Negotiating Marriage: Artisan Women in Fifteenth-Century Florentine Society

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Abstract

Social ties determined status, community membership, and even identity for all fifteenth-century Florentines. The marriage formation process was one of the most important opportunities to form social ties, not only between spouses but also with those friends, neighbors, and patrons who served as witnesses, guardians, and providers of dowries. This dissertation examines the process of marriage formation among Florentine artisans, defined as members of the minor guilds and their families in the late 1420s.

The study relies on 1425-1429 notarial records of marriages, betrothals, and dowry receipts, and on the 1427 Florentine Catasto. The narrow chronological range makes it possible to cross-reference the two documents, thereby increasing the amount of information available for the couples and their families. It also centers the study on a period of transition in Florence. At this time, Florentine artisans represented a sizable and politically active community. However, the Florentine republic was edging closer and closer to an oligarchy, and, increasingly, artisans were politically marginalized in favor of progressively more powerful elite factions. Artisans' social ties—including those created during marriage—became ever more important for a continued sense of political power.

From these sources, this dissertation makes three major points: First, although numerous studies of elite marriage exist for Florence and their results have been held to be representative of all Florentine society, marriage formation differed in significant ways across the social spectrum. Second, marriage formation provided artisans with an excellent opportunity to form and cement social bonds among themselves. This study also highlights the central role of artisans in both tying together those at different social

levels and providing an avenue for social mobility, however limited. A focus on marriage also demonstrates the importance of women, particularly non-elite women, in Florentine social networks. Third, by demonstrating the variety of marriage patterns in Florence, and through comparison with the ever more diverse picture of marriage in England, this dissertation argues that the established contrast between marriage patterns in the two regions is increasingly untenable.

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Abbreviations

All unprinted primary sources are found in the Archivio di Stato Firenze, or ASF.

The two collections used were:

Notarile Antecosimiano, abbreviated NA

Catasto, abbreviated Cat

Whenever I have been able to identify an individual from the notarial documents in the computerized Catasto database, I have provided the identification number of the household to which that individual belong. These numbers are not original to the Catasto but were assigned by David Herlihy and Cristiane Klapisch-Zuber when they and their team created the computerized database out of the Catasto material. The Catasto identification numbers have been abbreviated in the form Cat ID XXXX.

On 17 June 1428, a small group gathered around the notary Ser Calderino Franco Calderini in the western quarter of Florence, probably in the parish church of S. Trinita, on the north bank of the Arno River.[1] There Ser Calderino observed the formal betrothal of Gemma Domenico to Luigi Agnolo and scribbled a written record of the agreement in his notarial register, among the various other contracts Florentines had brought before him. Luigi, the groom, was a thirty-three-year-old used clothing salesman, a member of one of the city's fourteen minor guilds and an artisan.[2] He was a widower living just west of the church of S. Trinita along the Arno, with his widowed mother, a younger brother, and two sons, ages five and seven. Gemma, the bride, was represented in her betrothal by her brother, Cristofano Domenico, a butcher also living in the western quarter of the city, as her father had already died at that point.

In addition to Luigi and Cristofano, the group gathered around Ser Calderino included three witnesses, whose names he duly noted as part of his record. The witnesses consisted of Giovanni Piero Bini, a knifemaker and neighbor of Luigi's, Andrea Bernado, a neighbor of Cristofano's, and Salvatore, whose patronymic the notary did not record, an armorer from right across the river. Also present was Filippo Tommasi Marcialle, an apothecary and Cristofano's neighbor, who officially approved of the union and the dowry.[3]

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[1] NA 4370 fol. 17V.
[2] Cat ID 5168.
[3] Cat ID 5412

Gemma herself may or may not have been present at her own betrothal; women were not required to be present for the betrothal and were normally represented by their guardians. In this case it is likely that she was there; directly after Ser Calderino recorded the details of the betrothal and in front of the same three witnesses he recorded the marriage itself, for which Gemma would have been present.

This is just one of countless marriages recorded by Florentine notaries in the fifteenth century and now preserved in the Archivio di Stato in Florence. The records themselves are fairly dry, consisting of standardized contracts scribbled out day after day by notaries with few changes to the wording except to insert the appropriate names and dates, places and prices. Nonetheless, the records are teeming with the life of the city, with the people, their interactions, their quotidian transactions, and their life milestones. The people who appeared in most of the contracts, like Gemma and Luigi, were not wealthy and did not leave behind any artistic, architectural, or intellectual legacy. They were omitted from the city's historical narrative, but were the ones doing the majority of the living and dying, marrying and having children, working, buying and selling in the city. And they did not do so in isolation or on the margins of society, but in the company of and with the help of their neighbors, relatives, and other members of their various communities. These are the people who made up the bulk of Florentine society.

How are the individuals in this contract connected to one another, and where do they fit into Florentine society more broadly? How typical was their marriage in the Florentine context? Can it be used to draw conclusions about other butchers or used cloth

salesmen in Florence, or about Florentine marriages more broadly? Finally, how does the marriage of Gemma and Luigi compare to other marriages in northern Italy and across Europe in the early fifteenth century? Does it conform to models of pre-modern or Mediterranean marriages, with an early age of first marriage for women and a higher age for men, near universal marriage, and residence with the groom's extended family? In what way? If it does not, what does this mean for the broader models of marriage and the comparative history of marriage, for Florentine society, for marriage in Florence, and specifically for Gemma and Luigi?

The Mediterranean Marriage Pattern in Historiography

The comparative history of marriage was, in the 1960s and 1970s, defined by its methodology, specifically by a demographic/statistical approach relying heavily on quantitative sources.[4] Numerous scholars embraced this methodology but for the terms of this discussion perhaps the most important was John Hajnal.[5] In 1965, Hajnal defined the European marriage pattern through two criteria: late marriage for both partners,[6] and a

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[4] This methodology was the hallmark of the Cambridge Group for the History of Population and Social Structure, an interdisciplinary community of scholars founded in 1964 by Tony Wrigley and Peter Laslett.
[5] J. Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective," in *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography*, ed. D. V. Glass and David E. C. Eversley, (London: E. Arnold, 1965). Hajnal was one of the first to systematically reach back into the data sources for the pre-modern period and, based on this documentation, propose specific, concrete ways in which marriage developed in Europe. R. B. Outhwaite, "Introduction: Problems and Perspectives in the History of Marriage," in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 3-5. Scholars have largely moved away from framing their arguments as a direct response to Hajnal but the continuing importance of his work is clear in recent articles such as P.P. Viazzo, "What's So Special about the Mediterranean? Thirty Years of Research on Household and Family in Italy," *Continuity and Change* 18, Part 1 (2003): 111-37.
[6] Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns," 101. Hajnal does not give a minimum average age at first marriage, but he implies that there is a break at the age of 25. For example, he points out, on page 104, that in the age range 20-24 80% of women in non-European societies have been married. In general, he sees

high percentage of both men and women who remain celibate for life.[7] He further suggested that this marriage pattern may be tied to economic factors. Specifically, he linked the high male age of marriage to the socially dictated need for the man to establish an independent income and home before marriage.[8] This economic need was not so pressing in societies where joint households, rather than neolocality—the establishment of the new couple in their own home—were common.[9] It is important to note that for Hajnal this distinctive marriage pattern was modern; Hajnal could not trace it back further than the sixteenth century and therefore placed its development between 1400 and 1650.[10]

Hajnal's work was both extremely influential among and highly representative of the numerous studies on marriage patterns from this period in several ways. First, like many of the other major works that emerged in this period, it sought to establish temporally or geographically broad patterns, possibly a reflection of the influence of sociology on marriage studies in this period.[11] Second, it focused primarily on the

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early marriage, especially for women, and near universal marriage as characteristic of all non-European cultures, as well as pre-modern European cultures.

[7] In demographic literature, "celibate" means unmarried and generally without children, or at least not serving as the head of a household including those children. It does not necessarily mean sexually inactive.

[8] Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns," 133.

[9] Neolocality is often related to nuclear families, but the two are not synonymous. The former refers specifically to housing and the latter to family structure. A couple could, for example, move into their own home, but then be joined by a parent, resulting in a neolocal but not nuclear household.

[10] Specifically, he argues that for the group most easily observed – the aristocrats – the advent of this pattern was in the sixteenth century. Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns," 122. For his information on the Middle Ages, Hajnal relies on Josiah Cox Russell, *British Medieval Population* (Albuquerque: Univ. of New Mexico Press, 1948).

[11] For example, numerous scholars, including Laslett and Lawrence Stone worked to trace the origin of the nuclear family in Europe. Laslett argues that evidence from pre-modern Europe shows that the nuclear family was the dominant household structure at least back into the Middle Ages. Stone, in contrast, holds to

relationship between the population and the economy, and secondarily on the relationship between the population and the culture.[12] Third, Hajnal and other scholars of this period stressed the structure of the household and the family as reliable and consistent indicators of social and economic norms.[13] Finally, the specific demographic statistics that Hajnal focused on—age at marriage, rates of celibacy, and neolocality—became the standards for comparison among scholars who worked on marriage.

It is in this scholarly environment that David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber collaborated on what would become the defining work on marriage in Tuscany, and in Mediterranean Europe as a whole, *Les Toscans et leurs familles: une étude du "catasto" florentin de 1427*.[14] The influence of Hajnal is clear in their chapter on marriage, which they set up as an exploration of the factors that make up Hajnal's European marriage pattern.[15] They find that the Tuscan population displayed a very low

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the older view—proposed by 19th c. French social critic Frédéric Le Play—that the extended family was traditional. Peter Laslett, "Introduction: The History of the Family," in *Household and Family in Past Time; comparative studies in the size and structure of the domestic group over the last three centuries in England, France, Serbia, Japan and colonial North America, with further materials from Western Europe*, ed. Peter Laslett and Richard Wall, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1972), 73; Lawrence Stone, *The Family, Sex and Marriage in England 1500-1800* (New York: Harper & Row, 1977), 7.

[12] Michael Mitterauer and Reinhard Sieder argue that both social and economic changes influence family composition, but then provide the primarily economic example of guild members marrying the widows of their late guild brothers with an eye towards the capital and means of production. Michael Mitterauer and Reinhard Sieder, *The European Family: Patriarchy to Partnership from the Middle Ages to the Present* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1982), 3-4.

[13] Stone argues that it arose among the bourgeoisie in the mid-17th c. and signals strong affective ties, increased investment in children, and respect for autonomy. Stone, *Family, Sex and Marriage*, 8.

[14] David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles: une étude du "catasto" florentin de 1427* (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques: École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1978). Later abridged, translated, and released as David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

[15] They propose to see whether or not Tuscans conform to Hajnal's European marriage pattern through two criteria: "the age at first marriage of men and women, [and] the proportion of people who never marry."

age at first marriage for women, a higher age at first marriage for men, a gap in ages between the spouses, and a low rate of widow remarriage, leading them to conclude that while men might have married according to the European marriage pattern, women did not.[16]

In a review article on *Les Toscans et leurs familles*, Richard M. Smith was interested to determine whether the Tuscan marriage pattern described by Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber was typical for all of Europe in the fifteenth century, or whether it was a local pattern, indicating geographic differences.[17] From the fifteenth-century Tuscan data, Smith concludes it was both; the pattern existed in England as well as Tuscany at a roughly contemporary period, but they had different causes and persisted in Tuscany for much longer. He agreed with Hajnal that both England and Tuscany were non-European (i.e. not modern European) in their marriage patterns in the fifteenth century.

In the 1980s and early 1990s, the scholarship on marriage shifted focus from large-scale structures and whole populations to the range of patterns across the social spectrum and to the experience of marriage, particularly the experiences of women in marriage.[18] For northern Italy, Julius Kirshner and Anthony Molho focused specifically

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They also explore other marriage-related demographics, including remarriage rates for men and for women and the relationship between these factors and urban or rural residence and social status. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 395.

[16] Ibid., 404.

[17] R.M. Smith, "The People of Tuscany and their Families in the Fifteenth Century: Medieval or Mediterranean?," *Journal of Family History* 6 (1981): 108.

[18] This change was led largely by feminist scholars who argued that in the study of marriage patterns women needed to be considered not just as objects to be impregnated or married, but as active participants. Representative of this is Bridget Hill’s 1989 critic that, “the present obsession with the mean age at marriage of women—or men—reduces a central human experience of rich cultural and subjective diversity

on the Florentine marriage records associated with the *Monte delle Doti*, the state sponsored dowry fund with a high percent of investors from the top of the Florentine social hierarchy, and on the ways that fathers of girls worked to gain a more favorable position on the marriage market.[19] For Venice, Stanley Chojnacki examined the roles of women in the marriage formation process and argued for their importance and influences both within their own marriages and in the marriages of others.[20] Klapisch-Zuber began a series of articles examining the experience of marriage from a more qualitative perspective than *Les Toscans*, and concluded that women had very little control over their own movements.[21]

Scholars of medieval England also adopted this more localized and more experience-based approach. In the early 1990s, they debated whether or not labor shortages created increased economic opportunities and independence for young women leading to a "golden age for women" in England during the immediate post-plague years.[22] Some argue that these economic and social changes led to marriages in late

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into an abstract statistic." Bridget Hill, "The Marriage Age of Women and the Demographers," *History Workshop Journal* 29 (1989): 145.

[19] Julius Kirshner and Anthony Molho, "The Dowry Fund and the Marriage Market in Early Quattrocento Florence," *Journal of Modern History* 50 (1978): 403-38; Anthony Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy in Renaissance Florence: The Case of Women's Ages," *Renaissance Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1988): 193-217.

[20] A sample of his most influential essays are in Stanley Chojnacki, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice: Twelve Essays on Patrician Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000).

[21] Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "The "Cruel Mother": Maternity, Widowhood, and Dowry in Florence in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 117-31.

[22] P.J.P. Goldberg, himself a student of the Cambridge Group (see note 4), was perhaps the most vocal proponent of this theory. P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire c. 1300-1520* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 339. See also Ann J. Kettle, "Ruined Maids: Prostitutes and Servant Girls in Later Medieval England " in *Matrons and Marginal Women in*

medieval England that were modern in their adherence to the European marriage pattern.[23] Those who argued for modern marriage patterns in the post-plague period have also stressed the differences between late medieval marriage patterns in England and their contemporary Florentine counterparts in terms of age of marriage and, particularly, the place of pre-marital wage-labor for women.[24] The juxtaposition of the English "golden age" and Klapisch-Zuber's description of the powerlessness of Florentine "cruel mothers" furthered the idea of a northwestern/Mediterranean divide, although other scholars of Italy have suggested that all women were not as disempowered as Klapisch-Zuber suggests.[25] Nonetheless, the idea of difference and even dichotomy, particularly

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Medieval Society, ed. Robert Edwards and Vickie L. Ziegler, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Rochester Boydell & Brewer, 1995), 20. The debate on whether or not there was a "golden age" has moderated, with scholars now focusing on which women were actors and when and drawing away from statements about women as a single group. For example, in her 2007 book on women in London, Hanawalt argues that "demographic shortfall alone could not open employment to women, because patriarchy put limits on women's access to skilled training and business opportunities." Barbara Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives: Women, Law, and Economy in Late Medieval London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 5-6; Caroline M Barron, "The 'Golden Age" of Women in Medieval London," *Reading Medieval Studies* 15 (1989): 35-58.

[23] Hanawalt, in 1986, explicitly stated that Hajnal was correct in asserting that the late medieval populations of England did not adhere to his European marriage pattern but Jeremy Goldberg and R.M. Smith have disagreed. Barbara Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 96; P. J. P. Goldberg, "'For Better, For Worse': Marriage and Economic Opportunity for Women in Town and Country," in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society, C. 1200-1500*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg, (Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton, 1992), 113; Richard M. Smith, "Marriage in Late Medieval Europe," in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg, (Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton, 1992), 25.

[24] Goldberg, *Women, Work*, 344.

[25] In a forward to the translated, collected edition of Klapisch-Zuber's works, Herlihy suggests that with further research "Florentine women may appear somewhat less marginal, and their experiences a little less harsh, than represented here." David Herlihy, "Foreward," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), x. Klapisch-Zuber is certainly not the only scholar to offer a negative evaluation of women's positions in northern Italy in this period, although she is one perhaps the most cited. Stanley Chojnacki, a scholar of Venice, positions himself against the negative assessments he sees offered by Klapisch-Zuber but also by Anthony Molho, Joan Kelly-Gadol, Diane Owen Hughes, and Isabelle Chabot, a student of Klapisch-Zuber's. Chojnacki, *Women and Men*, 3, 6.

with regard to ages at marriage and the relationship between wage-labor and marriage, has become widespread.[26]

There are two problems with this assumed difference, which will be addressed in this dissertation. The first is that it is based on a single Florentine—often expanded to stand for Northern Italian or even Mediterranean—marriage pattern. Indeed, Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber do not even make such a claim for Tuscany, arguing instead that marriage differences existed between rural and urban areas.[27] In the three decades since, scholars of Italy have consciously focused on areas beyond Florence in an act of resistance to the idea that Florentine marriage patterns were in some way the standard, instead highlighting geographic differences.[28] This dissertation will return to Florence to argue that even within a single city, and even limiting the scope of the study to those established residents of Florence, there were important status-based differences in

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[26] Smith, "Marriage," 18, P. J. P. Goldberg, "Marriage, Migration, and Servanthood: The York Cause Paper Evidence," in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society, C. 1200-1500*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg, (Gloucestershire, England: Alan Sutton, 1992), 2. For examples of how this dichotomy was been incorporated into more general works, see Shannon McSheffrey, *Love and Marriage in Late Medieval London* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 199), 16; Jennifer Ward, *Women in Medieval Europe 1200-1500* (London: Pearson Education, 2002), 28, Cissie Fairchilds, *Women in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2007), 64.

[27] Maryanne Kowaleski, "Singlewomen in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The Demographic Perspective," in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 42; Goldberg, "'For Better, For Worse'," 109, Smith, "Marriage," 24.

