



Research note: Revisiting the classification of household composition among elderly people

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Abstract. The note updates comments written a decade and a half ago on our need for a standard schemata for comparing the living arrangements of elderly people around the world. Perforce limiting our view to populations living in private households, the note considers different schema beginning with an examination of household size and head/nonhead data and proceeding to schemes using ever more detailed data on ‘relation to household head’ information and data on marital status. The best scheme will of course depend on the data available and on the study’s theoretical ideas, but if the ideas have to do with the nature of the family then it would seem that one is best off using a combination of information on people’s relation to the household head and information on marital status to indicate *family household composition*. The six-category scheme (alone, spouse only, with married child[ren], with unmarried child[ren], with other relatives, with non-kin) might best be collapsed into a bivariate or trivariate categorical dependent variable for purposes of multivariate regression.

Keywords: Household composition, Classification.

Introduction

The purpose of this note is to revisit and update some comments written a decade and a half ago on various schemes that compared the household situation of elderly people (De Vos and Holden, 1988). Although we may now have a more sophisticated arsenal of ideas about them than before, it is still the case that information on the living arrangements of elderly people can often provide a broad overview of their family position (see Special Issue Nos. 42/43 2001 of the U.N.’s Population Bulletin). The idea behind the earlier and present discussion is that if we are to compare, we need to use measures that can take account of demographic conditions and cultural biases. This is a daunting, and perhaps impossible, task (Hammel 1984). Here at least, we can try to examine ways to compare household arrangements. In the end, the scheme used may depend on what data are available and/or how the variable may be used in analysis. If data permit, a variant on the Shanas et al. scheme

(1968) that considers the marital status of children may be preferable for initial descriptive purposes.

Since we are concerned about comparability, we use census-like data from seven countries located around the world: Colombia, the Czech Republic, Kenya, Mexico, Turkey, the United States, and Vietnam.¹ Broadly comparable, they necessarily reflect the statistics-gathering capabilities of each country. Furthermore, examining them requires a secondary data analysis, a procedure that is always suspect. However, that is necessary if we want a broad scope.²

In a first note, De Vos and Holden (1988) discussed four household schemes they had seen in the literature on older people's living arrangements using census or census-like survey data: 1) age-sex specific household headship rates, 2) household composition depending on headship and household member's relation to that head, 3) household composition that did not depend on headship but rather emphasized the co-residence of elders with an married or unmarried child (here referred to as the Shanas et al. scheme), and 4) household composition that did not depend on headship but rather emphasized the simple/extended nature of the household's family structure. Despite their preference for the fourth scheme, subsequent literature appears to show a preference for the third Shanas et al. scheme. We pay particular attention to that one here although shortly after the first note came out, Kinsella (1990) finished a study that emphasized the importance of two even more basic issues. The first issue had to do with differentiating between institutionalized and private household populations. Unimportant where there are few institutional homes for the elderly population, this issue tends to gain in importance with societal development, and cannot be ignored in countries with high per capita GNP (see also Kinsella & Velkoff, 2001; De Vos & Palloni, n.d.). Kinsella's second basic issue had to do with the size of private households lived in by elderly people, especially with whether an elder lived alone in a one-person household or lived with other people.

Here, we deal with the population living in private households (some of our data sets deal only with the noninstitutionalized population³). We begin our discussion with an examination of household size, going from there to using ever more detailed data on "relation to household head" starting with head/nonhead information. After considering whether an elder lives with a child or not, we consider whether a child is young or adult, and then demonstrate the importance of information on marital status, a datum sometimes lacking in otherwise fine surveys. We end our discussion by pointing out some of the methodological advantages and drawbacks of schemes that use crude vs. detailed information on relationship to the household head and/or marital status in addition to information on age, sex and household size. Whether or

not an elder lives with a child is sometimes (perhaps incorrectly) an issue of particular interest.

