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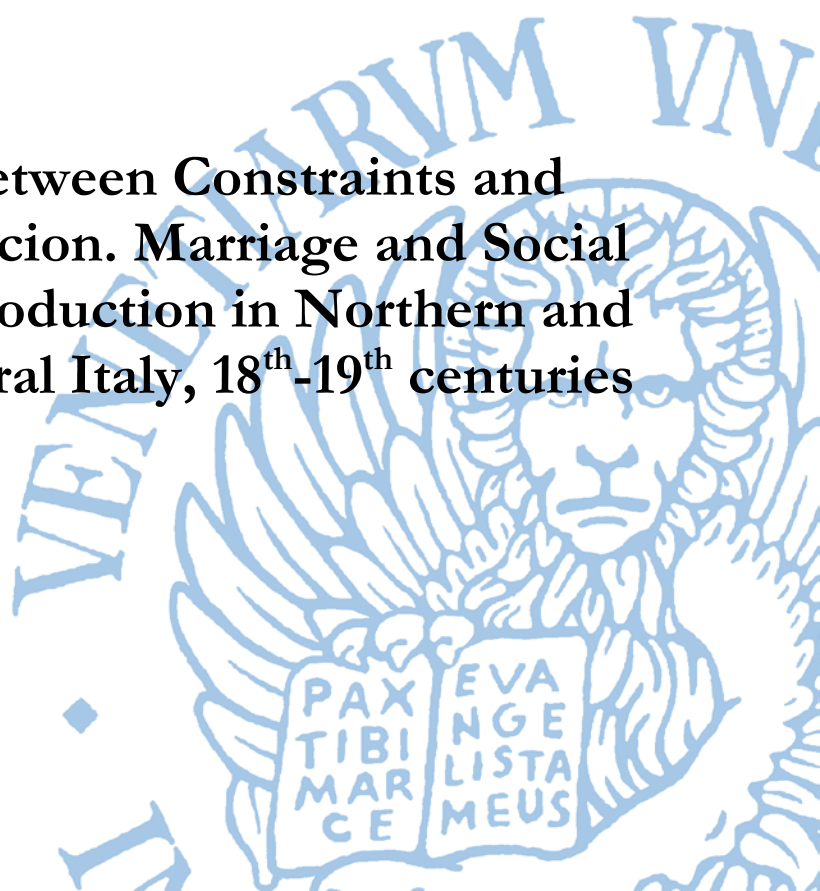
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Between Constraints and Coercion. Marriage and Social Reproduction in Northern and Central Italy, 18th-19th centuries.

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Abstract

In this paper we review the main theories of household and marriage systems, highlighting their inability to account for the astonishing variety of family and marriage patterns that characterized modern Italy. We propose a new interpretative framework, where social reproduction is given pride of place as the main factor shaping marital behavior and household formation in the past. We test our theory analyzing five populations in northern and central Italy, characterized by different ecological, economic, and social conditions. We use an event history analysis approach to model the timing of marriage in the populations under study. The results confirm that coercion mattered much more than Malthusian economic constraints. We conclude suggesting a more general application of our approach to the study of marital behavior, family formation, and residential patterns in the past.

Keywords: marriage; social reproduction; household and marriage systems; Italy

JEL Codes: J12; N33; C14

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«Lorsqu'on veut juger de l'égalité entre les diverses classes d'un peuple, il faut toujours arriver à demander comment se font les mariages. C'est le fond de la chose. Une égalité, résultat de la nécessité, de la courtoisie, de la politique, peut exister en apparence et tromper l'œil. Mais lorsqu'on vient à vouloir mettre cette égalité en pratique pour l'union des familles, alors on met le doigt sur la blessure».

(A. De Tocqueville, *Voyage en Amérique*, V, *Œuvres complètes*, Paris 1957)

1. Introduction: what interpretative framework for the Italian conundrum?

In the clear-cut dichotomy between East and West established by John Hajnal in his two celebrated essays on marriage and family systems (1965, 1982), the position of Southern Europe represented a source of embarrassment and disturbance. Correspondingly, students of South European family have been at odds confronting with such an authoritative model that seemed to fit so badly with their data. Indeed, one would not give up the plain elegance and linear functioning of the Hajnal model light-heartedly.¹

In his 1965 essay Hajnal admitted that one would probably find significant divergences from the European pattern of late marriage and high celibacy as long as one proceeded not only “eastward but on the southern edge of Europe as well” (Hajnal 1965: 103). In 1982 Hajnal stressed the surprising similarity of the joint household formation system of fifteenth-century Tuscany with that characterizing contemporary India and China. While acknowledging that household formation systems in Southern Europe might diverge remarkably from the Northwest European rules, Hajnal argued that they remained “probably much more similar to the Northwest European systems than were the joint household systems.” Including Southern Europe in the European marriage pattern would therefore require some modifications in the distinctiveness of Northwest European household formation system (Hajnal 1982: 476). The works of Richard Smith and Peter Laslett seemed to confirm Hajnal’s hypotheses about Southern Europe. Inspired by the findings from the 1427 Tuscan *catasto* as well as by current anthropological and sociological literature, Smith (1981) and Laslett (1983a) outlined a peculiar “Mediterranean model” of marriage and family organization characterizing large areas of Southern Europe, and surviving well into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, rooted in the widespread diffusion of the sharecropping system and in cultural features typical of the Mediterranean society.

¹ We rely here on Viazzo’s (2005) insightful reappraisal of the scholarly debate on the Hajnal hypothesis and the family in Southern Europe.

These articles by influential scholars of the Cambridge Group gave rise to a huge wave of studies on family systems in Southern Europe, aiming at testing the validity and extension of the Mediterranean model. The outcome was a generalized rebuttal of both the Mediterranean and the northwestern models. It soon emerged that a striking variability and combinations of family patterns at the regional and sub-regional levels characterized Southern Europe, which made talking about a common model for Southern Europe hardly meaningful (Reher 1991). Furthermore the basic mechanisms interconnecting age at marriage, neolocality, and life-cycle service lost most of the stringent necessity postulated by Hajnal: for instance, in many places the prevalence of neolocal households went hand in hand with early marriage; elsewhere, joint families were associated with late marriage and, surprisingly enough, with the sporadic presence of servants. To make things more disconcerting, demographic analyses suggested that, notwithstanding the peculiarity of its marriage patterns, the population growth in Italy was largely regulated through the nuptiality valve (Breschi et al. 1994; Breschi 1990), not differently from Northwest Europe, though possibly not exactly in the Malthusian way described by Wrigley and Schofield (1993; Schofield 2000). Overall, after two decades of “industrious research” by students of family and marriage in Southern Europe to assess the Hajnal hypothesis, “the dominant tendency has been to refute it rule by rule” (Viazzo 2005: 162). Kertzer’s conclusions were even more drastic: it is “the whole enterprise of branding major areas of Europe as having a particular type of household system [which] is misleading”. Rather than restricting themselves to a few parameters in order to build very broad taxonomies, family historians should develop a more sophisticated approach “focusing in the interplay of political economy, demography, and culture” (Kertzer 1991a: 156-157).

Such an awareness of the complexity of factors affecting marital behavior and family patterns seemed particularly compelling in the Italian case. Introducing his 1984 book, Kertzer himself declared that “no generalization regarding family life and co-residence in Europe can be made until the Italian case is well understood” (Kertzer 1984: 8). Seven years later he found however that “modern Italy has become a burial ground for many of the most ambitious, and well-known, theories of household and marriage systems proposed by historians, sociologists, and demographers”: quite a discouraging statement to be found in the introduction to a book on the history of Italian family (Kertzer 1991b: 247). Notwithstanding the quantity and quality of the research work carried out in the latest years, thus far no acceptable theory providing a general clue to understanding household and marriage systems in Italy seems at hand’s reach; rather, the target itself seems to have been abandoned as impossible or scarcely meaningful.

Before the studies of the Cambridge Group imposed a neo-Malthusian view as the standard paradigm in the history of the European family, a different perspective inspired the work of

ethnographers and anthropologists on family structures and marriage systems in Southern Europe. Since the late 1950s, the family of Southern Italy was the battlefield of scholars like Edward Banfield, John Davis, Sydel Silverman, William Douglass, whose starting point was the relevance of family ties and values in shaping the behavior of individuals. Banfield's much controversial description of South Italy as pervaded by an "amoral familism", the vicious propensity to put family interests above any other ethical principle, expresses vividly the kind of questions moving the scholarly debate at the time. Though with contrasting conclusions, all analyses relied on marriage patterns and living arrangements to draw the boundaries between a civilized northern and central Italy and a backward society located in the "Deep South" and permeated by "non-Western cultures".²

On a much broader scope, but still with the purpose of drawing boundaries between different cultures, David Reher (1998) similarly considered the strength of family ties as a major feature distinguishing northern and southern Europe. Reher traced a 'horizontal' line crossing France somewhere in the center, and separating Northwest Europe (and North America as well) from South and Mediterranean Europe. The northern countries are characterized by weak family ties: here individual independence is much more valued than group solidarity; intergenerational links between parents and children are severed early and definitively; care for the weakest members is left to public welfare institutions. Contrastingly, in South-Mediterranean Europe family interests always come before individual aspirations; family solidarity is the main source of mutual support, while anything pertaining to the State is considered with defiance and suspicion – an attenuated version of the amoral familism; kin ties are effective throughout the whole lifetime of an individual, maintaining an uninterrupted link between generations. Marriage patterns and living arrangements reflect such contrasting attitudes, but they cannot be considered their main determinant. According to Reher (p. 210), 'these differences seem to have little to do with the classical types of familial organization existing in Europe'. Their origins should be sought in the opposite influences of the German world and the late Roman civilization, a cultural disparity that was strengthened and deepened by the spread of the Reformation in the sixteenth century.

Alongside the neo-Malthusian and anthropologic frameworks, a third interpretative perspective on nuptiality and family systems must be finally mentioned, which gives pride of place to political and social considerations over economic and cultural constraints. In 1980, Ron Lesthaeghe criticized Wrigley's idea that a Smithian "invisible hand" regulated the balance between population and resources through some mechanism of "unconscious rationality" (Wrigley 1978). He argued that in pre-transitional societies such as historic Western Europe and contemporary sub-Saharan Africa the elites were primarily concerned with the continuity of wealth distribution and

² See Viazzo 2005: 137-141 for a review. On the ideological roots of the "Italian vices" see Patriarca 2010.

the perpetuation of social disparities, and that these were carried out through a functional linkage between “appropriation of resources, patterns of social control, risk devolution, and demographic checks” (Lesthaeghe 1980: 527). In Africa the pillars of male gerontocratic control over the younger generations were polygyny, postpartum taboo, and the pre-eminence of kinship groups over conjugal units. In Europe, it was the “nuptiality valve” which was instrumental to the enforcement of demographic and social homeostasis by the ruling classes, securing them from a potentially disruptive proliferation of the poor. Lesthaeghe did not suggest how the European elites succeeded in enforcing nuptiality restrictions to the poor. He made clear however that the nuptiality check was “directly beneficial for parents and that parents, more than the community, controlled the maintenance of the nuptiality check” (Lesthaeghe 1980: 533). However such a shift from the societal level (social control) to the family level (parental control) leaves a gap where one might be tempted to see again an “invisible hand” at work, albeit more of a Marxian than of a Smithian kind: indeed, even assuming that poor parents were willing to enforce a nuptiality check on their children, it was the rich who would most enjoy the social benefits deriving from such an (unconscious) courtesy.

