

Lucia Pasquini Alessandra Samoggia

The determinants of marriage and cohabitation in Europe

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UNIVERSITÀ DI BOLOGNA

Dipartimento di Scienze Statistiche “Paolo Fortunati”

1. Premise

According to the theory of ideational shifts [Preston 1986], the growing spread of new forms of life as a couple may be attributed to the increase in individual autonomy in the ethical, religious and political field, i.e. to changes in the scale of subjective values. The cultural dimension influences the acceptance and experimentation of the different forms of union in a different way for the man and for the woman. The importance at the explanatory phase of taking account of ideational factors in addition to economic ones has been discussed in depth and demonstrated in the case of certain countries of central Europe by Lesthaeghe and Moors [1996].

And it is the framework of Lesthaeghe and Moors which we take as our starting point in this study, for the analysis from a gender perspective of the role played by value orientations in the choice of the various forms of life as a couple, marriage and cohabitation, in certain areas of Europe. In particular, cohabitation will be taken as representing that type of partnership which, at least theoretically, is associated with a reduction in gender differences: indeed, the absence of pre-established roles for the partners should render the relationship within the couple more egalitarian and free. Moreover, in consideration of the fact that the various European countries exhibit a distribution of types of union which is extremely differentiated [Kiernan 2000], we wish to assess whether there is any corresponding existence of similarly differentiated ideational factors; indeed, we cannot necessarily assume that the same value orientations lead to similar patterns of behaviour [Lesthaeghe 1998].

2. The countries analysed

The analysis was performed on some European countries adhering to the Ffs which are indicative of the different situations of diffusion of the new family models and exhibited different value systems.

In some countries (for example those of Scandinavia), the new family types and free partnerships had already started to spread in the 'sixties and are currently regarded by society as equivalent to conjugal partnerships. In other, more conservative countries, the new models appeared later and cohabitation, nowadays uncommon, still represents a deviant pattern of behaviour [Prinz 1995]. In order to observe the determinants which induce men and women to opt for cohabitation, we decided first of all to limit our study to those countries where this has not yet become a common way of living as a couple: indeed, it is precisely in such societies that the circumstances leading to a non-conventional choice might be identified.

Moreover, since we regard the ideational system as playing an important role among the determinants influencing the choice of the type of partnership, we decided to select the countries to be analysed on the basis of the scheme developed by Inglehart [1997]. Using data from the World Values Survey (1990-91), conducted in several countries in Europe and elsewhere, the author synthesised opinions expressed by respondents on a substantial number of items regarding a wide variety of themes (religion, politics, sexual behaviour and so on), identifying two main dimensions of values: the first contrasting tradition with secularisation, the second contrasting "survival" values with "wellbeing" values. On the Cartesian plane formed by the two dimensions of values, it is possible to visualise eight main areas of homogeneity as regards the values expressed. Three of these areas concern the European countries, which turn out to be grouped and named by Inglehart as follows: "Catholic Europe" (Austria, Belgium, France, Italy, Portugal and Spain); "northern Europe" (Denmark, Finland, West Germany, Great Britain, Iceland, Norway, the Netherlands, Sweden and Switzerland) and "eastern Europe" (Belarus, Bulgaria, Czechoslovakia, Estonia, East Germany, Latvia, Lithuania, Rumania, Russia, Slovenia and Hungary). The countries observed in this study were picked from within these areas without any claims to their being representative.

For "Catholic Europe", located in an average position with respect to the system of reference, Spain was selected in addition to Italy. Italy and Spain exhibit notable similarities (tab. 1): late exit from family of origin, which in the vast majority of cases coincides with marriage (among women in a partnership aged between 25-29, the percentage of those having entered their first partnership directly with marriage is equal to 86% and 80% in the two countries respectively), a high total female first marriage rate, a low

incidence of cohabitation and a consequently low rate of extra-marital births. Both countries, which were still less developed at the end of the Second World War, have been the scene of notable economic progress which has allowed them to achieve levels of modernisation close to those of the economically more advanced areas of Europe. The weight of the agricultural sector, still very important in the '50s, has fallen considerably, especially in Italy, giving way to a substantial expansion of the tertiary sector. The intense economic development which has seen the alternation of phases of growth with phases of recession or stagnation from the post-war period to today has featured a decidedly inferior participation of women in the labour market compared to that of men, albeit increasing over time, which is overall lower than women's participation the more advanced economies. It is, moreover, women who have been the most penalised, especially in recent years, by the phenomenon of unemployment afflicting both countries, which in certain areas of Spain has reached rates three times higher than the European average for younger women. The intense process of modernisation has also facilitated a marked reduction in the rate of illiteracy, which was still fairly high in the '50s, especially in Spain.

Tab. 1. *Some demographic indicators concerning the second half of the 1990s in the selected countries*

	median age at first leaving the parental home		total female first marriage rate	mean age of woman at first marriage	% W ₂₅₋₂₉ married directly	mean age at the first live birth	total period fertility rate	% extra-marital births	total divorce rate
	M	F	women _{<50}	women _{<50}					
Italy	24.3	22.1	0.63	26.6	86	28.0	1.24	8.1	0.1
Spain	24.7	23.0	0.60	26.8	80	28.4	1.27	11.1	0.1
Switzerland	20.8	18.8	0.64	28.7	19	27.2	1.53	6.8	0.4
Slovenia	20.5	20.5	0.51	25.1	41	24.9	1.36	29.8	0.1
Hungary	24.2	20.9	0.56	22.9	76	23.8	1.69	20.7	0.3
Latvia	23.2	21.1	0.47	22.9	50	23.3	1.64	29.9	0.4

Source: Eurobarometer Surveys; Kiernan [2000]; Standard Country Report, Conseil de l' Europe [1997].

For the area named by Inglehart "northern Europe", which groups together countries marked by a high rate of secularisation and by values mainly associated with wellbeing, the choice was unavoidable: only Switzerland data on values and opinions are available. This country exhibits many demographic features similar to those to be found in Italy and Spain especially as regards the total female first marriage rate, mean age at first marriage, percentage of extra-marital births, but which is decidedly differentiated by age of exit from the parental home, which turns out to be particularly early. In fact, it is the lowest for all the countries observed in the case of women; cohabitation also started to spread in Switzerland from the 'seventies onwards: among younger women (25-29) living in a couple, only 19% entered their first partnership with marriage [Kiernan 2000]. Switzerland enjoyed favourable economic conditions from the post-war period to the end of the 'eighties, which were followed by a period of deep crisis of a mainly structural nature, accompanied by an increase in unemployment which, while currently displaying extremely contained levels compared to the European average, had been virtually non-existent prior to that. Participation in the labour market has always been high, with a growing female component linked - among other things - to the increased fragility of partnerships, as testified by the high total divorce rate.

From the countries called by Inglehart "eastern Europe" were selected Slovenia, Hungary and Latvia, where a high degree of secularisation is accompanied by the persistence of "survival values". Slovenia is characterised by early exit from the family of origin, a substantial diffusion of cohabitation, a high percentage of extra-marital births and a relatively high mean age at first marriage, similar to Italy's. Hungary is located in an intermediate position between Slovenia on one side and Italy and Spain on the other; it is closer to Slovenia in its limited total female first marriage rate and the substantial percentage of extra-marital births, an effect of the spread of cohabitation which is not always the result of free choice but often reflects the impossibility of contracting marriage for economic reasons [Prinz 1995]. It is aligned with Italy and Spain as regards the percentage of women entering their first union with marriage (76%). Latvia is distinguished by the lowest total female first marriage rate and the highest percentage of

extra-marital births of all the countries examined. While it is remarkably close to Hungary in its low age of exit from parental home and mean age at first marriage, it differs from all the other countries analysed in the fact that it has no prevailing marriage pattern: indeed, the proportion of young women entering into first partnership through marriage is virtually equal to that of those opting for cohabitation in Latvia. The three countries observed share a more modest level of economic development compared to the European average, and are also marked by the existence of a period of economic-political crisis between the mid 1980s and the early 1990s due to the collapse of the economies of the communist regime and the recent achievement of political independence. Participation in the labour market is very high in Latvia, which exhibited rates of activity among the highest in the world in the 1980s, especially as regards women, and fairly high in Hungary and Slovenia. The recent economic recession has, however, determined a growing rate of unemployment, which is particularly high among Hungarian men due to the crisis of the industrial sector. The increase in prices and the reduction of the buying power of wages measured in the years of crisis have led to a high degree of inflation, especially in Latvia, exercising a negative impact on demographic and social evolution.

