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INTRODUCTION

In a classic piece, Terry Rambo (1973) clearly demonstrated the relevance of taking a regional approach to the study of Vietnam. His comparative study of a village of the North and one of the South has set up a model for Vietnamese studies since the early 1970s. Recently, a number of studies on the Vietnamese society have adopted a similar comparative perspective and shown different patterns of behavior between provinces and regions. Works on sociodemographic behaviors such as marriage (Goodkind, 1996), and fertility (Allman et al., 1991; Nguyen et al., 1996; Barbieri et al., 1996) have also uncovered contrasting patterns, particularly between the northern and the southern regions. In this paper, we explore regional variations in household composition by focusing on the living arrangements of young couples. The question is whether part of the regional differences observed in household structure can be explained by different patterns of coresidence between parents and married children.

The theoretical link between household composition and coresidence patterns between generations relies on analyses of stylized version of family systems, namely the conjugal, stem and joint systems (Davis and Blake, 1955; Hajnal, 1982). Postnuptial

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coresidence for example is associated to the joint family system in which all sons join the parental home with their spouse. The necessity to set up a new household after marriage, in turn, is an aspect of the conjugal family system. In the stem family system, postnuptial coresidence may occur for one child only or for all of them, although as a prelude to the set up of a new household. Residence patterns are further studied in relation to nuptiality and fertility. Das Gupta (1997) argues for a need to readdress on more empirical grounds the relationship between family systems and demographic outcomes, including health, mortality and migration. Therefore, the study of residence patterns does not only contribute to a better understanding of household composition, but is also of primary importance for the explanation of demographic outcomes. In this paper, we attempt to characterize Vietnam's family system in relation to residence patterns as a step, which will eventually help us understand demographic behavior.

The analysis is based on data from the Vietnam Living Standards Survey conducted in 1992-1993 (VLSS 1992-93) on a nationally representative sample of 4800 households. The first section of the paper provides information on historical characteristics of the Vietnamese family and summarizes results of recent studies on family structure. Our analysis then provides results on household composition for Vietnam and its seven geographic regions. Our results confirm that household composition is another area of Vietnamese society revealing regional variations, the stronger one being between the North and the South. A higher proportion of nuclear families is found in the North, while more extended and multiple family households are found the South. Further analyses from the perspective of the young family units suggest differentials in postnuptial coresidence. Controlling for ethnicity and availability of kin,

analyses suggest that young couples of the southern regions tend to live with their parents more often, and perhaps for a longer period, than young couples of the North. Furthermore, couples of the South and of the Center display more flexibility as to whether to live with paternal or maternal kin, whereas

couples of the North feature a clear preference for coresiding with paternal kin. The fundamental question as to why the Vietnamese family differs across the country is addressed in the discussion. We review the explanations put forward in the literature, namely housing stock characteristics, success of the socialist revolution, cultural influences and migration patterns. We argue that none of these explanations is satisfactory when considered on an individual basis. While our study focuses on the living arrangements of Vietnamese people today, we recognize that family relationships are considerably more complex and not addressed in a study of household composition alone. We also acknowledge the limitation of our study of postnuptial coresidence based on survey data, which provide indirect information as to the frequency of postnuptial coresidence.

FAMILY AND KINSHIP IN VIETNAM

The Vietnamese family is often described as being Confucian, thus involving partilinearity, patrilocality and patriarchy. However, a survey of observations on the Vietnamese family based on precolonial and colonial sources does not entirely coincide with this view. Recent work based on these sources highlight the centrality of patrilinearity together with a relative autonomy of individuals (Yu, 1978; Haines, 1984). Drawing from his reflections on the precolonial kinship system, Haines (1984) expands his observations to the Vietnamese society as a whole: « What emerges about this society

as a whole is the mix of finely-gradated hierarchy and considerable individual mobility and autonomy » (Haines, 1984: 309). The principle of autonomy pertained to the position of married children towards their parents. Adult children gained autonomy from their parents upon getting married, except for the eldest son who was responsible for them. Thus, if all married children but the eldest son acquired residential autonomy after marriage, Vietnam would be characterized by a stem family system (Khuat, 1997; Do, 1991). Unlike in the European or Korean stem family system, in which the eldest son inherited all or most of the succession (Bourdieu, 1981; Das Gupta, 1997), in Vietnam, the inheritance was distributed evenly among all children. All children, regardless of their birth order and gender, had the right to inherit an equal share of their parents' succession (Keynes, 1977; Ta Van Tai, 1981). In fact, the eldest son inherited the *huong hoa*, a special portion of inheritance that had to be used for the expenses related to the cult of the ancestors, among them, his deceased parents (Keynes, 1977). The *huong hoa* did not favor the eldest son economically, but assured that he would have the sufficient means to assume his spiritual responsibility (Cadière, 1930). The main objective of this inheritance pattern was to ensure the continuity of the family line, while maintaining a certain degree of equality among siblings.

French ethnographers, who wrote during and about the first half of the 20th century, also emphasized the principles of hierarchy and equality when describing the family. The observers underlined the hierarchy between parents and children, but were struck by a relative gender equality between spouses (Durwell, 1906; Maître, 1908, quoted by Ta Van Tai, 1981). They highlighted the right of women to inherit contained in *Lê Code*, not the legal code in effect when the French took over but the one reflecting current practices the

most (Deloustal, 1908-1922; Lustéguy, 1935). The right for a woman to inherit and own personal belongings, such as land, and the need for the husband to obtain his wife's agreement before selling any common property is often contrasted against Chinese customs where the wife had far fewer rights. The strong power of the widow within the family is also stressed (Lustéguy, 1935; Pompei, 1951).

