

9 Between Constraints and Coercion: Marriage and Social Reproduction in Northern and Central Italy in the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries

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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)

What more have I to tell? Well, this—that matters bear just as hardly upon the eldest son. Perhaps he has his Gretchen to whom his heart is bound; but he cannot marry her, for the reason that he has not yet amassed sufficient gulden. So, the pair wait on in a mood of sincere and virtuous expectation, and smilingly deposit themselves in pawn the while. Gretchen's cheeks grow sunken, and she begins to wither; until at last, after some twenty years, their substance has multiplied, and sufficient gulden have been honourably and virtuously accumulated. Then the "Fater" blesses his forty-year-old heir and the thirty-five-year-old Gretchen with the sunken bosom and the scarlet nose; after which he bursts into tears, reads the pair a lesson on morality, and dies.

(F. Dostoyevsky, *The Gambler*, translated by C. J. Hogarth. Project Gutenberg EBook)

In this chapter 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, in which social reproduction is given pride of place as the main factor shaping marital behavior and household formation in the past. We test our theory by analyzing six 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 by suggesting a more general application of our approach to the study of marital behavior, family formation, and residential patterns in the past.

Introduction: Which 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 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 lightheartedly.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 to 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 to the distinctive 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 the cultural features typical of the Mediterranean society.

These articles by influential scholars of the Cambridge Group gave rise to a huge wave of studies on family systems in Southern Europe, aiming to test the validity and extension of the Mediterranean model.

The outcome was a generalized rebuttal of both the Mediterranean and the Northwestern model. It soon emerged that striking variability and combinations of family patterns at the regional and sub-regional levels characterized Southern Europe, which made any attempt to develop 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, 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 1990; Breschi et al. 1994; see also Fernihough 2012), not differently from Northwest Europe, though possibly not exactly in the Malthusian way described by Wrigley and Schofield (1981; Schofield 2000). Overall, after two decades of “industrious research” by students of family and marriage in Southern Europe aiming 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 that focuses on “the interplay of political economy, demography, and culture” (Kertzer 1991a: 157).

Such 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, however, he found 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 the Italian family (Kertzer 1991b: 247). Notwithstanding the quantity and quality of the research work carried out in recent years, thus far no acceptable theory providing a general clue to understanding household and marriage systems

in Italy has emerged; rather, the target itself seems to have been abandoned and deemed impossible or scarcely meaningful.²

Before the studies of the Cambridge Group imposed a 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, and William Douglass, whose starting point was the relevance of family ties and values to the shaping of the individuals' behavior. Banfield's particularly controversial description of South Italy as pervaded by "amoral familism," the vicious propensity to put family interests above any other ethical principle, vividly expresses the kinds of question moving the scholarly debate at the time. Though with contrasting conclusions, all the 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."³

In 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 Northwestern Europe (and North America as well) from Southern and Mediterranean Europe. The northern countries are characterized by weak family ties: here individual independence is valued much more than group solidarity; intergenerational links between parents and children are severed early and definitively; and care for the weakest members is left to public welfare institutions. Contrastingly, in Southern-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; and kin ties are effective throughout the entire lifetime of an individual, maintaining an uninterrupted link between generations. The marriage patterns and living arrangements reflect such contrasting attitudes, but they cannot be considered their main determinant. According to Reher (1998: 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 Malthusian and anthropologic frameworks, a third interpretative perspective on nuptiality and family systems must be mentioned finally, which gives priority to political and social considerations of 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 pretransitional societies, such as historic Western Europe and contemporary sub-Saharan Africa, the elites were primarily concerned with the continuity of wealth distribution and the perpetuation of social disparities, and that these were achieved 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 preeminence of kinship groups over conjugal units. In Europe, it was the "nuptiality valve" that was instrumental in 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 on 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 in which one might be tempted to see an "invisible hand" at work again, albeit more of a Marxian than a Smithian kind: indeed, even if one assumes 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 colleagues⁴ recently proposed 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 disposal. 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 parents' control over their children. The diffusion of life-cycle service was due to the fact that in the West the state was more reliable regarding the enforcement of labor contracts than the support of 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 also 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 culturalism⁵ intrinsic in the ethnographic debate of the 1950s as well as in Reher's proposal.

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, whereby "external constraints" obliged people to maintain joint households in order to maximize the farm output. Indeed, among Tuscan sharecroppers, all the 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 descent down the social ladder.⁶

In Engelen and Wolf's opinion, "the household system of Italian sharecroppers was a mutant version of a simple household system," while all the 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). The organization of households varied accordingly.

Yet 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 like their northwestern counterparts? Was it because they enjoyed greater authority over their children, which made it more convenient to exploit them directly rather than resorting to hired labor, or should one look again for “cultural” reasons? Unfortunately, in the few lines they devoted to Italy, Engelen and Wolf did not delve into this issue. Nevertheless, it is a crucial one.

Finally, although parental authority was certainly preeminent, 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 they were frequently in conflict with each other. At the local level, the city governments and the artisan guilds had their say on the marriages of their subjects, curtailing those that were not properly supported (Crossick and Haupt 1995: 88; Ehmer 1984; Head-König 1993; Kok 2005: 361–62; Lynch 1991; Ogilvie 1997; see also Fertig 2003 for a critical reassessment).

The kin group exercised its control too, quite importantly. Mitterauer and Sieder (1982: 134–38) 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 (2002), 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; and the lineage level, when inheritance and succession concerned only male children. Gérard Delille (1985) and Giovanni Levi (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 were organized in such a way as to keep the territorial cohesion of the neighborhood untouched. Interestingly, in other places in the same region a similar

system was based on female descent lineages. Delille explained the difference by 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 outmigration was frequent (Delille 1985; for similar contrasts in Austria, see Mitterauer 1995).

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 of any family system, whether 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 simply 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 on all rungs of the social ladder (Malthus 1826: 397–400), the marital condition was a privileged one, giving access to a variety of relevant benefits—at the sexual, emotional, economic, social, and political levels—that were inaccessible to most unmarried people (with the possible exception of a few small groups, such as the clergy and the élites, who could otherwise secure 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 and women (Laslett 1983b: 12, 101; Sabeian 1990: 61; Wall 2010: 89). Correspondingly the lowest layers of society were predominantly constituted by unmarried adults and elders (Crossick and Haupt 1995: 101; Hufton 1984; Laslett 1988; Sabeian 1990: 456; Stavenuiter 1996; Wall 2007), whose presence was often perceived as a source of embarrassment and moral concern by local authorities (Accati 1998; Anderson 1984; Bennet and Filippini 1983; Bennet and Froide 1999; Froide 2005; McCants 1999;

Ogilvie 1997: 64; Palazzi 1990; Sabeau 1990: 456; Zannini and Gazzi 2003). The disadvantaged condition of the unmarried was also common to Asian societies (Skinner 1997: 83), and is sadly persisting in contemporary affluent economies (e.g., see Hoynes et al. 2006; Minkler and Stone 1985; Modin 2003; Siegenthaler 1996). Nowadays, however, non-marital cohabitation and other living arrangements can provide frequent surrogates for formal unions, but until the recent past, marriage represented the only viable solution, and definitely a desirable one, for the great majority of the populace.⁷

Consequently, 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 endure a prolonged wait or made marriage downright 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 in 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 pretransitional societies relies on the arguments outlined above, but we insert them into a different and more comprehensive framework. We do not exclude the weight of economic constraints on nuptiality and family formation; we instead restrict it to more specific and limited conditions than is usually the case: we assume that such constraints could not affect the rich and the poor, and the landed and the landless, in the same way. Also we admit that cultural values and shared norms could play a relevant role in shaping marital behaviors or fixing the nature of family relations, for instance, prompting the elites to assume some “exaggerated version of the European Marriage Pattern” (Lynch 1991: 83) or securing lifelong maintenance of strong family ties, as in southern 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 operation whenever such norms were violated. Finally, and most important, 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 that can better account for the universality of marriage controls in pretransitional societies.

