Patterns of Social Trust in Western Europe and Their Genesis

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1. Introduction.

Machiavelli (1970 [ca.1519], 160-164) thought that it was impossible for a corrupt people either to create or to maintain a free government (except in the rare happenstance that a good prince leads them to good customs). Constitutional features suited for an uncorrupted people are not suited to a corrupted people; political institutions should be designed to vary by political culture, to use today’s terminology. Among its other virtues, there was a high level of social trust in republican Rome; the Senate, for example, so trusted the goodness of the plebs that it entertained an edict that individuals voluntarily return one-tenth of an unknown quantity of war booty that had fallen into their hands, and the plebs, rather than simply ignoring such an edict, contested its enactment, according to Machiavelli (1970 [ca.1519], 243). However, several of the institutions that were good for uncorrupted republican Rome were bad for corrupted imperial Rome. In his own day, Machiavelli continued, Italy is corrupt above all other lands; France and Spain are corrupt as well but each is united by a king constrained by the rule of law. In German lands, by contrast, it is as in ancient Rome, citizens are trusted to contribute voluntarily their share of taxes and they do so, such is their goodness and respect for religion; this is because they are isolated from Romance customs and because they maintain social equality within their states. Machiavelli’s Tuscany too is free of lords and gentry, and thus a candidate for republican rule. A principality is best in a climate of inequality and low trust, and a republic is best in a climate of equality and high trust.

On first reading Machiavelli’s attention to the differences in corruption between populations seems to be quaintly archaic, and his
cross-cultural comparisons comically provincial; and thus, his notion that the same institution might have different consequences in different cultures is obscured. Putnam (1993), however, studied the introduction in 1970 and subsequent course of development of the same imposed institutions of regional government throughout Italy, finding that the performance of the regional governments varied sharply according to the degree of civic community in the region, further that higher civic involvement in the 1900s foretold both higher civic involvement and economic development in the 1970s by region, and finally that such variations in civic involvement seem to be stable back to at least the early middle ages. The same kinds of institutions had different effects in different cultural settings. It is also interesting that Machiavelli’s Tuscany (together with neighboring Emilia-Romagna) was near the top of Putnam’s civic community index. Civic community involves social trust – the capacity for collective action, according to Putnam.

Social trust came within the ambit of modern political science with Almond and Verba’s *Civic Culture* (1963, esp. 261-299.), a comparison of political attitudes and democracy in five countries. Interpersonal trust eases the formation of secondary associations that in turn support the stability of democratic rule. Inglehart (1990, 44), in survey research on the advanced industrial countries, offered a civic culture hypothesis with a model that relates stable democracy secondarily to differentiated social structure and primarily to a political culture of civicness as indexed by interpersonal trust and two other components; economic development contributes positively to social structure and political culture, but not directly to democratic stability. Muller and Seligson (1994) challenged Inglehart, arguing that his civic culture attitudes have no effect on the
change in democracy from 1980 to 1990, and further that interpersonal trust is a consequence, not a cause, of democratic rule. Inglehart (1995, 174) responded that his model is relevant to the stability of democracy, not to short-term change in the level of democracy; and new models of democratic stability using data from the 43-country World Values Survey yielded an even more prominent place for interpersonal trust. For a simple illustration – data from the 43 countries worldwide show a correlation of $r = .72$ ($p = .0000$) between stable democracy and interpersonal trust (Inglehart 1995, 1974).

I do think that something like civic culture and its associated social trust contributed to the original European transition to political and economic modernity. That does not mean that I subscribe to a cultural determinism such that some peoples are destined to enjoy democratic peace and prosperity and other peoples are not. My purpose is to seek the microfoundations of civic culture, because, if we can precisely identify and understand the geneses of social trust then we can recommend traditional and novel institutions that advance social trust, civic action, and democracy. I do not confidently identify those microfoundations in this programmatic essay, but as an example of what I intend I refer the reader to my analysis of Chinese footbinding and African female genital cutting. Different explanations of those practices result in different reform strategies. A patriarchal-oppression theory would recommend feminist revolution in Sudanic Africa, a functionalist theory would recommend alternative puberty rituals and new roles for inflicting midwives, a legalist theory punishable prohibition and propaganda, a modernizationist theory economic development, and so on – all such recommendations have failed. My convention explanation of the practices
recommends associations of parents who pledge not to engage in the practice, and this reform strategy has robustly succeeded (Mackie 1996, 2000). Understanding culture does not mean surrendering to it, on the contrary, understanding how culture works helps us to escape its cage.

Section 2 examines Eurobarometer survey data on trust attitudes in 12 different countries in Western Europe. Differences in trustingness and perceived trustworthiness are stable over time and between countries. There seems to be a gradient of social trust across Europe -- the high pole in the northwest and the low pole in the southeast. Other cross-cultural studies find a related cluster of differences between the northwest and the southeast. Section 3 offers a hypothesis to account for the trust gradient -- there is a coincident gradient in traditional family structure. In the traditional northwest new couples establish their own household, women marry late, and youth work as servants in outside households; in the traditional southeast new couples move into the groom’s father’s household, women marry early, and work outside the household is shameful. I propose that these features of family life are a special type of Schelling convention that happen to regulate access to reproduction, and that because they are universal and persistent Schelling conventions they are likely to be independent of and prior to other explanatory factors. The Mediterranean honor complex in the southeast is also such a marriage-strategy convention appropriate to the Mediterranean climate, but the cultivation of a trustworthy disposition is the marriage strategy more appropriate to the climate and partly related family patterns of the northwest. One problem with the hypothesis is that southeast family patterns are not the neat opposite of the northwestern pattern. However, the more pronounced variability in family pattern and in other factors on
the Italian peninsula makes it an ideal setting for further elaborating and testing the hypothesis.

2. Patterns of Trust in Western Europe

2.1 Eurobarometer Data. Comparable data on trust among the publics of the European Community are available from Eurobarometer surveys undertaken in 1980, 1986, 1990, 1993, and 1996. Surveyors state: “I would like to ask you a question about how much trust you have in people from various countries. Please tell me whether you have a lot of trust, some trust, not very much trust, or no trust at all.” The mean for respondents from a given country is calculated by applying the coefficients 4, 3, 2, 1, respectively to the answer codes, “no reply” excluded; and 2.50 is the nominal mean. Respondents are asked to rate their own country, the remaining EC countries, and varying collections of countries outside the EC. For 1980 the data include respondents’ rating of their own country for Belgium, Denmark, Germany, Greece, France, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, Netherlands, and Great Britain, a total of 10 countries; for 1986, 1990, and 1993, add Spain and Portugal for a total of 12; and for 1996 add Sweden, Finland, and Austria for a total of 15

1 Means are taken directly from the 1990, 1993, and 1996 Eurobarometer publications; I use rawer response data from 1980 and 1986 Eurobarometer publications to calculate means equivalent to those reported in later years.
countries. Thus, for 1996, as an example, we can construct a 15 X 15 matrix that displays the country mean of respondents’ ratings, illustrated in Table 8.1. A column lists the ratings of nationalities by those in the country labelled at the top of the column; for example, the column headed “Belgium” includes trust ratings of the 15 different EC countries (including of their own country) by respondents in Belgium. A row lists the ratings of one nationality by respondents in each of the EC15 countries; for example, the row labelled “Belgians” includes trust ratings of the Belgians by each of the EC15 countries (again including Belgians rating Belgians).

-- Table 8.1 About Here --

It turns out that people always rate people of their own country (a rating I label as own-trust) as much more trustworthy than the average judgement of trustworthiness of that people by the respondents from all of the remaining countries (the mean of all own-trust ratings is 3.29, of all ratings by other nationalities is 2.70); indeed (with a few marginal exceptions among the lowest-trust countries, Italy and Greece), as more trustworthy than any of the remaining nationalities. Whatever the source of this positive own-country bias, it distorts rankings that are otherwise quite consistent, and so, unless otherwise indicated, own-trust is excluded from all the measures I report. Returning to Table 8.1, the right-hand side marginal is an unweighted average of the trust ratings of one nationality

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2 Whenever in this paper I report a 1980-1996 mean, it is constructed for the EC-12 of 1986, 1990, and 1993, treating Spain and Portugal as missing values in 1980, and excluding Sweden, Finland, and Austria from the EC-15 in 1996.
by each of the other nationalities, a Europe-wide rating of the relative
*trustworthiness* of that nationality. The bottom marginal is an
unweighted average of the trust ratings bestowed by one nationality on
each of the other nationalities, a measure of the relative *trustingness* of
each nationality. There is no need to weight the averages, because there
is no reason why the accuracy of trust judgements by people in small
countries should differ from those by people in large countries. By this
arrangement of the data, we have attained three variables of interest:
trustworthiness, trustingness, and own-trust.

