Nuclear Hardship in the Nuclear Heartland?
Families and Welfare in the Netherlands, 1850 - 1940

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NUCLEAR HARDSHIP IN THE NUCLEAR HEARTLAND?
FAMILIES AND WELFARE IN THE NETHERLANDS,
1850 - 1940

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Abstract

Regions with predominantly simple family households are associated with ‘nuclear hardship’. Supposedly, persons who have remained outside the nuclear family, or who are left behind after its dissolution, are not readily accepted in the households of their extended family. They have to rely on the care of the community at large. In ‘stem family’ regions with a more ‘familistic’ culture, vulnerable family members are supposed to be welcomed more readily. In this paper, we question and test empirically the premises underlying the nuclear hardship hypothesis. We make use of a large database with 35,233 individual life courses, providing us with detailed information on the household composition, in combination with occupation, type of residence and religion. First of all, we divide the Netherlands in three regions: a nuclear family area, an intermediate area, and a stem family area. Then, we look at the role of extended kin in the household situation of various types of ‘nuclear hardship victims’, such as orphans and celibates. Indeed, their households are composed as expected in the three regions. However, a multivariate analysis discloses that, when controlling for factors such as urbanity, religion and occupation, accepting vulnerable family members in the household is more likely in the nuclear family area than in the stem family area. In the final section, we broaden our perspective on nuclear hardship by including proximity and availability of kin. We zoom in on a village in the Northwestern ‘nuclear heartland’ and combine co-residence of widows and widowers with the number and proximity of their surviving children. Likewise, we look at co-residence and proximity in the case of celibates. Proximity of kin clearly mitigates the potential hardship of living alone.
1. Nuclear hardship

In his seminal 1988 article, Peter Laslett discussed the ‘nuclear hardship’ (or nuclear-family hardship) hypothesis (Laslett 1988). The notion suggests that families in areas with predominantly simple family households perform less welfare functions than families in regions with a larger share of extended family households. Such a welfare task could be, for example, to take in an orphaned relative in the household. In areas with strict nuclear family rules, all orphans would have to live in orphanages or as foster children in the homes of unrelated persons. The hypothesis is also that, perhaps as a consequence of the nuclear family deficit in this respect, community welfare roles were more developed in the nuclear family regions. In his article, Laslett also looked at other aspects of the family welfare function. He wonders whether the nuclear family regions were also characterized by ‘less kinship consciousness and kinship interchange’ than the areas with more complex families. If so, kin living outside the household in nuclear family areas were less inclined to help vulnerable relatives (e.g. with money or practical support) than kin in regions with extended families. Laslett recognizes how difficult it is to test this hypothesis. The problems are both empirical and conceptual. First, there is the question of finding, comparing and interpreting household data on potential victims of nuclear hardship. Typically, household information for the past is available for relatively small communities and it is problematic to make statistically meaningful comparisons of the households of small minorities (celibates, orphans, widows) with households of the majority. Laslett admits that interpreting the figures can be problematic: ‘...it could still be true that the exceptional households of complex structure in areas where simple households are dominant, existed and exist for welfare reasons, to provide against nuclear hardship’ (p.155). Another problem is the availability of kin (p.158). Dependent on ages at leaving home and marriage, and rates of fertility and mortality, household composition can differ widely. Ideally, tendencies to take in needy kin should be measured in relation to the availability of kin (Ruggles 1987). Laslett refers to the possibility of simulation to solve this problem, but, overall, the efforts in that direction have not been very successful. Simulation designers had ignored migration and overlooked the fact that demographic behavior is transmitted across generations and clustered within families, making it near impossible to predict the range of demographic outcomes needed to make realistic simulations (Schofield 1985, 73; Ruggles 1993).

The nuclear hardship hypothesis is embedded in a concept of a regional family culture, which seems to elude operationalization even more. In this respect, Laslett refers to his concept of ‘noumenal normative rules’ pertaining to family relationships (including residential rules). These norms are contrasted with ethical (or religious) norms in that they are very implicit and not even perceived as choices (Laslett 1984). Thus, it is very difficult to find qualitative evidence on the societal norms with respect to households. Recently, however, efforts have been made to lend empirical body to the notion of regional differences in family relationships. Thus, areas of (persistent) weak and strong family ties have been contrasted, the former overlapping with the Northwestern European region of nuclear families. These areas were marked by striking differences in, for instance, percentage elderly living alone, or suicide rates (Reher 1998). Other research shows that the frequency of face-to-face contacts with kin, including extended kin, is currently much higher in southern and eastern Europe than in western Europe.
Thus, there appears to be a lasting impact of historical family systems on social networks, extending to care arrangements (Keck and Blome 2008; Höllinger and Haller 1990, Micheli 2000, Viazzo 2010; Heady and Kohli 2010).

These recent efforts to contrast dominant family systems (either defined as ‘weak family’ versus ‘strong family’ or ‘simple’ versus ‘complex’ family systems) with kin consciousness, kin contacts and various forms of welfare are very inspiring. However, harmonizing indices across countries and taking count of kin availability still proves a problem. Controlling for alternative explanations of kin contacts (e.g. religion or regional economy) occurs rarely (an exception is Bras and van Tilburg 2007). Moreover, the outcomes cannot be simply extrapolated into the past. In this paper, we aim to employ the statistical power of the Historical Sample of the Netherlands (see below) to test the premises of the nuclear hardship hypothesis and solve some of its empirical and conceptual problems. Our first research question is: do we indeed find that in typically nuclear family areas – contrasted to areas with extended families – kin does not deviate from the ‘noumenal norm’ and does not accept needy relatives in their homes? The second question is: is there evidence of a regional family culture, as is surmised in the nuclear hardship hypothesis? Or can both ‘normal’ family extensions and the co-residence of needy kin be explained from other factors: urbanization, family economy, or religion? The third question is: does our perception of nuclear hardship change when we include availability of kin and geographic proximity to kin in the picture?