[28] Antonio Golini and Rosella Rettaroli independently argue for extensive regional variation in marriage patterns across Italy, without either a steady evolution towards modern European marriage patterns or a definitive end point. Antonio Golini, "Profilo demografico della famiglia italiana," in *La Famiglia italiana dall'Ottocento a oggi*, ed. Piero Bairati, Piero Melograni, and Lucetta Scaraffia, (Roma: Laterza, 1988), 346; Rosella Rettaroli, "Age at Marriage in Nineteenth-Century Italy," *Journal of Family History* 15, no. 4 (1990): 412. In his historiographic essay, Viazzo notes the tendency in recent decades to "emphasize the plurality and diversity of southern European patterns and to minimize their difference and separation from the north-western system" Viazzo, "What's So Special? ," 122.

marriage patterns. Specifically, artisans did not marry according to the same patterns as the elite or the urban poor, who have received more limited scholarly attention.[29]

Secondly, the existing dichotomy between the northern European and Mediterranean marriage patterns is based predominantly on comparisons of English scholarship with the work of Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber.[30] The problem with this comparison is that most of the English research of the last three decades has focused on non-elites, both urban and rural, while Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber offer arguments on the population as a whole. Other works on Florentine marriage, including later works by Klapisch-Zuber, focus largely—although not exclusively—on the elite. We are thus essentially comparing apples and oranges, since scholars of marriage at this period accept that elite and non-elite marriage patterns could differ, especially in England. In fact, Hajnal himself had suggested that the transition to the European marriage pattern might well have occurred earlier than the seventeenth century among non-elite populations.[31] The following chapters will address this problem by focusing on Florentine artisans, both in their own right and in comparison with and as part of the larger society.

Marriage and Florentine Society

Scholars have been interested in the social history of Florence since the nineteenth and even eighteenth centuries, when they sought to understand the social milieu of artistic

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[29] Anthony Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994); Samuel K. Cohn, Jr, *The Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1980).
[30] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 404-09.
[31] Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns," 122.

patronage and production.[32] The wealth of documentation available for Florence has allowed scholars to examine personal relations and levels of the socio-economic hierarchy at a depth rarely observable elsewhere in Europe in the fifteenth century.[33] As with the rest of Europe, the level of scholarship has not been balanced across the socio-economic hierarchy. Early work focused on the wealthy merchantile-elite in relation to their role as artistic patrons and then as bankers and merchants.[34] Later, scholars relied on the incredibly detailed and varied accounts left by the these same high-status men to study their social networks, marriage patterns, and display of status, among other things.[35] This is not to say that there is no tradition of scholarship on the lower classes. Such scholarship dates back at least to the turn of the twentieth century, when Niccolò Rodolico published his still-influential work on class tensions and the Ciompi, the wool workers who led a successful revolt against the oligarchic republican government in

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[32] Jacob Burckhardt is the most notable early non-Italian scholar of Florentine culture in the modern period, but several early Italians scholars also did extremely valuable archival work on Florence. Pierantonio dell' Ancisa combed through a variety of different archival sources, some no longer extent, in the 17th c. to create family trees for many of the elite lineages, noting both important dates for the families history, including government posts and marriages, but also including the archival references. Jacob Burckhardt, *The Civilization of the Renaissance in Italy* (New York: Mentor Books, 1960). The works of Ancisa are held in the ASF, *Manoscritti, Carte dell'Ancisa* 348-361 and listed in the index N/187.

[33] As Paula Findlen has pointed out, Anglo-American historians relied on the incredibly rich Florentine archives as a testing ground for new methodologies. Paula Findlen, "In and Out of Florence," in *Beyond Florence: The Contours of Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, ed. Paula Findlen, Michelle Fontaine, and Duane J. Osheim, (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2003), 14-15.

[34] For an excellent mid-century example of such innovative work, see Raymond de Roover, *The Rise and Decline of the Medici Bank, 1397-1494* (Washington D.C.: Beard Books, 1999).

[35] For recent book-length examples of such work on the elite in history and sociology, see Anthony F. D'Elia, *The Renaissance of Marriage in Fifteenth-Century Italy* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2004), Paul Douglas McLean, *The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007).

1378.[36] In the case of both of these lower-status groups, scholarship has focused, to a greater or lesser extent depending on the work, on their complex relationship with the mercantile-elite.

Early scholarship largely characterized the relationship between elites and the lower-status groups as one of conflict.[37] This historiographic focus, along with the evidence for vast discrepancies in wealth, has some led historians to describe Florence as a "double city," with a sharp spatial and social divide separating rich and poor, and little contact between the two groups.[38] In recent decades, however, scholars have contested this description of Florence, pointing to areas of functional and even harmonious relations between the elite and those further down the social spectrum.[39] Together, these works suggest a more integrated picture of the society even though social relations were, in many cases, strictly hierarchical.

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[36] Niccolò Rodolico, *Il Popolo Minuto* (Florence: Olschki, 1968). More recent works that deal with social tensions in Florence include Iris Origo, "The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century," *Speculum* 30 (1955): 321-66; Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994).

[37] Indeed, Origo entitled her essay "The Domestic Enemy," and Cohn's work relies on Marxist terminology. Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, 2. Molho, however, is the scholar who most clearly articulated the argument that the relationship between elites and non-elites was governed by fear and animosity, without friendship or mutual assistance. Anthony Molho, "Cosimo de' Medici: Pater Patriae or Padrino?," *Stanford Italian Review* 1, no. 1 (1979): 5-33.

[38] As cited by F.W. Kent, who discusses the historiography of this model and questions the model's validity. He particularly notes that Alessandro Stella and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber have supported this interpretation of Florentine society. F.W. Kent, ""Be Rather Loved than Feared:" Class Relations in Quattrocento Florence," in *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, ed. William J. Connell, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 15.

[39] Dale and F.W. Kent have led in this area, along with Nicholas A. Eckstein—F.W. Kent's student—and Ronald Weissman. Dale V. Kent, *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence 1426-1434* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978); Nicholas A. Eckstein, *The District of the Green Dragon: Neighbourhood Life and Social Change in Renaissance Florence* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1995); Ronald F. E. Weissman, "Reconstructing Renaissance Sociology: The 'Chicago School' and the Study of Renaissance Society," in *Persons in Groups: Social Behavior as Identity Formation in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, ed. Richard C. Trexler, (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1985), 39-45.

Both of these models, however, focus largely on the two ends of the socio-economic spectrum. It is true that the population consisted of a huge number of extremely poor households and a very small number of wealthy households, who controlled the majority of the city's wealth and political power.[40] Nonetheless, there were people who fell in between these two poles, namely artisans. Artisans, for the purposes of this dissertation, are those men whose occupations—skilled crafts, for the most part—made them eligible for membership in one of the city's fourteen minor guilds, along with their families.[41] Their guild membership gave them access to participation in the city's republican government, although they were in a secondary position to members of the seven major guilds.[42] Artisans tended to fall in the middle of the Florentine spectrum in terms of wealth.[43] Although an understudied group in terms of Florentine historiography, artisans were central to the Florentine population.

The centrality of artisans makes them extremely important to an understanding of Florentine society as a whole. This dissertation uses marital contracts, and the relationships they document, to focus on the ties artisans had to their fellow Florentines, both their peers and those above and below them. As the following chapters will demonstrate, focusing on the relations among artisans and between artisans and

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[40] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber find that while the poorest 14% of Florentines had no taxable assets, even before deductions were considered, the richest 1% controlled over 1/6 of all the wealth in Tuscany (not just the city of Florence). Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 251.
[41] For a complete list of guilds, see Appendix A
[42] Major guild occupations involved long-distance trade and high value merchandise, or required a university degree. For the relationship between the status of major and minor guildsmen, which consists closely to the relative status of these professions today, see Donald J. Treiman, "A Standard Occupational Prestige Scale for Use with Historical Data," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7, no. 2 (1976): 292.
[43] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 289.

Florentines at other levels of the social hierarchy undermines the “double city” model and reduces the degree to which different socio-economic groups can be seen as isolated from one another. It also offers new insight into the nature and frequency of vertical social relationships, thereby establishing that these hierarchical relationships could be mutually beneficial. Artisans entered into these relationships with those above and below them on the social ladder, thus serving as nodes of connection between the elite and the urban poor. Finally, marriage contracts provide examples of and allow for the study of social mobility in Florence.

But in addition to their importance to Florentine society as a whole, artisans merit further study than they have received in their own right. They made up a significant proportion of the Florentine population—nearly a quarter of Florentine households were headed by artisans—were politically active, were major actors in the economy as both businessmen and consumers, and were often important members of the smaller communities of the parish or the confraternity.[44] Artisans were important to Florentines society and culture in each of these areas and, as this dissertation will demonstrate, also in their marriages.

Florence and its Sources

It is possible to create a detailed description of the city of Florence in the fifteenth century because of the incredible richness of existing sources. Florentines were widely

[44] 2278 of 9820, or 23.2%, of households were headed by artisans in the Catasto.

literate, and were also very active writers.[45] Whether literate or not, all Florentines were participants in a culture that was decidedly written as opposed to oral. In a mercantile society, and particularly one in which long-distance trade played an important role, basic record-keeping and letter-writing were vital.[46] Familial and civic histories were preserved in writing and written contracts, recorded by a notary, and carried the force of the law.[47] Further, since the same elite merchants and legal professionals who relied so heavily on writing for their personal and business records also controlled the

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[45] Villani's figures suggest that, in 1333, a quarter to a third of Florentine men were educated in at least the basics of reading, writing, and arithmetic. Dino Compagni et al., *Cronache di Dino Compagni, e di Giovanni, Matteo e Filippo Villani* (Padova: Coi tipi della Minerva, 1841), XI.XCIV. Based on *portate* Catasto returns (those that individual households submitted), Robert Black estimates that 69.3% of male Florentine household heads could read and write in 1427. Robert Black, *Education and Society in Florentine Tuscany: Teachers, Pupils and Schools, c. 1250-1500* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 35. Education was much more limited for women. Margherita Datini, wife of Francesco Marco Datini, the famous Merchant of Prato, did not learn to read or write until she was in her thirties. Iris Origo claims that reading was an unusual skill for women, even among the elite, whereas Black argues that literacy was "widespread among women too." Iris Origo, *The Merchant of Prato, Francesco di Marco Datini* (London: J. Cape, 1957), 213-14; Black, *Education*, 36. Scholars debate whether or not literacy levels in Florence were much higher than elsewhere in Europe, as has long been assumed to have been the case. Robert Lopez contends that Italian merchants were more literate, and literate earlier, than their German counterparts and Burke has suggested higher literacy in general. Clanchy, however, asserts that levels of literacy were not much higher in Italy than in other areas of Europe at that time, at least in urban areas. Robert Sabatino Lopez, *The Commercial Revolution of the Middle Ages, 950-1350* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 118; Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 112; M. T. Clanchy, *From Memory to Written Record, England 1066-1307*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993), 13-15, 52.

[46] Lopez notes the sophisticated numeracy of Italian merchants in their accounting books, as demonstrated by the invention of double-entry bookkeeping probably in the late 13th c. and certainly by the 14th c. Lopez, *Commercial Revolution*, 107.

[47] Elite men kept *ricordanze*, memory books in which ancestry and important familial events (marriages, births, and government appointments), were intermingled with detailed records of the family's financial transactions. For a selection of translations, see Vittore Branca and Murtha Baca, *Merchant Writers of the Italian Renaissance* (New York: Marsilio Publishers, 1999). For a fairly comprehensive annotated bibliography of published ricordanze, see Angelo Cicchetti and Raul Mordenti, *I libri di famiglia in Italia* (Roma: Edizioni di storia e letteratura, 1985), 121-93. By the late 13th c., a businessman's own personal records could be used in court as proof of debts and credits owed. David Herlihy, *Pisa in the Early Renaissance: A Study of Urban Growth* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1958), 3, 10. Clanchy argues that this widespread written culture, rather than literacy rates, is what distinguished Italy from England in the later Middle Ages. Clanchy, *Memory*, 3, 53, 275.

government, the government itself became organized and efficient in producing, organizing, and preserving the written documents.

Of the rich variety of documentation available for Florence, this dissertation will rely primarily on two sources: the 1427 Florentine Catasto, a survey of the Florentine populace created by the government for tax purposes, and the notarial documents recorded between 1425 and 1429, inclusive. Both of these documents are housed, in their original form, in the Archivio di Stato in Florence (ASF). Focusing on such a narrow chronological range has two benefits. First, it is possible to cross-reference the two documents, thereby increasing the amount of information available for the couples and their families. Because the events recorded in the notarial documents occurred relatively close in time to the Catasto declarations, the chance that the economic or familial structure of the families has changed drastically in the time elapsed between the two documents is minimized. Secondly, these limits reduce the size of the sample of notarial documents—there are over 20,000 documents from the period before 1569—to a to a manageable sample.

The Catasto

The Catasto was the result of the Florentine Signoria's efforts to tax more equitably and more effectively.[48] The government required that all households—defined as fiscal rather than co-residential units—submit a written declaration of all assets, movable and immovable, along with all debts and credits owed. The household heads

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[48] A much more thorough description of the origins and making of the Catasto appears in Chapter Two and Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*.

also submitted the names of all residents of the household, along with their relationship to the head of household and, usually, their ages.[49] The combination of economic and demographic information allowed Catasto officials to calculate the household's tax burden, and also created an invaluable tool for studying the social, economic, and demographic structure of Florence and Florentine Tuscany.

With over 9781 households containing 37, 493 individuals in the city of Florence alone, the Catasto is without exaggeration the most valuable source for demographic history of premodern Europe.[50] Further, nearly all of the hundreds of volumes of the Catasto, consisting of both the *portate,* the original declarations submitted by households heads and the *campioni*, the Catasto Office's official redaction of the declaration and their tax assessment, survive intact.[51] This source has been made even more useful through the efforts of Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber in the 1970s, which resulted in the full computerization of the Catasto.[52] It is therefore now both searchable and workable with common statistical software.[53]

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[49] This demographic information allowed for the calculation of taxes and deductions. Men were subject to a head tax if they were between the ages of 18 and 60 in the cities of Pisa and Florence, 15 and 70 everywhere else. Women, however, and men above or below this age range, entitled the household head to a deduction of 200 florins from their taxable assets as long as they were "legitimate mouths." Those who were not legitimate mouths included servants, apprentices, slaves, and those who had taken vows and were residing in a religious institution. Ibid., 73, 60.
[50] Burke calls the 1427 Catasto "the greatest administrative achievement of medieval republics." Burke, *Historical Anthropology*, 29.
[51] A very limited number of the *campioni* are missing—2 of 31 for the countryside around the city of Florence—and some of the volumes of *portate* are missing or unusable, but in both cases the other type of document can be used to fill in the gaps in information. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 100, note 92.
[52] The computerized version is freely available over the internet. David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property Survey of Florentine Domains and the City of Verona in the Fifteenth Century Italy* (David Herlihy, Harvard University, Department of History, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, École

The Notarial Documents

While the Catasto collection arose out of a concerted effort on the part of the Florentine Signoria and was always a single—albeit large—collection of documents meant for the purpose of taxation, the notarial documents were the product of the notarial culture of western Mediterranean Europe. With the revival of Roman law in the eleventh century, notarial documents were given legal weight in Florentine and other Northern Italian civil courts as proof of a contract, independent of the oral testimony of witnesses.[54] By the twelfth century, in the area around Genoa, there is evidence of notarial documents being preserved permanently and used decades after their production as proof in court.[55] Northern Italian merchants brought notaries with them as they traded across the Mediterranean and dependence on notaries quickly spread.[56] By the fourteenth century northern Italian and local notaries operated both within and independently of

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Pratique des Hautes Etudes [producers] and University of Wisconsin, Data and Program Library Service [distributor] (12 September 1999) [cited December 2000]); available from http://dpls.dacc.wisc.edu/Catasto/.

[53] I relied on SPSS through the course of this research.

[54] Notaries had a place in the classical Roman legal system and continued to exist and function in a limited capacity through the early Middle Ages, but expanded in importance after the 12th c. Kathryn L. Reyerson and Debra A. Salata, *Medieval Notaries and their Acts: The 1327-1328 Register of Jean Holanie* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), 2-3, Herlihy, *Pisa*, 3. In northern Europe, the notarial contract was not given legal weight except in certain very specific situations. C. R. Cheney, *Notaries Public in England in the Thirteenth and Fourteenth Centuries* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972), 6, 52; Clanchy, *Memory*, 3.

[55] Herlihy, *Pisa*, 4.

[56] The Church also played a major role in the diffusion of notaries. James M. Murray et al., *Notarial Instruments in Flanders between 1280 and 1452* (Bruxelles: Palais des académies, 1995), 14.

secular and clerical courts, and were active in southern France, Spain, and the Italian colonies in the Eastern Mediterranean, as well as throughout Italy.[57]

In the 1330s, the Florentine Chronicler Giovanni Villani estimated that there were 600 notaries working in Florence, or almost 6 notaries for every 1000 inhabitants of the city.[58] By the 1420s, when the city had lost over half of its population to recurring epidemics of the plague, there were still over 300 heads of household who declared themselves as notaries, the occupation that occurs most frequently in the Catasto.[59] That figure does not include the numerous notaries who were not heads of households.[60] Although approximately 400 to 420 notaries were registered in the *Arte dei Guidici e Notai* each year during the fifteenth century, an unknown number of those men joined for

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[57] Notaries did exist in Northern Europe but local notaries—as opposed to the Italian notaries who traveled with the merchants—served a more judicial function, often working in church courts, rather than in a commercial or private role, and were not as numerous as their counterparts in the Mediterranean. Reyerson and Salata, *Medieval Notaries*, 6-7, 5; R. H. Helmholz, *Canon Law and the Law of England* (London Hambledon Press, 1987), 1.
[58] Compagni et al., *Cronache di Dino Compagni, e di Giovanni, Matteo e Filippo Villani*, XI.94. Florentine ratios were high even among mercantile northern Italian cities. For the 1380s, Benjamin Kedar estimates that the ratio of notaries to citizen in Genoa was approximately 1:300. He hypothesizes that the smaller notarial presence in Genoa, as well as Venice and Pisa, might be due to the fact that international commerce in these cities was established before the widespread diffusion of Roman legal practice, with its emphasis on the written record, and therefore did not depend so heavily on notary's written contracts or that higher rates of literacy made the Genoese government less dependent on notaries to fill government posts, hence creating a smaller market for notaries. Benjamin Z. Kedar, "The Genoese Notaries of 1382: The Anatomy of an Urban Occupational Group," in *The Medieval City*, ed. Harry A. Miskimin, David Herlihy, and Abraham L. Udovitch, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1977), 78.
[59] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber note that there are 307 notaries among heads of household. The percent of notaries, relative to those engaged in other occupations, might be inflated by the use of "Ser" as a title for notaries, making it possible to identify notaries even when no occupation is explicitly listed. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber do not make it clear if this is the case. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, Table 35, 286 n. 29.
[60] One such example is the 33-year-old Ser Iacopo Feo Ridolfi, who still lived in his father's household at the point of the Catasto. His betrothal was recorded in 1428. NA 16537 fol. 11R. Cat ID 236.

the political rights that membership in a major guild conferred.[61] They were not practicing notaries, or even trained as such.[62] Even based on the most conservative estimate of the number of notaries—300—there were nearly 8 notaries per 1000 inhabitants of the city in 1427, catering to the needs of citizens and to the international merchants who did business in the city. Indeed, Goro Dati in his *Istoria di Firenze*, written around 1410, noted that although "the center for lawyers is Bologna, that of notaries is Florence."[63] Indeed, the large number of notaries in fifteenth-century Florence makes them almost omnipresent.