All societies tend to perpetuate themselves, maintaining their social, cultural, and institutional patterns throughout time. Smaller groups, such as households and families, aim to reproduce themselves too. Their concern is not only the prosecution of the lineage, the safeguarding of economic assets (if any), and the maintenance of social standing and social capital. It also includes 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 the other aspects concerning the subsistence and survival of the household members in the short and medium terms. 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 highlight from an anthropological viewpoint the role of marriage in social reproduction in the past (see Claverie and Lamaison 1982; Delille 1985; Sabeau 1990, 1998; 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.⁸ This chapter adopts a different and more restricted perspective. As demographers, we focus on the probability of marrying, and ask whether and how access to marriage was determined by the requirements of social reproduction.

We argue that only referring to the variety of constraints imposed by social reproduction at the community, household, and individual levels a thorough understanding of the Italian conundrum can be

reached. We agree with Mitterauers's suggestion that much of the variation in family arrangements was 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 includes 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 ran 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, determining whether they changed according to local peculiarities. Such factors include the economic conjuncture, the socioeconomic status of the household, the composition of the family with regard to the parental couple and the presence of siblings, the amount of social capital available, and the strength of the relationship with the local community. Some of them refer to external constraints, others to forms of coercion conditioning individual access to marriage, but they all fit into a framework referring to social reproduction.

The rest of this chapter 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 devoted to the conclusions.

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 the age at marriage, proportions married, rules of family formation, household structures, inheritance rules, and presence of life-cycle service, they combine in a variety of ways 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 do Tuscan farmers marry later than their counterparts in Puglia, but day laborers in the two regions demonstrate corresponding behavior (Rettaroli 1990). There are marked differences in family systems and nuptial behavior according to the 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 in the hills in central Italy (Viazzo and Albera 1990), 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 influenced family systems and marriage patterns. Nevertheless, it seems worthwhile to provide a sketchy overview of 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 considered in our local studies, but unfortunately, no general analysis at the national level is possible before 1861 due to the lack of relevant data.

The picture emerging from the first censuses after unification suggests substantial stability of nuptiality over the four census dates (table 9.1): the age at marriage fluctuates at around 27 years for males and 23 to 24 for females. The proportion of people who never married is about 12 percent for both sexes, the drop in celibacy at the beginning of the new century probably being due to the massive outmigrations of the 1880s and 1890s (Rettaroli 1990). Such overall stability nevertheless conceals 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 percent in Grosseto (Tuscany) to 22.6 percent in the province of Catania. For men, the percentage ranged from 6.7 in Campobasso to 21 in the province of Naples.

Table 9.1
Nuptiality indexes: Italy, 1861–1901

Year	Crude marriage rate	Percentage unmarried by age						Singulate mean age at marriage	
		Men			Women			Men	Women
		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 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 also be useful for framing the features of the populations used for this study.

The first group concerns the Alpine area. Here marriages tended to be late, with high proportions of never-married people, especially women, who suffered from the imbalance in the marriage market (Lorenzetti and Merzario 2005; Viazzo 1989). Here barely 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 in a limited area of the northwestern Italian lowlands. Tenant farming was predominant and involved one-third of the workforce permanently, while resorting to day laborers when the 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 workforce was employed on 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.

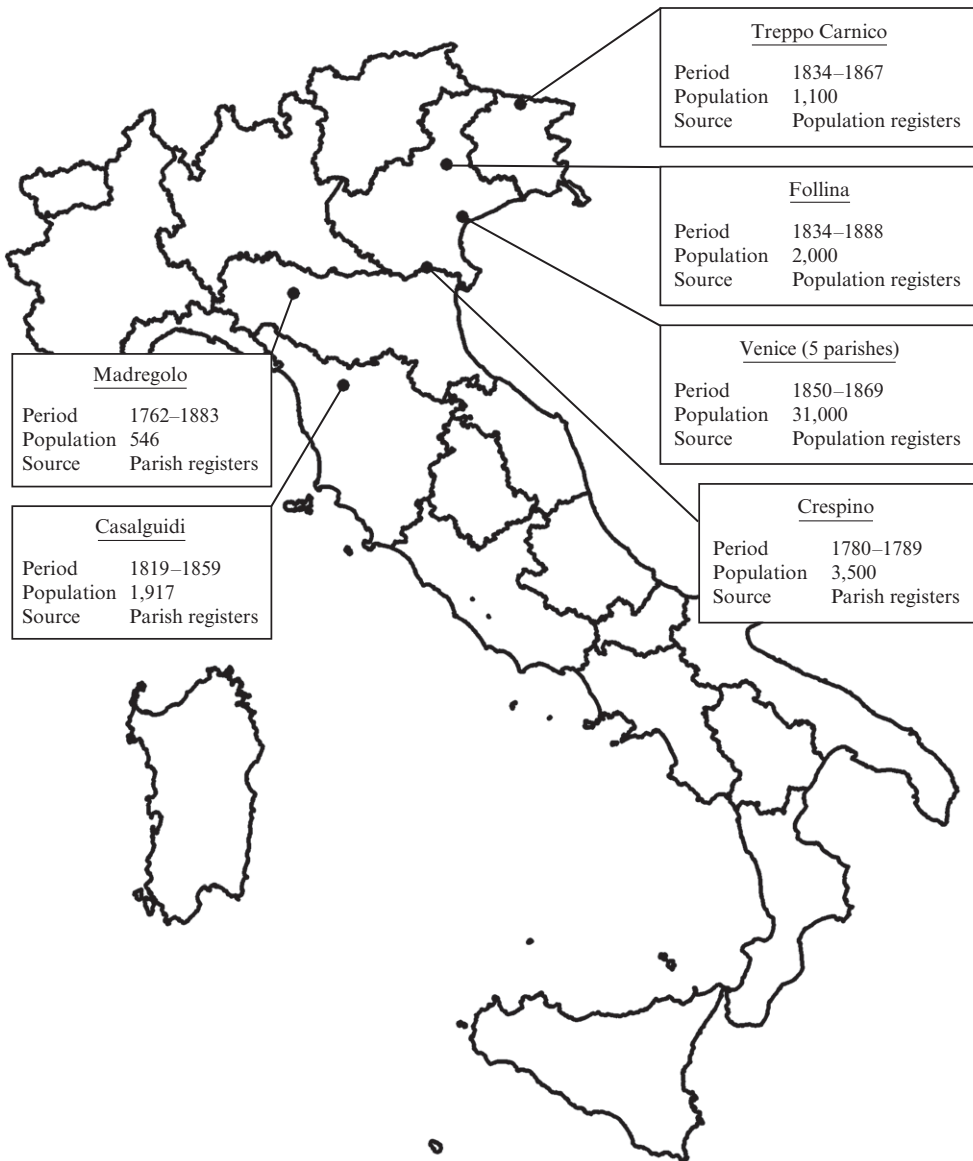
Central and southern Italy are divided into two groups, both characterized by relatively early and widespread marriage. This is particularly evident in the areas along the central ridge of the Apennines. This largely mountainous area presents a high proportion of land- or home-owning residents, most of whom were males. Agricultural laborers outnumbered tenant farmers. Peasant property encouraged nuptiality, while unmarried males were increasingly 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 some variability in agricultural conditions and nuptiality. The age at marriage and proportions married were 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 for men.