In brief, this is the socio-economic situation which emerges at a national level in the six countries selected, which are often highly differentiated, at a local level; our desire to draw up a synthetic picture, in addition to the limits imposed by the nature of the data, has therefore prompted us to focus the analysis on the countries as a whole, ignoring the specific characteristics of individual sub-national contexts.

3. Value orientations and living arrangements

As far as the relation between value orientations and living arrangements is concerned, it is as important to specify that this may be expressed both in terms of "selection effect" and in those of "affirmation effect". Selection exists when the different family forms mainly attract individuals who have already adopted a specific orientation in their value system; affirmation (or negation) exists when the adoption of a living arrangement leads to a reinforcement (or weakening) of certain values. The combination of these effects leads to a model in which causality is not unidirectional, but recursive. According to sociological and psychological theories, the selection effect, which originates in the phase of socialisation, predominates; economic theories, on the other hand, stress the importance of the affirmation effect, regarding values as an after-the-fact rationalisation of a previous choice, based on a cost-benefit assessment.

Selection effects can be captured in a single survey by means of retrospective questions, i.e. through questions concerning past situations and events (characteristics of the family of origin, place of residence up until adolescence, etc.). The retrospective method has made it possible to effectively demonstrate that the process of socialisation and the characteristics of the family of origin play an important role on the choice of family type and on subsequent demographic events, through selection effects [Kiernan 1992; Thornton 1991; Villeneuve-Gokalp 1990].

Affirmation (or negation) effects have been much less analysed. The few studies conducted [Thornton, Axinn and Hill 1992] have demonstrated that it is normal for people to change their values as a result of their experiences, especially important ones such as getting married, having children, getting divorced and so on. Family choices are generally more often due to a recursive effect; this has been noted in the case of the link between marriage and religious conviction (or cohabitation and non-observance): for example, married women mainly belong to the more religious groups, and marriage reinforces the religious characteristics of these women.

The cross-sections which are available to us capture the result of the entire recursive process: indeed, these make it possible to observe the association between value system and family forms in any given instance, without the possibility of making distinctions between selection and affirmation effects.

4. Ideational values of respondents

The questions chosen to define the value system concern religious observance¹, tradition/innovation, the reasons considered sufficient for the dissolution of a union or for having an abortion, the sense of responsibility towards children and materialism/post-materialism² (Pros. 1).

¹ The religiousness of the respondent was captured by means of a synthesis of the two variables selected, distinguishing those declaring themselves religious ("yes" and "somewhat") as "practising" if they take part in a

Prospectus 1. *Questions selected for the definition of value-orientations*

<p>RELIGIOUS OBSERVANCE Are you religious? - Yes - Somewhat - No - Don't know How often do you attend religious services (apart from weddings, funerals, baptisms and the like)? - More than once a week - Once a week - About once a month - Only at official holidays - Once a year - (practically) never</p> <p>TRADITION/INNOVATION Do you tend to agree or disagree with each of the following statements? - Marriage is an outdated institution - If a woman wants to have a child as a single parent, and she does not want to have a stable relationship with a man, she should be able to have the child - It would be a good thing if in the future more emphasis was placed on family life</p> <p>REASONS FOR SPLITTING UP Would you consider each of the following reasons sufficient or insufficient for splitting up? - Lack of love from partner - Personality clashes with partner - Aggressive behaviour from partner - Unsatisfactory division of household tasks with partner - Unfaithful behaviour by partner</p>	<p>- Unsatisfactory sexual relationship with partner - Inability to have children with partner - Disagreement about the number of children to have</p> <p>APPROVATION/ DISAPPROVATION OF ABORTION Do you approve or disapprove of abortion under the following circumstances? - When the mother's health is at risk from the pregnancy - When the child is likely to be born physically handicapped - When the woman is not married - When a married couple does not want to have any more children - When the woman does not wish to have a child for the time being</p> <p>PARENTAL RESPONSIBILITIES Which of the following statements describe best your view on parental responsibilities towards children? - It is the parents' duty to do their best for their children, even at the expense of their own well-being - Parents have lives of their own and should not be asked to sacrifice their own well-being for the sake of their children - Neither</p> <p>MATERIALISM/POST-MATERIALISM Which one of the four different national goals listed below would you say is the most (the second most) important for this country to strive for in the next 10 years? - Maintaining order in the nation - Giving people more say in important government decisions - Fighting inflation - Protecting freedom of speech</p>
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With a view of characterising the selected countries on the basis of their declared values, we shall refer - in the analysis which follows - to the answers provided by all respondents, in order to gain an overall

religious ceremony at least once a month and "non-practising" if they only take part in compulsory events or once a year or hardly ever; the others are defined as "non religious".

² Those interviewees who think that maintaining order in the nation and the fighting against inflation are important national objectives are defined as "materialists"; those who give more importance to having more say as regards important government decisions and to protecting freedom of speech are defined as "post-materialists". Inglehart actually uses a broader battery of items to identify materialists and post-materialists; the two questions selected may however be taken as proxies for the physiological and social needs ("physical and economic security" and "self-fulfillment") which distinguish the two currents of thought. In addition, those identifying both of the materialist (or post-materialist) objectives as being the most important were defined as "decidedly materialist" (or "decidedly post-materialist"), and the others as "mixed".

picture of the ideational system, even though, as we have said, we shall go on to focus our attention on those living in union in the next part of the study.

It should also be pointed out that, in order to render the data more homogeneous, the analysis was limited to individuals aged between 20 and 39, as the range of respondents' age actually differs from country to country.

The analysis of the system of values expressed by respondents was differentiated by sex, country of residence and partnership status. The latter was divided into four types: on the one hand, those living as a couple were divided into "married" and "cohabiting"; on the other, respondents not in union were divided into two large groups according to whether they had had at least one previous experience of marriage or cohabitation ("singles 2"), or whether they never lived as a couple ("singles 1"). Indeed, it is hypothesised that, either due to a selection effect or due to an affirmation effect, the fact of having experienced life as a couple or not may influence the system of values in a differential manner, i.e. it may have determined the various choices of partnership made.

Tab. 2 . *Living arrangements in the selected countries*

	Single1		Single2		Married		Cohabiting		Total	
	men	women	men	women	men	women	men	women	men	women
Italy	56.9	40.3	4.0	3.0	37.6	54.4	1.4	2.2	846	3,362
Spain	46.9	31.9	4.5	4.2	44.5	59.5	4.1	4.4	1,352	2,638
Switzerland	27.8	19.8	8.4	9.1	47.5	56.0	16.3	15.1	2,029	2,027
Slovenia	26.4	15.9	3.9	4.7	57.8	67.6	11.9	11.8	1,203	1,811
Hungary	33.3	14.1	7.1	10.2	55.1	70.5	4.5	5.2	820	3,184
Latvia	21.4	14.9	12.1	17.5	57.9	59.4	8.6	8.2	990	1,708

Table 2 shows everywhere a general prevalence of married individuals among women, and also among men in Slovenia, Hungary and Latvia. In the other three countries the percentage of married men is lower than 50%. In Italy, in particular, this situation is determined by late exit from the family of origin, as shown by the high percentages of "singles 1". In Switzerland, on the other hand, this is caused by the more widespread incidence of cohabitation. "Singles 2", i.e. those who have gone back to being single, are fairly substantial in Switzerland, Hungary and Latvia, both due to higher divorce rate marking the three countries and due to the greater incidence, especially in Switzerland and Latvia, of cohabitation which, as we know, tends to break up more easily than marriage. Cohabitants assume considerable importance only in Switzerland, Slovenia and Latvia, as has already been shown. In these countries, but above all in Switzerland, cohabitation mainly represents a trial period prior to marriage, and to a much smaller extent an alternative for life as a couple [Charton and Wanner 2001].

