

ERC Advanced Grant 2021 Summary Research proposal

# Intergenerational Coresidence in Global Perspective: Dimensions of Change

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Radical transformations in the family are occurring across the globe. Decades of demographic, economic and cultural change have brought about great changes in family life and households. The CORESIDENCE project investigates a crucial, although unanticipated, facet of these transformations: the global rise of intergenerational coresidence (IgC) among young adults and their parents. This shift is occurring in a variety of demographic, economic and cultural contexts and appears to run counter to expectations that intergenerational coresidence would gradually decline with modernization and cultural change. The primary objective of the CORESIDENCE project is to determine the dimensions of variations in and the rise of intergenerational coresidence around the world and investigate how these trends are related to demographic, social, economic, and cultural/attitudinal factors. To achieve this goal, I will (i) use recent big microdata, which describe family change for more than half a billion people representing more than 120 countries worldwide; (ii) harmonize existing longitudinal data to examine pathways to intergenerational coresidence in six countries representing different norms and forms of intergenerational coresidence (India, Japan, Mexico, Senegal, Spain and the Netherlands). This study will be the largest comparative study of the family and of family change ever undertaken. CORESIDENCE will test social theory by analyzing, for the first time, variation in family forms on several geographic scales and time spans to understand the background factors that drive these changes and theorize about the role of the family in the twenty-first century.

## Overview

Transformational changes in family relationships are accelerating across the globe. This project focuses on a crucial, although unanticipated, facet of these transformations: **the**



**intergenerational coresidence (IgC) among adult children and their parents and its rise in recent years.** This shift is occurring in a variety of demographic, economic and cultural contexts and appears to run counter to expectations that intergenerational coresidence would gradually decline with modernization (Le Play, 1871; Parsons, 1949; Goode, 1963; Ruggles, 2007), or with the weakening of family ties as result of the increasing individualization of present- day societies (Van de Kaa, 1987; Lesthaeghe, 2010; Thomson, 2014), changes in gender roles (Esping- Andersen & Billari, 2015; Goldscheider et al., 2015), and economic uncertainty (Blossfeld et al., 2006; Perelli- Harris, 2011). Yet none of these theories anticipated a rise in intergenerational coresidence, especially on a global scale.

I argue that existing theories are unable to make sense satisfactorily of the present rise and variations in intergenerational coresidence, an issue that requires a thorough understanding of its three main background factors and their mutual interactions: *demographic opportunities* resulting from an increased life expectancy (never before have there been so many living generations in a single family) and declining fertility (e.g. fewer siblings) and the weakening of marriage (prolonged singlehood, deinstitutionalization of marriage, rise of separation and divorce); *material or structural factors* that make it possible for the adult generations to become residentially independent, such as the increase of wage labor, urbanization, and living conditions; and *socio- cultural factors regarding values and norms* that constitute the boundaries of relationships existing within the family in an era of individualization and increasing family complexity.

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This study will be the largest comparative study of the family and of family change ever undertaken. By leveraging these newly available data, **the CORESIDENCE project will produce comparative social theory by analyzing, for the first time, variation in family forms on several geographic, cultural and developmental scales, across**

**social groups, and over time spans from one to five decades, to make informed inferences about present and future changes in the family.** A truly global perspective on the family continues to be lacking at the present, mainly because most of the existing literature on the family is based on western high-income countries and, among those, on the ones possessing the best data collections. I argue that intergenerational coresidence is a key dimension for carrying out a global study of the family because it reflects the underlying demographic, economic and cultural conditions existing in any given society and it is an observable and measurable variable in most international censuses and surveys.

