

HOUSEHOLDS AND FAMILIES

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1. INTRODUCTION

Statistics Norway reported in its Family statistics that there were 501,000 families consisting of a married couple with one or more children on 1 January 1999 (Statistics Norway, 2000, 6). However, in another table the number of married couples with children for that date is much lower: 359,000 (Statistics Norway, 2000, 6). Both figures are correct, but the definition of a family consisting of a married couple and one or more children differs between the two. For the first figure children can be of any age, and for the second one, children must be younger than 18 years of age. Introduction of an upper age limit for children reduces the number of married-couple families by about thirty per cent.

The November 1990 Population and Housing Census for Norway resulted in 102,000 consensual unions (Statistics Norway, 1999). But sample surveys carried out in 1988 and 1994 indicate that the numbers in those years were at least 130,000 and 200,000, respectively (Statistics Norway, 1995a, 3)¹. The three numbers suggest a strong fall between 1988 and 1990, and a steep rise thereafter. In reality, this has not been the case: consensual unions have gradually become more and more popular in Norway since the end of the 1970s, and there are

¹ The estimate for 1988 has been computed on the basis of age-specific shares cohabiting women for ages 22, 27, 32, 37 and 42 from the survey (see Statistics Norway 1995a, 3) These shares were assumed to be the average shares for age groups 20-24, 25-29, 30-34, 35-39, and 40-44, and next these were multiplied with the registered numbers of women in these age groups for the country as a whole on 1 January 1988. This results in 129,000 cohabiting women aged 20-44. Cohabiting women outside that age group are not included in this estimate.

no indications for major fluctuations in the numbers. The main reason why the census number is much lower than what could be expected on the basis of the information we have for 1988 and 1994 is that the census number relates to the household situation according to the Central Population Register, i.e. the *de jure* place of residence. However, the surveys are based on the *de facto* place of residence. The register does not always reflect the *de facto* place of residence accurately, and for partners in a consensual union in particular there is a strong under registration in the register. This explains why the census figure is much lower than that obtained on the basis of a survey.

The two examples given above illustrate some of the difficulties one will encounter when family and household trends are investigated. Different definitions and different measurement methods make a comparison over time or across countries problematic. In this reader, both the analysis and the synthesis of population developments are described. Therefore, the aim of the current chapter is to give not only a broad overview of trends in family and household developments in Europe (Section 5), but also to discuss concepts and definitions concerning the household, the family, and their members (Section 2): what constitutes a household, a family, what is a consensual union, a child, a one-parent family, a reconstituted family? Next I review various issues connected to measuring household and family developments (Section 3): *de facto* or *de jure* place of residence, measuring household and family structure at one point in time, measuring household and family dynamics over a certain period, the individual or the group as unit of measurement, the problem of longitudinal households, relationships between the events that several members of the same household may experience (e.g. a lone mother becomes a one-person household when her last child leaves the parental home), and the representativeness of the data. The strengths and weaknesses of various data sources often used to map household and family developments are discussed in Section 4. Finally, the main trends in family and household developments in Europe after World War II are summarized in Section 5. Notoriously lacking is a review of relevant behavioural theories. A decade ago, Burch (1995) noted that family and household demography have made considerable progress, but that theory has greatly lagged behind. This may reflect the complexity of the subject matter².

² Although, as Burch notes, a good theory makes things look simple(r).

2. DEFINITIONS AND CONCEPTS

The notions of «household» and «family» are closely connected - yet there are strong differences. A formal definition of both will be given below, but one can say that an important aspect of the household definition is co-residence irrespective of consanguinity or conjugality, whereas consanguinity and conjugality are major ingredients for the family definition, irrespective of place of residence. However, as we will see below, the family in the more restrictive sense is limited to persons related by blood or marriage, who live in the same household. In that respect every family is also a household, but some households are not family households, for instance one-person households.

The 47th edition of the Demographic Yearbook of the United Nations (UN 1997) contains summary tables for the definitions used by countries that participated in the 1990 round of censuses. The same type of information for the 1980-round is found in the 39th edition (UN 1989). Much of the international experience that is given below is drawn from a survey among member and associated countries of the UN Economic Commission of Europe (ECE), which was carried out in the spring of 2004; see Keilman and Kinsella (2004). 46 countries gave details on their experience with the 2000-round of censuses.

2.1 The household

For the 2000 round of censuses, the United Nations recommended to use the following definition of a private household: a household is "... (a) a one-person household, i.e. a person who lives alone in a separate housing unit or who occupies, as a lodger, a separate room (or rooms) of a housing unit but does not join with any of the other occupants of the housing unit to form part of a multi-person household as defined below; or (b) a multi-person household, i.e. a group of two or more persons who combine to occupy the whole or part of a housing unit and to provide themselves with food and possibly other essentials for living ..." (UN 1998, 41, 42). This definition centres on two important notions: common housekeeping and living in the same house. Both conditions must be fulfilled when two or more persons can be said to belong to the same household, according to this so-called *housekeeping-unit concept* of the private household. A somewhat less restrictive definition centres on the *household-dwelling concept*, which says that all persons who occupy the same housing unit live in the same household (UN 1998, 42). Although in practice some countries use the household-dwelling unit definition, the housekeeping unit definition may prove to be more useful in socioeconomic analyses of household structure. Two-thirds of the ECE-countries applied the housekeeping unit definition in their census carried out around 2000 (Keilman and Kinsella, 2004). Many of the countries that used the household-dwelling concept based their census on a population register, for

instance Denmark, Finland, France, Norway and Switzerland. Similar shares (two-thirds of the countries using the housekeeping definition, and one-third using the dwelling definition) were also observed in European countries for the 1980 round and for the 1990 round of censuses (Keilman 2004, 348; Keilman 1995, Table 5.1).

Household data may be obtained not only from a census, but also from other sources, see Section 4. Sample surveys are commonly used, for instance a Labour Force Survey (LFS). Kormendi (1995, Table 1) has shown that eight of the twelve member states of the former European Community (EC) employed the housekeeping unit concept in their LFS in the 1990s. Belgium, Denmark, Spain, and France based their household data on the household dwelling concept.

Whether one uses the housekeeping unit definition or the dwelling unit definition has little effect on the *total* number of households: differences of 2-3 per cent have been reported for Austria, Germany and Norway, see Gisser (1995), Galler and Ott (1993, 45-46), and Ås (1990, 57)³. But *one-person* households may be affected more strongly: lodgers are counted as one-person households according to the housekeeping-unit concept, whereas they are member of the household that they share the housing unit with when the dwelling-unit concept is used.

«Housekeeping unit» and «dwelling unit» are not the only two alternatives - other possibilities fall somewhere in between these two. For instance, Todd and Griffiths (1986) carried out a study into the effects of a household definition change upon numbers of households in England. In many major household surveys of the Office of Population Censuses and Surveys up to 1981, the housekeeping unit concept was used to define a household. But in 1981 it was considered more appropriate to bring the instructions for interviewers in line with Census practice, in which persons who shared a living room were also included in the household, even if they did not share catering arrangements. The effect of this change in definition was that the overall estimate of the number of households was reduced by 108,000, or 0.6 per cent. Most of the excluded households were in the private rented sector in outer London and the south-east of the country, comprising one-person households and households with a resident landlord.

³ Although the numbers for Austria, Germany and Norway cited here are small, this does not hold more generally, as is demonstrated by the case of Czechoslovakia: the difference in the number of households implied by the dwelling unit definition, as compared to the housekeeping definition was 8 per cent in the Czech republic, both in 1970 and 1980; in the Slovak republic the difference was 9 per cent in 1970 and 11 per cent in 1980 (Kalibova 1991).

