Proximity, Gender and Financial Support Received by Older Adults in Urban Latin America and the Caribbean: A Comparative Study

Nekehia Quashie, University of Utah

Overview

A considerable body of research has examined both the associations between proximity and social support for older adults and the importance of the gender of the parent and child in structuring support. Much of this research has focused on the United States, Europe, and Asia (Lin and Rogerson 1995; Zimmer, Korinek, Knodel and Chayovan 2008; Hank 2007; Ofstedal, Reidy and Knodel 2004; Xie and Zhu 2009) and they reify the importance of social context in shaping patterns of intergenerational support; thus calling attention to the need for more comparative research. Research on intergenerational support and the gendered dimensions of such within Latin America and the Caribbean is burgeoning but the existing research has been limited to a few countries (Gomes 2007; Camarano, Kanso, Mello and Pasinato 2005), and with a few exceptions has there been comparative assessment (Saad 2005; Glaser, Agree, Costenbader, Camargo, Trench, Natividad, Chuang 2006). This study begins to fill this gap through a comparative assessment of financial transfers to older adults in seven different cities across the region: Buenos Aires, Argentina; Montevideo, Uruguay; Santiago, Chile; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Mexico City, Mexico; Havana, Cuba; and Bridgetown, Barbados.

The importance of this topic is reflected in the rapid but varied pace of population ageing among countries within the region (Guzmán, Rodríguez, Martínez, Contreas and González 2006); the disproportionate representation of women among older adults in all countries (UN 2009); the consistent feature of migration amongst younger cohorts, which limits the availability of informal support providers (Canales 2009); and the similarities in gender ideology whereby men are expected to be economic providers and women act as caretakers. Therefore, women are traditionally financially dependent on men (Salles and Tuirán 1997). One of the main areas of concern for social policy is that the region is rapidly ageing within contexts of weak institutional infrastructure and volatile economies (Palloni, McEniry, Wong and Pelaez 2005). The countries under study, however, differ substantially in the design of their pension systems, which can have implications for older adults', men and women, dependence on children for financial support. Uruguay has the highest pension coverage and the most equality between men and women. In contrast, Mexico has the lowest coverage and the most inequality between men and women (Mesa-Lago 2008; Arza 2012). Although pension coverage differs across countries, they all share similarities in older women and men's differential access to independent income (Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC) 2009). The distinct social policy regimes, however, can render proximity of children more or less important for financial support. Given the demographic, cultural and socio-economic similarities and distinctions, this study asks the following questions: Are older adults whose nearest child is in close proximity more likely to receive financial support relative to older adults whose nearest child is further away? Is there consistency in the relationship between proximity and financial support across the cities studied? Lastly, to what extent are financial transfers to older adults in these cities contingent on the gender of the parent and the sex composition of children?

The associations between proximity and financial support are assessed within the new home economics of migration framework, which posits that the migration of family members does not inhibit support as household members retain their cohesion through remittances (Stark

and Bloom 1985). This perspective assumes migrants behave altruistically to ensure the well-being of other family members. Thus it is expected that even if the nearest child is far away, older adults in vulnerable positions will receive support. The political economy of aging perspective suggests that vulnerability is contingent on one's location in certain social structures such as class, ethnicity and gender. This perspective further argues that social policies such as pensions impact the well-being of older adults (Estes 2000, Phillipson 2005). As the countries differ in the design on their pension systems and the coverage for older adults, it is expected that gender differences in economic vulnerability and therefore gender differences in financial support will differ across the cities. In countries such as Uruguay, Brazil, Barbados, Cuba and Argentina where there is closer gender equality in pension coverage it is expected that there will be little or no gender difference in parents' receipts of financial support compared to countries where there is higher gender inequality. Moreover, Latin American and Caribbean countries share similar gender ideologies of men as breadwinners and women as caretakers, which are reproduced across generations. As such, there are clear expectations for sons to provide economic support more so than daughters (Chant 2003, Bialik 1992). Gendered ideologies regarding family or household support have been shown to transcend space (Vanwey 2004, Sana and Massey 2005). Thus it is expected that older adults will have higher likelihoods of receiving financial support if there are more available sons and if the most proximate child is a son. The region lacks comparative empirical tests of the intersections of parent-child proximity and the gendered dimensions of these relationships as it relates to older adult support. Thus the study seeks to contribute to these empirical gaps in the literature.