In comparing ‘hardship’ across regions with different family system, we take our inspiration from Richard Wall, who in 1998 compared households in villages in England, Corsica and Hungary. In doing so, he looked at the household situation of persons not (or no longer) belonging to the core-family. These persons can live with relatives, they can live alone, or they can live with non-relatives only (Wall 1998: 52). In adopting this approach, Wall moved away from the classic Hammel-Laslett categories to a more flexible, ‘dyadic’ approach in which one looks at types of co-resident persons, not at types of households. Our database allows us to use and expand this approach, by looking at different types of ‘victims of nuclear hardship’ and by adapting the definition of a family-based solution to their problems in each case. For example, for seventy-year old widows living with a child (married or not) may be a great relieve, whereas for forty year-old widows, children only add to her problems. In the latter case, the co-residence of a sibling may shield her from hardship.

In the next section, we will briefly introduce household and care arrangements in The Netherlands. Then, we describe our dataset and use it to map the trend and regional diversity of household composition. As will become clear, the Netherlands can be divided in three zones, one clearly nuclear, one with a strong tendency toward stem families, and one intermediate zone in between. We will compare, along Wall’s lines described above, these regions in terms of the fate of nuclear hardship victims. How many of them lived alone (or without any kin), and how many lived with extended kin? The groups to be compared are illegitimate children, orphans, celibates and widows. In a subsequent section, we look at the odds of those persons to live with kin, while controlling for various factors. By using interactions with region, we can answer the question whether we can assume a specific ‘regional culture’ with stronger or
weaker inclination to help relatives. In a final section, we use a different database with the life courses of two generations in a village in the Northwestern countryside, allowing us to place co-residence of widows and celibates in the wider setting of kin availability and kin proximity.

2. Households and care arrangements in the Netherlands

For many centuries, the northern and western parts of the Netherlands have formed a region with a very low prevalence of extended households. In the Noorderkwartier region (North-western part of the country), Van der Woude counted for the 18th century co-resident kin in merely 3.6% of all households, less even than the Dutch average of 1960. There were more persons living alone in this region than in contemporary English villages (Van der Woude 1973: 251). The other extreme is found in the south-eastern, and, in particular, the eastern areas of the country. For instance in the arable farming part of Salland in 1748 31% of all households had co-residing kin (Verduin 1985). In the middle of the 20th century, this figure could still be as high as 50% in the rural regions of the east (Kooy 1959). To account for the marked regional variation in households, several explanations have been proposed. Firstly, in the commercialized north-western part of the country, agriculture was small-scale but profitable, in other words, farmers did not have to rely on family labour but could hire help when it was needed. Van der Woude describes for his Noorderkwartier region that the farmers did not need living-in servants; they took care of the cattle themselves, and seasonal workers (coming from the eastern part of the Netherlands and from Germany) were hired to help with the harvest. Maids were needed for cheese making but they could live at home, in the households of their parents (Van der Woude 1973: 246). Also, farming was not the dominant means of living in the area – the regional economy was dominated by seafaring and fishing. This means that no one had to live at home to wait for land and a farm to be transmitted. On the other hand, in the southern and eastern regions, agriculture was more important and it also remained a self-sustaining family enterprise for a much longer period.

Inheritance practices also played a part. In the eastern areas, the custom of transmitting the farm to one heir, in return for care in old age, favoured the formation of stem families. The designated heir stayed at the farm, and only became head when the father decided the time had come for the heir to marry. The parents would help the heir on the farm as long as they could. The heir could not compensate his siblings fully for the loss of their equal share in the inheritance but instead they had a lifelong right to stay on the farm, provide they were unmarried and helped as best as they could. In effect, the heir and his wife were bound by many obligations to the elderly parents and living-in siblings, in return for the opportunity to farm the family property. Thus, the geographic spread of three-generation households in the Netherlands is closely connected to impartibility (De Haan 1994), in contrast to, for instance, Sweden where the connection seems to be weaker (Lundh 1995: 46).

The sandy regions of the South, where farmers were also strongly dependent on family labor, were characterized by strict partibility. The resulting fragmentation made it more difficult to create viable new households and parents tried to keep their children
at home as long as possible to benefit from their labour (Klep 2010). Thus, age at marriage was high and many people remained celibate. This also induced extended families as celibates remained together to run a farm or they joined the households of married siblings (De Haan 1994; Bras and Van Tilburg 2007).

Whereas the labour needs of farmers and inheritance practices seem the keywords to understand (variations in) household extensions in the countryside, in the cities different factors come into play. Extended families were not infrequent in the cities (about 13-14%, see Kok and Mandemakers 2009), but we still know little about their backgrounds. Several studies have focused on co-residence, implying sharing rent and income-pooling, as a survival strategy for single or widowed women (Dorsman and Stavenuiter 1993; Bulder 1993). Altruistic motives can be found as well: families frequently often took in relatives who found themselves in trouble. However, the poorest families were often not capable to do so, simply because of a lack of space (De Vries 1998). Occasionally, poor relief organizations supported families who were willing to take in elderly parents. The studies show that the elderly tried to remain independent as long as possible, and preferred keeping a child at home to moving in with a married child (Bulder 1993). Another motive for co-residence with extended kin is family production, such as in the proto-industrial weaving households described by Janssens for the city of Tilburg (Janssens 1993). Finally, (urban) elites, inspired by the Victorian cult of the family, may have co-resided with kin more than other groups, precisely because they could afford to do so. According to Ruggles (1987), this explains the short-lived rise of the extended family in the second half of the 19th century US. In his view, the prolonged presence of family soon came to be perceived as oppressive and ‘privacy’ became the new ideal. In our recent studies, however, we have found no evidence for a specific tendency of elite groups to take in kin (Kok and Mandemakers 2009; 2010).