Population and Communities' Context

This brief overview 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 extend beyond this general statement. Even in the same area, marital behaviors varied substantially with the socioeconomic conditions, and 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 now switch to a more analytic approach, which takes individual events and conditions into account.



Map 9.1
Location of the six Italian study populations

Study Populations

Our study concerns six populations located in northern and central Italy (map 9.1). 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 hilly area and the other on the plain. We therefore have 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 throughout different spells of their life course during 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 from Angelo Raffaele worked in a large tobacco factory located nearby. In general, however, women carried out piecework at home, as bead-stringers, seamstresses, or hat- and glove-makers, or were employed as 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 as servants. Finally, members of the elites, civil servants, employees, artists, artisans, and servants, especially females, 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 outmigration. 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. The 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. The proportions of unmarried people were also quite relevant, reaching 22.7 percent of women who never married in the age group 45 to 49 (Dalla Zuanna and Loghi 1997).

The second population is that of 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 intense seasonal emigration of adult men. In the mid-nineteenth century, the activities associated with such migration flows underwent a deep change, turning from peddlers and artisans into masons. During the transition between the two professional patterns—namely the period studied here—agriculture gained importance in seasonal migration, though it played a minor role in the local economy (Fornasin 1998). Treppo displayed the demographic features typical of the Carnia region. The growth rate was moderate (5.8 per thousand in 1834–1868); the life expectancy at birth was 39 years, while 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 inhabitants.

The third population included in the study is that of Follina, a textile center located in the Venetian countryside. Since the eighteenth century, Follina had been the main center for 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's population grew from 1,200 to 1,600 inhabitants. The population was neatly divided into textile workers and peasants. Textile workers constituted about 50 to 60 percent of the total, mostly working in the local factories, though some carried out their job at home. Peasants made up around 20 to 30 percent and were mostly tenants. The remaining 20 percent was represented by a petty bourgeoisie of small landowners, shopkeepers, and professionals, and by a few entrepreneurs. In the 1850s the wool industry suffered a severe crisis, and the majority of the workers lost their job. The final shutdown came in the 1890s, and pushed many inhabitants to migrate to Brazil (Munno 2004).

The fourth population is that of 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 workforce of considerable size, normally provided by the tenant's household, the size of which could easily exceed 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 wintertime.

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. The agricultural work was distributed among the household members according to age, sex, and individual ability. In both the communities the main concern of sharecroppers was to maintain 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 in the environment.

Madregolo was a tiny village of 500 to 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 being the main products. According to a census from the mid-nineteenth century, 72 percent of the household heads were peasants, 19 percent were artisans, and the rest belonged to the lower middle class or the poor. Of the peasants, 60 percent were sharecroppers and tenants, and the others were laborers, either day laborers or laborers settled on 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 the 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. During such a long period of time, the population experienced moments of sharp crisis, such as the typhus epidemic of 1817, and periods of relative population growth. Overall, the life expectancy at birth was around 35 and fertility was 5.6 children per woman.

Casalguidi is a small country town on the outskirts of the city of Pistoia (Tuscany). Around the 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 percent of the population. There were three main social groups in Casalguidi: landowners, artisans, and peasants. All the agricultural workers fell into the last category, but there were several degrees of differentiation and stratification, though low-income and needy families accounted for the majority. Most farmers were sharecroppers, some of whom were relatively rich. In Casalguidi the life expectancy at birth reached 35.3 years, and the fertility rate was 5.3 children per woman.

Source Materials

Two different kinds of source materials were used for this study: population registers on the one hand and a combination of parish registers and census-like forms 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 through time. Therefore population registers allow the reconstruction of 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 underreporting of events, especially the 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 the 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. It also happens that information on household composition and the related changes are not recorded 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.

However, when a new conjugal unit was added to the household by virilocal or uxorilocal marriage, registrars sometimes 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.⁹

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 reported yearly 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 to 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 members 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 on a large farm (*possessione*), in their own house, or in a rented one. We used such information to distinguish farmers from the semi-landless, and the 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, the information on professions is rather poor and even lacking in 60 percent of the cases. We distinguished the remaining between "peasants" and "others."

Descriptive Measures of Nuptiality

Table 9.2 displays some basic measures of nuptiality in the six populations under study. Overall, they clearly confirm 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

Table 9.2

Mean age at first marriage, proportions unmarried, and residence in six Italian study populations, 1781–1888

Study population	Mean age at first marriage		Unmarried 45–49 (%)		Multiple households (%)	Residing in a parental household after marriage (%)	
	Men	Women	Men	Women		Men	Women
Venice 1850–1869	27.7	24.7	25.7	19.3	3.0	60 ^a	27 ^a
Follina 1834–1888	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 1834–1867	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 1819–1859	28.8	24.7	14.8	10.1	13.5	54	5

Sources: Our computations from local population registers, parish registers, and *Status Animarum*.

a. Percentage computed on marriages for which the address of the spouse’s parents is known.

differences in size, location, environment, and socioeconomic conditions. First, access to marriage was rather late, the mean age at first marriage being around 27 to 28 years for males and 24 to 25 for females. Not unexpectedly, the villages in the Po Valley, Crespino and Madregolo, displayed the lowest age at marriage, both for males and for females, while Treppo lay on the upper bound of the range.

Second, the proportions of unmarried people were correspondingly high, though showing a greater variety: celibacy was highest in Venice, with around one-fourth of individuals aged 45 to 49 never marrying. 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 fewer than 10 percent of men never marrying and an astonishing 2.1 percent of never-married women, which indeed seems quite exceptional.