In a rather similar vein, Arthur Wolf and colleagues³ proposed recently a new interpretative framework of the East-West divide, arguing that parental authority was the main organizing principle distinguishing family patterns. In countries like China and Russia, dominated by a “State patriarchy” (i.e. a patriarchy supported by the State), parents had the right to exploit their children “not just as children but for all their natural lives”: hence the predominance of joint households and early and universal marriage, which maximized the human capital at the head’s disposition. On the contrary, a “property patriarchy” (i.e. a form of patriarchy based on property control) characterized western countries, and parents could exploit their children only as long as they remained unmarried: hence the adoption of late and sporadic marriage, which prolonged parental control over their children. The diffusion of life-cycle service was due to the fact that in the West the State was more reliable for the enforcement of labor contracts than for supporting parental authority. For western parents, it was easier to deal with servants than with their own children (Engelen and Wolf 2005: 28-29). In Wolf’s view, this stress on the two different forms of parental authority not only confirms Hajnal’s East-West cleavage, but provides a sounder explanation for it, leading “away from the Malthusian concern with the balance between population and resources to a more Marxian concern with forms of domination” (Chuang and Wolf 2005: 286). It also keeps clear of the culturalism⁴ intrinsic in the ethnographic debate of the 1950s as well as in Reher’s proposal.

³ See the chapters by Wolf; Chuang and Wolf; Engelen and Wolf; Klep, in Engelen and Wolf 2005.

⁴ In Verdon’s definition, culturalism “is a type of explanation which consists in observing a patterned behaviour or a collective practice, and in accounting for its existence by invoking a set of norms or of values, dictating this practice. In

When it comes to Italy, however, the usual problems emerge. Engelen and Wolf allowed that “local conditions may countermand the forces that produce the European/non European contrast”. In the Italian case, such conditions were basically the sharecropping system, where “external constraints” obliged to maintain joint households in order to maximize farm output. Indeed, among Tuscan sharecroppers all decisions about the composition of the household were subject to the landlord’s preventive approval. Marriage in particular was a matter of primary concern for the landlord, who exercised his control with the utmost attention and harshness, deciding who was to marry and when. Disobedience could cause the expulsion of the family from the farm, with the risk of a dramatic downgrade in the social ladder.⁵

In Engelen’s and Wolf’s opinion, “the household system of Italian sharecroppers was a mutant version of a simple household system”, while all other social groups followed the northwestern pattern (Engelen and Wolf 2005: 22-23). Unfortunately, however, things were not that simple. The geographies of joint households and sharecropping did not overlap perfectly, and complex households characterized many other areas where farming was carried out on extensive scale though under different lease contracts. Sharecropping itself was anything but a homogeneous system, and sharecropping practiced in the hilly areas of Tuscany differed substantially from that featuring the Po lowlands of Emilia or the dry areas of Veneto (Giorgetti 1974). Households’ organization varied accordingly.

Furthermore, another aspect of the Italian exceptionalism such as the substantial absence of life-cycle service remains to be explained. As far as Italy was fully part of the western “property patriarchy”, why did Italian parents largely avoid resorting to hired servants as their northwestern counterparts? Was it because they enjoyed a greater authority over their children, which made more convenient to exploit them directly rather than resorting to hired labor, or should one look again for “cultural” reasons for an explanation? Unfortunately, in the few lines they devote to Italy, Engelen and Wolf do not delve into this issue. Yet, it is a crucial one.

Finally, although parental authority was certainly pre-eminent, there were other sources of authority that could influence marital choices and living arrangements. The State and the Church (Goody 1983, 1998) were obviously two such authorities, though frequently conflicting with each other. At the local level, the city governments and the artisan guilds had their say on the marriage of their subjects, curtailing those that were not properly supported (Lynch 1991; Head-König 1993;

other words, it consists in summoning Culture (not specific cultural facts, but general norms, beliefs or a general ethos, that is, some floating, hypostatized and transcendental entity) to explain the fact that most individuals in a population act in a certain way in certain circumstances [...]” (Verdon 1998: 21-22).

⁵ Biagioli (2002) provides impressive evidence of the landlords’ tight control on sharecropping families.

Ehmer 1984; Crossick and Haupt 1995: 88; Kok 2005: 361-62; Ogilvie 1997; see also Fertig 2003 for a critical reassessment).

The kin group exercised its control either, and quite an important one. Mitterauer and Sieder (1982: 134-138) argued that the influence of kin on individual behavior was larger among the upper classes and the families of farmers and artisans. According to Augustins (2003), different levels of kin relationships were involved as legitimizing principles of individual and family behaviors, depending on the kind of inheritance and succession to headship that were adopted. These were the household level, when there was one single heir and successor; the kinship level, when inheritance and succession involved all the siblings in the same way; the lineage level, when inheritance and succession concerned only male children. Giovanni Levi (1985) and Gérard Delille (1985) showed convincingly how such principles worked in Italy and how powerful they were. They also demonstrated that kin constraints could operate in more sophisticated ways than those concerning individual living arrangements. For instance, Delille found that in certain areas of the Kingdom of Naples households were settled in *quartiers lignagers* (agnatic lineage quarters), where lineage properties were concentrated: marriages and the circulation of land through dowries and inheritances was organized in a way to keep the territorial cohesion of the neighborhood untouched. Interestingly enough, in other places of the same region a similar system was based on female descent lineages. Delille explained the difference referring to the environmental and economic features of the two areas: in the area of patrilineal lineages agriculture was based on small wine- and olive-growing farms, women were excluded from inheritance and female celibacy was high; matrilineal lineages characterized an area of corn-growing farms, where females inherited land and married early, and male out-migration was frequent (Delille 1985; for similar contrasts in Austria see Mitterauer 1995).

2. From constraints to coercion: marriage and social reproduction

Though poorly fitting the many facets of the Italian peculiarity, the patriarchy theory has the advantage of switching the attention from the Malthusian constraints to nuptiality to the role of domination as the driving force shaping different family arrangements. Indeed, one could hardly conceive any family system, whether of the eastern or the western type, without some form of coercion securing its regular functioning by keeping marriage under control. Who was to marry whom, when, and how, could not be left to individual choice.

Broadly speaking, it can be assumed that everyone, after reaching sexual maturity, desired to marry and would actually do so, if just allowed to. Although such a claim may seem hardly tenable to contemporary eyes, it is much less so when one looks at past societies. Notwithstanding the efforts of Malthus (who was himself married) to praise the advantages of celibacy at all social

ladders (Malthus 1826: 397-400), marital condition was a privileged one, giving access to a variety of relevant benefits – at the sexual, emotional, economic, social, and political levels – which were inaccessible to most unmarried people (with the possible exception of a few small groups, such as the clergy and the élites, who could secure otherwise some of the benefits of conjugal status). It was marriage that gave men full membership of the community, and secured respectability, (relative) independence, and control over their own households to women (Laslett 1983b: 12, 101; Sabeau 1990: 61). Correspondingly, the lowest layers of society were predominantly constituted by unmarried adults and elders (Wall 2007; Stavenhuter 1996; Crossick and Haupt 1995: 101; Sabeau 1990: 456; Laslett 1988; Hufton 1984), whose presence was often perceived as a source of embarrassment and moral concern by local authorities (Bennet and Froide 1999; Froide 2005; Anderson 1984; McCants 1999; Ogilvie 1997: 64; Sabeau 1990: 456; Zannini and Gazzi 2004; Accati 1998; Palazzi 1990; Filippini 1983). The disadvantaged condition of the unmarried was also common to Asian societies (Skinner 1997: 83), and is sadly persisting in contemporary affluent economies (see e.g. Siegenthaler 1996; Minkler and Stone 1985; Modin 2003; Hoynes et al. 2006). Nowadays however non-marital cohabitation and other living arrangements can provide frequent surrogates to formal unions. But until a recent past marriage represented the only viable solution, and definitely a desirable one, for the great majority of the populace.⁶

It comes as a consequence that, if most people married quite late and some never married at all, as happened in Western Europe, this was because some constraints, or coercions, or a combination of the two, compelled them to a prolonged wait or made marriage outright inaccessible. What for? Hajnal cautiously restrained from pointing out a specific cause or set of causes fostering the spread of the distinctive Northwest European marriage pattern. He stressed however the economic constraints that were related to the diffusion of life-cycle service and the principle of neolocality in household formation. According to Lesthaeghe, the nuptiality valve was instead instrumental to social control, carried out through parental coercion. Also the patriarchy theory proposed by Wolf and colleagues put forward the explanation of parental coercion, though this was mainly inspired by the economic exploitation of the younger generations.

Our own interpretation of nuptiality control and marriage patterns in pre-transitional societies relies on the arguments outlined above, but we insert them in a different and more

⁶ Though widely shared, such viewpoints have their opponents. Guinnane (1991) argued that in early-twentieth century permanent celibacy became increasingly attractive to the Irish and alternatives like living with siblings or using property or the Poor Law for future risk aversion were preferred to the burdens of marriage and child-rearing. Klep (2005) suggested that in late-nineteenth century Netherlands young people would rather postpone marriage to delay the loss of income associated with the switch of young women from the condition of paid workers to that of unpaid mothers. Somehow contradictorily, however, he also assumed that parents prevented children from marrying because they needed their help. Schellekens (1991) argued that Dutch (and possibly northwest-European) laborers preferred to postpone marriage, since they could enjoy of a relative degree of premarital sexual freedom.

comprehensive framework. We do not exclude the weight of economic constraints on nuptiality and family formation, but we restrict it to more specific and limited conditions than is usually the case: we assume that such constraints could not affect in the same way the rich and the poor, the landed and the landless. Also, we admit that cultural values and shared norms could play a relevant role shaping marital behaviors or fixing the nature of family relations, for instance prompting the elites to assume some exasperated version of the European marriage pattern (Lynch 1991), or securing a lifelong maintenance of strong family ties, as in South Italy. However we argue that such values and norms were embedded in a set of power relations and coercive forces, which usually remained under cover – “l’interdit tue le désir d’avance” (Veyne 1978: 61) – but were readily called into life whenever such norms were violated. Finally, and most importantly, we agree with the view that nuptiality was mainly governed by some form of domination, as suggested by Lesthaeghe and Wolf, but think that its mechanisms and rationale should be better qualified. On the one hand, there were other sources of coercion to take into account, though the parental role was certainly predominant. On the other hand, we argue that nuptiality control was mainly inspired by the enforcement of social reproduction, rather than by social control and parental exploitation. Indeed, both social control and parental exploitation can be included in the framework of social reproduction, but the latter provides a broader issue which can better account for the universality of marriage controls in pre-transitional societies.

All societies tend to perpetuate themselves, maintaining their social, cultural, and institutional patterns along time. Smaller groups such as households and families aim at reproducing themselves either. Their concern is not only the prosecution of the lineage, the safeguard of economic assets (if any), and the maintenance of social standing and social capital. It includes also more basic and daily issues such as the organization of the household as a work and consumption unit, the care for the elderly and the children, and all other aspects concerning the subsistence and survival of the household members in the short and medium term. In all of this, marriage obviously played a fundamental role. As Bourdieu (1976: 122) put it, as “an institution that had a direct bearing on the improvement, conservation, or dissipation of a family’s material and symbolic capital, [marriage] was no doubt one of the mainstays of both the dynamic and the static elements of the entire social system.” Consequently, it needed to be carefully controlled and regulated.