Not only were notaries numerous, but they played a major role in the life of the Florentine populace and commune. The population came to depend on them to document the wide variety of contracts that covered seemingly every instance in which money changed hands.[64] In addition to labor contracts, gifts, sales, and rentals of goods and property, and the discharge of debts of all sorts, notaries were present at a variety of life

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[61] The number of non-practicing members was offset, in part, by the number of non-registered practicing notaries, although the latter mainly practiced in the *contado* rather than in the city. Lauro Martines, *Lawyers and Statecraft in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), 41, 26, 24.

[62] After two years of classes on the notarial arts or a period of training under a working notary, an aspiring notary could apply for matriculation in the guild. The payment of a 17-florin fee and successful completion of an exam that tested Latin grammar, handwriting and composition, and understanding of contracts and public instruments were then required. Despite this expertise and their major-guild status—or perhaps because some notaries sought only the status and lucrative government posts—they were not held in universally high regard. Boccaccio, for example, includes as the first story in his *Decameron* a tale of a notary so corrupt that he has no scruples about telling egregious lies about his sinful life to the priest who hears his deathbed confession. Ibid., 35, 49; Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. trans. G. H. McWilliam (New York: Penguin Classics, 1995), 24-37.

[63] As cited in Stefano Ugo Baldassarri and Arielle Saiber, *Images of Quattrocento Florence: Selected Writings in Literature, History and Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 46.

[64] Even in mercantile northern cities, the population relied on oral contracts, which held up in court, and rarely turned to notaries to record contracts. This is true even where there were both prevalent and highly trained, as Murray has demonstrated for Flanders. Murray et al., *Notarial Instruments*, 99.

cycle events. They attended deathbeds and childbirths to record or change wills; they witnessed the emancipation of young men from their fathers' guardianship. They recorded engagements, marriages, and dowry payments for brides and grooms; they noted the dowry returns for widows; they might then record the whole cycle over again as women and men entered second unions.[65] The presence of the notary and, more importantly, the existence of his documents, gave the parties legal protection and recourse in the future. Further, notarial fees were low enough that all but the very poorest could make use of the services of a notary.[66] The result was that the figure of the notary was a fixture in fifteenth-century Florentine life.

Not all of the tens of thousands of notarial registers survive in a legible condition down to this day. By the time that Cosimo de Medici, in 1569, announced that all completed registers were to be stored in the state archive, some had been lost or destroyed, while others were simply never deposited.[67] Nonetheless a remarkable number of notarial registers predating this law —over 20,000, averaging perhaps 200 folii each— made it into the collection now held by the Archivio di stato in Florence, and these have

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[65] On the legal "minority" of women and their need for guardians, in theory and practice, see Thomas Kuehn, "'Cum Consensu Mundualdi": Legal Guardianship of Women in Quattrocento Florence," in *Law, Family and Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 212-37.

[66] Daniel Smail notes that "ruffians, drunkards, and domestic servants" did not appear in the notarial registers of late medieval Marseille. Daniel Lord Smail, *Imaginary Cartographies: Possession and Identity in Late Medieval Marseille* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 24. While it is impossible to identify all individuals in the Florentine notarial registers, it is true that when domestic servants and former slaves appeared in the registers—and they did appear—they were almost always receiving something from their masters or former employers, suggesting that it was the master rather than the servant who was actually patronizing the notary.

[67] These documents were housed in the *Uffizi* from that point until the archive, by then the modern Archivio di stato, moved to its present location in 1987-8. Anthony Molho, "The Closing of the Florentine Archives," *Journal of Modern History* 60 (1988): 291-2.

survived largely intact.[68] Although these registers were created by notaries working all over Florentine-controlled Tuscany, many of them were in fact created at least partly in the city of Florence; of over 325 registers that include the year 1427, over 100 were at least partly created in the city of Florence. This is a wealth of data unparalleled in Europe for this period.

Marriage and the Notary

Despite the importance of notaries in Florentine culture, marriages did not—strictly speaking—need to be notarized to be legally valid according to canon law. There were two legal systems operating simultaneously in the fifteenth century; canon law applied to all areas under the Roman Church and civil law—based on a combination of Roman law and local legal systems—differed by locality across Western Europe. In theory, marriage fell firmly under the jurisdiction of canon law.[69] The legal limits of a valid marriage according to canon law provided endless opportunities for juridical debate among scholars, but it is clear that notarization was not required to make a marriage canonically legal.

The primary requirement of a canonically valid marriage was free consent by both spouses, who could legally marry one another. Consummation was not actually

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[68] A small percent are missing and some suffered in the flood of 1966, although in many cases those damaged by water are still at least partly legible.

[69] Ecclesiastical courts were in general able to exercise an uncontested monopoly over the jurisdiction of marriage. This was confirmed in Alexander III's Decretals (X 4.14.2). James A. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law* (London: Longman, 1995), 71-2; Helmholz, *Canon Law*, 521.

necessary. [70] Nor did the absence of an exchange of rings, publication of the marriage, a dowry, a blessing by a priest, or any of the other signs or symbols of marriage render the union legally invalid.[71] But what exactly made consent valid is more complicated. Consent could be given using *verba de futuro*, "I will marry…", or *verba de presenti*, "I do marry…" .[72] *Verba de futuro* were a binding promise to marry in the future, but not an actual present marriage. Consummation or *verba de presenti* turned *verba de futuro* into a valid, present marriage although consummation was not necessary if the marriage was created using *verba de presenti*.[73] To be legally married, spouses had to be of age, twelve for women and fourteen for men.[74] The spouses must not be related to one another by blood within four degrees, nor could they be connected to one another through god-parentage, marriage, or sexual relations, although such marriages could be contracted

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[70] On the development of chaste marriage and the canon law concerning it, see Jo Ann McNamara, "Chaste Marriage and Clerical Celibacy," in *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, ed. Vern L. Bullough and James Brundage, (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1982), 22-33; James Brundage, "Marriage and Sexuality in the Decretals of Pope Alexander III," in *Miscellanea Rolando Bandinelli Papa Alessandro III*, ed. Filippo Liotta, (Siena: Accademia senese degli intronati, 1986), 62, 65, 67, 79.

[71] Charles Donahue, *Law, Marriage, and Society in the Later Middle Ages: Arguments about Marriage in Five Courts* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 2. Canon law did require that couples announce their intention to marry (publish banns) and get their marriage blessed. Failure to do so did not make the marriage invalid; the couple simply would be asked to perform penance. Brundage, *Medieval Canon Law*, 73; Helmholz, *Canon Law*, 524. In Florence, the couple depended on the priest or notary to announce the publicly betrothal rather than publicizing the marriage themselves. Gene A. Brucker, *Giovanni and Lusanna: Love and Marriage in Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1986), 73.

[72] Exactly what words made a legal future or present marriage was another issue discussed by generations of legal experts. See, for example, James Brundage, "Treatment of Marriage in the *Questiones Londinenses*," *Manuscriptia* 19 (1975): 90.

[73] This was the law established by Pope Alexander III. It was also publicized by the popular early 15th c. preacher Bernardino of Siena, who told his listeners that *verba de futuro*, a ring, and consummation created a valid marriage. Thomas Kuehn, "Reading Microhistory: The Example of Giovanni and Lusanna," *The Journal of Modern History* 61, no. 3 (1989): n. 520.

[74] These ages are based on Roman law and mark the end of adolescence and the beginning of the next phase of life. Luciano Musselli and Emanuela Grillo, *Matrimonio, transgressione e responsabilità nei penitenziali: alle origini del diritto canonico occidentale* (Padua: CEDAM, 2007), 112.

legally after the couple obtained a dispensation from the Church.[75] The spouses must not have taken final vows for any religious order.[76] Finally, and most ambiguously, the spouses must not be under undue pressure to give their consent from their parents or anyone else.[77] These were the rules for all people under the Roman church, wherever they might have lived.

In practice, however, some of these requirements could be interpreted loosely as parents, guardians, and relatives arranged for the marriages of those under their protection.[78] Parents could enter betrothals—legally initiating the marriage process—on behalf children as young as seven.[79] Further, although consent was the only legal

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[75] Molho reprints an excerpt from the *ricordanze* of Cino di Filippo Rinuccini, in which Cino describes the process leading up to his marriage to Ginevra, who was related to him in the fourth degree, including detailed genealogical study and obtaining a dispensation from the archbishop. Despite this example, Molho argues that consanguineous marriages were not very common among Florentine elites. Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 181-2, 274.

[76] Spouses were free to choose the religious life over marriage up until the moment of marriage and even after it, with their spouses' consent, but once they had taken religious vows they could not abandon those for marriage. C. 27 q. 2, c. 22, 26, 27.

[77] C. 31, q. 2, c. 1. Specifically, they could not be under "force and fear" strong enough to sway a constant man. They did not have to be happy about the arrangements but only to consent to them, even if grudgingly or through obedience alone. Philip Lyndon Reynolds, "Marrying and Its Documentation in Pre-Modern Europe: Consent, Celebration, and Property," in *To Have and to Hold: Marrying and its Documentation in Western Christendom, 400--1600*, ed. Philip Lyndon Reynolds and John Witte, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 15.

[78] Musselli and Grillo note that where marriage was a familial and not individual affair, the bride in particular was more often an object in the negotiations rather than a subject. Musselli and Grillo, *Matrimonio*, xii. There was a huge amount of tension in legal theory and practice, as well as popular opinion, between the notion of parental obedience and the good of the family, on the one hand, and the idea of free spousal choice, on the other, which continued through the Council of Trent. Daniela Hacke, "*Non lo volevo per marito: in modo alcuno*: Forced Marriages, Generational Conflicts, and the Limits of Patriarchal Power in Early Modern Venice, c. 1580-1680," in *Time, Space, and Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte, Thomas Kuehn, and Silvana Seidel Menchi, (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001), 206, 21; Donahue, *Law, Marriage and Society*, 5, 634-39.

[79] It was only necessary to be 7 years of age—the end of infancy and the beginning of adolescence—to enter into a legally binding betrothal, although there were a variety of legal ways to end a betrothal. Brundage, "Marriage and Sexuality," 66. Noble parents elsewhere in Europe frequently arranged marriages for children in this age range, but this rarely occurred in Florence. For examples in the English context, see

requirement of a marriage, practically speaking all but the very poorest members of society needed to have some sort of financial support to enter into marriage, whether a present or future inheritance or, for women, a dowry.[80] This was true in northern Italy to such a degree that Carol Lansing has distinguished between "legal marriage based on dowry and counterdowry," on the one hand, and informal and temporary unions, including concubinage, on the other.[81] Young people without assets might marry legally, according to canon law, but they could not do so honorably to anyone above the lowest ranks of society, and the marriage would be difficult to prove. The parents, guardians, or other relatives who controlled these assets would employ the threat of withholding them and even resort physical violence to gain consent to a chosen marriage partner.[82]

Despite the efforts of parents and guardians to exert control over marriages, young people in all areas of Roman Christendom found ways to circumvent the efforts of those around them. Since only words of present consent—or future consent followed by consummation—were necessary for a marriage, young people could and did contract

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Barbara J. Harris, "Space, Time, and the Power of Aristocratic Wives in Yorkist and Early Tudor England, 1450-1550," in *Time, Space, and Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte, Thomas Kuehn, and Silvana Seidel Menchi, (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001), 254.

[80] Many early medieval legal texts asserted that there could be no marriage without dowry, but these were superceded in the 12th c. by Alexander III's proclamation that consent alone made marriage. Musselli and Grillo, *Matrimonio*, 106.

[81] Carol Lansing, "Concubines, Lovers, Prostitutes: Infamy and Female Identity in Medieval Bologna," in *Beyond Florence: The Contours of Medieval and Early Modern Italy*, ed. Paula Findlen, Michelle Fontaine, and Duane J. Osheim, (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2003), 89.

[82] Catherine of Siena's violent struggle with her parents to avoid marriage in the mid-14th c. is documented by her biographer Raymond delle Vigne. In her study on patrician marriages in 16th c. Venice, Daniela Hacke argues that while neighbors—including women—did not condone beating and threatening young women, they also placed a high premium on the obedience owed to one's parents. Hacke, "*Non lo volevo*," 221. Not all parental involvement need be violent or counter to the interests of the spouses, but it is important to note that parents, kin, and other members of the spouses' communities were, in most cases, very involved in the marriage formation process. Donahue, *Law, Marriage and Society*, 3.

marriages in a variety of situations and locations (in beds, in taverns, behind barns).[83] Although the clergy might denounce these clandestine marriages and require the couple to perform penance, they nonetheless recognized them as legally valid unless there was evidence to the contrary.[84]

The laity demonstrated a remarkable fluency in the legalities of marriage, and cases from all over Europe prove that they were not afraid to use this legal knowledge to legitimize or escape from clandestine unions.[85] This is clear in the most famous Florentine case of clandestine marriage, that of Giovanni and Lusanna.[86] The marriage in question was between a man from an elite family and an attractive young widow of artisan background. It was a clandestine marriage because, although the supposed ceremony took place in front of neighbors with the permission of the bride's guardian and the blessing of a priest, it was not publicized beyond that select group—including to the

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[83] Helmholz provides numerous examples of clandestine marriages that appear in English court cases. Helmholz, *Canon Law*, 524-30. Boccaccio includes a story (V, 4), set in Romagna, of an elite young unmarried couple caught in bed by her parents. When her father insists that the young man take the woman as his wife or face death, the young man quite gladly chooses the former. A few days later, already legally married, the couple renewed their vows in a more public setting, she paraded to his house, and "the nuptials were celebrated with dignity and splendour." Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, 399.

[84] Helmholz, *Canon Law*, 524. Clandestine unions are often described as secret marriages, but they can be more accurately said to be marriages that were not properly publicized to the community before the marriage. Some were known only to the couple involved, but others had witnesses, and might even have been solemnized publicly. Donahue, *Law, Marriage and Society*, 4.

[85] Michael M. Sheehan and James K. Farge, *Marriage, Family and Law in Medieval Europe: Collected Studies* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1996), 54, 117.

[86] Very few ecclesiastical court cases exist for Florence in the early 15th c.; the case of Giovanni and Lusanna was preserved within the records of the public notary employed by the court and stored in the state archives rather than the archiepiscopal archives. This lack of date makes it difficult to compare Florence with other geographic regions. Brucker, *Giovanni and Lusanna*, vii.

groom's family—or notarized.[87] When Giovanni left her, Lusanna tried to enforce the marriage, and witnesses disagreed on whether or not the couple was married. The court was therefore forced to rely not only on the conflicting accounts of events, but on other evidence, including the presence or absence of the symbols that accompany marriage and indicate that both partners are serious about the union, even if these symbols do not themselves make marriage.[88] Lusanna stressed the ceremony, including the exchange of words and the priest's blessing, and the long and public relationship; Giovanni pointed to the lack of notarial evidence, dowry, parade, or other trappings of marriage, and argued that their adulterous relationship and promise to marry one another before her husband's death made her ineligible to be his marriage partner.[89] In the end, Lusanna won a judgment in her favor but Giovanni was able to have it overturned. The case demonstrates the breadth of the Florentine population that could come into contact and

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[87] The relationship between the two seems to have been widely known, but the marriage was not. Giovanni denied that the marriage took place at all. Ibid., 19. Lansing points to a 13th c. case from elsewhere in Northern Italy where parental permission seems to be the determining factor in turning a sexual union into a legal, binding marriage. Lansing, "Concubines, Lovers, Prostitutes," 94.

[88] Helmholz notes that, in contested cases, "There had to be the conjunction of three things to make a marriage enforceable: (1) long cohabitation, (2) *fama viciniae* that an actual marriage existed, (3) other supporting evidence." This is based on X.2.23.11. R. H. Helmholz, *Marriage Litigation in Medieval England* (London: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 47; Helmholz, *Canon Law*, 530. For the best description of the multitude of steps customarily involved in a 15th c. Florentine marriage, see Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Zacharias, or the Ousted Father: Nuptial Rites in Tuscany between Giotto and the Council of Trent," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 178-96.

[89] Kuehn, "Reading Microhistory," 521. Giovanni's accusation that Lusanna had poisoned her husband—if true—also made their marriage legally impossible; adulterous relations accompanied by either a promise to marry in the future or murder of the spouse rendered the marriage impossible through impediment of crime. Adulterous lovers who were not guilty of either of these acts were eligible to marry, although their behavior before the marriage was nonetheless sinful. Donahue, *Law, Marriage and Society*, 27.

became familiar with the legalities of marriage and the legal system, as demonstrated by the numerous witnesses involved in the case.

The case of Giovanni and Lusanna also demonstrates that, while the legality of the marriage might fall under the jurisdiction of canon law, the civil courts were not uninvolved in marriage-related cases. Parties involved in marriage cases might bring related suits in the civil court in an attempt to influence the canon court proceedings, as Giovanni did by accusing Lusanna of poisoning her first husband.[90] Further, certain aspects of the marriage, such as the dowry, fell squarely under the jurisdiction of the civil courts, which oversaw monetary contracts and inheritance issues.[91] The Florentine civil courts, therefore, moderated and passed judgment in cases of young women who were not granted the dowry—to which they had a right under civic law—by their fathers or guardians; widows and their natal families struggling to reclaim their dowries after the deaths of their husbands; and struggles over dowry payments between sons-in-law and the brides' guardians, often putting the bride squarely in the middle.[92]

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[90] Brucker, *Giovanni and Lusanna*, 45.

[91] Notwithstanding the jurisdictional differences of the two courts, people chose where to argue a case based on what court and approach would be more likely to produce a favorable outcome. Issues of the validity of a marriage might be argued in a civil court in relation to an inheritance dispute, where those "born of a legitimate marriage" were favored as heirs, as Kuehn notes for Florence. Similarly, a marriage case in the canon law courts might really revolve around property rights, as Pedersen argues for the 14th c. English case he dubs "Romeo and Juliet of Stonegate." Thomas Kuehn, "'As if Conceived within a Legitimate Marriage': A Dispute concerning Legitimation in Quattrocento Florence," *American Journal of Legal History* 29, no. 4 (1985): 281; Thomas Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 101; Frederik Pedersen, *Marriage Disputes in Medieval England* (London: Hambledon, 2000), 25.