As regards 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 percent. Coherent 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 figure rose to 64 percent in Follina, but also in Venice, quite unexpectedly, the majority of marriages started with cohabitation with the husband's parents. In Venice, furthermore, uxorilocal marriages were also relatively numerous, 27 percent of the total, whereas they were quite rare in the rural communities.¹⁰ Overall, the share of neolocal marriages therefore ranged from 10 to 40 percent of the total. However, only some 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 their own (Derosas 2003).

Table 9.3 displays the differences in timing of marriage by socioeconomic status. Again, remarkable regularity emerges for the four populations for which information on the socioeconomic status (SES) is available, the better off marrying later than those on lower rungs of the social ladder. As far as males are concerned, the difference was 3.3 years in Venice, 2.3 in Casalguidi, and 3.4 in Follina. Females displayed 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 males and females, confirming that the choice of cohabitation could be instrumental in relaxing the economic constraints inherent in the settlement of a new household. Oddly enough, however, in Venice virilocal marriages were slightly later than neolocal ones.

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 the household structures, all the populations displayed late access to

Table 9.3

Mean age at first marriage by sex, residential arrangements, and socioeconomic status in six Italian study populations, 1781–1888

Socioeconomic status	Men			Women		
	Non-virilocal	Virilocal	Total	Non-uxorilocal	Uxorilocal	Total
<i>Venice</i>	27.3	29.1	27.7	24.6	26.5	24.7
Day laborer	26.6	28.3	27.0	24.2	24.8	24.2
Wage earner	27.2	29.6	27.8	24.3	27.0	24.6
Artisan, shopkeeper	27.6	27.2	28.2	24.0	(27.2)	24.1
Middle class	29.9	(30.1)	29.2	23.4	—	23.5
<i>Follina</i>	28.9	27.6	28.0	25.2	(24.3)	25.2
Peasant	28.9	26.6	27.2	23.3	(21.8)	23.3
Textile worker	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
Landholder	30.7	28.9	29.5	25.7	(40.8)	26.0
<i>Crespino</i>	26.7	24.5	25.2	22.9	(22.0)	22.9
Farmer	(22.1)	23.9	23.4	21.7	—	21.8
Other	27.9	24.7	25.7	23.2	(21.9)	23.1
<i>Treppo Carnico</i>	30.5	29.6	30.1	27.7	(29.1)	27.8
Peasant	(28.3)	(27.7)	(28.1)	28.3	(26.7)	28.2
Other	(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
<i>Madregolo</i>	28.4	25.7	26.8	23.6	23.2	23.5
<i>Casalguidi</i>	29.2	28.0	28.8	24.8	23.1	24.7
Day laborer	28.4	25.7	26.8	23.6	23.2	23.5
Sharecropper	28.5	28.0	28.1	25.2	23.1	24.9
Artisan	27.5	28.1	27.3	24.9	(22.9)	25.2
Other	28.6	28.4	28.2	25.0	23.3	24.8

Sources: See table 9.2.

Note: In brackets fewer than twenty cases.

marriage, high proportions of unmarried inhabitants, and high frequency of virilocal settlements after marriage. In addition there were differences in the timing of marriage according to the socioeconomic status of the spouses and the methods of family formation.

Statistical Methods

We turn now to a probabilistic approach, in order to highlight the factors that 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.¹¹ In order to make comparisons possible, we ran 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 insofar 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. The individuals at risk are all the 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 be either fixed or time-invariant (e.g., gender, subject to change through time, or time-varying (e.g., the composition of the family).

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 any modeling of marriage events hardly meaningful; 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 upon marriage.¹² 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 for 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 during which 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 prospective marriage. Such was the case in modern England, where nuptiality turned out to be the demographic variable most sensitive to short-run changes in economic conditions, a doubling of food prices being associated with a decline in marriages in the same year by 41 percent, and a permanent loss of 22 percent on the normal annual total marriages (Schofield 2000: 59; see also Southall and Gilbert 1996 for the Victorian and Edwardian periods). Weir (1984a: 39) found an even stronger effect for late-eighteenth-century France (see also Dupâquier 1979: 117–18). 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 (e.g., see Breschi et al. 2002, 2005, 2009; Fornasin 2005; Fornasin et al. 2002; Scalone 2002). Our expectations were that such a discouraging effect should be stronger for the members of 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 nineteenth century."

However, just taking into account the variety of resources and the means available to gather them, as such criticisms recommend, also seems insufficient. 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 priority. 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 (Alter 1991; Angeli 1990; Armstrong 1974: 165–66; Davidoff and Hall 1987: 222–23; Engelen and Kok 2003; Gozzini 1990; Kent 2002; Levine 1987; Lynch 1991: 89; Matthijs 2002; Morgan and Macafee 1984; Sovič 2008; van de Putte 2007; van Poppel 1993; van Poppel and Nelissen 1999). Interestingly, such a feature is still persistent in contemporary societies, such as the United States: for instance, Axinn and Thornton (1992) found that in late-twentieth-century Detroit, both parental financial resources and parental educational attainment had additive delaying effects on the timing of marriage.

As table 9.3 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 were the consequences expected for the families, and the more complex and cautious were its procedures. While economic constraints were probably most important at the lower rungs of the social ladder, different forms of coercion became predominant as far as the better-off were concerned. It also seems reasonable to expect that the means of coercion 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. On the one hand, as Sabeian 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” (Sabeian 1990: 416). On the other hand, Cavallo (2012) showed that in early modern Italian cities children of artisans requested to be emancipated from the *patria postestas* on the pretension that their fathers were not able to carry out their economic obligations, such as settling them in a trade. In this way they were able to anticipate their entry in the labor market rather than contributing with unpaid or underpaid labor to the family economy (see also Pfister 2004 for similar tensions among proto-industrial workers in seventeenth- and eighteenth-century Zürich). Indeed parents of the working classes could also be unwilling to lose the contribution of their adult children to the family budget (Alter 1988: 149; Spagnoli 1983: 239). Klep (2005: 267) explained the late age at marriage in the poor areas of the Dutch countryside as being due to the stronger “power and need of the parents.” The children of the poor, however, had supposedly less to lose by following their own inclinations, even against parental will, provided that they had enough to support their new family (Secombe 1993: 18; Shorter 1975: 261). Still the social stigma and the hostility of the kin network could be heavy costs to pay for independence. Among the better-off, breaking the family rules could have dramatic consequences for the well-being of the new couple and of their offspring.

The propertied classes were obviously the keenest to fit their marriage policy into the main lines of their social reproduction strategies: this meant not only choosing suitable spouses for their children but also limiting the number of marriages to avoid asset dispersion through

inheritance and dowries (Bourdieu 1990: 187–99). Even the middle ranks of society could be affected by similar considerations: artisans and shopkeepers as well as farmers would keep their children at home as long as possible, in order not to lose their contribution to the 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 master artisans, coinciding with the decline of the guild system. Business increasingly became a family enterprise, and wives and children took the place of apprentices and hired journeymen. Interestingly, 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; 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; Levine 1987: 112–13). Medick (1996, quoted by Fertig 2003: 12–13) found similar behaviors in the proto-industrial town of Laichingen (Württemberg), where the children of the poorest waivers often had to wait for their parents' death to marry. Correspondingly Sabean (1990: 426) showed that in nineteenth-century Neckarhausen, when the development of the market economy encouraged male outmigration, rural labor became increasingly a female occupation carried out by unmarried daughters.