Household size, household headship and the two issues combined

It is not unusual to find discussions of “household structure” to be little more than discussions of household size, sometimes calculated as a mean. Often, information on household size exists or can be derived even when other more complicated data cannot be had. It seems ages ago however, that Laslett examined mean household size (MHS) and subsequently found that it was not as informative as might be thought, as differences or similarities could be due as much to fertility and mortality as to household complexity (e.g. Burch 1970; Laslett 1972). It was often possible to have large households that were still nuclear and small households that were extended. Still, the issue of living alone in a one-person household has maintained a special kind of mystique, especially when the subject is older people. Indeed, one of the universals that Kinsella (1990) detected in his world-wide view of the household situation of elderly people was that elderly women were more prone to live alone than other people, a situation that could be interpreted quite negatively (but see Palloni 2001).

Related to the issue of living alone is that of household headship because older women sometimes cannot head a household unless they live alone. Thus a common finding is that headship among males tends to decline with age whereas headship among females tends to rise (e.g. U.N. 1973; Arias & Palloni 1999). Better than trying to interpret living alone or headship separately however, is combining the information into a very crude scheme of household composition in which the categories correspond to 1) living alone, 2) heading a multiperson household, and 3) living in a multiperson household headed by someone else.

Considering headship and solitary vs. multiperson living in a crude 3-category scheme provides us with a richer understanding of elderly people’s living arrangements than do the simpler bivariate measures. Take for example the situations of Mexico and Turkey. Among elderly women 60+, living alone there is fairly similar (10.1 & 11.4%) while reported headship is very different (36.9 & 20.2%). If we consider living alone and headship together, we can see that in Mexico 26.8 percent of the elderly women head households with others compared to only 8.8 percent in Turkey. Or consider the situation of women in Kenya and the United States. If we were to look only at the proportions living alone, we would surmise that those proportions of elderly women (15.4 & 35.4%) were vastly different, women in the United States

being much more likely to live alone than women in Kenya. On the other hand, if we were to only consider headship, we would consider the proportion heading a household (55.5 & 56.1%) to be very similar. We obviously get a much better picture if we consider both attributes together. Then we find that elderly women in the United States are much more likely to live alone but that elderly women in Kenya are much more likely to head households lived in by other people.

Household size and “spouse” as well as head information

We can do much better if, along with information on household size and headship, we have information identifying the spouse of a head. Then, we can define as CO-HEAD the head and the head’s spouse even if we keep our scheme as simple as it was before, differentiating only by being alone and being *co-head*. When we do that, the effect of doing so is striking for elderly women everywhere, but the biggest effect is in countries in which married women are very unlikely to be considered “head.” In Turkey for example, less than 9 percent of the elderly women are strictly “heads” with other people but over 54 percent are “co-heads” with other people (figures not shown). (It is also noteworthy that using “co-head” instead of “head” effects figures for men in the United States, and to a lesser extent, in Vietnam.)⁴

The scheme can be still more illuminating because knowing about the presence or absence of a spouse in the household enables us to capture as a separate category, households in which there is only a head and a spouse. We can identify *independent* living as living alone or as a couple only. While only unmarried elders are at risk of living alone, *all* elders are at risk of living independently. Thus one can construct a four-category scheme of 1) alone, 2) couple only, 3) co-head with others, and 4) non-co-head with others. (One can also collapse this into a bivariate independent/not independent scheme or a trivariate 1) alone, 2) couple only, and 3) other scheme.) The situations in the Czech Republic and the United States stand out as independent living of individuals and couples is so common there compared to the situation in the other countries. Table 1.

Unfortunately, the comparative value of such a scheme is questionable, especially when the comparison is across societies rather than across time in the same society. The way to identify headship is notoriously difficult to determine objectively, and most censuses or surveys leave it up to the respondents to decide who the head is:

In DHS surveys, during the listing of household members, an adult respondent is asked to identify the head of the household. With this procedure,

Table 1. Basic household scheme using information on household size, head, and spouse of head among elders 60+ (percentile distribution)¹