Obviously, care for needy persons is not only provided in and by families. Many studies testify to the efficiency and coverage of the many welfare arrangements, ranging from mutual insurance to charity (e.g. van Leeuwen 2007). These community provisions seems to have been most developed in the richer, western part of the country (which is also the nuclear family region). However, in the eastern part of the country obligatory help by neighbors (which took on the form of a rotation scheme) persisted well into the 20th century, whereas similar formal arrangements had disappeared in the west already in the beginning of the 19th century (Sleebe 1998).

3. Quarterly snapshots from the Historical Sample of the Netherlands

The Historical Sample of the Netherlands (HSN) aims to compile life course data as completely as possible for a representative portion of the 19th and 20th century population (Mandemakers 2002). The sample drawn for this purpose is based on the birth registers from the period 1812-1922 (n=78,000). Most of the data for the construction of life courses, however, are extracted from the population registers. The Netherlands is one of the few countries in the world that has kept a continuous population register starting as early as the mid-nineteenth century. Its functions were, among others, to serve as a basis for the franchise and to facilitate the systems of poor relief and conscription. In the early registers, each household was entered on a double
page with the head of the household first. The head was followed by his wife (in case
the head was a married male), children, other relatives, and other members of the
household. Date and place of birth, relation to the head of the household, sex, marital
status, occupation, and religion were recorded for each individual. In the first records
(1850-1862), however, the relation to the head was not specified. Obviously, in most
cases children can be linked to fathers and mothers, but the use of these registers in
detecting extended kin is limited. All changes occurring in the household were
recorded in the register. These changes were usually made at least within a month of
occurrence of an event. New household members arriving after the registration had
started, were added to the list of individuals already recorded, and those moving out
by death or migration were deleted with reference to place and date of migration or
date of death. In fact, the population register combines census listings with civil
registration in an already linked format for the entire population. Thus, families and
individuals can, in principle, be followed on a day-by-day basis for a long period. In
most municipalities, registers cover a time span of ten years between the censuses, with
new registers starting after each decadal census. The population registers remained in
use until 1910 or 1920, after which a new form of continuous registration was
introduced, consisting of single sheets, so-called family cards. The registration unit was
no longer the household, but the nuclear family. This implied that co-residing kin, at
least in a number of large cities, were relegated to separate registers for singles. In the
late 1930s, the ‘personal card’ replaced the family cards and households registers; from
that time on, the individual person became the registration unit in all municipalities and
we can no longer reconstruct household composition. Children were still listed on the
cards of the household head, but only their final departure was mentioned, rendering a
dynamic analysis of even nuclear households impossible.

For this paper, we make use of the Historical Sample of the Netherlands (HSN). Data
Set Life Courses Release 2010.01 covering the now available data in three parts: a) the
provinces Utrecht, Friesland Zeeland and the city of Rotterdam for the birth period
1850-1882 (n=5,827), b) the other parts of the Netherlands for the birth period 1863-1882
(n=7,767) and c) the entire country for the birth period 1883-1922 (n= 23,579).

The outstanding feature of the population register for the period 1850-1940 is that it
presents the research person (RP) in constantly changing stages in the life course. The
following example gives a typical sequence:

1) as a son or daughter of the head of the household,
2) living independently or living in another household (for instance as a
   servant),
3) as a household head, or as a wife of the household head,
4) living as an elderly father or mother within the household of a child or
   living in an institutional environment.

In short, the population registers provides us with data on migration, religion,
occupation, moves and family structure for the complete life course. For our purpose,
we have created a datafile with quarterly snapshots of the households of the 35,233
Research Persons for which we have information from the data of birth onwards.\(^1\) In contrast to our earlier work on the topic (Kok and Mandemakers 2010) we have not classified households according to a typology, but have retained all details on relationship of co-residing to the Research Persons. Thus, for every 91 days in a person’s life course we have a record with details on the number of sisters, brothers, aunts and uncles, sons and daughters et cetera. This gives us a fine grained picture of the number and type of kin present along the life course and we of course break down the information by sex, birth cohort, type of residence, civil status. An example is provided in Figure 1 where we show how living with kin evolved over the female life course. We can see, for instance, that the maximum number of kin is reached around age nine. A temporary minimum is found around age 25, when many women were either living with non-kin (e.g. as servant), alone or just-married without children. The presence of ‘other kin’ (e.g. grandparents, uncles, aunts, cousins, grandchildren) is limited to around one at birth, and decreases during the life course, to increase slightly at the end.

**Figure 1. Kin by type of relationship and civil status during the life course in the households of female HNS research persons born between 1863 and 1882**

![Graph showing kinship data](image)

Source: HSN Data Set Life Courses Release 2010.01.

The national coverage of the data allows us to chart the geographic spread of nuclear and extended families much better than with the census.\(^2\) In fact, co-resident kin was

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\(^1\) For 1940 persons, information for the earliest period in life could not (yet) retrieved.

