Historical Legacies of the Pre-industrial Family Systems: Cohabitation

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Abstract. This paper discusses a cultural explanation for the rise of cohabitation in the last decades in Europe. For doing so, I approach this phenomenon from the field of historical legacies of pre-industrial family systems. The literature regarding the history of marriage and cohabitation points that, before the institutionalization of marriage, different characteristics of family systems and family norms (such as co-residence of parents with their adult children, dowry, or inheritance) were relevant to explain why some regions in Europe had a higher use of cohabitation (called back then informal marriage). Regarding the current rise of this practice, the *Second Demographic Transition* theory (SDT) points to the ideational change toward individualism and anti-conformism as the main cause of the rise of cohabitation. And, not surprisingly, the literature about legacies of historical family systems recently connected preindustrial family features (such as the number of generations living in the same household) with the persistence of the values and attitudes that seem to be linked to the recent changes in family formation. These 3 bodies of literature highlight the potential of the field of historical legacies of the family to explain the current family behavior, such as cohabitation.

Keywords: Cultural legacies, historical family systems, historical demography, Second Demographic Transition, cohabitation.

Introduction

The practice of cohabitation has increased dramatically in the last decades in Europe, either as a temporary solution (the *trial period*) before marriage, or as a substitute for marriage. Cohabitation is understood as a marriage-like relationship in which partners live together without having passed through a ceremony of marriage. The *Second Demographic Transition* theory (SDT) explains this change in the process of family formation as a consequence of the ongoing process of ideational change (Lesthaeghe 1995). But even if cohabitation looks like a recent phenomenon, when we look at the history of marriage, we notice that marriage as a generalized path to family formation in Europe was only institutionalized after the Council of Trent (1563). Before that moment, cohabitation seems to have been a fairly common practice. Research on the history of marriage has

https://doi.org/10.15388/Anthro.2025_8

pointed out that, in Europe, both formal and informal marriage (cohabitation) coexisted in the late middle ages, and that the preference for one practice over the other seems to be linked with one characteristic of the family system, namely, dowry (Sperling 2004).

Several authors have attended to the differences in family practices in medieval and modern Europe by pointing out that different types of families (in terms of the structure and practices) could be found across Europe at the time. Those historical family systems have been argued to have been quite stable over time, and only changed in response to the process of industrialization. The availability of historical data regarding these family differences across pre-industrial Europe has enabled scholars to argue about possible legacies that those family systems have left in our current society. This field has recently connected the pre-industrial family features with the persistence of the current values and attitudes (Henrich 2020; Schulz et al. 2019), economic development (Baten et al. 2017; Le Bris 2016; Van Zanden et al. 2019), democracy (Dilli 2016), violence (Sánchez-Cuenca 2019). Based on this research, the question that this study aims to answer is: Can the different historical family systems in Europe help us explain the current behavior toward family formation?

This chapter aims to set the grounds for an approach to current cohabitation as a historical legacy from the pre-industrial family systems rather than merely as a new phenomenon. A legacy is understood as a current outcome that cannot be fully explained by contemporary factors, and that needs an antecedent to be better described (Wittenberg 2015). This means that I understand the current cohabitation as an outcome that can be explained (at least partially) by different characteristics of the pre-industrial family systems in Europe. I argue that the common sense[1] linked to these family structures has persisted till today and is still affecting our behavior even after these family systems have changed their historical structure.

This argument is challenging because cohabitation, as the other side of marriage, has a history marked by the criminalization of its practice for over 400 years. This long gap in its practice makes it very difficult to link the pre-Trento practice with the current one. But, if the family is the main agent in the process of the reproduction of culture, and the main characteristics of culture (more concretely, the common sense) are its persistence in society over time

1 Common sense: defined as knowledge shared by ordinary people in daily situations, it is understood to be self-evident and rarely questioned by the members of the community (Taylor 1947; Watts 2014, 314); "the actor's conceptual schema for driving its behavior" (Thomas 1978, 2).

and the ability to guide the behavior of individuals (Strauss and Quinn 1993; Swidler 2001), it makes sense to think that the historical family systems can still be affecting our behaviors, even after the structures that characterized them are no longer in use.

As with any well-defined argument on historical legacies (Wittenberg 2015), the argument that I present in this paper counts with three components: 1) the *Outcome* (legacy), which is cohabitation, whose current changes cannot be fully explained by contemporary factors. The first part of this work is centered on providing the historical evolution of the practice of cohabitation in Europe; 2) the *Antecedent*, which is the element from the past that no longer operates but still affects the outcome and adds to its explanation – which is the pre-industrial family system in Europe. The second section of the paper describes the features and classification of these family systems; and 3) the *Mechanism*, which covers the reason why the antecedent still affects the outcome today. This refers to the cultural argument that I have briefly described above. I will cover it more in detail in the final discussion of the paper.