Some excellent studies highlighted from an anthropological viewpoint the role of marriage in social reproduction in the past (see Sabeau 1990, 1998; Delille 1985; Claverie and Lamaison 1982; Segalen 1991a, among the most notable). However, only scant attention has been paid to the demographic implications of the mechanisms and the politics inspired by social reproduction,

highlighting how they affected such aspects as the age at marriage and the extension of celibacy. This paper adopts a different and more restricted perspective. As demographers, we give pride of place to the probability of marrying, and ask whether and how access to marriage was determined by the requirements of social reproduction.

We argue that it is only referring to the variety of constraints imposed by social reproduction at the community, household, and individual levels that a thorough understanding of the Italian conundrum can be reached. We agree with Mitterauers's suggestion that much variation of family arrangements were related to the peculiarities of ecotypes associated with specific modes of production (Mitterauer 1995; see also, with specific reference to Italy, Kertzer 2002). To take such peculiarities into account, our study included six populations displaying a wide range of different social, economic and environmental settings, which can be representative, to some extent at least, of the complexity of Italian society. However we were not interested in drawing a map of the Italian marriage patterns. Our approach was not aggregate but micro analytical. Although we run separate analyses for each population, we focused on individuals rather than on regions or macro-areas. Our purpose was to highlight several factors that we supposed could influence the individual probability of marrying, seeing whether they changed according to local peculiarities. Such factors included the economic conjuncture, the socioeconomic status of the household, the composition of the family with regard to the parental couple and the presence of others siblings, the amount of the social capital available and the strength of the relationship with the local community. Some of them refer to external constraints, others to forms of coercions conditioning individual access to marriage, but they all fit in a framework referring to social reproduction.

The rest of this paper is organized as follows. In section three we outline the main features of marriage and family systems in Italy from an aggregate point of view. Section four describes the populations that are part of our study and provides some descriptive analyses of nuptiality. In section five we turn to a multivariate analysis of first marriage in the populations under study. Section six discusses the results, while section seven is left to conclusions.

3. Nuptiality in late-nineteenth century Italy: an aggregate overview.

Kertzer's definition of Italy as the graveyard of family theories is well grounded. If one considers the main constituents of family systems, such as age at marriage, proportions married, rules of family formation, household structures, inheritance rules, presence of life-cycle service, they combine in a variety of ways as to contradict the most popular models developed by social scientists. There are regions (Puglia, in Southern Italy) where neolocality is associated with early marriage, and regions (Tuscany) where patrilocality in complex households is associated with late marriage. Furthermore, not only Tuscan farmers marry later than their counterparts in Puglia, but

also day laborers in the two regions behave correspondingly (Rettaroli 1990). There are marked differences in family systems and nuptial behavior according to ecological settings, agricultural organizations, social classes, juridical traditions, and local cultures. Family organization in the Alps differs from that prevailing in the flatland along the Po River, and both differ from the situation of the hills in central Italy (Viazzo and Albera 1992), let alone urban populations. In the Kingdom of Naples, the family strategies followed by grape- and olive-growers along the Tyrrhenian coast were opposite to those characterizing corn farmers of the Southern plains (Delille 1985).

Several factors contribute to such variability, including deep differences in the political regimes that ruled over the regional states of Italy in the centuries before the political unification in the 1860s. These regimes were grounded on specific socioeconomic structures and juridical systems, whose effects lasted long after a national kingdom was settled. Furthermore, the great variety of ecological and economic conditions also influenced family systems and marriage patterns. Nevertheless, it seems worthwhile providing a sketchy outlook at nuptiality in late-nineteenth century Italy, showing the main combinations and features that can be detected at an aggregate level. The time period is later than that concerned by our local studies, but unfortunately no general analysis at the national level is possible before 1861 for the lack of relevant data.

Table 1. Nuptiality indexes. Italy, 1861-1901

Year	Crude Marriage Rate	% Unmarried by Age						Singulate Mean Age at Marriage	
		Males			Females			M	F
		20-24	25-29	50-54	20-24	25-29	50-54		
1861	7.8	81.0	51.1	13.3	55.1	29.8	12.2	27.3	23.5
1871	7.4	83.0	50.0	12.5	54.8	28.6	12.3	27.3	23.3
1881	7.7	89.2	52.6	11.4	60.9	29.9	12.1	28.2	24.1
1901	7.2	87.0	49.0	10.9	60.3	29.7	10.9	27.7	24.1

Source: Italian Population Censuses

The picture emerging from the first censuses after unification suggests a substantial stability of nuptiality over the four census dates (table 1): age at marriage fluctuates around 27 years for males and 23-24 for females. The proportion of never married is about 12 per cent for both sexes, the drop of celibacy at the beginning of the new century being probably due to the massive out-migrations of the 1880s and '90s (Rettaroli 1990). Such an overall stability conceals nevertheless wide differences at the local level. For instance, in 1861 the average age at marriage of females ranged from 20.4 in Catania (Sicily) to 26.3 in Teramo (Abruzzo), and, as far as males are concerned, from 24.7 years in Potenza (Basilicata) to 29.2 in Sondrio (Lombardy). The variability is even larger in the propensity to marry. Permanent celibacy for women ranged from 4.9 per cent in Grosseto (Tuscany) to 22.6 per cent in the province of Catania. For men, the percentage ranges from 6.7 in Campobasso to 21 in the province of Naples.

The 1881 census provides some pieces of information about the socioeconomic and demographic conditions at the provincial level, which can be used to highlight the relationship between marriage patterns, family systems and structural characteristics of the rural economy. Resorting to cluster analysis, Cocchi et al. (1996) outlined seven main areas, characterized by some homogeneity of nuptiality patterns, which can be useful to frame also the features of the populations used for this study.

A first group concerns the Alpine area. Here marriages tended to be late, with high proportions of never married, especially women, who suffered for the imbalance in the marriage market (Viazzo 1989; Lorenzetti and Merzario 2005). Here barely a half of the male workers were involved in agriculture, there was a widespread, small-scale pattern of landownership, and most households were nuclear.

A similar marriage pattern was also typical of the area of sharecropping farming predominating in most of central Italy (Tuscany, Marche, Umbria and Romagna). The social and environmental context was, however, very different. Peasant landownership was rare, and farms were rented to tenant farmers or given to sharecroppers.

Early marriage featured a limited area of the northwestern Italian lowlands. Tenant farming was predominant and involved permanently one third of the working force, while resorting to day laborers when agricultural activity was most intense.

The large lowlands in Lombardy, Emilia, and Veneto were characterized by slightly delayed and less universal access to marriage. The working force was employed in large farms either run directly by the owners or rented out to tenants. Peasant landownership was negligible. Large farms encouraged the formation of large, complex family units.

Central and Southern Italy is divided into two groups both characterized by relatively early and widespread marriage. This is particularly evident in the areas along the central ridge of the Apennines. This largely mountainous area presents a high proportion of land- or home-owning residents, most of whom were males. Agricultural laborers outnumbered tenant farmers. Peasant property encouraged nuptiality, while unmarried males were more and more obliged to migrate.

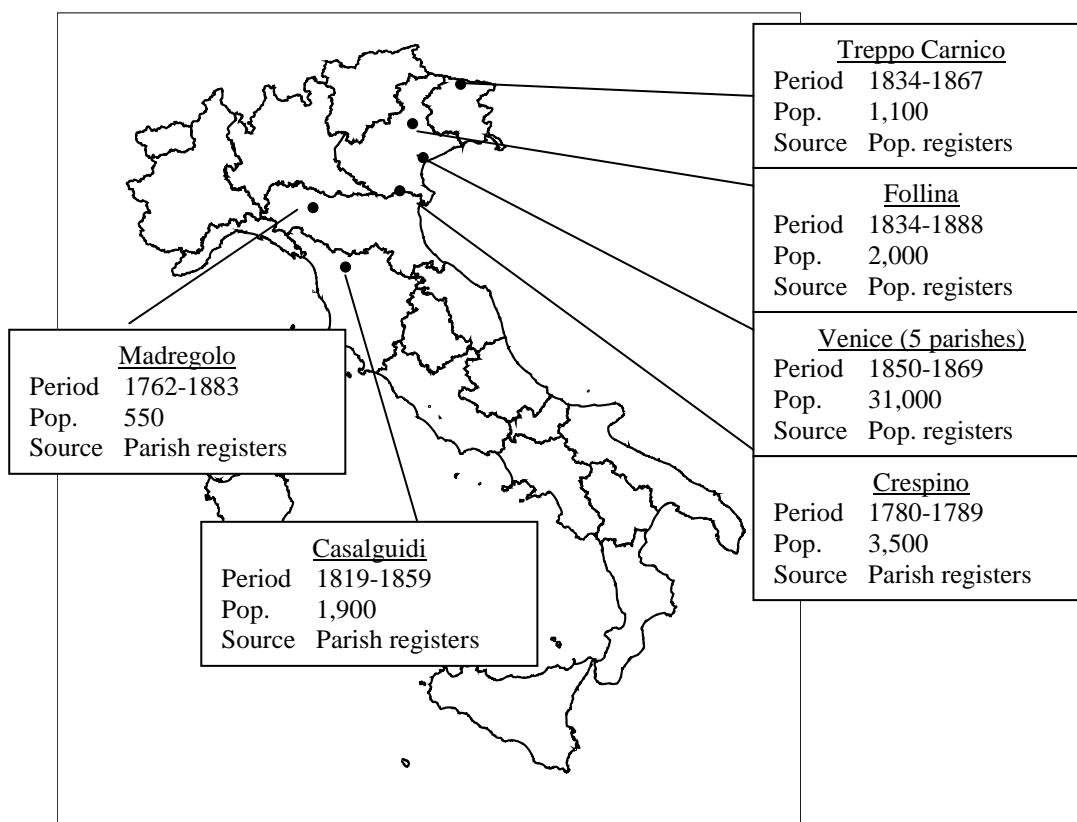
As for the other group of central and Southern Italy, this was characterized by the predominance of agricultural laborers. This large group includes scattered areas (the southern provinces of the Tuscan coastline, Latium, the coastal areas of Campania, Apulia and most of Calabria and Sicily), justifying a certain variability of agricultural conditions and nuptiality. Age at marriage and proportions married are close to the average Italian values. Households were mostly nuclear and concentrated in country towns rather than in dwellings scattered across the territory.

Finally, the last group comprises Sardinia. Here the family structure was predominantly nuclear, and the formation of the family corresponded to the requirements, or ideals, of independent housing units and economic self-sufficiency. These aspirations explain the relatively advanced age at marriage, especially of men.

4. The study areas

The quick overview of part three confirms both the diversity of family arrangements in nineteenth-century Italy and their relationship with the socioeconomic conditions prevailing in different areas and environmental settings. Such an aggregate approach, however, cannot go beyond this general statement. Even in the same area marital behaviors varied substantially by socioeconomic conditions, and also families of the same socioeconomic standing considered marriage differently according to their specific situation, depending for instance on the age of the parents, the number of children eligible for marriage, or the current economic conjuncture. In order to understand how marital choices were molded to fit with the requirements of social reproduction at the household level, we switch now to a more analytic approach, where individual events and conditions are taken into account.

Figure 1. Location of the communities under study



Our study concerns six populations located in northern and central Italy (figure 1). They include an urban population, a rural textile center, a mountain village, a village of farmers and day

laborers, and two communities of sharecroppers, one located in a hill area and the other in the plain. We have therefore a wide array of different socioeconomic and ecological conditions to deal with.