In addition to the private household defined above, the UN also has a recommendation concerning institutional households. "An institutional household comprises persons whose need for shelter and subsistence are being provided by an institution. An institution is understood as a legal body for the purpose of long-term inhabitation and provision of institutionalized care given to a group of persons. The institution's accommodation is by nature of its structure intended as a long-term accommodation for an institutional household. The great majority of institutions consists of one of the following: dormitories of educational institutions, hospitals, convalescence establishments, establishments for the disabled, psychiatric institutions, old people's homes, nursing homes, welfare institutions, hotels, motels, tourist homes, military installations, correctional and penal institutions, religious institutions, boarding houses, worker dormitories ..." (UN 1998, 42).

2.2 Head of household

Until the 1990 round of censuses, the UN recommended using the notion "head of the household", i.e. that person in the household or the family who is acknowledged as such by the other members. It implicitly involved the person who bears the chief responsibility for the economic sustenance of the household or the family. In a number of European countries, this concept is outdated by now. The UN formulated it quite cautiously: "... In countries where spouses are considered equal in household authority and responsibility or shared economic support of the household, the concept of head of household was no longer considered valid even for family households..." (UN, 1989, 7). Thus, the concept of household head no longer reflects social reality in many European countries, and, moreover, it is thought to be offensive to a large fraction of the population if they were asked to report one household member as head in a statistical enquiry (Murphy, 1991a, 887). Therefore starting with the 2000 round, the UN suggested that countries might prefer that the members of the household designate one among them as a *reference person* with no implication of headship. "... There is some evidence though to suggest that the following criteria for selection of the reference person will yield the most fruitful range of explicit kin relationships:

- either the husband or the wife of a married couple living in the household (preferably from the middle generation in a multi-generational household);
- either partner of a consensual union couple living in the household where there is no married couple present;
- the parent, where one parent lives with his or her sons or daughters of any age;
- where none of the above conditions apply, any adult member of the household may be selected...." (UN 1998, 45).

Next, the structure of the household may be explored by tracing the relationship between the remaining members and the reference person, or the household head in countries where the

traditional definition is considered appropriate⁴. Following UN practice, the term *householder* is used to denote «household head or reference person».

Whether a householder is called «head» or «reference person» is of less importance than the fact that there is heterogeneity among countries in determining the householder. Among 46 ECE-countries, all but two (Denmark and Norway) reported that they identified a reference person in the household (Keilman and Kinsella, 7). However, for purposes of household structure mapping, the two countries just mentioned define the oldest person in the household as a point of reference. In 22 of the 46 countries, census respondents chose the reference person freely, among the adults living in the household, using various criteria.

Does this large variability in the international practice concerning household head and reference person render international comparisons useless? Not for all cases, probably. First of all, in practice, the age distribution of householders seems to differ very little when alternative definitions are used (Murphy, 1991b). Second, many households consist either of a married couple (with or without children), a one-parent family, or a single person. In the case of a married couple, the husband will most frequently be denoted as (one of the) householder(s). In case a one-parent family is recorded, the householder will often be a woman. International comparisons are therefore still possible for a limited group of countries, provided that one distinguish between two-parent families, one-parent families, and other households, and that male and female householders be considered separately. When no such distinction is made, the comparison becomes hazardous, in particular for women. Indeed, as an UN-review shows, female headship rates for Austria, Norway, and Sweden are almost consistently higher than those in Italy, Portugal and Spain, and some of the differences may be interpreted in terms of economic criteria that are used to identify the householder (UN, 1989, 14-16).

The ultimate solution is of course to standardise the definition of the reference person (Wall 1996, 94). But this is virtually impossible to achieve in practice, and therefore Wall (1996) has suggested to base international household comparisons on a detailed set of standardised tables. The basic idea is to cross-classify age, sex and marital status with a person's household position: whether he or she lives in a couple, as a lone parent, as a child, in a one-person household etc. Such detailed tables have been compiled for Ireland (the Census of 1979) and Canada (the Census of 1986), and can be constructed for a number of other countries as well (e.g. England and Wales, Great Britain, Netherlands, Italy, Norway).

⁴ Brynin and Smith (1995) discuss various methods for mapping such relationships on the basis of the British Household Panel Survey.

2.3 The family

The UN recommend to define, for census purposes, a family as "... two or more persons within a private or institutional household who are related as husband and wife, as cohabiting partners, or as parent and child. Thus a family comprises a couple without children, or a couple with one or more children, or a lone parent with one or more children...." (UN 1998, 43). Among 46 ECE-countries, 39 used a definition that complies with the recommendation. In Canada, England & Wales and Northern Ireland, (a) grandparent(s) living with one or more grandchildren but without the grandchild(ren)'s parents are also regarded as a family. Canada and Ireland restricted the family to those living in private households. Norway complies with the definition when compiling international tables, whereas persons living alone are also counted as families ("one-person families") in national tables. The Swiss census did not include family information. The US restricts families to two or more persons related by birth, by marriage or by adoption to the householder. This differs from the recommended definition in two respects: cohabiting partners who are not married to each other are not counted as families, and a household consisting of a household reference person ("householder") and two or more persons who form a family (according to the UN definition), but who are not related (birth, marriage, adoption) to the reference person, is not considered a family household. Better comparability with previous censuses or with other statistical surveys was mentioned often as the main reason for a different definition.

Section 2.5 below contains a discussion of the concept of child, which features in the family definition above.

2.4 Consensual union

Starting with the 2000-round of censuses, the UNECE has formulated a recommended definition of a consensual union. "Two persons are understood as partners in a consensual union when they have usual residence in the same household, are not married to each other, and report to have a marriage-like relationship to each other." (UN 1998, 43). Note that partners can be of the same sex. Because of problems connected to developing criteria for «marriage-like relationship», it must be left to the respondents to report themselves as partners in consensual union or not (see also Trost 1988, for a review of issues connected to defining cohabitation). All 46 ECE-countries for which we have information practised this so-called "phenomenological definition" (due to Trost) in the 2000 round of censuses; see Keilman and Kinsella (2004, 6). Using a phenomenological definition will introduce a bias for various reasons (Trost, 1988, 4): social acceptance, or tax avoidance, or due to differences in perception between the partners (one considers the relationship as marriage-like, the other one looks upon it as more casual). As a result, two non-married adults living in the same household may be recorded as a consensual union at one occasion, and as two non-related adults at the

other. In case there are dependent children as well in the household, the alternative registration will often be a one-parent family, and a non-related adult living in the same household.

2.5 Child

The UN (1998, 43) recommends to define a child "... as any person with no partner and no child who has usual residence in the household of at least one of the parents. 'Children' also includes stepchildren and adopted children, but not foster children. A child that alternates between two households (for instance after the parents' divorce) is counted at only one of these households, for instance on the basis of the *de jure* place of usual residence (see Section 3.1) or the number of nights spent at either of the households. Only five countries among the 46 for which we have information deviated from the recommended definition (Keilman and Kinsella 2004, 5). The census in the Czech Republic required that children be economically dependent ("economically not active") and not older than 25 years of age. There is no restriction on partners or own children. Denmark required that children be less than 25 years old. In Switzerland, sons-in-law and daughters-in-law living in the same household were also considered as children. Moreover, there was no restriction on marital status in the Swiss definition. Thus, a child could be married and living with his or her spouse in the household of the parent(s). The US did not have any restrictions regarding the child's own children or partner.

The case of three or more generations living in the same household may create problems. A woman, who lives in the same household as her children *and* her parents, but without a partner, should be regarded as being member of the same family as her children, but not of the same family as her parents: "... A three-generation household consists of two or more separate family nuclei or one family nucleus and (an)other family member(s). A woman who is living in a household with her own child(ren) should be regarded as being in the same family nucleus as the child(ren) even if she is never-married and even if she is living in the same household as her parents; the same applies in the case of a man who is living in a household with his own child(ren). Thus, the youngest two generations constitute one family nucleus." (UN 1998, 43).