1. Cohabitation before and after the institution of marriage

Before marriage was an institution: cohabitation as informal marriage

In the Law of the Roman Empire, one of the three types of marriage contemplated by the Law of the Twelve Tables was the marriage 'per usum' or 'per usus' (Looper-Friedman 1987, 285). In this type of marriage, the couple was considered married when they lived together in the same house for at least a year. As a matter of fact, 'usus' or 'usum' means 'practice'; therefore, this marriage was a *marriage in practice*. Before the year lapsed, the union was not considered formal (therefore, their status was linked to *concubinage*) and, to dissolve the union, the spouses only had to spend three nights apart.

Under the ideology of the Christian world during the middle ages, as written in the *Decretum Gratiani*, the individuals had to be free to choose who to marry and only owe a responsibility to declare their union to God. This doctrine established that the consent of the parties alone was sufficient for a valid marriage (Wiesner 2020, 71), and that no formal or official ceremony was indeed needed to establish a marriage. Therefore, for a couple to be married, they only had to confess their

intentions to each other and God (Brugger 2017; Harrington 1992; Reynolds 2016; Sperling 2004). This type of marriage has been denoted as an 'informal' or 'clandestine' marriage. Of course, this practice was not the only path to family formation, and different formal marriage ceremonies and formal marriage contracts were also practiced, especially among the higher social classes. As Sperling (2004) highlights, the regions in Europe with strong dowry systems, such as Northern Italy, typically showed more formal marriages than informal ones when compared to the regions with weaker dowry systems, such as Spain. But, in the general lines, this type of informal marriage[2] was relatively common and widespread around Europe, Joel Harrington defined it as a "pandemic in Europe during the late fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries" (Harrington 1992, 55).

Table 1 displays the work of Sperling (2004) comparing the prevalence of clandestine marriages in several European countries. She counts data from several dioceses of the countries of Catholic Europe which applied to the Holy Penitentiary. In other words, she counts data from several cities that were important at the time in those countries[3]. Therefore, the percentages are a generalization of the country based on the sample of these cities.

Table 1. Clandestine marriages per country in 1564 (source: Sperling 2004, 70)

Country	All Petitions	Clandestine Marriages	Clandestine Marriages per Country in Percent
Italy	646	100	15.48
Spain	398	272	68.34
Portugal	258	226	87.60
France	98	14	14.29
Belgium	16	8	50.00
Netherlands	37	19	51.35
Other	36	13	36.11
Unidentifiable	102	44	43.14
Total	1 591	696	43.75

2 It is referred to as informal as a way of differentiating them from the marriages that actually involved a public ceremony. Informal marriages were merely a cohabitating couple who – when asked – declared to have married in front of God (Donahue 1992).

3 Specifically: Braga, Brescia, Burgos, Cambria, Evora, Genoa, Haarlem, Lisbon, Lucca, Milan, Naples, Rouen, Seville, Toledo, Utrecht.

This informal process for family formation seems in a way somewhat similar to what we nowadays know as cohabitation. Cohabitation, or 'non-married but living together', has been considered a contemporary phenomenon framed within the exceptional demographic changes of the last decades. The *Second Demographic Transition* theory (SDT), presented by Lesthaeghe and Van de Kaa (1986), focuses its attention on providing an explanation for those changes (an increase of cohabitation, non-marital fertility, and divorce, and childbearing and marriage postponement). The core of their argument is that those changes are a result of the change of values in the population (Inglehart and Welzel 2005).

But, how come that cohabitation – which actually was normalized behavior in the Roman Law, and a 'pandemic' in some European countries in the 15th and 16th centuries – is now being considered a recent phenomenon?

The answer is linked to the process of the institutionalization of marriage, which occurred in Europe during the Counter-Reformation after the Council of Trent in 1563.

Marriage as an institution: the end of informal marriages

As Jutta Sperling (2004) describes, the main change in the Council of Trent is the legitimation of a new rite of union formation. This change is understood indeed as a shock which has been shaping the European family ever since. After the 17th century, the only legitimate path to family formation was marriage. And that constituted an agreement between the Protestant, Catholic, and Orthodox worlds.

Protestants did not consider marriage as a sacrament, but they abolished the informal (or clandestine) marriage even before the Catholic Counter-Reformation and turned marriage into a secular institution in the hands of the State (Sperling 2004; Wiesner 2020, 65–118; Ch2). The Council of Trent (1545–1563) represented the crucial turning point in the process of marriage institutionalization. After the council, the Catholic Church applied the strictest reforms toward union formation. They made compulsory the religious ceremony and the payment of a fee for the legal formalization of the union in the Church registry; moreover, the Church became the authority which declared which couples could marry as well as who could get that marriage suspended (Brugger 2017; Reynolds 2016, 725; Schulz 2016; Sperling 2004). These reforms banned marriage among relatives, which was a regular practice at the time, and caused a change in the family structure, by promoting the nuclear family (Henrich 2020; Schulz 2016; Schulz et al. 2019). The Orthodox also applied some reforms in

the institutionalization of marriage, even if those were applied relatively later compared to Catholics or Protestants. The practice of the formal marriage was more generalized within this branch of Church than in the other two branches before the reforms. The Orthodox Church only recognized as married those couples which had passed the ritual of marriage in the Church with parental and societal approval (Wiesner 2020, 156–162; Ch3).