Tab. 3. *Percentage of cohabitants among 100 in union and distribution of cohabitation by type* *

	Italy and Spain		Switzerland		Slovenia		Hungary		Latvia	
	men	women	men	women	men	women	men	women	men	women
Cohabitants among 100 in union	6.8	5.3	25.5	21.2	17.1	14.8	7.6	6.9	12.9	12.1
Cohabitations free	83.6	77.5	97.9	96.7	95.1	87.3	97.1	93.4	-	-
forced	16.4	22.5	2.1	3.3	4.9	12.7	2.9	6.6	-	-

* In Latvia it is not possible to distinguish free from forced cohabitations, because the information about marital status of the partner is rarely available.

Let it not be forgotten, however, that cohabitation does not always derive from a free choice. It sometimes represents the only possible way for the two partners to live together. Indeed, the existence of economic or legal constraints may render marriage impossible and individuals may resort to an informal partnership while waiting for such obstacles to be overcome. The data available tells us nothing about any

possible economic problems, though it can tell us something about the legal ones. The joint analysis of the partners' marital status makes it possible to distinguish "free" cohabitants, who are technically single, widowed or divorced, from "forced" cohabitants, among whom at least one of the partners is still married or awaiting a divorce. From Tab. 3 we may note the extreme variability of both the proportion of cohabitants and the importance assumed by the two types, even though "free" cohabitation represents the vast majority in every country³. In Italy and Spain, where informal partnerships are still relatively uncommon, the percentage of "forced" ones is comparatively high, presumably showing that cohabitation is more often the result of the impossibility of getting married than in the other countries.

The value system expressed by respondents according to gender and country of residence⁴ is synthesised in Tab. 4. Religious observance displays significant gender differences in all the countries analysed. The most religious countries, as was to be expected, are those with the most deeply rooted Catholic tradition: Italy and Spain. These countries are joined by Switzerland, which is marked by the virtual absence of the non-religious. Italians display a higher degree of religious observance than the Spanish, while the Swiss are mainly non-practising. The other countries contrast with these for the high proportion of the non-religious, who actually represent almost half the respondents in Hungary and Latvia. Of those stating that they are religious, women practise their religion more frequently than men.

The questions posed in order to assess the countries' level of innovation or tradition make it possible to trace some interesting indications. A clear majority of respondents agree that a woman wants to have a child as a single parent, with the exception of Italy and Switzerland, most probably due to the higher degree of conservatism marking these countries. Excluding Italy, women more often agree to this than men. There is a greater degree of uniformity of views regarding the importance attributed to marriage: in every country almost three-quarters of respondents do not regard marriage as an outdated institution. Women are of this opinion more often than men. The value attributed to the family is very strong everywhere: the vast majority of respondents think that it would be a good thing if in the future more emphasis was placed on family life. Although women are of this opinion more often than men, the high percentage of agreement in certain countries ends up uniting the two genders. Overall, we may therefore state that the most traditional values (marriage and the family) are strongly rooted in Europe, despite the large socio-cultural differences existing among the six countries.

The other questions chosen to assess the level of innovation or tradition concern the reasons for dissolving a partnership or having an abortion, and parents' responsibilities towards their children. As for the former, the reasons regarded as sufficient in all countries are lack of love, aggressive behaviour from partner and unfaithful behaviour by partner. Aggression on the part of a partner, which produces significant differences between genders in all countries, is indicated mainly by women as being a sufficient reason; lack of love and infidelity are, on the other hand, more often indicated by men. For women, the essential requirements for a partnership are therefore understanding and respect between partners. They also appear to be better disposed than men to continue a couple relationship in the face of difficulties, i.e. they exhibit a greater degree of commitment, but they are more intransigent in the absence of accord with their partner.

The reasons regarded as sufficient for having an abortion differ considerably from country to country, also highlighting notable gender differences within each of these. The most broadly accepted reasons concern risk to the health of the mother and the possibility of a handicap in the child: there is very broad agreement on this, except in Switzerland. In the countries of eastern Europe, long characterised by a high rate of legal induced abortion due to the scarce availability of modern contraception, abortion is generally accepted - mainly by women - in cases where there is no intention for the time to have a child or there is a desire to put off pregnancy. The questions concerning the reasons for dissolving a partnership or having an abortion produce greater differences among the countries than the previous ones. Indeed, in the less religious countries, partnerships appear to be more unstable, and more reasons are given by respondents as being sufficient for dissolving them. Abortion is also justified in these countries not only on serious grounds (danger to the health of the mother or possible disability in the child), but also as a way of limiting or spacing births.

³ The higher percentages of forced cohabitations observed in each country for women depend on the different sample size of the two groups. Being smaller, the male group presumably captures this rare phenomenon less frequently.

⁴ For reasons of space we do not include the tables describing the values expressed by respondents according to living arrangements, but we do note the most important results in the text.

Tab. 4 . Values expressed by respondents according to gender

Variables	Italy		Spain		Switzerland	
	men	women*	men	women*	men	women*
Religious observance						
practising	30.7	49.0	17.7	30.2	10.7	15.5
non-practising	55.0	42.3	52.3	50.4	88.8	84.0
Motherhood of a single		*		*		*
agree	55.7	48.8	83.2	90.7	43.5	48.5
disagree	39.3	46.7	14.0	7.8	40.2	35.2
Marriage is an outdated		*		*		*
agree	18.7	14.0	27.3	19.4	13.8	9.4
disagree	77.5	83.9	69.1	77.5	67.9	72.8
More emphasis on family		*		*		*
agree	91.2	92.9	85.6	89.2	84.4	86.1
disagree	6.2	4.4	8.3	5.0	5.6	4.0
Reasons for splitting up						
lack of love from partner				*		*
sufficient	78.3	77.7	89.7	93.8	73.7	77.7
insufficient	18.7	19.7	7.9	4.7	21.8	16.9
personality clashes with		*		*		*
sufficient	41.1	38.7	49.0	50.6	61.8	57.8
insufficient	56.4	56.9	45.8	44.5	33.9	36.2
aggressive behaviour		*		*		*
sufficient	93.8	96.0	89.4	95.5	91.8	97.0
insufficient	5.4	3.3	7.9	3.6	6.7	1.6
household tasks' division		*		*		*
sufficient	5.0	3.9	19.6	16.1	4.0	4.0
insufficient	93.5	95.1	77.3	81.6	94.8	95.1
unfaithful behaviour						
sufficient	71.9	70.5	76.6	79.4	58.3	57.4
insufficient	23.5	22.8	17.8	15.0	34.1	34.9
unsatisfactory sexual		*		*		*
sufficient	36.8	29.1	35.4	35.1	19.5	14.7
insufficient	57.6	60.5	58.3	55.8	75.1	77.8
inability to have children		*		*		*
sufficient	7.3	5.7	5.4	5.0	3.6	5.9
insufficient	90.0	91.0	92.5	92.4	94.3	90.7
number of children to have		*		*		*
sufficient	2.9	2.1	2.9	3.0	1.9	1.3
insufficient	95.4	96.4	95.7	95.1	97.5	97.2
Abortion						
mother's health		*		*		*
approve	90.6	84.5	93.7	91.6	92.5	86.9
disapprove	6.1	10.4	4.4	6.0	4.2	8.7
child's health		*		*		*
approve	79.6	81.0	73.9	76.5	61.3	57.1
disapprove	15.1	12.4	19.4	16.7	29.8	33.3
not married women		*		*		*
approve	15.8	10.7	29.9	27.7	12.3	15.9
disapprove	79.1	83.9	64.5	68.0	83.9	79.8
limiting births		*		*		*
approve	12.0	11.6	37.6	34.3	22.4	23.0
disapprove	84.9	83.6	58.2	61.1	73.7	71.1
spacing births		*		*		*
approve	25.7	20.9	36.9	36.6	26.5	24.9
disapprove	66.5	72.6	57.1	58.2	68.6	68.6
Responsibility towards				*		*
total devotion toward	71.0	73.9	85.6	81.3	21.4	12.4
parent's right	13.4	11.4	8.1	10.4	65.6	76.5
neither	13.2	12.8	4.7	6.4	-	-
Materialism/post-		*		*		*
materialist	47.8	25.5	40.7	47.5	25.0	24.5
post-materialist	50.3	22.8	56.7	49.1	45.5	48.6