2.6 One-parent family

The UN has not formulated a separate definition of "one-parent family", but one possibility is: one adult living in the same household with one or more of his or her children (by blood or adoption). Problems in connection with the notion of «child» have been discussed above. But other problems may arise when there is a second adult member in the household. When this person is a relative of the lone parent (mother, father) the situation is clear. But another possibility is that this person is the lone parent's cohabitee, and then we have the situation of a

household consisting of a cohabiting couple plus the child of one of the partners. How can we distinguish between this household type on the one hand, and «one-parent family plus other adult» on the other? A possible marriage-like relationship between the two adults is not enough for the household to be called «consensual union with child(ren)». A further condition is that *both* adults take parental responsibility for the children. In Trost's words: the number of «parent-child units» should be twice the number of children, in addition to one «conjugal unit» (Trost 1990, 29). If only one of the adults forms a parent-child unit with the children and a marriage-like relationship with the other adult, it will be unclear whether or not this is a one-parent family.

The situation described here is not at all hypothetical: Höpflinger (1991, 321) indicates that in the 1980s in Germany, 10 per cent of women who declared themselves as «lone mother» were in fact cohabiting - for «lone fathers» the figure might even have been as high as 28 per cent.

2.7 Reconstituted family

The UN regards as a reconstituted family "...a family consisting of a married or cohabiting couple with one or more children, where at least one child is a non-common child i.e. either the natural or adopted child of only one member of the couple. If the child (natural or adopted) of one partner is adopted by the other partner, the resulting family is still a reconstituted family..." (UN 1998, 43). When a lone parent starts cohabiting with a partner who takes parental responsibility for the former lone parent's child(ren) we have one example of a reconstituted family or step-family. The other example of reconstituted family is when the two adults are legally married. While such reconstituted families historically referred to family formation through remarriage after widowhood, we nowadays also regard separation or divorce, followed by the start of a consensual union as events leading to a reconstituted family (Deven 1995). Issues connected to reconstituted families have been discussed by Leridon (1993, 52-54).

Only 19 of the 46 ECE-countries for which information exists reported that they are able to identify reconstituted families using census data. One possible explanation for the poor performance across countries on this item is the fact that many countries mapped household structures by means of the relationship of each household member to the household reference person, but not by means of the relationship to other household members. This implies that not all reconstituted families can be identified. For example, in case a father is the reference person and the mother is his second wife, this family can not be identified as reconstituted since the child is referenced to only one adult, viz. the father. It would be tallied as being a married-couple family with a biological child of the reference person but of unknown connection to the wife. However, if the father were listed as the "husband" of the reference

person (the reference person being the second wife), then this child would be listed as the stepchild of the householder. This family could be identified as a reconstituted family where the householder was not the biological mother of the child. Thus identification of reconstituted families requires more detailed mapping of household structures than by means of the relationship to just one person in the household. A full matrix of relationships between all household members is one possibility. Such a matrix was used by 13 of the 44 countries that reported that the relationship of each household member to the household's reference person was asked: Albania, Cyprus, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Lithuania, Portugal, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Montenegro, England & Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland. An intermediate solution is to map, for every child in the household, the relationship with all adults (biological or non-biological parent).

3. MEASUREMENT OF FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD DEVELOPMENTS

Given a particular definition of the various household and family variables, the analyst can start measuring them. Before doing so however, several questions have to be answered.

3.1 *De facto* or *de jure* place of residence?

Do the data to be measured refer to the *de facto* or the *de jure* situation? A number of countries have a population register, which is used directly or indirectly for collecting information on households and families. The situation according to the register (*de jure*) may differ from the actual situation (*de facto*). An important aspect in this respect is the place of usual residence. The UN (1998) recommends defining as place of residence: "... the geographic place where the enumerated person usually resides; this may be the same as, or different from, the place where he/she actually is at the time of the Census; or it may be his/her legal residence. A person's usual residence should be that at which he/she spends most of his/her daily night-rest."

Of 46 ECE-countries, 43 reported that they complied closely or completely with this definition. Scotland applied a different definition, because a person's usual residence was preferred to be at their family residence if they worked away from home during the week. In Austria, the usual residence of a person is her/his main residence as registered in the population register. Week commuters are registered at the family's residence, similar to the case of Scotland.

Given this recommendation it must be concluded that the UN recommend collecting *de facto* information regarding membership in families and households. In practice, a number of countries have probably used a *de jure* definition of place of residence and hence of family and

household membership, most often based on a population register. While this may be good practice in case there is little difference between *de jure* and *de facto* place of residence, it creates difficulties when the register shows considerable differences with the actual situation. Below I give some examples for Norway, Switzerland, and Germany connected to the 1990-round of censuses. For these countries, we have detailed statistical data on the differences between *de jure* and *de facto* place of residence.

Registration rules for the Norwegian population register until 1998 stated that a never-married person who resides outside the home of the parents because of education should be registered as living at the parents' address (Statistics Norway 1985, 4; Skiri 1995, 8). Data collection for the November 1990 Population and Housing Census of Norway was closely linked to the register. One of the census questions was "With whom do you share this dwelling?", and respondents had to answer *in conformity with the register*, irrespective of the persons actually living in the respondent's dwelling. One consequence was that the census severely underestimated the *de facto* number of consensual unions and the number of one-person households (cf. Section 1): an estimated 22 per cent for consensual unions (Keilman and Brunborg 1995), and 19 per cent for one-person households (Schjalm 1996). At the same time the census reported far more young adults living with their parents than in reality. The overall result was that the 1990 census underestimated the *de facto* number of private households by 4-6 per cent (Statistics Norway 1994). Registration rules were changed in 1998, when students were given the possibility to register as their *de jure* place of residence the place where they actually lived. But the 2001-census found that still 83 000 students had not done so. The consequence was that the census underestimated the share of persons living in a one-person household by 2 percentage points.

The December 1990 Census of Switzerland distinguished, for the first time, between legal and economic residence (M. Buscher, personal communication). The economic residence is the place where the individual concerned usually («the largest part of the week») lives. The legal residence is there where taxes are paid, political rights are exercised etc. The legal place of residence is different from the economic one for 3 per cent of the population.

Finally, note that difficulties may be encountered when a child alternates between two households, for instance after the parents' divorce. In general, an individual may theoretically be a member of two households, but with different degrees of membership (Berge 1988). In practice however, when classification is attempted, only one household will be assigned to each individual. But in German household statistics, persons with two residences are counted twice (Linke 1988, 122). The population in private households in a certain municipality includes all persons counted there, even if some of them live most of the time in a different

municipality. Schwarz (1983) estimates that the number of one-person households in 1961 had to be adjusted downwards by no less than 30 per cent in order to reflect reality.

3.2 Individual or group level data?

Do the data apply to *individuals*, or to the *group* level? One should clearly distinguish between an analysis for persons and an analysis for households (or families, or married couples). For instance, whereas 38 per cent of private households were a one-person household in Norway in 2001, only 17 per cent of the population lived in such a household; see <http://www.ssb.no/emner/02/01/fobhushold/>.⁵ Both types of data have their merits: for instance, some purchases are directly linked to the individual level (food, clothing); others to the group level (housing, capital goods). Furthermore, the household can make decisions as a group (e.g. the decision to marry taken by a cohabiting couple), or by individual household members (e.g. home leaving of young adults).

Data that reflect the household and family situation at one point in time (stock data) are routinely given both at the individual and the household level. For instance, the UN recommend to tabulate, among others, the *population* by household status (persons in various types of households), and, at the same time, *households* by various types. Note that knowledge of the type of household an individual lives in is not sufficient for determining this person's individual household status. For example, a person living in a household of type «married couple with children» may have household status «child» or «spouse». Conversely, age, sex, and marital status may be added to an individual's household status, and this often helps in determining that person's household type given household status, but not always - it depends on the actual classifications chosen for both household type and household status.