The literature regarding this reformation of marriage points out that, in different regions, some old traditions were preserved (such as southern Germany or Sweden) (Harrington 1992; Wiesner 2020; Ch2). That persistence was mostly due to the social acceptance of some practices, such as sex outside marriage, the non-required virginity for the first marriage, or the recognition of children born outside the wedlock. But the persistence of those practices did not interfere with the process of legitimization of marriage as the main path to family formation.

After centuries of reinforcing these practices, with cultural norms and formal Law, cohabitation became a rare practice. When occurred, it tended to be hidden due to the social stigma and legal punishment. We can say that, over that period, marriage became the social institution that was given not only the formal value over the Law, but also social value for legitimizing family formation. At the beginning of the 20th century, households conformed as non-married couples were not even registered in population censuses, and were still being commonly considered out of the norm (Kok and Leinarte 2015).

Due to a lack of data, it is difficult to determine exactly how common was cohabitation before and after the Council of Trent. Sperling (2004) uses records from dioceses (requests for dissolving marriages and local-priest reports of informal marriages) of towns in several countries to determine the popularity of informal marriages before the Council of Trent. But that data is not only hard to access (a formal request to the Vatican arcades is required), but it is also difficult to generalize to the overall population at the time. Another indicator to approach some estimated measurement of historical cohabitation is to consider the birth registry for births outside wedlock and illegitimate children. Yet, in that data, it is impossible to see how many of these births happened within cohabitating parents, or in single-parent households (Kok and Leinarte 2015, 6).

To approach these numbers, between 1896 and 1900, most European countries had less than 10% of births outside wedlock (Therborn 2004, 149), the countries that showed the highest proportions were: Iceland (16%), Austria (14%), Portugal (12%), and Sweden (11%). Whereas the countries that showed the lowest percentages of those births were the following: Bulgaria (0.4%), Greece (1%), the Netherlands (3%), Spain (5%), Switzerland (5%), and Italy (6%).

Cohabitation as a new phenomenon

Before the institutionalization of marriage, we only observed a change of this magnitude in the trend of cohabitation in Europe in the last decades. This change of behavior without closest precedents is what makes this phenomenon interesting and new. **Figure 1** shows the graph provided by Ron Lasthaeghe in his paper of 2020. As we can see, there has been a general increase in this practice all around Europe, but we can appreciate two separate trends. A rapid increase for the northern countries (Norway, France, United Kingdom, Austria, Netherlands, Estonia, Belgium, and Germany are positioned at the top of the graph), whereas Spain, Hungary, Georgia, Russia, Bulgaria, Lithuania, Italy, and Poland are found in the lower side of the graph.

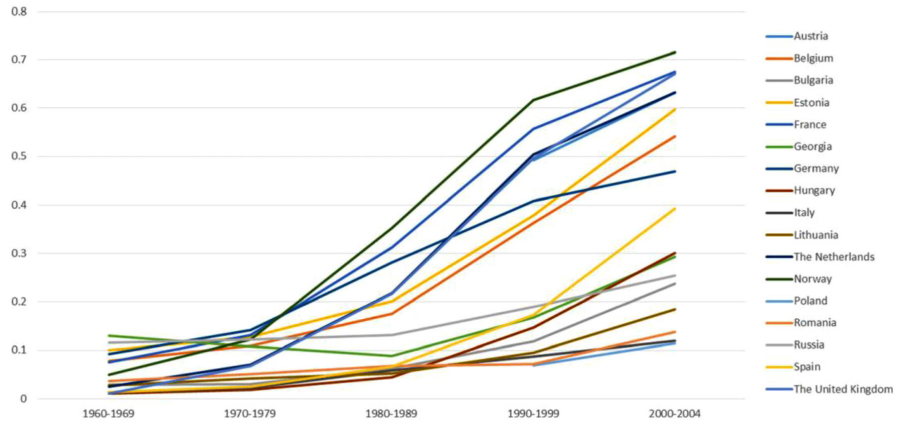

Image 1. Share of cohabitation between age 25 and 29 of those in a union (women) (Lesthaeghe 2020a, p. 16)4.

We can see how cohabitation, either as a temporary solution before marriage, or as a definitive choice for conforming to a new family unit, has shown a sudden and sharp increase in the last decades. The SDT theory argues that this change is a consequence of the increase in non-conformist, emancipatory, and autonomous values (Lesthaeghe 2010). Yet what is interesting about cohabitation is not

4 Expansion of cohabitation in selected European countries: Proportion of women aged 25–29 who cohabited for at least a year relative to all women aged 25–29 who were in a union (married+cohabiting) for at least 1 year; 1960–2004. Source: Courtesy of Jorik Vergauwen, Antwerp University. Data: Gender and Generations Survey harmonized data and national surveys (Lesthaeghe 2020a, 16, Fig. 5).

merely the change in the trend, but the fact that it was outside of the expectations considered in the field of demography.