Data and Samples
Data for this study are drawn from the Survey of Health, Well-Being and Aging in Latin America and the Caribbean (SABE), a multi-center research project conducted between 1999 and 2000 under the auspices of the Pan American Health Organization with support from the Center for Demography and Ecology at the University of Wisconsin (Pelaez et al 2000) in seven urban cities in the region. These cities included Buenos Aires, Argentina; Montevideo, Uruguay; Santiago, Chile; Sao Paulo, Brazil; Mexico City, Mexico; Havana, Cuba and Bridgetown, Barbados. All cities are used in this study. The initial samples for all cities produced a total of 11,226 cases for both sexes. For the purposes of this study, each city's sample is restricted to older adults who have at least 1 living child aged 15 and over. Individuals who did not fit the criterion were omitted. Thus, the analyses do not account for support received by older adults who did not have any living children but who can likely receive support from extended kin. This is a limitation as having such analysis can provide some insight into the ways in which support from children may differ from support provided by extended family. Nevertheless, examining support arrangements between older adults and their children in different contexts remains a beneficial contribution. Based on the sample restrictions sample sizes stand at Bridgetown, 1248; Havana, 1667; Mexico City, 1139; Sao Paulo, 1922; Santiago, 1182; Buenos Aires, 903; and Montevideo, 1236. In each city, analyses are weighted to assure representativeness. This comparative analysis is made possible by the parallel surveys used in each country. Older adults in each setting were asked detailed questions on formal and informal support transfers, background characteristics, and information on each child in each of the cities. This provides a valuable opportunity to conduct comparative analysis of the intersections of gender and geographic proximity in relation to financial support transfers within the region.

Measures and Analytic Strategy

The *dependent variable, receipt of financial support,* was derived from respondents' answers to the following question of each child: 'I would like to ask if (NAME) helps you in any way with money?" The response is dichotomized as either yes they receive money from at least one child or not.

      Proximity of nearest the child is measured by using information on the location of each child recorded at time of interview. Four categories of proximity are considered: co-resident; in the neighborhood; outside the neighborhood but in the country; and abroad. In all cities, the category outside the neighbourhood combines older adults who indicate their nearest child is in the same city but a different neighbourhood and those whose nearest child is in another city but in the country. In all cities, this category, outside the neighbourhood is dominated by older adults who indicate their nearest child is in the same city. In four cities, however, the category outside the neighbourhood also includes a minority of older adults who indicate their nearest child is abroad. Although parents can have children in multiple locations, the primary interest in this study is to examine the probability of receiving financial support based on the location of the nearest child rather than on the receipt of support from specific children. Table 1 shows the demographic, socioeconomic and health characteristics of older adults included as covariates in the models.

      Separate dichotomous logistic regression models are estimated for each city to predict the probability of older adults' receipts of financial support in each context. To better illustrate the extent to which gender mediates the relationship between proximity and financial support, predicted probabilities of financial support are calculated for mothers and fathers based on 1) the proximity of the nearest child in each location; 2) the number and sex of the nearest child in each location and 3) the combination of parents' vulnerabilities with the number and sex of the nearest child. These probabilities are calculated across the models in each city to capture the extent to which financial transfers are shaped by the social context.