\(^2\) The software used to build the dataset for the analysis in this article has been archived as Kees Mandemakers and Jan Kok, 'Household application, version III', 31st of october 2010.
specified for the first time in the census of 1947. In earlier censuses, they were lumped with other, shifting categories, such as spouses and boarders and lodgers, making it difficult to study extended families.

Then, we will show how the flexible, dyadic approach allows us to gear the definitions of kin constellations that we associate with ‘family response to nuclear hardship’ at each age and each type of problem.

4. The nuclear heartland

Our dataset with life courses based on a sample from the birth certificates is not readily compatible with household information gleaned from census. Clearly, we only have information on the households in which our research persons lived, meaning that for the earlier years we have only households containing young children. For a first impression of the long-term trend in household composition, however, this is not a problem. In Figure 1, we show the percentage of research persons born in nuclear families (that is, only a mother and/or father and possibly siblings are present). The figure shows remarkably high levels in the 1850’s, which is probably due to the incompleteness of the registration of relation to the head of the household. For this reason, we have decided to drop the period 1850-1862 from our subsequent analyses. Interestingly, the shift towards family cards after 1910, which may have resulted in under recording of co-residing kin in some municipalities, seems to have made no dramatic impact on the ratio.

Figure 2. Percentage of research persons born in nuclear families, The Netherlands 1850-1922, five-yearly moving averages

Source: HSN Data Set Life Courses Release 2010.01.
Next, we calculate the provincial percentages of the members of birth cohort 1863-1882, divided by urban and rural birth places. We followed the distinction proposed by Kooij (1985: 111-113) between urban and rural municipalities. ‘Urban’ stands for a town with over 10,000 inhabitants and with less than two and a half per cent of the population employed in the agricultural sector. The map for the countryside shows a clear demarcation between the nuclear West and North, overlapping the areas that had been engaged in trading, seafaring and commercial agriculture for centuries. The area with the lowest percentage of (children born in) nuclear families overlaps to a large extent with the German border area where partible inheritance or Anerbenrecht is found. The lighter grey area can be seen as an intermediate zone. In fact, the map shows great resemblance to one produced in 1956 on the basis of a census (Verduin 1985: 74). The figure also shows that residential patterns in towns and cities not always conform to the surrounding countryside and, furthermore, that there are not always more nuclear than the countryside. Cities which are clearly nuclear can be found in the provinces of North-Holland (including Amsterdam) and Friesland in the Northwest, but also in the more ‘stem family ’ regions in the east (Drenthe and Overijssel). Thus, when we speak of regional family cultures we cannot include the cities by definition and we will have to make sure to present separate figure and/or control for locality type.

Figure 3. Percentage of research persons born in nuclear families, 1863-1882, by province and type of birth place

Source: HSN Data Set Life Courses Release 2010.01.
In the remainder of this paper, we will divide the Netherlands in three regions, based on the incidence of nuclear families in the countryside. Thus, the ‘nuclear’ family region consists of the provinces North-Holland, South-Holland, Friesland and Groningen, the ‘intermediate’ region is the provinces Utrecht, Zeeland and Noord-Brabant and the ‘stem’ region is Drenthe, Overijssel, Gelderland and Limburg.

5. Co-residence of vulnerable persons in three regions

In this section, we will survey how, in the three regions, various groups of vulnerable people are residing. We are interested here in two forms of residence. The form ‘nonkin’ indicates whether people lived alone or only with unrelated persons. This may also include living in an asylum, convent, or garrison. The other category ‘extended’ indicates whether one lives with persons not belonging to the nuclear core. We take it that the presence of these persons generally alleviates the burden. We look at seven different groups of people, and define ‘extended’ according to the stage in the life cycle of the selected persons. The first group is illegitimate children, thus, children whose mother is not currently married. We look at the household situation at birth (or the earliest available). In this case, ‘extended’ may mean the child (perhaps together with the mother) lives with grandparents, uncles/aunts or other kin. The second group is children aged ten, who have already lost both natural parents. For them, there were basically only two options: either they lived with non-kin, or they lived with relatives (e.g. a married sister), a situation we define in this case as ‘extended’.

The third and fourth groups are permanent celibate women and men, for which we use the household snapshots at age forty. We define kin-based ‘solutions’ to their plight (or their living in ‘extended’ households as living with parents, siblings, or other kin. We deviate here from usual household definitions, because we think that living at age forty with parents is a breach of the neolocal/nuclear norm, probably involving care, although of course we do not know whether the parents care for the celibate child or the other way round. The fifth and sixth groups are young widows and widowers, also observed at age forty. For them ‘extended’ means living with parents, or siblings, married children or other kin. Finally, the last group are seventy year old widows and widowers for whom we define ‘extended’ as above, but with the addition of unmarried children. Because our life courses reach only to the year 1940, we have to limit the groups 1 and 2 to the birth cohort 1863-1902 and the other groups to the birth cohort 1850-1882.

In Table 1 we show the figures for these groups of potential nuclear hardship victims by region and by type of residence (urban/rural). Although we have to be careful because of the small absolute numbers for some groups, we can see that the score for ‘non-kin’ is particularly high in the cities in the nuclear family area for illegitimates (25%), orphans (44%), and celibate men (43%). Here, the family seems to offer a weak safety cushion, at best. In the case of illegitimates we are dealing with a sizeable portion of the whole, as the large cities of Rotterdam, Amsterdam and The Hague are located in this area. Judging from the percentages of vulnerable persons living in

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3 The alternative is living with the second partner of a deceased parent.
‘extended’ families, the countryside offers more protection than cities, in all regions and for all groups. Remarkably, in many cases, in the countryside of the intermediate zone we find larger shares of vulnerable persons living with kin than in the countryside of the stem family zone.