These observations as to the position of women within the family suggest that the Vietnamese family was probably neither entirely patriarchal nor patrilineal. A strictly Confucian family would not grant the right for the wife to own and manage personal property after marriage. In a Confucian family, the woman belongs to the husband's lineage after marriage; through her life, she must be subservient first to her father, then to her husband and finally to her son (Keynes, 1977). In precolonial Vietnam, the law even gave women the right to divorce: the husband could repudiate a childless wife but the wife was entitled to divorce if her husband had abandoned her (Ta Van Tai, 1981). This legal capacity of the woman is not only contained in the precolonial sources, but was also observed by the French until the 1940s and 1950s. This suggests that the aforementioned aspects of the Vietnamese family were still part of the local tradition until recently.

In sum, describing the family as being Confucian would not account for the specificity of the Vietnamese family, that may originate from its precolonial inheritance. The early emancipation of children, the responsibility of the eldest son for his parents and the continuity of the family line, the power of the wife and the widow and the egalitarian inheritance system make Vietnam's family unique. We must recognize that in spite of the long-lasting influence of Confucianism, native characteristics were still salient as of the middle of this century, although socioeconomic differentials most likely existed as to the

integration of Confucianism. Nevertheless, recent anthropological studies of the Vietnamese kinship system confirm that after forty years of socialism, some of the aspects of the precolonial and the colonial families remain current. Luong (1989) shows that for Northern Vietnam as of the 1980s, patrilinearity and gender inequalities were aspects of the kinship system, although a bilateral system existed as well. For instance, the fact that married women still maintain strong ties with their parental family after marriage illustrates the existence of a bilateral kinship system. In spite of this cohabitation of two models, Luong concludes on the strength of the male-oriented model: "However, the male-oriented model of kinship within gender inequality so embedded has persisted to a much greater extent than many studies suggest." Nevertheless, this example highlights how the study of precolonial and colonial Vietnam is relevant for the understanding of today's family structures and relationships. This very brief historical account of the Vietnamese family and kinship system sets the stage for a description of household composition. Colonial sources, however, are of little help for understanding regional differences, as most texts deal with societies of the North and the Center (the former Delta Tonkinois and Annam).

HOUSEHOLD SIZE AND COMPOSITION IN VIETNAM

Recent regional differences in Vietnamese families and households were first revealed by the population censuses of 1979 and 1989. While for both census years the average household size for the country was close to five persons, between provinces, the range was from 3.8 (Thai Binh province) to 6.3 (Lai Chau province) as of 1989 (General Statistical Office, 1991). At the regional level, the smallest households are found in the Red River Delta (North) and the largest ones in the Mekong Delta (South). Recent studies

of household composition indicate differences between specific northern and southern provinces. A study based on the 1989 census data comparing the city-provinces of Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh highlights that even if the nuclear family is the most common living arrangements in the two provinces, it is more often the case in the North (66%) than in the South (51%) (Bélanger, 1997b). Another comparison of two geographically opposed provinces concludes on a similar variation (Hirschman and Vu, 1996). While the South exhibited a higher total fertility rate than the North until the mid 1980s (Barbieri et al., 1996), these studies on household composition suggest that the larger household size of the South is not a function of higher fertility alone, but of different living arrangements among adults. The living arrangements of the elderly, however, do not significantly vary regionally, the majority residing with at least one adult child (Truong et al., 1997). In contrast, an important difference emerges in coresidence patterns of the elderly according to the sex of their child. By calculating a patrilineal ratio, the authors document a higher propensity for married children to live with a parent from the male side in the North than in the South. Residential proximity and exchanges between non-residing kin confirm the strength of the family institution: frequency of visits is very high among non-residing kin members, and emotional and economic exchanges, particularly intense (Truong et al., 1977; Hirschman and Vu, 1996). While the aforementioned studies provide insights as to how the North and the South vary, our study, instead, offers results on all seven geographical regions.

DATA AND METHOD

Our analysis uses the data of the 1992-1993 World Bank Living Standards Survey (State Planning Committee, 1994) conducted on a nationally representative sample of

4800 households in the seven regions of Vietnam. The individual variable "relationship to the head of household" is particularly detailed and allows for a very thorough description of family types. This variable offers a total of 15 categories listed below.

Relationship to the head of household (VLSS 1992-93):

Head	Brother-sister-in-law
Wife or husband	Grand father-mother
Child or adopted child	Father-mother-in-law
Grandchild	Other relative of head or of his-her spouse
Niece or nephew	Servant or servant's relative
Father or mother	Tenant or tenant's relative
Sister or brother	Other person not related to the head
Son-daughter-in-law	

While these categories do not render the complexity of the Vietnamese language for describing kin relationships, they allow people to describe the composition of their household without having to include too many of its members in the residual category ("other family member")¹.