[92] Failure to rely on or comply with local secular laws and legal practices in marriage could jeopardize one's claims to other civic legal rights, such as inheritance, but could also extend beyond that. For example, in 1526 the Venetian Council of Ten passed a law requiring all patrician men to register their marriages.

Dowries provided particularly fertile material for disputes because of their high social and economic value. By the High Middle Ages, the exchange of a dowry was a standard part of the marriage formation process.[93] While Jack Goody has characterized the dowry as an alternative form of inheritance, several scholars of northern Italy contest that description, calling it instead a form of disinheritance, a way to terminate women's demands on the patrimony.[94] It was commensurate not with any sort of inheritance but rather with the family's social status and limited by the total amount that the family was willing to pay out among all daughters.[95] Because a large dowry was so important to the status of both the natal and marital family of the young woman, families often agreed to dowries that were difficult to pay off. Elite grooms were then often paid only very slowly after the marriage, and might not ever have been paid fully, while men further down the social hierarchy would sometimes delay the marriage, refusing to accept the bride until

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Those who failed to do so were ineligible to serve on the Great Council, regardless of the validity of the marriage and the eligibility of the man according to other criteria. Hacke, "*Non lo volevo*," 208.

[93] Although the Romans had used the dowry, the Germanic tribes that dominated Italy in the latter half of the first millennium did not. The tradition of the dowry then reemerged and was firmly established by the High Middle Ages. Herlihy ties this change to shifting demographic and economic patterns, while Chabot argues that demography played only a small role alongside social changes. Diane Owen Hughes, "From Brideprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe," in *The Marriage Bargain: Women and Dowries in European History*, ed. Marion A. Kaplan, (New York: 1985), 17; David Herlihy, "The Medieval Marriage Market," *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6 (1976): 8, 18; Isabelle Chabot, "La dette des familles: Femmes, lignages et patrimoines à Florence aux XIVe et XVe siècles" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, European University Institute, 1995), 98.

[94] Jack Goody, *The Development of the Family and Marriage in Europe* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Hughes, "Brideprice to Dowry," 45.

[95] Chabot, "La dette des familles", 86-90.

the dowry was paid in full.[96] In either case, disagreements could arise between the families.

Because of these civil disputes and because of the importance of the document-based civic legal system—and particularly the notaries—in their daily lives, Florentines notarized the various aspects of the marriage process. The marriage formation process could involve up to three notarial contracts: the betrothal (*sponsalia*), the marriage itself (*matrimonium*), and the dowry (*confessio dotis*).[97] The betrothal, which generally took place in a parish church, was a mutual contract between the groom and the guardian of the bride.[98] The former promised that he would accept the bride and the latter promised that the bride would marry and be accompanied by a set dowry.[99] The bride's presence was not seen as necessary for this stage in Florence, as opposed to most other areas in Europe, and indeed it was not unusual for Florentine spouses not to have met at this point, at least among the elite. The second document, the marriage contract, recorded that the spouses exchanged both words of present consent and a ring. Finally, the dowry confession was essentially a business contract in which the groom formally declared that

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[96] Julius Kirshner, "Li Emergenti Bisogni Matrimoniali in Renaissance Florence," in *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, ed. William J. Connell, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 104.
[97] See Appendix C for a sample of each contract. Other marriage-related contracts might attest to the later augmentation of a dowry by a different friend or relative of the bride, or the return of the dowry to the widow at the end of a marriage.
[98] Indeed, in 1356 the city made it mandatory that all betrothals occur in a church, not because of its sacred character but because it was a public and neutral space and the city hoped to minimize feuding between families. Thomas Kuehn, "Contracting Marriage in Renaissance Florence," in *To Have and to Hold: Marrying and its Documentation in Western Christendom, 400--1600*, ed. Philip Lyndon Reynolds and John Witte, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 394.
[99] For a detailed description of the betrothal process, see Chapter Four, below, or Osvaldo Cavallar and Julius Kirshner, "Making and Breaking Betrothal Contracts ("Sponsalia") in Late Trecento Florence," in *"Panta rei": Studi dedicati a Manlio Bellomo*, ed. Orazio Condorelli, (Rome: Il Cigno Edizioni, 2004), 398.

he had received a stated amount from a named individual, usually his father-in-law, for his wife's dowry. Each of these contracts involved at least two witnesses. I will call the product of this process a union rather than a marriage in order to avoid confusion with the second notarial contract.

Not all Florentines had all three aspects of their union notarized. For example, only about a third of the unions contracted between 1425-9 for which there is notarial evidence involved a betrothal.[100] When all three contracts survive for one union, they generally took place within a few weeks of one another, and the union was almost always concluded within a year.[101] The contracts proceeded from the betrothal to the marriage to the dowry. The marriage frequently occurred on the same day as either the betrothal or dowry, although not always in the same location. They are always recorded in separate contracts, one sometimes following directly after the other in the notary's register.[102] For example, Giovanna Puccio and Piero Antonio recorded their betrothal and marriage contracts on the same day, 28 March 1429, while the dowry exchange was notarized on 11 June of the same year.[103] Similarly, Isabetta Giovanni Gini and Bartolomeo Manno

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[100] For more on betrothal contracts across the Florentine social hierarchy, see Chapter Four.
[101] This observation, unfortunately, cannot be quantified because not all contracts related to all unions survive. The longer the time lapse between contracts, the more likely it is that the contracts ended up in different registers, or even recorded by different notaries, making it increasingly possible that one contract is now missing. Further, because the research for this dissertation focused on a period of only five years, those contracts beyond this period were missed. The data collected, therefore, are necessarily biased in favor of unions concluded in a short period. Nonetheless, examination of the cases found does suggest that families worked to conclude marriages quickly. Cohn has found that "they are seldom found separated by more than a month." Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, 19.
[102] Notaries might simply note, in the second contract, that the witnesses, place and date are the same as the proceeding, but they never combine the contracts. This is in contrast to practices in Montpellier. Reyerson and Salata, *Medieval Notaries*, 59-61.
[103] NA 15101 fol. 135R and 140V.

recorded their betrothal on 21 June 1429 and notarized their marriage and dowry transaction a few weeks later on 6 July.[104]

Since the notarization of unions was not legally required for a canonically valid marriage, it is worth considering why Florentines invested the time, effort, and money to notarize them. The simple answer is that from the thirteenth century Florentine civil law had required the notarization of marriage.[105] The reasons behind this law reflect the dominance of written documents in Florentine culture. First of all, the notarial document provided evidence that a canonically legal marriage had taken place by supplying the names of the witnesses and notary who were present, and through the existence of the document itself, which was valid proof in Florentine civil courts. Second, the notarial documents safeguarded the financial interests of the bride, protecting her dowry, giving her protection against financial mismanagement by her in-laws, and providing legal grounds from which to demand its return in widowhood. The documents could also serve to protect and demonstrate the legitimacy of the children of the union by guaranteeing the claim to their maternal inheritance—the dowry—and support from their father or his estate. Finally, in the Florentine context the notarial contract evolved into one of the symbols of marriage, which did not itself make marriage but which publicly demonstrated and proved that a legal marriage existed. The use of notarial contracts for marriage, therefore, represents the use of an instrument of the civil law to strengthen a contract that could be reexamined in either a civil or ecclesiastical court and was valid in

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[104] NA 20557 fol. unnumbered (21 June 1429 and 6 July 1429).
[105] Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, 18.

either court. The contracts demonstrate the importance of civil law and written culture in Florence, and the intertwined nature of the two systems of law.[106]

Notaries, The Catasto, and Marriage

Marriage practice in Florence, therefore, was shaped by both canon and civil law, but it was also shaped by local custom, and the Catasto is perhaps the best illustration of this. Given the marriage statistics in the Catasto, we can expect approximately 1190 women to have entered into first unions in Florence per year, or 5950 in a five-year period, plus an unknown number of second or subsequent marriages.[107] A survey of all notarial documents over a five-year period yields contracts for only 387 unions, or about 6.5 percent of these projected first unions. It is true that the count of notarial documents omits all those Florentines who married non-residents of the city, as well the unknowable number of Florentines whose unions were recorded in registers no longer extant. Nonetheless, this huge discrepancy in numbers strongly suggests that not all Florentines availed themselves of the help of a notary. Further supporting this assertion is the fact that the wealthy are disproportionately present in the unions for which contracts exist. It is possible that the notaries with a wealthy clientele, and who themselves were

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[106] Similarly, Brundage notes the use of civil as well as canon legal citations to examine the legality of certain marriages. Brundage, "Treatment of Marriage," 90.

[107] This is based on the difference in the percent of women single between each five-year age group and the previous one, multiplied by the number of women in the age group. A comparable calculation based on the figures for men suggests that approximately 1150 men married for the first time each year, a remarkably similar number when the imperfect nature of the statistics, the large sample size—the entire Catasto—and the vagueness of male marital status in the documents is considered alongside the fact that men and women might have married non-Florentines at different rates.

presumably more elite, were better able to preserve their registers and these registers were more likely to be deposited into the archive created over a hundred years after the period under study. It is also possible, however, that the poorest and most disenfranchised members of the society either did not have the small sums necessary to have their unions notarized, or did not see it as necessary.

This does not inevitably mean that those without notarized unions did not have legally valid marriages, according to canon law; they might have exchanged words of consent in front of witnesses and then lived in the manner of a husband and wife. It is also possible that some of the "married" couples in the Catasto were cohabiting or otherwise living in a union that was not a valid marriage, according to canon or civil law. As Ruth Karras has argued for Europe as a whole, laypeople did not always divide their neighbors into only two categories—those who were canonically married and those who were not—but recognized a greater range of relationship types, brought to fruition in a variety of ways.[108] Lansing has demonstrated that in thirteenth-century Bologna, the non-elite witnesses in court cases describe a variety of relations, including formal marriages, informal marriages, temporary unions, concubinage, exclusive occasional relations and non-exclusive relationships, to name just a few.[109] In some cases, women left marriages to enter into other relationships, forfeiting their legal right to their dowry and financial

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[108] Ruth Mazo Karras, *Common Women: Prostitution and Sexuality in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 85.
[109] Some of these relationships involved co-habitation, financial support, or both, while others did not; some were regarded by neighbors (and witnesses in court) as respectable or honest. Lansing, "Concubines, Lovers, Prostitutes," 85, 97.

support in the process.[110] Among those at the bottom of the social and economic hierarchy, there was not the strict division among sexually active women between married/ honest/ legally protected and prostitute/ dishonest/ without rights. This dichotomy certainly existed in the minds of the canonists—although even they differed on the status of concubinage—as well as those of judges, jurors, and Catasto officials, but those further down the social hierarchy were possibly more flexible in their definitions.[111]

It is quite possible that this variety of unions persisted among fifteenth-century Florentines at the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy. It is only logical that, even among lower-status Florentines who entered into unions that were formal, permanent, and legally valid according to canon law, they chose to forgo some of the symbols and rites associated with elite marriages, extending even to the process of notarization. Instead, they simply exchanged vows, and possibly celebrated with family and neighbors—as Lusanna claims she and Giovanni did—or moved directly to living as husband and wife, producing and rearing children and supporting one another.[112] This was particularly the case, Lansing suggests, when the bride lacked a dowry.[113] While

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[110] Ibid., 93.
[111] Some canonists held that concubinage was equivalent to clandestine marriage, while others believed it was worse than prostitution. For the most part, it was treated as a sort of second-class marital relationship. For a detailed account of the canonical debate, see James Brundage, "Concubinage and Marriage in Medieval Canon Law," in *Sexual Practices and the Medieval Church*, (Buffalo: Prometheus, 1982), 121-2; Ruth Mazo Karras, "Marriage, Concubinage, and the Law," in *Law and the Illicit in Medieval Europe*, ed. Ruth Mazo Karras, Joel Kaye, and E. Ann Matter, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 120; Musselli and Grillo, *Matrimonio*, 128-30.
[112] Such unions, which had all of the appearance of marriage, were accepted as such by neighbors and called such in court. Lansing, "Concubines, Lovers, Prostitutes," 94.
[113] Ibid., 92.

canonists might have argued that such unions were legal marriages, the women would have lacked many of the legal protections, especially those provided by the dowry.[114]

Regardless of their legal status, couples might have regarded themselves as married, and their neighbors might well have agreed.[115] Indeed, if the couples had been living together, were held to be married by their neighbors, and there was other supporting evidence of marriage—most notably marital affection, including calling each other husband and wife, sharing a table and bed, and raising children together—they were regarded as married by canon and, usually, civil law.[116] Further, the Catasto officials, bureaucrats and taxmen, were not in the business of investigating the legalities of marriage. They were uninterested in the various interpretations of and ways to enter into marriage. If a man described the woman he lived with as his wife, or a woman claimed that she was a widow and her children legitimate orphans, the Catasto officals accepted it as so unless they had reason to believe that there was fraud that would affect taxation.[117] Hence many marriages that might have been legally questionable became hard and fast in the Catasto documentation, reflecting practice and, perhaps, popular opinion rather than civil or canon law. In some ways, therefore, the Catasto is perhaps a more accurate

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[114] In this instance, canon lawyers recognized that the two systems of law were at odds with one another; canon law held that these unions were fully legal and valid while civil law saw them as less than a full marriage. Brundage, "Concubinage," 122.

[115] Sheehan has argued this was the case for many couples in the Bishopric of Ely, England, in the late 14th c. Sheehan and Farge, *Marriage*, 55.

[116] Brundage, "Concubinage," 125; Helmholz, *Marriage*, 47.

[117] All children and descendents of the head counted as deductions, whether legitimate or not, so it was not worth the while of the Catasto Officials to investigate the legitimacy of marriages and children.

depiction of the self-definition of marital status among the non-elite than either court documents or the notarial sources.

The potential to see the multiple types of marriage-like relationships is only one advantage of using the notarial sources and the Catasto in combination with one another. Another equally important benefit is that in many cases the two sources supplement each other in terms of the information available for a single union. The Catasto allows for the calculation of marriage-related statistics, the demographics of marriage as they will here be called, for the whole population and large subgroups. It also provides the names and sometimes the ages of married couples (or couples in marriage-like relationships). Except in the cases of unions noted in an amendment to the original Catasto it does not tell us when they married. When there is a notarial contract for one of the Catasto's married couples, the contract supplements the information in the Catasto with dates, dowry amounts, and the names of others involved. Conversely, the Catasto can be used to establish the ages, household wealth, family structures, and sometimes the occupations and neighborhoods of those involved in contracts recorded by notaries.[118] In particular, for this study, that information allows us a fuller picture of the status of the participants.

Identification and Identity within the Catasto

The successful identification in the Catasto of individual names from notarial documents relies, first, on matching the names. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber included in

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[118] For example, in the 387 unions, the notary included the parish identity of 226 brides, or 58.4%, and 265 grooms, or 68.5%. The Catasto provides a gonfalone—although not a parish—for an additional 55 brides and 71 grooms.

the computerized Catasto data the name, patronymic, and family name (when one existed) for the household head in Italian, as opposed to the Latin that the notaries used. Because certain names were very common, it is possible to find several individuals by the same name in the Catasto. The second step is to match the gonfalone—the civic unit of spatial division—provided in the Catasto with the parish—the ecclesiastical division of the city—in the notarial document. It also important that the occupations match, when they are both available. Finally, it is necessary to check that the demographic and economic information in the Catasto does not rule out the possibility that the records refer to the same person. For example, Stefano Lorenzo amended his Catasto declaration to add his bride, whom he married before the Catasto records were closed to corrections. The fifty-year-old Stefano married a thirty-four-year old by the name of Bartolomea, described as the daughter of Andrea Nofri.[119] There is an Andrea Nofri in the Catasto, and he is of commensurate wealth as Stefano, making a union between the families seem like a good possibility.[120] However, the Andrea Nofri in the Catasto is only forty years old, making it physically impossible for him to be Bartolomea's father. Many successful identifications involve a level of detective work and investigation of possible options, most frequently a consideration of who might have been the head of household, if not the individual listed.[121] This is almost always the approach in dealing with women, whether

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[119] Cat ID 2707.
[120] Cat ID 7826.
[121] If, for example, a groom does not seem to be listed in the Catasto, it is important to consider whether or not he might have still been a part of his father's household. Was the father dead at the time of the Catasto;

brides or mothers, who were rarely the heads of their own households. In identifications that seem tenuous, it is worthwhile to turn from the computerized Catasto, which lists only the name of the head, to the original manuscript declarations of the families in question, and to examine the names in those families.[122]

It is still not possible to identify all notarial contract participants in the Catasto. In some cases there are simply too many possibilities; for example, there are eleven different household heads by the name of Giovanni Antonio in the gonfalone of Drago Verde alone. In other instances it impossible to know what household an individual is in, without searching through all of the thousands of pages of handwritten returns looking for his or her name. This is the case more often for women than for men and especially problematic in the case of young women living with a stepfather, relative, or unrelated guardian who may not be mentioned by the notary.[123] Finally, there were an unknown number of people who were simply not included in the Florentine Catasto; they could have been legal residents elsewhere, transients, individuals undeclared by the person under whose roof they lived, or simply successful in evading the Catasto officials. It is

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that is, did the notary precede his name with *olim*? Is it possible to identify a man who might be the father, and does that man have a son of marriageable age?

[122] The documents make up the Catasto collection in the ASF. Documents 15 through 63 consist of the *portate* documents, those turned in by household heads, and 64 through 81 are the *campione*, the standardized version put together by the Catasto officials. The *campione* have been microfilmed. A copy of the microfilm is available at the ASF, but there are also a few copies available in the US, including one held by The Center for Research Libraries in Chicago.

[123] Even when a woman can be associated with a household, for example her guardian has a Catasto entry, it is still not necessarily the case that the woman herself was a part of that fiscal household, never mind physically lived there, before her marriage.

not possible to identify with certainty individuals who fall into any of the above categories.

In the end it is possible to identify better than half of the individuals named in the notarial contracts.[124] Individuals are not, however, equally identifiable across the social ranks. Of the grooms who can be identified in the Catasto, over a third are from households in the top quintile of the population in terms of wealth.[125] Meanwhile, less than a quarter of the identifiable grooms came from the poorest 40 percent of households.[126] While it is possible, as suggested, that elite families were more likely to have marriages notarized or to have their notarial documents survive, it is also possible—and not a mutually exclusive possibility—that the Catasto is much more helpful in identifying some members of society than others. This creates an imbalance in the historical record favoring the elite and, for the purposes of this project, makes it easier to establish the geographic, wealth, and occupational identity of those who were wealthy or from prominent families.