Cross-country survey comparisons are fraught with problems and
hazards. Such issues cannot be rehearsed in this limited space, but, at a
minimum, let us assess whether the trust judgements extracted from the
*Eurobarometer* surveys are stable across time and across countries. Are
the trust judgements stable across time? Begin with trustworthiness.
Bivariate correlations of average *trustworthiness* judgements across
survey years 1980, 1986, 1990, 1993, and 1996 are strong and significant,
ranging from .87 to .99 as measured by Pearson’s *r* (each at a significance
of .000), and ranging from .55 to .88 as measured by Kendall’s *tau* (each
at a significance of .01 or better). Bivariate correlations of average
*trustingness* across survey years range from .42 (p = .179) to .88 (p =
.001) as measured by Pearson’s *r*, and range from .47 (p = .06) to .87 (all

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3Pearson’s *r* is a measure of the linear association between two series of interval-level
data that ranges from -1 for perfectly negative correlation to +1 for perfectly
positive correlation; Kendall’s *tau* is a measure of the similarity between two
ordinal rankings and ranges from -1 to +1 if, as here, the data matrix is square.
the remaining correlations significant at .03 or better) as measured by Kendall’s *tau*. Finally, correlations of *own-trust* range from .57 to .89 (.01 > p > .001 for six correlations, .05 > p > .01 for three correlations, and p = .07 for one) as measured by Pearson’s *r*, and, excluding 1980 (correlations are positive but not significant except for 1986), range from .38 (p = .09) to .59 (the remaining correlations significant at p = .03 or better). The three variables are stable across time, extraordinarily so as such things go.

Are trust judgements stable across countries? Here, rather than comparing the marginals, we are comparing the matrix entries by column. We compare, first, the 15 X 15 trust judgements (as always, excluding *own-trust* – the diagonal is vacant) expressed in the 1996 survey, and, second, the average of the 12 X 12 trust judgements expressed in all the surveys from 1980 to 1996. Generally, rankings are strongly and significantly correlated between countries, with the exception of rankings by respondents in Greece. For the 1996 data, 13 of the 14 Kendall correlation coefficients of rankings by respondents from Greece with rankings by respondents of the other countries are negative (and two of those coefficients report as conventionally significant). In the 1996 sample, rankings by respondents in Portugal appear to be unrelated to rankings by respondents in other countries. Excluding Portugal and Greece, the median number of positive and significant (.05 or less) correlations between one country’s rankings and another’s is 10 (out of a possible 12), and these significant correlations range from .42 to .92 (Pearson’s correlation coefficients are similar, and generally stronger and more significant). For the average of trust judgements from 1980 to 1996 for 12 countries, the Kendall coefficients for correlations between
rankings by respondents from Greece and rankings by other countries are mildly positive but not significant. For the average of all years, Portugal’s rankings correlate positively with those of other countries (six at a significance of .05 or better, three at a significance between .05 and .10); the 1996 Portugal sample is a lone anomaly – Portugal 1996 differs more from other years’ samples than any similar comparison in the data base, suggesting either some extraordinary event or corrupt data. For all years, and excluding Greece, the median number of positive and significant (.05 or less) correlations between one country’s rankings and another’s is 8 (out of a possible 10), and these significant correlations range from .49 to .86 (again Pearson’s correlation coefficients are similar, and generally stronger and more significant). With the exception of Greece, and the anomalous 1996 Portugal sample, trust judgements are stable across countries.

Since trust judgements are stable across time and stable across countries it is likely that the surveys are capturing some social reality rather than reporting some artifact of methodology. The judgements are stable, but there is also evidence of a few long-term changes. Germany and Italy showed much lower levels of trust in the 1950s than they did in the 1980s and ‘90s, presumably related to their defeat in World War Two, or perhaps past low trust contributed to their earlier lack of democracy (Inglehart 1990, 438; Inglehart 1997, 359). The German increase levelled off in the ‘80s, and the Italian increase levelled off in the ‘90s.

What do the trust rankings tell us? The EC-12 sorts into three groups with respect to trustworthiness. First, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Denmark and Belgium are highest in trustworthiness – label them the North Sea for short. Second, France, Germany, Great Britain
and Ireland, are intermediate – label them Intermediate for short. Third, Spain, Portugal, Greece and Italy, are lowest – label them the Mediterranean for short.\(^4\) The sort is similar for trustingness, except for the oddity of the highly trustworthy and highly own-trusting Luxembourgers being very low in their trusting of other nationalities. For a closer look, examine Figure 8.1, which shows trustworthiness of the 12 nationalities (arranged from least trustworthy to most trustworthy on 1980-1996 average) by year of sample. Figure 8.2 shows the trustingness of the 12 nationalities (arranged from least trusting to most trusting on 1980-1996 average) by year of sample. Figure 8.3 shows the ups and downs of own-trust from year to year. Three observations are manifest in

\(^4\) Do the measures vary because of different meanings for the equivalents of “trust” in the various languages? The survey evidence suggests that this is unlikely. First, trustworthiness rankings are highly similar across countries, regardless of language of survey question. Second, own-trust rankings are highly similar to trustworthiness rankings, again regardless of language. Language does not determine reality. With respect to Hardin’s (this volume) observations on cross-language differences in the term trust, it may well be that there is neither a word for nor the reality of trust in a small closed society. There would be, however, a need for trust in the urban societies of Europe. The need for trust is the same reality from one modern European setting to another, even if labeled trust in the United Kingdom and confiance in France, and even if the level of trust varies from one country to the next. Trust and confiance denote the same problem, even if the more nuanced meanings of each term vary.
the charts. First, Italy is considered the least trustworthy; moreover, least trustworthy by far; this assessment is shared by the Italian respondents as well, who rank lowest in own-trust among the 12 nationalities (Figure 3, own-trust); also, Italians are among the least trusting. Second, trustworthiness rankings are noticeably lower in the 1996 sample than in the samples for the other years, but own-trust increases to near high levels in 1996 -- from 1993 to 1996 respondents in the EC-12 came to trust other nationalities less but trust their own nationality more. Is this related to controversies over unification? I don’t know.

Third, trustworthiness, trustingness and own-trust are correlated. I have already mentioned that there seems to be a positive own-country bias exhibited in the own-trust ratings. Is this bias arbitrary from country to country, so that assessments of the trustworthiness of people in one’s own country does not resemble the assessments of them offered by one’s European neighbors? Remarkably, own-trust ratings resemble the trustworthiness ratings of the outsiders in each case: for 1996 the Pearson correlation coefficient between own-trust and trustworthiness is .74 (p = .002) and for all years it is .80 (p = .002). Next, trustingness and trustworthiness could each be stable but not necessarily related to one another. Are the most trustworthy also the most trusting?\(^5\) Yes: the

\(^5\) The projection heuristic of Orbell and Dawes (1991) is capable of explaining social trust or its absence as the byproduct of imperfectly informed agents projecting their
Pearson correlation coefficient between trustworthiness and trustingness for 1996 is .62 (p = .01) and for all years is .75 (p = .005). Noise is obvious in the data. The survey question captures both personal and political dimensions of trust. “Do you trust the Germans?” could mean “Do you trust German people?” or “Do you trust Germany?” Own-trust from year to year goes up and down in the same direction for nearly every country – there must be an exogenous factor – economic confidence? – driving that fluctuation in level but not ranking. Similar moods affect trustworthiness and trustingness, although to a lesser degree, and with some divergence, for example between own-trust on the one hand (up) and trustworthiness and trustingness on the other (down) in 1996 (charts not shown).

The data on social trust among the EC-12 indicates a social trust gradient across Europe, with highest trust at a northwest pole and lowest trust at a southeast pole. The 1996 survey includes complete data on Sweden, Finland, and Austria, and also trust by members of the EC-15 in people from Switzerland, Norway, Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Turkey, and Russia. Trust is highest for the Swiss, Swedes, and Norwegians, and lowest for the eastern Europeans and then the Turks, own trustworthiness or lack thereof onto unknown others. See my “Trust as Bond, Trust as Exit,” 1997 for a full discussion.