Contrary to stock data, the individual level may be preferred when information is collected concerning household and family *dynamics* over a certain period (*flow* data). The reason is that the group level perspective may create some problems, cf. the discussion below on longitudinal households.

In between the individual and the complete household is what Ermisch and Overton (1985; see also Ermisch (1988)) have called the «Minimal Household Unit» (MHU). It is the smallest group within the household that constitutes a demographically definable entity. This means that an individual, over his lifetime, moves from one type of MHU to another by means of

⁵ Note that the ratio of these two numbers equals mean household size; for Norway $38/17=2.3$ persons per private household on average.

simple demographic events only. The four MHUs defined by Ermisch and Overton are: (i) childless, non-married adult; (ii) one-parent family; (iii) childless married couple; and (iv) married couple with dependent children. Demographic events that cause individuals to move between MHUs are marriage, loss of spouse, birth of child, loss of last child, and divorce with loss of children. The status “married” and the event “marriage” are to be interpreted as including *de facto* marriage. Hence MHUs (ii)-(iv) are equivalent to a narrow definition of the family, whereas type (i) corresponds with a person living alone. Households can be viewed as consisting of one or more MHUs.

3.3 Adult or child as the unit of analysis?

When family or household structures are investigated, the focus is often on the relationship between children and adults. If the data apply to individuals, the choice is between the perspective of the child and that of the adult. Most often, the adult is chosen as the unit of analysis, because most data are supplied in that form (OECD 1979). But in a few cases, the focus has been on children. The results may differ, sometimes considerably, according to which viewpoint is chosen. The first reason is that most children live in families and households with only one or two adults, whereas the range in number of children seen from the perspective of the adult is much larger: from one to six or even more. The second reason is particularly relevant when *relative* numbers are compared, for instance the share of lone parents among all parents to the share of children with a lone parent compared to all children. In this case the findings will differ because the reference groups differ (all parents versus all children). As an example consider the Children Statistics compiled by Statistics Norway (1996, Table 1) from which we can compute that 17.3 per cent of all *children* (under 18) lived with a lone parent on 1 January 1995. On the other hand, only 13.7 per cent of all *parents* (with children under 18) were lone parents at that time (Statistics Norway 1995b, Table 3).

The few demographic family and household studies in which children are the unit of analysis, have most often analysed family break-up and the extent to which children experience divorce by the parents. Examples are findings reported for Denmark, England, France, Netherlands, New Zealand, Norway, and the USA, see Section 5.3.

3.4 Structure or dynamics?

Is the interest in the household and family *structure* at one point in time or in *dynamics* over a certain period? Cross-sectional data can only give a snapshot of the situation. Changes in that structure may be mapped at two levels: that of the population as a whole, and that of the individual or the household. Repeated cross-sectional surveys can provide us with repeated measurements for population indicators, for instance the development in the number of

households of various types, in the share of children living in a one-parent family and so on. Only the net change between two points in time is measured this way - hence we may also speak of comparative statics. Yet this will generate useful data. For instance, changes in the composition of households by size and type may help us in understanding developments in housing preferences, or consumption patterns. But when the interest is in a more causal analysis, data on net changes obtained from repeated cross sections are only of help during a first stage in the analysis - changes at a continuous time scale (gross flows) measured for individual persons or households should be analysed next. This would facilitate exploring the consequences of certain policy actions for subsequent household and family behaviour, or to study the impact of events in one arena of life (e.g. education) for those in a different arena (e.g. childbearing). The point is that the *timing* of certain events is recorded for *the same* individual or household during a particular time period.

The amount of household change that is found during a particular period increases when more detail is distinguished in the breakdown by household type or household status. When households are only divided into family households and non-family households, a woman who becomes a lone mother will not change household type. This will only be the case when an additional distinction is made between couple households and lone parent households. Compare the distinction between interregional migration and intraregional migration in studies of regional mobility.

3.5 Longitudinal households

An individual person is born, dies, and experiences during his life several events, such as home leaving, start of a partnership, marriage, childbearing etc. Events of this type reflect household and family dynamics at the *individual* level. We can also define events at the *group* level: household formation, household dissolution, and household change. When the focus is on the development of households at the group level, one may be confronted with the problem of *longitudinal households*: when a household splits it is often difficult to determine which part is the original household, and which part constitutes a new one. In other words, when can two households that exist at two points in time be considered as the same household (McMillan and Herriott 1985)? For example, when a married couple with four children separates and the man leaves the household, the result is a lone mother and a one-person household. Are these two truly new households? Or is the one-parent family a continuation of the old household (although of a different type)? In order to answer such questions, continuity rules have to be formulated. One possibility is to call a household a continuous one as long as 50 per cent or more of its members are the same at two points in time. In that case the lone mother and her children mentioned above would not change household. Another one is the rule that two households that have the same head are the same household. This may lead to the

decision (depending on the definition of head of household) that the man who now lives alone in fact lives in the same household. The continuity rule chosen for a particular situation is often arbitrary, and an important objection is that different rules lead to different results (Citro 1985; McMillan and Herriott 1985). Therefore when household dynamics are investigated the unit of analysis is likely to be the individual rather than the household (Duncan and Hill 1985, 368-372; Murphy 1995, 163). In such an approach, individuals move between household states. As an example, consider the following sequence: from «child with two parents» to «cohabiting» to «married» to «married, one child» to «separated» to «deceased».

3.6 Interrelated events for members of the same household

To focus on individuals rather than on households when analysing household and family dynamics circumvents the problem of longitudinal households, but it leads to another problem: many household events for members of the same household are interrelated. An event for one household member often induces an event for other members. To continue the example given in the previous section, when a person moves from «married, one child» to «separated», the spouse becomes a lone parent. If we want to understand household dynamics at the individual level, these and other links between events experienced by members in the same household must be taken into account. How complex these interrelationships are depends on the level of detail in the household state classification for individuals. For instance, with only four marital states (never married, currently married, divorced, widow(er)) we just have to trace marriage and divorce for both partners, and death of one spouse together with transition to widowhood. But with a reasonable set of proper household states (for instance: child, living alone, cohabiting, married, in institution, and other) there are many interrelationships of various types.

3.7 Representativeness

When the data come from a sample survey, one should consider carefully which larger population they represent. At survey date, the sample should be representative of the population both in terms of individuals *and* of households. In other words, the distribution of sample members by household status should be reasonably close to the corresponding distribution for all persons in the population and, at the same time, the distribution of households by some characteristic should be close to the corresponding distribution for households in the population. This may be problematic when the sample frame is in terms of individual persons, of which a sample of persons is drawn who next report on the household situation of all other members in their household. This leads to an overrepresentation of large households, because a randomly drawn person is more likely to live in a large household than in a small household. Thus a representative sample of individuals will not give a representative sample of households. The same problem may occur when generations are linked. A

representative sample of children will not give a representative sample of the previous generation: mothers with large families will be overrepresented, and childless women will not be included at all (Murphy 1995). Weights by household size or family size (sampling proportional to size) must be used to achieve representativeness in such situations.

The problem becomes even more complex when the data do not apply to one point in time, but when they cover a certain period, for instance in the case of a panel survey. Because of selectivity in the exit and entrance processes for the relevant population, the sample may become gradually less and less representative of the whole population. Selective panel non-response only adds to the problem. Time-dependent ("longitudinal") weights may be necessary to achieve representativeness for each wave, both at the individual and at the household level (Duncan 1994). This may also be useful for retrospective data - there is no non-response, but exit and entry processes in the past may have been different for the population compared to the sample.

In any case, one has to decide whether the sample should be representative of the larger population

- (i) only in terms of individuals, or also in terms of families or households;
- (ii) only at one point in time, or over a longer period.