* $p < 0,05$

Tab. 4 (continued) . *Values expressed by respondents according to gender*

Variables	Slovenia		Hungary		Latvia	
	men	women	men	women	men	women
Religious observance		*		*		*
practising	25.7	31.8	8.4	13.6	7.0	15.7
non-practising	44.7	45.2	38.9	42.4	37.7	47.2
Motherhood of a single		*				*
agree	70.1	77.2	74.4	77.4	67.2	78.6
disagree	22.0	16.8	17.3	14.4	17.8	12.7
Marriage is an outdated						*
agree	19.9	19.8	15.4	13.0	17.3	15.7
disagree	72.7	72.5	77.7	79.9	68.5	73.8
More emphasis on family				*		*
agree	94.3	95.6	86.5	92.5	80.5	89.4
disagree	2.5	2.1	5.3	2.7	3.9	2.8
Reasons for splitting up						*
lack of love from partner						*
sufficient	64.4	63.1	84.9	83.4	74.5	69.5
insufficient	27.8	28.2	9.7	10.1	15.9	19.1
personality clashes with						
sufficient	44.7	48.3	36.8	36.2	28.4	29.0
insufficient	48.8	45.1	51.6	52.0	48.9	49.4
aggressive behaviour		*		*		*
sufficient	78.0	88.9	61.7	75.1	42.8	87.7
insufficient	18.6	8.5	26.8	17.9	38.6	7.0
household tasks' division				*		*
sufficient	13.7	11.8	10.9	9.1	5.4	7.3
insufficient	82.4	83.5	82.1	85.5	86.7	85.2
unfaithful behaviour				*		*
sufficient	60.6	57.5	73.4	62.8	71.3	60.4
insufficient	31.3	33.6	16.9	24.9	16.4	22.6
unsatisfactory sexual		*		*		*
sufficient	29.2	21.1	46.8	39.7	49.3	47.2
insufficient	61.2	68.8	36.4	42.9	28.0	29.6
inability to have children						
sufficient	17.7	16.8	17.6	18.2	13.3	17.2
insufficient	73.2	74.4	65.1	67.1	67.2	63.9
number of children to have		*				
sufficient	5.4	8.5	6.3	6.8	2.7	2.9
insufficient	88.9	86.0	81.3	83.4	87.2	88.2
Abortion				*		
mother's health				*		
approve	94.7	94.9	95.9	97.2	87.7	89.5
disapprove	3.5	3.4	2.6	1.0	5.9	5.8
child's health		*		*		*
approve	87.0	91.2	90.6	95.4	79.8	87.6
disapprove	8.2	5.6	4.6	2.1	9.6	6.6
not married women				*		
approve	18.1	18.6	35.3	41.2	11.4	10.4
disapprove	76.7	77.0	50.6	43.5	76.1	78.0
limiting births		*		*		
approve	48.3	55.2	62.3	69.3	43.6	40.5
disapprove	43.3	36.5	25.3	18.9	39.4	44.6
spacing births		*		*		*
approve	38.8	49.1	41.6	53.6	37.0	50.1
disapprove	51.5	42.3	38.9	30.7	39.3	33.8
Responsibility towards		*		*		*
total devotion toward	86.2	82.5	64.4	67.0	53.1	47.2
parent's right	5.5	6.6	14.0	11.1	7.0	10.2
neither	5.0	7.8	13.8	15.3	27.3	30.1
Materialism/post-		*		*		*
materialist	55.5	62.2	68.3	70.9	42.1	34.1
post-materialist	43.7	37.4	29.1	24.4	6.9	4.8

* p< 0,05

The sense of responsibility towards children is strongly felt nearly everywhere. With the exception of Switzerland, where the percentage of respondents declaring that parents also need to think of themselves is highest, total dedication towards children prevails in all the other countries examined. This dedication is the most common among men in Latvia, Slovenia, Spain and Switzerland, and among women in Hungary. There are no significant gender differences in Italy, the country in which the value of children is most deeply rooted.

The questions aimed at identifying materialist and post-materialist values were those which caused the greatest problems for respondents who, in many cases, were unable to establish an order of importance for the items proposed. This perplexity was particularly acute in Latvia, Italy and Switzerland (57%, 42% and 28% of respondents felt unable to answer in these countries) and generally greater for women than for men. Those adhering to post-materialist values were more frequent only in Spain and Switzerland, and, in the case of men, only in Italy and Slovenia. With the exception of Switzerland, where no significant gender differences appear, women more often display materialist values compared to men.

From this descriptive analysis, it is possible to note the presence of gender differences as regards the values expressed by respondents in the countries analysed. Indeed, with the exception of certain reasons given for splitting up, the majority of countries exhibits significantly different attitudes between men and women.

In general, what would appear to emerge is that although women display more conservative values than men (indeed, they practise their religion more often, they adhere more frequently to materialist values and they tend more to attribute great value to marriage and the family), they are nonetheless clearly more accepting of change: indeed, the more widespread acceptance of birth outside a stable partnership, the greater acceptance of resorting to an abortion - even when there is no risk to the health of mother or child - and the identification of aggression on the part of the partner as the main reason for dissolving a partnership all show how a common female ideational model is taking shape in the countries analysed, still strongly characterized by the existence of great traditional values, but with more innovative elements compared to the male ideational model.

An analysis for which we shall not present the data for reasons of brevity shows that specific value systems are associated with the status of being/not being in a partnership. Cohabitants and those who have gone back to being single are fairly often marked by a greater degree of individual autonomy, a greater prevalence of secular values, a rejection of institutional morals and imposed ethics, an affirmation of freedom of choice, a rejection of conformism and greater tolerance towards others, compared to those who are married or those who have never lived as a couple. However, there are also values which are so strong that they are perfectly shared by everyone and do not have religious and cultural boundaries; such values concern the importance of marriage, the family and children.

5. Ideational dimensions

To confirm the associations existing between the variables chosen to describe value orientations, we used a multiple correspondence analysis which makes it possible to identify new dimensions (axes or factors) which synthesise the information and explain its variability. Twenty variables are regarded as active in the multiple correspondence analysis, and a total of 61 modalities are associated with them. These concern religiousness, agreement/disagreement over the importance of marriage and the family and acceptance/rejection of maternity outside a stable couple relationship, sufficient reasons for dissolving a partnership or having an abortion, sense of responsibility towards children, materialism/post-materialism. Certain illustrative individual variables were also chosen (age, sex, education, living arrangement, occupational status) in order to better interpret the meaning of the new dimensions identified.

The multiple correspondence analysis was performed separately on the countries studied. Indeed, as we have seen in the descriptive analysis, the active variables play a different role among the various countries or at any rate among the broad cultural areas. The countries observed seem to be highly differentiated, with the exceptions of Italy and Spain, which seem to be permeated by the same ideational context. For this reason we have chosen to consider Italy and Spain together, as being part of the same broad cultural area. The multiple correspondence analysis performed at an initial stage on the six countries taken as whole made it possible to confirm the proximity of Italy and Spain as regards their value orientations. This is also opportune for statistical reasons. The rarity of cohabitation in the two countries makes it preferable to aggregate the data, so that the results of the analysis are not invalidated

by the low incidence of this type of partnership. The aggregation is therefore justified both on conceptual and on statistical grounds.

Within each country or cultural area, then, the analysis was conducted jointly for the two sexes, given that the socio-cultural context in which the individuals live is characterised by the same ideational factors independently of the fact that it might then influence men and women's orientations in a different manner.

On the basis of the results of the multiple correspondence factor analysis⁵, the space identified by the first three axes of factors, which together explain about 90% of overall inertia, was defined as the subspace of representation of each country (Tab. 5).