Cohabitation as a path of family formation has been only included in the agenda of sociologists and demographers in the last decades, which indicates a significant break in the social institution of marriage. First, with the process of de-illegalization of cohabitation, which occurred in most European countries in 1960–1980 (Perelli-Harris and Gassen 2012, p. 437), most countries were no longer applying those laws by the time they abolished them, and the law reform was mostly due to the need of a legal alternative for the unmarried couples with children[5]. And, second, this reform was driven by the increase of its practice and by the gain of the popularity of the *Second Demographic Transition* theory (SDT).

2. Historical family features: explaining the old cohabitation

In these terms, we find that, before the Council of Trent, there was a factor which would explain the regional differences in the incidence of formal marriage. According to Sperling (2004), these differences were due to the practice of dowry.

On one hand, in the regions where dowry was a common practice, and it was linked to the parental approval of the union (linked also to the practice of arranged marriage), then, the formal marriage was more prevalent. This was due to the incentive of the new couple to receive the dowry. If the family did not approve the new union, the young couple would not receive the dowry, and even if they chose to marry clandestinely without a dowry, they would be socially recognized as with a lower status or as not-married. That would dissuade young couples from marrying clandestinely.

On the other hand, in the regions in which the dowry was not a common practice, or in which the dowry was not linked to parental approval, then, clandestine marriage was more common. Sperling especially compares Northern Italy and Northern France in terms of the strong dowry tradition which gave parents the right of choosing whether to give the dowry or not if they did not

5 The legal change towards the symmetry of marriage and cohabitation is still taking place in Europe. Such countries as Sweden and Denmark were the ones starting earlier with the change in the legal status associated to cohabitation, and they were followed by the central European and Mediterranean countries. There are still major legal differences across Europe regarding how marriage and cohabitation are treated. Such countries as the Netherlands, Sweden, France or Norway treat them either equally or as an intermediate position (Perelli-Harris and Gassen 2012).

approve the marriage ('exclusio propter dotem' (Sperling 2004, 73)). For example, this was compared to central and southern Spain, where the law declared the obligation for the families of the spouses to exchange dowries, even if they were strangers to each other[6].

Sperling's argument is about how the level of authority which the parents had over their children shaped the practice of marriage. The control over the dowry can be understood as the control over the individuals and their will[7]. Sperling is arguing that the formal marriage existed in the regions where parents had a higher control over their children. And that links directly with the theory of Emmanuel Todd (1996) about the legacies of historical family systems. Todd classifies historical family systems based on two dimensions, one of which is *authority* (based on the co-residence of generations in the same household, where authority was manifested if more than two generations lived together, and which was liberal if nuclear households were the norm); and the second dimension was *equality* (based on the distribution of inheritance among the sons and daughters. Inequality was manifested if only one offspring inherited the family assets, whereas equality was observed if parents distributed the assets equally among brothers). Todd argues that these historical family systems left a persistent ideology on the population that not only can explain historical events in the development of European history, but also reflect the current ideological trends and voting nowadays.

But this connection that could be drawn from Sperling and Todd's argument is not the only link which we can find between the historical family and the current demographic behavior.

The SDT theory has already considered how the legacies from the past played a role in the development of the said changes. Lesthaeghe (2010) presents some examples of how some historical traditions, or 'strong' or 'weak' family networks (Reher 1998) could help to understand some irregularities in the phases of the SDT for some countries in Europe. And, in his latest paper (Lesthaeghe 2020b), Lesthaeghe proposes connections between some traditional kinship systems and the current cohabitation patterns worldwide (e.g. 'patriarchal' family by Le

6 In the southern areas of Spain, Portugal and Italy, the dowry was considered an advance of the bride's parental inheritance, and the law stated that patrimony had to be equally distributed among sons and daughters (except for certain feudal titles and royal endowments reserved for aristocratic males). Parents therefore had a lower control over the marriage of their children (Mineo 2001; Sperling 2004, 73).

7 As an example of how the historical family structure can affect the marriage patterns, the study of de Munck et al. (2016) statistically shows the correlation between the lineage norms (matrilineality or patrilineality) and the contemporary resilience of love as the main reason of marriage (versus arranged marriage).

Play (1871)). He already tried to test his theory on cohabitation in 2016 when he edited (together with Albert Esteve) the book *Cohabitation and Marriage in the Americas: Geo-historical Legacies and New Trends* (2016). The main objective of that issue was to discuss and find the possible legacies affecting the trends of the *Second Demographic Transition* in the American continent. In that volume, they tested the argument of diffusion of SDT by looking at the rise of cohabitation in Latin America. They concluded that, even today, identifying clear legacies still remains a challenge, and, even more, if we move from specific case studies to the general legacies affecting cross-nationally. The book focuses on Latin America, which is far from where this work takes its interest, but yet it remains an interesting example of the gap of literature that my paper attempts to fill.

By using the approach of the legacies of historical families, some authors tried to find connections between the historical family regions and the trends of fertility. Micheli and Dalla Zuanna (2006) pointed to the paradoxical drop in fertility in the Mediterranean countries in the last decades (attending to the southern European 'familistic' characteristics (Banfield 1967; Reher 1998)); whereas Rotering (2019) tested if the areas with historical authoritarian family structures (as measured by Todd (1995)) showed higher rates of fertility than the liberal families during the first demographic transition. Meanwhile, Schulz et al. (2019) centered their research on how the Catholic Church shaped the structure of the family by promoting nuclear formations, which has affected the psychological characteristics of individuals nowadays. They found that nuclear families are linked with greater individualism, less conformity, and more impersonal pro-sociality, which are characteristic elements of western, educated, industrialized, rich, and democratic countries.

