

Historical-sociological research SWEDEN

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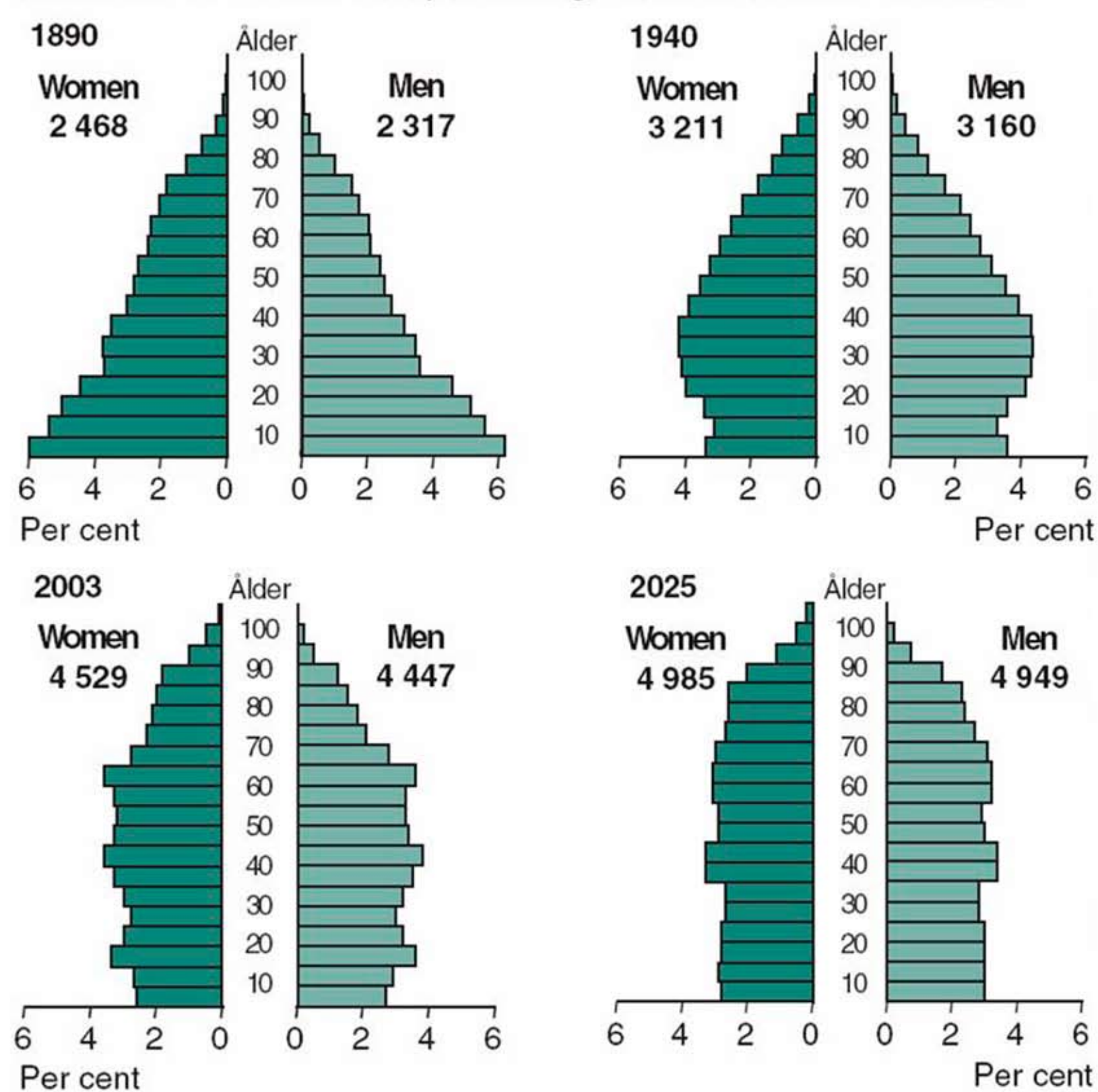
The Swedish KASS paradoxes

The relation between Swedish kinship and social services contains many seeming paradoxes. First is the paradox of kinship awareness. Swedes live in small households and the average household size is one of the lowest in Europe, and there are few extended households. However, Swedes have considerable kinship awareness and socialize greatly with a selected group of relatives. The second paradox is that the Swedish social and welfare services

are well established and give broad coverage. Swedish families rely on the public services for childcare and old age care. Pensions, illness insurance, unemployment insurance, student loans are on a level designed to relieve major burdens of support to younger and older generations. However, Swedish families give a large amount of care for the elderly and disabled kin, even if the kinsman cared for lives in a separate household. 22 percent of Swedes between 16 and 89 years of age give some sort of care to a relative - 5 percent give to a relative living in the same household and 18 percent give care to kin living in another household. Because these are average figures, the percentages of those who give substantial care at some time in their lifecycle should be very much greater. A third paradox is that women are very present on the Swedish labor market and there are very few "housewives". Close to 80 percent of adult women are within the labor market. However, a great amount of care (estimated at twice the amount given by public sources), including such that is termed "heavy", is supplied by working women.