The urban population is a sample of the inhabitants of Venice, overall about 31,000 individuals followed along different spells of their life course in the period 1850 to 1869. The sample includes the inhabitants of four different parishes of the city. There were large differences in the population under study. The parishes of Angelo Raffaele and Santa Eufemia were by far the poorest of the city. Their inhabitants were mostly boatmen, fishermen, porters, and other unskilled day laborers. In Santa Eufemia some men and women were also employed in small hemp factories. Several women of Angelo Raffaele worked in a large tobacco factory located nearby. But in general women did piecework at home, as bead-stringers, seamstresses, hat- and glove-makers, or were servants. San Geremia was predominantly a working-class parish. Men were mostly employed in glass factories, at the railway station, or as butchers at the communal slaughterhouse; women worked in glass factories, as milliners or servants. Finally, members of the elites, civil servants, employees, artists, artisans, and servants, especially female, inhabited San Luca, one of the richest parishes.

Overall, Venice was characterized by widespread poverty. After the fall of the aristocratic regime, in 1797, the city experienced a prolonged economic and demographic crisis (Zalin 1969). In a few years, its population fell from about 140,000 to less than 100,000 inhabitants, mainly due to massive out-migration. Borrowing a definition of early nineteenth-century Stockholm (Söderberg et al. 1991), we could similarly label Venice as a ‘stagnating metropolis’, characterized by a crisis in the traditional manufacturing system, by the diffusion of an *informal* economic sector, and by a large population earning their living precariously, teetering on the border of poverty. Demographic parameters clearly reflect the social and economic depression that characterized Venetian life. As late as 1881, Venice had by far the worst crude mortality rate among the 59 districts of the Veneto, with exceedingly high infant and childhood mortality rates (Derosas 1999b); on the other hand, fertility was among the lowest in the region, with a total fertility rate of 3.30. As for marriage, the singulate mean age for women (SMAM) was 26.9, the oldest in the whole region. Proportions unmarried were also quite relevant, reaching 22.7 per cent of women never married in the age group 45-49 (Dalla Zuanna and Loghi 1997).

The second population is Treppo Carnico, a mountain village of about 1,100 inhabitants and 230 households on average, located in Carnia, in northeastern Italy. The local economy was based on an intense seasonal emigration of adult men. In mid-nineteenth century the activities associated to such migration flows underwent a deep change, turning from peddlers and artisans into masons. During the transition between the two professional patterns – i.e. the period studied here –

agriculture gained importance in seasonal migration, though it played a minor role in local economy (Fornasin 1998). Treppo displayed the demographic features typical of the Carnia region. The growth rate was moderate (5.8 per thousand in 1834-68); life expectancy at birth was 39 years, whilst fertility was around 4.8 children per woman. Treppo was therefore characterized by a low-pressure demographic system, with late marriage and high levels of never married.

The third population included in the study is Follina, a textile center located in the Venetian countryside. Since the eighteenth century Follina was the main center of the wool industry in the Venetian State, and one of the most important in Italy. Founded primarily as a manufacturing agglomeration, it changed slowly into a residential settlement, becoming the site of a parish and a municipality in 1820. During the nineteenth century Follina grew from 1,200 to 1,600 inhabitants. Its population was neatly divided in textile workers and peasants. Textile workers were about 50 to 60 per cent of the total, mostly working in the local factories, though some carried out their job at home. Peasants were around 20 to 30 per cent and were mostly tenants. The remaining 20 per cent was represented by a petty bourgeoisie of small landowners, shopkeepers, and professionals, and by a few entrepreneurs. In the 1850s a severe crisis involved the wool industry, and the majority of the workers lost their job. The final shutdown came in the 1890s, and pushed many inhabitants to migration to Brazil (Munno 2004).

The fourth population is Crespino, a village of 3,400 inhabitants lying in the lowlands on the left side of the Po River, not far from the city of Ferrara. Its economy was exclusively rural, based on corn farming. There were a hundred farms of large dimensions, called “*possessioni*”: they were usually around 30 hectares, and their exploitation required a considerable amount of working force, normally provided by the tenant’s household, whose size could easily go above 10 and even 20 persons. Tenants resorted to laborers hired on a yearly base, although a certain number of servants were also present in their households. Other workers were hired by day, when fieldwork was particularly urgent. Day laborers were also employed in public works, especially in winter time.

Finally, there are two sharecropping populations, Madregolo and Casalguidi. The norms regulating sharecropping were quite similar in the two villages. The sharecropping contract was normally made between the landowner and the head of a peasant household. The head was usually a man, and his role and duties gave him great authority and power over the other members of the household. The landowner provided the farm, the house, and the cow barn, while the sharecropping family provided labor and agricultural tools. Agricultural works were distributed among the household members according to age, sex, and individual ability. In both the communities, the main concern of sharecroppers was to keep a balance between resources and household size, which was accomplished through the adoption of specific demographic mechanisms, such as delayed marriage

and the expulsion of family members. However, some relevant differences existed between Madregolo and Casalguidi, both in the social structure and the environment.

Madregolo was a tiny village of 500-600 inhabitants in the lowlands of the Po valley. The territory is flat and agriculture was the main activity, with wheat, legumes, grass and hemp as main products. According to a census of mid-nineteenth century, 72 per cent of the household heads were peasants, 19 per cent were artisans, the rest belonging to the lower middle class or the poor. Sixty per cent of the peasants were sharecroppers and tenants, and the others were laborers, either day laborers or laborers settled in a farm on a yearly agreement. The backwardness of agriculture, the short length of sharecropping contracts and the proximity to the city of Parma made turnover quite intense: almost one third of the population changed every year. The data for this village cover a period of more than a century, from 1761 to 1883. In such a long time the population experienced moments of sharp crises, as the typhus epidemic of 1817, and periods of relative population growth. Overall, life expectancy at birth was around 35 and fertility was 5.6 children per woman.

Casalguidi is a small country town in the outskirts of the city of Pistoia (Tuscany). Around mid-nineteenth century it had 2,500 inhabitants and 460 households, some living in the village, and some living in the surrounding countryside. Its economy was based on agriculture, which employed over 70 per cent of the population. There were three main social groups in Casalguidi: landowners, artisans and peasants. All agricultural workers fell into the last category, but there were several degrees of differentiation and stratification, though low-income and needy families accounted for most of it. Most farmers were sharecroppers, some of which were relatively rich. In Casalguidi life expectancy at birth reached 35.3 years, and the fertility rate was of 5.3 children per woman.

Source materials. Two different kinds of source materials have been used for this study: population registers on the one hand, and a combination of parish registers and census-like listings called *Status Animarum* on the other. Population registers are used for Venice, Follina and Treppo, and parish registers for Crespino, Madregolo and Casalguidi.

Population registers are a kind of longitudinal census. As with censuses, population registers list people according to the households to which they belong, reporting information about personal and family names, the names of the parents, the place and date of birth, and the occupation of each member of the household. Population registers differ from censuses, however, since they record variations occurring along time. Therefore, population registers allow reconstructing the biographies—or part-biographies—of individuals, framing them in the changing contexts of the families, households and communities of which they were a part. Obviously, population registers are not devoid of defects. There may be an under-reporting of events, especially birth of infants who did not survive long enough to be recorded. Sometimes the dates reported are lacking or

incomplete. In both cases, however, a double check on vital events reported by the parish registers of the same areas made it possible to integrate and amend the data drawn from the population registers. A major drawback, for the purposes of this study, concerns household composition. In fact, it happens also that information on household composition and the related changes are not recorder properly. When two households merged, for example, the registrars did not usually bother to fill in a new form for the new domestic group, but simply filed the two old forms in the same place. On the other hand, when a new conjugal unit was added to the household by virilocal or uxorilocal marriage, sometimes registrars preferred to fill in a new form rather than add the details of the new members to the old one, especially when there was little room left for that purpose. As a consequence, the dynamics of living arrangements are difficult to follow and the information on household composition is not fully reliable.⁷

The other documentary sources used for this study were the parish registers of baptisms, burials and marriages. The data drawn from the parish registers have been linked to the information on household composition yearly reported by the *Status Animarum*. The latter is a kind of census compiled by the parish priest before Easter. For each member of the household, the name, age, sex, marital status, and relationship to the head of the household, or with some other member of the family, are recorded. Since these records were made annually, it has been possible, with the help of supplementary data from vital registers, to reconstruct the life histories of all the individuals and families who were member of the three communities of Crespino, Madregolo, and Casalguidi in the period under study.

Unfortunately, in the cases of Crespino and Madregolo the sources do not provide any information about the profession or socioeconomic condition of the individuals listed. Crespino's *Status Animarum* however distinguish between households living in a large farm (*possessione*), in their own house, or in a rented one. We use such a piece of information to distinguish correspondingly between farmers, semi-landless and landless. Data on professions are reported in the case of Casalguidi; however, since most people were simply recorded as "peasants", a category that pooled together the poor and the better off, the information is quite equivocal. As a rule of thumb, we considered as sharecroppers those peasants who did not live in a house of their own. Also in Treppo information on professions is rather poor, lacking in 60 per cent of the cases. We distinguished the remaining between "peasants" and "others".

⁷ In the Venetian case we have used information about the addresses to establish patterns of coresidence: when two households dwell at the same address and move at the same time, it seems quite reasonable to infer that they did live together. In practice, in the following analysis two persons will be considered as members of the same household when they are listed in the same 'household-form', or when they are relatives living at the same address for the time-spell considered, though they might be recorded in separate forms.

Descriptive measures of nuptiality. Table 2 displays some basic measures of nuptiality in the six populations under study. Overall, they confirm clearly the main features of the marriage patterns prevailing in nineteenth-century Italy, as they have been anticipated above. What is even more remarkable, such features were present in all the populations under study, notwithstanding the differences in size, location, environment, and socioeconomic conditions. First, access to marriage was rather late, the mean age at first marriage being around 27-28 years for males and 24-25 for females. Not unexpectedly, the villages in the Po Valley, Crespino and Madregolo, displayed the lowest age at marriage, both for males and females, while Treppo lied on the upper bound of the range.

Table 2. Mean age at 1st marriage, proportions unmarried, and family formation in the communities under study.

<i>Population</i>	<i>Mean age at 1st marriage</i>		<i>Percentage unmarried 45-49</i>		<i>Multiple households (%)</i>	<i>Percentage staying in the parental household after marriage</i>	
	M	F	M	F		M	F
Venice 1850-69	27.7	24.7	25.7	19.3	3.0	60*	27*
Follina 1834-88	28.4	24.9	10.0	13.3	14.5	64	3
Crespino 1780-1789	25.2	22.9	12.4	12.1	18.8	68	4
Treppo Carnico 1834-67	29.5	27.0	22.9	19.2	19.4	59	7
Madregolo 1761-1883	26.8	23.5	9.7	2.1	22.9	61	3
Casalguidi 1819-59	28.8	24.7	14.8	10.1	13.5	54	5

Sources: our computations from local population registers, parish registers, and *Status Animarum*. * Percentage computed on marriages for which the address of the spouse's parents is known.

Secondly, the proportions unmarried were correspondingly high, though showing a greater variety: celibacy was highest in Venice, with around one quarter of individuals aged 45 to 49 never married. The effect of the constraints of the mountain economy is also evident in Treppo, where around one fifth of the population remained unmarried. Again, Madregolo displayed the lowest values, with less than 10 per cent of men never married and an astonishing 2.1 per cent of never married women, which seems indeed quite exceptional.