Given this detailed information about the relationship among members of a household as well as about other individual characteristics (marital status, presence of spouse in the household), we were able to reconstruct the conjugal units composing one household. Moreover, all members of the households surveyed were asked about the survival of their parents ("Is your father/mother still living?"). This part thus considers the availability of one or two parents from both the wife's and the husband's sides when dealing with the living arrangements of young couples. For people with living parents and spouse, we know if the respondent shares a house or not with them ("Is your father/mother/spouse living in this household?"). Overall, in spite of the limitations inherent to cross-sectional data for understanding family processes, the information

collected by the Living Standards Survey makes it the best nationally representative data set for the study of Vietnam's household and family composition. Neither the census of 1989 (Central Census Steering Committee, 1991) nor the demographic surveys of 1988 (National Committee for Population and Family Planning, 1990) and 1994 (General Statistical Office, 1995) give as much information as this survey.

The first step of our analysis was to choose an appropriate way to classify families for Vietnam. In the Vietnamese language the word *gia dinh* means family. In contemporary speech, the word family, *gia dinh*, usually defines the nuclear or conjugal unit. For children, *gia dinh* would refer to their parents and siblings, and for married adults, to their spouse and children. Traditional popular imagery also reveals an important emphasis on the conjugal bond (L'Art a Hue, 1919; Durand, 1960). Therefore, a typology based on the nuclear unit appeared to reflect the Vietnamese conception of the family. For this reason, we chose the one elaborated by Laslett (1972) and presented in detail by Hammel and Laslett (1974) in their seminal article entitled *Comparing Household Structure Over Time and Between Cultures* (1974). This classification of family types is based on the concept of the conjugal family unit, or the CFU. The basic unit is based on either a filial or a marriage relationship. In other words, it consists of either a married couple, a married couple and their single children, or one parent and his or her single children. When a child marries, he or she forms a new unit and does not belong to his parents' unit any more. In Laslett's typology, a conjugal family unit (CFU) corresponds to the nuclear family, which is also one of the categories of households. If we find more than one unit in a household, we have a multiple family. However, if a person does not belong to any unit, she or he is part of the household but not of a unit. These families are

"extended", the extension being the person "out of unit". Depending on the relationship between the unit found in the household and the person who is the "extension", the household is extended laterally, up or down. This is the case, for example, in a family consisting of an elderly woman, her married son, his wife and children. In that case, since the son is married, he forms a unit with his own family and the mother is considered as "extension" because she is not part of a unit. By contrast, if a single brother of the married son is also part of this household, we have a multiple household, since the mother and the single child form a unit too. Conversely, if we have related people in a household not forming a unit, we have a non-family household. One important choice we made was not to distinguish between single children living with their parents according to their age. Since marriage is usually when children join a new family unit, being a single child at 15, 21 or 23 has a similar significance. Unlike in the Western cultures, entry into union stands a better proxy of independence from parents than age or entry into the job market. The disadvantage of this choice, however, is that we end up classifying widows living with an older single daughter or son as one-parent families. In the analysis, however, we shall distinguish these cases in order to estimate the proportion of stem families.

The first step in classifying households is to identify all the conjugal family units and the individuals not part of a unit in each household.² A total of twenty-one types of unit were created organized in four categories: units of the head, ascendant, descendant and lateral secondary units. After having formed all the units, we identified all the relatives not part of a CFU. Based on this information, households were classified according to their composition following Laslett's categories. Once the households were classified, the last step was to determine the type of household each individual belonged

to. In fact, the final files contained individual information about the belonging to both a unit and a family type. We then created a variable using both the information on the unit and the household to better understand the family environment of individuals.

For the analysis on postnuptial coresidence, only family conjugal units including one married woman aged 15 to 34 were used. Another condition was that the husband of the wife be living in the household. This subsample of 2,022 young couples was further reduced after controlling for availability of parents. After keeping only young couples who had at least one surviving parent from both the husband's and the wife's sides at the time of the survey, we ended up with a new subsample of 1,692 couples.

RESULTS

As shown by previous studies, a large majority of Vietnamese households are nuclear families (simple family households, see table 1). While we observe a dominance of the nuclear family arrangement (70% in total), extended and multiple family households represent one out of every four households (25%). Less than 1% of households contain at least one member with no relationship to the head of household. The phenomenon is so rare as to use the terms households and families interchangeably, as we shall do in this paper. Also rare are one-person households (3%) and households without any family unit (1%). This pattern highlights that, in Vietnam, the residential unit corresponds to a consanguine unit 95% of the time. A glimpse at the subcategories provides us with further information (second column of table 1). Among the simple family households, we find a majority composed of two married parents and their single children (56%). Married couples living alone account for only 3.5%, while one-parent families with single children represent 9% of the total. Single-parent families include

elderly living with an adult child without a spouse or children. These cases account for 4% of the total (head is 50 and over, in 5% of the other cases, the head is under 50). These families, in fact, could be considered extended rather than nuclear.

Turning to the extended households, we find that the most common type is composed of one parent with a married child and his or her family (extended upward). That less than one percent of the households is extended laterally indicates that married and single siblings rarely coreside. Among the multiple family households, the subcategories *secondary unit up* and *down* display the same structure but reflect two different patterns of headship. When the secondary unit is up, the head is a child or a child-in-law of the parents; whereas when the secondary unit is down, the head is a member of the parental generation. Together, these two subcategories represent almost all multiple family units. Coresiding married siblings are very rare, as are the households with more than two units. By adding subcategories 4a, 5a and 5b we obtain the total proportion of stem families, which is 20%. If we add to this proportion the one-parent single families composed of one older parent (parent is 50 and above) with an adult child, we end up with a total of 24% of stem families and consequently, 64% of nuclear families³.