Results and Discussion

      Table 2 shows the distribution of select socio-demographic characteristics of each sample. Table 3 shows the bivariate associations between proximity and older adults' receipts of financial support. In each city, older adults whose nearest child is co-resident show the highest likelihood of receiving financial support. As distance increases the likelihood of monetary support decreases. This decline is sharpest in Montevideo and most gradual in Mexico City. Among those whose nearest child is abroad, older adults in Havana have the highest likelihood of receiving monetary support across all the cities. Preliminary analyses, as shown in Table 4, indicate that proximity, the gender of the parent and the sex composition of children are important determinants of parents' receipts of financial support. In all cities, the likelihood of financial support decreases with increasing distance even after covariates are included. In Santiago, Buenos Aires and Sao Paulo, there are no notable differences between older men's and older women's odds of receiving monetary support. In contrast in other cities, older men have lower odds than women of receiving money from children. Furthermore, the number and sex composition of children has distinct associations with financial support in each city. The results presented at PAA will speak to the gendered dimensions of the altruistic tenet of the new home economics perspective and the role of nuanced socio-economic contexts in shaping intergenerational relations across these Latin American and Caribbean cities.

Table 1: Covariates, and their measurements, included in models predicting older adults' receipts of financial support by proximity of the nearest child in each city

Demographic	Health	Socio-economic
age (categorical)	Self-reported health status (categorical)	Highest level of Education (categorical)
gender (dummy)	Difficulty with ADLs (dummy)	Employment/Pension Status (categorical)
sex composition of children (categorical)	Difficulty with IADLs (dummy)	Income Quintile (categorical)
marital status (categorical)		
residual household size (continuous)		
residual household assistance (dummy)		

Table 2: Percentage Distribution of Select Socio-Demographic Characteristics Of Older Adults By City Of Residence.

Characteristics of Parents	Mexico City N=1139	Santiago N=1182	Buenos Aires N=903	SaoPaulo N=1922	Montevideo N=1236	Havana N=1667	Bridgetown N=1248
Receipt of Support							
At least 1 child helps with money	67.2	53.7	42.5	46.3	32.9	60.5	49.6
Location of Nearest Child							
Coresident	71.6	65.2	45.5	57.6	31.2	65.6	49.8
In the same Neighborhood	15.5	14.4	29.7	25.6	36.8	14.2	11.2
Outside the Neighborhood	13.0	20.4	24.9	16.8	28.0	17.6	27.4
Abroad	na	na		na	4.1	2.6	11.6
Gender							
women	56.1	59.3	61.2	58.3	64.8	58.3	59.6
men	44.0	40.7	38.8	41.7	35.2	41.7	40.4
Children							
exactly one son	4.1	4.1	13.1	6.5	12.0	9.1	8.0
exactly one daughter	2.7	6.3	11.8	7.2	10.4	9.0	6.2
two sons	6.7	11.9	15.0	12.9	14.5	13.8	11.1
two daughters	14.3	16.8	18.5	19.8	19.5	16.8	16.2
one son and one daughter	4.5	8.9	19.6	13.0	16.9	14.2	9.4
3 or more sons or daughters	67.8	52.0	21.9	40.6	26.9	37.2	49.1

Table 2: Continued

Characteristics of Parents	Mexico City N=1139	Santiago N=1182	Buenos Aires N=903	SaoPaulo N=1922	Montevideo N=1236	Havana N=1667	Bridgetown N=1248
Work/Pension Status							
No Work/No Pension	32.2	14.7	18.1	15.3	10.6	na	20.1
Pension Only	20.9	50.4	49.1	51.3	65.1	64.4	56.4
Work and Pension	7.0	15.0	9.1	17.5	9.6	12.2	6.6
Work only	24.2	11.2	14.3	9.2	6.3	na	11.2
No info on work or pension	15.8	8.7	9.3	6.6	8.5	23.4	5.9
Income Quintile							
I	46.2	21.5	26.2	20.0	19.5	20.6	25.3
II	na	19.1	14.0	21.4	19.9	19.5	13.1
III	9.4	20.2	17.2	18.8	19.0	20.2	17.5
IV	21.3	19.2	18.4	19.8	19.5	19.6	18.7
V	21.6	19.9	18.9	20.0	19.5	20.0	18.5
Income not reported	1.5	0.1	5.4	na	2.7	0.1	6.9

na: no cases
Reference categories are in bold

Table 3: Percentage Distribution of Older Adults' Receipts of Financial Support by Proximity of the Nearest Child in Each City.

