

Household Headship as a Transition to Adulthood

Elwood Carlson

Abstract

The third decade of life from ages 20 through 29 is the heart of the normative age range for the transition to adulthood. Trajectories related to school, jobs, marriage and household headship observed in this age range give good indications of the overall shape and speed of the entire transition process. Evidence related to this third decade of life comes from international integrated public use microdata samples (IPUMS-I) from the United States, France, Austria and Italy. In Austria and Italy the links between household headship and marriage remain strong. In France and the United States, the role of paid worker in the labor force increasingly supplants family roles as a basis for headship. But in all four studied countries, young adults also are taking up the householder role without either of these traditional institutionalized supports as prerequisites, and sometimes while still engaged in the formerly non-adult role of enrolled student. Living as head of a separate household is becoming a marker in its own right for adult status.

Household Headship as a Transition to Adulthood Elwood Carlson

Role Transitions and Adulthood

Each human being is born, ages, and then disappears from the population. Our temporary status on this earth and our continuous aging create an inescapable dilemma facing every human society. To sustain a relatively stable institutional context, the life course includes age-bounded roles (Benedict 1938) for children, adolescents, adults and elders. While a person occupies such a role the fact of continuous aging may be ignored temporarily. However, age boundaries reflect our transience as individuals. Transitions through these age-bounded roles (Foner & Kertzer 1978) generate a perpetual demographic metabolism in society.

As an umbrella term for several of these compromises between transient individual lives and a stable societal context, “adulthood” furnishes a classic example of the problem of role transitions. Social scientists explore age-bounded roles within the institutionalized social contexts of the family (Hogan & Astone 1986, Buchmann 1989, Modell 1989, Bumpass, Sweet & Cherlin 1991, Goldscheider & Waite 1991, Shanahan 2000, Corijn & Klijzing 2001, Benson & Furstenberg 2007, Gauthier 2007, Settersen & Ray 2010) and the economy (Blossfeld 1995, Oppenheimer 1998, Hill & Yeung 1999, Smeeding & Philips 2002, Sassler & Goldscheider 2004) in particular as aspects of the transition into adulthood (Modell, Furstenberg & Hershberg 1976, Furstenberg, Cook, Sampson & Slap 2002). Both marriage and a job have been widely recognized across the years and across societies as markers of adult status, and roles as spouse and worker are excellent examples of the age-bounded compromises that any society must make between stable social structure and transient aging individuals. Closely connected to marriage in the transition to adult family roles, parenthood also might be considered as a marker of adult status in some cultures. However, the lack of census data on parenthood status of men led to exclusion of childbirth events in this analysis. A third important role also emerges in many contemporary large, complex and institutionally differentiated societies: the role of student within institutionalized education systems (Coppola 2004). This age-bounded student role may not be a marker of adulthood, but it must be considered when examining role transitions into marriage and employment because normative ages for the student role now overlap and may interfere with the other two more traditional role transitions.

A fourth role transition, independent residence as a householder responsible for one’s own household, also sometimes is considered in relation to the transition to adulthood (Laslett 1972, Kobrin 1973, Hajnal 1982, Cook & Furstenberg 1982, Pampel 1983, Goldscheider & DaVanzo 1985, Santi 1990, Goldscheider 1997, Arnett 1998, Billari et al 2002). While household headship implies separation from the household of one’s parents, it involves more than simply leaving home, another event widely studied in this context (Glick & Lin 1986, Goldscheider & LeBourdais 1986, Goldscheider & Goldscheider 1993, Cherlin, Scabini & Rossi 1997, Billari, Mazuc & Ongaro 2002, Gutman, Mulder, Clark & Wagner 2002, Pullum-Pinon & Pullum 2002). Some young adults who leave parental homes do become heads of their own new households, but many others simply become dependents in another household headed by someone else. Households are social constructs with specific physical, spatial locations, unlike many other kinds of social groups. As such they involve not only families, jobs and schools, but also the built residential environment (Winkler 1992, Mulder, Clark & Wagner 2006). The institutionalized system for controlling rights and access to residential property forms the background upon which each society draws its patterns of household headship, just as the

institutionalized system of kinship serves as a background for marriage patterns, and the institutionalized system of production and exchange in market or command economies forms the background for labor force roles of individuals. Institutionalized roles like renter, landlord, or owner form a dimension of social organization based on the control of residential property. The relation between household headship and other role dimensions of adulthood can be seen in terms of structural details of this property system (Haurin, Hendershott & Kim 1993), and its articulation with the other dimensions of schooling, kinship and labor force participation.

Household headship sometimes has been viewed as only an aspect of the other transitions noted above, but today the transition to householder status has begun to separate from transitions related to school, jobs and marriage (Furstenberg et al 2004, Mouw 2005, Fussell, Gauthier & Evans 2007) and increasingly constitutes a marker of adulthood in its own right. Differentiation or separation of the different dimensions of the transition to adulthood has progressed more slowly in some societies and more quickly in others (Bruekner & Mayer 2005, Elzinga & Liefbroer 2007). This study examines such societal contrasts in household headship as an element of adulthood.

Census Evidence on Household Arrangements and Role Transitions

For countries considered here, the third decade of life from ages 20 through 29 is the heart of the normative age range for the transition to adulthood. While some transitions (notably employment) begin prior to age 20, and other transitions (notably marriage) do not reach a stable level until after age 30, this third decade of life is the key to understanding all the role transitions considered here. Trajectories related to school, jobs, marriage and household headship observed within the 20-29 age range give good indications of the overall shape and speed of the entire transition process for each of these roles.

Evidence related to this third decade of life comes from international integrated public use microdata samples (IPUMS-I) of respondents to recent national censuses in various countries. These individual records include information on age, sex, marital status, educational attainment, household living arrangements, and labor force status, so that role transitions in each of these social dimensions can be tracked and compared.

Only a limited number of countries have been integrated into IPUMS-I to date and some of the samples cannot be used for the current analysis due to data deficiencies. For example, in the 2001 UK census sample each individual has a separate “household” serial number rather than everyone in a household sharing the same household serial number, so the composition of the household cannot be determined by aggregating people on the basis of this identifier. The same lack of household structure occurs in IPUMS-I census samples from Canada, Spain, and a number of other countries. The 2001 Hungarian census sample is not suited to the analysis because lineal relatives beyond one generation (grandparents, grandchildren), collateral relatives of all types (siblings, cousins, aunts, uncles), and some categories of unrelated persons are all combined into a single category of relationship to household head, so relationship categories needed for this analysis are not provided in sufficient detail. The Greek IPUMS-I census data include only measures of lifetime completed education, not a response about current school enrolment, so one key dimension of the transition to adulthood for young adults is missing. The countries studied here include only France, the United States, Italy and Austria. These countries were chosen on the basis of data availability, and because comparisons among these four illustrate particularly well the central point to be made about the changing place of household headship as part of the transition to adulthood.

Measuring the Extent of Adult Role Involvement

The student role generally is not regarded as an actual element of adulthood. One might even say that adulthood is delayed until a person leaves the student role. In fact, the student role traditionally was seen as inconsistent with two of the institutional components of adulthood noted above—paying jobs and family formation. Despite this historical non-adult character of the student role, in a number of countries the practice has developed of providing university students in the third decade of life with stipends and other forms of support, almost as though the student role were a form of government employment. Thus the extent to which students at universities continue to live with parents well into the third decade of life varies dramatically across countries. This may change the character of the student role and allow it to qualify to some extent as a marker of adulthood.