There are several causes for this imbalance. The family names of the elite make it easier to identify an individual or to search for possible relatives in whose house he or she

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[124] For example, 224 of the 415 grooms, or 54.0% can be identified with certainty. Of those who cannot be identified with certainty, there is a likely identification or two or three possible identifications for an additional 29 grooms. Approximately the same number of unidentifiable grooms clearly had connections outside the city; some were Florentines living elsewhere while most were from the Florentine *contado* but in the city, either briefly or permanently. Their migrant status might mean that they were registered outside the city, but it also might have meant that they slipped through the cracks of the Florentine tax bureaucracy. Although the natal families of only 34.9%, or 145 of 415, brides can be identified with certainty, it is possible to identify the bride herself in either her natal or marital household 53.0% of the time, or in 220 of 415 instances.

[125] 85 of 224, or 37.9%, were from the wealthiest 20% of the households.

[126] 52 of 224, or 23.2%.

might be living. Elite families might have been registered in the Catasto at a higher rate than the general population. It has long been acknowledged that the most marginal members of society—the transient, the indigent, criminals, foreigners, widows, and the elderly living alone—were almost certainly under-recorded in the Catasto, although it is impossible to estimate the degree to which this is the case.[127] Because these households were both poor and poorly connected to the rest of the population, they could easily escape notice of the government, further disenfranchising them. The prominence of elite families, conversely, increased their visibility before the Catasto officials. At the same time, the tax officials and fellow citizens, who stood to gain a reward for reporting evasion commensurate with the level of evasion, would have been especially proactive in making sure that the wealthiest households were properly declared.

There is, however, a vast gulf between the most marginal and the most elite. The Catasto has long been assumed to be quite complete for these middle of the social spectrum. Those who were not registered in the Catasto were, by Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's estimation, essentially outlaws, unable to use the court system and without a legitimate social identity.[128] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber therefore argue that while undervaluing one's assets was common, wholesale tax dodging by not submitting a declaration was rare.[129] It might have been rare, but how rare is open to question. Although in some cases there is a fairly simple explanation as to why an individual

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[127] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 162.
[128] Ibid., 69.
[129] Ibid., 70.

cannot be identified in the Catasto—he or she is registered elsewhere or in the household of an unknown individual—in other cases there is no explanation. Why, for example, is there no trace of Francesco Bene, the wool worker (specifically a wool stretcher) from the parish of S. Michele Visdomini in the gonfalone of Drago? In September 1429, Francesco declared his receipt of 70 florins for the dowry of his wife, Agnese Miniato, in the same parish in which he lived.[130] Francesco must have existed and he must have been alive in 1427, when the Catasto was made. There is no evidence that Francesco ever lived anywhere other than Florence, or shared close financial interest—and perhaps a fiscal household—with either brothers or his father, who, at any rate, was dead by 1429. While Francesco was a very common name, Bene was much less so. All of this suggests that it should be relatively easy to identify him within the Catasto. But there are no Francesco Benes and only three Benes at all, none of whom seem to have been Francesco's father. Francesco was not impoverished—a 70-florin dowry was quite respectable for a wool worker—and does not seem to be transient or criminal. Was he simply omitted from the Catasto? This one instance certainly cannot prove that there was widespread omission, or even that Francesco himself was not included and should have been. It is curious, however. Other similar cases, such as that of Antonio Salvestro, a second-hand clothing dealer from S. Lorenzo in the gonfalone of Leon d'Oro, or Guido Luca, a linen dealer in S. Frediano, in the gonfalone of Drago Verde, raise the issue of

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[130] NA 16529 fol. 49R.

omissions on a wider scale than previously thought among those from the middling-ranks of the city's population.[131]

The two sources—the Catasto and the notarial documents—in combination tell us an exceptional amount about marriage and Florentine social structure more generally. It is true that in the largely expected ways the sources complement one another and also in the surprising ways that they fail to supplement one another—in the differences in numbers of marriages expected and contracts found and in the difficulty in identifying individuals from the notarial documents in the Catasto.

Artisans, Marriage, and Florentine Society

This dissertation begins by examining, in Chapter One, the ways that Florentines situated themselves in their social world. Through an exploration of how Florentines identified themselves and were identified by notaries and the Florentine government, it argues that community, identity, and status were tightly intertwined and interdependent. Florentine identity was based on social ties, on membership in communities, and these social ties also defined a Florentine's position in the social hierarchy, his or her status. Because one could belong to numerous communities at once, status was multifaceted, with wealth, occupation and political status, lineage, and married ties all playing into it. Status was, therefore, nuanced and changeable rather than set or discrete. Despite the complexity of status, however, both status and community can be 'read' in the way that notaries recorded the identity of those who came before them.

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[131] NA 12128 fol. unnumbered (12 Dec. 1428) and NA 11115 fol. 100.

Chapter Two explores the relationship between status and marriage at the level of the society. By examining the demographics of marriage—age of the spouses and age difference between them, celibacy rates, and residence patterns—this chapter argues for noticeable and significant differences in the marriage formation patterns of those at different levels of the Florentine social hierarchy. In this, it not only argues that there was no single demographic Florentine marriage pattern, but also demonstrated through the important example of marriage that Florentine society was a hierarchical spectum. Finally, it establishes the importance of considering those in the middle of the spectrum, artisans, rather than just those on the edges, since patterns and differences based only on the edges often look very different when those in between are considered.

Chapters Three and Four focus more specifically on the artisans at the center of the social spectrum, exploring the ways that marriage both differentiated them from and connected them to the rest of Florentine society. Chapter Three begins by examining the choice of spouse for Florentines in general and artisans in particular. It argues that artisans were much more likely than those at either end of the social spectrum to select a marriage partner from outside the communities defined by geography, occupation or wealth. But while ties between artisan spouses did not reinforce existing bonds of community, theses bonds were reinforced through the selection of individuals to witness the various formal steps of marriage. In this way, artisan marriage formation both solidified existing communities and extended ties across communities, making artisans

central in the social hierarchy as well as in the web of Florentine social relations that extended vertically and horizontally across this hierarchy.

Chapter Four explores the centrality of artisans in vertical, or patron-client, relations that spread across the hierarchy. It focus specifically on the position of the arbitrator, who formally approved the betrothal contract and who was usually a man slightly higher on the social hierarchy than the spouses' families. It also examines the function of patronage in funding dowries for young women. In both the case of arbitrators and dowry providers, artisans depended on their more elite acquaintances for assistance but also took on these roles for their community members further down the social spectrum. Artisan marriages, therefore, demonstrate the importance of vertical bonds across the social spectrum, both emphasizing the interconnectedness of Florentine society and the centrality of artisans.

Finally, Chapter Five backs away from the close focus on Florentine artisans to consider the ways that the more complete picture of Florentine marriage patterns compares to other areas of contemporary societies, and specifically the well-studied example of England. It argues, specifically, that when the marriage formation patterns of the entire Florentine social spectrum are compared with the entire English social hierarchy, the differences are minimized. A preference for neolocality and the use of lifecycle servanthood are no more unique to England than a young age at marriage for women is restricted to Florence. But while the demographics might not be as different as previously thought, this chapter stresses the way that the predominance of the patriarchy

in Florentine identity did shape the ways that Florentines set up the legal system surrounding marriage. It thus argues for the importance of considering the range of marriage possibilities and the aspects that fed into marriage for a society or geographic region.

On 12 March 1427, the notary Ser Antonio Leonardo Pugi recorded a straightforward transaction certifying the receipt of a dowry.[1] The entry in his notarial register tells us that Lodovico, of the parish of S. Simone, received the dowry of his wife, Francesca, who was called Cecca.[2] She was the daughter of the late Bartolomeo Pagolo, from the same parish. Lodovico's father, Tamerighi Ser Lodovico, gave his permission for the transaction. [3] The mother of the groom, Agnola, daughter of the late Domenico Antoni, stood as a receiver along with her son, also with Tamerighi's consent.[4] Nardo Manetto, of S. Simone, and Giovanni Alessandro, formerly of Prato living in S. Simone, both wool cleaners, served as witnesses to the declaration of receipt.[5] The Catasto reveals that Lodovico, the groom, and his father were poor laborers in the city's wool industry—Lodovico was a shearer and his father a wool cleaner—but the notarial document makes it clear that they were not destitute or socially isolated. By carefully reading the few lines in which the notary recorded the business of the dowry receipt, the integration of both spouses into their community, the social connections to their various communities, and their positions in the larger Florentine social hierarchy become clear.

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[1] NA 17402 fol. 325R. See Appendix C for a summary of the notarial documents related to the union.
[2] Lodovico's Catasto declaration, Cat ID 3364, notes that he heads his own fiscal household, and is 23 years old, while his wife is 18. Household identification numbers are numbers assigned to the household tax returns by Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber in the computerized version of the Catasto that they prepared. For the most part, I rely on Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's database for my use of the Catasto and will simply provide the Cat ID. In the instances where I have consulted the original Catasto records, available on microfilm at the ASF, I also cite the archive and the bobbin number of the microfilm roll consulted.
[3] According to the Catasto, Cat ID 3469, Tamerighi is a 55-year-old wool cleaner living in the same gonfalone as his son, if not in the same parish. He lives with his 45-year-old wife and a 10-year-old daughter.
[4] By standing as co-receiver of her daughter-in-law's dowry, Agnola guaranteed its return in the event of Cecca's widowhood.
[5] Nardo is Cat ID 3391 but Giovanni could not be identified.

Fifteenth-century Florence, as any guidebook will explain, was a collection of monumental architecture; of civic edifices and private *palazzi*, awe-inspiring churches and stately monasteries; of pink, green, and white marble, red terracotta, and cold, grey *pietra serena*; of private walled gardens and public markets; all of these connected by narrow cobblestone streets and bridges spanning the shallow Arno River. As the notarial record of Lodovico and Cecca's dowry transaction makes clear, however, contemporary Florentines did not define themselves through their relationship to the physical geography of the city. The streets, monuments, squares, and bridges are almost invisible in the quotidian contracts recorded by Ser Antonio and his fellow notaries. Instead, the geography that Florentines and their notaries situated themselves within was the human geography of kin, parish, and occupational groups.

The social bonds that positioned them within these human geographies, these communities, gave Florentines their status. That is, the number of personal ties a Florentine had, the people to whom he or she was connected, and the nature of those ties, determined and indicated that person's position in the hierarchical web of Florentine social relations. Further as the above example suggests and this chapter argues in more detail, community and status provided the basis for Florentine identity.[6] Florentines defined who they were in relation to the communities to which they belonged. The communal basis of Florentine identity is important to understanding social relations

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[6] Caroline Walker Bynum argued that concepts of group identity and personal identity developed alongside one another and that the former strongly influenced the latter in 12th c. Europe. Caroline Walker Bynum, *Jesus as Mother: Studies in the Spirituality of the High Middle Ages* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), 107.

within the city as a whole, but particularly for understanding the importance and process of marriage, itself one of the most important social bonds in Florence.

This chapter will begin with a discussion of the nature of Florentine social ties and their importance for status. It will then turn to the issue of Florentine identity, examining how Florentines defined themselves both in their own words, where they are available, and especially in notarial documents. It will explore the three communities that were most important to Florentine identity: the family, the occupational community, and the parish. How the notaries recorded these communities allows us to read the status of these individuals. Finally, this chapter will explore the interrelationship between status, community, and identity, and will begin to consider the role of marriage in this relationship.

The Value of Social Ties

Florentines were connected to one another through ties of *amicizia*, a 'friendship' of mutual obligation to one another that could be relied upon for favors.[7] *Amicizia* and the role of social ties in Florentine society are best approached through the theoretical lens of social capital.[8] Social capital consists of social connections, and specifically the

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[7] Paul Douglas McLean, *The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), 62. Kinship itself was of course also an important bond, but *amicizia* and kinship could be used almost interchangeably as kin—and especially more distant kin—reminded each other of their *amicizia* while unrelated individuals used the language of kinship to emphasize the closeness of their non-kin bonds. McLean, *Art of the Network*, 14-15.

[8] Social theorists cite three main forms of capital: economic capital, cultural capital, and social capital. Economic capital is material wealth. Cultural capital corresponds to the social values of the society's elite and demonstrates membership in that elite. Karl Marx first defined capital as the economic reward for controlling means of production. Pierre Bourdieu proposed the now-standard tripartite division of capital,

opportunity these connections afford to call on the resources of others. Numerous social connections—especially but not only connections with high-status members of the community—give one a store of social capital and, consequently, benefit one's social status.[9]

The ties of mutual obligation could be closed and form finite communities, groups with shared values and norms that engaged in collective activities, and held together by bonds of reciprocity, however imperfect or enforced through social pressure.[10] Entrance to these diverse communities could be more or less formal, as could the obligations of members to one another. In each case, however, an individual member felt a sense of belonging and obligation to the group, and was recognized by those in and out of the group as a member. Individuals could, however, be members of multiple communities at once. Giovanni Alessandro, for example, one of the witnesses in Lodovico Tamerighi's dowry transaction, had ties to the community of Prato, his community of origin; to the Florentine parish of S. Simone, with whom he worshiped and shared the space around the church; and perhaps also to the community of immigrants from Prato residing in Florence. He was also part of the community of Florentine wool cleaners. Social ties, therefore, extended from one community to another and created broad networks.

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adding cultural and social capital to Marx's (economic) capital. Nan Lin, Karen S. Cook, and Ronald S. Burt, *Social Capital: Theory and Research* (New York: Aldine de Gruyter, 2001), 4-8.

[9] "High status" is, of course, relative. In a community of poor, unskilled laborers, a slightly less poor individual might be "high status," and connections with a skilled laborer could improve one's status, although none of these individuals would be among the city's elite.

[10] Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 2.

In modern thought, both communities and friendship (the direct translation of *amicizia*) have connotations that are positive and, specifically, egalitarian. These relationships are founded on horizontal bonds, while vertical bonds, best characterized as patron-client relationships, have been depicted in a largely negative light.[11] These two types of bonds, horizontal and vertical, have largely been seen in opposition or as mutually exclusive to one another. For example, in his first book—before the more famous *Bowling Alone*—Robert Putnam explicitly juxtaposes what he sees as the vertical social bonds in the more economically depressed areas of the Italian South with the egalitarian, horizontal social ties in the more democratic and economically functional Italian north in the post World War II period and argues that this egalitarianism can be traced back to the late medieval northern Italian republics.[12] In this, he is drawing on Alexis de Tocqueville who, in his early nineteenth-century study of American democracy, stressed egalitarianism in social networks and the positive effects of this civic mentality for democracy.[13] By contrast, vertical bonds are associated with a lack of cooperation and even competition between clients and patrons and among clients.[14]

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[11] A patron could be anyone with more social, political, or economic power than the client and who served as an intermediary, providing his or her client with access to needed social connections. In this I follow Anthony Molho's definition, itself based on the one provided by the sociologist Paul Littlewood in 1974. Anthony Molho, "Cosimo de' Medici: Pater Patriae or Padrino?," *Stanford Italian Review* 1, no. 1 (1979): 19.

[12] This claim has been both widely discussed and heavily contested by historians for a number of reasons, most notably for depicting northern Italy in 1300 as exclusively egalitarian and republican—neither of which were true—and for ignoring the entire period from 1500-1800. Robert D. Putnam, *Making Democracy Work: Civic Traditions in Modern Italy* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1993), 130-6; Samuel Kline Cohn, "La Storia secondo Robert Putnam," *Polis* 8 (1994): 316, 19.

[13] Putnam, *Democracy*, 88.

[14] Putnam argues that clients have no interest in helping patrons without an immediate return, while Julian Pitt-Rivers notes that they also have no interest in helping their peers, who are simply competition for the

Because of these perceived differences, the two forms of social bonds are often studied in isolation from one another.

In fact all social networks—the arenas for exchange of social capital—in all societies involve both horizontal and vertical components, and the division between the two is not always neat or exclusive.[15] Patron-client relationships are not inherently negative or backward, nor are they necessarily antagonistic, and they exist alongside egalitarian peer-bonds in functioning social networks.[16] Further, social ties in general can be quite fluid. Not only can two individuals be connected by multiple types of bonds—as both members of the same guild and as the giver and receiver of a loan, for example—but the nature, importance, and even the existence of these various bonds can change over time.[17] Finally, networks are neither closed nor static. People can work to maintain or improve social ties, but they can also leave ties dormant, resurrect them, or sever them entirely.[18] The variety of types of bonds, combined with the possibility of belonging to multiple networks at once, create numerous obligations—and opportunities—for

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same resources doled out by the same pool of patrons. Ibid., 175. Julian Alfred Pitt-Rivers, *The Fate of Shechem; or, The Politics of Sex: Essays in the Anthropology of the Mediterranean* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1977), 32, 160.

[15] Putnam, who draws perhaps the most polemical distinction between the two types of ties, concedes this point, pointing out that even bowling teams have captains. Reynolds argues that the perceived incompatibility of these two forms of social bonds is based in the worldview of modern western scholars rather the historic political cultures they study. Putnam, *Democracy*, 173; Reynolds, *Kingdoms*, xlvii.

[16] In fact, Reynolds argues that inequality in medieval communities might have actually helped to promote a degree of cohesion. Reynolds, *Kingdoms*, xl; Anne Kovalainen, "Social Capital, Trust and Dependency," in *Networks, Trust, and Social Capital: Theoretical and Empirical Investigations from Europe*, ed. Sokratis M. Koniordos, (Aldershot, Hants, England ; Burlington, VT: Ashgate Pub. Co., 2005), 77.

[17] Paul Douglas McLean, "A Frame Analysis of Favor Seeking in the Renaissance: Agency, Networks, and Political Culture," *The American Journal of Sociology* 104, no. 1 (1998): 54.

[18] S.N. Eisenstadt and Louis Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations as a Model of Structuring Social Exchange," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 22, no. 1 (1980): 52.

individuals, and allowed individuals to fill a variety of different roles in the networks, serving as patron, client, and peer all at once.[19] Because individuals could choose which bonds to activate or form at any point, both those in horizontal and those in vertical relationships—including clients—could actively select how they would use the range of social ties available to them to their advantage at any moment.[20]

Social capital—a wealth of social ties—improved the position of Florentines in a variety of ways. First of all, well-connected friends and patrons could provide material assistance in the form of tax relief, loans, and jobs, especially well-paid government jobs, thereby directly advancing an individual's economic situation.[21] Government positions were also an important marker of social status. Further, one's social network could expand through the addition of new, well-placed social ties, since one then had access to all the social capital of the new ties. As Dale Kent demonstrates, the Medici energetically and pointedly cultivated vertical social networks and relied on support from their clients in their rise to political and social power.[22] Far less powerful Florentines also relied on the careful cultivation of social ties to improve their access to resources—responsible landlords, work, apprenticeships for children—even at a more modest level.