Origins of pre-industrial European families

So far, we have mentioned that some family practices are linked to cohabitation in the past, as well as to other characteristics, such as authority or inheritance. The fact is that pre-industrial Europe showed a variety of typologies of the family, and those differences have been used to explain the currently manifested phenomena. But, before entering into the discussion on these different family systems and the different categorizations or data sources, it is interesting to briefly discuss the reasons for these differences.

The truth is that the literature on the historical legacies of the family has never paid much attention to explaining how the different family systems originated in the first place. The earlier works lean on a functionalist approach to the family

change, as is evident in the work of Herbert Spencer (1975; 1873) who understood that the family changed its form to adapt to the economic system. This way, in the *Advanced Agrarian Society*, the logical family structure would be the extended family since the subsistence would be associated with the land and the lineage; but, in the *Modern Industrial World*, the efficient form is to reduce the household to the nuclear kinship[8]. This analysis got challenged when the Cambridge group led by Laslett pointed out that, in pre-industrial England, nuclear households were indeed relatively common (1987; 1983). By using this base, Emmanuel Todd sustained that the reason why Europe showed this variety of family systems was due to the different agrarian systems which dominated medieval and modern Europe. Nuclear families would appear in areas of restricting agrarian portions and large land exploitation (so, in areas where most people did not own the land); whereas multigenerational households were associated with family farms (a small-sized property) and share-cropping (a medium-sized property).

This means that, when using family characteristics, we are not only measuring the family traits, but also the societal attributes; this is why, the family is a good way to approach or measure the cultural persistence. Another point is that little work has pointed to the changes in the family structure. Meanwhile, demographers have focused on the changes in demographic behaviors, such as fertility or mortality, which is part of the literature on the first demographic transition.

Different ways to approach the pre-industrial European families

Several authors have provided a variety of classifications of family systems in the pre-industrial era. Even when looking at the same society, in other words, the same families, looking at different features makes their classification look like very different theories.

Table 2 below contains a summary of the most known classifications of the historical family systems by author and the characteristics of each of them. No previous work has combined their findings, but I will try to provide a consistent geographical pattern of their findings. For doing so, I provide **Figure 2** which shows the map of Europe according to Todd's classification of the family (as presented in the work of Duranton et al. (2009)).

We have argued that it seems to be the dowry, which is linked to the parental control and authority, what appears to predict cohabitation, and that Todd's theory

8 I consulted (Turner and Machalek 2018, 49–51) for a review of Spencer's theory.

appears to use the argument of the authority linked to the co-residence of adult sons and their parents in the parental house. Indeed, the topic of the generational composition of the house is a common characteristic described by most of the authors. It is also the characteristic most used for describing the legacy arguments.

But we can go further if we want to define the differences of each family type. In terms of the parental control, we should identify gradients between all the sons living in the parental house (the *Communitarian family*) versus only one (the *Stem family*), to sons emancipating, but only after marriage (to form a new family unit which is the *Nuclear egalitarian family*), to the early emancipation in their teen ages (which is the *Absolute nuclear family*). What I have just described is based on the types described by Todd (as described in **Table 3**).

Communitarian and *stem* families appear as black and purple on the map, while the *nuclear egalitarian* family appears in green, and the *Absolute nuclear family* is shown in yellow. We see that the *Communitarian families* are the least common in Europe, as they are only predominant in Finland and central Italy. This family type is linked to the share-cropping arrangements. Sperling states that the same area in Italy had strong dowry systems, with strong parental control. Also, Putnam (1994) describes the area as a region of a high civic society and high social and impersonal trust. Hajnal describes this family as a *Joint household* characterized by marriage at an early age for women and high fertility.

In different terms, *Stem families* were the most common in Europe; we can see them in Northern Spain, South France, and central Europe. This family type was centered on lineage durability, and only the firstborn son inherited the parental property and lived in the house with his parents, thereby becoming the head of the house once his father passed away. From the works of Le Bris and Tallec and Szołtysek (Le Bris and Tallec 2020; Szołtysek 2016), we can see that these family types were associated with a later marriage, higher ages at marriage, and a lower fertility, i.e. the characteristics defined by Hajnal. It is also of importance to note that only the firstborn son (or the daughter, if the couple only had daughters) would preserve the family legacy, whereas daughters and second-born sons would leave the parental home at marriage. For the daughters, the marriage was typically arranged to find a similar or better status in comparison to the one of the family; therefore, ideally, they would be married to an heir, and provide the husband house with the assets of the dowry. This means that the *Stem family* should also be linked to Sperling's theory. On the other hand, the brothers of the heir could stay unmarried at the parental house, emancipate alone by joining the Church or the army, or get emancipated by forming a new household after marrying, but without the wealth of the inheritance which was bound to go to his elder brother.