Tab. 5. *Meaning and variability explained by the first three axes in the selected countries*

Italy and Spain		Switzerland		Slovenia		Hungary		Latvia	
Axes	R.I. (%)	Axes	R.I. (%)	Axes	R.I. (%)	Axes	R.I. (%)	Axes	R.I. (%)
Religiousness	64.4	Religiousness	53.6	Certainty	56.1	Certainty	68.5	Certainty	58.7
Dogmatism	20.6	Dogmatism	25.5	Tradition	32.3	Tradition	15.9	Tradition	23.5
Tradition	6.0	Tradition	8.8	Religiousness	5.5	Religiousness	7.1	Sentiment	6.3

R.I.(%) = revalued inertia (%)

It is interesting to observe that the axes identified have somewhere the same meaning, albeit to different extents, and are partly distinctive of each context analysed.

The axis defined by "religiousness" sharply contrasts positions typical of a rigid religious ethic with secular values. At one extreme, we find those least in favour of resorting to abortion, even when mother or baby's health are in danger, those who regard a union as indissoluble, to the extent that none of the reasons listed for dissolving it are regarded as sufficient, and those who actively practise their religion. This axis is the first in order of importance for Italy and Spain, and for Switzerland; in Slovenia and Hungary, countries where the religious tradition is less widespread, it only occupies third place, while in Latvia it doesn't appear at all.

Another axis present in Italy and Spain and in Switzerland as a second dimension is termed "dogmatism": it contrasts the ability to express an opinion on the questions posed with an inability to do so. From a more detailed analysis, which has made it possible to further examine the meaning of the axis, it has above all emerged that the group of those answering "don't know" consists of different individuals, depending on the different questions and items proposed: i.e. the group of those reluctant to give an answer is not the same. From the observation of the latter, according to certain illustrative variables, it seems to consist of people who believe that certain practical situations cannot be judged *a priori*, but should be contextualised in each case before being able to express an opinion on the subject. While the possession of certain characteristics significantly influences the orientations expressed, the fact of being very religious, for example (or young, or married, or innovative, or secular), is not enough for these doubtful respondents to assume a precise position: their approval or disapproval of a given fact depends on the circumstances surrounding it, not from an ideological *a priori*. For example, even though the most religious are opposed to abortion under any circumstances, it is precisely the most religious who find it most difficult to provide an answer on the admissibility of having an abortion when the mother's health is in danger, whether they are practising or not, especially among women aged over thirty. This would appear to suggest the existence of a conflict between religious dictates and real situations, which determines the inability to assume a precise position valid for all circumstances. This axis therefore seems to contrast possibilism, i.e. the absence of preconceptions, with a kind of dogmatism.

The axis of "certainty", the most important in Slovenia, Hungary and Latvia, contrasts those who have already developed what is now a deep-rooted opinion with those who, on the other hand, are more uncertain, not yet having concluded this process. The respondents who do not know what answer to give do not appear to be characterised in any specific way by the illustrative variables taken into consideration,

⁵ For reasons of space, the factor planes identified by the variables active in each country cannot be included in the text.

and they do not therefore appear to experience the conflict between ideology and opinions registered among the doubtful in other countries. This axis may perhaps be linked to the so-called phenomenon of presentification: indeed, certain sociologists [Buzzi, Cavalli and de Lillo 1997] have shown, in a series of surveys targeted at young Italians, that some of them are only interested in the present, i.e. in the events which they are living through, and that they are therefore unable to express opinions on issues which do not concern them. Presentification may not be just a juvenile phenomenon; it may also characterise other age groups to varying extents.

As for the axis denominated "tradition", which is present everywhere, this provides a sharp contrast of more traditional values with those which are more innovative: from the vision of a partnership as being an indissoluble bond (even in the absence of love or in the case of infidelity, etc.) to a more innovative view of the partnership, which has a justification only if certain conditions exist. The greater degree of innovation is also shown through greater acceptance of abortion and the birth of a child outside a stable partnership. This factor is the third in order of importance in Italy and Spain and in Switzerland, and the second in the other countries.

Finally, only in Latvia multiple correspondence analysis has identified an axis which seems determined almost exclusively by opinions regarding the reasons for dissolving a union and on having an abortion. This axis clearly contrasts the most material reasons (insufficient division of tasks, disagreement about the number of children) with those of a more sentimental nature (lack of love, infidelity). This therefore seems to represent a vision of life as a couple as being understood on the one hand as a kind of well-defined contract which does not allow for derogation and on the other as a sharing of sentiments. The condemnation of abortion, whatever its cause, is also associated with the more material vision, whereas in the more sentimental vision there is greater tolerance as regards the voluntary interruption of pregnancy. On the basis of these findings, the axis has been defined as that of "sentiment".

6. Determinants of the choice of partnership for men and women

As we have already said, the aim of the study is to analyse the role played by value orientation on the choice of the various forms of union, from a gender perspective. The group to which we shall now refer is therefore that of those respondents living in a partnership, married or cohabiting. We chose to ignore the subset of those not living with a partner in so far as their status might not derive from a free choice but rather be the result of circumstances independent of the will of the individuals in question, thus representing a factor of confusion in the analysis. On the other hand, the married and the cohabiting are treated as a homogeneous group, characterised by the fact of having chosen to live as a couple.

The explanatory variables are firstly the factor scores obtained in the multiple correspondence analysis, representing respondents' ideational system, and secondly certain control variables which the literature has shown to be influential on the choice of the kind of the union: age, education, employment status, whether parents have separated or divorced and size of place of residence up to the age of 15.

In order to analyse the determinants inducing men and women to opt for a given way of living as a couple and in order to measure the hazard of cohabitation as opposed to marriage, we made use of the logistic regression model. The model was fitted separately for the countries analysed, with the exception of Italy and Spain, which were observed as a single unit once again, and for the two genders. Indeed, it is hypothesised that the ideational system, apart from having different characteristics in the various countries, plays a different role in the decision-making process of men and women regarding the choice of life as a couple.

With a view of making it easier to interpret the results of the regression, the factor scores were rendered discrete by means of terciles, which made it possible to compare an average situation against the two more extreme situations with respect to it.

Age was expressed in five-year groups, and was preferred to generations of birth as the years in which the survey was carried out in the different countries (December 1992-January 1996) do not entirely coincide, although they are fairly close.

As far as education is concerned, the utilisation of the ISCED classification has led to unsatisfactory results, due to the extreme diversity of educational systems in each country. We therefore opted to reconstruct the number of years devoted to education by each respondent in episodes of study. The number of years of study within each country were then grouped into classes using terciles, in order to obtain a discrete variable which might make it possible to compare the effect of a relatively high, average or low quantity of years of study for that country.

For the definition of occupational status, in addition to professional position reference was also made to the proportion of time which had elapsed between the first job and the date of the interview in which the respondent had been employed. Employment was then defined as "continuous" when the respondent had been employed for over 90% of the time, and "segmented" (between 50 and 90%), "discontinuous" (under 50%) and "never" in the other cases.

Finally, the variable for any separation or divorce on the part of respondents' parents was fed in as a yes/no dichotomy, and the size of the place of residence up to the age of 15 was grouped into three classes (up to 9,999, 10,000-99,999 and 100,000 plus).

The logistic regression model adopted effects a selection of the explanatory variables through a backwards stepwise process. This procedure begins with a model in which all the identified variables are inserted, and at each step evaluates those to be retained and those to be removed according to a pre-established threshold of significance. The results of the logistic regression give us the probability that an event (the dependent variable) occurs for each category of the independent variables.

In Switzerland, the probability of opting for a cohabitation rather than for marriage seems strongly influenced by age both for men and for women (Tab. 6). Younger men are characterised by relative risks which are 12 times higher compared to those of respondents aged 35-39. More contained, but still considerable, is the size of the odds-ratio for those aged 25-29, and for men aged 30-34. It is well known that cohabitation among the very young is no longer a marginal phenomenon in Switzerland (67% of respondents aged 20-24 and living in a couple opted for cohabitation), and this now represents a common form of partnership, which in the majority of cases constitutes a trial period with a view to marriage [Charton and Wanner 2001]. The legislation of the various cantons have not yet awarded couples in informal unions the same rights as married couples, and nor have they done so for children born within the two different forms of union. This is what mainly determines the transition towards marriage for couples who decide to have children.