Studies on headship in Vietnam reveal a high proportion of female heads of households (Vu, 1994). In the urban regions, the proportion is as high as 50%, while the national average is 30% (General Statistical Office, 1991). In the VLSS sample, 27% of the head are females, of which 44% in the urban areas. The families with a high proportion of female heads are one-parent families (86%), non-family households (75%) and households with one or more person not related to the head (64%). More than one

third of the extended households (36%) have a female head, as does more than one quarter of the multiple households (27%). In total, 95% of the male heads have their spouse in the household whereas this is the case for 33% of the female heads.

In the multiple households, the head may be a member of the younger or older couple. In addition, in the extended upward families, the head may be the parent or the married child. Results (not shown in the tables) show a high proportion of elderly heads among multiple family households (79%). In contrast, the extended families feature a high proportion of heads from the younger generation (65%). This difference suggests that, for the elderly, a loss of the status of head of household family occurs after the death of one member of the elderly. In this way, an elderly couple living with a married child will remain head of the household until one of the spouses becomes widowed. Then the household becomes extended and headship passes on to the married child. When not belonging to a unit, one is less likely to be the head of the household. However, when in an extended family the elderly is still head, we find a majority of women in this position, partly reflecting the higher proportion of elderly women in the population overall.

Table 2 shows the distribution per category for each of the seven regions of Vietnam. The Red River Delta and the North Central Regions share the highest proportion of conjugal families with three quarters of the families of this type as well as the lowest proportions of multiple family households (less than 10%) and extended family households (less than 13%). A different pattern characterizes the Mekong Delta and the Southeast Regions where conjugal families account for slightly more than 60%. Multiple and extended households represent about 15% each, for a total of just over 30% in each of these regions. The two Center Regions are split: the Central Coast is very close

to the pattern of the South while the Central Highlands is close to one of the North. Finally the Northern Mountainous Region combines a unique pattern of a high proportion of conjugal families (70%) with over 25% of extended and multiple families. Therefore, with the exception of this last region, we observe that as one moves from north to south, households become larger and more complex. The last row of table 2 provides the proportions of all households that are stem families for each region. We observe the greatest proportions in the South and the lowest in the North.

The patterns studied are generally not affected by the ethnic composition of the regions involved (results not shown in the tables). Where the majority of households of the sample belong to the viet or kinh ethnic group, the effect of excluding all households belonging to ethnic minorities is an increase in the proportion of nuclear families by 2 or 3%. The exception to this rule is in the Central Highlands, where half of the households surveyed are not kinh. There, the proportion of nuclear households decreases by 4%. Overall, the effect of ethnicity is not strong enough to modify the regional patterns already described⁴

We now turn to results on the living arrangements of the young couples. In our study, young couples include those childless and those with children. Results for the whole country by age groups of the wife suggest different patterns of residence between the younger and older couples (table 3). The older couples tend to form an independent household more frequently than the young ones. Among the youngest couples (wife is 15 to 19), four out of five live in an extended or a multiple household. Considering that over 96% of these households include a member of the parental generation, we can interpret these results as comparing living with or without parents. Among the couples in which

the wife is 20 to 24, more than half of them share a house with a member of the parental generation. Above age 25, however, most women and their conjugal family live independently in a nuclear household. At age 30 to 34, close to 80% of the women and their conjugal families form an independent household.

The distinction between childless couples and those with children first and foremost is that married couples without children are rare, no matter what their living arrangements (table 3). Most of the childless young couples, nevertheless, live in an extended or a multiple family. Table 4 shows the proportion of young couples living either with the husband's or the wife's parents, as opposed to the ones not sharing a housing unit with a member of the parental generation. Most couples coresiding with one or two parents do so with paternal kin. From age 15 to 29, the proportion living with parents of the husband declines steadily, while the proportion living without parents increases. In contrast, the proportion living with parents of the wife remains stable.

Between the seven geographic regions of Vietnam, different patterns of coresidence emerge (table 5). First of all, we observe that for all regions, except for the Central Highlands which has a very small sample ($n=44$), the most common type of living arrangement among young couples is the nuclear family. However, the proportions range from over 70% in the North to just below 50% in the South. Among the young couples living in extended or multiple families, more are childless in the southern regions than in the northern ones. This finding is consistent with a longer first birth interval observed in the South in comparison to the North (Bélanger, 1997c).

Table 6 gives the proportions living with paternal and maternal kin among those living in an extended or a multiple family household. Three patterns emerge. First, the

three regions of the North have a strong preference for paternal kin since above 93% of couples live with the husband's parents. Second, the Center features the highest proportions of couples living with maternal kin (above 20%). The third pattern is observed in the southern regions, where we find a lower proportion living with maternal kin than in the Center but a still significantly higher one than in the North.

In order to compare family formation patterns, we considered two regions sharing similar distributions of households per type for the North and the South. We thus calculated the proportion of couples forming an independent household in the North (includes the Red River Delta and the North Central Regions) and in the South (includes the Southeast and the Mekong Delta). If we accept the hypothesis that the three age cohorts have a similar behavior, the results point to two very different patterns of family formation (table 7). Most couples of the South would go through a period of postnuptial coresidence before setting up a new household, whereas we see the opposite behavior in the North, where most young couples start their married life by forming a nuclear household.