Labor force participation by itself also never was a sufficient condition for adult status or household headship. Although a sizeable share of both men and women at ages 20 through 29 participate in the paid labor force in many countries, many of these workers continue to live as dependents in the households of other people, particularly with their own parents. In fact, for women the correlation between jobs and household headship (even as a partner of a male householder—see below) has been negative in many societies. Both student and paid worker roles for women have been viewed in some times and places as temporary, and as inconsistent with adult roles of wife and mother. On the other hand, the wages/salaries that come with paid employment also create the opportunity for women to contribute to supporting an independent household separate from parents.

The one role dimension of adulthood most strongly linked to household headship in most countries traditionally has been entry into marriage. Increasingly, however, young adults in many countries are forming couples as well as households without the formal step of marriage (Santi 1990, Bumpass, Sweet & Cherlin 1991, Mantin 1996, Toulemon 1997, Heuveline & Timberlake 2004).

The analysis below combines the three transitions involving student, worker and spouse roles into a state space that distinguishes eight separate combinations: single only (that is, not in school, not in the labor force, and never married), single student, single worker, single student worker, and then for people who have ever married, married only, married student, married worker and married student worker. It is important to keep in mind that “married” here means “ever married,” and includes persons who are divorced or widowed. While marriage may help to define adulthood, adult status certainly is not removed by divorce or widowhood. Each census respondent between ages 20 and 29 in each country sample of IPUMS-I data falls into one and only one of these eight role-combination categories.

Figures 1a & 1b Here

Figure 1 shows the distribution of young men (1a) and women (1b) at ages 20 through 29 over these eight role-combination categories in France, the United States, Austria and Italy, as enumerated in censuses in or near the year 2000. On the assumption that a person enumerated in such a category occupied the specified role(s) for approximately one year during the census year, this cross-sectional census picture can be thought of as a synthetic period estimate of the percentage of the third decade of life spent in each of the eight possible role combinations by an imaginary cohort passing from age 20 through age 29.

Figures 1a and 1b both show several interesting contrasts across countries. First, marriage occupied a much larger share of this third decade of life for both men and women in the United

States than in the considered European countries. Second, people averaged roughly two years of this decade of life as enrolled students in all countries (slightly less for men and slightly more for women), although the student role was noticeably shorter in Austria. However, about two-thirds of this time spent in the student role in the United States also involved simultaneous participation in the labor force for both men and women, while in Europe the student role hardly overlapped at all with other institutionalized roles like spouse or paid worker. This contrast results from the more generous state subsidies for students in post-secondary education in most European countries. Third, young men spent an average of about eight years and young women spent an average of about seven years of this decade of life in each country as members of the paid labor force (slightly higher in Austria due to earlier average school exit). This near-uniformity in the extent of the role of paid worker is important to keep in mind for comparison with the discussion below of household living arrangements.

Detailed Categories of Household Living Arrangements

The primary focus in this analysis is on household headship (Carliner 1975, . Gendered assumptions by census agencies about household headship continue to be made in a number of countries to the present day, and these definitions can create problems for measurement. In particular, the male partner in a marriage sometimes is assumed to be the head of the household regardless of actual economic or property relations, while the female partner sometimes is listed automatically as a dependent of her male partner. To take account of these definitional issues, people enumerated as heads of households and also those reported as spouses/partners of household heads are *all* counted and defined here as “householders.” This definition reflects the social reality that co-resident couples generally share the actual day-to-day responsibilities of heading a household, whether they are married or not. All other persons in a household are defined as “dependents.”

This aspect of the transition to adulthood also can be disaggregated into more detailed categories. People who are not householders (“dependents”) fall into three sub-categories:

- 1) They could be lineal relatives of the head of the household where they lived (in almost all cases this means the person was counted as “child of head of household”).
- 2) They could be collateral relatives (that is, cousins, brothers, sisters, uncles, nieces and so on) of the head of household.
- 3) They could be unrelated to the head of household. This category does *not* include unmarried partners of household heads. A person identified as such a partner is counted in the same way as a spouse—that is, as a householder. In this way, unmarried cohabitation is appropriately part of our measure of household headship and living arrangements, though not a part of our measure of entry into formal marriage.

For heads of household and their partners/spouses, “relation to head of household” is not interesting because it is defined here as the same for everyone. In the case of these householders, it is more informative to ask what kinds of households these people were heading. Using the household serial number in each IPUMS-I census file, respondents were aggregated into households and these households were coded according to the presence of members with various relationships to the household head. Household characteristics were then used to sort householders into four sub-categories:

- 1) A couple might head a household together as married or unmarried partners, and the household might also contain other dependents besides themselves. In most cases these other

dependents were children of the couple, but they could also include parents and other relatives of the couple, or even unrelated boarders, lodgers or other people.

2) A couple might head a household together, but that household might contain no one besides the partners themselves. Solo couples in the 20 through 29 age range managed to form an independent household of their own, but were not directly responsible for support of any other dependents in those homes.

3) A man or a woman living as a head of household without a partner/spouse might have other dependents living with him or her. These other dependents could include children (the great majority of such cases) or a parent or other relatives, or even unrelated persons living as dependents with this single householder.

4) A man or a woman might be living alone in a “household for one” as a primary individual. These people qualify as householders in charge of their own household, but they are not responsible in that household for any person other than themselves.

Household living arrangements can be viewed in terms of these sub-categories for both dependents and householders. Figures 2a (for men) and 2b (for women) show household living arrangements at ages 20 through 29 in the four studied countries, grouping the three categories of dependents below the central horizontal axis of the figure (shown as blue, green and gray segments with negative percents) and the four categories of householders above the horizontal axis (shown as yellow, orange, brown and red segments with positive percents).

Figures 2a & 2b Here

Despite the contrast between the United States and European countries for the role categories (particularly marriage) depicted in Figure 1, the pattern of household headship for both men and women at ages 20 through 29 actually appears very similar in the United States and France. At the turn of the century the United States had slightly more young adults at these ages living as single heads of household and also as unrelated dependents in the households of others, but the overall share of householders versus dependents is very similar in the two countries despite much earlier marriages in the U.S. census sample. The similarity between French and U.S. headship patterns reflects the more prevalent and more institutionalized character of unmarried cohabitation in France (Toulemon 1997, Heuveline & Timberlake 2004).

On the other hand, while the three European countries looked very much like each other in terms of the salience of different role-combination categories in Figure 1, much larger differences appear between these three countries in the extent of household headship during the third decade of life. Both of these forms of incongruity between the two Figures already hint at the central point of this study—that household headship can no longer be considered simply as a by-product or reflection of the three institutionalized role transitions involving students, spouses and workers.

Decomposition of Headship Changes in Relation to Other Roles

Since household headship traditionally was seen as merely an expression of the other institutionalized role transitions into adult family and work roles, perhaps complicated by a temporary student role, it is fair to ask how much of the differences in household headship visible in Figure 2 are due to differences in the other role transitions. Two questions can be asked about the nature of this interaction between household living arrangements and other roles:

1. If household living arrangements within each particular combination of student, work and marriage roles were the same in each society, how would such household patterns have

differed for different countries, due solely to observed differences in the extent of involvement with student, work and marriage roles?

2. If the extent of involvement with student, work and marriage roles had been the same in each society, how would household living arrangements have differed, due solely to observed differences in the propensity to form and head households observed within such role combinations?

The answers to these two complementary questions are produced by component decomposition of the overall differences in household living arrangements illustrated in Figure 2. The first component, answering the first question above about variations in time spent in different role categories of student, worker and spouse, is calculated from sex-specific matrices of household status by role combinations for pairs of countries according to formula 1:

$$\Delta_{i,j}^r = (r_j^2 - r_j^1) \frac{(h_{i,j}^1 + h_{i,j}^2)}{2}, \quad (1)$$

where r_j is the proportion of all men or women from ages 20 through 29 who were enumerated in role category j (j = single only, single student, single worker, single student worker, married only, married student, married worker, or married student worker) and $h_{i,j}$ is the proportion of the persons in role category j who were enumerated in household living arrangement i (i = unrelated dependent, lineal dependent, collateral dependent, householder couple with dependents, solo householder couple, single householder with dependents, primary individual). These role-duration terms capture differences in household living arrangements due to different levels of involvement in student, work and marriage roles in the two populations, assuming that within role-combination categories, the propensities for the various household arrangements in both populations are the average for the two populations.