Table 2. Summary of the main categorizations of the historical family (compiled by the author)

Author	Family type	Characteristics of family
Hajnal[9]	European marriage pattern (Northwest Europe)[10]	Late marriage, working on service before marriage, nuclear families, male headship of the household after marriage.
	Joint Household	Early marriage is the cohabitation of more than one couple in the household.
Le Play[11]	Patriarchal	Direct descendants in the same household, Headship leading the family-labor; Property undivided.
	Stem	Only the heir cohabits with his parents, and remaining siblings emancipate after marriage (High family support).
	Unstable	Nuclear family; Early emancipation of children.
Todd[12]	Nuclear vs Extended	One married couple vs more than one living in the same household.
	Egalitarian (or not) inheritance.	Equal distribution of inheritance vs a single heir.
	Woman's status	Patrilocal (the wife moves into the husband's family house); Matrilocal (the husband moves into the wife's family house).
	Late vs early emancipation	Age of emancipation; Temporary co-residence of young marriage.
Murdock[13]	Multi categories	Inheritance; Descent-line; Monogamy/ Polygamy/ Endogamy; Gender roles; Activity.
Reher[14]	Strong Family	Late emancipation; Duty of care of family members; Strong family network.
	Weak family	Early emancipation; Low duty of family care.
Bott[15]	Close vs Loose kinship networks	[Only for London[16], but applicable to strong-weak family types.]
Banfield[17]	Amoral family	Nuclear family with strong family ties.
Sperling	Strong vs weak dowry.	Contrasting marriage within the Catholic countries in Europe (not a general theory of family classification; focuses only on marriage).

9 (Hajnal, 1982) as part of the Cambridge Group led by Laslett, as mentioned above in the text.

10 His hypothesis has been broadly tested, the most recent works point that Hajnal's division should be addressed more carefully, since there are strong geographical deviations in the combination of the 4 components of the Marriage Pattern (Szołtysek and Ogórek 2019; Szoltysek et al. 2019; Szołtysek et al. 2020).

11 (Play 1871)

12 (Todd 1995)

13 (Murdock 1967)

14 (Reher 1998)

15 (Bott 1957)

16 Replication of the validity of her work can be found at: (Aldous and Straus 1966).

17 (Banfield 1967) is linked to the concept of identity and basic priorities of the individual. In the familistic societies, individuals will set first the interest of the family, then the individual, and last the community. This will link to a higher control of the family members, with family members consisting mostly of the social network of the individual.

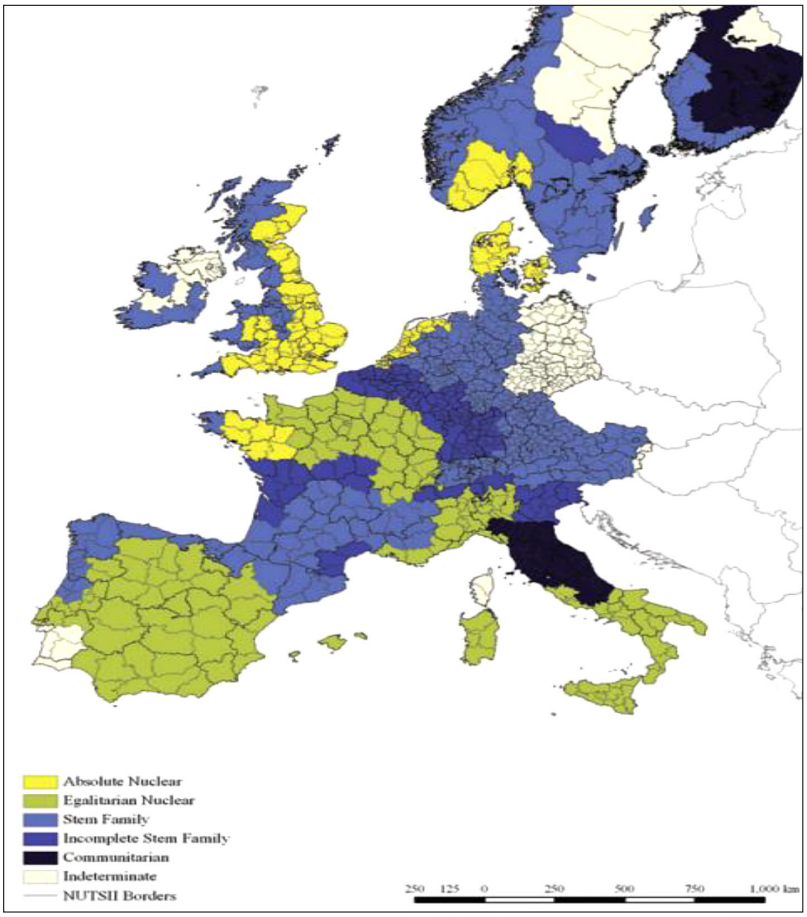

Image 2. Different family systems in Europe. Source:Duranton et al. (2009).