DISCUSSION

Although the majority of Vietnamese households are nuclear in structure, the important proportions of extended and multiple families stand out as a significant finding for the understanding of the Vietnam's family. The question is what does a typology of households tell us about the domestic cycle of today's Vietnamese family? Our results show that the majority of extended and multiple family households are composed of one or two elderly parents with one married child. In total, 24% of the households at the national level are stem families. In their study on family structure, Hirschman and Vu

(1996) found a similar distribution of households per type, and emphasized the dominance of the nuclear family for Vietnam as a whole. In their survey, they asked all individuals in their sample if they had lived with paternal or maternal kin before the age of 15. They found low proportions of positive answers and concluded that postnuptial coresidence was not common in Vietnam. However, today's proportions of extended and multiple families could lead to different interpretations than this retrospective information.

Since a cross sectional analysis provides us with a snapshot of family types, the dominance of conjugal households does not have as its correlate that the family system is conjugal. Similarly, a stem family system is not characterized by a majority of stem families at a given point in time, unless fertility has been low for many years. All types of families found in a cross sectional analysis are indicators of different stages of the domestic cycle. In other words, 24% of stem families may reflect that most children do, in fact, live with their parents at some point of their married life. For instance, research on the Taiwanese family has shown the strength of the stem family system over the last decades, while a similar proportion of stem families than the one found in Vietnam is identified in cross sectional studies (Weinstein et al., 1990). In Vietnam, the intergenerational cohabitation is confirmed from the elderly's point of view by Truong et al. (1997) in their study on the living arrangements of the elderly. The authors' findings show that the majority of Vietnamese elderly live with a adult child. But do the majority of married children share a house with their parents for a period of their life-course?

The answer to this question lies in a better understanding of Vietnam's family system. If we accept that Vietnam is characterized by a stem family system, the

characteristics of this system are far from being elucidated. Who forms an independent household after marriage or resides with the parents? If a period of postnuptial coresidence occurs, what is its duration, what involves the sharing of a common housing unit?

Once all children are married and have left the parental home, does one of the previously married children then begin to live with the parents? Alternatively, are we in a so-called « hiving-off » stem system in which married children coreside with their parents after marriage until the following sibling gets married? Or instead, does the formation of a new household occur when the economic and emotional union is viable?

In spite of the relevance of these questions, our findings address them only partially. We identified a relationship between the age of the wife of the young family unit and the coresidence patterns such that the younger the wife; the more likely the couples are to share a house with parents. This finding suggests three possible effects. Perhaps, the relationship is the result of a life-cycle effect: as couples become older they tend to form an independent household. According to this hypothesis, most couples would go through a period of postnuptial coresidence after marriage. It could also reflect an effect of age at marriage: couples marrying young, in their late teens, tend to live with their parents more than couples marrying in their late twenties (unfortunately, we do not have information about age at marriage in the VLSS 1992-93). Finally, the results could also be affected by a period effect, since cohorts could have been affected by the socioeconomic environment that has changed a great deal in Vietnam over the last decades. The younger cohorts could tend to live with their parents more than do and did the older cohorts.

A qualitative study on marriage in Hanoi recently suggested that there is a strong norm for postponing marriage until the young couple is ready to become independent from the parents (Bélanger and Khuat, 1996; Bélanger, 1997a). This observation provides evidence for the relationship between age at marriage and living arrangement. When the ideal time in one's life-course for marriage corresponds to the actual entry into union, the young couple has the capacity to form a new household. When marriage occurs before this ideal timing in terms of achievements, such as having completed one's studies and having found a stable job, the couple lives with the parents. This study on marriage in Hanoi also concludes that this social norm was stronger before the economic and political reforms of the 1980s than it is today because the family resources, including housing, were so limited until the late 1980s that postnuptial coresidence appeared difficult to envisage. Over the last ten years, the new economic system allowed a number of families to increase their standard of living, including improvements to their housing conditions, as some of them were able to build their own private homes. This situation would make it less necessary that the young couple accumulate the sufficient resources to set up a new household after marriage, and could even decrease the mean age at marriage. Such an observation offers some support for the period effect, the pre and post "renovation" (*doi moi*) having a different impact on cohorts.

Our results suggest that the magnitude and types of stem family systems found in Vietnam could vary regionally. The main question arising, is if a stem family system characterizes Vietnam, why does the proportion of extended and multiple families increase substantially as one moves from north to south? Do different regions of Vietnam really share one family system, feature variations of the same one, or are characterized by

separate ones all together? Our results from the perspective of the young couples by regions and by age groups give hints as to how to answer these questions. Vietnam might be split between two variations of a stem family system. On the one hand, in the South and the Center, most recently married couples cohabit with their parents, either from the paternal or the maternal side. On the other hand, in the North, far fewer couples cohabit with their parents after marriage. Most of the ones who do however, live with parents of the husband. In fact, postnuptial coresidence could apply only to the child who will live with his or her parents until their death. According to Truong et al.'s findings, the youngest child would live with the parents in most cases. Yet, if we look at nuptiality patterns, we do not observe what the theoretical link between family systems and marriage suggests. Postnuptial coresidence is considered to make earlier marriage more feasible. In Vietnam, the median age at marriage varies little between regions and differentials in age at marriage do not seem to account for differentials in postnuptial residence patterns.