The total of all these duration differences must sum to zero because the sum of all role-combination categories equals the total population at ages 20 through 29 in each country. However, the different household components that make up these duration differences do not sum to zero for each specific household arrangement. The total contribution of some living arrangements to these duration effects is positive, while for some living arrangements the total duration effect is negative. It is the sum of all these different effects that balances out to zero.

The second component, answering the second question above about variations in living arrangements within each combination of role categories, is calculated using the same matrix of household status by role combinations from each pair of countries according to formula 2:

$$\Delta_{i,j}^h = \frac{(r_j^1 + r_j^2)}{2} (h_{i,j}^2 - h_{i,j}^1), \quad (2)$$

where all symbols have the same definitions as in Formula 1. These propensity terms capture differences in household living arrangements due to different propensities to live in households of various types *within* each role combination, assuming that distributions of men and women across student, worker and spouse role categories in both populations are the average for the two populations. For convenience, all comparisons below start with France as the reference country (country 1 in the formulas). Figures 3a and 3b show results of the component decomposition for young men and women in the United States in 2000, contrasted with France in 1999.

Within each category of household living arrangements considered, the role duration effect from equation 1 and the household propensity effects within role categories from equation 2 sum to the total observed difference between the two countries for that category of household living arrangements:

$$\Delta_i^r + \Delta_i^h = h_i^2 - h_i^1. \quad (2)$$

Sometimes these two component effects both have the same sign and reinforce each other in producing a difference between countries, but sometimes they have offsetting signs and partially cancel out one another with opposite effects. In all decompositions explored below, France is taken as the reference country. All effects are expressed in terms of figures for another country minus the equivalent figures for young adults in France.

Household Arrangements in the United States and France

The top halves of Figures 3a for men and 3b for women present differences in the salience of particular role combinations among French and U.S. young adults. Bars extending to the left (with negative values) indicate less involvement for that role among U.S. men and women than for their French counterparts, while bars extending to the right (with positive values) show more U.S. involvement with a particular role combination than observed in France. For example, the two largest offsetting role differences were fewer single and more ever-married workers in the United States, due to the earlier marriage pattern noted in Figure 1 above. Role categories involving people in the labor force dominate among these duration effects simply because that particular role occupied more of the third decade of life than did any other. The U.S. had more young men living as married or single student-workers, while France showed a surplus of young men living as unmarried students not in the paid labor force.

Each such bar is further subdivided to show which specific living arrangements were implicated in the difference between countries for that role category. The French surplus of single workers involved men and women living as dependents with their parents, but also living in couples (that is, unmarried cohabitation—they had never married) with or without children (Winkler-Dworak & Toulemon 2007). The U.S. surplus of married workers involved mostly men heading households with partners, with or without other dependents, but also a few married couples still living as dependents. While U.S. couples were less likely to live in cohabiting unions, they were more likely to live as householder couples combining student and worker roles.

Figures 3a & 3b Here

The bottom halves of Figures 3a and 3b tell the rest of the story about the difference between France and the United States in household living arrangements of young adults. Since each of these bars represents the balance of household choices within a particular role category, choices in France in favor of one living arrangement must be matched by choices in the U.S. in favor of a different arrangement. Each bar in the bottom half of the figures must be balanced between left and right, with some household arrangements on the left (favored in France) and the others on the right (favored in the U.S.). Here we see that the biggest differences between the two countries appear among unmarried students and workers for both men and women. In France these unmarried students and workers were more likely to live as cohabiting householders or primary individuals, while in the United States the unmarried students and workers were more likely to be living as single householders with dependents, and especially as dependents

themselves who were living in households headed by collateral relatives or unrelated persons such as roommates.

Figures 3a and 3b reveal that the superficial similarity of household living arrangements in France and the United States was produced quite differently in each country. Although a third of the young men and nearly half of the young women in each country headed households as couples, in France this was because most young adults lived as unmarried workers, and those workers were more likely than in the United States to form cohabiting couples. In the United States these young householder couples tended instead to be married, and in fact to combine marriage and employment or even marriage, employment and student roles.

Household Arrangements in Austria and France

Figure 1 above revealed that young men and women in Austria spent considerably less of the third decade of life enrolled as students than was the case in France, and correspondingly more time active in the labor force instead. This earlier transition from student to paid work roles might lead us to expect more household headship among young adults in Austria. Instead, however, Figure 2 above clearly showed less household headship in Austria in 2001 than in France in 1999. Again it is clear that household headship is not simply an outcome of these other role transitions. Figures 4a for men and 4b for women present differences in the salience of particular role combinations at ages 20 through 29 in France and Austria, as well as differences in propensities to live in different household arrangements within each role category.

The modest role-duration effects shown in Figure 4 are very similar for men and for women. In France, young adults at ages 20 through 29 spent more time in the student role, virtually all of it unmarried and outside the labor force. In Austria they spent more time as paid workers out of school, mostly single but also to some extent as married workers. Most of the French students lived with their parents as dependents, while a sizeable share of the Austrian workers lived as couples heading households of their own, both married and unmarried. Thus the role-duration effects are just what one would expect if young Austrians were more likely to head their own households than were young adults in France.

Figures 4a & 4b Here

But Figure 2 shows exactly the opposite. Young Austrians were less likely to head households of their own than were young French men and women. The answer to this anomaly is to be found in the bottom half of Figure 4. Based on these decomposition results, the explanation is quite simple. Young unmarried students and workers both showed the same French/Austrian contrast. In France these unmarried young adults were much more likely to form new cohabiting households of their own, even households with dependents (often their children), while young Austrians who were not yet married almost all continued to live as dependents, usually with their parents, even though more of them actually had paying jobs than in France. In France the roles of student and worker were more often viewed as appropriate grounds for forming new households (Roussel & Bourguignon 1978), while in Austria the defining transition for household formation continued to center on marriage. These propensities to live in different types of households *within* specific categories of student, worker and spouse roles outweighed the role-duration effects of less college and more paid labor force participation in Austria, with the result that young Austrians were more reluctant to start their own new households at ages 20 through 29.

Household Arrangements in Italy and France

A comparison of the third decade of life in Italy and in France provides an even clearer and more dramatic illustration of variations across countries in the differentiation of household headship from transitions into other adult roles. Figure 1 above showed almost identical involvement in student, worker and spouse roles among young men and women in Italy and in France at the turn of the century. About the same shares of people at ages 20 through 29 had ever married in the two countries. Both paid employment and higher education were at about the same levels among young adults in both countries. From these role distribution similarities, one might expect household living arrangements also to be about the same in the two countries.

Instead, Figures 2a for men and 2b for women reveal the largest studied contrast in household headship. Young adults in Italy are famous (Ongaro 2001, Billari, Castiglioni, Castro Martin, Michielen & Ongaro 2002, Cook & Furstenberg 2002) for this delayed transition into household headship. The top halves of Figures 5a and 5b show virtually no role-duration effects of any kind to explain such a contrast. We see a very tiny tendency for young Italians to live as single student workers (generally with their parents for men, but sometimes in cohabiting couples for women), balanced by an equally tiny tendency toward the married-worker role for French men and the single student role for French women, but these very small role-duration effects contribute almost nothing to the overall dramatic deficit of household headship among young Italians.