	Mexico City	Santiago	Buenos Aires	Sao Paulo	Montevideo	Havana	Bridgetown
Coresident	72.7	64.4	58.3	58.2	65.4	70.2	69.7
Same Neighborhood	55.0	36.1	32.3	35.0	20.6	44.0	31.6
Outside Neighborhood	51.3	31.9	25.7	22.9	16.5	39.2	32.2
Abroad	na	na	na	na	9.1	50.7	21.6

na: no cases

Table 4: Logistic Regression Odds Ratios of Parents Receipts' of Financial Support by City of Residence.

Characteristics of Parents	Mexico City N=1139	Santiago N=1181	Buenos Aires N=903	Sao Paulo N=1922	Montevideo N=1236	Havana N=1665	Bridgetown N=1248
Location of Nearest Child (Co-resident)							
In the same Neighborhood	0.39(.08)***	0.25(.07)***	.30(.06)***	.35(.05)***	0.11(.02)***	0.35(.06)***	0.20(.04)***
Outside the Neighborhood	0.46(.11)***	0.24(.06)***	.25(.06)***	.28(.05)***	0.09(.02)***	0.31(.05)***	0.24(.04)***
Abroad	na	na	na	na	0.06(.04)***	0.60(.20)***	0.13(.03)***
Gender (women)							
men	0.52(.10)***	0.76 (.15)	1.03 (.21)	.85 (.13)	0.57 (.12)**	0.47(.08)***	0.27(.04)***
Children (one son)							
one daughter	0.24 (.15)*	0.55 (.30)	1.00 (.35)	1.43 (.48)	2.11 (.84)	0.76 (.20)	1.71 (.61)
two sons	0.84 (.39)	1.53 (.68)	1.63 (.52)	2.39(.70)**	3.10(1.08)***	1.56 (.39)	2.55(.85)**
two daughters	0.82 (.36)	1.50 (.63)	1.48 (.45)	2.67(.74)***	2.01 (.69)*	1.67 (.41)*	2.35(.72)**
one son and one daughter	0.63 (.32)	2.42 (1.15)	1.57 (.48)	2.56(.74)***	1.79 (.62)	1.24 (.31)	1.77 (.60)
3 or more sons or daughters	1.41 (.59)	2.46(.99)***	2.50(.73)**	2.68(.71)***	2.05 (.66)*	2.00(.46)**	2.98(.85)***
Age (70-74)							
60-64	0.88 (.20)	0.65 (.18)	1.18 (.31)	1.02 (.19)	0.61 (.16)*	0.97 (.18)	1.06 (.27)
65-69	0.89 (.20)	0.63 (.17)	1.51 (.35)	1.08 (.20)	0.97 (.24)	1.04 (.20)	1.19 (.25)
75-79	1.34 (.37)	0.75 (.22)	1.48 (.40)	1.14 (.20)	1.54 (.42)	1.02 (.22)	0.93 (.22)
80-84	0.69 (.22)	0.43 (.16)*	1.93(.66)*	1.03 (.21)	1.60 (.54)	1.23 (.33)	1.61 (.42)
85 and older	0.53 (.20)	0.89 (.39)	1.21 (.63)	0.96 (.24)	0.73 (.32)	0.78 (.20)	1.31 (.38)
Marital Status (married)							
widowed	1.19 (.22)	1.02 (.22)	1.80(.35)**	1.24 (.20)	1.12 (.23)	0.88 (.15)	1.28 (.25)
separated/divorced/unmarried	0.74 (.18)	0.92 (.22)	1.86(.52)*	0.58 (.14)*	1.61 (.44)	0.95 (.15)	1.00 (.16)