Russell Hardin (this volume) argues that trustworthiness begets trust. My provisional view is that trustworthiness is conceptually prior to trustingness, but that trustworthiness and trustingness are causally reciprocal (see Mackie 1997).
replicating the gradient. The data on high trust for Switzerland, Sweden, Norway and Austria also suggest that the northwest pole may be associated with Germanic (including Scandinavian) speakers, corresponding to Machiavelli’s observations five centuries ago.

2.1 Similar Studies.

Hofstede (1980, 1991) was able to administer a job-related attitudes survey to the employees of local subsidiaries of IBM in over 50 countries across the world in 1968 and 1972. With factor analysis he found the answers sorting into three dimensions, but from theoretical concerns he distinguished two strands in one of the dimensions to yield a four-dimensional model of differences in culture: 1. social inequality, 2. individualism, 3. masculinity and femininity, and 4. uncertainty avoidance. I want to pay attention to his inequality (his label was “power-distance”) index and to his individualism index, which are correlated (more inequality is associated with less individualism, -.67, p = .001) and also happen to be the two that load on the same factor. Each is correlated with national wealth and with distance from equator: the more inequality the closer to the equator and the less wealth, and the more individualism the more wealth and the further from equator. The inequality index purports to indicate “the extent to which the less powerful members of institutions and organizations within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally.” Worldwide, countries speaking a Romance language ranked medium to high on the inequality index (more unequal), and countries speaking a Germanic language ranked low (more equal). Hofstede (1991, 32-33) speculates that the difference is rooted in family experiences:

In the large power-distance situation children are expected to
be obedient towards their parents. Sometimes there is even an order of authority among the children themselves, younger children being expected to yield to older children. Independent behavior on the part of the child is not encouraged. Respect for parents and other elders is seen as a basic virtue; children see others showing such respect, and soon acquire it themselves. . . . In the small power distance situation children are more or less treated as equals as soon as they are able to act . . . The goal of parental education is to let children take control of their own affairs as soon as they can. Active experimentation by the child is encouraged; a child is allowed to contradict its parents, it learns to say “no” very early. Relationships with others are not dependent on the other’s status; formal respect and deference are seldom shown. . . . There is an ideal of personal independence in the family . . .

As for the next index, individualism “pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose; everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism . . . pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.” Europeans, Germanic or Romance, rank high (individualist) on the individualism index, and the English-speaking countries rank highest worldwide. Again, the range of the index is surmised to be rooted in family experiences: individualism in the nuclear family and collectivism in the extended family (Hofstede 1991, 50). More exactly, however, says Hofstede (1980, 229; 1991, 66) individualism is related to universalism, and collectivism to particularism, which resolves the apparent anomaly that high individualism is in another study associated with high
interpersonal trust. Looking at both power distance and individualism in Europe alone, they are negatively correlated as they are worldwide, and three clusters are apparent: strongly individualist and egalitarian Great Britain, individualist and egalitarian Germanic and Scandinavian countries, and individualist and moderately inegalitarian Romance countries plus Belgium. Hofstede’s inequality index is significantly correlated with my Eurobarometer-derived trustingness variable (Pearson’s $r = -0.60$, $p = .05$), as is his individualism index ($+0.60$, $p = .05$).

The 1990-1993 World Values Survey (WVS) in 43 societies contained the question, “Generally speaking, would you say that most people can be trusted or that you can’t be too careful in dealing with people?” and two possible answer codes, “Most people can’t be trusted,” and “Can’t be too careful.” I compared the independent WVS trust data from the relevant European countries to the trust data I derived from the Eurobarometer survey. WVS-trust correlates in expected directions with my 1990, 1996, and average trustworthiness, trustingness, and self-trust

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7 The same apparent anomaly was rediscovered and resolved in the same fashion 30 years later by Yamagishi and Yamagishi (1994) in their studies of comparative responses of Japanese and Americans in social-dilemma decision-making experiments. “Individualist” Americans trust more than “collectivist” Japanese in these experiments, suggesting that the proper contrast is between universalistic Americans and particularistic Japanese in the placement of trust. See my “Trust as Bond, Trust as Exit” (1997) for further discussion.
variables. For WVS-trust and my average trustingness, \( r = .69 \) (\( p = .03 \)).
I do not know why WVS-trust is not more strongly related to my trustingness and trustworthiness -- perhaps because the WVS data are nominal and the *Eurobarometer* data are ordinal-interval. Inglehart (1997, 352, 358-361) also reports data from the survey project on income inequality and on associational memberships for the 43 societies. WVS-trust and my average trustingness each is strongly and significantly correlated with more associational memberships; and WVS-trust and my 1996 trustingness each is strongly and significantly correlated with more income equality, recalling Machiavelli’s observations on corruption, inequality, and republicanism. Also, Hofstede’s inequality index is correlated with WVS-trust (\( r = -0.61, p = .02 \)) as is his individualism index (+0.53, \( p = .06 \)). It is remarkable that a factor extracted from Hofstede’s survey limited to apparently inconsequential on-the-job attitudes relates to independent measures of trust taken twenty years later.

Emmanuel Todd relates world-wide macro-level variations in family structures to variations in ideology (1985) and variations in cultural development (1987). Todd’s work is admirably parsimonious, but too bold for my intellectual tastes. Nevertheless, I find his broader hypotheses suggestive, and his narrower discussion of family structure and development in Europe useful. Todd asserts that generally economic development is preceded by the demographic development of a fall in the rates of mortality and fertility which in turn is preceded by the cultural development of a rise in the rate of literacy. Further, worldwide, literacy is positively correlated with mean age at marriage, more so with mean age at marriage of women (.83 – even male literacy is more strongly associated with later female age of marriage than with later male age of
marriage, .79 compared to .65). Looking at Europe, there are correlations among age at marriage of women over 27 years around 1840, literacy rates of over 70% around 1850, and national product exceeding $10,000 in 1979 – but no relation between these variables and industrialization in 1860 as indexed by rail track per capita. Early cultural development (late age of female marriage and higher literacy) and higher current national wealth are found in Norway, Sweden, Finland, Denmark, Netherlands, Belgium, Luxembourg, Germany, and Switzerland – almost the same set of countries that rank highest in the Eurobarometer trust measures.8

There are two different exceptions here, each interesting. First, notice the absence of Great Britain from both the list of countries experiencing early cultural development and the list of current higher-trust countries. Older historiography emphasizes the industrial revolution, its beginning in Great Britain, and the apparent diffusion of industrialization and associated modernization through Europe and beyond; however, Todd’s data (and much recent historiography) suggest that the industrial revolution is not an independent prime mover but rather a dependent component within a longer and larger process of change (its onset in Great Britain perhaps related to the combination of coal and iron resources and fortuitous location for world commerce and conquest).

What is remarkable is that despite its lead in the industrial revolution,

8 According to Todd, mid-19th century Scotland enjoyed late female age of marriage and high literacy, but England did not. If these variables are related to social trust, then social trust as measured by survey question might now generally be higher in Scotland than in England.
Great Britain ranks behind the countries of early cultural development and current high trust in national product per capita in 1979 (and by 1993 ranks below Italy in per capita gross domestic product). This suggests that there are important relationships among early cultural development, later economic development, and social trust; and if Todd’s data are correct that the absence of Great Britain from the present list of countries of higher trust may not be due to measurement error. If such a pattern of relationships is posited, however, then Germany becomes the exception — high in cultural and economic developments but medium on both trustworthiness and trustingness. The countries of intermediate trust – France, Germany, Great Britain and Ireland – are geographically intermediate, but with the exception of Ireland in the 20th century, they are also the largest of our countries in territory and population.

3. Explaining Western European Patterns of Social Trust

3.1. Candidate Explanations. What explains the social trust

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9 Measured in terms of either exchange rates or purchasing power standards, Eurostat: Rapid Reports, Economy and Finance, 1994(3). Thus, it is not a complete surprise that students in York in Great Britain free-ride in prisoner’s dilemma decision experiments significantly more than those in Turin in northwestern Italy (from 12 to 16 percent more, depending on the experimental condition: Burlando and Hey 1997). Eurobarometer data for 1976, 1980, and 1986 on Italians’ trust of other Italians by region show the northwest as the most trusted region. Interestingly, the northwest Italians cooperate more when the game is repeated among the same subjects, but the British do not.
The behavioral consequences of Protestant belief as contrasted to those of Catholic religious belief? Colder climate in the northwest and warmer climate in the southeast? Differences in customs or values between Germanic and Romance culture areas? The advance on economic development in the northwest due merely to its fortuitous location at the center of the new Atlantic-oriented world system? Different tendencies in family structure between the two regions? Idiosyncratic features not captured by our methodologies? These are among the major issues in comparative politics and historical sociology. Late female age of marriage, nuclear families, declining mortality and fertility, literacy, interpersonal trust, associational membership, population density, urbanization, industrialization, occupational specialization, wealth, subjective welfare, stable democracy, and other salient variables are all associated in a widely recognized modernization complex; and properly sorting out the intricate and sometimes reciprocal causal relationships among these processes is an unending challenge. I shall offer one plausible yet incomplete hypothesis, gladly conceding that nothing can be settled by the data and analysis in this meager essay.