This suggests that the norms underlying kin relations in the stem family zone may be less supportive of extended kin than we assume. However, tables like this (and historical household studies abound with them) do not make clear whether the position of vulnerable positions is relatively better in the supposedly ‘familistic’ (stem or intermediate) regions than in the ‘nuclear-hardship’ area. For this, we will need (significance tests of) comparisons with non-vulnerable persons. Moreover, we need to find out whether other factors than ‘regional culture’ can account for the differences in household composition. We will make an effort in this direction in the next section.

Table 1. Types of household (%) of different types of vulnerable persons, by type of vulnerability, region, and urban/rural

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Vulnerability</th>
<th>Nuclear</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Stem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>rural</td>
<td>urban</td>
<td>rural</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegitimate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 848</td>
<td>% non-kin</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% extended</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orphans</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 92</td>
<td>% non-kin</td>
<td>39</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% extended</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>17</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celibate women</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 427</td>
<td>% non-kin</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% extended</td>
<td>64</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celibate men</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 375</td>
<td>% non-kin</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% extended</td>
<td>66</td>
<td>57</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young widows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 47</td>
<td>% non-kin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% extended</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young widowers</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 97</td>
<td>% non-kin</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% extended</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old widows</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N = 422</td>
<td>% non-kin</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>% extended</td>
<td>52</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HSN Data Set Life Courses Release 2010.01.

6. Regional family systems and nuclear hardship

In order to discover the role of regional differences in treatment of nuclear hardship victims, we have run a number of logistic regressions. In each model, the dependant variable is living in an ‘extended’ family, or more precisely: a household setting that potentially offers direct kin support. We write ‘potentially’ because we can only surmise that, for instance, an orphan was better off living with her grandparents than
in an orphanage. We include in each model interactions with region, using the nuclear area as the reference category. Thus, the models indicate whether vulnerable persons were treated differently in the intermediate or stem areas than in the nuclear areas.

In the models we use three control variables: type of residence, socio-economic position, and religion. As we have seen in a previous section, regional variation of types of households in towns and cities could differ from the one in the countryside. Many factors may account for this: housing shortages, early industrialization – which may temporarily increase co-residence (Anderson 1971) – and kin-networked in-migration. As we are primarily interested in detecting regional norms, we focus on the countryside by controlling for living in urban places. As indicator for socio-economic position, we use occupations coded according to the HISCLASS scheme (Van Leeuwen and Maas 2011). In the case of illegitimates and orphans, we have used the occupations of the head of the household, in the others cases those of the Research Persons themselves. By controlling for occupation, we make sure that the regional differences that interest us, are not composite effects of occupational structure. In recent articles, Ruggles (2009, 2010) has shown the immense importance of agricultural employment in explaining national variation in extended families (in particular stem families). Clearly, the type of agriculture, and specifically the relative role of family labor, is not captured in a simple indicator of agricultural occupation. It seems that the level of commercialization is vital in determining the need for family labor, and therefore the pressure on family members to stay or join the farming household. Our data does not allow us to differentiate by type of agriculture, so we should keep in mind that our control factor is limited in this respect.

On the role of religious norms in relation to household composition and the care for kin we know next to nothing. Laslett may have been right that we are dealing with ‘noumenal’ norms that are extremely implicit. Nevertheless, some hypotheses can be found in the literature. Kooy (1959) speculated that since neo-Calvinists (Gereformeerden) strongly advocated the autonomy of the couple with respect to the religious upbringing education of the children, they would be relatively averse to living with non-nuclear family members. Also, Roman Catholics had sanctified marriage, which might also work towards nuclearization of households (Bras and Van Tilburg 2007). Although Kooy (1959) found (in his field sites in the eastern or stem family area) a negative association between Roman Catholicism and family extension, he could not control for farm size. Since the Roman Catholics were likely to have smaller plots, the autonomous influence of religion could not be corroborated. On the other hand, it has been asserted that Catholicism is associated with ‘familistic’ family cultures. The role of Catholic rituals and festivities, often in the sphere of the family, may have increased family bonds more than Calvinist worship (Bras and Van Tilburg 2007). Bahle (2008:102) suggests that ‘...the significance...of individual consciousness [in Protestantism] paved the way for an ‘individualisation’ of family relationships whereas Catholicism kept a group-centred image of the family as an institution’. Among the Jewish minority, kin relationships may have been cultivated more than among other groups. A study of extended households in an American suburb showed that they were most prominent among the Jews, to a lesser extent among Catholics, and the least among Protestants (Winch et al 1967). Apart from denomination, religiosity itself has been associated with closer kin ties (Bras and Van Tilburg 2007:}
Thus, we can expect that people without religion had the lowest odds to live in extended families. In Table 2 we present the models for the groups we have specified in the previous section. As interaction effects can be difficult to interpret, we also present them in more detail in Table 3.