Parents and Siblings

As the examples mentioned above clearly show, the social reproduction policies needed some coercive power to be enforced, and this was mainly provided by 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 those of the siblings group. There is contrasting evidence regarding a supposed decline in parental authority in the nineteenth century. Complaints of contemporaries (Alter 1988: 143–44; Sabean 1990: 321–33; Spagnoli 1983) should not be taken at face value. The studies mentioned above suggest on the contrary that the parental grip on children was strengthening rather 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 the individuals' chances of marrying negatively. In early modern America

the younger children had to defer their marriage until they could inherit their parents' farm (Fawver 2012); as a consequence orphans married significantly earlier than the average (Smith 1973). Parents' ability to retain their children was probably higher when the parents were relatively young and their authority was stronger, yet decreased with aging and possibly with widowhood (Smith 1973; see Axinn and Thornton 1992 for a contemporary example). Indeed retirement and widowhood might encourage the settlement of a new conjugal unit, in substitution for or support of the old one (Skinner 1997: 65). In our analyses we took aging into account, discriminating between parents under or over 60.

The size and composition of the siblings group could also represent a powerful source of constraint limiting the individual chances of marriage. 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 were the competition among them and the risk that some would have to give up and remain unmarried, in order not to weigh exceedingly on the family resources. We discriminated the position of the index individual according to the gender and age of the siblings.

Social Capital

Finally, we included a fourth group of variables to try 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 it easier to find a proper dwelling (Bodnár and Böröcz 1998; Derosas 1999a). Sabeau (1998: 406–407, 449–89) 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, in which “independent” households were deeply embedded in dense kinship networks. Secombe (1993: 32–33) argued that kin networks played 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) highlighted the role of extended kinship and affinal networks in the success of large economic enterprises.

We used three different measures of the social capital available to individuals. One was the migrant status: we considered as such all those born outside the communities under study. Migrants are supposed to have fewer 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. Segalen (1991b) found that in early-nineteenth-century Nanterre, 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 location outside the household of the index individual, and used the logarithmic transformation of the total to account for nonlinearity. Finally, the third measure was an indicator of social relevance, as reflected by the frequency with which the other members of the study populations chose the individual's parents as godparents. Unfortunately, we have been able to use this variable only for the village of Follina.

With the exception of socioeconomic and migrant status, all the covariates mentioned above are time-varying.

Results

Using this set of covariates, we ran several models for each population, both pooling together all the individuals and separating males and females. In some cases we also ran 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 direction, pushing toward rather than discouraging such a solution. Finally, we also ran 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 on 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 of whether 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 9.4). A period of high prices for staple food had a negative impact on nuptiality in Follina and Casalguidi (though statistical significance is achieved only when all the 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 in the corn price was the day laborers, whose odds of marrying were halved in times of economic stress, whereas all the other social groups remained 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. In 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 youths to migrate to find alternative sources of income. Overall, the reduction in the risk of marriage when prices were high was around 20 percent.

Regarding Crespino, it should be taken into account that at the time most day laborers were hired on a yearly basis by large capitalistic farms, with a fixed salary and the benefit of a small plot to work for their own subsistence. This kept them separated from the market conditions, which they hardly bothered about: all they received and gave was entirely mediated by the farmer on whom they depended, the balance normally resulting 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 they employed.

What remains hard to explain is the effect of food prices in Venice and Treppo. In the period under study, Venice was affected by a few economic crises, the worst of which lasted from 1854 to 1857, when

Table 9.4
Means of covariates used in the event-history analysis of the risk of first marriage in six Italian study populations, 1781–1888 (men)

Covariates	Venice	Follina	Crespino	Treppo Carnico	Madregolo	Casalguidi
Age				25.9	24.0	24.9
<i>Current grain prices</i>						
Lower	0.63	0.75	0.75	0.72	0.76	0.76
Higher	0.37	0.25	0.25	0.28	0.24	0.24
<i>Socioeconomic status</i>						
Day laborer	0.38					0.18
Wage earner	0.35					
Artisan, shopkeeper	0.20					0.13
Middle class	0.04	0.23				0.02
Peasant		0.30		0.15		
Textile worker		0.47				
Landless			0.36			
Semi-landless			0.41			
Farmer			0.19			
Sharecropper						0.51
Other farmer						0.14
Other			0.04	0.30		0.01
Unknown	0.03			0.56		
<i>Presence and age of parents</i>						
Father						
< 60	0.47	0.48	0.50	0.57	0.48	0.37
60+	0.14	0.22	0.14	0.17	0.23	0.19
Absent	0.39	0.30	0.36	0.26	0.29	0.44

the grain price doubled. This was beyond any doubt a terrible period for the populace, unemployment was widespread, and adult mortality soared due to 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 percent, a phenomenon as unexpected as worthy of further analysis. Certainly Lynch's hypothesis that contrary to the situation in the countryside, "good times" in the cities tended to raise marriage ages temporarily 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 to 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 the expectations: as mentioned above, in Treppo the consumption of food stuff largely exceeded its local production, so that a rise in food prices should lead to a worsening of living standards and an increase in temporary migration.

Socioeconomic Status

In all of the populations, the household's SES was a powerful factor affecting the nuptiality of its members (table 9.5). 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 percent. Only Crespino represents an interesting exception to the rule: indeed for the young farmers, the chances of marriage were much higher than for the landless and the semi-landless. This can be easily explained by the need to provide the farm with the necessary workforce. Moreover most farmers' marriages were patrilocal: the risk of a patrilocal marriage was 52 percent higher for the farmers than for the landless. The women who grew up in farmers' families married quite early too; yet, whereas the women left the parental home upon 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 in 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 percent (in relation to the men

and women of the middle class, their chances of marrying were even lower). Similarly to Crespino's farmers, men in sharecropping households were discouraged from leaving the family; differently from Crespino, however, the landlords did not appreciate having 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 the population pressure high.