3.2 The Marriage-Strategy Hypothesis. Tacitus observed that German customs of family life differed considerably from those of the Romans, including primacy of the nuclear family, lack of clans or lineages, probably monogamy, and possibly late marriage (“the young men were slow to mate . . . the girls too, are not hurried into marriage,” quoted in Goldthorpe 1987, 10). I propose that persistent differences in family structure – more precisely, different marriage-strategy equilibria – ultimately account for the social trust gradient across Europe. The social
trust gradient from the northwest to the southeast in Europe corresponds to the broad categorization of traditional European family structures by the Cambridge family historians Hajnal (e.g., 1983) and especially Laslett (1983). Laslett discerns four broad types of family household in traditional Europe, distinguished by 33 tendencies of difference. The first type corresponds to the northwest, the second is intermediate, the third ("Mediterranean") corresponds to the southeast, and the fourth, which I shall not discuss, is eastern Europe (beyond the EC-12). The first set of tendencies has to do with household formation. The tendency in the northwest is for neolocal residence: the newly married couple sets up residence on its own. The tendency in the southeast is for the newly married couple to stay in the father's household; new households fission off from the joint household for reasons unrelated to marriage.

Household-formation seems to structure many of the remaining variables, according to Laslett (but this conjecture is not borne out on closer examination of southeastern marriage patterns, as we shall see). Neolocal residence implies a large proportion of nuclear households, generally limited to parents and unmarried children. Patrilocal (groom's father's) residence implies a large proportion of joint households, including grandparents, adult brothers, and grandchildren.

A second important set of tendencies distinguishing the northwest European marriage pattern is late age at marriage, especially late age at first marriage of women. This implies a narrow age gap between spouses and a late age of first birth of children. This is supposed to follow structurally from neolocal residence, because the couple has to work and save to afford marriage. The southeast, in contrast, tends to experience early age of female marriage, implying a large age gap between spouses
and early maternity. Also in northwest Europe, the proportion of
permanently celibate individuals marrying was comparatively higher.
The third important tendency is dubbed "addition to household of life-
cycle servants," which means that in the northwest youth left home to
work as temporary servants in outside households, especially households
at the stage of having young children to care for. This seems to follow
structurally from neolocal residence: the couple with young children
need help (recall, these are the days of peasant subsistence), and the
servant youth need to earn money in order to establish their own
households ("save for their nest egg"). Life-cycle service is "very
common" in the Northwest and "not uncommon" in the Mediterranean.
But, in parts of southern Italy and Greece, it is "shameful" to work for
non-kin (Banfield 1958; Campbell 1964, 285; Barbagli and Kertzer 1990,
381).

The northwest European pattern of late age at first marriage of
women is "quite remarkable and unlike anything elsewhere in the world”
(Levine 1989, 92; also Seccombe 1992, 56). The pattern may have
originated in marriage practices of the Germanic tribes, the political
economy of the manorial system of the high middle ages, developing
Christian marriage rules, or in other factors, and various combinations
thereof, but seems to have emerged decidedly after the Black Death
(Levine 1989, Seccombe 1990). Whereas it was once believed that the
nuclear family is a consequence of industrialization, the received view
now is that the northwest European nuclear family was rather one of the
factors contributing to early industrialization (Goode 1963, Laslett 1983,
Todd 1987, compare Seccombe 1992). Indeed, adapting Seccombe, since
several societies achieved technological capacities as good or better as
those of northwestern Europe, only to stagnate or regress, the unique marriage pattern must be suspected as a necessary factor in the initial transition to modernity. The marriage pattern contributed to that transition in a number of ways. Late marriage reduces fertility and thus reduces mortality crises and increases average longevity; and the reduced number of children increases parental investment per child. Neolocal late marriage requires and the associated longevity justifies greater investments in physical and human capital by the marrying parties; especially, in comparison, by females who accumulate both for ten or more years between puberty and first marriage. The more equal age between marriage partners means that the average duration of marriage increases and that women (and their children) are less likely to be widowed and paupered in their later childbearing years. Life-cycle service permits men and women to accumulate capital for marriage, redistributes youth from less productive to more productive holdings, and introduces youth to a variety of settings and skills (adapting from Seccombe 1992, 239-241). The frustrating delay in marriage also

10 Crone (1989, 148, 152-154), in her excellent summary of “The Oddity of Europe” in history, remarks that, “Medieval Europe was backward in comparison with medieval China or the Islamic world, but it was not visibly different in kind. Of course it had its peculiar features, but so did other civilizations, and it is only in retrospect that medieval Europe can be seen to have contained an unusual potential.” She cites the northwest European marriage pattern as one of its distinguishing peculiarities.
cultivates habits of self-control and future-orientation in the population.

Some contrasts between Germanic and Romance marriage patterns go back for many centuries. Why the regional homology and the millennial persistence? To tackle the question, we have to understand the concept of a Schelling convention.

3.3 Conventions Regulating Access to Reproduction. Game theory is the study of interdependent choice. The most necessary and deeply interdependent choices a human makes have to do with reproduction. Moreover, many crucial aspects of courtship, marriage and childrearing are a matter of coordination. This gives rise to what I call conventions regulating access to reproduction. Elsewhere, this concept allows me to explain two perplexing practices. Female genital mutilation in Africa persists despite modernization, public education, and legal prohibition. Female footbinding in China lasted for a thousand years, but ended in a single generation. I show that each practice is a self-enforcing convention (in Schelling's sense), regulating access to reproduction, and maintained by interdependent expectations on the marriage market (Mackie 1996).

The following account of conventions as solutions to coordination problems, as developed by Schelling (1960) and Lewis (1969) is adapted from Mackie (1996). Schelling said that the coordination game lies behind the stability of institutions and traditions, yet can also explain rapid change. How can the same mechanism explain both stability and change? Look at a sample coordination game, as in Figure 8.4B. (Generally for the games in Figure 8.4: there are two players, each player has two strategies, the lower left payoff in any box is that of player Row-Chooser and the upper right payoff in any box is that of player Column-
Chooser; assume that the players can't talk to each other; and that they play pure strategies, not a probabilistic mixture of strategies.) If Row-Chooser chooses row one and Column-Chooser chooses column one, then they coordinate on R1C1 and carry home a payoff of two each; the same is true if they coordinate on R2C2. If coordination fails, say they choose R1C2, or R2C1, then each gets nothing. The usual illustration of this is whether to drive on the left side of the road or the right. It doesn't matter which side I drive on, so long as everyone else does the same.

-- Figure 8.4. About Here --

Consider now the game in Figure 8.4A. Here, only R1C1 is an equilibrium choice. Figure 8.4A does not represent a coordination problem; for that, there must be at least two proper coordination equilibria, according to Lewis (1969). Figure 8.4B does represent a coordination problem. So does Figure 8.4C. In 8.4C, R1C1 is better for each player than R2C2, and R2C2 is better for each player than the miscoordination at R1C2 or R2C1. If people are stuck at inferior equilibrium R2C2 they may lack a concerted way to move to superior equilibrium R1C1. Figure 8.4D also represents a coordination problem, but now with a bargaining aspect. Here, Column Chooser does best at R1C1, while Row-Chooser does best at R2C2, and each likes either of these coordination equilibria better than miscoordination at R1C2 or R2C1; this game has all the ingredients of power and tragedy. Any game with two or more proper coordination equilibria represents a coordination problem.

Singling out a coordination equilibrium is a matter of concordant mutual expectations. If there are two of us and we can talk, then we can each promise to choose either right or left, and the promise is self-
enforcing. If there are hundreds of us, express agreement is difficult. Many conventions suggesting a single choice of equilibrium in a coordination problem are not expressly agreed to, rather, they are tacit. Schelling urges that there is no logical solution to the tacit coordination problem; rather, solutions are suggested by their psychological salience. The salient choice is not uniquely good, just noticeably unique. It all depends on what the players believe about each other. In novel play of game 4C, absent credible communication, superior R1C1 stands out as the salient choice for most people. But in a recurring game, precedent is strongly salient. If we played the same game 1C yesterday at R1C1, then R1C1 is the salient choice today. If the choice yesterday was inferior R2C2, R2C2 is weakly salient today; and if R2C2 was the result in our last ten games, it is strongly salient on our next. Coordination by precedent is convention.