The *Nuclear egalitarian family* is the one associated with large agrarian exploitation in which the majority of people work the land for a minimum salary, with no property of the house that they live in or what they produce. This means that the 'family lineage' is not something that they could preserve. They are characterized by an equal distribution of the inheritance among brothers and sisters; most commonly, the daughters got their inheritance share as part of their dowry after marriage. This dowry system was weak, as Sperling explains, since parents could not deny their daughter the right to dowry if they did not approve of the partner. In this family type, emancipation only occurs after marriage, and, according to Hajnal's classification, they marry earlier and have a higher fertility. This family type is the one that Banfield describes as "amoral

familism" (a family-centered society in which individuals are subordinated to the family rather than the community needs), and with the strong family, as described by Reher.

Last but not least, there is the *absolute nuclear family* which is the least common in Europe, and also the most peculiar. This family type is the one that Hajnal described in the *European Marriage Pattern*, with early emancipation, late marriage, male headship of the house, and unequal inheritance. The inheritance in these regions was completely based on the person's will, where it was common to choose one child to give the parental property in exchange for care when the parent gets older. The level of authority of the parents in this family system is less strict than in the previous cases. Individuals are more independent from a younger age since there is a gap of time when living on their own before they form a new family. This family type is described as the one 'Weak Family' according to Reher's classification, and an 'Unstable Family' according to Le Play. Also, this family type appears in countries with the Protestant tradition, which formalized contractual marriages, rather than religious ones, even after the reform. Sperling only mention the Netherlands in her study by claiming that this family type and dowry system existed only there, but, similar to inheritance, it was subject to parental choice and control. Yet it also happens in such environments in which individuals had more agency and resources to confront this control.

Table 3. Family systems described by Todd

Family Type	Main Characteristics
Absolute nuclear	Total emancipation of children in adulthood to form independent families made simply of a couple and their children. Division of inheritance among children by testament or will, usually to a single individual, often the son. Brothers and sisters are treated as independent individuals (Todd 1990a, 37).
Egalitarian nuclear	Total emancipation of children in adulthood to form independent families made simply of a couple and their children. Equal division of inheritance among children. This system encourages the persistence of slightly stronger relations between parents and children until the inheritance is completely divided after the parents' death (Todd 1990a, 37–38).
Stem family	An extended family with several generations living under one roof. One child—generally, but not always, the eldest—marries and has children who remain in the household to preserve the lineage. The rest have the choice of remaining unmarried within the household or of marrying and leaving the home or becoming soldiers or priests. The house and the land are inherited by the son who stays at home. Others may receive some financial compensation. The inheriting son, who stays at home, remains under the formal authority of the father (Todd 1990a, 38).
Incomplete stem family	The same as the stem family, but with more egalitarian inheritance rules (in principle, but rarely in practice).
Communitarian family	An extended family in which all the sons can get married and bring their wives to the family home. Equality among children in inheritance, with family wealth and estates divided after the death of the parent (although a period of cohabitation between married brothers after the death of the parents is possible) (Todd 1990a, 39–40).

Due to the availability of data (Duranton et al. 2009a), Todd's classification seems to be the one which is more convenient for conducting statistical analysis and processing the European family differences. It is nevertheless a challenge to only attend to the dowry systems, as discussed above, also because the data is very limited if we want to approach the statistical test. In addition, the availability of other family theories enables researchers to define an argument with more nuances than when focusing only on a single characteristic.

The extensive databases available to conduct statistical tests on this theory are shown in **Table 4**.

The datasets listed above show that both cross-sectional and longitudinal analysis can be conducted. Datasets such as Fertility and Family or Gender and Generations are longitudinal surveys, which enables the life course analysis. Also, by linking the records in the census data available in *Eurostat*, we could derive the data in the longitudinal format, which would enable the study of the change in cohabitation trends over time, as well as the family structure or the emancipation age. Also, some historical databases, such as the BALL dataset (Pujadas-Mora et al. 2019) enable the study of the historical family since they include census records from as far back as the early 19th century.

Of course, qualitative analysis would be an interesting approach as well, which would enable us to find more nuances than the big datasets can, and refine the arguments of the mechanism that connects the antecedent with the legacy.

Discussion: what results should we expect from the historical family?

This section is meant for a reflection on the diverse ways in which we could interpret the effect of the family structure over cohabitation, in other words, to settle the mechanism.

As we have mentioned in the first section, cohabitation nowadays is rising as part of the diffusion of some new demographic practices that are argued to have originated in an ideational change by the population. This ideational change is argued to manifest itself due to the economic development, which changes the needs of the individuals and, therefore, their values. More specifically, we have observed that, among other factors included in SDT, cohabitation has a history linked to the legitimization (or institutionalization) of marriage. Thus, its current rising trends seem to be the result of a new process of legitimation (or re-legitimization) of cohabitation as a path to family formation. The values that