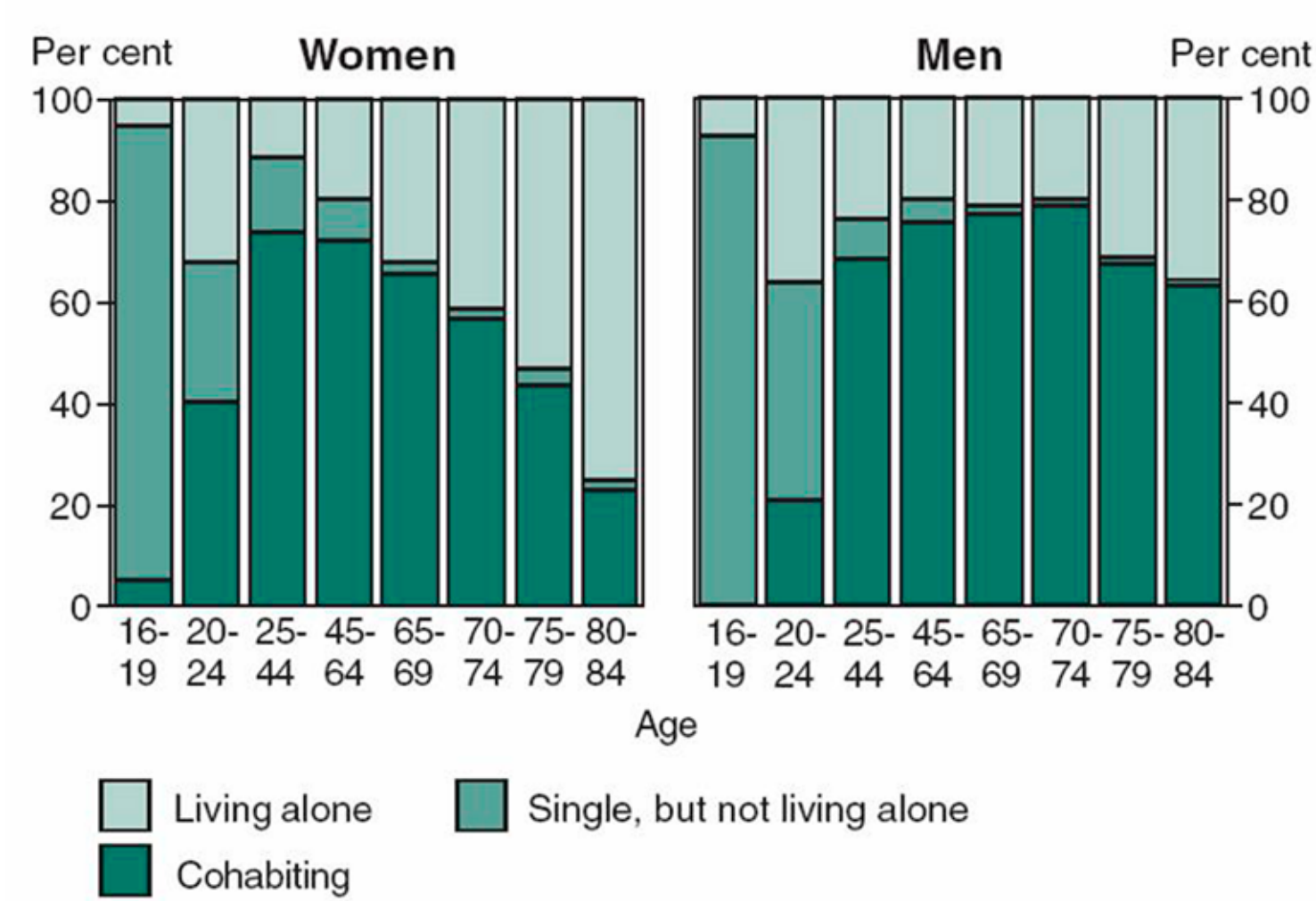
Population by age 1890, 1940, 2003 and projection for the year 2025