At 5:00 A.M., Sunday, September 22, 1967, Sweden switched from driving on the left to driving on the right (Ullmann-Margalit 1977, Hardin 1988). Sweden, or at least its authorities, saw driving on the left as more like the game in 1C than the one in 1B. The rest of continental Europe drove on the right, so as international traffic increased, visitors to Sweden caused accidents by driving in the wrong lane as did nonchalant Swedes abroad. So, Swedes would be better off driving on the right, moving from R2C2 to R1C1 in something like game 4C. Even if the millions of Swedes were each convinced that driving on the right would be better, they could never spontaneously, by some invisible hand, get to the better coordination equilibrium. Convention is self-enforcing: any one person driving to the right to demonstrate its advantages would end up dead. In left-driving Pakistan a local religious party decreed that the pious must
drive on the right. The decree was rescinded in two weeks following a number of serious accidents (Bedi 1994).

Some features of family life are conventions of this type, and other features are not. A feature will be a convention to the extent that a choice is interdependent between the parties and it is in the parties’ interests to make a coordinated choice. Discussions of family structure often emphasize inheritance practices, whether land is impartible or partible, for example. Whether inheritance is impartible or partible is not a convention, or is only weakly conventional, because what property one family transmits to its children does not depend, or only weakly depends, on what another family transmits to its children; a weak dependence might occur, say, if a certain type of land parcel was complementary in the local agricultural market. Whether the Addams family bequeaths the total 100 acres to one child and compensatory nonland shares to the remaining three children or bequeaths 25 acres to each of four children matters little to the Barney family.11 However, marriage-formation

11 Hume had a concept of conventions and cited inheritance practices as an instance of convention. Schelling interpreted choice of equilibrium in repeated coordination games as a matter of convention harking back to Hume’s concept. In an unpublished paper, I attempted to follow up on Hume and explain inheritance practices as conventions in Schelling’s sense. I concluded that inheritance practices were not conventions, but that conventions would more likely be found associated with more interdependent marriage practices. This led to the discoveries in Mackie (1996).
practices are deeply interdependent between families, and marriage is
defined as the fact that two parties make the same choice – each other –
for the purposes of reproduction. If the local convention is that a
daughter on the marriage market be equipped with a dowry of a certain
content and value, then it matters immensely to the families with sons on
the local marriage market that the Addams family has failed to properly
dower Letitia.

Conventions regulating access to reproduction are nearly universal in
local marriage markets and stubbornly persistent there because of the
strong interdependence of marriage choice. Consider, say, the cooking
practices of a household. What one house cooks does not depend on what
another house cooks (except for the soft constraints of input prices and
local knowledge). To deviate from the local norm of cooking might mark
one's family as creative, or maybe odd, but it is not fatal. Consider now
age of marriage. If the local convention is for males to marry at 35 and
females at 15, then individuals seeking to marry away from those means
face a smaller pool of eligible mates from whom to choose. The smaller
the mate selection pool, the lower the quality of match, down to absence
of acceptable match and consequent reproductive death. For individuals
who wish to marry and reproduce, there are strong incentives to comply
with any convention regulating access to marriage. The convention
persists in the ongoing marriage market, which is sufficient, but also
parents, nearly all of whom will have complied with it, will transmit the
expectations to their offspring. Those who do not wish to marry and
reproduce, or who defy the conventions, tend not have offspring to carry
on their peculiar traditions. An anthropologist presumably unfamiliar
with the particulars of the Schelling convention observed:

Once established as a trend a particular age of marriage may be difficult to vary; a late or early age may have to continue as a norm in situations very different from that in which it had its functional origins, not as a survival but because people are locked into a particular system. In my own experience the very high differential age of marriage found among the Konkomba of northern Ghana (late for men, early for women) has proved very resistant to modification, despite the wishes of many young men and women, and the pressures from outsiders; the brides are simply not there to enable a sudden change to take place. When variations in an already established "norm" do occur, they may arise from a number of factors which are specific to an individual case; it has been suggested that, at Colyton, Devon, in the later seventeenth century such changes were due to a desire to adjust the number of children to a favorable or disastrous sequence of events, so that the age of marriage reacted to local changes in the economy or demography. (Goody 1983, 209-210, references omitted, emphasis added)

Demographers sometimes portray age at marriage as an equilibrating device. Say that in a frontier society the number of males exceeds the number of females; then, assuming no polyandry, females are equitably distributed by increasing the difference between male and female marriage age, males marrying older and females marrying younger or both. Individuals acting individually cannot depart from the age convention, but the value of the convention might change nonintentionally in response to changes affecting all or most members of the intramarrying group.

Neolocality and patrilocality are each alternative Schelling conventions -- brides and grooms from different families in the same market must each expect one type of residence or another. Consider a local marriage market, and the larger set of overlapping marriage markets
within a cultural region, that is at a neolocal equilibrium. If a boy or girl wishes to find a partner who expects patrilocal residence, he or she faces a much smaller marriage pool, perhaps an empty pool, and thus an inferior match or reproductive death. There is further entrenchment at a neolocal equilibrium, since a boy who proposes departing to patrilocality would have to convince his parents to take into the residence a bride and subsequent grandchildren, and it is unlikely that the inherited neolocal housing structure would be large enough for that, not to mention the parents’ expectations; a girl’s family might reduce her dowry since it is going to the groom’s family rather than to the new couple. Similarly, at a patrilocal equilibrium, a boy or a girl seeking a partner who expects neolocal residence faces a smaller or empty marriage pool; and the equilibrium is further entrenched in that the boy is unlikely to obtain from his parents resources for independent residence and the girl’s family will not likely provide additional resources for residence conventionally provided by the boy’s family. Of course there are those who defy the conventions, but their deviation may result in less successful biological reproduction, and more surely will result in failed cultural reproduction of the deviant trait as children and grandchildren are relentlessly attracted back to mean values on conventions.

The tradition of life-cycle service is also a convention. For teenagers and younger adults to work annual stints with other families means that other families must need and want work from outsiders, and are willing to accept residence of non-kin; under a no-service equilibrium, a youth seeking outside work would find no family needing or wanting to hire him. Life-cycle service is associated with neolocality and its absence is associated with patrilocality: the small nuclear family household needs
outside help when its children are small but the large extended family household does not. Also, later age of marriage, especially for females, is associated with neolocality and early female age of marriage with patrilocality. Under neolocality, boys and girls must accumulate sufficient capital to establish their independent household, both by their own work and by waiting for the parents’ bequests at retirement and death, which delays marriage. Under patrilocality, the male needs his father’s permission to marry and the younger female goes directly from her parents’ supervision to her husband’s family’s supervision. However, in noticing the associations among these somewhat independent conventions -- neolocal with late marriage and service, and patrilocal with early marriage and no service -- we must not commit the error of expecting that we will observe optimal institutions. Just because it would be better for all concerned that neolocals marry late and have available service does not mean that such conventions will be what we observe, because, such as in the case that Goody observed, the relevant parties can be stuck at a welfare-inferior equilibrium that no one of them can escape alone. That is an advantage of the convention approach, that it can help us explain what is anomalous for structural-functionalism, for example, the many ills that follow from neolocality, early marriage, and no service in traditional southern Italy, or the consequential occurrence of patrilocality and late marriage in north-central Italy.¹²

¹² The relations among these conventions, and their interdependence and independence, requires further work. There appears to be no tension between patrilocality and either early or late marriage, for example, but considerable tension
In section 3.1 I noted that a great many variables are associated together in a modernization syndrome. Here I want to propose that conventions regulating access to reproduction -- specifically neolocality, early female age of marriage, and life-cycle service -- are together a strong candidate for being one of the necessary and primal factors in the original transition to modernity. These conventions are observed early in the historical record, are locally almost universal, are stubbornly persistent, and thus suggest considerable independence and causal priority.\footnote{Conventions regulating access to reproduction can depend on more fundamental demographic variables. For example, if life expectancy is brief, then neolocality will not pressure late age of marriage, because children will inherit at an early age.} Observing such universality and persistence, Seccombe asks: “Why do the great majority of families in a society share so many features in common? What ensures their similarity with one another and induces new family branches to replicate the form of their predecessors?” (Seccombe 1992, 24). His answer neatly summarizes the standard sociological repertoire for explaining such structural homology: the dominant mode of production (the local political economy?), an independent cultural kinship ideal inspiring widespread emulation and conformity, desire for family reputation for compliance with local norms, and norm compliance variously enforced by legal codes, community surveillance, and the heads of households. However, contrary to economic determinism, a study of variation in postmarital residence, female age at marriage, and prevalence of household servants among

between neolocality and early marriage.
regions of Italy finds a "persistence over time of regionally distinctive nuptiality patterns, even as economic systems changed,"; so-called "cultural norms" are somewhat independent of "political economy" (quoting Barbagli and Kertzer 1990 on Rettaroli 1990). Moreover, I am dubious in principle of the norm-compliance account, and believe that the convention account is more promising, especially in deriving a delimited conformity from the desire for reproduction rather than having to assume conformity as an all-purpose but arbitrarily invoked primitive.