	Alone	Couple only	CoHd w other	Non-CoHd w other
Colombia 1993	6.6	7.3	60.9	25.1
Czech Rep. 1991	31.3	45.0	16.0	7.6
Kenya 1999	12.3	7.0	62.4	18.3
Mexico 2000	8.8	15.8	57.0	18.4
Turkey 1990	8.5	23.0	46.8	21.6
United States 2000	26.7	47.9	17.4	8.0
Vietnam 1999	5.8	11.1	59.7	23.4

¹Categories correspond to 1) Alone, 2) With spouse only, 3) Co-head of household with other members, and 4) non-Co-head of household with other members. Percents may not add up to 100 because of rounding error.

sociocultural considerations may affect who is viewed as the head of the household. In some societies that have strong traditional values, even if a female member is the real provider for the household, she might not be designated as the head of the household, if there is an adult or elderly male who is a member of that same household. (Ayad et al., 1997:2)

(The U.S. census's idea of a "householder" is clearer than most.) It is a cultural determination as much as anything else (see U.N. 1987). In a recent comparative study that did not focus specifically on old people, Kamo (2000) used information on headship to show how three major ethnic groupings in the United States tended to have different kinds of household extension. There appeared to be a preference for downward extension among African Americans, for upward extension among Asians and for lateral extension among Hispanics. It would thus seem questionable to consider "headship" to symbolically mean the same thing in each group even when the census uses the same definition. By extension, how is one to interpret the fact that in Colombia in 1993, elderly people seemed more likely to live in a multiperson household headed by someone else compared to in Kenya in 1999? (Table 1).

Adding children to the cauldron

While the issue of independent living may be most important to many gerontologists, theoretic ideas about the nature of the family, often the intergenerational bond in particular, and its relationship to social and/or economic development, are not served well with the aforementioned scheme. Other

schemes are better for this, if we presume that household arrangements can help indicate family arrangements, an assumption that is often plausible. Perhaps because of the primacy of a “nuclear family household” however, some censuses and household surveys that gather “relation to head” information nonetheless confine those relations to “head,” “spouse of the head,” “child of the head,” and all others (perhaps distinguishing between whether they are related to the head or not). This is obviously inadequate for even knowing whether an elderly person lives with a child since instead of being the co-head of a household with a child, he/she may live as a parent (in-law) in a child’s household. In Turkey for example, only 45.5 percent of all elderly people are found to co-head a household in which there was a child of the head when we try to look at the presence of children without information on parents (in-law). Using parent (in-law) information we find that in fact 62.6 percent of Turkish elders were living with children. Similarly, according to the first scheme in Vietnam, 54.9 percent of the elderly people were co-heading a household lived in by a child. With parent (in-law) information we find that three quarters of the elders lived with a child.

To consider *any* child ignores the fact that the nature of the parent-child bond often differs according to a child’s age. If children are young, they are still dependent on parents who may care *for* them more than they receive care *from* them. Older children in contrast may provide more care than they receive. When living arrangements change with development, the likelihood that elderly parents continue to live with young children might stay relatively unchanged (barring fertility change) while the likelihood of living with older children might decline drastically. It is far from clear that parents who live with adult children are mainly on the receiving end of a relationship whereas parents who live with young children are mainly on the giving end, but people have often found it useful to differentiate between young and adult children. Thus in a relatively early study of elderly living arrangements in Asia, Martin (1989) examined whether or not an elder lived with a child of any age while subsequent work limited the view to children 18 or 20 and older (e.g. Bongaarts & Zimmer 2002; DaVanzo & Chan 1994).

A majority of elderly people may be classified as living with children of any age in four of the study’s seven countries, but this becomes less than half for adult children (the proportion is still over a third in Colombia, Mexico, Vietnam). Table 2. (Table 2 used 25 as the beginning of adulthood as young people by this age are likely to be finished with school or an initial apprenticeship in some job and may be married but we should emphasize that the selection of an age is arbitrary and has often been data-driven.⁵) Also initially, although two countries had less than a quarter of the elderly population living with children, the United States and the Czech Republic, the proportion of

Table 2. Family household scheme with adult/not adult child¹ (percentile distribution)²