Figures 5a & 5b Here

The entire story in the case of Italy compared to France is found within one or two bars in the bottom halves of Figures 5a and 5b. Particularly among young never-married people with jobs in the paid labor force, the propensities in France favor unmarried cohabitation as heads of independent households for both men and women. At ages 20 through 29, these young adults in France are more likely to head their own households even when they do not cohabit with someone—they show a greater propensity among single workers to live as primary individuals and single heads of household with no partner. By contrast, the young Italians (as documented in a number of other studies) continue to live as dependents in their parents' homes. The present analysis reveals that this Italian dependency is overwhelmingly a feature of choices among only the *unmarried* young Italians. Figure 5 shows that among the ever-married there are virtually no propensity differences between France and Italy, just as there were no role-duration effects. The fact of marriage in Italy, as in Austria, continues to be the defining transition for adulthood with respect to forming separate new households, and marriage is as common in Italy at these ages as in France. The peculiar dependency of young adults in Italy is shown here to be confined to the never-married population, whether they are studying at universities or working in the paid labor force. The higher level of household headship in France is due not to any difference in proportions married (there is almost no difference) or to any difference in headship among the ever married (there is almost no difference here, either). It is due almost entirely to the greater propensity of unmarried French men and women (both those with jobs and those in higher education) to cohabit informally as heads of their own households.

Emergence of the New Householders

Each of these three comparisons of living arrangements in relation to student, worker and spouse roles in different countries reinforces the same conclusion. Household headship is not a simple by-product of one or another of these institutionalized role transitions, nor even of a particular combination of such transitions. In Italy and Austria in particular, household headship tends to be linked to the more traditional criterion of entry into marriage. In the United States and

particularly in France, on the other hand, household headship may also accompany the role of student in higher education, and especially the role of worker in the paid labor force.

In all these countries, however, neither jobs nor marriage automatically transform young adults into householders. Some men and women at ages 20 through 29 get married and yet continue to live at home with parents. Many remain at home after they enter the paid labor force. In this same age range, others form and head their own independent households without getting married. Household headship is becoming differentiated from family roles, as noted nearly four decades ago in a path-breaking study of U.S. society by Kobrin:

“...the great expansion of headship for persons living alone, the primary individuals, implies that family responsibilities are no longer a necessary condition for household headship, and that privacy is being increasingly achieved at the expense of family membership.” (Kobrin, 1973:800).

In the same way, household headship is becoming differentiated from the economic role of paid worker in the labor force. While many young adults with jobs continue living at home with parents, others live as heads of their own households without paid employment. How they manage this feat remains a fascinating issue deserving further study--some may receive financial support from parents and other kin (Whittington & Peters 1996, Schoeni & Ross 2005), some may inherit wealth that facilitates independent residence, and others may receive government benefits of various kinds (Ellwood & Bane 1985), including financial or other assistance with places of their own to live. A quarter-century ago Louis Roussel described this differentiation of various dimensions of adulthood in terms of the emergence of what he called multiple models of the family (Roussel 1989) within French society, and by extension in other societies as well. In the present context we may speak of multiple models of household headship instead, some based on family roles and others not.

These new householders may have paying jobs, or not. They may be married, or not. They may be enrolled in school, or not. The simple fact of household headship is emerging as a new alternative for defining entry into adulthood in these societies. In Austria and Italy the links between headship and marriage remain strong. In France and the United States, the role of paid worker in the labor force increasingly supplants family roles as a basis for headship. But in all four studied countries, young adults also are taking up the householder role without either of these traditional institutionalized supports as prerequisites, and sometimes doing so while still engaged in the formerly non-adult role of enrolled student. A reasonable case can be made that living as head(s) of a separate household, and so taking on an adult role in a society's institutionalized system for organizing residential property, is becoming a marker in its own right for adult status.

References

- Arnett, Jeffrey J. 1998. Learning to stand alone: the contemporary American transition to adulthood in cultural and historical context. *Human Development* 41: 295-315.
- Benedict, Ruth. 1938. Continuities and discontinuities in cultural conditioning. *Psychiatry* 1:161-7.
- Benson, Janel & Frank F. Furstenberg, Jr. 2007. Entry into adulthood: are adult role transitions meaningful markers of adult identity? MacMillan, Ross (ed). *Constructing adulthood: Agency and subjectivity in adolescence and adulthood*. Amsterdam: Elsevier.
- Billari, Francesco C., Stefano Mazzuc & Fausta Ongaro. 2002. Leaving home: a comparative analysis of ECHP data. *Journal of European Social Policy* 12: 259
- Billari, F., Castiglioni, M., Castro Martin, T., Michielin F. and Ongaro F, 2002. Household and union formation in a Mediterranean fashion: Italy and Spain. E. Klijzing and M. Corijn (eds), *Comparative Research on Fertility and the Family in Contemporary Europe: Findings and Lessons*. Geneva/New York: United Nations.
- Blossfeld, H.-P. 1995. Changes in the process of family formation and women's growing economic independence: a comparison of nine countries. Pp. 3-34 in H.-P. Blossfeld (ed). *The New Role of Women. Family Formation in Modern Societies*. Boulder, CO: Westview
- Bruckner, H., & Mayer, K. U. (2005). De-standardization of the life course: What might it mean? And if it means anything, whether it actually took place. *Advances in Life Course Research* 9: 27-53.
- Buchmann, M. 1989. *The script of life in modern society: Entry into adulthood in a changing world*. Chicago, 111: University of Chicago Press.
- Bumpass, L. L., Sweet, J. A., & Cherlin, A. 1991. The role of cohabitation in declining rates of marriage. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 53: 913-927.
- Carliner, Geoffrey. 1975. Determinants of household headship. *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 37(1): 28-38.
- Cherlin, Andrew, E. Scabini, G. Rossi. 1997. Still in the nest: delayed home leaving in Europe and the United States. *Journal of Family Issues* 18: 572-5.
- Cook, Thomas D. & Frank F. Furstenberg. 2002. Explaining aspects of the transition to adulthood in Italy, Sweden, Germany, and the United States: a cross-disciplinary case synthesis approach. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 580: 257-287.
- Coppola, L. 2004. Education and union formation as simultaneous processes in Italy and Spain. *European Journal of Population* 20: 219-250.
- Corijn, M. and Erik Klijzing (eds). 2001. *Transitions to Adulthood in Europe*. London: Kluwer.

Ellwood, David & Mary Jo Bane. 1985. The impact of AFDC on family structure and living arrangements. *Research in Labor Economics* 7: 137-207.

Elzinga, Cees H. & Aart C. Liefbroer. 2007. De-standardization of family-life trajectories of young adults: a cross-national comparison using sequence analysis. *European Journal of Population*. 23(3/4): 225-250.

Foner, Ann & David Kertzer. 1978. Transitions over the life course: lessons from age-set societies. *American Journal of Sociology* 83(5): 1081-1104.

Furstenberg Jr., Frank F., T. D. Cook, R. Sampson, and G. Slap (eds.). 2002. *Early Adulthood in Cross-National Perspective*. London: Sage Publications.

Furstenberg Jr., Frank F., Sheela Kennedy, Vonnie C. McLoyd, Ruben G. Rumbaut, and Richard A. Settersten, Jr. 2004. Growing up is harder to do. *Contexts* 3 (3): 33-41.

Fussell, Elizabeth, Anne H. Gauthier and Ann Evans. 2007. Heterogeneity in the transition to adulthood: the cases of Australia, Canada, and the United States. *European Journal of Population* 23(3/4): 389-414.

Gauthier, Anne H. (ed). 2007. Becoming a young adult: an international perspective on the transitions to adulthood. *European Journal of Population* 23(3-4: ?-?)