Although our results on the living arrangements of young couples have shed light on the geographical variations of household composition, we still do not know why Vietnam's regions feature different patterns of family structures and family formation processes. According to Hirschman and Vu (1996), the north-south contrast arises from different housing situations. They point out that either the housing units are larger in the South than in the North allowing for larger families to coreside, or, alternatively, that a shortage of housing units obliges more people to share a house. If we consult the findings of the housing census conducted at the same time as the 1989 population census, we find that housing density is much higher in the North than in the South (General Statistical

Office, 1990). Therefore, this indicates that housing units of the North are small and densely occupied. Social scientists have paid little attention to the relationship between household composition and characteristics of housing stock in developing countries. Yet, the relationship is studied for industrialized nations, with the knowledge of family structure being used for the planning of future housing needs.

Inversely, housing stock could play a role in living arrangements, as illustrated by the case of urban Vietnam⁵. Following the socialist revolution in the North, the government took over large urban houses and redivided them in order to accommodate a greater number of families. In parallel to this division of existing housing units, a number of state-funded houses and apartments were built for the new groups of civil servants moving to the urban centers from the country. The result was a multiplication of housing units available together with a reduction in living space provided for each urban family. The reorganization of living space could have indeed affected living arrangements differently in the various regions of Vietnam. Thus, this reorganization and reallocation of living space took place earlier and was more comprehensive in the North than in the South. As a result, more housing units are more likely to be small in size in Hanoi than in Ho Chi Minh City for instance. Therefore, the availability of larger houses and apartments could in fact, as suggested by Hirschman and Vu, explain part of the higher proportion of extended and multiple households found in the South. Nonetheless, the fact that more couples of the South live with parents from the maternal side while this pattern of coresidence is very rare in the North cannot be addressed by differentials in housing situations alone.

Truong et al. (1997), who also observe this difference between regions, put forward a cultural explanation. They argue that Vietnam has been influenced by two Asian family systems. The North has a closer cultural proximity to East Asia, which is characterized by a patrilineal, patriarchal, and patrilocal pattern. In contrast, the south is closer to South East Asia where a bilateral kinship system is dominant. According to this hypothesis, the dual influence would be intimately linked to settlement patterns. The North is the oldest seat of the Vietnamese civilization and has experienced the influence of the Chinese for over 1000 years. The members of the kinh ethnic majority who migrated from the North, in contrast, colonized the South, over the last few centuries. The population who settled in the South thus established close contacts with South East Asian civilizations.

Based on the distributions of young couples living with paternal and-or maternal kin, the cultural hypothesis is appealing and appears to solve the problem. However, the dichotomy is somehow shortsighted. First, postnuptial coresidence is not a widespread practice in the North, as should be the case in an East Asian family pattern. In China for instance, over 80% of the newlyweds do coreside with parents after marriage in the 1980s, although the duration of postnuptial coresidence has shortened over the 1960s and 1970s (Lavelly and Ren, 1992). The East and South-east Asian opposition might prevent us from recognizing that Vietnam may have its own culture and family systems, as we suggested based on historical sources. Instead of trying to identify influences and blends of influences, it could be more fruitful to accept a certain uniqueness and originality. The North is characterized by a strong nuclear family, support of the elderly and preference

for patrilineal kin. Neither completely East nor South East Asian, this pattern is, perhaps, simply North Vietnamese.

Another difficulty with the cultural hypothesis is that it gives little room to the last forty years of Vietnam's history. One of the objectives of the socialist revolution was to reform the so-called traditional family. The 1959 Law of Marriage and the Family was aimed at eradicating arranged and child marriages, inequality within the family and wife abuse, among other aspects of the traditional family (Eisen, 1984). A simple, nuclear and harmonic family, as well as simple and inexpensive marriage rituals, were glamourized in the propaganda campaigns (Malarney, 1993). Besides these political efforts to erect a new family model, a number of socialist policies might have encouraged the fission of extended and multiple families. Official documents publishing census results attribute the small family size found in Vietnam to socialist policies allocating land and housing to new family units, therefore encouraging fission of larger households (General Statistical Office, 1991). The link between socialist policies and living arrangements still has to be investigated, although the implementation of policies has certainly varied between and within regions. For forty years, the socialist state of northern Vietnam has, to some extent, replaced the family by providing housing, jobs, and benefits to the population. Family strategies of survival required knowledge of the government policies and ideally, vertical connections with decision makers, in opposition to strong horizontal family networks. The south of the country, meanwhile, has been subject to socialist policies and ideology since only 1975. Differentials in policy outcomes between regions have already been highlighted for family planning (Goodkind, 1995) and marriage rituals (Goodkind, 1996). In both cases, the North featured a greater degree of compliance with the official policy

and ideology while the South often adopted a different behavior than the one prescribed by the government. Lesser control, greater geographic distance from the central power and a shorter history of socialism could account for the regional variations observed.

In the same vein, the strong nuclear family of the North could have resulted from the success of family reforms initiated in the 1950s. In fact, debates over the traditional marriage and family preceded the revolution and were taking place as of the 1920s and 1930s among the Vietnamese intelligentsia (Marr, 1981; Phan Ke Binh, 1915) However, this hypothesis would require the study of time series of household composition from the colonial to the socialist period. Is the strong nuclear family of the North really a recent phenomenon having resulted from socialist ideology and policies? More historical research and inquiries as to the impact of socialist policies on living arrangements might resolve this issue in the future⁶. In any case, the housing argument should certainly be considered in the broader context of socialist policies of housing construction, and land and housing distribution.