Numbers in 1 000's and percentage of total women and men



Cohabiting, single, and living alone by age 2002

Proportion (%) in age group



Source: Survey of Living Conditions, SCB

Agrarian Roots

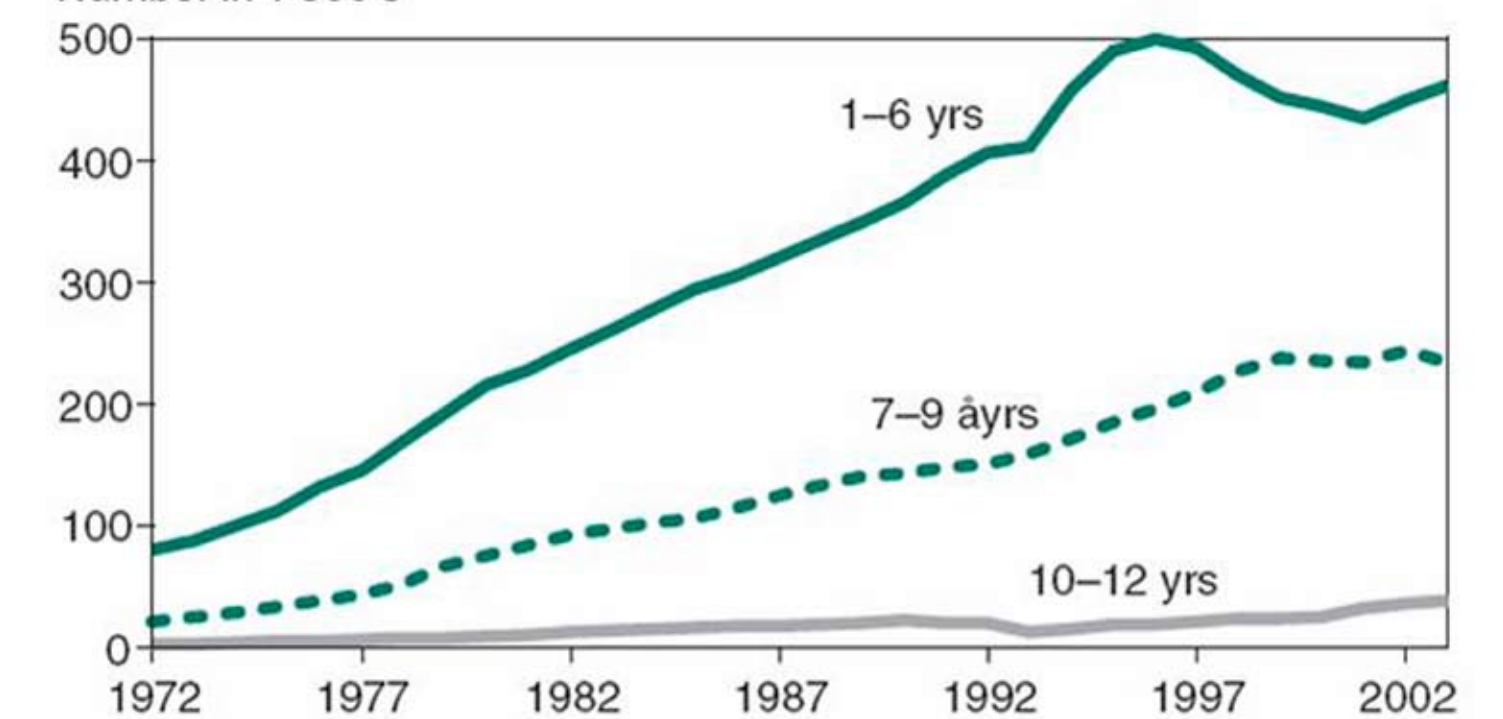
The Swedish variant of the stem family was a kin group of three or more generations living in the same farmyard, but with a separate cottage for the elderly generation. Thus they would appear to be separate households, but they had a common economic base, comprised a common group for work tasks and were the primary group for socialization, childcare, care in illness, and so on. The generations were separate for everyday behavior such as cleaning, cooking, sleeping. The material grounds for the separate dwelling in the same farmyard was the easy availability of timber for building which meant that Swedish farms normally had many separate buildings for storage, barns, sheds for tools, and sometimes separate quarters for servants. In some regions farms even had separate dwellings for winter and summer living. It was usual that teenage children had their sleeping places in barns or storage houses, at least during the warmer seasons. Household size, defined as the number of persons who sleep behind the same door and under the same roof, varied over the seasons. This historical factor may explain why Swedes so easily give care to kin living in other households and why young people set up their own households at an early age and before marriage.