	Alone	Couple	W adult child	W young child	W other relative	W non-kin
Colombia 1993	6.6	7.3	39.7	23.5	17.8	5.0
Czech Rep. 1991	31.3	45.0	10.1	8.6	3.9	1.0
Kenya 1999	12.3	7.0	23.5	26.2	27.8	3.2
Mexico 2000	8.8	15.8	38.5	23.0	11.8	2.0
Turkey 1990	8.5	23.0	32.0	30.6	5.1	0.7
United States 2000	26.7	47.9	14.2	2.1	5.8	3.3
Vietnam 1999	5.8	11.1	41.7	33.2	7.8	0.3

¹An adult child is aged 25 or more.

²Categories are 1) alone, 2) couple only, 3) with an adult child, 4) with a young child but not an adult child, 5) with another relation but not a child, 6) with non-kin but not with a relation. Percents may not add to 100 due to rounding error.

elders residing with a young child is particularly low in the United States at only 2.1 percent. This should not be construed to mean that most elderly people living with children in the U.S. are on the receiving end of care however (see e.g., Aquilino & Supple 1991; DaVanzo & Goldscheider 1990). Adult children may return to the parental home after a divorce or separation and/or because of employment instability, not necessarily out of concern for the parents' welfare (see Goldscheider et al. 1999). This is one of many areas that needs more study.

The importance of "other relative"

Although it is natural to consider children when typing elderly living arrangements in terms of *family* composition, an exclusive focus on the parent/child bond is wrong, as is the idea that an elderly person must be living with a child if she/he is to live with extended family or the idea that an elderly woman had to have a child if she is to be at risk of living in an extended family household in old age. The idea may make sense in parts of the world dominated by the Confucian ethic or where marriage is early and near-universal (see Dixon 1971; Andorka 1995), but it does **not** make sense in many other places where ties may be stronger between children and their mothers's brothers than between children and their own biological fathers or where people need not marry and have children to be part of a strong extended family (see Nimkoff 1965; Reher 1997). Thus schemes oriented toward the *family* composition of an elder's household often have a category for relatives other than children and

may be particularly important for never-married elders. "Other relatives" often include grandchildren, siblings, nephews, nieces and even cousins. Looking again at the figures in Table 2, we can see that over 10 percent of elders lived with relatives other than children in Colombia (1993) and Mexico (2000), and that over 20 percent of elders lived with relatives other than children in Kenya (1999). Among certain sub-groups, the figures would be much higher still, both in those countries and elsewhere. An issue that is gaining particular saliency at present is the extent to which grandparents and grandchildren form independent household units without the presence of the middle generation. Under certain circumstances, the analyst might wish to identify separately households with grandchildren but without the middle generation. Perhaps the best-known situation is that of AIDS orphans but other situations have become more common as well.

The importance of unrelated people

Just as it is wrong to only consider children when looking at the family membership of a household, it is also wrong to consider only living alone when considering non-family households. Some older people living on pensions board in other people's households, and other elders may take in unrelated people who can contribute to the household's maintenance. Finally, a small group may be domestics or have domestics helping them. Although definitions of household membership are particularly problematic for comparative purposes when unrelated household members are concerned, it is important to try to make a positive identification and classification of such households as they can be rather important (see Keilman 1988; Ruggles 1988). This is quite different from the near-reification given to households with unrelated members by the U.N.'s basic household typology (1998). The typologies used here are hierarchical so that only households in which the elder does not live with any family, or is him/herself unrelated to the household head, is considered in the "unrelated" category. It appears that over 3 percent of elders 60+ in private households in Colombia (1993), Kenya (1999) and the United States (2000) are in this category. Table 2.

The importance of marital status

The discussion of household schemes has so far consciously omitted consideration of marital status because, despite its fundamental character, many household surveys seem to neglect collecting information on marital status.

By no means isolated but perhaps the best known example of neglect is that of the multinational Demographic and Health Survey in which marital status is only asked of women in the individual survey. Household samples contain information on the age and sex of everyone in the household, and even on everyone's relation to the household head (in some detail) but they do not contain information on the marital status of household members. Either the analyst must devise some way to impute the information (see Palloni et al. 2002) or examine household composition without the information (e.g. Bongaarts 2001; Bongaarts & Zimmer 2002).