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[19] McLean, *Art of the Network*, 14.
[20] Eisenstadt and Roniger, "Patron-Client Relations," 52.
[21] Being a patron could be financially draining, which meant that Florentines needed to master the art of not fulfilling requests while maintaining the social bonds. Ronald F. E. Weissman, "The Importance of Being Ambiguous: Social Relations, Individualism, and Identity in Renaissance Florence," in *Urban Life in the Renaissance*, ed. Susan Zimmerman and Ronald F. E. Weissman, (Newark: University of Delaware Press 1989).
[22] Dale V. Kent, *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence 1426-1434* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 16, 28-29. For a more theoretical explanation of the way that patron-client relationships benefit the status of both parties, see Pitt-Rivers, *Fate of Shechem*, 34.

In addition to these concrete benefits, social capital translated fairly directly into social status. Florentines largely defined social status in terms of honor—*onore*—the social value of a person in his or her own eyes, but more importantly in the eyes of his or her society.[23] People at all social levels could have honor. What exactly made one honorable in Renaissance Florence, however, was quite nebulous.[24] In Leon Battista Alberti's early-fifteenth-century *I libri della famiglia*, the old and world-wise Giannozzo Alberti argues that "a man is highly enough honored when he lived untainted by vice and untouched by shame."[25] Such a definition stresses both dependence on others for one's honor—one *is* honored—and the multifaceted nature of honor. As the text continues, Giannozzo mentions a few areas where one should strive for honorability: occupation, a wife who avoids dishonor, and a certain amount of spending power to keep one's family "honorably maintained."[26] Honor was therefore a reflection of one's economic capital but also, and to a greater extent, of one's social capital: occupational affiliation, marital ties,

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[23] This is what Frank H. Stewart refers to as "external honor;" one is honorable because one is honored by others. The opposite of honor, according to both anthropologists studying the modern Mediterranean and also to 15th c. Florentine letter writers, is shame. But simultaneously honor and shame went hand-in-hand, as one who had no shame could have no honor. Frank Henderson Stewart, *Honor* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994), 11; Julian Pitt-Rivers, "Honor and Social Status," in *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society*, ed. John G. Peristiany, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1965), 21, 43; John G. Peristiany, *Honour and Shame: The Values of Mediterranean Society* (London: 1965), 11.

[24] As McLean notes, this nebulousness is exemplified and heightened by the fact that Florentines' works on honor tended to be in the format of a dialogue or debate rather than a monovocal treatise. Peristiany argues that honor has little to do with adherence to social norms as those with honor are often allowed to flout social convention, while those without cannot attain it even by carefully adhering to social convention. McLean, *Art of the Network*, 61; Peristiany, *Honour and Shame*, 9.

[25] Leon Battista Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, ed. trans. Renée Neu Watkins (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), 47.

[26] Ibid., 66, 83, 72. Clearly the definition was somewhat circular. Honor was the sum total of one's success in behaving honorably in each of the areas that gave one honor, an honor was reflected on and was shared by the household and the kin group. It also stresses gendered definitions of honor; Pitt-Rivers has observed that to be honorable it is necessary for a man to "defend his honor and that of his family, a woman to conserve her purity." Pitt-Rivers, *Fate of Shechem*, 20.

and the level of esteem in which one was held. Further, Gianozzo's criteria were relative rather than specific to the elite. Certainly a wool clearer like Lodovico, whose union is described at the beginning of this chapter, could not hope to achieve the same level of honor as an Alberti, nor would an Alberti living like Lodovico be very highly honored by the elite despite his kinship ties. Nonetheless, Lodovico could strive to live honorably, to maintain and improve his status, within his own community of peers by striving to ameliorate, even marginally, his economic situation and by behaving in such a way as to be honored by those around him.

Historians of Florence have more clearly stressed the links between social connections and honor or social status. Lauro Martines argues, there are four major components of social status in early fifteenth-century Florence: "honorably-acquired wealth, a substantial record of service in public office, descent from an old Florentine family, and bonds of marriage with another family of some political and economic consequence."[27] More recently, Ronald Weissman has stated that in fifteenth-century Florence honor depended, first, on the proper expressions of gratitude and loyalty to peers and patrons and, second, on the ability to act as a patron oneself.[28] Again, however, one needed not be a member of the city's elite to be a patron. An artisan who employed a servant or lent a small sum to a neighbor was a patron of sorts to that servant or borrower.

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[27] Lauro Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 18.
[28] Conversely, those who did not or could not demonstrate the proper level of gratitude and reciprocity were without honor. Ronald F. E. Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1982), 26.

This did not raise the artisan to elite levels, but it did influence his status in his communities.

In this sense honor was roughly equivalent to status in that it positioned the individual in the web of social networks. Both sets of factors used to define honor, with the possible exception of wealth, were directly based on social capital. In fact, Anthony Molho and Frederick W. Kent both argue that it was the extent of their social networks that differentiated elite Florentines from those further down the social hierarchy.[29] The relationship between status and social capital was direct and, if not exclusive, very important.

But Florentines not only depended on social capital for economic, political, and social status and advancement; they also depended on it for their very identity.[30] Indeed, those who were without networks were essentially without status or identity.[31] This was consistently the case in a variety of media in which Florentines recorded their identities, or had their identities recorded. The elite Gregorio Dati, for example, began his private *ricordanze*, or book of family records, with an account of his paternal lineage and the political and occupational affiliations of his ancestors, and neighborhoods in which they lived, as well as his own guild affiliations and the parentage of his successive wives.[32] He

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[29] F. W. Kent and Gino Corti, *Bartolommeo Cederni and his Friends: Letters to an Obscure Florentine* (Florence: Olschki, 1991), 9-10; Molho, "Cosimo," 24-25.
[30] One of the leading American scholars on social capital, James Coleman, argues that people may pursue social capital even at a short-term economic cost because it secures their self-identity. John Field, *Social Capital* (London: Routledge, 2003), 24-25.
[31] Kent and Corti, *Bartolomeo Cederni and his Friends*, 10.
[32] Gene A. Brucker et al., *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 107-8, 13.

was certainly not unique among writers of *ricordanze* in this; in fact, it was fairly standard practice.[33] Nor was this the case only for those with lots of social capital, the elite; those further down the social spectrum, such as the shearers and wool cleaners involved in Lodovico's dowry receipt, similarly defined themselves through kin-based, occupational, and geographic communities.

Identity and Identification

The city of Florence in 1427 was home to just under 40,000 individuals living in the area of approximately 5 square kilometers within the city's defensive walls.[34] When individuals appeared before a notary, the notary had to carefully identify each of them. This was important to the legal validity of the contract and in case the parties involved needed to be found to testify in court.[35] The notary therefore had the challenge in his identifications of not only singling out one individual from among the swarm of humanity that filled the walls of Florence, but also to do so in such a way that court officials or the notary himself could enter in to the city and find the individual in question.

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[33] See, for example, Giuseppe Odoardo Corazzini, *Ricordanze di Bartolomeo Masi Calderaio Fiorentino dal 1478 al 1526* (Florence: Sansoni, 1906), 2-5.

[34] David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles: une étude du "catasto" florentin de 1427* (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques: École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1978), 119. The contraction of the city's population after the plague resulted in tracts of green space within the city, often walled off as private gardens or orchards.

[35] The careful inclusion of individuals demonstrated, for example, that the proper number of legally-eligible witnesses were in attendance or that a woman's legal guardian was present and consented to the transaction. Witnesses were always Christian men of good legal standing. Women, under Florentine law, were perpetual legal minors who needed the control of their guardian to act legally. They were, however, allowed to select their own guardians. Thomas Kuehn, "'Cum Consensu Mundualdi": Legal Guardianship of Women in Quattrocento Florence," in *Law, Family and Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 212-37.

A notary could have chosen from an almost infinite number of personal characteristics or traits to record as identity labels. In early fourteenth-century Montpellier, notaries largely confined themselves to name and surname, occupation, city of origin, and occasionally, for women, marital status.[36] The record keepers of fourteenth-century Marseille might have chosen to identify an individual through name, lineage, marital status, legal status, occupation, place of origin, or residence, the last defined through street names, nearby landmarks, or neighborhood designations. They were not, however, particularly consistent in which of these identity labels they chose to use.[37] Scribes in Douai were similarly inconsistent, relying on up to fourteen different identity labels, and choosing which to use based on the type of document, space available on the page, and personal preference.[38] When elite Florentines described themselves in their private *ricordanze*, where detail was more important than brevity in preserving the family history, physical imagery occasionally made an appearance, and fairly elaborate descriptions of maternal and paternal ancestry were not unusual. In 1412 Bonaccorso Pitti began his *ricordanze* with a detailed account of his ancestors' origins, occupations, and government positions. He further noted that his father was "a fine-looking man, six feet tall, not stout, but well built and muscular" and had red hair.[39] Such physical details, while important to family members for what they said about the physical and moral

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[36] Kathryn L. Reyerson and Debra A. Salata, *Medieval Notaries and their Acts: The 1327-1328 Register of Jean Holanie* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004).
[37] Daniel Lord Smail, *Imaginary Cartographies: Possession and Identity in Late Medieval Marseille* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2000), 195-202.
[38] Ellen Kittell, "The Construction of Women's Social Identity in Medieval Douai: Evidence from Identifying Epithets," *Journal of Medieval History* 25, no. 3 (1999): 219.
[39] Brucker et al., *Two Memoirs*, 20-22.

character of the person in question, would do little to help the notary locate such an individual on the busy streets of Florence.

Florentine notaries, however, displayed much more constancy. They restricted themselves to a half dozen or so identity labels, including title, name, patronymic, family, geographic community, and occupation (or affiliation), although they did not include each of these labels for all individuals. Taken together I shall call the labels provided for any single individual an identity cluster. Almost all notaries listed the available characteristics in the same order—the order listed above—exactly mirroring the order in which the characteristics are listed in the *formularia*.[40] While this is no doubt partly a result of the bureaucratic standardization of the city, the fact that they restricted themselves to these labels demonstrates their importance to Florentines.

Each of these identity labels corresponds to a social tie, pointing toward another individual or a community with which the person in question was affiliated. In fact, the identity labels correspond with the most basic and most important communities for Florentines: the kin network, and specifically the natal, patrilinal kin network; the geographic community; and the occupational community. Further, what a notary chose to include or omit in an individual's identity cluster could reveal as much about the individual's identity as any label. The identity clusters, therefore, fairly accurately placed the individual within the Florentine social hierarchy.

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[40] See, for example, *Formularium quotidianum contractuum secundum stilum potissime Florentinorum, cui etiam plura acta forensia frequentissima seperaddita fuerunt.* (Florence, Italy: 1587). It is not clear if the notaries were following protocol or vice versa. In their uniformity, however, notaries were not exhibiting slavish devotion to the *formularia*, as they would omit certain labels in different circumstances.

The Community of Kin

The fundamental unit of Florentine society was the family. Family, of course, can be defined in a number of ways: an extended group of living relatives (clan), an ancestral lineage, or those who shared a roof or table. All of these different social configurations were important to Florentines. Alberti's elderly patriarch Giannozzo defined family as "children, wife, and other members of the household, both relatives and servants."[41] Giannozzo also, however, extols the virtues of living in an extended household—specifically a frérèche—and describes the nobility of the family's ancestors, tapping into broader definitions.[42] And although each of these definitions focus on the patriline—a primacy similarly reflected in the notarial documents—maternal relatives also make frequent appearances in notarial registers.

The household was the basic social unit according to the Florentine government, as reflected in the Catasto, as well as in Giannozzo's definition.[43] In the Catasto, however, the household represented a fiscal rather than a co-residential or emotional unit.[44] The conjugal family formed the base of 67 percent of Florentine households in the

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[41] Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, 50.
[42] Ibid., 55-6, 38.
[43] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 469. As Burke has observed, census materials provide a depiction of the society filtered through the society's own system of classification. This makes them as useful for understanding how the society organized itself, or at least how those who conducted the census organized the society, as they are for presenting an "objective" picture of the society. Peter Burke, *The Historical Anthropology of Early Modern Italy: Essays on Perception and Communication* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987), 27.
[44] This meant that servants and other co-resident individuals who were not the financial responsibility of the household head either submitted their own declarations or were counted in their natal homes, but it also meant that household heads would declare widows or segments of the co-resident group as separate fiscal units to lessen the tax burden. The size of fiscal households, therefore, could be smaller than that of actual co-residential units.

Catasto, while only 16 percent of households consisted of one person.[45] It is important to remember, however, that the structure of the fiscal household or even the co-residential household did not necessarily dictate the limits of the familial group in terms of economics, emotion, or decision-making, as the notarial contracts make clear. Lodovico's parents, for example, were both very actively involved in the receipt of their daughter-in-law's dowry although they did not share a fiscal household with their son. The kin group was the basic unit of society whether or not all members live under one roof and regardless of whether the family was elite, like Giannozzo's, or near the bottom of the social hierarchy, as Lodovico's was. The primacy of the kin group for identity at all social levels is reflected in the notarial documents. While notaries might record slightly different identity markers depending on an individual's social status, gender, and place of origin, notaries always included names and some sort of denotation of the individual's kin group. The kin identity, in turn, positioned individuals in the web of Florentine social relations.

The one identifier that all Florentines had was a name, what we would call a first, given, or given name. The same few names, in masculine or feminine form, were remarkably common among Florentines but the names still took on importance to kin groups.[46] Children were rarely named after living parents, but were frequently given the

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[45] While some single-individual households were actually part of a larger household, legitimate single-person households were also the most likely to be missed by the Catasto officials. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 518.
[46] Among the top 12 most popular names for men and for women, there is Antonio/a, Giovanni/a, Nanni/a (often a nickname for the previous), Piero/a, Francesco/a, and Cecco/a (often a nickname for the previous).

names of deceased relatives.[47] In particular, boys were often named after grandfathers, resulting in both alternating names by generation and in cousins of the same name. For example, when Luigi Piero Giucciardi declared receipt of his new wife's dowry, his two adult sons, Piero and Giovanni, were co-receivers, along with their father.[48] Like his son Piero, Luigi shared a name with his own grandfather. It is possible that Giovanni was the name of an ancestor, as Luigi's sons also had a cousin by that name, although it might have been chance that the cousins were both named after the city's patron saint. The practice of alternating names by generation was not limited to elite families such as the Giucciardi; Lodovico, the shearer whose dowry receipt opened this chapter, was also named after his grandfather.

But female naming practices did not serve to strengthen and reinforce their link to the patriline, essentially the familial identity, in the way that male names did. Only three of the more than four hundred brides were given the female version of their father's name, while another three shared a name with their grandfather, numbers so small as to suggest that this was the result of mere chance or even an active avoidance of this practice.

Indeed, fully half of the men in the Catasto have one of only eleven names. This is a drastic change from 13th c. Tuscan naming practices, when a much wider variety of names were used and names were much more descriptive. David Herlihy, "Tuscan Names, 1200-1530," *Renaissance Quarterly* 41 (1988): 564.

[47] Unsurprisingly, given the number of people who shared names, nicknames were quite common and notaries recorded these as well. Notaries used the format "*Bartolomeo vocat[us] Meo*." Most nicknames were shortened forms of the full name (Nanni/a for Giovanni/a or Betta for Lizabetta), but others could be diminutives or even descriptives.

[48] NA 9040 fol. 302R-V.

Although the importance of the patriline is reflected in male naming patterns, female names reflect the importance of familial bonds and affection beyond the patriline, a practice more visible in *ricordanze*, which give a more extensive picture of the familial network than the Catasto or notarial documents. Bernardo Piero Masi, for example, named his newborn daughter Agnola. The little girl's maternal grandfather was Agnolo. Perhaps more significantly, she also shared a name with her maternal grandmother, who passed away three months before the birth after living with her daughter and son-in-law for a little over a year.[49] Goro Dati gave the first daughter born to his new wife the name of his most recently deceased wife on three separate occasions.[50] In addition to naming daughter in honor of deceased wives, Goro Dati named a daughter in memory of his mother, Ghita, and another after the little girl's maternal grandmother, Veronica.[51] Further, girls could be named (or renamed) after deceased sisters, even if the living girl was already born and named.[52] It is clear, therefore, that female names often tied girls to the more extended circle of female kin, both living and dead, in less overt ways than those of their brothers.[53]

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[49] Corazzini, *Ricordanze*, 7-8.
[50] Brucker et al., *Two Memoirs*, 115, 27, 35. Goro had a total of four wives.
[51] Brucker et al., *Two Memoirs*, 128, 16.
[52] Boys were occasionally renamed, but much less frequently than were girls. Herlihy, "Tuscan Names, 1200-1530," 570-1, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "La femme et le lignage florentin (xiv-xvi siècle)," in *Persons in Groups: Social Behavior as Identity Formation in Medieval and Renaissance Europe*, ed. Richard C. Trexler, (Binghamton, N.Y.: Medieval & Renaissance Texts & Studies, 1985), 141.
[53] While this evidence support Klapisch-Zuber's assertion that boys were more often given patrilineal names than girls, it does not suggest that girls' names were not familial. Klapisch-Zuber, "La femme," 142-3.

Both men and women, however, were consistently and permanently tied to their patriline through the patronymic, the father's name, which followed directly after the names (and nicknames, where applicable). In instances where the father was already dead at the time of the contract, his name was preceded by the term *olim*, formerly or deceased, in the contract. This might in turn be followed by the names of the paternal grandfather and even the great grandfather. [54] The second name of almost all Florentines, therefore, was the first name of the individual's father.

Very rarely was one's maternity included. The notary recording Vettorio Berano's receipt of his wife Pagola's tiny dowry first wrote that Pagola was the daughter of the late Maso Salvo (called "Zampone").[55] The notary then crossed out the reference to Maso as Pagola's father and noted only that she was the daughter of Margherita, Maso's widow, who was responsible for her dowry.[56] This suggests not only that Maso was not her father but that she did not have a legitimate father. This was an extreme case even for an illegitimate child, however, as most were simply recorded as their father's child, sometimes with—but frequently without—any indication of illegitimate birth. One's father was still a fundamental part of one's identity unless, as it seems in Pagola's case, he was literally unknown.

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[54] Notaries rarely used *olim* for grandparents or more distant ancestors, perhaps because it would be assumed.