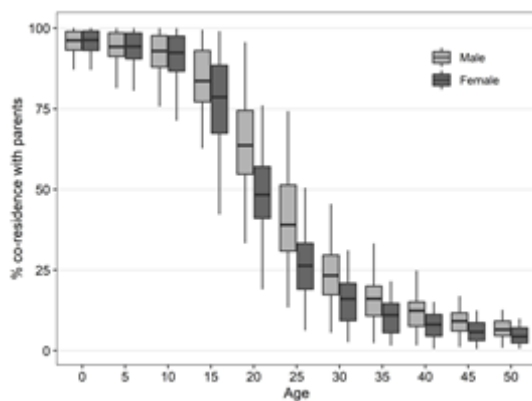
## Significance

**Levels and recent trends of IgC.** The importance of intergenerational coresidence varies widely by age, sex and society. Figure 1 summarizes the observed age patterns of female and male coresidence with at least one parent, using the most recent census data from 69 countries since year 2000, showing the median and interquartile range: longer colored bars indicate greater variation across countries. Evidence of a generalized pattern of growth in intergenerational co-residence, at least among young adults, in recent times is shown in Figure 2. This Figure summarizes decadal changes of intergenerational coresidence in 44 countries for males and females, mainly during the first decade of the XXI century. This is most evident among people 20-30 years of age and, at least in regions such as Europe and North America and in Latin America and the Caribbean, affects women as much or more than it does men. Rates of growth are fastest in Asia (Esteve and Liu, 2018), robust in Europe (Liu and Esteve, 2021) and Latin America (Esteve and Florez, 2018), and relatively slow in Africa (Esteve and Reher, 2021). These results can be complemented with country-specific evidence showing similar trends (Koksel, 2017; Fukuda, 2009), even in countries with historically low levels of coresidence, such as the UK, the Netherlands and the US, where ‘boomerang’ children are contributing to rising coresidence (Mykyta et al., 2012; Mitchell, 2017; Smits et al., 2010; Stone et al., 2011; Fry and Passel, 2014).

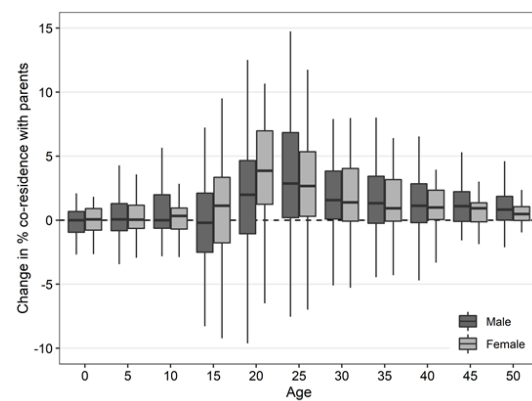
**While this literature presents convincing evidence in support of the global nature of increasing coresidence between adult children and their parents, relatively little has been said about its background factors or about its historical and more recent trends** (last decade). The results produced by these

preliminary findings open an array of important research issues, some of which are related to the long-term implications of changing coresidence for families and societies. Addressing these issues successfully will require a larger temporal and spatial perspective than the one observed in these studies, with extensions both toward the past and the future. The CORESIDENCE project aims to fill this gap.

**Figure 1.** Age patterns of female and male coresidence with at least one parent, using most recent available data from 69 countries since year 2000



**Figure 2.** Decadal change in levels of intergenerational coresidence in 44 countries for males and females, based on two most recent observations since year 2000



Source: Esteve and Reher, 2021. Analysis based on IPUMS international census microdata from 69 countries (Figure 1) and 44 countries (Figure 2) using most recent data points since year 2000. Changes have been standardized to absolute changes in one decade.

**Theorizing about intergenerational coresidence.** Earlier scholarship on intergenerational coresidence centered on its relationship with economic development. This theorizing began in the mid-nineteenth century when Frédéric Le Play (1871) argued that the rise of manufacturing and wage labor was bringing about a decline in intergenerational coresidence and the rise of unstable single-generation families. By the twentieth century, it was widely accepted that single-generation nuclear families had become dominant in the West because they were functionally adapted to the needs of industrial society (see Burgess 1916, Ogburn 1933, and Parsons 1949). Goode argued that **with economic development, the nuclear family would inevitably spread across the world** (Goode, 1963, p.6).

Little, if any, of this theorizing was informed by empirical analyses of large-scale trends. No representative statistics on long-term changes in family composition were available until the 1960s, when Peter Laslett compiled crude measures of family composition for 100 preindustrial English communities (Laslett, 1965, 1970). Laslett discovered that the percentage of households with extended kin was approximately the same in preindustrial England as in the mid-twentieth century. This finding led to the revisionist hypothesis that



**there was no long-term change in family composition** (Hareven, 1993) and that **the indelibility of family norms and values would ensure regional diversity for centuries to come** (Hajnal, 1965; Reher, 1998; Thornton, 2005). Ultimately, however, it was not the historical evidence, but the change that occurred after the 1960s that contradicted Goode's nuclearization hypothesis, which had failed to foresee the large-scale expansion of women's employment and the decline of marriage as the only way to embark on life as a couple. In contrast, the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) theory offered a more consistent framework for interpreting these changes (Van de Kaa, 1987; Lesthaeghe, 2010, 2014), correctly highlighting: (i) the "unfolding of very different patterns of partnership formation, (ii) the shift in value orientations in many spheres (ethics, politics, sex relations, education, etc.) which emerged as the key driving forces in childbearing decisions, and (iii) the emergence of subreplacement fertility as a structural and lasting feature" (Lesthaeghe 2014, p.18115).