Yet knowledge of marital status is quite helpful for understanding even the most basic of data on the household. Let us first consider the marital status of elders themselves. Wilmoth (2001) considers it of utmost importance to differentiate between married and unmarried elders when considering independent living among elderly people. Usually only unmarried people are at risk of living in a one-person household whereas (theoretically at least) only married people are at risk of living in a couple-only household. And only if a woman is unmarried, is she typically at risk of heading a household. Thus one sees that the near-universal tendency for elderly women to be more likely than elderly men to live alone is in large part explained by the greater likelihood that elderly women are unmarried (mainly widowed). When the view is of unmarried elders only, women are usually either equally likely to live alone compared to unmarried elderly men or actually less likely to, in some cases by quite a bit (Table 3). Also, overall elderly men may be much more likely to live in a couple-only household than are elderly women, but again, this is definitely not the case when we limit our view to married elders (Table 3). Sometimes in fact, married elderly women may even be slightly *more* likely than married elderly men to live in couple-only households.

Second, let us consider the marital status of children. We already considered whether children were young or old (Table 2), but some cultures consider marriage, rather than chronological age, to be the marker of adulthood. In some circumstances a man who is 40 years old but never married is still considered a "boy" although others might consider any 40-year old a man whether married or not. Does it matter? Yes. If one only looked at figures that categorize living arrangements by whether the elder lives with an adult child 25 or older among other factors, one might conclude that many elders who lived with children did indeed live with adult children in what was probably an extended family household (Table 2). If one looked at figures that categorize living arrangements by whether the elder lives with a married child (married taking precedence over unmarried) one would obtain a similar impression (first set of figures of Panel A Table 3). However, closer examination suggests that the two classification schemes are not similar (figures not shown). Many

Panel C. Married Elders

Colombia 1993	1.4	13.3	21.2	49.4	11.8	2.9	1.6	12.2	20.6	52.8	9.9	2.9	1.0	15.3	22.4	43.5	15.0	2.8
Czech Rep. 1991	1.5	79.8	2.8	14.0	0.5	1.4	1.5	78.1	2.9	15.4	0.4	1.6	1.5	82.0	2.8	12.0	0.5	1.2
Kenya 1999	8.0	9.6	14.4	41.6	23.5	2.8	5.5	10.7	12.9	50.9	16.8	3.1	11.1	8.3	16.4	29.8	32.0	2.5
Mexico 2000	0.8	26.3	18.5	49.8	3.1	1.4	1.0	24.2	18.3	52.5	2.6	1.4	0.6	29.4	18.9	45.9	3.8	1.4
Turkey 1990	2.2	32.5	31.6	31.3	1.5	0.8	2.3	31.6	32.2	31.6	1.4	0.8	1.9	33.8	30.8	30.9	1.7	0.8
United States 2000	0.0	82.0	1.0	14.9	1.5	0.6	0.0	80.6	1.0	16.3	1.5	0.6	0.0	83.8	1.0	13.1	1.6	0.5
Vietnam 1999	0.7	18.3	42.9	32.5	5.2	0.4	0.6	17.1	41.3	35.8	4.8	0.4	0.7	19.9	45.1	28.1	5.7	0.4

¹Percents do not always add to 100 because of rounding error. Categories are 1) alone, 2) couple only, 3) with married child, 4) with unmarried child but not married child, 5) with a relative beside a child, 6) with an unrelated person but not with a relative (including a child).