Glick, Paul C, and Sung-ling Lin. 1986. More young adults are living with their parents: Who are they? *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 48: 107-112.

Goldscheider, Frances K. & Jule DaVanzo. 1985. Living arrangements and the transition to adulthood. *Demography* 22: 545-63.
(1972 NLS cohort—separate living as transition to “adulthood”)

Goldscheider, Frances K. & Celine LeBourdais. 1986. The decline in age at leaving home, 1920-1979. *Sociology and Social Research* 72: 143-145.

Goldscheider, F. K. and Waite, L. J., 1991. *New Families, No Families? The Transformation of the American Home*. University of California Press, Berkeley.

Goldscheider, Frances K. & Calvin Goldscheider. 1993. *Leaving home before marriage: Ethnicity, religiosity, and generational relationships*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press.

Goldscheider, Frances K. 1997. Recent changes in U. S. young adults living arrangements in comparative perspective. *Journal of Family Issues* 18, 708-724.

Guttman, Myron, Sara Pullum-Pinon, and Thomas Pullum. 2002. Three eras of young adult home leaving in twentieth century America. *Journal of Social History* 35: 532- 576.

Hajnal, J. 1982. Two kinds of preindustrial household formation systems. *Population and Development Review* 8(3): 449-494.

Haurin, D., Hendershott, P. & Kim, D. 1993. The impact of real rents and wages on household formation. *Review of Economics and Statistics* 75: 284-293.

Heuveline, Patrick & Jeffrey M. Timberlake. 2004. The role of cohabitation in family formation: the United States in comparative perspective. *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(5) Special Issue: 1214-1230.

Hill, M. S., and W. J. Yeung. 1999. How has the changing structure of opportunities affected transitions to adulthood? in A. Booth, A. C. Crouter, and M. J. Shanahan (eds). *Transitions to adulthood in a changing economy: No work, no family, no future?* Westport, CT: Praeger.

Hogan, Daniel P. & Nan M. Astone. 1986. The transition to adulthood. *Annual Review of Sociology* 12: 109-30.

Kobrin, Frances E. 1973. Household headship and its changes in the United States, 1940-1960, 1970. *Journal of the American Statistical Association* 68(344): 793-800.

Laslett, Peter (ed). 1972. *Household and Family in Past Time*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Manting, D., 1996. The changing meaning of cohabitation and marriage. *European Sociological Review* 12(1): 53-65.

Modell, John, Frank F. Furstenberg, and Theodore Hershberg. 1976. Social change and transitions to adulthood in historical perspective. *Journal of Family History* 1: 7-32.

Mouw, T. (2005). Sequences of early adult transitions: A look at variability and consequences. In R. A. Settersten, F. F. Furstenberg Jr., & R. G. Rumbaut (Eds.), *On the frontier of adulthood: Theory, research and public policy* (pp. 256-291). Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Mulder, Clara H., William A. V. Clark & Michael Wagner. 2002. A comparative analysis of leaving home in the United States, the Netherlands and West Germany. *Demographic Research* 7(17): 565-592.

Mulder, Clara H., William A. V. Clark & Michael Wagner. 2006. Resources, Living Arrangements and First Union Formation in the United States, the Netherlands and West Germany *European Journal of Population* 22(1): 3-35.

Ongaro, F., 2001. Transition to adulthood in Italy. in E. Klijzing and M. Corijn (eds), *Transitions to Adulthood in Europe*, pp. 173-207. Dordrecht: Kluwer.

Oppenheimer, Valerie K. 1988. A theory of marriage timing. *American Journal of Sociology* 94: 563-91.

Pampel, Fred C. 1983. Changes in the propensity to live alone: evidence from consecutive cross-sectional surveys, 1960-1976. *Demography* 20: 433-47.

Roussel, Louis. 1989. *La famille incertaine*. Paris: Editions Odile Jacob.

Roussel Louis & Odile Bourguignon. 1978. *Generations nouvelles et mariage traditionnel*. Paris: INED- PUF, Travaux et documents, 86.

Santi, Lawrence L. 1990. Household headship among unmarried persons in the United States, 1970-1985. *Demography* 27(2): 219-32.

Sassler, Sharon & Frances Goldscheider. 2004. Revisiting Jane Austen's theory of marriage timing: changes in union formation among American men in late 20th century. *Journal of Family Issues* 25: 139-166.

Robert Schoeni and Karen Ross, "Material Assistance from Families during the Transition to Adulthood," in R. Settersten, F. Furstenberg, and D. Rumbaut (eds). *On the Frontier of Adulthood: Theory, Research, and Public Policy* (University of Chicago Press, 2005).

Settersten Jr., Richard A. & Barbara Ray. 2010. What's going on with young people today? The long and twisting path to adulthood. *The Future of Children* 20(1): 19-41.

Shanahan, Michael J. 2000. Pathways to adulthood in changing societies: variability and mechanisms in life course perspective. *Annual Review of Sociology* 26:667-92.

Smeeding, Timothy M. and Kathleen Ross Phillips. 2002. Cross-national differences in employment and economic sufficiency. *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science* 580: 103–33.

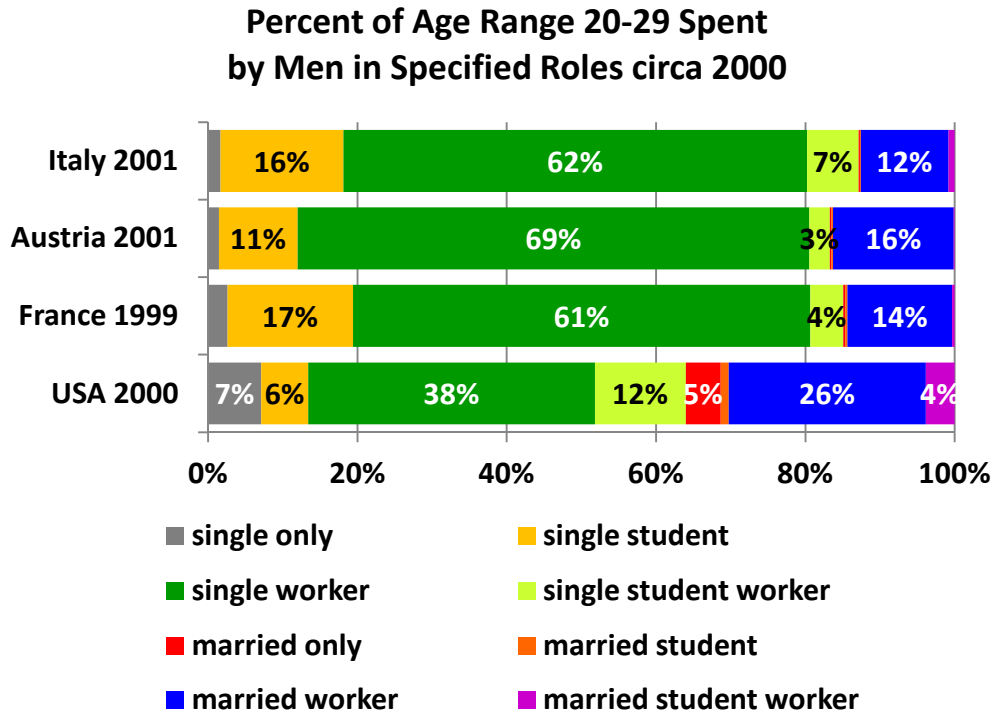
Toulemon, Laurent. 1997. Cohabitation is here to stay. *Population: An English Selection* 9: 11-56.

Whittington, L. and Peters, H. E., 1996. Economic incentives for financial and residential independence. *Demography* 33(1): 82-97.

Winkler, Anne E. 1992. The impact of housing costs on the living arrangements of single mothers. *Journal of Urban Economics* 32(3):388-403.