Table 4: continued

Characteristics of Parents	Mexico City N=1139	Santiago N=1181	Buenos Aires N=903	Sao Paulo N=1922	Montevideo N=1236	Havana N=1665	Bridgetown N=1248
Residual HH Size	0.96 (.04)	0.95 (.06)	0.86(.07)*	1.07 (.06)	0.86 (.05)**	0.94 (.04)	1.05 (.06)
Residual Household Assistance (No assistance)							
Assistance from auxillary hh members	1.16 (.21)	1.18 (.25)	1.70 (.48)	0.62(.11)**	1.82 (.40)**	1.47(.21)**	1.59 (.33)*
Self -Rated Health (very good)							
good	1.36 (.43)	1.53 (.59)	1.54 (.36)	0.83 (.18)	1.31 (.34)	0.95 (.25)	1.05 (.21)
fair	1.80 (.54)*	1.58 (.60)	1.56 (.40)	1.00 (.22)	1.10 (.31)	1.01 (.26)	1.23 (.25)
poor	1.79 (.63)	1.44 (.60)	0.99 (.37)	1.03 (.31)	0.97 (.40)	0.53 (.15)*	.96 (.37)
used proxy	na	na	na	na	na	0.95 (.33)	na
Disability							
Difficulty with at least 1 ADL	1.03 (.23)	0.87 (.22)	1.34 (.38)	1.10 (.19)	0.80 (.20)	1.30 (.23)	.97 (.23)
Difficulty with at least 1 IADL	0.78 (.16)	0.96 (.23)	1.07 (.24)	0.96 (.15)	1.28 (.34)	1.12 (.21)	1.04 (.20)
Educational Attainment (none)							
primary	0.76 (.14)	1.07 (.22)	0.54 (.19)	1.03 (.15)	0.90 (.24)	1.00 (.28)	.67 (.28)
high school	0.84 (.23)	0.94 (.27)	0.542 (.21)	1.31 (.43)	0.94 (.31)	0.97 (.28)	.47 (.22)
above high school	0.27 (.10)	0.32(.13)**	0.27(.12)**	0.41 (.18)*	0.45 (.17)*	1.24 (.45)	.46 (.25)

Table 4: continued

Characteristics of Parents	Mexico City N=1139	Santiago N=1181	Buenos Aires N=903	Sao Paulo N=1922	Montevideo N=1236	Havana N=1665	Bridgetown N=1248
Work/Pension Status (No Work/No pension)							
Pension only	0.47(.14)**	0.46 (.15)*	0.54 (.20)	0.73 (.20)	0.88 (.29)	na	.96 (.18)
Work and Pension	0.54 (.20)	0.36 (.14) **	0.52 (.25)	0.65 (.20)	1.08 (.48)	0.71 (.16)	.62 (.21)
Work only	0.57 (.15)*	0.23(.09)***	0.45(.17)*	0.82 (.24)	0.75 (.35)	na	.85 (.24)
No info on work or pension	0.52(.12)**	0.39 (.16)*	0.48(.18)*	0.69 (.20)	1.72 (.64)	0.79 (.15)	.86 (.26)
Income Quintile (I)							
II	na	1.40 (.41)	1.70 (.62)	1.25 (.34)	0.86 (.25)	0.91 (.21)	1.68 (.43)*
III	1.11 (.33)	1.34 (.40)	1.08 (.40)	1.26 (.34)	1.33 (.40)	0.80 (.19)	1.09 (.26)
IV	1.09 (.29)	0.74 (.22)	1.28 (.48)	0.68 (.19)	0.85 (.26)	0.62 (.15)*	1.00 (.22)
V	0.50(.13)**	0.89 (.28)	0.64 (.25)	0.31(.10)***	0.31 (.10)	0.47(.12)**	1.05 (.23)
Income not reported	0.45 (.25)	na	0.77 (.38)	na	0.87 (.52)	na	1.45 (.43)
Pseudo R2	0.1533	0.1569	0.1502	0.1405	0.2551	0.1314	0.2242
Wald chi2	167.09***	149.10***	143.59***	206.37***	266.01***	232.91***	265.73***

*p <.05; **p <.01 *** p <.001
na: no cases
standard errors in parentheses

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