One more avenue to explore for the explanation of different family structures lies in the demographic regimes themselves. How different are the regions of Vietnam in terms of demographic behaviors, and do these behavior affect living arrangements? Special attention should be paid to migration. Vietnam strictly controlled migration fluxes until the mid 1980s, particularly rural to urban migration, while trying to colonize less densely populated territories with inhabitants of the very dense areas (Desbarats, 1987; Forbes and Thrift, 1987; Thrift and Forbes, 1986). The migration policy and the zero urban growth objective were more successful in the North than in the South. Recent studies on migration show important inflows to Ho Chi Minh City from the neighboring

provinces (Doan et al., 1996). The new migrants may be joining family members already living in the city, thus increasing the household size and complexity of its composition. To be considered as well is North-South migration, although the issue has not been studied. Nuptiality patterns are also of primary importance here. Trends in age at marriage and divorce rates should be studied for regions in order to clarify any link between nuptiality and household composition. Fertility and mortality differentials, although not very important according to recent sources, also need to be investigated from a regional perspective.

This review of the different explanations accounting for the regional variations in family structure, and perhaps, in family system lead to one major conclusion. Until now, research on the Vietnamese family has considered the possible options separately, although we should consider them together. For instance, the cultural differences certainly play an important role, but we feel it might be a mistake to undermine the failures and successes of the socialist revolution and of its impact on living arrangements. Finally, differentials in demographic regimes, namely migration, have not been taken into consideration seriously enough. Cultural differences, socialist policies and demographic behavior might be together the pieces of a puzzle yet to be put together.

CONCLUSION

According to our findings, different behaviors in postnuptial co-residence appear to be an important determinant of household composition in Vietnam. The North features a strong nuclear family and the set up of a new household right after children marry. Most young couples of the South appear to share a house with their parents after marriage. Vietnam's family system is stem but characterized by different coresidence behaviors

between the regions. These differences are important for understanding sociodemographic behavior. Fertility differentials between the North and the South, for example, have been attributed to variations as to the implementation of the family planning program. Different coresidence patterns, however, should be considered.

Future research on the family should collect information on postnuptial coresidence of cohorts. The next step, however, is the study of family relations: what do coresidence patterns mean for people's daily lives? How does the status of women in different households vary and affect her fertility decision, the health of the children and the option to migrate? The theoretical link between family systems and demographic outcomes could certainly benefit from the Vietnamese case. Finally, a more historical and global perspective as why regions vary should lead us to a better understanding of Vietnam's society.

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Table 1. Vietnam. Proportions of households per type, 1992-1993 (in %) (n=4800)

Categories	Percent	Subcategories	Percent
1 One person	2.69		
2 No family (2 or more persons)	1.15		
3 Simple family households	68.46	<i>3a Married couple alone</i>	3.48
		<i>3b Married couple with single children</i>	55.85
		<i>3c One parent with single children</i>	9.13
4 Extended family households	13.54	<i>4a Extended upward</i>	9.04
		<i>4b Extended downward</i>	3.54
		<i>4c Extended laterally</i>	0.96
5 Multiple family households	12.02	<i>5a Secondary unit is up</i>	2.25
		<i>5b Secondary unit is down</i>	8.29
		<i>5c Secondary unit is lateral</i>	0.13
		<i>5d More than 2 units</i>	1.35
6 Incompletely classifiable households	1.81		
7 Households with non family member(s)	0.33		
TOTAL	100.00		

Table 2. Vietnam. Proportions of households per type by region, 1992-1993 (in %)

Categories/ Regions	Northern Mountainous n=800	Red River Delta n=1152	North Central n=624	Central Coast n=544	Central Highlands n=128	Southeast n=544	Mekong Delta n=1008	Total n=4800		
1 One person household	1.13	4.51	2.40	3.31	0.78	2.39	2.08	2.69		
2 Non family	0.75	0.78	0.96	1.10	0.78	2.02	1.59	1.15		
3 Simple family households	69.88	75.09	74.04	63.42	68.75	61.58	62.70	68.46		
4 Extended family households	13.38	11.11	12.66	15.99	10.94	14.52	15.48	13.54		
5 Multiple family households	12.87	7.20	8.81	13.97	16.41	16.18	14.98	12.02		
6 Incompletely classifiable households	1.63	0.87	1.12	2.02	2.34	2.94	2.68	1.81		
7 Households with not related member(s)	0.38	0.43	0.00	0.18	0.00	0.37	0.50	0.33		
		Stem families	23.25	20.00	20.53	25.00	26.00	24.63	27.24	24.00
TOTAL	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00		

TABLE 3. YOUNG COUPLES' LIVING ARRANGEMENTS BY AGE GROUP
(wife is 15 to 34, parents available on both sides)

Living arrangement	15-19	20-24	25-29	30-34	15-34
Live in an independant household	19.18	43.79	63.59	76.28	60.76
Childless	<i>4.11</i>	<i>3.61</i>	<i>1.65</i>	<i>0.53</i>	<i>1.89</i>
With children	<i>15.07</i>	<i>40.18</i>	<i>61.94</i>	<i>75.75</i>	<i>58.87</i>
Live in an extended or multiple household	75.35	51.69	33.11	21.44	35.88
Childless	<i>46.58</i>	<i>13.54</i>	<i>3.13</i>	<i>0.53</i>	<i>6.86</i>
With children	<i>28.77</i>	<i>38.15</i>	<i>29.98</i>	<i>20.91</i>	<i>29.02</i>
Other types of households	5.48	4.51	3.29	2.28	3.61
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
n=	73	443	607	569	1692