4. DATA SOURCES

4.1 Census

A large part of the data that we have on families and households stems from censuses. Indeed, as was indicated in the previous sections, the UN formulate recommendations for measurement and tabulation of such kind of data. Important aspects of census data are (Eggerickx and Bégeot 1993, 1710):

- the characteristics of the whole population are mapped, not just a sample⁶;
- measurement in the form of a snapshot takes place at regular intervals, typically every decade.

⁶ This is not the case for the few countries in which the census is a sample survey. This was the case in Norway in 1990 (sample of between 8 and 20 per cent), and in 1991 in Germany (the 1 per cent micro census).

These aspects point at the same time at a number of advantages and disadvantages. Because census data cover the whole population, they can be broken down by region, socioeconomic group etc. Regular measurement facilitates an analysis of changes in household and family structure over a relatively long period. On the other hand, these changes can only be investigated in the form of net flows, as argued in Section 3.4. And although regional and socioeconomic detail can be given for the household and family variables, the huge undertaking each census implies that it is rather costly, and hence that only a few variables can be measured. Most often will we be able to give the household and family structure at census time only and not changes at the level of individuals or households. Another problem is that because of its administrative character, some household variables may be difficult to measure accurately, for instance whether or not a person cohabits (see Section 2.4). Consequently, numbers of consensual unions based on a census have been underestimated by 30-50 per cent in Norway, France, and England and Wales in the 1980s and 1990s (Keilman 1995).

4.2 Cross-sectional sample survey

A cross-sectional sample survey can be held just once, or it can be repeated a number of times. A one-time cross-sectional sample survey is relatively cheap, and therefore it usually contains a large number of questions. The survey is most often organized for a specific purpose, and hence it will be relatively easy, compared with the case of a census, to build up good «rapport» between respondent and interviewer. This increases the quality of the data. Yet well-known problems connected to the sample character remain: the sample can be biased and the non-response can be selective. For instance, the proportion of women aged 20-24 in Norway who live in a consensual union varies between 24 and 34 per cent in five sample surveys around 1990 (Gulbrandsen and Gulbrandsen 1993, 311)⁷. Another drawback is that the information obtained from a pure cross-sectional sample is limited: no information is obtained concerning changes. If the interest is in dynamics, and not only in the structure at one point in time, retrospective elements have to be included (Section 4.3), or the survey has to be repeated. If the same sample is used for each round we speak of a panel (Section 4.4). In case a fresh sample is drawn in each round we have a repeated cross-sectional survey. An example is the annual household statistics for the Netherlands, which started in 1988 and which is based on annual averages of data from the monthly Labour Force Surveys (Visser 1995).

⁷ Although the surveys cover a long period (1987-1992), this fact can not explain the large differences in the proportions. The high share of 34 per cent dates from 1988 and the low one (24 per cent) from 1992. Moreover, the earliest survey (1987) reports 30 per cent. An apparent *decrease* in cohabitation is not plausible; it must be caused by sample errors of various kinds.

There are numerous cross-sectional sample surveys repeated on a regular basis that routinely collect past and present household information. The main difference with a multi-round panel survey (Section 4.4) is of course that links between the household situations between two subsequent interview dates can only be given for the aggregate, not for individuals. Klijzing (1988) noted that few trend studies attempt to link up the differences in household composition, as observed between subsequent rounds. Part of the problem is that, from round to round, sample designs are frequently adapted to changing research objectives.

A repeated cross-sectional survey for which the household data are certainly not underutilized is the General Household Survey (GHS) in Great Britain. Established in 1971, the GHS has a standard sample size of around 10 000 private households each year (Harrop and Plewis 1995). Originally, the GHS primarily produced stock data on household composition, but since 1979 questions on family formation were included as well. These questions covered aspects such as length of current cohabitation and type of pre-marital cohabitation (Brown and Kiernan 1981; Haskey and Coleman 1986). Hence, since 1979 the GHS may be typified as a multiround retrospective survey.

4.3 Retrospective survey

In a retrospective survey the sample is approached only once. However, the questions cover not only the present situation, but also a certain period in the past. Retrospective surveys have gained popularity among demographers in the last few decades, not the least because they provide life history (biographical) data. Murphy (1995) provides a useful overview. A prime example is the set of so-called Family and Fertility Surveys (FFS) carried out in several European countries and co-ordinated by the UN Economic Commission for Europe (ECE 1992; Klijzing 1995). During the period 1988-1997, 20 countries in Europe, plus the USA, Canada, and New Zealand carried out the field work for such an FFS, and all of them have included life history data on partnership formation and dissolution (although with somewhat variable level of detail).

Compared to its competitor the panel survey, a retrospective survey is relatively cheap, and it produces immediate data on dynamics. A problem, however, is the quality of the data. In particular, retrospective data may be subject to errors of omission and misplacement - in particular for events which the respondent experienced as unpleasant (divorce, abortion), or for which the timing is not clear-cut (start of a consensual union, leaving the parental home), or for which the occurrence took place in the remote past (Courgeau 1991; Poulain et al. 1991). In addition, to collect reliable retrospective information on individual values is next to impossible, except for those values that are so fundamental to the individual (characterizing

perhaps his or her personality) that they are constant or almost constant over time. A final problem is that of sample selection bias (Tuma and Hannan 1984, 129). Only persons alive and living in the region of interest at the time of the interview can answer the retrospective questions, and thus the sample may become selective because of survival and emigration. Even if the sample is representative of the population *at interview time*, the *retrospective data* may be biased when the process of interest depends on mortality and emigration. When the sample is restricted to a special sub-group of the population (for instance only married couples), the problem becomes even larger because there are additional exit processes (divorce and transition to widowhood in this example).

4.4 Panel survey

If one would want to improve on the quality of retrospective data, one could rely on a panel instead. Panel data record the situation of sample members at two or more points in time. Sometimes, retrospective questions are added which cover the period between two panel waves. This reduces memory effects clearly and it facilitates the collection of data on current norms and values. Drawbacks, however, are that a panel is relatively costly, that the panel has to be followed-up over time, that selective panel drop-out may introduce a bias in the estimates, and that repeated interview may distort the answers, or even the actual behaviour of the respondents (Kasprzyk et al., 1989).

Usually a panel comes in the form of a sample survey, but the sample size varies a great deal. For instance, in the panel investigation on changing fertility, parenthood and family formation in Nordrhein-Westfalen (former Federal Republic of Germany), the sample dropped from 2620 women aged 18 to 30 years in the first round (late 1981/early 1982) to 1472 women two years later (Kaufmann et al., 1982). In contrast, we have the British Panel Household Survey, with annual waves between 1991 and 1994 (Buck et al. 1994). This source contains household and family data from nearly 13,000 individuals in about 5,000 households in the first round. Other examples of panel surveys which may be used to trace family and household developments are the annual Panel Study of Income Dynamics in the USA with a sample size of 5,000-6,000 families since 1968 (Duncan and Morgan 1976), and the German Socioeconomic Panel with annual waves for 6,000 households since 1984, and an additional 2,000 households from the former GDR since 1990 (Ott 1995).

During the years 1994-2001, the European Union carried out the so-called European Community Household Panel (ECHP), a multi-purpose survey which covers demographic characteristics as well as a number of other topics (income, labour force, health, education, housing, migration) in the European Union. Annual waves have been carried out based on a

sample of approximately 61 000 households (about 127 000 individuals) in twelve EU-countries. All members in the sample household aged 16 years or over were interviewed. The achieved sample size ranged from some 3,500 households in Denmark to nearly 7,500 households in Spain (except for Luxembourg, where the sample size was 1010 households). Austria, Finland and Sweden were also included in wave 3 in 1996. An illustrative analysis based on the results of two waves of the pilot survey shows how data of this kind may be used to map dynamics in household composition and in individual relationships within households, among others (Verma 1994).