Family-Friendly Social Policy

Swedish social policy before World War II was similar to that of many other countries and had a professional social worker corps who preferred institutions and the removal of "deviant" or problematic persons from their families. After the war Swedish public opinion rejected institutionalization and it was phased out for old age care, care for youth, mental illness, and orphanages. Care was instead to be given in the home with a tacit division of labor between public services and the family. This trend has continued into the 21st century. The major exception to de-institutionalization is daycare for children, which has expanded greatly since the 1970s. The "family-friendly" approach is a by-product of "women-friendly" state measures that support female workers. The tacit division of labor between social services and families to give care to elder relatives and continue working. Amelioration of the situation of the next-of-kin (*anhöriga*) caring for relatives is a major political issue

Children registered in pre-schools, after-school centres and family day care 1972-2003

Number in 1 000's



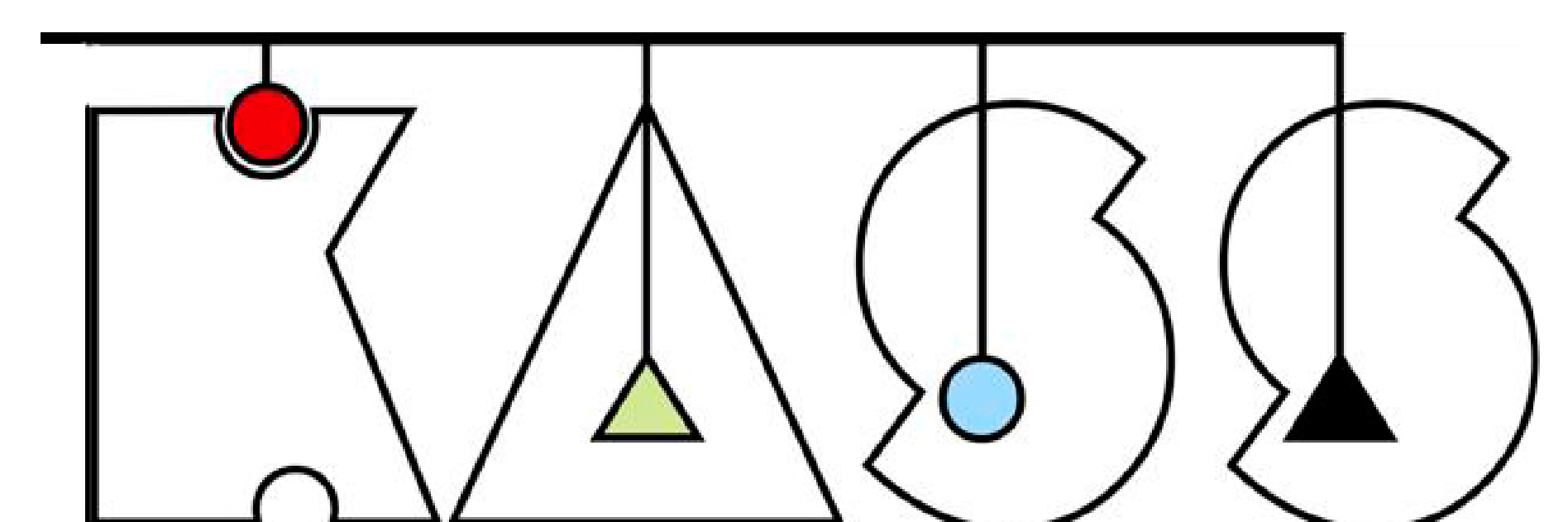
Children enrolled only in part-time group/pre-school class are not included. Parents' cooperatives and other pre-schools receiving support from municipalities are included. From 1998, children aged 6 are usually in after school centres.

Cultural Roots

The Swedish language preserves until today specific kinship terms that have disappeared in many other European languages. This maintains kin awareness in everyday speaking. It gives specific names for various relations. Thus there are four designations for grandparents: *mormor* (mother's mother), *farmor* (father's mother), *morfar* (mother's father), *farfar* (father's father). There are two designations for aunt: *moster* (mother's sister) and *faster* (father's sister) and uncles are distinguished as *farbror* (father's brother) and *morbror* (mother's brother). Grandchildren are divided into *dotterdotter* (daughter's daughter), *sondotter* (son's daughter), *dotterson* (daughter's son) and *sonson* (son's son). Extensions to further generations like *mormorsmor* or *farmorsfar* are completely possible, just as *sonsonsson*, etc. Cousins are divided into *syslingar* (originally sister children) and *bryllingar* (originally brother children). The survival of the specific terminology indicates that kinship awareness is a living part of society despite the decline in the number of functions.

Selective Kinship

The theoretical size of Swedish kinship networks is as large as demography will permit. The average length of life is 82 for women and 78 years for men. This is a rise of about 25 years since the end of the 1800s and means that many more persons are becoming great grandparents thus increasing the living generational depth of kin groups. The growing generational depth forms the background to the large place genealogy has begun to play in media and society. However, Swedes are very selective in their choice of kin, and acknowledge and socialize intensively with only a chosen few.



Kinship And Social Security

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