[55] NA 811 fol. 57. Maso is itself a shortened form of Tommaso. Zampone, Maso's nickname, is the name of a dish of stuffed pig's foot, today often eaten around Christmastime. Vettorio is Cat ID 9222.

[56] The dowry was 25 florins, smaller than some of the dowries given as charitable gifts.

This does not mean that mothers were uninvolved in their children's lives. The active involvement of Alessandra Strozzi on behalf of her sons, detailed in the famous collection of letters between the elite fifteenth-century widow and her exiled sons, is ample evidence of this. She carefully collected and recorded the latest news on Florentine politics and the marriage market, actively working on reversing their exile as well as seeking brides for them. [57] With all the adult men in her family exiled, Alessandra's role was much more active and involved than most women's, but not fundamentally different. On 16 June 1425, Donato Carlo Cavalcanti declared the receipt of the dowry of his wife, Lena Buonromeo Buonromei; his older brother served as his co-receiver.[58] This is not surprising given that, in the Catasto, Donato is part of his older brother's (fiscal) household.[59] More interesting is that Nanna Vieri de Medici, the widowed mother of the two men, who in the Catasto is in a household alone with her slave, is highly visible in the notarial contract and fairly clearly in charge of her son's marriage formation process.[60]

Further, such activity was not limited to elite widows such as Alessandra or Nanna. Agnola, Lodovico's mother, played an active role in his dowry receipt even though his father was alive at the time of the transaction. It is possible that his father was away or otherwise indisposed at the time of the receipt, but it is also likely that his

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[57] Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, *Selected Letters of Alessandra Strozzi*, ed. trans. Heather Gregory, Bilingual ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).
[58] NA 9040 fol. 197R.
[59] Cat ID 2876.
[60] Cat ID 3049. She lives in the same gonfalone, Caro, as her sons, although it is not clear if she shares their roof or not.

mother, as the legal owner of her own dowry, made a better guarantor than his impoverished father.[61] This demonstrates the importance of mothers in their sons' lives, even when the sons were not exiled, as Alessandra Strozzi's were. More importantly for this discussion, it points to the importance of the entire community of the kin group, both those within and beyond the household and both matriline and patriline, for Florentine life and notarial practice.

What the primacy of the patriline represents is therefore not a monopoly that fathers had on influence over their children, but rather the importance of fathers in Florentine identity. This is certainly the case among the brides who appear in marriage documents, of whom only nine of nearly four hundred total appear in the notarial documents without a patronymic.[62] It is perhaps unsurprising that women were associated with the fathers at the point of their marriages, even their second marriages, but the importance and prominence of the patronymic in the identity cluster does not change once women married. Twenty-two mothers of grooms appear in the marriage documents, mostly serving as co-recievers of dowries, as Lodovico's mother Agnola did. All of these women were identified by name and then patronymic, just like the brides. Similarly, of

[61] Lodovico's father, Tamerighi, lists no assets in his Catasto declaration, either after or before deductions. This would place his household among the city's poorest 15%. Cat ID 3469.
[62] Even fewer grooms, 3, lacked a patronymic as part of their identity cluster.

the women who left testaments, all of whom were married or widows, not one omits her patronymic.[63]

When notaries did include the current or late husband's name in the identity cluster of a groom's mother, it was still usually her patronymic that came directly after her name.[64] Typical of this was *Laurenta, filia olim Leonardi vocat Nardi Pieri et ux. Piccardi Agostini*, that is, Lorenza, daughter of the late Leonardo (called "Nardi"), granddaughter of Piero (as indicated by her father's patronymic), and wife of Piccardo, son of Agostino.[65] While, notaries might include the name of a late husband when a widow was acting on his behalf by giving or accepting a dowry for the children from that union, they almost never noted the former husband in instances of a widow's remarriage. Lorenza, for example, was in her second marriage. She was the widow of Giovanni Filippo, but the notary does not include this information in his description. It is only clear because Lorenza appears as co-receiver of her daughter-in-law's dowry along with her son, Matteo, son of the late Giovanni Filippo. While this does mean that it is difficult to identify cases of remarriage, it makes it clear that one's primary identity was natal and patrilineal, not marital, for both men and women.[66]

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[63] This is based on a small sample of fourteen women who wrote wills that included bequests of dowries between 1425 and 1429. There is no reason, however, to believe that these women behaved any differently than any other women.

[64] Female testators were divided about equally between those who listed their father and those who listed their husbands first. The death of either the father or husband seems to have no bearing on which they chose to list first.

[65] NA 4370 fol 62R. Cat ID 5244.

[66] This also reflects practice. When women needed help or support, they turned to their natal family. In Venice, women were mostly likely to name their brothers as executors of their wills, even more frequently than their sons. Stanley Chojnacki, "Getting Back the Dowry: Venice, c. 1360-1530," in *Time, Space, and*

For some individuals, family names followed the patronymics, thereby further demarcating association with the patrilineal family but also serving as an indicator of elite status. Only about a third of Florentines had family names in 1427 and those who did tended to be elite.[67] They held the vast majority of the political and economic power in the city.[68] Elite families had names, and named families were elite. Although these two statements did not always coincide—there were wealthy and politically powerful individuals from unnamed lineages and weak and impoverished branches of elite families—this was the social impression. It is true to such a degree that Anthony Molho, who has studied the relative prestige of the Florentine lineages extensively in connection with his work on elite marriage, felt confident in assuming that all families with surnames enjoyed a higher social position than those who did not.[69] This was enough to imbue even a poor, politically weak, or small lineage with a family name with a sense of prestige.[70]

Family names, therefore, divide Florentine into the haves—those who have last names and are more elite—and the have-nots. But Florentines were not split neatly into two groups. Nor was social hierarchy based only on lineage. As Lauro Martines's four

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Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte, Thomas Kuehn, and Silvana Seidel Menchi, (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001), 86.

[67] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 539-42, Tables 84 and 85. This is a very low percent indeed compared to other areas of Mediterranean Europe; Smail notes that nearly all residents of Marseille from the thirteenth century on had family names. Smail, *Imaginary Cartographies*, 195.

[68] Molho notes that of the 500 wealthiest households in the 1427 Catasto, all but 105 had family names. Some lineages were consistently richer, more politically active, more numerous, and longer lasting than their counterparts. Anthony Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy in Renaissance Florence: The Case of Women's Ages," *Renaissance Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1988): 204.

[69] Of the 1502 wealthiest Florentine households, approximately 500 from each of the Catasti, only 210 lack family names. Anthony Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 204, 13.

[70] Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy," 213.

criteria of social status in Florence—wealth, lineage, political participation, and marriage—demonstrate, status was much more complex and multifaceted. Other aspects of the identity cluster, layered on top of the universal naming schema, allow for a more nuanced reading of status by providing evidence of other, non-kin social ties.

The Occupational Community

Like names, occupations denoted both membership in a community, whether a formal guild or an informal community of laborers, and social status. The usefulness of occupations in establishing social status comes from the way that fifteenth-century Florentines divided occupations into three hierarchical categories: major guild, minor guild, and *sottoposti*, or those with occupations below the guild system.[71] There were seven major or fourteen minor guilds, the former mainly occupations involving long-distance trade or requiring a university education while the latter consisted of skilled, trained artisans who worked with their own hands.[72] *Sottoposti* included skilled laborers who lacked guild representation, such as dyers or weavers, as well as the unskilled

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[71] *Sottoposti* worked in occupations that were either outside the guild system or that excluded from active membership in a guild that supposedly represented their interests, such as the wool workers who could not participate in the elite *Arte della Lana.* These laborers in the wool industry, along with the tailors under the *Arte della Seta/ Por Santa Maria*, were the ones most actively involved in the famous Ciompi revolt of 1378, which resulted in short-lived guilds and political participation for dyers, tailors, and others excluded from the guild system. John M. Najemy, *Corporatism and Consensus in Florentine Electoral Politics, 1280-1400* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982), 240-51. For a detailed examination of the *sottoposti* in the wool industry up to the Ciompi, see Niccolò Rodolico, *Il Popolo Minuto* (Florence: Olschki, 1968), 13-16.

[72] This had been the case since 1293. For the most complete account of the relationship between the guilds and the government in the early republican period, see Najemy, *Corporatism and Consensus*, 23. See Appendix A for a complete list of the guilds.

laborers.[73] These categories, used by fifteenth-century Florentines, correspond in a direct way to wealth, political power and status.

Indeed, the Florentine evidence in support of correspondence between occupation, guild hierarchy, and status is as irrefutable as it is multifaceted. While Alberti's Giannozzo does not deny the honorability of a trade—presumably a minor guild occupation—in *I libri della famiglia*, he would lean towards wool or silk manufacture, both major guild occupations, in his quest for an honorable profession. In such an occupation, he explains, he would "not use [his] own labor except to oversee and regulate everyone's performance."[74] Further, he could improve the business himself, he would be free from the worry and daily trouble of a trade, and he could offer employment to a number of people, "an act of noblest piety."[75] According to Donald Treiman, the characteristics that Giannozzo mentions—control over others and control of capital—are two of the universal attributes of high status occupations across time and space, along with a high degree of required skill and high stakes.[76] The manufacture of luxury goods for the international market, as Gianozzo makes clear, was far more prestigious than local trade or craft production.

Guild membership also corresponded with economic status. The median wealth of a minor guild member's household was higher than over two-fifths of the city's

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[73] Samuel Cohn separates the *sottoposti* from the urban poor, who were further down the social hierarchy, but include both under the heading of *popolo minuto* Samuel K. Cohn, Jr, *The Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 75.
[74] Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, 66.
[75] Ibid.
[76] Donald J. Treiman, "A Standard Occupational Prestige Scale for Use with Historical Data," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 7, no. 2 (1976): 288, 96.

households, while the median wealth of a major guild member's household placed him above almost three quarters of households.[77] In addition to the household wealth of individual guildsmen, the guilds themselves wielded considerable economic, political, and artistic clout in Florence. In 1427, the *Arte del Calimala*, or international merchants' guild; the *Arte della Lana*, or wool merchants' guild; and the *Arte della Seta*, which included those dealing in silk and precious metals, were overseeing the construction of the baptistery doors, the cathedral, and the *Opsedale degli Innocenti* (the city-run orphanage), respectively. Involving artists such as Ghiberti, Brunaleschi, and della Robbia, these monuments are today some of the most important civic works of the Italian Renaissance. At the time, the projects advertised the importance and high status of the guilds and the individual members.

But perhaps the most important way in which occupation translated into status was though the access guild members gained to political participation. The republican government of the 1420s and 1430s has perhaps been best described as a series of concentric circles.[78] At the center were the highest and most exclusive offices of state, and power diminished while eligibility increased until one reached the outermost circle, which consisted of all citizens who could be selected for government offices.[79] In 1433,

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[77] Median wealth for minor guild members was 136 florins, equivalent to the 41st percentile of households by wealth while for major guild members it was 735, or the 72nd percentile.
[78] Dale V. Kent, "The Florentine Reggimento in the Fifteenth Century," *Renaissance Quarterly* 28, no. 4 (1975): 578; Lauro Martines, *Lawyers and Statecraft in Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1968), 388.
[79] The executive office of the Florentine government, the Signoria, consisted of nine priors, two guild members from each of the four quarters of the city plus the standard bearer of justice. For a clear description of the government offices, see Gene A. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence* (New York: Wiley,

the outermost circle of governance consisted of 6354 male citizens, or less than twenty percent of the city's residents.[80] These men were all members of one of the city's guilds. The city, like the household, was run patriarchally, with the senior, elite, male citizens at its head. This excluded the majority of Florentines, who were not members of any guild, including those men who worked in *sottoposti* occupations, women, slaves, and men too young to join a guild. These individuals had no effective voice in the government.

The period between the 1378 and 1434 was one of intense flux and struggle in the government, during which the oligarchic factions in the government became stronger and stronger.[81] By the late 1420s, these factions held power by carefully controlling the scrutiny, the process of weeding out the names of 'ineligible' men from the bags from which officeholders were selected.[82] In this process, artisans, who commanded less social capital than major guildsmen, were increasingly marginalized.[83] Artisans were further

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1983), 134-5. For a detailed contemporary account of the Florentine government system, see Goro Dati's *Istoria of Florence*. Translated in Stefano Ugo Baldassarri and Arielle Saiber, *Images of Quattrocento Florence: Selected Writings in Literature, History and Art* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000), 44-53.

[80] Kent, "Florentine Reggimento," 587.

[81] The period begins with Ciompi revolt (see Note 68, this chapter), when the laborers temporarily seized power and were then admitted to the governing body, and the government was re-established subsequently with a more conservative, oligarchic government structure in 1379. Brucker specifically points to reforms made to limit the power of the people after the Ciompi as key in the larger evolution of the Florentine government. Gene A. Brucker, *Living on the Edge in Leonardo's Florence: Selected Essays* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2005). In 1434, Cosimo de Medici returned from exile and became the effective head of the Florentine Republic, a position he held until his death and the smooth transfer of power to his son.

[82] Officeholders were not elected but rather selected. Their names, written on little pieces of paper, were drawn blind out of a small bag. The difficulty was in establishing one's eligibility to enter into the bag at all.

[83] On this major political issue in the late 1410s and early 1420s, see Gene A. Brucker, *The Civic World of Early Renaissance Florence* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1977), 410. Failure to pay taxes was the most frequent reason for rejecting a guild member in the scrutiny, but there was a great deal or room in the process for including those with the right political connections. Brucker, *Civic World*, 406, 10.

restricted in their participation in the government by new laws passed in 1425 that limited their access to salaried governmental jobs, such as clerkships.[84] With the loss of their political and economic status, their social status also declined relative to the rest of the population.

At the same time, government service was even more than before a reflection of and a source of social capital and power: one had both the clout and connections to make it through the scrutiny; one held power, albeit for a very short period; and one could be reselected.[85] Holding office was an honor for the entire family and elite Florentines carefully recorded the tenures of relatives in various government offices, alongside guild and ecclesiastical positions, in their family histories.[86] The chance, however slight, still existed that an individual lowly minor-guildsman might pass through the scrutiny and achieve office. [87] This potential opportunity elevated the status of all guildsmen, and might have helped to counterbalance the anger that the artisans felt at being increasingly squeezed out of an active role in the republic.[88]

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[84] Brucker, *Civic World*, 477.
[85] Martines demonstrates that this, quite logically, increased the prestige of office holding. Martines, *Social World*, 43. In his set of over 1000 Florentine letters to patrons from this period, McLean notes that the term *onore* appears in approximately one third of the letters, but in over half of the 154 letters related to office holding and the scrutiny. McLean, *Art of the Network*, 94, 96.
[86] Indeed, office holding was seen as something of a familial affair; no more than two or three members of an extended named family would make it through the scrutiny and into the bag for selection to office at any one time. For a list of a family's positions, see for example Goro Dati's ricordanze in Brucker et al., *Two Memoirs*, 129.
[87] Two of the nine seats on the Signoria were still reserved for the minor guilds. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 136-8.
[88] Reynolds argues that in general social bonds allow those removed from power to feel like a part of the system, even when they had no hope of participating directly in politics. Reynolds, *Kingdoms*, 2.

Despite theoretically equal access to government posts for guildsmen, there was a great social range both within each of the two guild levels and within each guild. Martines has described this divide for the major *Arte dei Giudici e Notai*, the guild for notaries and lawyers. The university-educated lawyers accounted for a minority of the members but held a majority of the power at the expense of the notaries, who made up the majority of the guild.[89] But the *Arte dei Giudici e Notai* was not unique in this; members had grossly unequal levels of economic capital even when the guild consisted of one profession. In fact, the mean wealth for each guild was higher than the median by several hundred florins, indicating the presence of some extraordinarily wealthy guild members.[90] Despite these differences in access to capital, however, occupational groups shared a strong common identity, providing members with social support and working for common political goals.[91] They ate and drank together and engaged in charitable works in the name of the group.[92] Differences in access to political, economic, and social status were clear to members but there was nonetheless an equality, at least within the guild context, and that was extremely important in maintaining the power of the guild and stasis in the society.

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[89] Martines, *Lawyers*, 30-31. The same division occurred in the other major guilds, were those who engaged in local trade or did a smaller volume of business were decidedly further from the guild's, and hence the commune's, center of power. Najemy, *Corporatism and Consensus*, 10.
[90] Among the 264 households headed by shoemakers, for example, assets ranged from 0 (for 21.6% of the households) to 9767 florins. Mean household wealth was 220 florins, but the median was only 58, reflecting the presence of a few very high values in the sample.
[91] Rodolico, *Il Popolo Minuto*, 13; Reynolds, *Kingdoms*, 78.
[92] Reynolds, *Kingdoms*, 78; Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, ix.

The notary could denote the occupation of an individual through the use of an occupational title, the most widespread of which was "Ser," used to denote a notary.[93] "Ser" could also be used before secular clergymen, such as parish priests, as was the case for *Ser Paulo Iacobi sacristi oratorii S. Michaelis in Orto*, the witness to a declaration of a dowry receipt that took place within his parish.[94] Clerics were also noted by a title, and their name was often followed by the name of their order. "Messer" indicated a knight or someone with a university degree.

In most cases, however, notaries denoted occupation by writing it after the name cluster. The occupation was usually an income-producing craft or trade. For example Girolamo Niccolo, a barber, declared receipt of his wife's dowry in 17 September 1426.[95] Less frequently, the notary recorded affiliation with an industry or guild without recording the exact occupation, as was the case with Girolamo's father and co-receiver of the dowry, Niccolo Iacopo, a laborer in the wool industry.[96] The notary could also include a government position (paid or unpaid) or denote membership in a confraternity, if that was relevant to the proceedings of the notarial document; Tommaso Scolaio

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[93] "Ser" is used before the names of both living and dead notaries. For example, *Ser Monte olim Johanni Ser Montis* is both a notary and the grandson of a notary. He appears in connection with a betrothal contract in NA 19115 fol. unnumbered (21 October 1427). "Ser" could also be used to denote a knight, leading one of Giannozzo's young listeners to ask if "Ser Niccolaio" was really a knight or "so called only by virtue of age and position." Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, 38. In the city, however, it seems to have always referred to a notary.
[94] NA 18512 fol. 56R.
[95] NA 16536 fol. unnumbered (17 September 1426). Cat ID 8756.
[96] Cat ID 7088.