However, even where households could not be as clearly featured as units of production, such as in Follina and Venice, the social divide remained quite relevant. In Follina, the strong difference in the risk of marriage of textile workers in comparison with that of the small peasants can be easily understood as the desire to keep the children's contribution to the family earnings as long as possible. 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 21 and 58 percent for the artisans and shopkeepers, and the members of the middle class. As for females, there were similar though lesser differences: -16 (artisans) and -26 (middle class) percent, respectively. Finally, in Treppo, the socioeconomic conditions seem to have affected 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 also included aspects such as the intergenerational relationship between parents and children. The effects of the 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 aging, making an exit for marriage more likely. On the other hand, old parents, who were possibly widowed, would require some assistance conditioning the marital choice of one child at least. This could involve either

Table 9.5
 Means of covariates used in the event-history analysis of the risk of first marriage in six Italian study populations, 1781–1888 (women)

Covariates	Venice	Follina	Crespino	Treppo Carnico	Madregolo	Casalguidi
<i>Age</i>				25.4	22.2	23.9
<i>Current grain prices</i>						
Lower	0.63	0.75	0.75	0.72	0.75	0.76
Higher	0.37	0.25	0.25	0.28	0.25	0.24
<i>Socioeconomic status</i>						
Day laborer	0.36					0.20
Wage earner	0.33					
Artisan, shopkeeper	0.15					0.15
Middle class	0.03	0.24				0.04
Peasant		0.27		0.19		
Textile worker		0.49				
Landless			0.36			
Semi-landless			0.46			
Farmer			0.13			
Sharecropper						0.45
Other farmer						0.12
Other			0.05	0.21		0.03
Unknown	0.13			0.60		
<i>Presence and age of parents</i>						
Father						
< 60	0.46	0.47	0.52	0.53	0.55	0.39
60+	0.13	0.21	0.14	0.18	0.21	0.18
Absent	0.41	0.31	0.34	0.30	0.24	0.43

delaying an exit for marriage or giving it up definitively, or favoring the arrangement of a patrilocal marriage (Skinner 1997: 65–66).¹³

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 for their children’s destiny (table 9.6).

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 percent for males and females,

Table 9.6

Event-history analysis of the relative risk of first marriage: effects of current grain prices in six Italian study populations, 1781–1888

Current grain price	Men		Women	
	Relative risk	<i>p</i> -value	Relative risk	<i>p</i> -value
<i>Venice</i>				
Lower	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Higher	1.15	0.023	1.26	0.00
<i>Follina</i>				
Lower	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Higher	0.80	0.07	0.82	0.08
<i>Crespino</i>				
Lower	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Higher	1.01	0.60	0.98	0.38
<i>Madregolo</i>				
Lower	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Higher	0.83	0.44	0.832	0.36
<i>Treppo Carnico</i>				
Lower	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Higher	1.28	0.26	1.67	0.01
<i>Casalguidi</i>				
Lower	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Higher	0.76	0.25	0.73	0.16

Sources: See table 9.2.

Note: Cox regression estimates for Venice, Follina and Crespina; complementary log-log estimates for Madregolo, Treppo Carnico, and Casalguidi. In the multivariate models the risk of first marriage is regressed on the socioeconomic status of the household, grain prices (corn or wheat), presence and age of the parents and siblings and indicators of “social capital.” The complementary log-log model also controls for age.

respectively. This leaves open the question of 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 to be quite disruptive for social reproduction, whereas the second would be a conservative one. Unfortunately, no straightforward answer is possible. Analyzing patrilocal and neolocal marriages separately (tables not reported here), we find that a “weakness” of the parental couple, meaning that the 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 also quite relevant to the patrilocal ones. The only difference concerned the patrilocal marriage when both parents were absent. On the one hand, 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 of marrying and staying in the household were reduced by half. On the other hand, if the mother was an “old” widow, the chance of a male patrilocal marriage was raised by 78 percent.

Interestingly, not only Madregolo, the other sharecropping location, 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 a woman’s chances of marrying 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) percent. As for the mother, her absence affected in an even stronger way (+84 percent) the marriage chances of sons, but not those 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. For Venice, however, it was possible to distinguish among the different purposes for which a marriage could be used. Indeed, in the Venetian case, the age of the parents did not seem to matter, but their absence mattered greatly, for both parents and both sexes, raising the risk of marriage by about 20 percent. Such an aspect

was, however, dramatically enhanced in the case of virilocal or uxorilocal marriages, and much more so when 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 toward a long-lasting intergenerational relationship was a basic tenet of familial and social relations, which explained the frequency of extended household arrangements (Goody 1998: 89–90; Seccombe 1993; Stavenhuter 1996). Not unexpectedly, it was the daughters who were primarily appointed to this role (Derosas 2003; on daughters' role, see Skinner 1997: 68).

Siblings

Siblings could represent a further constraint to marital choices. Families with many children might think better of letting only a few of them marry, so as not to spoil their resources exceedingly. 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 9.7). Everywhere the presence of older siblings in the family reduced the chances of marrying dramatically, roughly by about one-half. Interestingly, 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. However, 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 for females (tables not displayed). Although the combination of such effects might seem to point out 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

Table 9.7

Event-history analysis of the relative risk of first marriage: effects of socioeconomic status in six Italian study populations, 1781–1888

Socioeconomic status	Men		Women	
	Relative risk	<i>p</i> -value	Relative risk	<i>p</i> -value
<i>Venice</i>				
Day laborer	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Wage earner	0.90	0.12	1.03	0.71
Artisan	0.79	0.01	0.84	0.04
Middle class	0.42	0.00	0.76	0.10
<i>Follina</i>				
Peasant	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Textile worker	0.80	0.06	0.54	0.00
Middle class	0.61	0.00	0.56	0.00
<i>Crespino</i>				
Landless	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Semi-landless	1.02	0.90	0.97	0.82
Farmer	1.41	0.04	1.36	0.11
Other	1.29	0.40	1.19	0.52
<i>Treppo Carnico</i>				
Peasant	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Other	0.68	0.20	1.82	0.01
Unknown	0.65	0.08	0.28	0.00
<i>Casalguidi</i>				
Day laborer	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Sharecropper	0.76	0.02	0.96	0.72
Peasant	0.75	0.06	1.29	0.06
Artisan	1.01	0.92	1.05	0.71
Middle class	0.38	0.04	0.61	0.07

Sources: See table 9.2.

Notes: See the notes of table 9.4 for specification of the models.



consider such results as the effect of constraints (or of coercion exercised through parental intervention) affecting the chances of ever marrying at all.

Social Capital

Our final point concerns 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 members, reducing 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 relationships was certainly a primary concern of social reproduction. We used three different proxies for social capital, some of which unfortunately are not available for all the populations under study: these were the immigrant status 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 9.8).

Actually migrant families did not seem disadvantaged in the marriage market. Interestingly, however, this concerned communities in which immigration and turnover were quite intensive: indeed in Follina, Madregolo, and Casalguidi, migrants constituted 40 to 60 percent of the population at risk. In Venice, on the contrary, migrants made up just above 10 percent of the total and were less likely to marry than their indigenous counterparts, by 17 and 32 percent for males and females, respectively. Lynch (1991: 83) argued that the high proportions of migrants were 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 migration to cities. Somehow, unexpectedly, Venice was itself a rather isolated location in the nineteenth century, ranking in the bottom place among the largest Italian cities both for migration rates and for nuptiality rates (Derosas 2002: 726). Nevertheless, our results seem to confirm Lynch’s remarks, insofar as the urban population displayed greater hostility to strangers, possibly perceiving them as competitors for scarce resources, although their number was quite small (Derosas 1999a; Hannerz 1980).