Model 1 looks at the first household situation of newborns (1863-1902). The control factors give the expected outcomes: family extensions were less common (odds ratios 0.824) in urban places, compared to rural ones; more common among Catholics and less common among orthodox Protestants (including neo-Calvinists) than among liberal Protestants (for the definition of these groups, see Kok and Van Bavel 2006). People without religion indeed seem to have lived less often in extended families, but the result is not statistically significant. As expected, children were born more often in extended families farmers (and among people without a known occupation), and – compared to lower middle class occupations – less often among workers (either skilled or unskilled) and the elite. Presumably, the reference category of the lower middle class groups includes shopkeepers and artisans for whom additional labor in the form of a living-in relative may have been be welcome. Finally, we see that region, after controlling for urbanity, religion and occupation, is still a very important factor in explaining kin co-residence. However, because we include interaction effects, the ‘main effects’ only relate to the reference category of legitimate children. Table 3 makes this more clear. In the intermediate area, legitimate children are 1.3 times as likely as in the nuclear area to be born in an extended family, whereas in the stem area the likelihood is 2.2 times higher. Illegitimate children, however, have in the nuclear area 4.6 times higher odds to be born in an extended family. In the intermediate zone they are also more likely to be taken in by kin, but the difference with legitimate children in this region is much smaller. The odds are only 1.14 times higher (1.564/1.367). In the stem area, their odds are actually 60% lower (0.897/2.218). Although the interaction effects in the latter case are not statistically significant, we find that these results indicate, at least, that families in the stem area were not more inclined that families in the nuclear area to take in relatives in need. In all likelihood, they were less inclined to do so.

Moreover, these outcomes are consistent across the subsequent models. In all cases, the intermediate and in particular the stem regions stand out with higher odds for extended family settings for the reference categories of people we have defined as not suffering from nuclear hardship. But when it comes to the households of vulnerable persons the stem regions have lower odds. Families in the intermediate zone are ‘doing better’ than those in the nuclear area in the case of ten-year old orphans (see Table 3) and they are also quite receptive to celibate men. Families in the nuclear area stand out by taking in (or not rejecting) illegitimate children (in most cases with their mothers), and celibates. The score on co-residing with widows and widowers is much less
Table 2. Logistic regression of household settings with co-resident and potentially helpful kin of vulnerable persons, by type of vulnerability, household characteristics and region.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
<th>Model 6</th>
<th>Model 7</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coresidence with illegitimates</td>
<td>Coresidence with orphans</td>
<td>Coresidence with celibate men</td>
<td>Coresidence with celibate women</td>
<td>Coresidence with young widowers</td>
<td>Coresidence with young widows</td>
<td>Coresidence with elderly widowed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegitimate (legitimate=ref.)</td>
<td>4,369***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orphan (not orphan=ref.)</td>
<td></td>
<td>1,785</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celibate men (not celibate=ref.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>13,289***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Celibate women (not celibate=ref.)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>15,499***</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young widower</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,005</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Young widow</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,702</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Old widow/widower</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,196</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban (rural=ref.)</td>
<td>0,824***</td>
<td>1,054</td>
<td>0,946</td>
<td>0.974*</td>
<td>1,021</td>
<td>0.982</td>
<td>0.755**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Catholic (Liberal Protestant=ref.)</td>
<td>1,131**</td>
<td>1,025</td>
<td>1,432***</td>
<td>1,213</td>
<td>1,307*</td>
<td>1,253</td>
<td>1,762***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orthodox Protestant</td>
<td>0,855*</td>
<td>1,104</td>
<td>1,188</td>
<td>1,041</td>
<td>1,190</td>
<td>1,037</td>
<td>1,454*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish</td>
<td>1,141</td>
<td>1,724***</td>
<td>1,732</td>
<td>2,159*</td>
<td>1,400</td>
<td>2,158*</td>
<td>1,515</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other and unknown</td>
<td>1,180</td>
<td>0,948</td>
<td>1,293</td>
<td>1,240</td>
<td>1,111</td>
<td>1,176</td>
<td>0,604</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Without religion</td>
<td>0,563</td>
<td>0,978</td>
<td>0,732</td>
<td>0,847</td>
<td>0,747</td>
<td>0,757</td>
<td>0,809</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elite (lower middle class=ref.)</td>
<td>0,594*</td>
<td>0,813</td>
<td>0,276*</td>
<td>0,382</td>
<td>0,563</td>
<td>0,000</td>
<td>1,012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skilled workers</td>
<td>0,831**</td>
<td>1,085</td>
<td>1,167*</td>
<td>0,234*</td>
<td>1,289</td>
<td>1,036</td>
<td>1,603</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Farmers</td>
<td>1,443***</td>
<td>1,724***</td>
<td>1,798***</td>
<td>2,796*</td>
<td>2,110***</td>
<td>2,003</td>
<td>1,362</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unskilled workers</td>
<td>0,552**</td>
<td>0,997</td>
<td>0,942</td>
<td>0,554</td>
<td>1,052</td>
<td>0,984</td>
<td>1,132</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Unemployed</td>
<td>1,509***</td>
<td>1,547***</td>
<td>1,829**</td>
<td>1,233</td>
<td>3,583***</td>
<td>0,370</td>
<td>0,889</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intermediate region (nuclear=ref.)</td>
<td>1,367***</td>
<td>1,178**</td>
<td>1,138</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>1,225</td>
<td>1,122</td>
<td>1,405*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stem region</td>
<td>2,219***</td>
<td>1,865***</td>
<td>2,258***</td>
<td>2,719***</td>
<td>2,201***</td>
<td>1,534***</td>
<td>2,550***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction illegitimate*intermediate</td>
<td>1,564*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction illegitimate*stem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction orphans*intermediate</td>
<td>2,831*</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction orphan*stem</td>
<td>0,942</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction celibate*intermediate</td>
<td></td>
<td>2,432***</td>
<td>1,444</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction celibate*stem</td>
<td></td>
<td>0,729</td>
<td>0,727</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction widow*intermediate</td>
<td>0,564</td>
<td>0,895</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interaction widow*stem</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1,286</td>
<td>1,276</td>
<td>0,693</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>0,123***</td>
<td>0,126***</td>
<td>0,095***</td>
<td>0,118***</td>
<td>0,003***</td>
<td>0,164***</td>
<td>0,751</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nagelkerke R2</td>
<td>0,09</td>
<td>0,03</td>
<td>0,326</td>
<td>0,273</td>
<td>0,06</td>
<td>0,02</td>
<td>0,09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Model chi2</td>
<td>1263,8</td>
<td>296,5</td>
<td>643,1</td>
<td>567,94</td>
<td>86,2</td>
<td>29,3</td>
<td>97,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>234221902</td>
<td>15876</td>
<td>2740</td>
<td>2871</td>
<td>2402</td>
<td>2463</td>
<td>1371</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* significance level p<0.05  ** significance level p<0.01  *** significance level p<0.001. Source: HSN Data Set Life Courses Release 2010.01.