As for household structures, it is interesting to note that the number of complex households was rather high in all the populations, ranging from 12 to 23 per cent. Coherently with the data on age at marriage and proportions marrying, the share was larger in Madregolo. The urban population was the obvious exception; as explained above, however, this was partly due to registration practices. In all the populations considered, the majority of marriages did not give place to a new

household, the new couple settling in the parental household of the bridegroom. The percentage raised to 64 per cent in Follina, but also in Venice, quite unexpectedly, the majority of marriages started with a cohabitation with the husband's parents. In Venice, furthermore, also uxori-local marriages were relatively numerous, 27 per cent of the total, whereas they were quite rare in the rural communities.⁸ Overall, the share of neolocal marriages ranged therefore from 10 to 40 per cent of the total. However, only a part of such cohabitations with the parental household were permanent. In most cases, especially in Venice and Follina, they were rather a temporary solution, a kind of "launching pad" (Skinner 1997: 62) adopted until the new couple could gather enough resources to settle on its own (Derosas 2003).

Table 3. Mean age at 1st marriage by sex, kind of marriage, and SES

	Males			Females		
	Non virilocal	Virilocal	Total	Non uxori-local	Uxori-local	Tot.
Venice	27.3	29.1	27.7	24.6	26.5	24.7
Day laborers	26.6	28.3	27.0	24.2	24.8	24.2
Wage workers	27.2	29.6	27.8	24.3	27.0	24.6
Artisans, shopkeepers	27.6	27.2	28.2	24.0	[27.2]	24.1
Middle class	29.9	[30.1]	29.2	23.4	--	23.5
Follina	28.9	27.6	28.0	25.2	[24.3]	25.2
Peasants	28.9	26.6	27.2	23.3	[21.8]	23.3
Textile workers	28.8	27.5	27.9	26.4	[23.9]	26.3
Lower middle class	28.3	29.6	29.1	24.9	[21.4]	24.7
Landholders	30.7	28.9	29.5	25.7	[40.8]	26.0
Crespino	26.7	24.5	25.2	22.9	[22.0]	22.9
Farmers	[22.1]	23.9	23.4	21.7	--	21.8
Others	27.9	24.7	25.7	23.2	[21.9]	23.1
Treppo Carnico	30.5	29.6	30.1	27.7	[29.1]	27.8
Peasants	[28.3]	[27.7]	[28.1]	28.3	[26.7]	28.2
Others	[28.2]	[29.4]	28.9	27.5	[29.5]	27.6
Unknown	31.9	30.2	31.2	27.6	[29.5]	27.8
Madregolo.	28.4	25.7	26.8	23.6	23.2	23.5
Casalguidi	29.2	28.0	28.8	24.8	23.1	24.7
Day laborers	28.4	25.7	26.8	23.6	23.2	23.5
Sharecroppers	28.5	28.0	28.1	25.2	23.1	24.9
Artisans	27.5	28.1	27.3	24.9	[22.9]	25.2
Others	28.6	28.4	28.2	25.0	23.3	24.8

Sources: our computations from local population registers and parish registers. In square brackets less than 20 cases.

Table 3 displays the differences in timing of marriage by socioeconomic status. Again a remarkable regularity emerges for the four populations where information on socioeconomic status (SES) is

⁸ These percentages refer to the share of patrilocal marriages on the number of marriages for whom the address of one of the spouse's parents at the time of marriage is known. The frequency of patrilocal arrangements in Italy was postulated by Laslett (1983a) and confirmed by Kertzer and Hogan (1991). For a Dutch urban example see Janssens 1993. A general overview in Kertzer 2002.

available, the better off marrying later than those in lower social ladders. As far as males are concerned, the difference was of 3.3 years in Venice, 2.3 in Casalguidi, and 3.4 in Follina. Females displayed a similar behavior. In Crespino, however, the children of tenants' families married much earlier than the others. There also seems to be a correlation between the timing of marriage and the kind of settlement adopted by the new couple. In fact, as one would expect, those who remained in the parental household after marriage tended to marry earlier than those who abandoned it. This was true for both male and females, confirming that the choice of cohabitation could be instrumental to relaxing the economic constraints inherent to the settlement of a new household. Oddly enough, however, in Venice virilocal marriages were slightly later than the neolocal ones.

5. Event history analysis of first marriage

The previous section outlined several features of the marriage patterns prevailing in the six communities under study. Notwithstanding the differences in the ecological and socioeconomic context and in household structures, all populations displayed late access to marriage, high proportions unmarried, and high frequency of virilocal settlements after marriage. Also there were differences in the timing of marriage according to the socioeconomic status of the spouses, and to the ways of family formation.

Statistical methods. We turn now to a probabilistic approach, in order to highlight the factors which most affected the chances of marrying at the individual level. We followed the methods of Event History Analysis: according to the nature of the information available, we adopted a discrete-time approach (logistic regression) in the cases of Madregolo, Casalguidi, and Treppo, and the semi-parametric method of Cox regression in the cases of Venice, Follina, and Crespino.⁹ In order to make comparisons possible, we run discrete-time models using the *c-loglog* link, which makes the estimations almost equivalent to those of the continuous approach (Bengtsson and Broström 1997). In such models, the dependent variable is a dichotomous covariate indicating whether or not the individual experienced a first marriage either in a given year (discrete time) or within an infinitesimally small time interval (continuous time), provided that he or she was subject to the risk of experiencing it. It should be noted that, as far as the average age at marriage was similar across the various social groups, to some extent the differences in the relative risks can be interpreted as an indirect measure of the likelihood of permanent celibacy. Individuals at risk are all never-married persons aged between 18 and 40, present in the populations under study. The independent variables are a set of factors, whose effect on the hazard rate (or odds) was estimated. Such covariates can either be fixed or time-invariant (such as sex), or subject to changes through time, or time-varying (such as the composition of the family).

⁹ See Blossfeld and Rohwer 1995 for an introduction.

Models. As mentioned above, our analysis assumed that all individuals desired to marry. We have mentioned already the substantive reasons supporting such a point of view. There are however also formal reasons in its favor. Indeed, if we assumed that the timing of marriage was primarily a matter of personal inclination and subjective feelings, this would make hardly meaningful any modeling of marriage events: needless to say, love and hormones are beyond our reach.

If one married later than others or did not marry at all, we interpret this as the outcome of constraints, or coercions, or a combination of the two. Some constraints, however, could be relieved when other resources, mostly of a social kind, were available. A further, if secondary, assumption is that all individuals would prefer to set up an independent household of their own, again if constraints or coercions would not oblige or push them to behave differently, joining another household at marriage.¹⁰ The desire to marry and the preference for an independent dwelling could have contrasting effects, though, encouraging or imposing patrilocal marriages whereas neolocal marriages were discouraged or delayed.

Relying on such assumptions, we modeled the risk of marriage in the populations under study, taking into account a set of factors that could be interpreted as proxies of either constraints or coercions affecting the “risk” of marriage. The factors included in our analyses can be gathered into the following four groups.

Economic conjuncture. As a major constraint we considered the economic conjuncture, as expressed by the price level of food (corn or wheat). We identified as periods of economic stress those years when the price was in the upper quartile of the overall distribution of the time periods under study. Since marriage required a certain amount of economic resources, we expected that, when the conjuncture worsened and the price of food was high, people were pushed to delay or even give up a prospected marriage. Such was the case in modern England, where nuptiality turned out as the demographic variable most sensitive to short-run changes in economic conditions, a doubling in food prices being associated to a decline of marriages in the same year by 41 per cent, and a permanent loss of 22 per cent on the normal annual total marriages (Schofield 2000: 59). Weir (1984: 39) found an even stronger effect for late-eighteenth century France (see also Dupâquier 1979: 117-118). As for Italy, several studies carried out both at the aggregate level through time-series analyses and at the micro analytic level confirmed the inverse relationship between prices and nuptiality (see e.g. Scalone 2002; Breschi et al. 2002, 2005, 2009; Fornasin et al. 2002; Fornasin 2005). Our expectations were that such a discouraging effect should be stronger for the members of

¹⁰ To some extent, our approach may appear as an extension of Verdon’s “atomistic set of axioms for Western residence” (Verdon 1998: 47-71). Verdon does not include marriage into his analysis, preferring to focus exclusively on residential patterns. We add the access to, and timing of, marriage to his approach, as the first and most important event regulating subsequent living arrangements. Also Daniel Scott Smith (1993) assumes that the neolocal residence is a “natural” choice for young couples.

the lower social classes, as well as for neolocal marriages, which required more resources than patrilocal ones. For instance, Derouet (1980) showed that in eighteenth-century Thimerais (France) times of economic stress affected the nuptiality of the day laborers but not of the peasants.

Socioeconomic status. The most important coercive factor that we took into account is related to the household's socioeconomic status. As Goody noticed, having to rely on aggregate statistics, Hajnal's analysis understated "the implications regarding the class stratification of household systems, in particular their relation to resources" (1996: 7-8). Fertig (2005: 42-43) added that the model of society Hajnal had in mind was "tailored to a society of noble landowners, dependent peasant producers, a limited number of craftsmen, and servants", assuming "the existence of a labor market only for unmarried, semi-free laborers", which is "clearly unrealistic ... for many parts of Western Europe, where day laborers, proto-industrial producers, and other sub-peasant strata were common during the early modern period as well as during the 19th century."

However, just taking into account the variety of resources and of the means available to gather them, as such criticisms recommend, seems not enough either. Rather than the availability of viable niches, as implicit in Hajnal's model, the specific polities of reproduction followed by different social groups should be given pride of place. As Hendrickx (2005: 82-83) noticed, in many parts of modern Europe social groups occupying surplus producing niches "hardly increased or even decreased", whereas "groups occupying marginal niches increased manifold." Hendrickx drew from Viazzo (1989) and Ehmer (1991) the conclusion that what mattered in marital behavior was not the availability of viable niches, but "the availability of specific social positions within a richly diversified social structure" (Ehmer 1991 quoted by Hendrickx 2005: 83). Indeed, there is widespread evidence throughout Europe suggesting that access to marriage was inversely related to socioeconomic status (Armstrong 1974: 165-166; Morgan and Macafee 1984; Davidoff and Hall 1987: 222-223; Angeli 1990; Gozzini 1990; Lynch 1991: 89; Alter 1991; van Poppel 1993; van Poppel and Nelissen 1999; Matthijs 2002; van de Putte 2007). Interestingly enough, such a feature is still persistent in contemporary societies, such as the United States: for instance, Axinn and Thornton (1992) found that in late-nineteenth century Detroit both parental financial resources and parental education attainment had additive delaying effects on the timing of marriage.

As table 3 shows, our own populations were no exception to this rule. Such a matter of fact seems at odds with a barely Malthusian perspective, but fits nicely with the coercions imposed by social reproduction. The larger the interests involved in a marriage, the deeper the consequences expected for the families, the more complex and cautious its procedures. While economic constraints were probably most important at the lower social ladders, different forms of coercions became predominant when the better off were concerned. It seems also reasonable to expect that the

means of coercions were more effective when the potential loss due to disobedience was greater, and when the assimilation of behavioral norms was enhanced by education and social control. As Sabeau argued for nineteenth-century Neckarhausen, “the authority exercised by parents over adult children and the respect the latter were supposed to demonstrate were both derived expressly from the fact that parents were the sources of wealth” (Sabeau 1990: 416). Nevertheless, also parents of the working classes could be unwilling to lose the contribution of their adult children to the family budget (Spagnoli 1983: 239; Alter 1988: 149). Klep (2005: 267) explained the late age at marriage of the poor areas of the Dutch countryside because there the “power and need of the parents” were stronger. The children of the poor, however, had supposedly less to lose following their own inclinations, even against parental will, provided they had enough to support their new family (Secombe 1993: 18; Shorter 1975: 261). Still, facing social stigma and the hostility of the kin network could be heavy costs to pay for independence. On the contrary, a break of family rules among the better off could have dramatic consequences for the wellbeing of the new couple and of its offspring.