Such an impression is reinforced by the analysis of the influence of kinship networks on access to marriage. In all the populations except

those of 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 throughout 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 to be quite strong, an increase by one unit in the logged number of kin raising the hazards of marriage by 38 to 69 percent. 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 fewer than 6 kin).

Our final point regards 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 among the families involved (Munno 2005, 2006, 2008). Our findings were consistent with the expectations: the children of the families chosen most frequently were significantly more likely to be married, in a measure varying from by 37 to 77 percent. Munno (2009: 336) also showed that the members of families who preferred to choose their godparents from within their own kin group were significantly less likely to marry than the members of families whose social relations were more open.

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 a hopeless task. Similarly to the rest of Italy, our six populations display a puzzling variety of combinations, though sharing some basic patterns, such as relatively late ages at marriage, high percentages of people who never married, and, interestingly, a large number of patriloc settlements. These shared features are not enough, however, to force such patterns into a comprehensive model—whether or not we name it “Mediterranean”—to place side by side with the illustrious one outlined for Northwest Europe by Hajnal (1965; 1982) and validated by Wrigley and Schofield (1981) for modern England.

Table 9.8 Event-history analysis of the relative risk of first marriage: effects of the presence and age of parents in six Italian study populations, 1781–1888

Presence and age of parents	Men		Women		Presence and age of parents	Men		Women	
	Relative risk	p-value	Relative risk	p-value		Relative risk	p-value	Relative risk	p-value
<i>Venice</i>									
Father					Father				
< 60	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	< 60	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
60+	0.97	0.75	0.96	0.68	60+	2.29	0.03	1.82	0.08
Absent	1.19	0.04	1.29	0.00	Absent	3.65	0.00	3.40	0.00
<i>Mother</i>									
< 60	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	< 60	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
60+	0.87	0.16	0.86	0.15	60+	1.51	0.22	2.52	0.00
Absent	1.18	0.05	1.17	0.03	Absent	1.85	0.05	5.48	0.00
<i>Follina</i>									
Father					Father				
< 60	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	< 60	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
60+	1.59	0.00	1.38	0.01	60+	1.45	0.05	0.91	0.64
Absent	1.38	0.02	1.15	0.24	Absent	0.97	0.89	0.76	0.12
<i>Treppo Carnico</i>									
<i>Madregolo</i>									

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 was primarily a matter of economic resources, how come the members of the upper classes were those who married less and later? Malthus provided a hedonistic explanation: the rich refrained from marrying in order not to give up such pleasures as the “illicit intercourse” they could easily indulge in 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 or patrimonial consequences for the families involved (De Biase 1992; Hunecke 1997). In the vacuum following the fall of the Republic, when the political coercions inspiring marriage strategies suddenly became meaningless, love marriages (and divorces) seemed to triumph, but it was a short parenthesis and more compelling class considerations soon prevailed again (Derosas 1997).

There is no doubt that cultural values could drive marital behavior forcefully (Bourdieu 1976), but the kind of material and political interests they served remain to be explained. Our approach avoided both cultural and economic explanatory frameworks. To be sure, the economy had an enormous influence on family organization, but it should not be the only issue to take into account. Kertzer was certainly right in advocating the inclusion of political economic forces in the analysis of household history (Kertzer 1991a: 164–65). Interestingly, 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: the distribution of landownership, the structure of farms, the juridical forms set up for their exploitation, and the conditions of the workforce were the outcome of historical processes, in which politics mattered at least as much as the 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 is dependent on the multiplicity of political, economic, and social organizations in which it was framed. Albeit in different ways, all family arrangements were functional in their reproduction. Securing a regular and smooth reproduction of social structures required tight and continuous control over family organization, and above all over the way in which 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 accomplish such a task. Nevertheless, we pointed out some factors of coercion and constraints molding marital behavior, mostly of a socioeconomic or demographic nature. These included the economic conjuncture, the socioeconomic status of the family, its composition, and the social capital upon which families could rely. Overall, the sensitivity of nuptiality to the 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 that were more exposed to the 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 access was inversely related to the social gradient, a result that could hardly be explained unless 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 frequently was that of Crespino’s tenant farmers. In an area of extensive farming and low population density, the need for a stable and rather large workforce was met by 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, in this respect, Crespino displayed the same features as those characterizing the large estates of the Baltic provinces (Plakans and Wetherell 2005), like any other area with extensive farming (e.g., see Gunnlaugsson and Guttormsson 1993), as Hajnal himself suggested (Hajnal 1965: 133–34). A similar situation probably characterized the sharecropping area of

Table 9.9
 Event-history analysis of the relative risk of first marriage: effects of the presence and age of siblings in six Italian study populations, 1781–1888

Presence and age of siblings	Men		Women		Presence and age of siblings	Men		Women	
	Relative risk	<i>p</i> -value	Relative risk	<i>p</i> -value		Relative risk	<i>p</i> -value	Relative risk	<i>p</i> -value
<i>Venice</i>									
Brothers									
None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Only younger	0.67	0.00	0.90	0.24	Only younger	0.82	0.55	0.76	0.39
Only older	0.72	0.00	0.80	0.01	Only older	0.65	0.25	0.71	0.26
Both younger and older	0.71	0.00	0.88	0.18	Both younger and older	1.87	0.19	1.18	0.73
Sisters									
None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Only younger	0.81	0.04	0.68	0.00	Only younger	1.49	0.22	0.38	0.00
Only older	0.87	0.07	0.83	0.01	Only older	1.06	0.89	0.28	0.00
Both younger and older	0.60	0.00	0.79	0.02	Both younger and older	0.72	0.51	2.22	0.08
<i>Follina</i>									
Brothers									
None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Only younger	1.41	0.00	0.82	0.11	Only younger	0.91	0.62	1.03	0.86
Only older	0.60	0.01	0.55	0.00	Only older	0.92	0.68	0.83	0.31
Both younger and older	0.64	0.05	0.72	0.04	Both younger and older	0.82	0.33	0.70	0.07
<i>Treppo Carnico</i>									
Brothers									
None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Only younger	0.67	0.00	0.90	0.24	Only younger	0.82	0.55	0.76	0.39
Only older	0.72	0.00	0.80	0.01	Only older	0.65	0.25	0.71	0.26
Both younger and older	0.71	0.00	0.88	0.18	Both younger and older	1.87	0.19	1.18	0.73
Sisters									
None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Only younger	0.81	0.04	0.68	0.00	Only younger	1.49	0.22	0.38	0.00
Only older	0.87	0.07	0.83	0.01	Only older	1.06	0.89	0.28	0.00
Both younger and older	0.60	0.00	0.79	0.02	Both younger and older	0.72	0.51	2.22	0.08
<i>Madregola</i>									
Brothers									
None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Only younger	1.41	0.00	0.82	0.11	Only younger	0.91	0.62	1.03	0.86
Only older	0.60	0.01	0.55	0.00	Only older	0.92	0.68	0.83	0.31
Both younger and older	0.64	0.05	0.72	0.04	Both younger and older	0.82	0.33	0.70	0.07