Model 1 Dependent variable defined as co-residing with other kin than the mother.
Model 2 Dependent variable defined as living with kin.
Model 3-4 Dependent variable defined as co-residing with father and/or mother and/or married siblings and/or other kin.
Model 5-6 Dependent variable defined as living with father and/or mother and/or siblings and/or married children and/or other kin. Celibates removed from this subset.
Model 7 Dependent variable defined as living with siblings and/or children and/or other kin.
impressive, but that goes for all regions. All in all, our outcomes seem to be in line with the conclusion of Richard Wall (1998) in his comparison of the welfare role of rural households in England, Corsica and Hungary:

(...) the nuclear family regime of England ... actually had a wider range of kin-types within its households than were to be found in selected communities from other parts of Europe where more complex household regimes predominated. In England one can see the household functioning as a welfare agency, taking in a wide variety of persons who would find it difficult to live on their own, whereas in the other two populations the kin group was much less diverse and primarily associated with the process of the transfer of the headship of the household (p.62).

Our findings put the nuclear hardship hypothesis in perspective by showing that in the quintessential nuclear family region of Northwestern Netherlands families were quite ‘elastic’ and performed welfare tasks by taking in specific groups of kin in need.

Table 3. Interaction effects of Table 2 (Exp. B values)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Nuclear</th>
<th>Intermediate</th>
<th>Stem</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Legitimate 0 year old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,367</td>
<td>2,218</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Illegitimate 0 year old</td>
<td>4,635</td>
<td>1,564</td>
<td>0,897</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Not orphaned 10 year old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,178</td>
<td>1,865</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orphaned 10 year old</td>
<td>1,785</td>
<td>2,831</td>
<td>0,942</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever-married men 40 year old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,138</td>
<td>2,258</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never-married men 40 year old</td>
<td>13,289</td>
<td>2,432</td>
<td>0,729</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ever-married women 40 year old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,125</td>
<td>2,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never-married women 40 year old</td>
<td>15,499</td>
<td>1,444</td>
<td>0,727</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently married men 40 year old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,225</td>
<td>2,201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowers 40 year old</td>
<td>1,095</td>
<td>0,564</td>
<td>1,286</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently married women 40 year old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,122</td>
<td>1,534</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widows 40 year old</td>
<td>1,702</td>
<td>0,895</td>
<td>1,276</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Currently married 70 year old</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>1,405</td>
<td>2,535</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowed 70 year old</td>
<td>1,186</td>
<td>1,542</td>
<td>0,693</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: HSN Data Set Life Courses Release 2010.01. Significant effects in bold.

7. Proximity as a complement to co-residence

As we have seen in table 1, vulnerable persons lived more often alone, and less often in an extended family setting, in the nuclear areas (both rural and urban) than in the intermediate or stem area. Tables 2 and 3 have put these findings into perspective, by showing that the outcomes were likely the result of other factors, in particular agricultural employment and religion. After controlling for such factors, the likelihood of vulnerable people compared to non-vulnerable ones appears to be actually higher in the nuclear family region. Another way of putting the nuclear hardship hypothesis in
perspective, is to look at availability and proximity of kin. As this is notoriously difficult to reconstruct for historical families (for an exception, see Egerbladh et al 2007), we have to restrict ourselves to a case study of a village in central North-Holland, the heart of the nuclear family region.

The dataset for the village of Akersloot was based on the marriage registers from the period of 1830-1879. The period is chosen because this happened to be one of the few places in the Netherlands where the dynamic population registers already begin in 1830. The construction of the dataset took place within the context of the Historical Sample of the Netherlands, using HSN programs and procedures. The dataset is known as Dataset Family Formation and Living Strategies in the Western Parts of the Netherlands 1830-1940 (GBW), HSN release GBW.02. The dataset was limited to two conditions: it had to be the first marriage of both partners and the groom had to reside in Akersloot. All in all we have a set of 298 marriages. Seventeen couples left the parish soon after the marriage and could not be traced in nearby villages (lacking those early registers). The remaining 281 couples were followed until the death of the last remaining partner, regardless of where they happened to live. Of these marriages, 256 proved to be fertile, resulting in 1480 births. The life courses of the surviving children were reconstructed as well and we can therefore combine co-residence with kin with the total number of surviving kin and with their actual geographical location. The area under observation is much larger than Akersloot, but due to abundant employment opportunities long distance migration was rare and therefore the analysis is for most cases restricted to the province of North-Holland (see also Kok and Bras 2008).