Propertied classes were obviously keenest in fitting their marriage policy into the main lines of their social reproduction strategies: this meant not only choosing suitable spouses for their children, but limiting the number of marriages to avoid assets dispersion through inheritance and dowries (Bourdieu 1990: 187-199). Even the middle ranks of society could be affected by similar considerations: artisans and shopkeepers as well as farmers would keep at home their children as long as possible, not to lose their contribution to family income and to avoid the expenses required by their marriage. In nineteenth-century central and western Europe, a new model of authoritarian and patriarchal family developed among the masters artisans, in coincidence with the decline of the guild system. Business became increasingly a family enterprise, and wives and children took the place of apprentices and hired journeymen. Interestingly enough, such a process was more intense at both extremes of the petite bourgeoisie: the richer trades compelled sons to stay at home in view of inheritance; on the contrary, the poorest ones, such as the food-producing, textile, and clothing trades resorted to exclusively family workshops as a defensive response to economic crisis and competition from factories (Crossick and Haupt 1995: 87-111; Ehmer 1984). Medick (1996, quoted by Fertig 2003: 12-13) found similar behaviors in the protoindustrial town of Laichingen (Württemberg), where the children of the poorest weavers had often to wait for their parents’ death to get married. Correspondingly, Sabeau (1990: 426) showed that in nineteenth-century Neckarhausen, when the development of market economy encouraged male outmigration, rural labor became more and more a female occupation supplied by unmarried daughters.

Parents and siblings. As the examples mentioned above clearly show, social reproduction policies needed some coercive power to be enforced, and this was mainly committed to parental authority. This leads to the third group of variables included in our models. These variables concern the composition of the family, namely the presence and age of the parents as well as that of the siblings group. There is contrasting evidence on a supposed decline of parental authority in the nineteenth century. Complaints of contemporaries (Alter 1988: 143-144; Sabeau 1990: 321-333; Spagnoli 1983) should not be taken at the face value. The studies mentioned above suggest on the contrary that parental grip on children was rather strengthening than loosening. As Klep (2005: 245) put it, “European parents had power.” If they were generally hostile to losing their children’s contribution and to supporting their marriage expenses, we expect that their own presence would affect negatively the individual’s chances of marrying. The parental ability to retain their children was probably higher when parents were relatively young and their authority was stronger, while decreasing with ageing and possibly with widowhood (see Axinn and Thornton 1992 for a contemporary example). Indeed, retirement and widowhood might encourage the settlement of a new conjugal unit, in substitution or support of the old one (Skinner 1997: 65). In our analyses, we took ageing into account, discriminating between parents below or over 60.

The size and composition of the siblings group could also represent a powerful source of constraint limiting the individual chances of getting married. Although marriage is usually taken as a separate event, the position of a child in the marriage market depends on the marriage chances of all the other siblings, his or her position in the sibling set, and the configuration of the latter (Bourdieu 1990: 197). In general, the larger the number of siblings in the family, the higher was the competition among them and the risk that some will have to give up and remain unmarried, not to weigh exceedingly on family resources. We discriminated the position of the index individual according to the gender and the age of the siblings.

Social capital. Finally, we included a fourth group of variables, trying to test whether the availability of social resources was capable of relieving the pressure of economic and family constraints, putting those who were better endowed in a favorable position in the marriage market. The partnership with people embedded in extended networks would give access to a larger amount of social capital (Astone et al. 1999), for instance making easier to find a proper dwelling (Derosas 1999a; Bodnár and Böröcz 1998). Sabeau (1998: 406-7, 449-489) stressed “the usefulness of kin”, arguing that not only the propertied classes, but also the artisans and the farm laborers relied heavily on kinship and the alliance system it provided. Reay (2002) made similar remarks about the Kent communities he studied, where “independent” households were deeply embedded in dense kinship networks. Secombe (1993: 32-33) argued that kin networks had a relevant role in protecting

women looking for employment. Crossick and Haupt (1995: 106-107) underlined the importance of the extended family to the economic survival of the petite bourgeoisie. Goody (1998: 57, 83-85) made similar remarks concerning the role of extended kinship and affinal networks for the success of large economic enterprises.

We used three different measures of the social capital available to individuals. One was the status of migrant: we considered as such all those born outside the communities under study. Migrants are supposed to have less and looser relationships within the local community, and therefore to be less worthy in the marriage market. In several early modern and modern European cities, migrants tended to marry later than the native-born (see Lynch 1991: 84, for references; Ratcliffe and Piette 2007). A second measure was the extension of the kin network. In early nineteenth-century Nanterre, Segalen (1991b) found that farmers with extended kinship networks married earlier than artisans who could not rely on kin support. We counted all kin (agnates and cognates up to the third degree) present in the community outside the household of the index individual, and used the logarithmic transformation of the total to account for non-linearity. Finally, the third measure was an indicator of social relevance, as reflected by the frequency with which the other members of the community chose the individual's parents as godparents. Unfortunately, we have been able to use this variable only for the village of Follina.

6. Results

Using this set of covariates, we run several models for each population, both pooling together all individuals and separating males and females. In some cases we also run separate (competing-risk) models for patrilocal marriages. As mentioned above, we expected that in patrilocal marriages some of the constraints affecting marriage could be relaxed, and coercion itself could work in the opposite way, pushing towards rather than discouraging from such a solution. Finally, we also run interactions to test for possible joint effects between the household's SES and the other covariates. All of this amounted to quite a large number of tables and figures, which cannot be commented in detail here. To make the overall picture easier to grasp, we restrict ourselves to an essential outline of the main results we obtained.

Economic conjuncture. Were the chances of marrying conditioned by the economic conjuncture? This is the most direct test that some kind of Malthusian constraint was at work in the communities under study. Indeed, such was the case in modern England (Schofield 2000), as well as in other European countries (Söderberg et al. 1991: 163-70). The situation in Italy seems less straightforward (table 4). A period of high price of staple food had a negative impact on nuptiality in Follina and Casalguidi (though statistical significance is achieved only when all marriages are collapsed together), no effect at all in Crespino and Madregolo, and a strong and weirdly positive

effect in Venice and Treppo. It is worth noting that in Casalguidi the price effect was significantly correlated with the household's SES: indeed, the interaction between the two covariates shows that the only group actually affected by a rise of corn price was that of the day laborers, whose odds of marrying were halved in times of economic stress, whereas all other social groups were apparently untouched. In Follina there was no significant interaction between food price and SES. A possible explanation is that most of the small peasants could not achieve self-sufficiency, and had to rely largely on the market for their basic provisions. Under this respect, they were similar to the textile workers, and were equally sensible to a worsening of the economic conditions. Furthermore, during economic crises the peasant families used to push their unmarried youth to migrate to find alternative sources of income. Overall, the reduction in the risk of marriage when prices were high was around 20 per cent.

Table 4. Hazards models of the risk of first marriage. Effects of current corn or wheat price.

Population	Venice				Follina				Crespino			
Covariate	Males		Females		Males		Females		Males		Females	
Current food price	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value
low	1		1		1		1		1		1	
high	1.15	0.025	1.26	0.000	<i>0.80</i>	0.067	<i>0.82</i>	0.083	1.01	0.595	0.98	0.382
Population	Madregolo				Casalguidi				Treppo Carnico			
Covariate	Males		Females		Males		Females		Males		Females	
Current food price	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value
low	1		1		1		1		1		1	
high	0.831	0.441	0.832	0.359	0.756	0.253	0.728	0.159	1.28	0.257	1.67	0.005

As for Crespino, it should be taken into account that at the time most day laborers were hired on a yearly base in large capitalistic farms, with a fixed salary and the benefit of a small plot to work for their own subsistence. This kept them separated by market conditions, which they hardly bothered about: all they received and gave was entirely mediated by the farmer they depended from, the balance normally ending up in workers' chronic indebtedness (Derosas 1977). Actually the worst times for the day laborers were when prices were low, as in the long depression of the 1820s, when farmers were eager to reduce the workforce employed.

What remains hard to explain is the effect of food price in Venice and Treppo. In the period under study, Venice was interested by a few economic crises, the worst of which lasted from 1854 to 1857, when the grain price doubled. This was beyond any doubt a terrible period for the

populace, unemployment was widespread, adult mortality soared for a cholera epidemic while a measles epidemic made many victims among children under five. There are signs that malnutrition was equally widespread, indirectly affecting neonatal mortality (Derosas 2009). Nevertheless, the risk of marriage in this period grew by 20 per cent, a phenomenon as unexpected as worth of further analysis. For sure, Lynch’s hypothesis that, contrary to the countryside, “good times” in the cities tended to raise temporarily marriage ages by stimulating immigration (Lynch 1991: 85), cannot be advocated here, since we are dealing with individual probabilities rather than with the average age at marriage, not to mention that the rural nature of the 1854-1857 crisis rather encouraged than discouraged immigration to the city from the countryside. Similarly, in Treppo the even stronger positive impact of a period of high prices on nuptiality, especially for females, is against expectations: as mentioned above, in Treppo consumptions largely exceeded local production, so that a rise of food prices should lead to a worsening of living standards and an increase of temporary migration.

Table 5. Hazards models of the risk of first marriage. Effects of socioeconomic status.

Population	Venice					Follina					Crespino			
Covariate	Males		Females		Covariate	Males		Females		Covariate	Males		Females	
SES	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	SES	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	SES	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value
day laborers	1		1		peasants	1		1		landless	1		1	
wage earners	0.9	0.119	1.03	0.707	text.workers	0.8	0.058	0.54	0.000	semi-landless	1.02	0.901	0.97	0.823
artisans	0.79	0.005	0.84	0.040	middle class	0.61	0.001	0.56	0.000	farmers	1.41	0.043	1.36	0.112
middle class	0.42	0.000	0.76	0.103						others	1.29	0.402	1.19	0.523
Population	Treppo					Casalguidi								
Covariate	Males		Females		Covariate	Males		Females						
SES	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	SES	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value					
peasants	1		1		day laborers	1		1						
others	0.68	0.198	1.82	0.010	sharecrop.	0.762	0.017	0.962	0.715					
unknown	0.65	0.077	0.28	0.000	peasants	0.749	0.064	1.288	0.060					
					artisans	1.014	0.923	1.051	0.706					
					middle class	0.382	0.036	0.607	0.069					

Socioeconomic status. In all of the populations the household’s SES was a powerful factor affecting the nuptiality of its members (table 5). If we compare the two extremes of the social scale, we find that the better off displayed a risk of marriage lower than that of the poorest group by 40 to 50 per cent. Only Crespino represents an interesting exception to the rule: indeed, for the young farmers the chances of getting married were much higher than for the landless and the semi-landless. This

can be easily explained by the need of providing the farm with the necessary working force. Indeed, most farmers' marriages were patrilocal: the risk of a patrilocal marriage was 52 per cent higher for the farmers than for the landless. On the other hand, the women grown up in farmers' families married quite early too: whereas the women left the parental home at marriage to join the household of another farmer, the men remained at home with their new family. It is also worth noting that for farmers the risk of a male marriage rose dramatically when the share of adults on the total size of the household became unfavorable.