TABLE 4. YOUNG COUPLES' LIVING ARRANGEMENTS
(n=1692 couples, wife is 15 to 34, parents available on both sides)

Age of the wife	With husband's parents	With wife's parents	Live independen tly	Total
15-19	73.97	5.48	20.55	100.00
20-24	47.86	5.87	46.28	100.00
25-29	28.83	5.44	65.73	100.00
30-34	19.86	2.64	77.50	100.00
15-34	32.23	3.24	64.53	100.00

Table 5. Young couples' living arrangements by region
(wife is 15 to 34, parents available on both sides)

Living arrangement	Northern Mount.	Red River Delta	North Central	Central Coast	Central Highlands	Southeast	Mekong Delta
Living in a nuclear family	61.82	70.78	70.56	53.66	43.18	51.79	50.31
<i>Childless</i>	1.71	2.66	3.03	0.61	0	1.79	1.25
<i>With children</i>	60.11	68.12	67.53	53.05	43.18	50.00	49.06
Living in an extended or multiple family	35.9	26.81	25.54	43.29	52.27	45.24	44.07
<i>Childless</i>	6.84	5.31	4.76	5.49	15.91	10.12	8.13
<i>With children</i>	29.06	21.50	20.78	37.80	36.36	35.12	35.94
of which:							
<i>With husband's parents</i>	93.65	94.59	93.22	76.06	56.52	82.89	79.43
<i>With wife's parents</i>	3.17	1.80	5.08	22.54	43.48	17.11	17.73
<i>In an extended or multiple household without parents</i>	3.17	3.60	1.69	1.41	0.00	0.00	2.84
Other types of households	2.28	2.42	3.90	3.05	4.55	2.98	5.67
Total	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00	100.00
n=	351	414	231	164	44	168	320

Table 6. Young couples' living arrangements by region
(wife is 15 to 34, kin available from both sides)

Region	With husband's parent(s)	With wife's parent(s)	Live independently	n=
North Mountains	34.76	1.42	63.82	351
Red River Delta	27.29	0.72	71.98	414
North Center	26.84	1.30	71.86	231
Center Coast	33.54	10.98	55.49	164
Mountain Center	34.09	22.73	43.18	44
South East	38.69	8.33	52.98	168
Mekong	38.13	7.81	54.06	320
Total for the country	32.74	4.61	62.65	1692

Table 7. Proportion of couples forming an independant household by age group of the wife. North and south. (parents available on both sides)

AGE OF THE WIFE	North	South
20-24	63.28 (n=177)	23.97 (n=121)
25-29	73.09 (n=223)	51.37 (n=183)
30-34	78.22 (n=225)	74.25 (n=167)

¹ The Vietnamese census of 1989 (the most recent one) had only 6 categories for the variable « relationship to the head » which were, spouse, child, parent, grand child, other family member, non family member. I first attempted to use the census data for my study until I identified problems with the data. If a family relation did not fall into the four specific categories, the residual category « other » was apparently considered non-satisfactory and thus avoided. Instead, people preferred to include some members for whom no categories were suggested to the ones enumerated by the censor. For instance, we found anomalies in the households with a married child of the head. In many instances, the spouse, who was a child-in-law of the head, was not registered as « other » but as « child » as well. In other cases, a parent-in-law was not in the category « other » but in the « parent » one. The variable « relationship to the head » failed to adequately measure household structure because it did not allow people to describe the complexity of their households. This observation gives an example of how wary we must be in using census data for studying household composition.

² Unfortunately, the listing of household members does not enumerate all members of a unit before listing the ones of a subsequent unit. While the unit of the head is easy to identify, reconstitution of the secondary units require the adoption of a few hypotheses. Spouses part of a secondary units are easily coupled but difficulties arise for the attribution of children to their parents. We established that the grandchildren of the head were the children of the couple forming the secondary unit. Since the vast majority of children in Vietnam live with their parental family at least until marriage, this assumption is reasonable enough. Since a very small proportion of households contain more than two units, the problem that such hypotheses would cause in trying to reconstitute more units is not very important.

³ Skinner (1997) has criticized the difficulty to identify all stem families from Laslett's typology. By including the one-one-parent families in which the parent is an elderly, we avoid this limitation.

⁴ A proportion of 86% of the households of the sample have a Kinh (Vietnamese) head for a total of 4146 households. The remaining belong to the ethnic minorities. Among all ethnic minorities, the households headed by a Chinese person (n=89) have the highest proportion of extended and multiple households.

⁵ We did not show the results between the urban and rural areas in this paper. In another analysis, we observed that the largest household sizes and highest proportions of extended and multiple families are found in the urban south. Overall, the South differs a lot between the urban and the rural areas. The North, in contrast, does not differ between the urban and rural areas. Hirschman and Vu observed the same differences in the South and similarities in the North.

⁶ Up to the present, based on our preliminary research on a colonial census, we do not find support for a nuclearization process of the Vietnamese family (see Bélanger, 1998 for presentation of results on household composition of a northern village of 1926 based on a colonial census). Luong (1989) also questions the fact that the nuclear family is now more common than in the past.