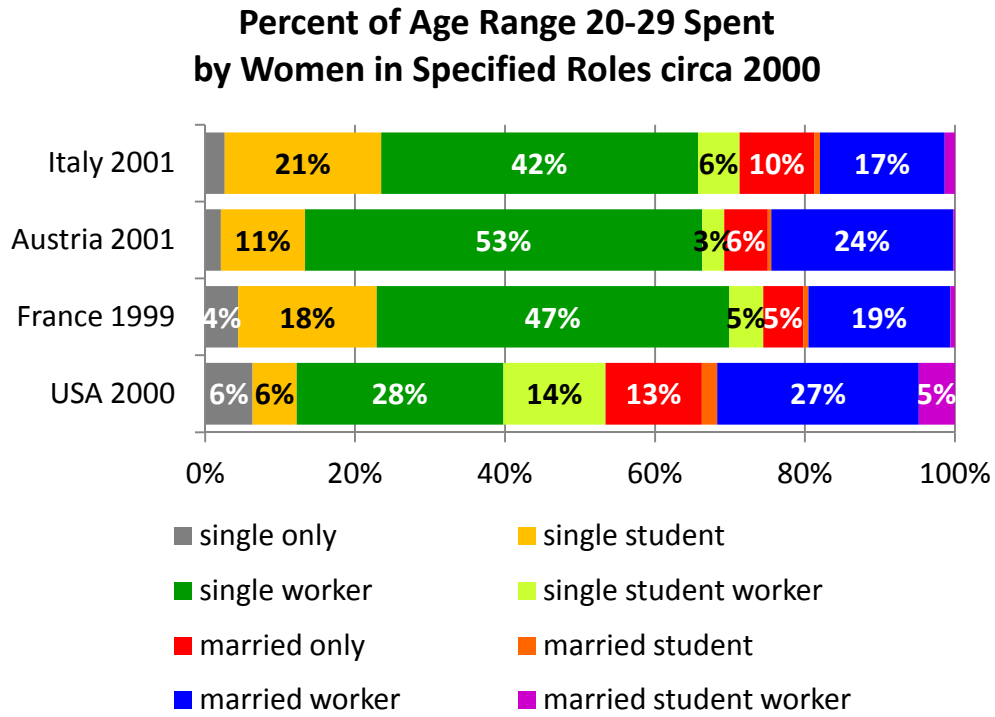
Winkler-Dworak, Maria & Laurent Toulemon. 2007. Gender differences in the transition to adulthood in France: is there convergence over the recent period? *European Journal of Population* 23(3/4): 273-314.

Figure 1a:



Source: original calculations from IPUMS-I samples of decennial censuses.

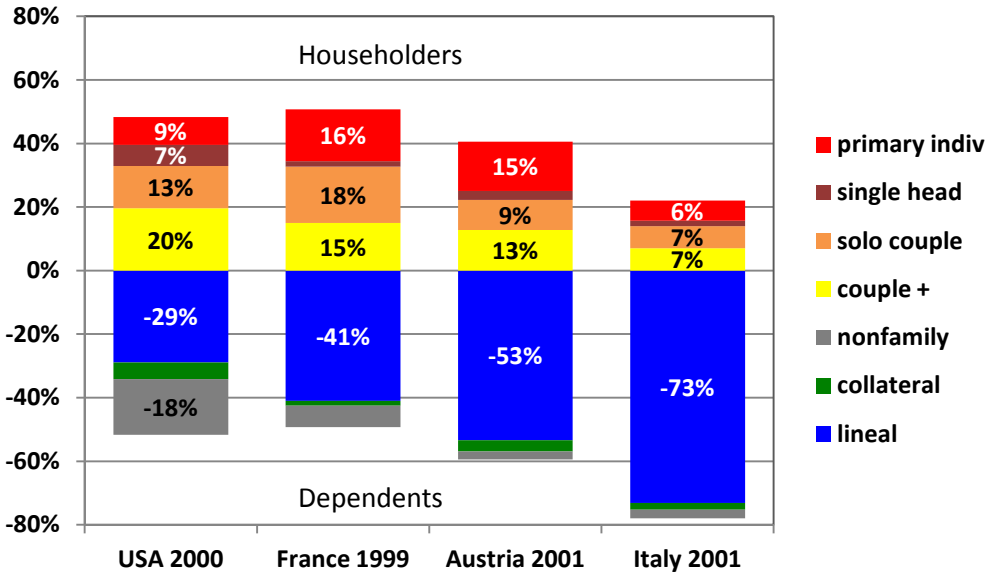
Figure 1b.



Source: original calculations from IPUMS-I samples of decennial censuses.

Figure 2a:

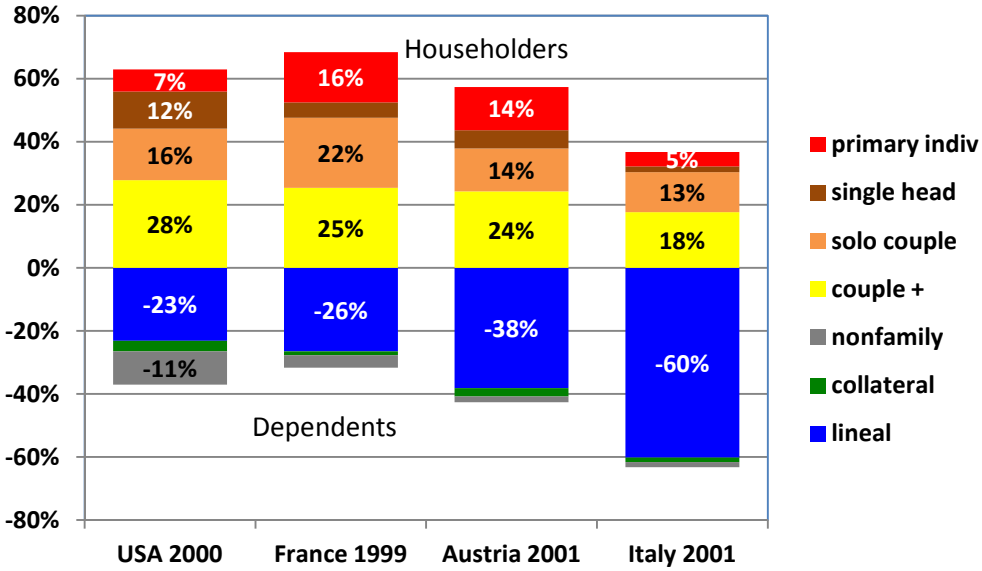
Household Living Arrangements at Ages 20-29 for Men in Selected Countries circa 2000



Source: original calculations from IPUMS-I samples of decennial censuses.