Being a male member of a sharecropping family in Casalguidi decreased the risk of marrying by 29 per cent (as for the men and women of the middle class, their chances of marrying were even lower). Like for Crespino's farmers, also in sharecropping households men were discouraged from leaving the family; differently from Crespino, however, the landlords did not appreciate to have complex households running their farms, and pressed the family to avoid or delay any marriage that could alter the desired balance in the household composition. The contradiction is only apparent, though. In both cases marriage was molded to answer the needs of social reproduction: in Crespino by securing the family workforce in an area of extensive farming and low population pressure; in Casalguidi by keeping the right balance in an area where farming was intensive and population pressure high.

Even where households could not be as clearly featured as units of production, however, as in Follina and Venice, the social cleavage remained quite relevant. In Follina, the strong difference in the risk of marriage of textile workers in comparison to that of the small peasants can be easily understood as the desire of keeping as long as possible the children's contribution to the family earnings. For Venice as well, the hazards of marriage lowered steadily according to social rank. Only the wageworkers did not display statistically significant differences from the day laborers, whereas the decline was respectively of 21 and 58 per cent for the artisans and shopkeepers, and the members of the middle class. As for the females, there were similar though lesser differences: -16 (artisans), and -26 (middle class) per cent respectively. Finally, in Treppo the socioeconomic conditions seemed to affect particularly the female population, delaying dramatically the marriage of female peasants in comparison with the members of the landless families.

Parents. We turn now to a different point of view, taking into account the composition of the family and how it affected the chances of marrying. As mentioned above, we assumed that the requirements of social reproduction included also aspects such as the intergenerational relationship between parents and children. The effects of parental condition on the marriage of children could be contrasting, though. On the one hand, the grasp of parents on their children could relax with ageing, making an exit for marriage more likely. On the other hand, old parents, possibly widowed, would

require some assistance conditioning the marital choice of one child at least. This could involve either delaying an exit for marriage or giving it definitively up, or favoring the arrangement of a patrilocal marriage (Skinner 1997: 65-66).¹¹

Our results show that the negative impact was largely prevalent. We considered separately the presence and the age – below or above 60 – of both parents. Overall, we found that such covariates had an extremely heavy impact on the individual’s risk of marrying, confirming our assumption about the importance of parental coercion on their children’s destiny (table 6).

Table 6. Hazards models of the risk of first marriage. Effects of the presence and age of parents.

Population	Venice				Follina				Crespino			
Covariate	Males		Females		Males		Females		Males		Females	
Father	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value
below 60	1		1						1		1	
60 +	0.97	0.748	0.96	0.679	1.59	0.001	1.38	0.011	1.25	0.293	1.27	0.245
absent	1.19	0.041	1.29	0.001	1.38	0.017	1.15	0.236	1.46	0.016	1.52	0.009
Mother												
below 60	1		1						1		1	
60 +	0.87	0.163	0.86	0.148	1.84	0.000	1.04	0.789	0.93	0.699	1.01	0.959
absent	1.18	0.046	1.17	0.034	1.37	0.010	1.01	0.892	1.10	0.566	0.89	0.467
Population	Treppo Carnico				Madregolo				Casalguidi			
Covariate	Males		Females		Males		Females		Males		Females	
Father	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value
below 60	1		1		1		1		1		1	
60 +	2.29	0.026	1.82	0.083	1.45	0.047	0.91	0.642	1.86	0.000	1.45	0.001
absent	3.65	0.001	3.40	0.000	0.97	0.888	0.76	0.120	1.21	0.175	1.21	0.104
Mother												
below 60	1		1		1		1		1		1	
60 +	1.51	0.224	2.52	0.002	0.702	0.130	0.872	0.579	1.49	0.004	1.68	0.000
absent	1.85	0.046	5.48	0.000	1.228	0.203	0.930	0.639	1.15	0.313	0.95	0.678

Nevertheless, some further specifications are in order. In Casalguidi what mattered more was the old age of the parents, raising the chances of a marriage in the family by 85 and 45 per cent for males and females respectively. This leaves the question open whether such marriages were motivated by a weakening of parental authority, or rather by the need to replace the parental couple once the age for retirement was reached, and possibly one of the two had passed away. The first hypothesis would turn out quite disruptive for social reproduction, whereas the second would be a conservative one. Unfortunately no straightforward answer is possible. Analyzing separately

¹¹ Skinner (1997: 65) also suggested that in patrilineal stem family systems widows or widowers might have been at disadvantage in seeking a daughter-in-law for the heir designate, and that orphaned young men appeared less attractive in the marriage market.

patrilocal and neolocal marriages (tables not reported here), we find that a “weakness” of the parental couple, meaning that parents were old and possibly widowed, had a tremendous and positive impact on the likelihood of a male marriage in the family both for neolocal and patrilocal marriages. The difference was somehow stronger for the former, but was quite relevant also for the patrilocal ones. The only difference concerned the patrilocal marriage when both parents were absent. Whereas this condition made an exit for marriage three times more likely in comparison with what happened when both parents were present and “young”, the chances to marry and stay in the household were reduced by a half. On the other hand, if the mother was an “old” widow, the chance of a male patrilocal marriage was raised by 78 per cent.

Interestingly enough, not only Madregolo, the other sharecropping community, but also the other populations included in our study display very similar results, notwithstanding the diversity of their socioeconomic structure. In Treppo such an effect was extremely strong: a fatherless individual was 3.5 times more likely to marry than one living with a young father. The absence of the mother raised the chances of marrying of a woman by 5.5 times. In Crespino it was the father’s absence that made both males and females much more likely to marry. In Follina both the old age and the absence of the father raised the chances of marrying by 38 (females) to 59 (males) per cent. As for the mother, her absence affected in an even stronger way (+84 per cent) the marriage chances of sons, but not that of daughters, who were probably expected to take the mother’s place as housewives and caregivers. Unfortunately, in the case of Follina we are not able to discriminate between neolocal and patrilocal marriages, though patrilinearity seemed largely prevalent. We can discriminate in Venice, however, making it possible to distinguish among the different purposes a marriage could be used for. Indeed, in the Venetian case the age of the parents did not seem to matter, but their absence mattered a lot, for both parents and both sexes, raising the risk of marriage by about 20 per cent. Such an aspect was however dramatically enhanced in the case of virilocal or uxorilocal marriages, and much more so when the daughters were concerned: living with a widowed parent raised the likelihood of a virilocal arrangement by 2.3 times, and by 5.4 (with a widowed father) to 6.5 (with a widowed mother) times for an uxorilocal one (tables not displayed). To put things more simply, whenever the parental couple was broken, one of the children, preferably a daughter, was prompted to reconstitute a conjugal unit in the household. Even in an urban setting, and possibly more so than in the countryside, the attitude for a long-lasting intergenerational relationship was a basic tenet of familial and social relations, which explained the frequency of extended households arrangements (Seccombe 1993; Goody 1998: 89-90; Stavenhuter 1996). Not unexpectedly, it was the daughters who were primarily appointed with it (Derosas 2003; on daughters’ role, see Skinner 1997: 68).

Table 7. Hazards models of the risk of first marriage. Effects of the presence and age of siblings.

Population	Venice				Follina				Crespino			
Covariate	Males		Females		Males		Females		Males		Females	
Brothers	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value
none	1		1		1		1		1		1	
only younger	0.67	0.000	0.90	0.242	1.41	0.003	0.82	0.110	1.08	0.499	1.39	0.050
only older	0.72	0.000	0.80	0.007	0.60	0.007	0.55	0.000	0.83	0.126	0.77	0.140
both	0.71	0.001	0.88	0.175	0.64	0.047	0.72	0.037	0.85	0.248	1.19	0.359
Sisters												
none	1		1		1		1		1		1	
only younger	0.81	0.038	0.68	0.000	1.08	0.488	1.12	0.289	1.05	0.649	0.83	0.207
only older	0.87	0.073	0.83	0.011	0.51	0.000	0.71	0.034	0.59	0.005	0.80	0.352
both	0.60	0.000	0.79	0.016	0.32	0.000	0.45	0.000	0.69	0.189	0.64	0.329
Population	Treppo Carnico				Madregolo				Casalguidi			
Covariate	Males		Females		Males		Females		Males		Females	
Brothers	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value
none	1		1		1		1		1		1	
only younger	0.82	0.547	0.76	0.392	0.91	0.620	1.03	0.855	0.85	0.188	1.12	0.343
only older	0.65	0.249	0.71	0.263	0.92	0.684	0.83	0.306	0.70	0.008	0.95	0.679
both	1.87	0.188	1.18	0.727	0.82	0.329	0.70	0.067	0.37	0.000	1.01	0.917
Sisters												
none	1		1		1		1		1		1	
only younger	1.49	0.222	0.38	0.002	1.01	0.930	0.90	0.442	1.25	0.054	1.34	0.004
only older	1.06	0.886	0.28	0.000	0.22	0.003	0.41	0.010	0.49	0.000	0.67	0.009
both	0.72	0.509	2.22	0.079	0.33	0.029	0.37	0.001	0.46	0.001	0.52	0.000

Siblings. Siblings could represent a further constraint to marital choices. Families with many children might think better of letting marry only a few of them, not to spoil exceedingly their resources. Furthermore, in certain communities setting up too many marital alliances could be a source of embarrassment for the social relations of the families involved (Bourdieu 1976). Indeed, with remarkable homogeneity our communities displayed the same effects of the siblings' group composition (table 7). Everywhere the presence of older siblings in the family reduced dramatically the chances of marrying, roughly by about one half. Interestingly enough, this concerned both males and females, regardless of the gender of the siblings considered, although of course the effect was stronger when the gender was the same as that of the individual at risk. On the other hand, being the eldest in the sibling group had a positive effect on the risk of marriage in Casalguidi (for both males and females), Follina (for males), and Crespino (for females). In Venice, the presence of *any* sibling reduced dramatically the likelihood of a patrilocal marriage, both for males and females (tables not displayed). Although the combination of such effects might seem to point out to some mechanisms of seniority (as in Kertzer and Hogan 1991) – meaning that the eldest married earlier – that would

not be a correct interpretation, since the comparison was not carried out with the siblings of the same family, but with individuals in other families who were in a different position in their own siblings group. It seems therefore more appropriate to consider such results as the effect of constraints (or of a coercion exercised through parental intervention) affecting the chances of ever getting married at all.

Social capital. Our final point concerned a resource rather than a constraint to marriage. The question we asked is whether the network of social relations in which families were embedded – which we label as “social capital” – could enhance the chances of marriage of their member, relieving the strength of the hindrances or coercions taken into account thus far. This is coherent with our general framework, since the maintenance and extension of social relationship was certainly a primary concern of social reproduction. We used three different proxies of social capital, some of which unfortunately are not available for all the populations under study: these were the status of immigrant of the index individual, the size of the kinship network, and the social prestige. The latter was proxied by the number of times the parents of the index individual had been chosen as godparents in baptism ceremonies (table 8).

