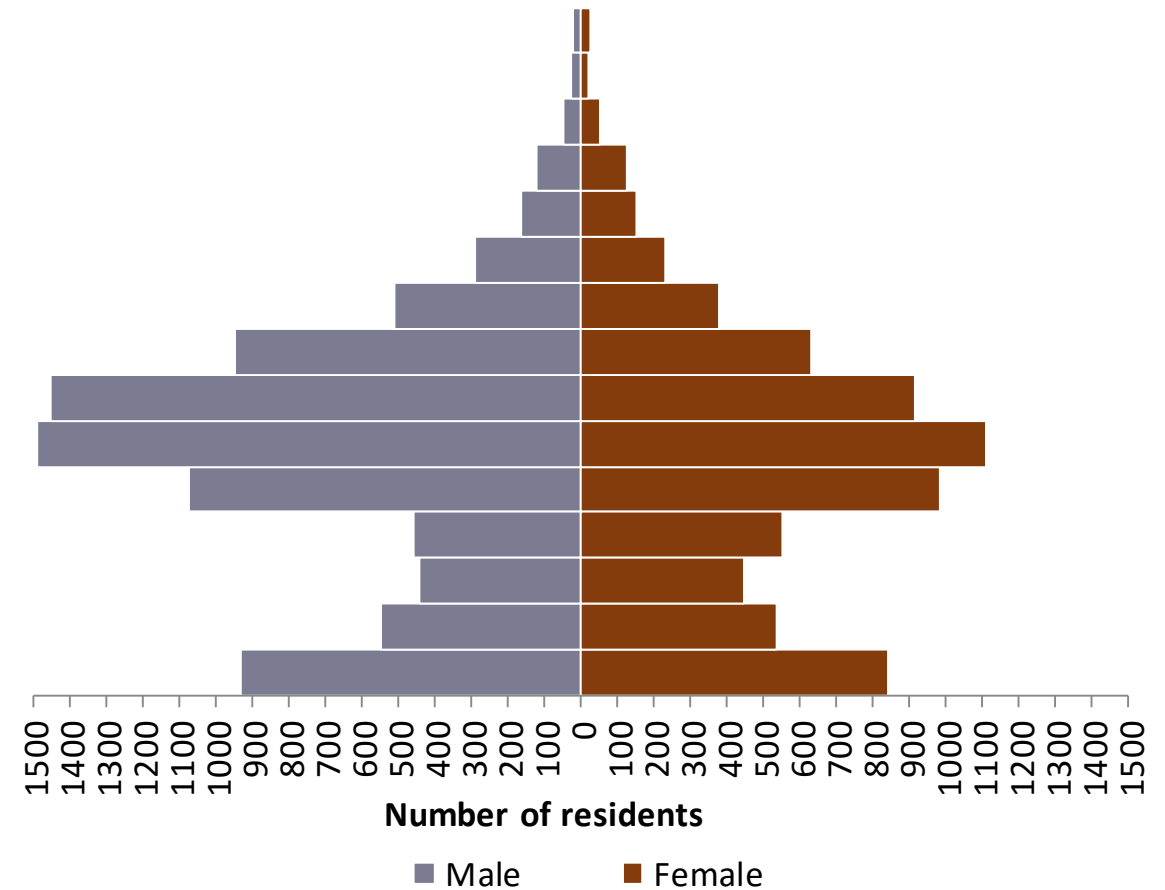


# Population pyramids for rural and urban sites

A. Lindiwe's rural village



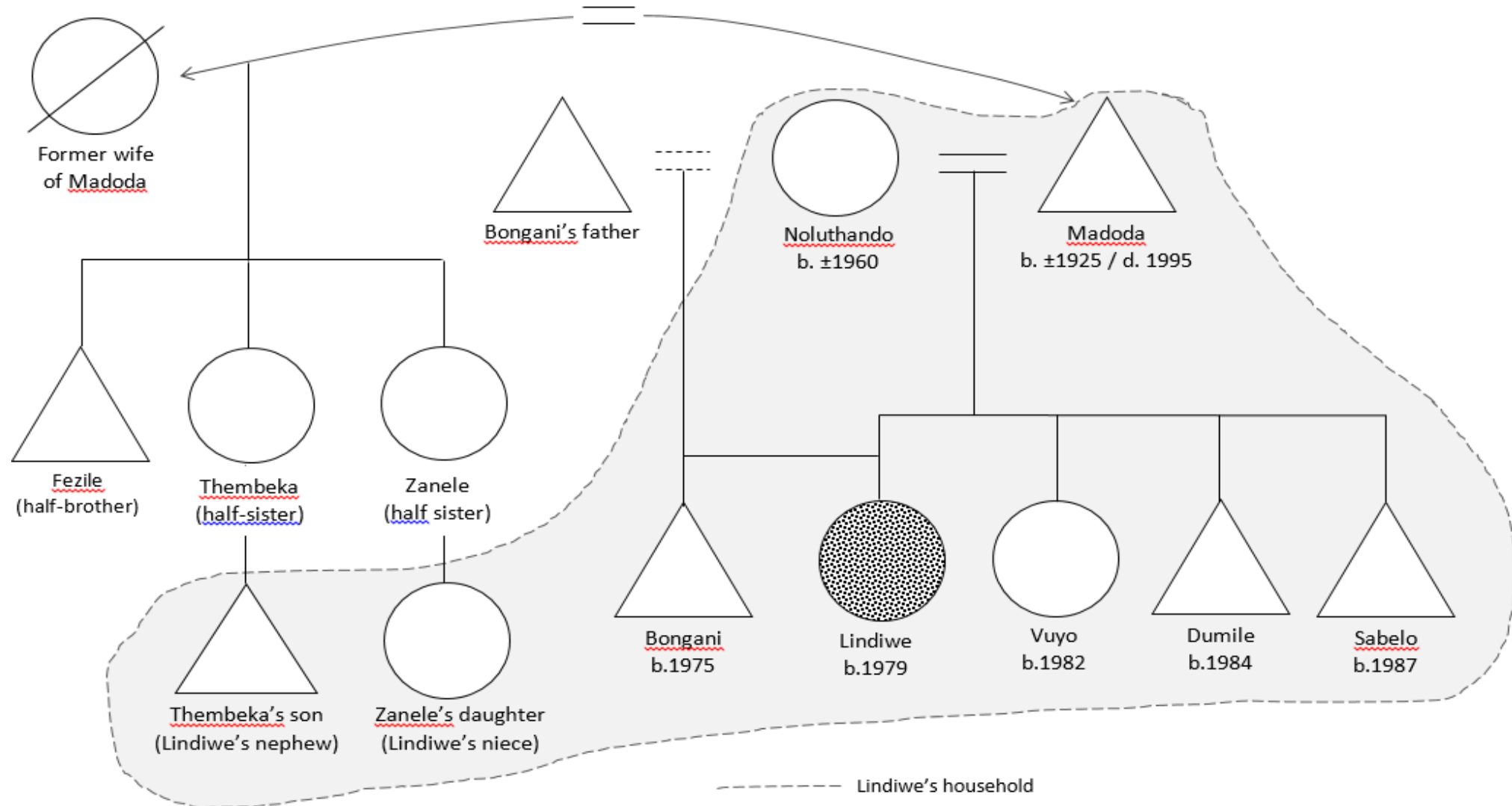
B. Lindiwe's urban township



Own calculations from population census 2011 (100% census, using SuperCross).

# Lindiwe's childhood household (c.1988-1993)

- Visual tools to assist recall:
- Life histories matrix
  - Kinship diagrams





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

- *Noluthando (Lindiwe's mother)*

I thought that the following year I would go back to school, but it turned out that I should go and take care of my brother. I left the child behind. That's how it started. My mother said 'Go to Cape Town to look after your brother because he's not well,' you see.

And when I arrived here I found that she had made it seem like a small thing, but it turned out that all along my brother was sick, and he was not going to make it. So I was forced to stay in Cape Town and find work in order to help those who come after me.