In addition to the strong influence of the age factor, it emerges that, in the case of men, the lower is the degree of religiousness and dogmatism, the greater is the probability that they will live in cohabitation. Even though religious observance is on the wane, the influence of religious ethics on conjugal behaviour emerges clearly, determining a risk which is four times as high among non-observing men compared to the more faithful. While cohabitation is a fairly common form of union, it is not yet regarded in all spheres as a normal, socially acceptable behaviour, as underlined by the higher relative risks for those who appear to be more "possibilist" and less conditioned by preconceptions.

The same factors also seem to condition the choices of Swiss women regarding life as a couple, but an important role is also assumed by human capital: being employed, or possessing a medium-high level of education (associated with young age) represent further important requisites capable of raising the probability of opting for an informal union as opposed to traditional marriage. In the case of women, the form of union therefore seems to be strictly linked to professional status: the absence of economic autonomy undoubtedly renders the matrimonial contract preferable, as it offers greater protection, while the possession of an independent income allows women to choose freely which form of union to adopt according to their own aspirations, no longer conditioned by motives of a material nature. A high level of education, besides representing an easier entry into the labour market, also contributes to the increase of women's social status, rendering women increasingly autonomous and free in their choices as regards their own political, religious, economic, personal, family and reproductive lives. The increase of relative risks among 25-29 year-olds with medium-high educational qualifications should be interpreted as a broadening of the possibilities of choice for this type of woman who, in couple relationships, appears to be more oriented than others towards informal unions.

In the case of the Italian-Spanish group⁶ too, as for the Swiss one, the youngest age groups are marked by the existence of high odds-ratios both for men and for women (Tab. 6). However, in these countries the increase in relative risks does not indicate that informal unions have become a habit among young people, but that, still relatively uncommon (only 14 out of 100 respondents aged 20-24 and living in a couple had opted to cohabit), they are a relatively new phenomenon involving principally the most recent generations.

⁶ The variable "country" was also initially inserted among the predictors taken into account for this group's regression, in order to further test the affinity between Italy and Spain. The non-significance of the coefficient obtained further justified the aggregation of the two groups of respondents.

Tab. 6 . Results of logistic regression- Switzerland, Italy and Spain

	Switzerland				Italy and Spain				
	men		women		men		women		
	% cohab.	odds ratio	% cohab.	odds ratio	% cohab.	odds ratio	% cohab.	odds ratio	
100 in union	25.5	-	21.2	-	100 in union	6.8	-	5.3	-
Age					Age				
20-24	73.3	12.32	62.2	11.48	20-24	12.4	6.32	14.6	5.12
25-29	39.1	5.47	27.4	2.09	25-29	11.7	4.09	7.0	2.31
30-34	20.5	2.24	13.5	N.S.	30-34	6.9	2.38	4.0	N.S.
35-39 (ref.)	11.2	1.00	8.2	1.00	35-39 (ref.)	3.5	1.00	3.3	1.00
Religiousness					Religiousness				
secular	36.3	3.98	25.5	3.08	secular	14.1	9.13	11.1	6.71
medium	25.4	1.81	26.0	2.42	medium	2.4	N.S.	4.4	2.78
religious (ref.)	16.8	1.00	13.1	1.00	religious (ref.)	1.6	1.00	1.6	1.00
Dogmatism					Dogmatism				
possibilist	28.6	1.66	22.6	1.67	possibilist	6.0	N.S.	4.7	N.S.
medium	29.1	1.67	23.3	1.58	medium	6.4	N.S.	6.2	N.S.
dogmatic (ref.)	19.3	1.00	17.9	1.00	dogmatic (ref.)	8.3	1.00	5.0	1.00
Tradition					Tradition				
innovative	24.4	N.S.	24.1	N.S.	innovative	12.0	2.63	5.5	N.S.
medium	29.2	N.S.	20.2	N.S.	medium	5.1	N.S.	4.4	N.S.
traditional (ref.)	23.3	1.00	19.1	1.00	traditional (ref.)	3.2	1.00	6.1	1.00
Education					Education				
low (ref.)	20.7	1.00	15.4	1.00	low (ref.)	4.2	1.00	3.6	1.00
medium	31.0	N.S.	25.4	N.S.	medium	6.4	N.S.	5.4	N.S.
high	24.3	N.S.	27.9	N.S.	high	11.6	2.28	8.8	N.S.
Occupational status					Occupational status				
no (ref.)	31.4	1.00	8.4	1.00	no (ref.)	6.7	1.00	3.3	1.00
yes	24.9	N.S.	38.7	5.17	yes	6.8	N.S.	7.8	2.09
Employment					employment				
never (ref.)	26.7	1.00	24.1	1.00	never (ref.)	17.6	1.00	1.7	1.00
discontinuous	42.3	N.S.	9.5	N.S.	discontinuous	11.5	N.S.	3.7	N.S.
segmented	23.5	N.S.	16.9	N.S.	segmented	8.6	0.24	8.4	4.08
continuous	25.6	N.S.	36.4	N.S.	continuous	5.6	0.18	6.4	2.14
Parents' divorce					Parents' divorce				
yes	71.1	N.S.	28.7	N.S.	yes	6.6	N.S.	19.1	3.60
no (ref.)	74.9	1.00	20.1	1.00	no (ref.)	11.7	1.00	4.7	1.00
Residence					Residence				
up to 9999 (ref.)	31.3	1.00	21.7	1.00	up to 9999 (ref.)	3.9	1.00	3.6	1.00
10000-99999	29.8	N.S.	26.9	N.S.	10000-99999	5.1	N.S.	4.4	N.S.
100000 +	34.2	N.S.	26.6	N.S.	100000 +	11.3	1.98	7.9	1.50
Interactions					Interactions				
25-29*medium ed.	37.6	N.S.	34.3	4.23	20-24*high ed.	24.2	N.S.	48.7	8.28
25-29*high ed.	45.3	N.S.	43.2	3.25					

The significant values are in bold (p<0.05)

The most important result seems to be the influence of the religious factor: in these countries, marked by the existence of a strong religious tradition which directly influences more or less all spheres of life, we may observe a marked variation in relative risks as we pass from the very religious respondents to the

others, as they gradually become less spiritual. The most secular men are 9 times more likely to opt for an informal union. These are countries in which the value of marriage is still very deeply felt, and which represents the only possible form of union for many people. It is interesting to observe how, in the case of Italian and Spanish men, a greater or lesser degree of adherence to traditional behaviour is decisive in choosing the type of union. The fact of having innovative attitudes helps to increase the probability of cohabiting. It would therefore appear that it is precisely in the presence of a strong innovative spirit that the Latin male is prepared to abandon the position of privilege which generally enjoyed in the traditional marriage, in order to undertake a partnership which is more egalitarian, at least in theory, and at any rate based on presuppositions which are very different from those typical of the Mediterranean tradition.

The dislodging of traditional choices also appears to increase with a high level of education, which plausibly represents a basic requisite for adherence to less conventional living arrangements. Finally, it comes as no surprise that men who have spent their childhood in urban areas show a probability to opt for an informal union which is twice that of those who have lived in small rural centres. It is interesting to note that, if education represents a factor of opening-up towards new forms of union, continuous employment represents a deterrent in this respect. Indeed, it is well known that economic instability delays the moment of marriage, while stability renders it possible. The different meanings taken on by employment and family life for men and women translate into different ways of organising the working and private spheres. While employment seems to discourage the choice of cohabitation for men, in the case of women it appears to considerably increase the probability of entering into an informal union (2,09), especially if this employment is fairly continuous.

In contrast to men, greater economic autonomy therefore seems to favour the choice of less conventional unions for women. The high odds ratio for women associated with the presence of separated or divorced parents (3,6) plausibly depends on a double order of factors: on the one hand, there can be no doubt that the failure of the parents' conjugal bond renders daughters more cautious in tackling the experience of marriage; on the other, the presence of a separation in the family weakens the pressure exercised by the parental group, which fairly often stigmatises unions not sanctioned by marriage in these countries. The fact of having grown up in large urban centres, which are generally more secular, also certainly enables women to overcome the strong conditioning exercised by Italian and Spanish societies, still firmly rooted in tradition, with the penalisation of behaviour which deviates from the norm.