Table 8. Hazards models of the risk of first marriage. Effects of “social capital”

Population	Venice				Follina			
Covariate	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value	R. R.	p-value
Immigrant								
no	1		1		1		1	
yes	0.83	0.042	0.68	0.000	1.10	0.359	1.02	0.758
Kin (logged)	1.69	0.000	1.38	0.000	1.05	0.258	0.96	0.363
Times as godparents	n.a.		n.a.					
never					1		1	
1-3 times					1.54	0.000	1.37	0.006
4+ times					1.77	0.000	1.63	0.000
Population	Madregolo				Casalguidi			
Covariate	Males		Females		Males		Females	
	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value	O. R.	p-value
Immigrant								
no	1		1		1		1	
yes	0.82	0.197	1.03	0.865	1.06	0.558	0.95	0.516
Kin (logged)	0.98	0.330	1.01	0.536	1.01	0.523	1.00	0.751

Actually, migrant families did not seem disadvantaged in the marriage market. Interestingly enough, however, this concerned communities where immigration and turnover were quite intensive: indeed, in Follina, Madregolo, and Casalguidi, migrants were 40 to 60 per cent of the population at risk. In Venice, on the contrary, migrants were just above 10 per cent of the total and

were less likely to marry than their indigenous counterparts, by 17 and 32 per cent for males and females respectively. Lynch (1991: 83) argued that the high proportions of migrants was the single most important factor explaining “the exaggerated version of the European Marriage Pattern” displayed by early modern urban populations. Actually, as our populations show, intra-rural mobility could be more intense than migrations to cities. Somehow unexpectedly, Venice was itself a rather isolated community in the nineteenth century, ranking at the bottom place among the largest Italian cities both for migration rates and nuptiality rates (Derosas 2002: 726). Nevertheless, our results seem to confirm Lynch’s remarks, insofar as the urban population displayed a greater hostility to strangers, being possibly perceived as competitors for scarce resources, although their number was quite small (Hannerz 1980; Derosas 1999a).

Such an impression is reinforced by the analysis of the influence of kinship networks on the access to marriage. In all populations but Crespino and Treppo, we were able to trace and count all the kin to the index individual up to the third degree, who were present along time, including both agnates and cognates. In the three rural communities the extension of the kin network did not exert any influence on the chances of marriage. In Venice, on the contrary, this turned out quite strong, an increase by one unit in the logged number of kin raising the hazards of marriage by 38 to 69 per cent. In practice, this means that, all other things being equal, the chances of a neolocal marriage for men in the upper quintile of the kin distribution (from 22 kin up to 130) were from 3.5 to 7 times higher than those in the lower quintile (who had less than 6 kin).

Our final point regarded the social prestige of the family, which we have been able to approximate only for Follina through the frequency with which its members were chosen as godparents in baptism ceremonies. Indeed, this represented a major way to establish an alliance between the families involved (Munno 2005, 2006, 2008). Our findings were consistent with expectations: the family chosen most frequently were significantly more likely to have their children married, in a measure varying from by 37 to 77 per cent. Munno (2009: 336) also showed that the members of families who preferred to chose their godparents inside their own kin group were significantly less likely to marry than the members of families whose social relations were more open.

7. Discussion and conclusions

The purpose of our study was to propose a framework for the interpretation of the Italian conundrum of family systems and marriage patterns. However we had no ambition to dig a new grave in the Italian burial ground of family theories evocated by Kertzer (1991b). We believe that looking for any further comprehensive model would be an hopeless task. Similarly to the rest of Italy, our six populations display a puzzling variety of combinations, though sharing some basic

pattern such as relatively late ages at marriage, high percentages of never married, and, interestingly enough, a large number of patrilocal settlements. These shared features are not enough, however, to force such patterns into a comprehensive model – whether we name it “Mediterranean” or not – to put side by side of the illustrious one outlined for Northwest Europe by Hajnal (1965; 1982) and validated by Wrigley and Schofield (1993) for modern England.

Leaving classificatory problems aside, our interpretative framework pointed out social reproduction as the main organizing principle of family arrangements. We argued that if the larger background of social organization were not taken into account, the mechanisms governing family life would remain largely obscure. If marriage were primarily a matter of economic resources, how come that the members of the upper classes were those who married less and later were? Malthus provided a hedonistic explanation: the rich refrained from marrying not to give up such pleasures as the “illicit intercourse” they could easily indulge on as long as they remained unmarried (Malthus 1826: 397). Notwithstanding its modern flavor, such a position ignores the coercive component embedded in such an attitude, ending up dangerously close to a culturalist explanation. Also the Venetian nobles publicly declared their dislike for marriage (to which they were not allowed by their families), but resorted frequently to secret marriages, which were silently accepted since they brought no political nor patrimonial consequences for the families involved (Hunecke 1997; De Biase 1992). In the vacuum following the fall of the Republic, when the political coercions inspiring marriage strategies became suddenly meaningless, love marriages (and divorces) seemed to triumph: but it was a short parenthesis and more compelling class considerations soon prevailed again (Derosas 1997).

No doubt, cultural values could drive forcefully marital behavior (Bourdieu 1976), but it remains to explain what kind of material and political interests they served. Our approach avoided both cultural and economic explanatory frameworks. Indeed economy had an enormous influence on family organization, but it should not be the only one to take into account. Kertzer was certainly right in advocating the inclusion of political economic forces in the analysis of household history (Kertzer 1991a: 164-165). Interestingly enough, he supported his argument with examples from Eastern Europe. The Italian case might have offered examples as pertinent to his purpose as the East-European ones. Indeed, the distribution of landownership, the structure of farms, the juridical forms set up for their exploitation, the conditions of the workforce, were the outcome of historical processes, where politics mattered at least as much as economy. Such processes, for instance, together with the peculiar environmental settings, led to the deeply different ways in which farming was organized in Tuscany, Emilia, and the Veneto. As Sabeian (1990: 427) put it, “families have to be understood within a field of power”.

If the Italian family system appears so hopelessly complex, this depends on the multiplicity of the political, economic and social organizations in which it was framed. Albeit in different ways, however, all family arrangements were functional to their reproduction. Securing a regular and smooth reproduction of social structures required a tight and continuous control on family organization, and above all on the way marriages were managed. This was carried out through a complex and continuous interplay of factors of coercions and hindrances. As Bourdieu (1976: 140) put it, “the constraints surrounding every matrimonial choice are so numerous and appear in such complex combinations that the individuals involved cannot possibly deal with all of them consciously, even if they have mastered them on a different level.”

Much less so can we pretend to do it. We pointed out nevertheless some factors of coercions and constraints molding marital behavior, mostly of socioeconomic or demographic nature. These included the economic conjuncture, the socioeconomic status of the family, its composition, and the social capital families could rely upon. Overall, the sensitivity of nuptiality to current economic conditions, which was shown to be the pillar of the homeostatic regulations of population growth in England, turned out to be quite weak in our case studies, and limited to those social groups who were more exposed to market conditions.

Regardless of the economic conjuncture, socioeconomic status was nonetheless a very strong factor differentiating access to marriage. In all of our populations, such an access was inversely related to the social gradient, a result that could be hardly explained but within the logic of social reproduction and its coercive power, which was primarily committed to parental control. The only relevant, and revealing, exception to the rule that the better off married later and less was that of Crespino’s tenant farmers. In an area of extensive farming and low population density, the need of a stable and rather large workforce was met resorting to the early patrilocal marriage of sons, giving place to large complex households, and the circulation of daughters among other tenants’ families. It is hardly surprising that, under this respect, Crespino displayed the same features as those characterizing the large estates of the Baltic provinces (Plakans and Wetherell 2005), as any other area with extensive farming (see e.g. Gunnlaugsson and Guttormsson 1993), as Hajnal himself suggested (Hajnal 1965: 133-134). A similar situation probably characterized the sharecropping area of Madregolo, though unfortunately we cannot put forward direct evidence about it. On the contrary, where agriculture was intensive and demographic pressure high, as in Casalguidi, sharecroppers were forced to follow a different policy of late marriage and frequent celibacy in order to maintain their social status. As Viazzo (2005: 146) argued, “in spite of retaining a joint family system, [the Tuscan sharecroppers] were able progressively to delay – and restrict – marriage [...] *precisely because* they wanted to remain sharecroppers” (Viazzo’s italics). Although

in the Tuscan system the coercive power of the landlords played a decisive role, we should not overstate it. Indeed, similar marriage patterns could be found among the olive and wine-growing families in the Kingdom of Naples studied by Delille (1985). In this case the authority over marriages was not exercised by the landlord but by the collective interests of the kin group ruling over the *quartier lignager*. At the end, both purposes and outcomes were basically the same.

As these examples show, social reproduction was secured through the ways that most suited the demographic and environmental conditions of different areas. Overall, the ultimate concern for controlling marital behavior was the need to keep demographic growth in line with economic opportunities. Admittedly, this might sound like a refurbishing of the Malthusian approach. The point is however that families did not care about the overall balance between population pressure and economic resources. They did care about maintaining their wellbeing and social standing and tried to behave correspondingly. Homeostasis was rather the (unintentional) outcome of the (intentional) pursuit of social reproduction.¹²

Obviously, this was not always the case, though. In nineteenth-century Piedmont marriage control did not prevent the fragmentation of family plots, jeopardizing the self-sufficiency of textile workers and making them more susceptible to the crises of the manufacturing sector (Ramella 1984). On the contrary, the Venetian aristocracy was almost completely extinguished as a consequence of its stubborn restriction of marriages to avoid asset dispersion (Hunecke 1997). Similarly, the demographic crisis of the late seventeenth century compelled the Neapolitan populations studied by Delille (1985) to abandon their ultra-conservative polity, opening to female inheritance and accepting strangers. In other cases, socioeconomic changes themselves made coercive powers less effective. Since the 1870s the Po plain where Crespino lies was invested by a deep reorganization of farming units and management, turning almost exclusively to daily-hired labor for the fieldwork. This was reflected by a rise of nuptiality among the day laborers, which they later paid for with structural unemployment and massive emigration to America. This process was also accompanied by widespread complaints about a loss of authority at all social levels and the lack of obedience by the youth (Derosas 2003). On the contrary, the sharecropping system turned out remarkably stable along time (Breschi 1990). In the period under study, the population of Casalguidi grew by 41 per cent, and the number of households by 34 per cent. However, while the households of the day laborers tripled, those of the sharecroppers grew only by 14 per cent.

Although we have focused here on the Italian case, we believe that the principles of social reproduction shaped marriage and family patterns in all societies. Obviously, we do not argue that

¹² In a similar vein, Lesthaeghe (1980: 530) argued that “demographic homeostasis is not a feature that stands on its own and needs explanation *sui generis* by inventing a special concept such as ‘unconscious rationality’; rather it is a logical ingredient in a broader homeostasis relating to the entire social system”. See also Fertig 2003.

such principles were the same everywhere, nor that all societies tended to remain unchanged along time. On the contrary, there was a strict relationship between the dynamism of societies and the corresponding changes in family patterns. Lots of essays and books have been written, arguing that European capitalism and the industrial revolution itself were tributary to the peculiar family system that prevailed in Northwest Europe (see e.g. Macfarlane 1986; Jones 2003; Hartman 2004). We suggest that such a relationship should be viewed also the other way around. Bourdieu (1990: 189) argued that it was the failures in the reproductive mechanisms, such as marriage misalliances, sterility, and assets partition, which represented the main factors of transformation of economic and social hierarchy. Correspondingly, conservative and stationary societies, characterized by long-term economic stagnation, hostility towards innovation, and preference for rent seeking positions, found a fundamental pillar in the social reproduction guaranteed by the family system that most befitted their functioning.¹³

¹³ See also McNicoll's remarks: "An exploration in functional terms – seeing particular structures as, for example, devices for maintaining power positions or diffusing risk – is an important source of insight into socio-economic stasis in a changing environment" (McNicoll 1978: 89, quoted by Lesthaeghe 1980: 548). A convincing reassessment of the economic consequences of the persistence of "amoral familism" in Italy and the corresponding deficit of social capital in Alesina and Ichino 2009.

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