- *Lindiwe*







## Imizamo Yethu fire leaves 240 homeless

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

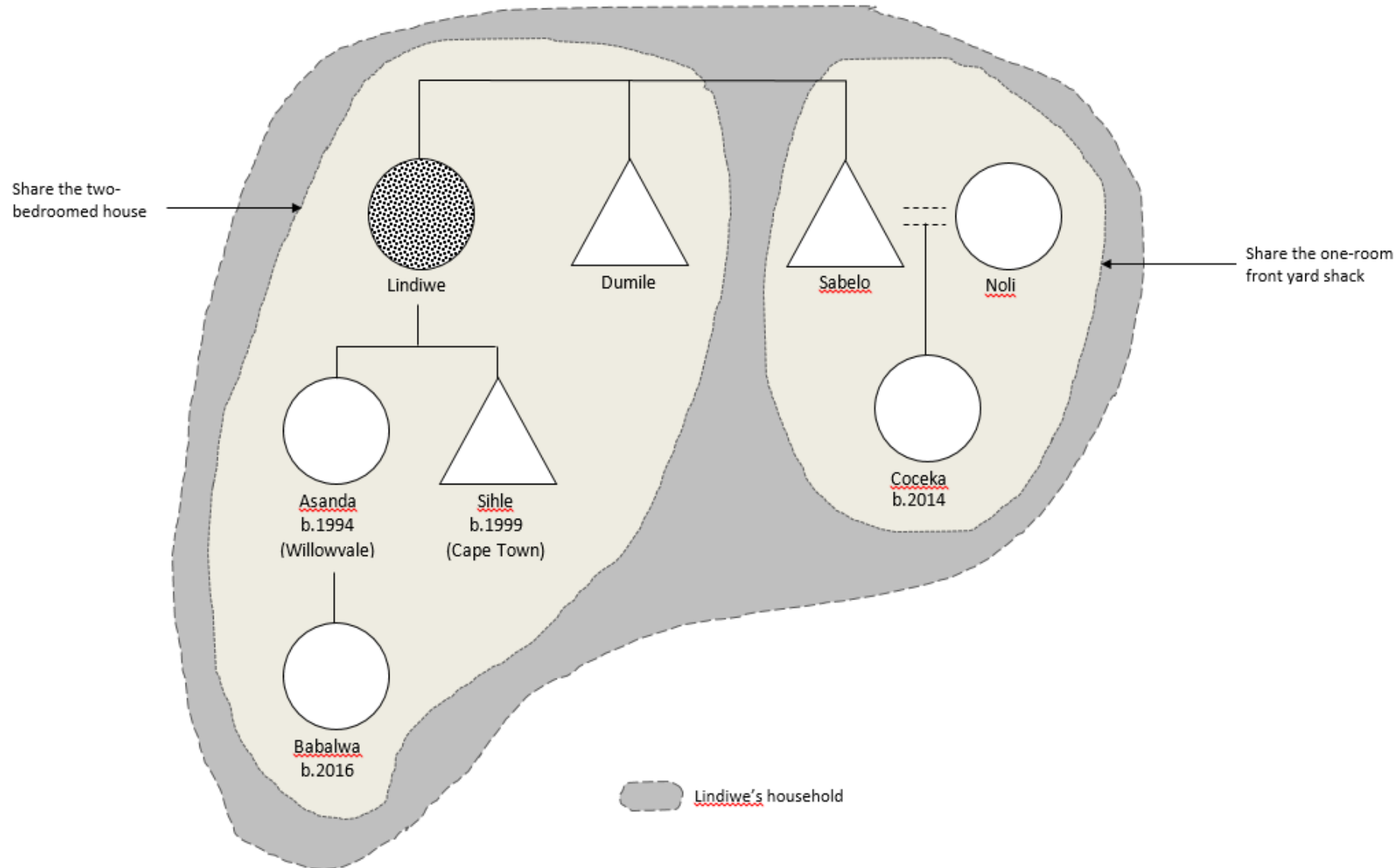
The city's Disaster Risk Management Centre spokeswoman, Charlotte Powell, said the fire broke out at around 4pm, destroying 60 shacks.

"Sixty dwellings were destroyed, leaving 240 people displaced."

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

"The South African Red Cross is providing immediate relief and emergency shelters, such as community halls have been opened to shack fire victims."

# Lindiwe's urban household (2016)



# Conclusions

- The necessity of female migration, even at the cost of family fragmentation and absence from children's households. Fragmentation as part of the household strategy.
- Child migration may be prevented (involuntary immobility), delayed, or premature – in relation to plans and aspirations.
- Both migration and immobility may be about a lack of choice (challenges notions of individual agency). Long-term intentions superseded by short-term necessity.
- The importance of extended families, especially grandmothers. Connectedness of rural and urban homes.
- Permanent v circular/temporary migration – intentions vary, not clear-cut.
- Surveys essential for describing broad trends, but not well suited to examining extended household arrangements and social networks.
- Child-mother migration events take many forms. Worthy of further research.

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