Figure 2b:

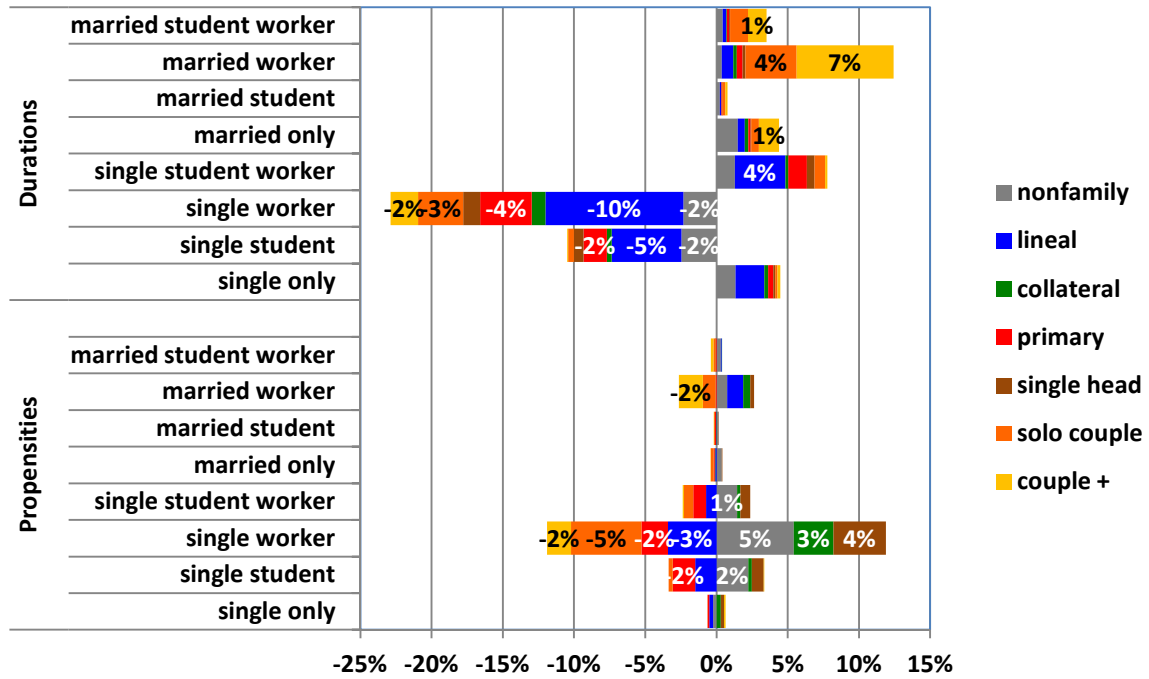
Household Living Arrangements at Ages 20-29 for Women in Selected Countries circa 2000



Source: original calculations from IPUMS-I samples of decennial censuses.

Figure 3a:

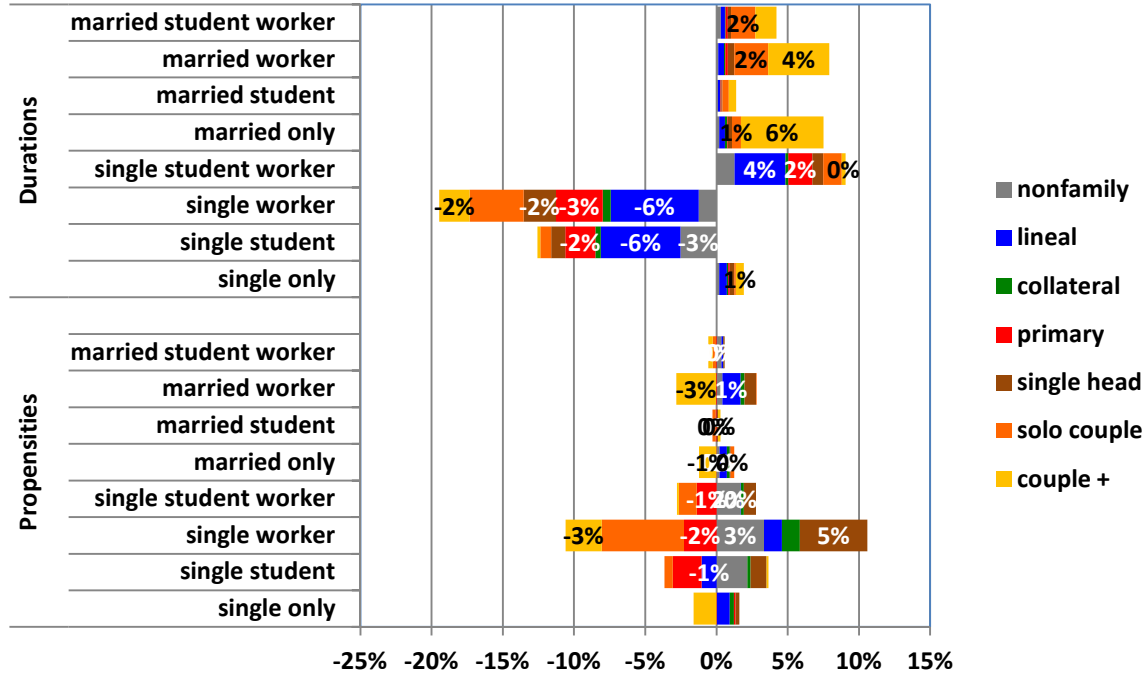
Decomposition of Household Status Differences, U.S. vs. French Men



Source: original component decomposition calculations from IPUMS-I samples of decennial censuses.

Figure 3b:

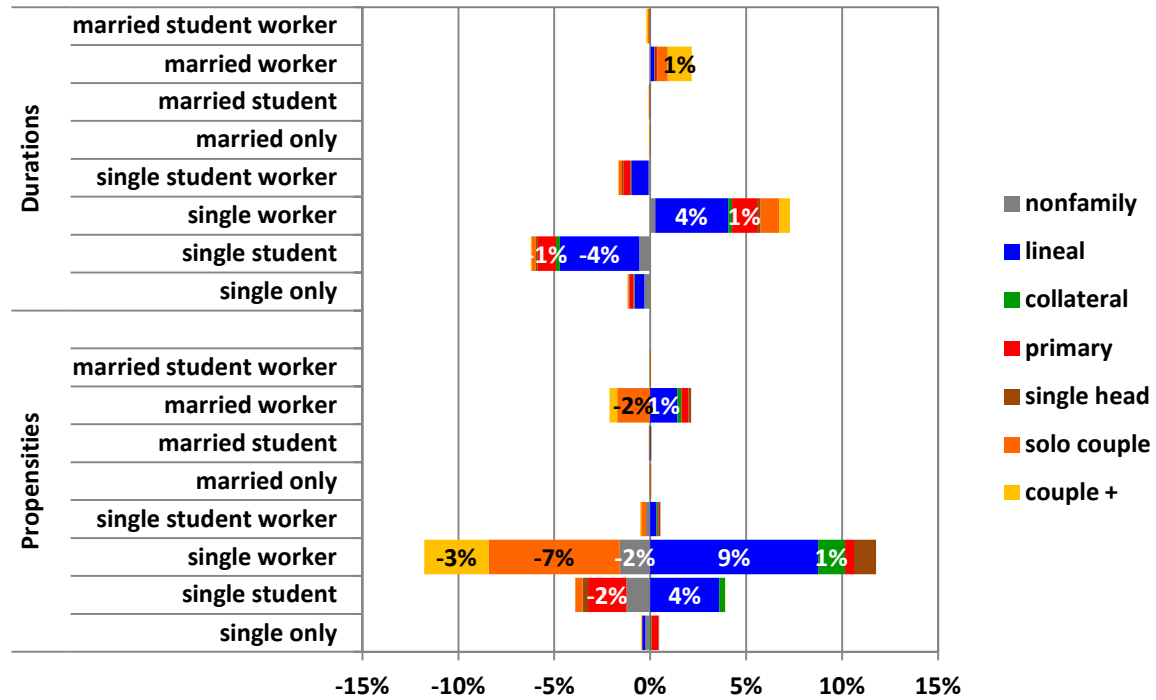
Decomposition of Household Status Differences, U.S. vs. French Women



Source: original component decomposition calculations from IPUMS-I samples of decennial censuses.