Sisters	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
None	1.08	0.49	1.12	0.29	1.01	0.93	0.90	0.44
Only younger	0.51	0.00	0.71	0.03	0.22	0.00	0.41	0.01
Only older	0.32	0.00	0.45	0.00	0.33	0.03	0.37	0.00
Both younger and older								
<i>Crespiino</i>								
Brothers	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
None	1.08	0.50	1.39	0.05	0.85	0.19	1.12	0.34
Only younger	0.83	0.13	0.77	0.14	0.70	0.01	0.95	0.68
Only older	0.85	0.25	1.19	0.36	0.37	0.00	1.01	0.92
Both younger and older								
<i>Sisters</i>								
None	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Only younger	1.05	0.65	0.83	0.21	1.25	0.05	1.34	0.00
Only older	0.59	0.01	0.80	0.35	0.49	0.00	0.67	0.01
Both younger and older	0.69	0.19	0.64	0.33	0.46	0.00	0.52	0.00

Source: See table 9.2.

Notes: See the notes of table 9.4 for specification of the models.



Madregolo, though unfortunately we cannot put forward direct evidence in relation to this. 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-grower 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*. In 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 the demographic growth in line with the economic opportunities. Admittedly, this might sound like a refurbishment 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 well-being and social standing and tried to behave correspondingly. Homeostasis was rather the (unintentional) outcome of the (intentional) pursuit of social reproduction.¹⁴

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 in 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 in the late seventeenth century compelled the Neapolitan populations studied by Delille (1985) to abandon their ultra-conservative polity, opening up to female inheritance and acceptance of strangers. In other cases socioeconomic changes made coercive powers less effective. Since the 1870s the Po plain where Crespino lies has been involved in a deep reorganization of farming units and management, turning almost exclusively to daily-hired labor for the

Table 9.10

Event-history analysis of the relative risk of first marriage: effects of “social capital” in six Italian study populations, 1781–1888

Indicators of “social capital”	Men		Women	
	Relative risk	<i>p</i> -value	Relative risk	<i>p</i> -value
<i>Venice</i>				
Immigrant				
No	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Yes	0.83	0.04	0.68	0.00
Kin (logged)	1.69	0.00	1.38	0.00
<i>Follina</i>				
Immigrant				
No	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Yes	1.10	0.36	1.02	0.76
Kin (logged)	1.05	0.26	0.96	0.36
Times as godparents				
0	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
1–3	1.54	0.00	1.37	0.01
4+	1.77	0.00	1.63	0.00
<i>Madregolo</i>				
Immigrant				
No	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Yes	0.82	0.20	1.03	0.87
Kin (logged)	0.98	0.33	1.01	0.54
<i>Casalguidi</i>				
Immigrant				
No	1.00	ref.	1.00	ref.
Yes	1.06	0.56	0.95	0.52
Kin (logged)	1.01	0.52	1.00	0.75

Sources: See table 9.2.

Notes: See the notes of table 9.4 for specification of the models.

fieldwork. This was reflected by a rise in 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 the social levels and a lack of obedience by the youths (Derosas 2003). Yet the sharecropping system turned out to be remarkably stable through time (Breschi 1990). In the period under study, the population of Casalguidi grew by 41 percent, and the number of households by 34 percent. However, while the households of the day laborers tripled, those of the sharecroppers grew by only 14 percent.

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 such principles were the same everywhere, or that all societies tended to remain unchanged through time. On the contrary, there was a strict relationship between the dynamism of societies and the corresponding changes in family patterns. Many essays and books have been written arguing that the peculiar family system that prevailed in northwestern Europe was at the origin of European capitalism and the Industrial Revolution (e.g., see De Moor and van Zanden 2010; Foreman-Peck 2011; Hartman 2004; Jones 2003; Levine 1987; Macfarlane 1986). We suggest that such a relationship between family systems and socioeconomic development should also be viewed the other way around: “family formations reproduce social formations; equally, social formations are reproduced by family formations” (Levine 1987: 215). Bourdieu (1990: 189) argued that it was the failures in the reproductive mechanisms, such as marriage misalliances, sterility, and asset partition, which represented the main factors of transformation of the economic and social hierarchy. Correspondingly conservative and stationary societies, characterized by long-term economic stagnation, hostility toward 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.¹⁵

Notes

1. We rely here on Viazzo's (2003, 2005) insightful reappraisals of the scholarly debate on the Hajnal hypothesis and the family in Southern Europe.
2. More recently a growing number of studies has questioned the validity of Hajnal's representation also for Eastern Europe, arguing that family systems were much more heterogeneous than they have been assumed for a long time, and that Hajnal's view was

biased by ideological prejudices. See, for instance, Čapo Žmegač (1996), Sovič (2008), Szolttisek and Zuber-Goldstein (2009), Gruber and Szolttisek (2012), and Szolttisek (2012). Kaser (2002) supports instead the traditional view of a patriarchal Eastern Europe. Todd (2011: 48) harshly dismisses Hajnal's model as "une classification simplifiée et absurde opposant la nucléarité de l'ouest de l'Europe au communitarisme de l'est, dans une typologie mort-née qui restera sans doute la grande contribution de la guerre froide à l'anthropologie."

3. See Viazzo (2003, 2005: 137–41) for a review. On the ideological roots of the "Italian vices," see Patriarca (2010).

4. See the chapters by Wolf; Chuang and Wolf; Engelen and Wolf; Klep, in Engelen and Wolf (2005).

5. 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 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).

6. Biagioli (2002) provided impressive evidence of the landlords' tight control of sharecropping families.

7. Though widely shared, such viewpoints have their opponents. Guinnane (1991) argued that in the 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 the Netherlands in the late nineteenth century 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 their 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.

8. Levine 1987 represents a noteworthy exception.

9. In the Venetian case, we used information about the addresses to establish patterns of co-residence: when two households dwelled at the same address and moved at the same time, it seems quite reasonable to infer that they did live together. In practice, in the following analysis, two persons were considered as members of the same household when they were listed on the same "household-form" or when they were relatives living at the same address for the time spell considered, though they might be recorded on separate forms.

10. These percentages refer to the share of patrilocal marriages in 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), and for a general overview see Kertzer (2002).

11. See Blossfeld and Rohwer (1995) for an introduction.

12. 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 did not include marriage in his analysis, preferring to focus exclusively on residential patterns. We added the access to, and timing of, marriage to his approach, as the first and most important event regulating the subsequent living arrangements. Also Daniel Scott Smith (1993) assumed that the neolocal residence is a "natural" choice for young couples. Emmanuel Todd's (2011) ambitious reconstruction of the origins of family systems argues that the nuclear family was the most primitive familial structure in human history. In this regard, the English were as archaic and peripheral as the Bushmen, the Andamaneses and the Nambikwara.

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

14. 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).

15. 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 is available in Alesina and Ichino (2009).