Yet neither the modernization nor the SDT theories anticipated a rise in intergenerational coresidence. From different perspectives, both theories predicted a loosening of family control and the attenuation of patriarchal authority: changes which have occurred in many countries.

***The need for the re-conceptualization of IgC in the 21<sup>st</sup> century.*** The modern rise of intergenerational coresidence requires the conceptualization of a new framework. This framework will integrate ***three main groups of determinants***:

1) **Demographic opportunities**. Demography is crucial for understanding the extent to which fertility and mortality shape the opportunities for intergenerational coresidence across societies, and the extent to which the realization of these opportunities adheres to specific family norms (e.g. Ruggles, 1987; Hammel et al., 1990; Murphy, 2004, 2011; Smith and Oeppen, 1993; Zagheni and Zannella, 2013). Gains in life expectancy expand opportunities for living with one's parents (Kohler et al., 2002; Oeppen and Vaupel, 2002) and increases the overlap between generations. Conversely, as fertility declines and families become smaller (Bongaarts, 2001; Bongaarts & Zimmer, 2002), the number of siblings decreases. Demographic change is expanding opportunities for intergenerational coresidence from the perspective of young adult sons and daughters (whose parents will live longer) and, as the number of children declines, there is less competition for coresidence among siblings, meaning that decreasing household size may bring with it less pressure to leave the family home. The rise of diverse family forms and delayed partnership formation and childbearing described by theoretical frameworks such as the 'Second Demographic Transition' or the 'Gender Revolution' (Goldscheider et al. 2015; Lesthaeghe, 2010;

Therborn, 2004) have additional implications for intergenerational coresidence. Young men and women are delaying the transition to marriage and childbearing and extending pre-marital coresidence with their parents (Billari et al., 2001). When young adults remain unmarried for a longer period of time, they are more likely to remain in or return to their parental home (Smits et al, 2010; Stone et al. 2011). Delays in marriage and childbearing are potentially increasing the potential for intergenerational coresidence together with the rise in divorce and separation among both the young adult and older generations. However, I do not expect a strong and universal relationship between union formation dynamics and coresidence, nor a direct relationship between marriage and independent living. This relationship will be context-dependent and influenced by material and socio-cultural factors, as I present next.

2) Material constraints. CORESIDENCE will explore the relationship between material constraints and intergenerational coresidence both at the macro and micro level. At the macro level, we will consider three sets of conditions: employment, mass education, urbanization, and development. At the micro level, we will focus on education, employment status and origin (as a control variable for migrant populations). Material constraints (i.e. wages, unemployment, house prices) and public transfers and policies affecting young and elderly people's independent living (e.g. unemployment benefits or pensions) potentially influence patterns and trends in intergenerational coresidence (Liu and Easthope, 2017; Ruggles 2008; United Nations, 2005; Costa, 1999; McGarry and Schoeni, 2000; Chen et al., 2017). Deindustrialization, the decline of the working- class family, the scarcity of rewarding jobs, and cuts in the welfare state may have favored a rise in coresidence across developed countries (Cherlin, 2004, 2014; Furstenberg, 2010; Beck, 2009). By contrast, in the booming economies of the developing world, the fact that economic growth has not been accompanied by an expanded welfare state in terms of education, health, pensions, social policy and workers' rights (Cherlin, 2012) would have paved the way for more coresidence. Across these contexts, coresidence may act as a mechanism of protection and intergenerational solidarity in times of rapid economic change. The rise of intergenerational coresidence might be a response to the economic uncertainty and risks of globalization, which translates into increasing difficulty getting into the labor force. These factors have laid the groundwork for intergenerational coresidence, in which the family recovers the functions of a refuge, not only among disadvantaged but also among advantaged socioeconomic groups. To explore differences across social groups, CORESIDENCE will investigate variations in intergenerational coresidence in time and by educational attainment and employment status.