Figure 4a:

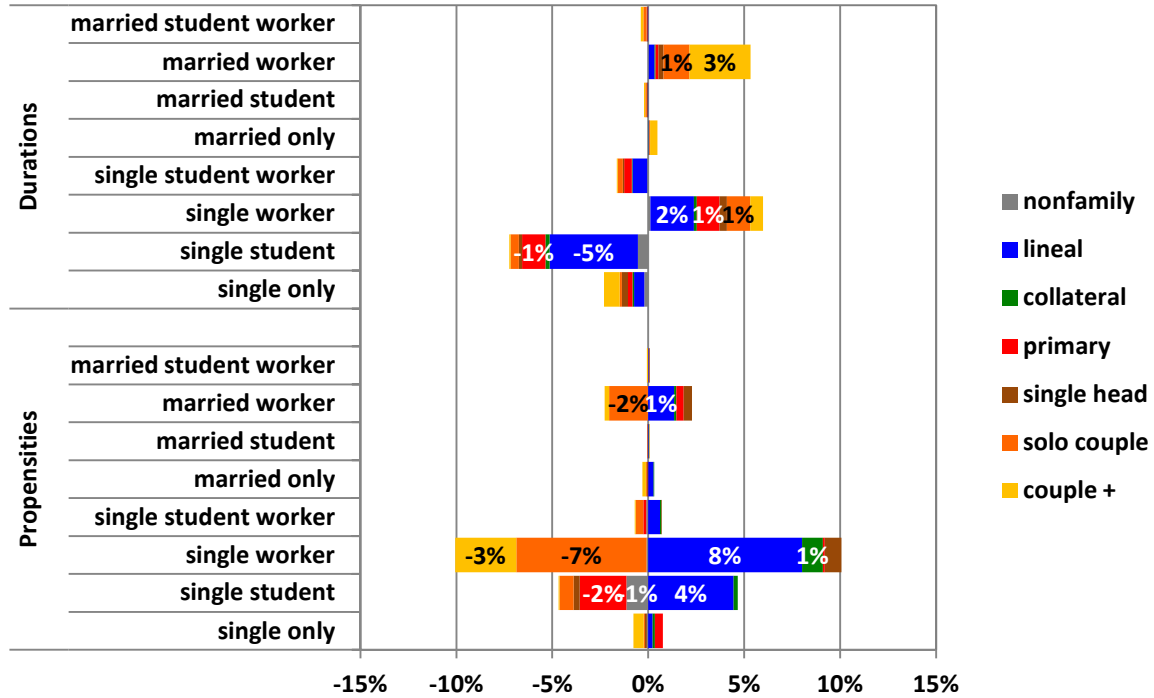
Decomposition of Household Status Differences, Austrian vs. French Men



Source: original component decomposition calculations from IPUMS-I samples of decennial censuses.

Figure 4b:

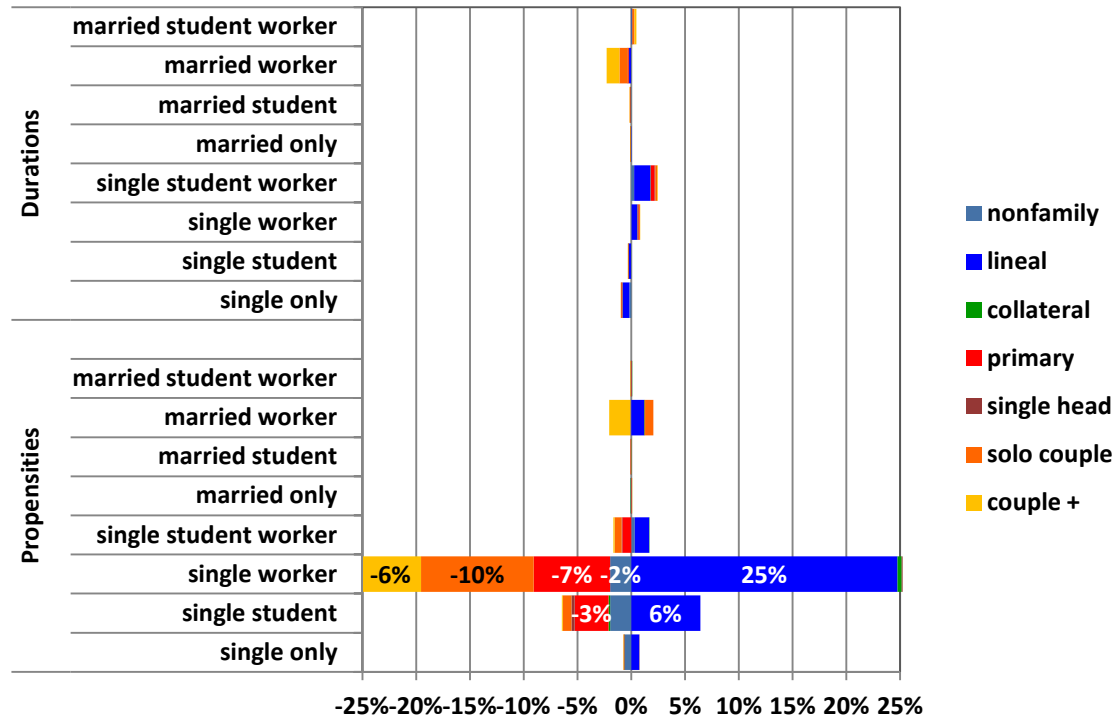
Decomposition of Household Status Differences, Austrian vs. French Women



Source: original component decomposition calculations from IPUMS-I samples of decennial censuses.

Figure 5a:

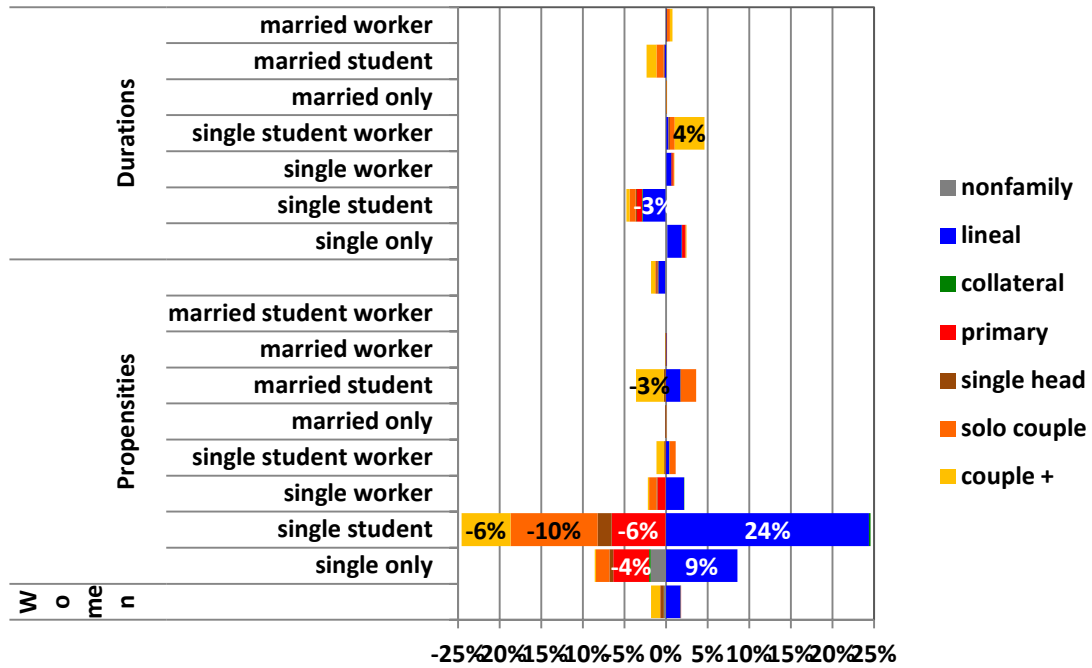
Decomposition of Living Arrangement Differences, Italian vs. French Men



Source: original component decomposition calculations from IPUMS-I samples of decennial censuses.

Figure 5b:

Decomposition of Living Arrangement Differences, Italian vs. French Women



Source: original component decomposition calculations from IPUMS-I samples of decennial censuses.