A specific type of panel data is that which is obtained by linking the records of successive Censuses. Data of this type are available for Sweden for the period 1975-1980 (Dellgran et al., 1984, 82), for France for 1968-1995 (the so-called “Échantillon démographique permanent” or EDP) and for England and Wales for 1971-1991. The latter data source is known as the 1% Longitudinal Study. It is a record linkage study covering about 500,000 people in England and Wales (1 per cent of the population). It includes a sample of the census records from 1971, 1981, and 1991. But register information for sample members regarding births (women only), deaths, on cancer has been linked to the census data (Murphy et al., 1988; Craig, 1990; Dale 1993). The French EDP covers a little over 1/200 of the population. It is based upon the census forms from the censuses of 1968, 1975, 1982, and 1990, and the civil registration forms for major demographic events (births, marriages, deaths, adoptions) for the years 1968-1975 (Ekert-Jaffé *et al.*, 2002).

4.5 Register

Another possibility is to analyse population register data. There is no selectivity connected to this approach, but there are other problems. For instance, the *de jure* situation that the register reflects is sometimes only a crude approximation of the *de facto* situation that one is interested in. (This has implications not only for statistics on household membership, but also for migration statistics.) Furthermore, the number of variables is usually very limited. As most of the existing population registers record (changes in) formal marital status but not (those in) household status, only limited information on families and households can be obtained from such a source. «Informal» living arrangements such as consensual unions are difficult to measure with a register.⁸ But exceptions are the Scandinavian countries (Denmark, Finland,

⁸ Previous address of both spouses is recorded when a marriage takes place in Austria, France or Spain. This is one possibility for compiling statistics on consensual unions (De Santis and Santini 1995, 116-117), but the application is restricted to cohabiting couples who eventually marry. A second possibility is the practice followed by Statistics Finland and Statistics Denmark. When two persons of opposite sex are registered at the same address, do not have a common biological parent, are not married to each other, have an age difference of less

Iceland, Norway, and Sweden) and the Netherlands. Concerning families, statistics in the form of stock data are published with regular intervals for the Scandinavian countries, for instance annually for Finland and for Norway. Statistics Netherlands carried out register counts in 1987 and 1992 with ample information on families (Prins and Levering 1994). Concerning households, Denmark has a household register (Noordhoek and Petersen 1984; Petersen 1985). Finally, Statistics Sweden combined data from the censuses of 1980 and 1985 with information from the registers of marriages, that of internal migration, and that of deaths. This resulted in stock and flow data for couple formation and dissolution (Statistics Sweden 1992; Prinz et al. 1995).

5. MAIN TRENDS IN FAMILY AND HOUSEHOLD DEVELOPMENTS IN WESTERN EUROPE AFTER WORLD WAR II

The main developments in numbers and types of households in Western Europe and other industrialized countries after World War II have been documented extensively (Kuijsten 1995 and 1996; Haskey 1993; Höpflinger 1991; Linke et al. 1990; Gonnot and Vukovich 1989; Schwarz 1988; Burch and Matthews 1987; Hoffmann-Nowotny 1987; Keilman 1987; Hall 1986). Therefore I can restrict myself to a short summary. The extent to which the various countries experienced these trends is not always the same - in some countries the *levels* are lower than in others. This may, at least partly, be explained by the fact that definitions, concepts and measurement of household and family variables differ among countries and within countries over time. On the other hand, the *direction* of the trends seems to be similar (except for a few policy induced temporary effects, such as marriage peaks in Austria in 1983 and 1987, and in Sweden in 1989). However, at the end of this section I shall discuss the apparent uniformity of the trends.

5.1 Falling average household size

There has been a continuous *fall in average household size*. Two demographic causes stand out: (i) numbers and proportions of persons living alone have greatly increased; (ii) family sizes were reduced, due to the fall in fertility rates, especially those of higher birth orders (in addition to a modest increase in voluntary childlessness in some countries). Changes in the age structure of the populations concerned have also contributed to this development. An aged population has relatively many couples of whom the children have left the parental home, and

than 16 years (and, for Denmark, no other persons live at that address), the two are considered as a cohabiting couple.

also relatively many elderly persons who live alone, but such changes contribute much less to the fall in the average size of households than the first two factors.

Information on average household size covering Europe as a whole is only available since 1950. Estimates by MacKellar et al. (1995) indicate that average household size in Western Europe dropped from 3.5 in 1950, via 3.1 in 1970 to 2.6 in 1990. The figures for Eastern Europe were higher by 0.2 to 0.3 persons per household for those years. The average for developed countries in the year 2000 was 2.5, with a range between 2 and 4 (UN 1995; UN Centre for Human Settlements 2001). Country-specific data for the old European Community indicate that average household size was between 2.5 (Denmark and the former Federal Republic of Germany) and 3.7 (Ireland) in 1980, and dropped to between 2.2 (Denmark) and 3.3 (Ireland, Spain) in 1991 (European Commission 1993). Households in the former European Union (EU15) are smallest in Denmark, Finland, and Sweden (2.1 persons on average in 1995), closely followed by Germany (2.2) and France and the Netherlands (2.4), see Eurostat (2003). Whereas the fall in birth rates and excess mortality among men are among the main demographic explanations for the falling household size in Western Europe around 1970, the recent drop is caused to a large extent by growing more frequent divorce and separation, and by increasing longevity. Countries in Eastern Europe had relatively high and stable fertility until the mid-1980s when strong declines occurred (Coleman 1996). This explains the somewhat larger households in that region, compared to the Western part.

MacKellar et al. expect a modest further decrease in average household size for Eastern Europe, to a level of 2.4-2.8 persons per household on average in the year 2030. For Western Europe a slight increase might occur to a level of 2.7 in the year 2030 when fertility would increase again, but in three other scenarios the authors expect a further drop by 0.1-0.3 persons per household by 2030. Three household scenarios by Eurostat (2003) indicate also that in 2025, average household size in the EU15 may have fallen to between 2.1 and 2.3 persons per household, down from 3.3 in 1961. This agrees with Bumpass' (1990) view that sociological factors such as a shift in tastes towards privacy, and economic factors such as higher income, all lead to more atomized living arrangements in industrialized countries. Indeed, the following factors are related to shrinking households:

- Firstly, all other factors remaining the same, falling birth rates reduce population size, but do not affect the number of households; hence, household size is reduced.
- Secondly, social, economic and cultural theories of demographic behaviour point to a variety of reasons why individuals prefer to live in small households. These include less adherence to strict norms; less religiosity and increased individual freedom on

ethical issues; female education, which has led to women having greater economic independence and also facilitates divorce; more assertiveness in favour of symmetrical gender roles; the contribution of women to the labour market; increased economic aspirations; and greater residential autonomy among young adults (Van de Kaa 1987; Lesthaeghe 1995; Verdon 1998).

- Finally, population ageing reduces household size. This is a direct consequence of two facts: increased longevity leads to longer periods of time when children do not live with their parents; and the greater mortality of men, together with the usual age difference between spouses, results in many widows who live alone.

Smaller households, then, are the result of processes that cannot be reversed (such as modern contraception and liberalization from norms) or that we value for a number of reasons (such as women's emancipation).⁹

5.2 Increasing importance of consensual unions

The *traditional family* has lost its dominant position. Marriage has been postponed to higher ages, and ever lower proportions of successive birth cohorts have ever married (or may be expected to do so) at age 40, say. Griffin et al. (1995) note that the increase in mean age at marriage has been stronger for women than for men in many European countries.

Consensual unions have become accepted widely - not only as a prelude to marriage, but in some countries also (and increasingly so) as an alternative to married life. De Santis and Santini (1995) have analysed trends in observed age-specific shares of women living in consensual union for nine industrialized countries between 1975 and 1990. In seven of these they noted an increase over time in the average share (the average taken over 35 ages between 15 and 50).