3) Socio-cultural factors. Beyond material constraints, some societies may foster intergenerational coresidence more than others. A plethora of historical and anthropological literature on family, marriage and kinship has documented the variety of norms that shape the structure of coresidence and obligations of sons and daughters to their parents (e.g. Goody, 1961; Klapisch-Zuber et al., 1996; Todd, 1985; Bonvalet, 2003). Over recent decades, however, parental control over children has waned in favor of more democratic and open relationships (Cherlin 2014; Therborn, 2004; Arnett, 2000, 2012). Economic and ideological changes have reinforced the decline of the patriarchal family (Cherlin 2012; Ruggles, 2007; Furstenberg, 2010), mainly in the West, but in many other regions of the World as well (Therborn, 2004; Jones, 2007; Esteve et al. 2012a). Paradoxically, the rise in intergenerational coresidence is appearing in a context of declining control of the traditional family. At least in high-income countries, intergenerational coresidence might be increasing on the basis of a system of values which is increasingly making coresidence compatible with autonomy and the individual development of young people. We will investigate how value systems and normative change are associated with levels and trends of intergenerational coresidence across countries. Finally, if coresidence based on traditional structures had unequal implications for women and men, modern coresidence should be more symmetrical, though we know that gender intersects with social class, age, and other factors, in variable ways.

To sum up, in the West and in more industrialized countries including some urban areas of the less developed world, the stalled social mobility among younger generations and increases in divorce and singlehood among both family generations, might favor coresidence, while less traditional and patriarchal intergenerational relations can soften the negative effects of coresidence for the young adults. In other parts of the world, coresidence might mainly reflect expanding demographic opportunities. The overall decline of fertility around the world coupled with important improvements in adult life expectancy are likely to explain a substantial part of increases in intergenerational coresidence in recent years. The relative effect, however, is not known and constitutes an important goal and challenge for this project.

## **Research Objectives and specific aims**

**CORESIDENCE's primary objective is to determine the dimensions of the rise in intergenerational coresidence between adult children and their parents around the world and investigate how these changes are related to**



**demographic, economic, and socio-cultural shifts.** The specific aims of the CORESIDENCE project and their respective tasks are described in more detail below.

***Specific Aim 1. Charting global patterns and trends in IgC.*** To offer a systematic description of the wide variety of patterns of intergenerational coresidence. We will examine trends and growth of intergenerational coresidence across countries, regions, by gender and education, based on newly available global-scale big microdata. This entails: (1) building a cross-national database of household-level census and survey microdata; (2) constructing indicators of coresidence at the individual level (by age, gender and educational level), based on the kinship relations among members of the household; (3) documenting the patterns and evolution of the levels of coresidence among countries subdivided into subnational regions; (4) analyzing the family context of coresidence, taking into account union status, the presence of offspring, siblings, relatives and other people in the household.

***Specific Aim 2. Demographic, material and socio-cultural correlates of IgC.*** To examine, at the global scale, the relationship between levels of coresidence and their determinants and how these change over time. This goal includes: (1) standardizing the levels of coresidence by the exogenous demographic conditions of mortality and fertility in each country and time; (2) exploring the relationship between standardized levels of coresidence and other socioeconomic and demographic variables like educational attainment, union formation, migration, occupational status, or sector of employment; (3) analyzing the relationship between standardized levels of coresidence and societal values and beliefs.

***Specific Aim 3. Pathways to IgC.*** To explore intergenerational coresidence across different contexts from a life-course perspective depending on our ability to identify the factors that promote the prolongation (or resumption of) coresidence and those that precipitate its end. This implies checking the validity of the cross-sectional approaches with data that allow for a proper control of living kin availability and pathways to coresidence. This means (1) harmonizing longitudinal and retrospective surveys which make it possible to (re)construct the residential histories of individuals with their parents and knowing the availability of living parents/offspring; (2) identifying the different pathways to intergenerational coresidence by gender and social groups and studying the impact of social and demographic factors (e.g. having a job/partner/child) on the observed levels of coresidence for the six selected countries.