Bourdieu (1976, 117-118), in his essay on marriage strategies as strategies of cultural reproduction, acutely observes that ethnology “has borrowed not only concepts, tools, and problems but also an entire theory of practices from the legalistic tradition . . . [a tradition] that speaks the language of the rule rather than that of the strategy.” The legalistic approach imagines that individual action is motivated by reference to a local unwritten law called a norm which is associated with some unwritten sanction. Norms persist because they are habitually transmitted from parent to child. Bourdieu’s innovation was to reject legalism in favor of his habitus, “a whole system of predispositions inculcated by the material circumstances of life and by family upbringing.” Habitus is an advance on legalism, but still retains the bibliophilic imagery of culture as a book of rules (explicit for the legalists, implicit for Bourdieu) handed from parent to child, of people as “cultural dopes.” A rational-choice approach to culture (which may be defined as the distribution of beliefs within an intramarrying group) portrays it as constraints on individual action arising from local interdependencies of action – as in conventions regulating access to reproduction. A local cultural practice of neolocality, for example, is not the result of parents teaching their children to be
neolocal, but rather persists as a convention very costly for individuals on
the marriage market to ignore (consider how unlikely it would be for one
to satisfy a desire for patrilocal marriage in Ohio); the convention is so
strong that actors may even fail to realize that there are alternatives to it.
One observes that children speak the same language as their parents and
in the absence of variation in the observed population erroneously
assumes that the cause is parental training. Notice, however, that children
of immigrants to the community, because of the power of convention,
speak in the language and accent of their peers, not their parents (Harris

Fukuyama (1995) argues that there is an important relationship
among family structure, trust, and national prosperity, but a surprising
one. Fukuyama dubs the surprise "the paradox of family values" (61-
127): in an informal but instructive cross-national comparison, he finds
that the stronger and larger the family, the lower is both social trust and
national prosperity. Fukuyama reports this association, but does not
adequately explain it. He ascribes culture, including ethics and family
structure to “inherited ethical habit” (34), "totally arational in its
substance and in the way it is transmitted” (33). He rejects “rational
choice” explanations of culture, and imagines that the only alternative
explanation of culture is that people “adopt such attitudes without
thinking much about them and pass them on to their children, so to speak,
with their toilet training” (38). Fukuyama’s toilet-training theory of
culture, following Weber, explains northwest European family structure
and high trust as a consequence of the adoption and bibliophilic
transmission of Protestant religious beliefs. But why, with so much
eagerness and sacrifice, did the northwest Europeans flock to the
Protestant sects? I argue that their religious beliefs were a consequence of the prior culture emergent from their family structure.

The toilet-training theory says that “because culture is a matter of ethical habit, it changes very slowly” (40). Some cultural regularities change slowly, but some change almost instantly. Footbinding, for example was nearly universal for a thousand years, but ended entirely in less than a generation (Mackie 1996). Some cultural regularities change slowly, some change quickly, and the toilet-training theory, although of venerable sociological heritage, explains neither (Harris 1998, Mackie 1999). Incidentally, Fukuyama confuses rational choice theory, which assumes only actors with consistent purposes, with vulgar economics, which assumes that humans are egoists who seek the heaping up of material goods. Vulgar economics is, of course, useless in explaining human purposes that violate its assumptions. Fukuyama also unwittingly shares the behavioral assumptions of vulgar economics: he thinks that individuals are naturally selfish and are moral only if society habituates them to be so (35). I argue for a rational-choice approach: a concrete account of cultural reproduction, explained by distinct mechanisms subject to constraints, as opposed to the typical socialization story where arbitrary habits are passed on by rote indoctrination. A more accurate understanding of the mechanisms of culture also allows for more effective policies to promote welfare-enhancing cultural change.

3.5. Trust or Honor? Assume that humans strongly desire to

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14 I think that humans are naturally moral. Fukuyama (1995, 370) rather incoherently affirms this view as well.
raise successfully their biological children. The various forms and aspects of marriage serve this end. Because of the desire for children, each party prefers marriage to nonmarriage, and thus marriage is a deeply interdependent choice and a coordination equilibrium. Females are certain of maternity, but males are not certain of paternity (who was it who quipped that maternity is a fact, but paternity is an opinion?). In the standard case, the female requires assurances of resource support for the bearing and rearing of children, and the male requires assurances of paternity confidence. Families advertise their male offspring as capable of providing both generous and sustained support, and their female offspring as both fertile and faithful. Under conditions of resource equality, humans compete in conveying the many signs of trustworthiness to possible marriage partners. Under conditions of resource inequality, conventions of honor (as male vigilance and as female modesty) emerge as signs of higher desirability. Trust and honor each serve the purpose of guaranteeing the risky marriage transaction, but each is only an effective strategy against its own type – trust with trust and honor with honor.

The honor conventions of male prowess and female modesty, sometimes described as the Mediterranean cultural pattern, can be derived from past conditions, not of resource shortage, but rather of resource unpredictability. Braudel (1966, 231, 235, 238, 244) emphasizes the unity of the Mediterranean climate:

a climate, which has imposed its uniformity on both landscape and ways of life. . . . identical or near-identical worlds . . . on the borders of countries as far apart and in general terms as different as Greece, Spain, Italy, North Africa . . . undeniable homogeneity, both from north to south and from east to west. . . . The disadvantage of this climate for human life lies in the annual distribution of
rainfall. It rains a good deal . . . but the rains fall in autumn, winter, spring . . . . The “glorious skies” of the summer semester have their costly drawbacks. Everywhere drought leads to the disappearance or reduction of running waters and natural irrigation . . . . A few changes in temperature and a shortage of rainfall were enough to endanger human life.

There is far more potential variance in male reproductive success than in female reproductive success. Resource unpredictability results in more mortality among males as compared to females, and results in more resource inequality among families; and male death and family stratification conspire to produce a shortage of marriageable males (Braudel’s Mediterranean: “We may assume that as a rule women were in the majority . . . .”, 1966, 415). The shortage of males intensifies positional competition among families offering daughters on the marriage market, and the families of women compete to marry upwards (hypergyny), provide dowries, and assure paternity confidence; at an extreme of resource inequality, polygyny, formal or informal (sequential monogamy, mistresses) emerges. Low (1990) uses Murdock’s standard cross-cultural sample to explore the relationships between variance in male resource control as proxied by non-sororal polygyny on the one hand and environmental variables on the other hand. Among other things, she finds that as the seasonality of rainfall increases so does polygyny; also, polygyny increases with pathogen stress (consider – “in the towns of the Sicilian cereal latifundia, where only men cultivated the land, adult male death rates exceeded adult female death rates probably because males were more exposed through their work to a torrid climate and to malaria,” Benigno 1989, 178).

Thus, under greater resource inequality, families advertise the
honor of the line, the purity of its females, and their commitment to the values of chastity and fidelity, the so-called modesty code. Local conventions of modesty emerge, among them clausturation, veiling, footbinding and infibulation. Female modesty in these circumstances is a positional good (valued not for attaining a standard, but for its rank; not “excellent” but “best”) and thus is driven to maximum affordable values on the conventions: “One wrong word about his sister and he’ll kill you,” “The errant daughter shall die,” and so on. It is a matter of family honor that its sons fulfill the reproductive obligations of marriage as well as that they attempt multiple low-cost liaisons -- a mixed reproductive strategy. (These ideas are borrowed from the brilliant work of Dickemann 1979.) The contrast between the northwestern marriage strategy of trust and the southeastern strategy of honor is developed in the next section, 3.6.