In synthesis, it is possible to affirm that in Switzerland, while it is sufficient for men to be young and secular to be more oriented towards cohabitation, the situation is more complex for women. In Italy and Spain, the requisites which facilitate access to a non-traditional type of relationship are more numerous and complex, especially for women. It is therefore evident that in all three countries, women undergo greater social conditioning than men, demonstrating the existence of marked gender differences.

The importance of the ideational system on the choice of the type of union in Hungary, Slovenia and Latvia seems to be much more limited, or even absent. Indeed, there is no statistically significant ideational factor for Hungarian men (Tab. 7).

The relative risk of opting for an informal union seems to be particularly high only in correspondence with younger age groups (7,69 for 25-29 year olds and 6,32 for 20-24 year olds) and residence in medium-large urban centres up to the age of 15 (3,00 and 4,26 respectively). In Hungary too, as in the previously analysed countries, it is possible to measure a reduction of the relative risk of entering into an informal union for young people with a job compared to those who are unemployed. This fact, besides deriving from the direct link between economic stability and marriage, may also be the consequence of another motivation: informal unions, which are on the increase in Hungary among young couples, are not always the expression of a preference, being sometimes determined by external conditions which are mainly of an economic and legal nature; indeed, couples often lack the means to get married, and opt for cohabitation until it should become feasible. Also, given the high divorce rate, it may happen that one of the two partners cannot contract a new marriage. Moreover, due to the shortage of housing in Hungary, not all new couples manage to find a house in which to live, once they are married, and many of them decide to cohabit in the home of the parents of one of them [Kamarás 1999]. The reduction of the relative risks in concomitance with employment may therefore explain the antithesis between such forced cohabitation and the economic means provided by employment.

The simultaneous existence of cohabitation which is either a free choice or a forced decision is even more evident from the analysis of the results for Hungarian women. Indeed, we may observe an increase in the relative risks in correspondence with young age associated with a low degree of religiousness, residence in large urban centres during childhood and separation of parents as underlining the importance

of these factors in encouraging the choice of an informal union. A relation in the opposite direction between forced cohabitation and certain covariates is, on the other hand, underlined by the reduction of the odds ratios relative to being young and employed, having undertaken a continuous working activity and being in possession of an average level of education, conditions which tend to increase women's economic means, thus encouraging marriage. The double aspect assumed by cohabitation in Hungary (here still fairly uncommon as an ideological choice) makes it harder to analyse the phenomenon and more difficult to interpret the results obtained. Overall, we may nonetheless note that the determinants identified for the choice of type of union seem to be fairly different for men and women, suggesting differentiated courses of action between the two genders.

Tab. 7. Results of logistic regression - Slovenia, Hungary

	Slovenia				Hungary				
	men		women		men		women		
	% cohab.	odds ratio	% cohab.	odds ratio	% cohab.	odds ratio	% cohab.	odds ratio	
100 in union	17.1	-	14.8	-	100 in union	7.6	-	6.9	-
Age					Age				
20-24	40.6	8.40	35.0	8.00	20-24	20.7	6.32	13.2	N.S.
25-29	27.8	5.10	17.4	2.84	25-29	11.1	7.69	5.7	N.S.
30-34	14.5	2.16	11.2	1.66	30-34	5.3	N.S.	4.8	N.S.
35-39 (ref.)	7.3	1.00	7.2	1.00	35-39 (ref.)	3.8	1.00	6.1	1.00
Uncertainty					Uncertainty				
uncertain	22.4	0.46	19.3	N.S.	uncertain	9.2	N.S.	6.5	N.S.
medium	16.2	N.S.	12.6	N.S.	medium	7.7	N.S.	8.2	N.S.
certain (ref.)	12.5	1.00	13.1	1.00	certain (ref.)	6.0	1.00	5.8	1.00
Tradition					Tradition				
innovative	18.3	N.S.	19.2	2.03	innovative	9.3	N.S.	7.4	N.S.
medium	19.2	N.S.	13.0	N.S.	medium	8.7	N.S.	8.0	N.S.
traditional (ref.)	14.2	1.00	12.6	1.00	traditional (ref.)	5.4	1.00	5.2	1.00
Religiousness					Religiousness				
secular	19.4	1.00	15.6	1.00	secular	7.8	N.S.	6.7	N.S.
medium	16.6	N.S.	15.5	N.S.	medium	7.6	N.S.	7.0	N.S.
religious (ref.)	15.6	N.S.	13.2	N.S.	religious (ref.)	7.2	1.00	6.9	1.00
Education					Education				
low (ref.)	16.8	1.00	17.3	1.00	low (ref.)	8.0	1.00	8.3	1.00
medium	18.6	N.S.	11.6	0.50	medium	9.4	N.S.	5.8	0.60
high	15.5	N.S.	16.7	N.S.	high	4.5	N.S.	6.4	N.S.
Occupational status					Occupational status				
no (ref.)	31.6	1.00	17.4	1.00	no (ref.)	12.3	1.00	9.7	1.00
yes	15.6	0.42	14.2	N.S.	yes	6.8	N.S.	6.1	N.S.
Employment					Employment				
never (ref.)	32.0	1.00	22.7	1.00	never (ref.)	13.3	1.00	15.3	1.00
discontinuous	45.1	N.S.	28.7	N.S.	discontinuous	33.3	N.S.	12.5	N.S.
segmented	23.6	N.S.	15.6	N.S.	segmented	12.1	N.S.	8.3	N.S.
continuous	14.1	N.S.	13.0	N.S.	continuous	6.2	N.S.	5.9	0.38
Parents' divorce					Parents' divorce				
yes	16.2	1.99	24.5	1.86	yes	6.9	N.S.	12.7	2.06
no (ref.)	28.0	1.00	13.9	1.00	no (ref.)	11.7	1.00	5.7	1.00
Residence					Residence				
up to 9999 (ref.)	17.4	1.00	14.0	N.S.	up to 9999 (ref.)	3.5	1.00	4.9	1.00
10000-99999	20.6	N.S.	20.5	N.S.	10000-99999	9.2	3.00	5.9	N.S.

In Slovenia too, the highest values for the relative risks correspond, for men and women, with young age, up to 30-34 (Tab. 7). Indeed, informal unions are not only a young phenomenon, but often represent an alternative to marriage, as also testified by the low total female first marriage rate and a high percentage of extra-marital births (Tab. 1). As amply demonstrated by Prinz [1995], the transition of the partnership is divided into four phases: in the first phase, cohabitation is regarded as a deviant phenomenon; in the second, it represents a trial period prior to marriage; in the third phase it represents an alternative to marriage, which is socially accepted; in the final phase it is regarded as a real kind of marriage. Slovenia is therefore at a more advanced stage of the transition of the partnership compared to the countries hitherto considered.

The fragility of conjugal bonds which, albeit to a lesser extent, also marked the generations of respondents' parents, is driving new couples to give preference to informal unions. Indeed, for men and women, the influence exercised by the existence of separated parents turns out to be significant. For Slovenian males, there is a reduction of the probability of opting for an informal union in correspondence with employment and if there is an inability to express an opinion. The absence of one's own opinions on the subject of the family, couple relationships and relations between generations plausibly drives men to assume "normal" forms of behaviour, i.e. to be more oriented towards traditional marriage. For women, on the other hand, an innovative spirit favours cohabitation, while the lowest relative risk, corresponding to medium-level educational qualifications, may suggest a preference for marriage when the social situation allows it, as has already emerged in the case of Hungary. The data available therefore suggests that gender differences as regards choices of living as a couple are more attenuated in Slovenia, probably as a result of the greater diffusion and acceptance of informal unions.