Recent studies testify to the importance of co-residence and close proximity for care and other forms of practical assistance among kin. A ethnographic study of 19 European communities shows how the frequency of practical assistance to direct kin already is halved when someone is not sharing a household, but still lives within one kilometre. The frequency is halved again when someone lives more than 10 kilometres away (Heady and Ou 2010; also Hank 2005).

Because the Akersloot sample is limited, we can only focus on two types of potential nuclear hardship victims: celibates and widows/widowers. In the case of widows and widowers (Table 4), we can see that they often lived with children, although this diminishes rapidly with age. In the case of widows, shares of co-residence of elderly widows with children seems somewhat lower than the figures reported for Scandinavia (Moring 2010) and France (Fauve-Chamoux 2002). The table shows that living with other kin was mostly not an option: practically all widows not living with one or more of their children lived alone. In the table we only report on widows or widowers who still had children. Those without children lived alone in most cases. For instance, there were six childless widows at age 60, five of them lived alone. For men the corresponding figure is two and two.

This seems to confirm the impression of tables 2 and 3 that families in the nuclear family area were not flexible in the case of widows. However, the table also shows that even when, after age 60, the number of co-resident children went down, widows and widowers could still count on children living nearby, in another household but in the same place. The figures in brackets show that up until old age of the widowed, more than forty percent of their children lived either in the same house or very close. In fact, life stories of the Akersloot elderly show that dwellings were sometimes split, so that two related families could live together (but were undoubtedly registered as separate
family cores). Thus, Trijntje Dekker-Baltus (born in 1900) remembered: ‘When I was six years old, my father bought a house and land from grandfather Baltus…and had it equipped for two families. Grandfather, uncle Lauw and aunt Pietje lived on the south side and we on the north side (p.9)… ‘Much later, grandfather went to live two houses away and we had the house…for ourselves’ (p.12) (Clazing 1987). Information such as this, coupled with the proximity of children shown in the table, gives the impression that for widows and widowers ‘nuclear hardship’ was limited to those without children and some of the very old whose children lived too far away.

Table 4. Types residence of non-childless widows and widowers by age and average and potential number of children by distance, Akersloot and surrounding area. Widows and widowers from the marriage cohort 1830-1879

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence of widow(er)s</th>
<th>Location of the children (average number and % of total available)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alone</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widows</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 50</td>
<td>9,1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 60</td>
<td>20,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 70</td>
<td>40,4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 80</td>
<td>57,7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Widowers</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 50</td>
<td>5,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 60</td>
<td>3,2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 70</td>
<td>33,3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age 80</td>
<td>45,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Release GBW.02.

In the final table (5), we look at fifty-year old celibates in the second generation. Were they true victims of nuclear hardship (Alter 1996)? A sizeable number of them still lived with their parents, whereas in particular men also tended to live with siblings.
An example of the latter – and suggestive of an interesting mix of care and independence - can be found in the collection of Akersloot life stories. Margaretha Velzeboer-Kaandorp (born in 1917) remembers: ‘In our house lived uncle Willem, a brother of father. He had a bad leg and rode a bicycle with one pedal. Uncle Willem was bachelor. He had a tailoring establishment upstairs in the front room’ (p.33). He also had a small shop with pieces of cloth: ‘If someone came to buy or order something, uncle Willem had to come from upstairs, through our kitchen and living room, to the shop...Uncle Willem retained his tailoring business in our house until he died in 1953’ (Clazing 1993). Celibates living alone still appear to have lived often near siblings. Only among the men do we find a small group living alone without siblings in the vicinity (Table 5).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Residence of celibates</th>
<th>Distribution siblings by distance, percentage of celibates living alone</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>At least one sibling same place</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>With parent(s)</td>
<td>With siblings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women</td>
<td>38,9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Men</td>
<td>21,9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Release GBW.02.

8. Conclusion

Regions with predominantly simple family households are associated with ‘nuclear hardship’. According to the ‘nuclear hardship hypothesis, persons who have remained outside the nuclear family, or who are left behind after its dissolution, are not readily accepted in the households of their extended family and they have to rely on the care of the community at large. Conversely, in regions characterized by extended families, such as stem families, one can expect a more ‘familistic’ culture in which vulnerable family members were welcomed more readily. In this paper, we have questioned and tested the premises underlying the nuclear hardship hypothesis. We have made use of a large database with 35,233 individual life courses, providing us with detailed information on their household composition, in combination with occupation, type of residence and religion.

First of all, we have divided the Netherlands in a nuclear family area, an intermediate area, and a stem family area. The role of kin in the households of ‘nuclear hardship victims’ (illegitimates, orphans, celibates, widow and widowers) in the three region was a predicted by the nuclear hardship hypothesis. Thus, for instance orphans and illegitimates lived in the nuclear area (particularly in the cities) relatively more often in non-kin households and less often with ‘extended’ kin. However this could not be explained from a more or less ‘familistic’ regional culture. When we controlled for factors such as urbanity, religion and occupation, we found out that accepting
vulnerable family members in the household was actually more likely in the nuclear family, and to a lesser extent in the intermediate region, than in the stem family area. The nuclear family system appears to be rather flexible when it comes to accommodating several groups of vulnerable kin, in particular illegitimate and celibates. Widows and widowers, however, were not welcome. In the final section, we zoomed in on families in the ‘nuclear heartland’ and included proximity and availability of kin in our analysis. We combined co-residence of widows and widowers with the number and proximity of their surviving children and we also looked at co-residence and proximity in the case of celibates. Even in this highly nuclear region, widowed (but not childless) and celibate people, could in all likelihood count on the contacts and practical help of a sufficient number of kin.

Bibliography