Table 4. The association¹ between the distinction of being with young or adult (25+) child and married or unmarried child, various countries

Country/Time	Phi
Colombia 1993	0.100
Czech Rep. 1991	0.457
Kenya 1999	0.098
Mexico 2000	0.133
Turkey 1990	0.627
United States 2000	0.113
Vietnam 1999	0.024

¹The association is measured by Phi ($\sqrt{\chi^2/N}$), corresponding to a 2×2 micro-level cross-tabulation of elders who lived with a child by whether the child was young or old (25+) and by whether the child was unmarried or married.

people classified as living with an adult child do not, in fact, live with a married child, and many elders classified as living with a young child nevertheless live with a married child. This low level of association is summarized by Phi ($\sqrt{\chi^2/N}$), corresponding to a 2×2 micro-level cross-tabulation of elders who lived with a child by whether the child was young or old and by whether the child was unmarried or married. Table 4. Only in Turkey, and to a less extent the Czech Republic, is the association worth noticing.

Data for the Czech Republic alert us to the problematic nature of using marital status in some places, or at least of trying to interpret marriage using a traditional perspective (e.g. Roussel, 1992; Miller & Browning, 1999).⁶ Over 3 percent of supposedly unmarried elders in the Czech Republic are reportedly living in couple-only households. This is 8 percent among unmarried men in the Czech Republic while it is less than 2 percent among the unmarried women there. Many supposedly married elders, particularly in Kenya, live alone. See Table 3. Generally, many adults in more developed countries cohabit or otherwise have an informal union that includes living together without any common-law or formal tie. More universally, being married is not synonymous with living with a spouse, especially among elders. And how does one deal with such customs as the levirate?

Is the solution to devise a comparative living arrangements scheme that does not use marital status information? No, because we would be poorer doing so. The sociological mind considers unions, however defined, important. Household analysis considers living arrangements important, whether they

are legal or not. Hopefully, our exploration has shown how the information currently available on marital status can greatly enhance our view. We may need to identify marital status differently in the future, and while a new format may not yet exist, we must identify “marital status” for a good comparative scheme (see also Hammel & Laslett, 1974).

Some methodological thoughts

What starts as a descriptive use of a large micro-level data set may lead to a more analytic approach in which the researcher wishes to treat living arrangements as an independent or dependent variable. One approach, that can keep many categories of living arrangements, is loglinear analysis. For instance, one might want to extend Table 3 to consider urban/rural residence or young/old elders (<80, 80+) in addition to male/female and unmarried/married elders. A good example of a study that used log linear analysis to study living arrangements in the United States is the one by Soldo and Lauriat (1976) that used a 6-category living arrangements variable (head of family, spouse, other relative, primary individual, other unrelated individual, inmate) and assessed the goodness of fit of various hypotheses involving four independent variables (age, sex, race, and income). More recently, Himes et al. (1996) used loglinear analysis to standardize a 7-category living arrangements variable (alone, couple only, with spouse and kin, with kin but not a spouse, with non-kin, institutionalized) by age, sex and marital status using the 1990 PUMS data of the U.S. Census. (For women, they standardized by age, children ever born, and marital status.) This technique works nicely when the number of control variables is limited.

When the number of contingencies (and related variables) rises however, the analyst may wish to collapse a 4, 5 or 6-category variable into a smaller one since interpreting multiple contrasts can be difficult. As the use of a categorical independent variable in a multivariate statistical model with the use of dummy variables has become rather commonplace, we pay special attention here to the situation in which living arrangements is the dependent variable. Commonly, one focuses on one contrast (yes/no), for instance living alone among unmarried people (e.g. Kramarow, 1995), living with a child or adult child (e.g. Martin 1989; DaVanzo & Chan 1994), or living with extended family (e.g. De Vos 1990) and uses a method such as logistic or probit regression analysis.

If one wants the flexibility of a regression-type model but needs to consider a multinomial dependent variable, the situation becomes much more complex because there are many possible contrasts. A good example of using multinomial logistic regression is the recent article by Wilmoth (2001) in

which she considered living arrangements to be a three-category nominal dependent variable: independent, with family as householder, with family not as householder (separately for married and unmarried elderly men and women [four groups]). But of the three possible contrasts, she picked two: one category (independent) was contrasted individually with the other two.