## Methodology

This is a choral project in its diversity of focuses, data and methods. For clarity, I present the methods organized by specific aims:

### ***Specific Aims 1 and 2. Global trends and correlates of IgC***

The analysis will mainly rely on nationally-representative data from a vast new archive of anonymized census microdata made available by the Minnesota Population Center (MPC), in addition to complementary use of Demographic Health Surveys (DHS), Eurostat Labor Force Surveys (EU-LFS), and country-specific surveys or censuses not present in these archives. The complete CORESIDENCE database will amount to over 120 countries and more than a billion individual-level observations, statistically representing over 95% of the world's population. For data on values, we will use data from the World Value Surveys, the Latin *Barómetros*, and the European Value Surveys. The analysis of these data will require the following tasks:

Creating individual measures of intergenerational coresidence. The CORESIDENCE database will permit the use of individual data rather than using the household as the unit of analysis. The basis of this approach is the standardization of family relationship codes and the construction of position (pointer) variables for all individuals in a household (Sobek & Kennedy, 2009). These are primarily constructed from the standard question on relationship to the head. The harmonized IPUMS-I and LFS datasets include pointer variables indicating father, mother, spouse/partner and own children positions in the household. DHS data require additional programming to create reliable pointer variables. We will focus on parental and filial relationships but other type of relationships will be coded as well (i.e. spouse, siblings, non-primary kin, others) as they will be used as control variables. Furthermore, individual data will allow for the classification of each individual according to age, sex, union status, educational attainment, economic activity, and migration status, among other dimensions.

Standardizing coresidence levels by demographic conditions. One of the main methodological challenges of this project is to standardize the levels of coresidence by demographic conditions of mortality and fertility, which determine the range between the maximum and minimum levels of coresidence. The lack of standardization may distort our interpretation of crude measures of coresidence. Except for DHS datasets, which include information on parental survivorship, the census and other survey data we shall use for the global analysis do not provide information about kin availability. Therefore, it has to be estimated. We will rely on demographic simulation to compute distributions of living parents and adult children by age of the individuals and their kin (Hammel et al, 1990;

Smith & Oeppen, 1993; Devolder, 2002; Le Bras, 1982). These distributions will then be used to estimate parental availability at the aggregate level, which will be compared with crude measures of intergenerational coresidence.

Measuring material constraints. All samples allow identification of gender, educational attainment and working conditions at the individual level. The latter two will require some degree of standardization across countries and they have different forms of and approaches to capturing these dimensions. The microdata will also provide the basis for the macro-level indicators that will be regressed against levels of intergenerational coresidence. These include macro-level indicators of educational attainment, material needs, and working conditions. These indicators will be complemented with other macro-level indicators such as the human development index and its components. Obtaining these indicators will be a major task of this project.

Measuring socio-cultural / ideational factors. With respect to socio-cultural factors, CORESIDENCE will collect data from various social and value surveys (e.g. WVS, EVS, ESS, Latin Barometer). Value surveys will be mainly used to generate country level indicators to be included in general regression models as contextual variables. We will rely on factor and latent class analysis to construct synthetic indicators capturing different dimensions of cross cultural variation. Following Inglehart and Welzel (2005), value indicators will revolve around two major dimensions: traditional values versus secular-rational values and survival values versus self-expression values. Both secular-rational values and self-expression values play a central role in theories of the second demographic transition and changes in family behavior.

A multilevel approach. The combination of individual variables and contextual variables will ultimately lead to multilevel multivariate regression models. Multilevel or random effects models are able to exploit hierarchically arranged data to differentiate the contextual effects from the background effects for individuals (Goldstein, 1995; Hox, 2002; Luke, 2004). The dependent variable will be if ego coresides with parents or not. Once contextual and individual measures are constructed, the composite dataset will consist of individuals nested within regions nested within countries for each simple year with a list of variables distributed at the various levels.

### ***Specific Aim 3. Pathways to IgC***

To determine pathways to intergenerational coresidence and to validate and inform decisions made in the cross-sectional analysis, we have identified a number of surveys in the six countries chosen for this analysis: the 2004-05 and 2011-12 Indian Human

Development Survey; the 2007-11 Japanese Life Course Panel Surveys and the 2000-10 National Family Research of Japan studies; the 1998 and 2011 Mexican *Encuesta Demográfica Retrospectiva* (EDER); the rich collection of Senegalese census and Demographic Health Survey and, potentially, three rural Demographic Surveillance Sites; the Spanish 1991 *Encuesta Sociodemográfica* and the 2018 *Encuesta de fecundidad*; and the 2002-14 Dutch Kinship Panel Study. We will use event history analysis to examine coresidence with parents and its correlation with other educational, work, and family transitions. Given the different structure of the data, we will examine countries separately but apply similar models to facilitate comparisons. The original data files will be framed in a multilevel person-years structure.

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