The contrast between the northwestern and southeastern family patterns is also arguably related to differences in climate, disease mortality and their interaction. It is not that the north is colder and the south hotter, except as that may effect disease mortality.¹⁵ Rather, it is

¹⁵ Hot temperatures are unmistakably associated with an increase in aggressive behaviors. In the U.S. there are highly significant correlations between the warmth of a city and violent crime arrest rates. Controlling for heat, and for race, there is also a weaker but puzzling correlation between southern culture and violent crime. Heat and culture are hotly debated as substitute hypotheses. However, they may be complementary, with independent effects from heat and from a lingering southern U.S. culture of honor rooted in reproductive conventions (see Fischer, 1989 for suggestive evidence). For an entry into to the heat literature, consult Anderson and
that the northwestern climate is less extremely variable than the Mediterranean in the ways that matter to agricultural production, and it is also more predictable. More predictable resources mean less inequality between families and greater expected longevity in the northwest. To understand regional differences in disease mortality we must consult McNeill’s *Plagues and Peoples* (1977, 57): by the beginning of the Christian era “four divergent civilized disease pools had come into existence, each sustaining infections that could be lethal if let loose among populations lacking any prior exposure or accumulated immunity.” As the scope of conquest and trade expanded, the Roman disease pool of the west was connected to the Chinese disease pool of the east, with calamitous population collapse for both empires at the extremes of the new confluence. The Roman Mediterranean populations contracted from the third century on, and collapsed after the Justinian plague in the late fifth century. The Germanic barbarians invaded the Western Roman Empire, or more precisely, wandered in to take over vacant land, which made a bad situation worse, because as Roman and Germanic “masses began to commingle, living as close neighbors and intermarrying, disparate ethnic groups were exposed to the ravages of alien diseases for which they lacked effective antibody defense” (Seccombe 1992, 57).

Whether due to the macroparasitism of imperial domination of the peasantry in the south as McNeill believes or due to the differential

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16 Low (1990), a biologist of reproduction strategies, offers a useful formal distinction between extreme variation and unpredictability.
microparasitism of disease, population growth was greater after the Justinian collapse in the Germanic north than in the Romance south. Later, the Black Plague of 1346-1350 and its many weaker successors hit all of Europe hard, but it hit the Mediterranean the hardest, the possible explanations detailed by McNeill (1977, 146-154). I would add that perhaps small households in the north and large households in the south contributed to the differential mortality. In the 150 years after the first plague, the population center of Europe shifted from northern Italy to the low countries, as did the centers of commerce and conquest (the shift is made vivid in the population maps constructed by Terlouw 1997). Thus, again, now with respect to disease, expected lifespan was more predictable in the northwest. Less inequality of resources and more longevity support neolocality and late marriage.¹⁷

3.6 Trust as a Marriage-Strategic Disposition. There are five major tasks in the life cycle (Seccombe 1992, 25). First, to achieve a livelihood. Second, to acquire household space. Third, to get married. Fourth, to bear and raise children. Fifth, to provide for aging parents. The second, third, and fourth tasks typically involve conventions that regulate access to reproduction. Assume that residence, age of marriage, and service are such conventions. Consider first the northwest European case of neolocal residence and late age of marriage. The husband and wife are of comparable maturity. The wife has attained comparable

¹⁷ These speculations have to do with understanding the origins of the European transition to modernity, and do not imply any geographical determinism with respect to current transitions to democracy.
human capital, perhaps a distinctive skill. She has also likely spent some
time away from her family, if not, a 26-year old is certainly more
independent than a 16-year old. Each spouse hails from a small nuclear
family, which has some reputation but comparatively little power to
enforce the honor of its sons and the modesty of its more independent
daughters. Consider next the stylized southeast European case of
patrilocal residence and early age of marriage (the stylization is useful but
misleading, as I will explain in section 4.1). The husband is mature, but
the wife is much younger; the man tends to have more power, the woman
tends to be less responsible. The wife has attained simple domestic skills,
but no other distinctive human capital. She has spent no time away from
her family, and has less of a sense of independence. Each spouse hails
from a large patrilocal family for whom reputation is everything and
which has the power to enforce the honor of its sons and the modesty of
its daughters. In the northwest, marriage is a contract negotiated by two
independent individuals (with parental agreement); in the southeast,
marrige is a contract negotiated between two families (with children's
agreement).

Assume that men and women want to have their own biological
children. If that is the goal, the problem for the woman is resource
support for child bearing and raising and the problem for the man is
assurance that the children are his own. These are major problems.
Although it is probably obvious to most readers of this article that
reckless promiscuity and penury is not the way to go in a marriage, these
background assumptions are learned practices that don't seem so obvious
to those of our fellow citizens populating the daytime television talk
shows. Under the southeastern marriage system, the modesty of the
immature and dependent young bride is guaranteed by the jealous honor of her family, and by vigilant supervision before and after marriage. The resource reliability of the groom is guaranteed by the honor of his family, under whose supervision the couple will reside; even if the son turns out to be useless, his family will make good the keep of the children, if only for the sake of its reputation. The primary negotiators of the marriage are the two families, who will each insist on marrying as well as possible into a family of honor (of course, the couple's wishes can't be denied, but notice how zealously the honor family supervises the introduction of prospects); transgressions are deterred by the prospect of destruction of the family's honor – for an individual member to damage his or her family’s honor is to damage his own central interests. The northwestern marriage market is quite different. The mature and independent female and the male are certainly concerned about their reputations. However, these reputations do not follow from direct physical supervision by their respective families, but rather from dispositions inculcated by parents and cultivated by individuals. The reliability of the female's marriage pledge is guaranteed not by the thorough physical supervision of her family, which is impossible because of its smaller size and her much longer wait till marriage, nor by the broader incentives of the larger patrilocal family to safeguard its honor, but rather by her trustworthiness. The male's potential resources are indicated not only by inheritable family resources but by his ability to earn and save in work beyond the parental family; the reliability of his marriage pledge is best guaranteed not so much by the honor of his family but by his own signs of trustworthiness. If parents desire children and grandchildren, which is one of my assumptions, then it is in the parents' interest under this system to teach their children to be
trustworthy. Anyway, individuals who do not exhibit the signs of trustworthiness do less well on the marriage market, and under subsistence conditions those who were in fact untrustworthy tended to be less successful in raising children to adulthood.

Notice the powerful consequences of a convention of life-cycle service, a temporary stage of work outside the family before starting one's own family (perhaps the equivalent today is college). First, children must be trained to make favorable decisions even when not under family supervision. Second, children attain an outside perspective on affairs, if lucky, several new skills. Third, familiarity and cooperation with distant kin or non-kin is shown possible. Fourth, we get something like the strength of weak ties (Granovetter 1973: the idea is that new information or new opportunities are more likely learned from distant acquaintances than from close relations). Neolocal households a la Montegrano in southern Italy are almost isolated cliques. In contrast, identically small neolocal households in the northwest, linked through life-cycle service involving annual and sequential household residence of equal-status outsiders, inhabit a more complete network of ties. To be fit for such intimate apprenticeship necessary for acquisition of sufficient capital for marriage, the youth must be prominently trustworthy.

The first and fifth major tasks of the life cycle are to obtain a livelihood and to care for aging parents. Under patrilocal residence there comes a time for the old man to retire, and ideally there is a stable transfer of household authority to one of the sons. Nevertheless, under the supervisory constraints of commonly expected common residence, the aged grandparents need not fear neglect, because they are daily present with lingering authority even if resented. And a marrying son, although
he needs parental permission to marry, need not worry about attaining his own means of production, since marriage does not mean leaving the household. Matters are quite different under neolocal residence and its variants. In order to marry, son and daughter must accumulate and receive from parents sufficient means of production to establish their own household. Generally, this is impossible without large transfers from the couple's parents. A resource dilemma arises between the parents and the children. The children need the parents' capital to establish their own households, but once the parents transfer the capital they lose certainty of care in their old age. The neolocal parents' only security is the trustworthiness of their children to honor the pledge of care. Therefore, it is in parents' interest to raise trustworthy children. In the patrilocal household, it is in the father's interest to inculcate the norm: obey your father. In the neolocal household it is in the father's interest to inculcate the norm: fulfill your promises.