Table 4. Available datasets

Databases		Indicators	Type	Level	Source
SDT	**SDT**	Indexes SDT1 & SDT2	Rates	National	Sobotka (2008)
	Eurostat & OECD Family database	Marriage, Cohabitation, age …	Rates	National	
	Fertility & Family	Fertility, cohabitation, childbearing, marriage, divorce, age …	Survey	National	(Me and Giovannelli 2004)
	Gender & Generations	Trends of: Fertility, cohabitation, childbearing, marriage, divorce, age …		National	(*Demographic Research, Volume 17*, 2008)
Values	**WVS**	Secular-Rational & Self Expression values	Survey	National	(World Values Survey Association 2010)
	EVS & ESS	Secular-Rational & Self Expression values		Sub-national	
	Psychological factors	Individualism – Independence – Impersonally prosocial – Conformity – Obedience (indexes)			(Schulz et al. 2019)
Historical family	**Todd**	Equality (Egalitarian vs Non. inheritance) Authority (Unitary vs Extended family)	Secondary data Ethnography	Sub-national	(Le Bris 2016; Duranton et al. 2009b)
		Woman status		National	(Le Bris 2016)
	Murdock	Nuclear – Extended – Exogamy		Sub-nat.	(Murdock 1967)
		Women's status		Sub-national	(Carmichael and Rijpma 2017; Dilli 2015)
	Hybrid Data Todd & Murdock	This database combines and completes the indicators of Todd and Murdock.		National	(Rijpma and Carmichael 2016)
	Hajnal	Mosaic project	Census	Sub-national	(Mikołaj Szołtysek and Ogórek 2019)

SDT has tested to be associated with cohabitation, autonomy, and extreme non-conformist values (Lesthaeghe 2010) are very close to the dimension which is considered by Schwartz as the "openness toward change" (Schwartz 2003; 1994; 1992).

With a basic line, these pieces of literature are pointing in the same direction, an economic improvement propitiated the change of values, which eventually led to the rise of cohabitation, because societies became Ready, Willing, and Able to start those changes.

We have evidence in the literature which proves that the historical family systems affected the economic development of the countries (Baten et al. 2017; Baten and de Pleijt 2018; Carmichael et al. 2016; Dennison and Ogilvie 2016; Le Bris 2016; Moor and van Zanden 2006; van Zanden et al. 2019). This already suggests an indirect effect of the historical family over the current cohabitation mediated by economic performance. These studies argue that the European Marriage Pattern, the *Absolute nuclear* and the *Stem families* in Europe (Hanjal's and Todd's theories) positively affected the economic development. That happened because of the advantageous position which they gave to women – who made part of the labor force – but also due to the intergenerational investment of the inegalitarian systems.

Before drawing a complex model on the channels through which the historical family could affect cohabitation, which will always contain a fair amount of endogeneity since we could also understand economic development and values as legacies of family, I shall try to draw here the direct path based on the stable common sense transmitted over generations. This path relies on the assumption that people behave by following the main principles of the cultural schemas which are contained in the common sense. Also, this common sense is transmitted and reproduced in one generation over the next one, thereby ensuring its persistence over time.

We should not interpret this approach as the persistence of behaviors, but rather as the persistence of culture and how culture interplays with the changing environment. This means that this argument does not directly translate to assuming that the family systems which involved high use of cohabitation in the past should also have high cohabitation today. This relies on how culture, measured by the pre-industrial family structures, affects an individual's behavior in the current society. In other words, it depends on the roots settled in the historical family systems whether the current symbolism of cohabitation fits or does not fit as an acceptable path in the repertory of options in the strategies of action of members of a given society (Swidler 1986).

The basic mechanism of the argument on cohabitation as the historical legacy which I attempt to draw is based on the premise that culture is persistent, and that culture affects our behavior. Yet, culture needs to be properly drawn to become an argument; we can just say that the differences in cohabitation have cultural causes. I have defined how the four family systems had different profiles. And I have attempted to order them on base to this 'authority' line, by linking it to the dowry systems. If we understand this line as the main driver of the acceptance of cohabitation and therefore as an increase of its practice, then we should expect that the *Communitarian family* systems show the lowest cohabitation while the *Absolute nuclear family* has the most cohabitation.

Still, I am a bit reluctant to put this so straightforwardly, especially because *Nuclear egalitarian families* have been argued in the literature to be 'Familistic' and perceived as strong families. Even without the possibility of capital concentration, as in *Stem families*, Banfield, Reher, and other researchers, such as Micheli and Dalla Zuana (2006), have pointed out how the regions with this family type have societies in which the family is at the center. The component of equality makes – in a way – this family more alike to the communitarian systems than to the *Absolute nuclear family*.

One more point to note is that *Stem families* relied on primogeniture in the durability of the family lineage. This seems to reinforce the dowry system in a way that the household head can allocate the family resources in the most favorable way for its preservation. This relies upon only one heir and control over the other siblings to serve a solution which does not divide and break the family lineage. But, this inequality in inheritance makes this family look like the *Absolute nuclear family*. Rather than by a choice based on merits and formalized on a consensual contract as in the *Absolute nuclear family*, the *Stem family* has the same concept imposed over the first son. The remaining sons and daughters have similar characteristics. Also, both family systems come from agrarian systems which are associated with the small property and/or the ownership of what they produce, which may be relevant to settle differences.

This discussion attempts to put some light on the logic of the mechanism behind understanding cohabitation as a cultural legacy of the different family systems of Europe's agrarian past. The variety of approaches of the historical family and the data limitations makes this exercise challenging, yet interesting and promising.

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