Discussion

An ideal of comparative research is to use a standard measure to describe the same phenomenon in different populations. This enhances similarities or helps make contrasts glaring indeed. The purpose of this note has been to explore possible schemes for comparing the living arrangements of elders in different settings, using more and less restrictive amounts of information. This was motivated in part by having to deal with different data sets that had different limitations. I wondered what the best way was to use the data in an informative manner that could serve as a baseline for comparison with a future situation. Ideally, when focusing on the population living in private households, there is sufficiently detailed information on people's "relation to household head" and on marital status to devise a scheme based on Shanas et al.'s comparative work on three industrialized societies (1968) but researchers have to be prepared for the most minimal of situations in which one knows only whether someone lives alone or not (see e.g. Kinsella, 1990). In between, there may be minimal information on relation to head and no marital status information or there may be detailed information on relation to head but no marital status information.

A major idea in sociology is that elderly people will become more likely to live independently as societies develop and modernize (Cowgill, 1986). A major reason is that the conjugal relationship gains in importance within the family, often at the expense of the intergenerational relationship (Goode 1963). Simultaneously or perhaps as a result, pension schemes may help underwrite the independent living of elderly people (Ruggles 1996; McGarry & Schoeni, 2000). Yet this is not the only idea. There are ideas about living as a boarder (Keilman 1987; Ruggles 1988; Wall 1989), about a European marriage pattern (Hajnal 1982; Goody 1983, 1996), and about being part of an extended family (Ruggles 1987; Reher 1998). An advantage of starting with a scheme such as one based on Shanas et al.'s work (1968) is that each of these issues is addressed initially by the full scheme and can form the basis for a collapsed bivariate or multivariate dependent or independent variable.

This note has not meant to gloss over the limitations of using data on living arrangements to study the family or to ignore the difficulty of developing truly comparative indicators. Instead it has argued that we must try anyway.

Just as there developed a Human Relations Area Files at Yale University that has spurred scholars to develop measures that could apply to very different populations, there is developing an international census/survey micro-data base through such efforts as the University of Minnesota Population Center's International-IPUMS project and ICPSR's NACDA project housed at the University of Michigan. This in turn must motivate gerontological demographers to develop standard comparative measures that can be used on data sets from all around the world. It is with positive identification and correlation that we can advance human science.

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Notes

1. Data for Colombia, Kenya, Mexico and Vietnam come from the Minnesota Population Center's International IPUMS project. They, along with useful documentation, can be downloaded from <http://www.ipums.umn.edu/international/index.shtml>. Data for the Czech Republic and Turkey come from the UN Economic Commission for Europe's Population Activities Unit and are being distributed by the Inter-University Consortium for Political and Social Research's (ICPSR) National Archive of Computerized Data on Aging (NACDA) program. These data are free when used for scientific purposes. Information about NACDA is available at <http://www.icpsr.umich.edu/nacda> or (313) 936-1752. Data for the United States come from the March 2000 Current Population Survey, data that are freely distributed by the U.S. Census Bureau.
2. All the data have problems. In Turkey, many of the observations were listed as "guests" of the household head and it was unclear how to treat them. If they were included in the ultimate sample, estimates tended to be unreasonable, but excluding them may also result in error. Here they are excluded but doing so does not make me happy. In the Czech Republic, many people who were reported to be unmarried nonetheless also reportedly lived with a spouse. This might reflect the difficulty of using traditional definitions of marital status in many countries.
3. Although the Colombian census enumerated everyone, the available microsample only includes private households. The United States' March 2000 Current Population Survey data also cover the private household population only.
4. Headship is also related to marital status. Being the co-head of a multi-person household is usually more common among married elderly people than among unmarried elders, while living in someone else's household is usually more common among unmarried elderly people

- than among married elders. Among unmarried people, living in someone else's household seems as likely for an elderly man as for an elderly woman.
5. The scheme is hierarchical such that one can live with both young and adult children when classified as living with an adult child, but one cannot live with an adult children and be classified as living with young children. Likewise, someone living with another relative as well as a child is classified as living with a child, but someone classified as living with another relative cannot also be living with a child.
 6. This is so even as most Latin American censuses now consider consensual union a marital status.

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