The rising popularity of consensual unions went together with increased levels of extramarital childbearing in some countries. In other countries remained childbearing largely restricted to married couples. Lesthaeghe (2000) plotted national percentages of non-marital births against proportions of cohabiting women aged 20-24, and found the following groups of countries¹⁰:

⁹ Some processes are irreversible *and* appreciated at the same time.

¹⁰ Information stems from the Fertility and Family Survey project, with data collected in the various countries between 1988 and 1999. Note that Lesthaeghe's fertility indicator applies to women of all ages, whereas cohabitation is restricted to young women.

1. *low extra-marital fertility together with a low incidence of cohabitation* in Mediterranean countries, Poland and Japan;
2. *low prevalence of cohabitation but high non-marital fertility* in Eastern Europe, Portugal, Ireland the UK and the US;
3. *high prevalence of cohabitation but low non-marital fertility* in Western European populations such as Belgium, the Netherlands, the former Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), and Switzerland;
4. *high prevalence of cohabitation combined with parenthood* in Scandinavian countries, and, to a certain extent also in France, Austria, Estonia, Slovenia, the former German Democratic Republic, and Canada.

The picture is not static, as Lesthaeghe notes. For instance, Portugal has recently moved from the first to the second group, and Belgium, the Netherlands and the FRG are on their way to the fourth group.

At the same time De Santis and Santini (1995) have noted an increasing tendency to live without a partner (neither cohabitee nor spouse) in Sweden (1975-1985), Canada (1984-1990), Netherlands (1982-1988), Austria (1981-1989), Italy (1983-1988) and the FRG (1982-1986). For Norway a similar rise has been observed in the age group 25-44 (1980-1995), see Barstad (1996, 25). Also, Klijzing and Macura (1997) note increasing shares of women who, by the age of 25, never had entered a first partnership. The increase is observed for women born between 1950 and 1970 in Italy, Spain, Belgium (Flanders), the FRG, New Zealand, France, and the Netherlands¹¹. Hence the fall in marriage rates generally observed for European countries has not fully been compensated by increasing shares of women living in a consensual union; see also Haskey (1993, 223-227). Part of the rise in the proportions living alone is an indirect consequence of the increased popularity of consensual unions, as these unions have relatively high separation rates. This has been documented for Sweden (Hoem and Hoem 1992; Trussell et al. 1992a), Netherlands (Klijzing 1992; Manting 1994) and Norway (Keilman and Brunborg 1995; Texmon 1999). But also the role of education and of psychological factors has been stressed (Van Hoorn 1994).

¹¹ The indicator used by Klijzing and Macura is different from that employed by De Santis and Santini. Entrance into partnership *after* age 25 will not be reflected by the former two authors' indicator, as opposed to the latter two authors' indicator. This explains why Sweden, Canada and Austria appear in De Santis and Santini's list, whereas Klijzing and Macura note *no* increase for these countries. Nor is it observed in Eastern European countries such as Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, the GDR, Estonia, in Central Europe (Switzerland, in addition to Austria) or Northern Europe (Norway and Finland, in addition to Sweden).

Several authors have noted that cohabiting couples do not form a homogeneous group. Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel (1991) have stressed that the behaviour of some cohabiting couples is close to that of married couples, while that of others is much more similar to the behaviour of persons who live alone. Noack (1996) discusses whether a cohabiting couple should be regarded as «just lovers», or perhaps as «engaged to be married», or as a *de facto* married couple.

5.3 Growing numbers of lone parents

The nature of *one-parent families* has changed dramatically. Decreasing mortality and increasing divorce has led to fewer lone parents who are a widow(er), and many more divorced lone parents, in particular lone mothers. Although the share of births outside marriage went up sharply since the 1970s, this is not a major cause for the increase in one-parent families. The reason is that most of these children are born in a consensual union.

Data for the former FRG on the distribution by marital status of lone mothers indicate that the share of divorced lone mothers went up from 24 per cent in 1961 to 46 per cent in 1985. The share of widows dropped from 46 per cent to 18 per cent over the same period. For Switzerland the figures show a similar development between 1970 and 1980; for the Netherlands the changes during the years 1960-1983 are even stronger: from 14 to 60 per cent for married lone mothers, and from 71 to 21 per cent for widows.

As a consequence of the growth in divorce rates, larger shares of children spend more and more time of their childhood in a one-parent family, usually with their mother. Studies have been carried out for Denmark, England and Wales, France, Netherlands, Norway, and the USA, among others (Voets & Kuijsten 1989; Brown 1986; Haskey 1990; Villeneuve-Gokalp 1993; Festy 1994; Kuijsten & Voets 1986; De Jong 1989; Jensen et al. 1991; Hofferth 1985; Duncan et al. 1994). Longitudinal data collected for adolescents indicate that roughly between 15 and 30 per cent of them will have lived in a one-parent family, depending on the age limit for these young adults (often between 18 and 21) and the type of family they were born in (two married parents, two cohabiting parents, or a lone mother). The figures are particularly high for blacks in the US.

5.4 Higher levels of childlessness

A number of countries in Northern, Western and Southern Europe experience growing levels of childlessness for subsequent birth cohorts of women¹². Among the 11 countries listed by Höpflinger (1991, 306), there are five in which women born in the 1950s have higher shares with parity zero than women born around 1940. Prioux (1990a, 163) notes that seven countries in Western and Northern Europe experienced low childlessness for women born between 1935 and 1947 (between 8 and 15 per cent of these women are childless). Later cohorts have higher levels. Beets (1995, 11) showed that for 17 European countries, the mean percentage childless at age 30 increased from 16 per cent for women born in 1945 to 22 per cent for the 1955 cohort and 27 per cent for the 1960 cohort. Childlessness at age 30 *decreased* between cohorts born in 1935 and 1945 for England and Wales, France, Italy, Netherlands, Norway, and Portugal. De Beer (1995, 6) found that the share of childless women is particularly high in Southern Europe in the early 1990s: over 30 per cent as measured on a period basis, compared to 20 per cent in Nordic countries. De Jong (1995) has analysed births by parity in the 17 countries of the European Economic Area¹³ and notes that first birth rates were high around 1970. Then a decrease took place that lasted until the mid-1980s, with Southern Europe following the pace set by Northern and Western Europe. In Ireland, Spain and Italy the fall continues at least until 1990. Because of the period perspective adopted by De Beer and De Jong, these figures exaggerate the fall in cohort shares, particularly since the age at birth of the first child is rising in many European countries.¹⁴ This implies that some of the women born at the end of the 1960s and during the early 1970s may still have a first child after age 30. Indeed, first birth rates went slightly up again in the 1980s in Sweden, Norway, Denmark, Portugal, West Germany, the Netherlands and France. Yet the figures indicate that a rise in cohort childlessness has to be expected, as current period levels of first birth rates are lower than those twenty years ago. This is also confirmed by recent data compiled by Prioux (2002). She suggests that shares of childless women born in the early 1960s in countries in Northern, Western, and Southern Europe may increase to 15-20 per cent.

How can these developments be explained? Prioux (1990a) discusses strictly demographic factors: the strong fall in first marriage rates, the relatively low marital first birth rates early in marriage, and, as a factor counteracting the latter two trends, the rise in extramarital fertility. Beets (1995) stresses the fact that postponement of the first birth may lead to higher infecundity: 30-year old women who wish to become pregnant will succeed after

¹² Léridon (1999, 61) presents evidence which suggests that proportions childless were more or less constant at a level close to ten per cent for women in Hungary, the Czech Republic, Poland, the former GDR, and Yugoslavia who were born between 1940 and 1960.

¹³ The 15 old member states of the European Union plus Iceland and Norway.