Thus, it may be no mere accident that the high-trust countries in northwestern Europe traditionally exhibited one marriage pattern and the low-trust countries in the southeast exhibited another. It may be that the marriage patterns generated variations in social trust as a byproduct. Further, recall that Hofstede’s index of inequality and his index of individualism were negatively correlated with one another, and each also proved to be correlated with *Eurobarometer* - and World-Values-Survey-derived measures of trustingness. At one pole we have southern latitude, more inequality, obedience to parents, local collectivism, extended families, fewer associational relationships, and lower trustingness; at the other pole we have northern latitude, more equality, independence from parents, individualism, nuclear families, more associational memberships,
and higher trustingness. According to Todd, a later female age of marriage is associated with higher literacy worldwide – the logic of the relationship is obvious – if women have time to learn before they marry they transmit that learning to children; and at the national level earlier literacy is associated with later wealth. In the case of the original northwest European transition to modernity, I have identified an additional linkage from later age of marriage to economic development – the unavoidable marriage strategy of cultivating trustworthy dispositions resulting in persons who are independent and individualized yet at the same time because of their trustworthiness capable of forming and reforming in civic, political, and economic associations beyond the immediate family.

4. Discussion.

4.1. Problems with the Marriage-Strategy Hypothesis. Laslett (1983) thought that neolocal residence structurally induces late age of female marriage and life-cycle service. These three traits are associated in northwestern Europe and, as I argued, additively generate trust. However, southeastern Europe is not the neat opposite of northwestern Europe. Students of the Italian family (Barbagli 1991, Benigno 1989, 18 Compare Cook and Hardin (forthcoming), who say that small communities with strong oversight of individuals tend to organize cooperativeness with general norms and the sanction of shunning, while more urban communities organize cooperativeness through many relatively specific networks, hence through trust as encapsulated interest. Our conceptions are parallel but differ in some details.
Macry 1997) have identified three broad traditions of family formation.\(^{19}\) The first, characterized by neolocal residence and late age of marriage, is found in the cities of northern and central Italy (and in Sardinia). The second, characterized by patrilocal residence, late age of marriage, and life-cycle service is found in the countryside of northern and central Italy, where agriculture was typified by annual sharecropping or family farms. The third, characterized by neolocal residence and early age of marriage, is found in southern Italy, where agriculture was typified by agrotowns of farmworkers employed by large estates or by tiny peasant plots (greater resource inequality). Life-cycle service is absent in southern Italy (Da Molin 1990, Arru 1990). Similarly, on the Iberian peninsula, in the north is patrilocality and early marriage, in the center patrilocality and late marriage, in the south neolocality and early marriage (Benigno 1989, 175). Empirically, neolocal residence does not structurally induce late age of female marriage or life-cycle service. This may count against Laslett’s structural interpretation of the relations among the variables, but it is not inconsistent with the convention account.

Trust is higher in northern Italy, lower in central Italy, and lower still in southern Italy. Consider Putnam's (1993, 97 and throughout) celebrated study of civic culture in Italy: low trust and low political and economic development are found in the southern region, and high trust and high political and economic development are found in the north-

\(^{19}\) The southern family pattern has changed radically with modernization, but nevertheless exhibits distinctive traits, as detailed in Jurado-Guerrero and Naldini (1997).
central region. The lower-trust south is characterized by neolocal residence and small nuclear families, and the higher-trust north-central area by patrilocal residence and large joint families. Clearly then, post-marital residence alone has nothing to do with trust! The large joint families of the higher-trust north-central area and their late-marrying daughters are associated with a particular style of sharecropping in the past. Land was owned by an urban elite who annually contracted with a family head for the exclusive labor of family members, and the landlords, who paid a fixed percentage of the crop, demanded larger work crews (Kertzer 1989). Whether the joint family emerged in response to landowners' demand, or landowners' demand emerged in response to the joint family, I do not know.

The large patrilocal family is well-suited to guarding the chastity and fidelity of its women, and thus capable of living in rural isolation. What about the small neolocal family in the more fiercely honorable south? “Throughout most of southern Italy, the division of land into individual farmsteads was rare or nonexistent” (Da Molin 1990, 504). It is curious that such families are found in dense villages admirably suited for jealous surveillance of all by all, particularly of the honor of the women. Moreover, and notice the negative superlatives:

In southern society, to go into service was considered to be humiliating and a disgrace; in some cases it was almost better to starve. To leave one’s home to work as a servant in another home was considered to be absolutely unforgivable. The southern male, and in particular the head of the household, protected the honor of his women, be they wife, daughter, sister, or mother. An “honored” daughter (a daughter with a good reputation) only left her family and home after marriage. It was absolutely inconceivable that a girl should leave home to enter service for a period and
coreside with another family; if she did so before marriage, she could never return to live in the family home. (Da Molin 1990, 521)

The traditional southern pattern of neolocal residence, early age of marriage, and no life-cycle service is the worst of all possible family worlds, but due to its conventional nature impossible for any one family to escape from. One must establish one's own household with few resources at an early age. Hiring outside help when the children are small is impossible; thus, the wife has no time to invest in new human capital. The teenager to toddler transmission of human capital frequent under life-cycle service does not occur. Poverty follows. Parental death, unemployment, sickness or senility are calamitous to the precarious nuclear unit. Laslett (1988) takes note of the “nuclear-hardship” of the neolocal family, its vulnerability to misfortune, its dependence on the broader community, and corresponding institutions of poor relief in England and elsewhere. The neolocal family is also found in southern Italy, but without the corresponding community institutions. Banfield studied a neolocal low-trust village in southern Italy. The thematic apperception test stories that Banfield invoked from the distrustful Montegrani were ninety percent about calamity and misfortune (similar tests in northern Italy and in Kansas yielded threefold and sixfold fewer proportion of calamity stories respectively), and no wonder: “No matter how hard parents struggle, the family may suddenly be destroyed and reduced to beggary” (Banfield 1958, 105). Banfield (1958, 139-152) offered two explanations for the amoral familism and suspicion of Montegranaro. First, trust is higher in northern Italy and there one finds the extended family. The greater poverty and insecurity of the neolocal
household makes for distrust. One finds the nuclear family in northwest Europe, however, and higher trust there than in northern Italy. Second, Banfield hypothesizes that the northern and southern Italy family patterns vary by traditions of land tenure leading to renters in the north and hired hands in the south. The traditions of land tenure themselves might have evolved in adaptation to a prior local family pattern, however.

4.2. Conclusion. Under my convention approach, postmarital residence, age of marriage, and forms of service can both be somewhat independent of one another and stable in value. The distinguishing cause of first transition to modernity may have been neolocality, late age of marriage, and life-cycle service. Late female age of marriage may also encourage female literacy and thus general literacy and an explosion of human capital. Late female age of marriage tends to supplant honor with trust (compare Cook and Hardin forthcoming). Late-marrying patrilocal families that sharecrop together on a contract basis may extend trust beyond the nuclear family. Life-cycle service may underwrite trust and cooperation beyond the radius of family. Advancing economic development increases trust, according to the survey data, regardless of prior family structure, and economic development tends to induce neolocality, later age of marriage and work outside the household. Trust is subject to equifinality (the same effect might follow from any one of several different causes). This does not mean that anything goes, just that the theorist might have to specify more than one genesis for more than one variety of trust.

It may be that neolocal residence, late female age of marriage, and life-cycle service additively generate trust. Thus, we find highest trust in northwestern Europe, which had all three traits; lower trust in the north of
the Mediterranean peninsulas, which had late female age of marriage and some life-cycle service; lowest trust in the south of the peninsulas, which had neolocal residence alone.

I have been bold in stating my marriage-strategy hypothesis for the sake of effective presentation, but I am humbly aware of the sketchiness of the theory, of the loose ends and inconsistencies, of the inappropriately monocausal overemphasis on trust and family, of the neglect of political history, and of the paucity and ambiguity of supporting data. The hypothesis requires both more detailed modelling and more comparative-historical testing and refinement. A proper theory would detail relationships among background demographic variables, biogeography, political economy, and the several conventions regulating access to reproduction. A worldwide comparison is out of the question, and a Western European comparison is beyond the comprehension of any single researcher and is afflicted with uncontrolled variables and incomparable data sources. Italy, however, is an ideal laboratory for testing an elaborated hypothesis, because of fewer uncontrolled variables, more comparable data, but above all because of the abundance of distinguishable cases and very wide range on all the variables of interest – production, reproduction, nature, and trust.
References


FIGURE 1.

Game Matrices

* = Equilibrium Choices

A. 

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td>R2</td>
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B. 

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<tr>
<td>R2</td>
<td>0</td>
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Single Equilibrium

Coordination: Indifferent

Equilibria
Coordination:

Ranked Equilibria

Conflicting Equilibria