Finally, the situation in Latvia appears to be greatly differentiated by gender, even though it is a smaller set of covariates which turns out to be significant (Tab. 8). Latvia has in any case a very complex situation, with the coexistence, sometimes in a conflicting manner, of different ethnic groups with different ideals, which can give rise to heterogeneous forms of behaviour. This may explain the absence of a specific model for the formation of unions in this country: as we have seen (Tab. 1), Latvian women aged 25-29 at the time of the interview show not clear preference for marriage or cohabitation for their first union.

Tab. 8 . Results of logistic regression - Latvia

	Latvia					Latvia			
	men		women			men		women	
	%	odds	%	odds		%	odds	%	odds
	cohab.	ratio	cohab.	ratio	cohab.	ratio	cohab.	ratio	
100 in union	12.9	-	12.1	-	Education				
Age					low (ref.)	15.3	1.00	14.9	1.00
20-24	28.0	2.91	19.8	2.83	medium	15.1	N.S.	11.9	N.S.
25-29	12.7	N.S.	16.1	2.21	high	7.3	0.51	9.8	N.S.
30-34	10.8	N.S.	9.3	N.S.	Occupational st.				
35-39 (ref.)	9.8	1.00	8.1	1.00	no (ref.)	18.9	1.00	13.0	1.00
Uncertainty					yes	11.8	N.S.	11.7	N.S.
uncertain	14.4	N.S.	14.9	N.S.	Employment				
medium	13.3	N.S.	11.8	N.S.	never (ref.)	25.0	1.00	8.9	1.00
certain (ref.)	10.9	1.00	10.2	1.00	discontinuous	23.3	N.S.	19.2	N.S.
Tradition					segmented	14.7	N.S.	12.0	N.S.
innovative	15.0	N.S.	17.2	2.30	continuous	11.2	N.S.	10.8	N.S.
medium	13.2	N.S.	10.0	N.S.	Parents' divorce				
traditional (ref.)	11.3	1.00	8.8	1.00	yes	19.3	1.69	15.7	N.S.
Sentiment					no (ref.)	10.9	1.00	11.1	1.00
rational (ref.)	12.3	1.00	14.9	1.00	Residence				
medium	11.1	N.S.	12.8	N.S.	up to 9999 (ref.)	10.3	1.00	11.8	1.00
sentimental	15.5	N.S.	9.4	0.59	10000-99999	17.1	N.S.	13.2	N.S.
					100000 +	14.5	N.S.	13.8	N.S.

The significant values are in bold (p<0.05)

This situation in Latvia may also be due to an advanced state of the transition of the partnership, the most advanced of all the countries observed. Indeed, here exists the lowest total female first marriage rate, and the highest percentage of extra-marital births. For men, very young age and parental separation lead to an increase in the relative risks (respectively equal to 2,91 and 1,70), while a high level of education lowers the odds ratio (0,51). For women, young age and adherence to innovative values increase the probability of cohabiting, which is, on the other hand, reduced when women's opinions are permeated by a decidedly sentimental view of life as a couple and the family.

In conclusion, we may state that in the most conservative countries (Italy, Spain and Switzerland), the ideational system exercises a fundamental influence on choices of living as a couple, both for men and for women, while the same is not the case in Hungary, Slovenia or, at least for men, Latvia. Human capital, another factor which is sometimes important in determining the type of union, acts in one direction or another according to the context referred to and according to gender. In general, it is observed that in countries with stronger ideational values, a high level of education increases the probability of opting for cohabitation both for men and for women, while the exercising of an economic activity makes men more inclined to marriage and women more oriented towards an informal union. It would therefore appear that economically independent men prefer to make more conventional choices as far as couple life is concerned, as they regard marriage as the most advantageous solution compared to cohabitation, which probably requires a greater involvement of the partner also in the performance of tasks which in a traditional marriage generally fall almost exclusively upon the woman. On the other hand, women who enjoy economic autonomy and feel less bound to traditional models of behaviour as regards the couple appear to be more likely to opt for an informal union, which is more frequently egalitarian.

In Hungary, Slovenia and Latvia, where the influence of the value orientation is weaker and cohabitation is more widespread, albeit for different reasons, human capital also has less marked effects. Both for men and for women, a high level of education or employment pushes mainly in the direction of opting for marriage: in these countries, which are economically less well off than those previously discussed, the possession of an income favours more traditional choices. Human capital therefore drives women to adopt forms of behaviour which are more innovative in the more conservative countries, and more traditional ones in those which are less so. In the case of men, on the other hand, it acts in one direction only: more conventional choices are favoured in all contexts. In conclusion the results obtained highlight the presence of fairly differentiated decision-making processes between the genders, even within the same country. In particular, the ideational system has a strong impact in all countries, and lacks significance only in the cases of Hungarian and Latvian men. However, it takes on different connotations in the other countries: in Italy and Spain, and in Switzerland, the effect of secularization on the decision to cohabit seems decidedly marked, while innovative spirit is more influential in the other countries.

7. Conclusions

In the last thirty years, family models have become enriched by new forms. One-person families in the case of the young, one-parent families and cohabitation have become increasingly frequent, especially in the industrialised countries. In Europe, the distribution of cohabitation is fairly differentiated, being quite limited in some countries and very widespread in others. With a view to throwing light on the determinants which induce men and women to opt for this form of union, we decided primarily to concentrate our attention on those countries where cohabitation is not yet a usual form of union. Indeed, we would argue that it is precisely in these contexts that it is easier to identify those circumstances which render a choice which is still regarded as being deviant from the norm as being preferable, because in those places where cohabitation is so widespread that it is regarded as being on a par with marriage, as for example in the Scandinavian countries, the individual decision-making process is probably much less differentiated. As we would argue that the ideational system is an important determinant of the choice of the type of union, we also decided to select the countries to be analysed with reference to the scheme identified by Inglehart [1997], which makes it possible to delineate three European areas characterized by specific dimensions of values, defined by the themes of religiousness/secularity and wellbeing/survival. Attention was therefore focused on Italy and

Spain ("Catholic Europe"), Switzerland ("Northern Europe"), Hungary, Slovenia and Latvia ("Eastern Europe").

Besides the ideational system, we considered other aspects which are thought to be influential on the choice of the type of union: in particular, reference was made to respondents' age, their human capital, family experience and the urban/rural context in which they grew up.

The results obtained are very interesting, highlighting the presence of fairly differentiated decision-making processes between the genders, which are peculiar to the contexts examined. It should also be stressed that all the determinants proposed offer a notable contribution at an explanatory phase. In particular, the ideational system has a strong impact in all countries, and lacks significance only in the cases of Hungarian and Latvian men. However, it takes on different connotations in the other countries: in Italy and Spain, and in Switzerland, the effect of secularization on the decision to cohabit seems decidedly marked, while innovative spirit is more influential in the other countries. With the exception of Hungarian women, age plays a fundamental role both for men and for women, showing that cohabitation is a choice mainly involving the younger generations in all contexts. The role of human capital is more complex: with the exceptions of Latvian women and Swiss men, it acts in a fairly different fashion in the countries analysed. Generally speaking, the possession of a high degree of human capital favours cohabitation in Italy, Spain and Switzerland, and marriage in the other countries. Moreover, in the case of women, it is chiefly employment which tips the balance towards less conventional forms of union. For men, on the other hand, it is education which appears to assume a greater role. Parental separation or divorce seems to influence the woman's choice on the whole, except in the East. The exception is Switzerland, where this determinant is not significant for either genders. Finally, the fact of having grown up in an urban/rural area does not discriminate the genders, but takes on a different role in the various contexts, with a demonstrable effect in Italy, Spain and Hungary and a negligible one elsewhere.

We may therefore say that in most cases, the decision-making process upon which the choice of the type of union is founded is markedly different for men and women; even within the same country, the determinants which have been identified influence male and female behaviour in different ways, highlighting the existence of notable differences between the genders.

The decision-making process exhibits different features in the countries analysed, demonstrating the importance of the context of reference. In particular, the picture which emerges makes it possible to outline the somewhat atypical situation of the East, which is fairly similar to the other areas in some respects and decidedly different in others. Moreover, the East also exhibits strong internal differences as regards the determinants playing a key role on the choice of the type of union. This is therefore a context which is certainly worthy of further attention in order to improve our knowledge of such hitherto little-analysed countries.

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