¹⁴ When birth generations 1950 and 1960 are compared, the mean age at motherhood (irrespective of parity) went up from 26.7 to 27.8 years for the average of the 17 EEA countries. Greece and Portugal are the only countries in which no rise took place. See De Jong (1995, Table 4).

approximately three months, but for women aged 35 it will take about seven months. Hobcraft and Kiernan (1995) present a thoughtful discussion of the existing literature about the transition to parenthood from various perspectives: they elaborate both pronatalist forces and constraints on becoming a parent, involving biology, time, money, ideas, and security. They argue that fertility was high in the 1950s and 1960s for several reasons: costs of rearing children (education, health, welfare) were increasingly covered by the state rather than directly by the parents themselves; economic growth and permanent employment added to the anticipated security for parenthood; reconstruction of housing after the war improved quality and access; and the accelerated establishment of independent living (see Section 5.5), which usually involved marriage, contributed to earlier entry into parenthood. After 1970, the scene changed fundamentally (although Hobcraft and Kiernan also argue that some of the key changes can be dated back to the war time period or even further back). Increased female labour force participation reduced the time available for childrearing. Reliable means of fertility control broke the intimate connection between sex and reproduction. Patterns of partnership changed, with marriage becoming a more fragile institution and cohabitation becoming more widespread. And employment insecurity delayed the achievement of the basic requirements for becoming a parent and increased the levels of uncertainty about future security. The authors are rather pessimistic for the future, although they assume that generous provisions by Scandinavian welfare states have led to higher entry rates into parenthood than in Southern Europe, where commitment to marriage for women is relatively great, attachment to the labour force is lower and state support for parenthood is less.

The analysis by Hobcraft and Kiernan confirms that prolonged education for women and their increased labour force participation *per se* are insufficient explanations. Indeed, Hoem (1992, 1995) argues for the case of Sweden that mothers with high levels of education also had the highest fertility in the 1970s and the first part of the 1980s. And in subsequent years, the labour force participation of women has increased (further), simultaneously with a substantial rise in fertility for *all* birth orders. Hence she questions the roles of improved educational level and higher labour force participation as the main explanatory factors in the intensity and timing of childbirth. Instead she argues that new attitudes as to what is suitable at different ages in life should be analysed further as potential explanations: childbearing is regarded as an important part of full life, but it is a part that many young people see as belonging to a later phase than earlier cohorts did. This argument points into the direction of *activity status* as an important determinant for childbearing, rather than educational level. This is confirmed by Kravdal (1994), who finds that the effect of educational level on first birth rates of Norwegian women is small, whereas being in education has a strong fertility-inhibiting impact. In other words, what matters for childbearing is not educational attainment, but educational participation. Being employed reduces the chances to become a mother somewhat.

5.5 Fluctuations in the age at leaving home

During the 1960s and 1970s young adults left the parental home at progressively younger ages. This has been documented for Sweden, Germany, Netherlands, Great Britain, France, and Norway (as well as the US and Australia), see Texmon (1996) for a summary of the literature. Among the reasons that explain this trend are changes in attitudes and values, increasing individualism, a decreasing tendency for living in families, improved economic conditions, and the increased availability of (student) dwellings. This trend stopped up in the 1980s, and it has turned into an increase in home leaving ages for some countries (Sweden, Netherlands, the FRG, and England), in particular for men. Moors and Van Nimwegen (1990) present figures for the EU as a whole in 1982 and 1987 that show a trend towards later home leaving at ages between 21 and 24 for men, and at all ages between 15 and 24 for women. Economic difficulties in the housing market and the labour market are mentioned as factors behind this reversed trend. But part of the effect may also be explained by the fact that surveys are not always comparable (*first* or *final* leave, problems with measuring «living with parents», etc.; see the particularly thoughtful analysis by Texmon 1996). It is unclear whether the tendency for young adults to leave the parental home at higher age as observed in the 1980s has continued in recent years. Figures presented by Visser (1995) for the Netherlands indicate that at least for men this seems *not* to be the case: in 1988/1989 63 per cent of men aged 20-24 lived with their parents, and in 1993/1994 only 60 per cent. (For women the decrease was only 2 percentage points.) On the other hand, Italian men and women *did* leave their parents at a higher age between 1983-85 and 1995-96 (Manting and Alders 1998, 12).

5.6 Two qualifiers

It should be stressed that many of the trends noted here have a long history, which started well before World War II. Drops in fertility and family size, and an increase in divorce were first in evidence in the nineteenth century. The movement of women in the labour force and the growth of sexual permissiveness became noteworthy in the first half of the twentieth century (Popenoe 1991). More surprising, however, was the fact that in the 1930s birth rates began to rise, and that immediately after World War II many Western countries experienced a «family renaissance». Although family life was also valued before 1950, there was an increasing emphasis in the decade thereafter on marriage and parenthood as central to fulfilling life. One explanation for this phenomenon is that the unparalleled affluence and upward mobility after the war gave the working classes the opportunity to achieve the bourgeois family ideal. With less education and access only to inferior jobs, which they held out of economic necessity, the women of the working class had long looked with envy at the non-working wife middle-class wife, Popenoe argues. Other explanations point to political circumstances, such as the Allied victory which led to a renewed confidence in the stability of the democratic state, or the Cold War which undermined confidence in the future and led people to retreat to the safety of home

and family (Cherlin 1992, 37). However, it is problematic that all these arguments point to circumstances after the war. They fail to explain why fertility and marriage rates began to rise in the 1930s already, immediately after the Great Depression, and why the increase continued during the war in a number of western countries. More generally, when one tries to explain developments in household and reproductive behaviour, attention should also be given to what happened to families and households between 1930 and 1950, and not only to the events since the mid-1960s. But others have argued that the 1960s *did* imply a break. Lesthaeghe and Van de Kaa have been among those who most strongly have stressed the role of tastes and aspirations, and of norms and attitudes in the explanation of family and fertility changes in industrialized countries after World War II (Lesthaeghe 1983; Lesthaeghe and Surkyn 1988; Van de Kaa 1987). During the 1960s and thereafter, a strong shift in norms toward progressiveness and individualism, and a focus on self-fulfilment implied increased individual freedom from religious and political institutions, from peers, and from parents. At the same time, the economic position of young men has deteriorated (Oppenheimer 1994). These developments, which have been in operation for the past three decades, have had led to lower levels of fertility and marriage.

A second qualifier is that the family and household trends described above are rather similar for various countries as long as an analysis at only a superficial level is employed, for instance in the form of aggregate demographic rates for family and household dynamics. But more detailed investigations reveal a great deal of pluriformity. Hobcraft and Kiernan (1995) stress the difference between Scandinavia and Southern Europe when they analyse the constraints around parenthood, see Section 5.4. Lelièvre (1994, 1995) gives a detailed comparison of couple formation and the birth of the first child in Great Britain and France. She concludes that the recent rise of births outside marriage and the extent of extra-marital cohabitation are very different between the two countries, despite apparently similar trends. Mellens (1999, 37) notes that female labour force participation is high both in Eastern and in Northern Europe, but for different reasons. In former communist countries many women belong or belonged to the labour force out of economic necessity – in the north, the explanation is to be found in non-traditional gender roles. Kuijsten (1996) criticizes expectations of a continuing convergence of demographic and family trends in Europe towards uniformity, as expressed by various authors. The material he presents for ten European countries on combined family status/labour market status for women shows a picture of substantial variation between the countries. These differences cannot be explained as inter-country differentials in the speed towards a uniform model of family and household patterns. This leads Kuijsten to the belief that the Swedish model with high shares of cohabiting couples, lone mothers and one-person households, and high labour force participation among women, does not necessarily predict the future situation in other countries. For instance, the family life in Germany (in particular in the former FRG) is highly polarized. On the one hand there is a strong and growing «non-family sector»

(consensual unions are not interpreted as families in Kuijsten's analysis), but at the same time there are fewer employed married mothers aged 25-29 than «traditional housewives» in that group. In general, Kuijsten endorses the view that industrial countries have entered an era of new biographical models with a pluralization of life styles, both over the life course of the individual and in the cross-sectional picture at one point in time.

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