Ciacchi, for example, appeared in two separate marriage-related contracts as a member of the city's Office of Wards, representing orphaned brides.[97]

Of those grooms for whom an occupation is listed, approximately half are guildsmen, divided almost exactly equally between major and minor guildsmen, and the other half are *sottoposti*.[98] The best-represented guild among the minor guilds was the *Arte dei Rigattieri*, which represented both used-clothing dealers and linen makers and merchants.[99] The *Arte dei Giudici e Notai*, meanwhile, was the most well-represented among the major guildsmen, although the use of "Ser" for notaries, which made them easy to identify even when they were not actually labeled by occupation, might have increased their relative visibility.[100] Nearly half of the *sottoposti* were skilled laborers in the wool industry.[101] Weavers and dyers were especially numerous, as well as tailors and doublet makers, who were technically outside of the wool industry.[102] The prominence of these woolworkers, many of whom were practicing the same occupations as those who

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[97] NA 11696 fol. 294R "Orphaned" in Florence meant that the minor had lost his or her father. The mother might or might not have still been living.

[98] Of the 385 grooms, it is possible to identify 187 of them with an occupation, either through the notarial documents or the Catasto. Of these, 47 were major guildsmen, 45 were minor guildsmen, and 91 were *sottoposti.*

[99] There were 14 grooms associated with this guild, or 31.1% of the minor guild grooms.

[100] There were 12 notaries and 2 judges, representing a total of 29.7% of the major guildsmen. In the Catasto, there are over twice as many households headed by minor guild members as major guild members, and the abundance of notaries might be increasing the relative number of major guildsmen in this survey. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 299, Figure 10.

[101] 41 of the 91 *sottoposti*, or 45.1%, worked in the wool or clothing industry in one form or another. This only includes those *sottoposti* theoretically represented by the *Arte della Lana,* not tailors or doublet makers, who fell under the *Arte della Seta.*

[102] There were 18 weavers, 9 dyers, and 12 tailors or doublet makers, technically under a different guild, but also without representation. On the social position of tailors, who were outside the guild but could make a very comfortable living and form quite close bonds with elite clients, see Carole Collier Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes, and Fine Clothing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 14-29.

were instrumental in the Ciompi revolt of 1378 and denied political representation after its failure, suggests a strong continued occupational identity on their part, either based on this past or on a desire to differentiate themselves from the masses of less skilled laborers in the industry.

Despite the importance of the occupation for political, economic, and social status, notaries did not include an occupational label for the majority of Florentines. Women, first of all, were almost never identified with an occupation.[103] They were identified strictly within the familial and geographic contexts. Still, at least at the lower economic levels, women certainly worked. It is likely, however, that they had neither formal training in a craft nor a single steady occupation of their own.[104] Further, since they could not enter into contracts on their own, husbands or legal guardians entered into contracts for labor that the woman would perform, as Klapisch-Zuber has pointed out in the case of wetnursing.[105] Since women were not identified as laborers even in contracts for their labor, it is hardly surprising that notaries rarely identified them as such in documents related to other matters.

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[103] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber found that of the more than 1500 female-headed households in Florence, 72.8% do not declare any profession, while many of those who do declare a profession list that of their late husband. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 287. This might mean that the women actively engaged in that occupation either before or after their husbands' deaths, but it may also simply indicate the "household" occupation, that is, the occupation of the late household head. Certainly women worked, but for most women an occupation was not a defining factor of their identity in the way that it was for men. For more on women and work, see Lauro Martines, "A Way of Looking at Women in Renaissance Florence," *Journal of Renaissance Studies* 4, no. 1 (1974): 17; Samuel Kline Cohn, "Women and Work in Renaissance Italy," in *Gender and Society in Renaissance Florence*, ed. Judith C. Brown and Robert C. Davis, (New York: Addison Wesley Longman, Inc., 1998), 115-17.

[104] Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 25.

[105] Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Blood Parents and Milk Parents: Wet Nursing in Florence, 1300-1530," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 143.

In the rare cases of women identified by their occupation in marriage contracts, the women were—without fail—servants or slaves tied to particular named individuals. For example, the wife of one Guglielmo Giovanni of Anglia was identified as *Dora de Albania, olim serva de Bartolomeo Nigri et hodie libera*.[106] Dora of Albania was a former servant, in this case a freed slave, and her only social tie was to her former master.[107] In another instance, Iacopa, the bride of Domenico Iacopo, a shoemaker, was described by the notary first as the daughter of Niccolai de Certaldo, and then as the former servant of the widow Taddea Bardo de Mancini.[108] In this case the description of her relationship to Taddea served as an explanation for the fact that Taddea paid her dowry. In both cases, therefore, the occupation did not associate the women with a community of those in the same occupation, but rather with the master. That is, it placed the woman in a household and under the guardianship of an employer. It therefore denoted a hierarchical, familial identity more than it denoted a semi-egalitarian occupational community, all the while, of course, demonstrating the status of the young woman.

Occupational identity, therefore, was exclusively masculine. This is certainly true of formal occupational organizations, the guilds. Confraternities and other egalitarian communities were similarly homosocial and masculine. But this does not mean that

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[106] NA 9040 fol. 247V. They were married on 19 July 1427.

[107] This agrees with Orlando Patterson's influential argument that enslavement represents social death and that a slave has no social identity apart from his or her relationship to the master. Orlando Patterson, *Slavery and Social Death: A Comparative Study* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 10. *Serva* could also be used to denote a paid, free servant, but in this case the woman's Albanian origin and the note that she is now free make it clear that she was at least at one point a slave, and it seems likely that she was freed that day.

[108] NA 9040 fol. 253R.

occupational identity was unimportant for women. Women's identity was connected so intimately to the patriline that the occupational identity and status of fathers and brothers, the communities that these men were part of, and their access to the political process deeply affected women's status, as well as the status of everyone else in the family. Indeed, notaries occasionally even noted the occupations of fathers who predeceased the making of the contract. For example, when on 15 April 1425 a notary recorded the marriage of a woman named Piera, he left a blank space for the name of her paternal grandfather, but noted that her late father, Marco, was a butcher.[109] Throughout their lives, and especially at marriage, occupation had a very important impact on the status of the entire family.

But notaries also did not note the occupation of all men. For just under half of the men, notaries include some form of occupational identification label, about the same ratio as for male household heads in the Catasto.[110] Notaries only noted the occupation of men who had a fairly stable line of work. Those without a listed profession included the disabled, chronically unemployed, and those who drifted in and out of a variety of industries as opportunities presented themselves. They also included a number of elites, who were almost certainly members of major guilds for political reasons but sufficiently

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[109] NA 18775 fol. 169R-V.

[110] In Florence, Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber find that 43.5% of the household heads report an occupation. In the notarial documents, the rate is almost identical. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 286. For example, among one subgroup of individuals, arbitrators, a category discussed in much greater length in Chapter Four, the rate 44.6%, or 86 of 193.

prominent that their name and lineage alone served to identify them.[111] Tommaso Scolaio Ciacchi, the member of the Office of the Wards mentioned above, was also a furrier and a member of the *Arte dei Vaiai e Pellicciai*, a major guild, but neither notary records that information.[112]

Because both the elite and the urban poor lacked occupational labels, as did a good number in between, it is impossible to make an assumption of status based on a lack of occupation, at least without further indicators of status. But in many cases, in fact, it is possible to estimate an individual's status based on the other identity labels that the notary included in the identity cluster and other hints of social and economic capital provided in the contract. In the case of Tommaso Scolaio Ciacchi, both government officeholding and a family name suggest high status. His Catasto declaration, which indicates that his was among the wealthiest twenty percent of households in the city, adds additional evidence even if he had not listed his association with a major guild. By contrast, Tommaso Simone has an illegible occupation, but his lack of family name, and the fact that he does not even record his grandfather's name, suggest that he is not of high status.[113] This suspicion is furthered by the fact that there is simply a blank space where the name of his wife Caterina's late father should be.[114] All of these blank spaces suggest

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[111] In the smaller Tuscan cities those who did not list an occupation in their Catasto declarations were more likely to be poorer than average. In Florence, however, they were likely to be wealthier than average. Ibid., 287.
[112] This is, however, recorded in his Catasto entry, Cat ID 2900.
[113] NA 1525 fol. unnumbered (27 March 1429).
[114] The fact that the notary left this blank space, however, is further evidence of the importance of the patriline and its primacy in identification. The recording notary leaves such a blank space for 2 of the 9 women and for 2 of the 3 men without fathers listed, perhaps in the hope of being able to add the

a degree of disenfranchisement or marginality. His Catasto entry confirms these suspicions, placing his household wealth among the poorest twenty percent of households and lists his occupation as a weaver, a *sottoposto*.[115]

In the way that they provided names and occupation, therefore, notaries situated individuals in the community of the household and the guild. Members of both communities theoretically held the same status through their association with the community. The actual power that they wielded within these strictly patriarchal communities, however, might differ drastically based on gender in the case of the household, wealth and family in the case of the guild and the larger extended family, and age in all cases. But within the context of fifteenth-century Florence, ties to these supposedly horizontal or egalitarian communities can also be read in such a way as to place the individual into the social hierarchy as well. While this rightly emphasizes both the strict and omnipresent division of the Florentine population according to their position in the social hierarchy and the way that horizontal as well as vertical bonds play into this, it also risks overemphasizing the separateness of those at different levels of the social hierarchy, something this dissertation argues strongly against. It also, as a result, downplays the opportunity that individuals and families had to create social bonds outside of the carefully planned communities of the family, the guild, or the occupational network.

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information later, but at least to indicate that the patronymic was not omitted accidentally, through the error of the notary.

[115] Cat ID 2757. Some weavers were quite wealthy but clearly Tommaso was not among them.

The Geographic Community

The final identity label that appeared regularly in fifteenth century notarial documents was geographic. For some, this could be a place of origin—Lorenzo Ser Antonio was from Prato but living in Florence in the parish of S. Felice in Piazza—or a statement of citizenship—Lodovico Francesco was a citizen of Florence living in Pivere di Signa—but the place also served to identify the individual's residence and place him or her within a community defined by geography, as indeed both of the above examples do.[116] The geography of Florence was fairly socially integrated, in the sense that neighborhoods included people from all levels of the social hierarchy.[117] Neighborhoods therefore were communities in which social ties could stretch across bonds of family, occupation, and even status.

When notaries record the geographic identity of an individual residing within Florence, they almost invariably do so by parish, or *popolo.* This was not the case elsewhere. In fourteenth-century Montpelier, for example, notaries usually identified the individual's city of origin.[118] By the 1420s in Marseille, the populace defined their geographic identity in terms of streets, as opposed to relying on landmarks, as they had

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[116] NA 10444 fol. 48V and NA 20704 fol. 169R. Pivere di Signa is in the *contado* just west of the city on the north bank of the Arno.
[117] There was more wealth in the city center and the western area of the city than in the east and south of the Arno, where laborers in the wool industry were congregated, but generalizations break down when more local areas are examined. Each neighborhood had people in a variety of industries and from across the social spectrum.
[118] Reyerson and Salata, *Medieval Notaries*, 24.

done previously.[119] Florentine notaries, by contrast, not only used the parish as an identity marker consistently and exclusively, but did so through the sixteenth century.

The parish was certainly not the only geographic identifier available to Florentine notaries. They could have relied on the streets or landmarks as they did in Marseille. Alternatively, they might have employed the civic system of the gonfalone. The communal government, in a move directed at superseding the bureaucratic primacy of the Church, instituted a different division of the city into four *quartiere*, or quarters, each one surrounding a major ecclesiastical structure: S. Croce in the east; S. Giovanni in the center; S. Maria Novella in the west; and S. Spirito south of the Arno.[120] Each of these quarters was further subdivided into four *gonfalone*, for a total of sixteen civic districts in the city. These gonfalone both lumped together multiple parishes—usually four or five—and also split individual parishes, creating conflicting systems of geographic identity.

Notaries, however, seem not the least conflicted in their loyalty to the parish. The Office of the Catasto used the gonfalone system and, since the majority of Florentine notaries would have been involved with the Catasto—as employees of the Office, working for the government, or simply drawing up the declarations of their Florentine clients—they would have been fluent in the system.[121] But instead they used parishes for

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[119] Smail, *Imaginary Cartographies*, 96-109.
[120] The first surrounded a major Dominican church and house, the second surrounds the baptistery, the third a Franciscan establishment and the fourth an Augustinian house and church.
[121] In July of 1428, for example, 16 notaries were directly employed by the Catasto, each with a scribe under him. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 82. For more on the integral role of notaries in the government, see Martines, *Lawyers*, 48-51.

identification, without exception.[122] There was a very strong dedication to the parish system on the part of either the populace or the notaries, and most likely both.

It is important to stress that the parish was important to identity not because Florentines were particularly dedicated to their parishes, as the local representation of the Church, as they were not. There was, rather, perennial conflict with the inefficient and disinterested parish clergy.[123] Nor were parishes, first and foremost, divisions of space; parish churches were incredibly close to one another and their congregations must have overlapped to some degree. The parish church of S. Michele Visdomini, for example, had to be destroyed to make way for the construction of the main cathedral S. Maria del Fiore (the Duomo), also a parish church. The new S. Michele Visdomini, a tiny structure built in the late fourteenth century, stands less than 200 meters from the Duomo, a distance roughly equivalent to that from one end of the cathedral to the other.

Parishes represented lay communities of parishioners who shared the space of the church and churchyard as well as to the surrounding streets. Indeed, the small, displaced church of S. Michele Visdomini seems to have inspired a much stronger sense of community in early fifteenth-century Florence than the much larger and still unfinished S. Maria del Fiore.[124] Parishoners worked together informally to maintain the peace; to keep up the building and any churchyard, valuable open space in the densely packed city

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[122] In wills, notaries will sometimes identify properties by street, but not people. The parish appears in both documents of practice—actual notarial contracts—and of theory, including a *formularium* printed in 1587. *Formularium*, 164.
[123] Weissman, *Ritual Brotherhood*, 20.
[124] Notaries record S. Maria del Fiore (often using the older name of S. Maria Reparata) as the parish of 4 brides and 1 groom, while 10 of each claim S. Michele Visdomini.

center; and to perform charitable acts within the community.[125] Further, those in the parish were often members of other more structured communities, such as local confraternities and gonfalone government, which also bound together men who might run into each other on the streets of their neighborhood.[126] Like guilds, parishes and these other parish-based organizations shared and worked towards common goals and, because of that, shared a sense of belonging to a community despite clear differences in access to wealth, political power, or society status, and no pretense at equality.

Of the 383 grooms in the notarial documents for whom there is no suggestion that they live outside of Florence, 283, or nearly three quarters, have parishes in their identity cluster.[127] Similarly, of the 393 brides in the notarial documents who are identified with in Florence, 239 list parishes in Florence, or slightly under two-thirds. Since women were more likely to have missing information in general, it is not surprising that they list their parishes slightly less often. The most frequently cited parishes for both brides and grooms were S. Ambrogio and S. Piero Maggiore, both in the northeastern portion of the city, in an area heavily populated by dyers and wool workers.[128] But indeed, even the spouses that claim these parishes highlight the integration of the Florentine geography; not only did two shoemakers (minor guildsmen) and four dyers (skilled *sottoposti*) claim the

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[125] Reynolds argues that conflict with the clergy actually could serve as the basis for a strong parish lay community, with parishioners forced to organize and independently meet the needs of the parish. Reynolds, *Kingdoms*, 79.
[126] Nicholas A. Eckstein, *The District of the Green Dragon: Neighbourhood Life and Social Change in Renaissance Florence* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1995), xxii.
[127] For an additional 6 of the 383 grooms, the notary records that they are citizens of Florence. There are also 2 grooms listed as citizens of Florence who are living elsewhere (and hence not among the 383).
[128] Piazza dei Ciompi lies directly between the two.

parish of S. Piero Maggiore, but so too did Neri Francesco Neri, who had wealth sufficient to place his household among the richest 1 percent in the city.[129]

Like those without occupations, the individuals for whom the notaries did not record a parish tended to be clustered into two groups. First, over the course of the fifteenth century notaries became less likely to record the parishes of the elites.[130] Elite men like Neri Francesco Neri, whose parish was a part of their identity cluster, were increasingly rare by the 1420s. The prominence and family names of elite individuals were sufficient to define them. Further, they identified first with a city-wide community of elites rather than a parish-based community. This was especially true of fellow notaries for whom the occupational title "Ser" and the community it represented seemed to replace the parish as an identifying label.[131]

Notaries also omitted the parishes of some of the most disenfranchised members of Florentine society, particularly widows and female orphans. For example, on 14 January 1429 the artisan Bartolomeo Antonio, a poor shoemaker from the parish of S. Lorenzo, acknowledged the receipt of his bride Mea's dowry.[132] The notary recorded that Giuliano Bernardo, Mea's late father, had been a wool cleaner during his life but does not record where Giuliano and Mea lived before his death and her marriage. It is possible that the notary did not think it necessary to identify the parish of a dead father when Mea was

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[129] NA 19116 fol. unnumbered (9 September 1429), Cat ID 8319.
[130] Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, 43. Similarly, less-known, non-elite individuals were more likely to be identified by the notaries of Marseille. Smail, *Imaginary Cartographies*, 26, 203.
[131] There are a combined total of 22 notaries among the grooms and the brides' fathers. Only 8 are identified by parish.
[132] NA 7943 fol. 85V.

by then a part of her husband's parish, S. Lorenzo, and might have been so for a while between their marriage and the payment of the dowry.

For those towards the middle of the social hierarchy, however, skilled, better-off *sottoposti,* and minor guildsmen, and even lower status major guildsmen, as well as their families, the parish was a very important part of their identity. It was the world in which they lived everyday, and their social community. It was the arena in which those who were barred from or unlikely to be selected to city-wide government could expand their social capital.[133] They did this by acting as patrons to their less well-off neighbors; by becoming clients of wealthy men in their area; by establishing strong homosocial peer networks, both formal and informal; and through marriage.

Identity, Status, Networks, and Marriage

To return to the four aspects of social status named by Martines—lineage, political activity, wealth, and marriage—the first two can be read directly within the notarial identity clusters. The third, wealth, can be estimated in a number of different ways. First of all, as the above description makes clear, a family name and membership in a major guild are good indicators of wealth, while a minor guild occupation suggests at least financial stability and modest comfort, if perhaps not luxury. Pulling back from a narrow focus on the identity clusters, notaries included a variety of other clues hinting at wealth. The types of business contracts one entered into—contracting out one's own labor or being on the receiving end of charity versus engaging in international trade,

[133] Samuel K. Cohn argues that elites worked on forming city-wide networks through marriage while those further down the social spectrum looked to marry within the parish. Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, 58-60.

donating large sums, or making expensive purchases—and the value attached to sales and purchases, wills and dowries, all spoke to the wealth of the individuals involved.[134] None of the notarial documents, with the exception of the rare inventories, give an individual's precise worth at any point.[135] The Catasto, however, lists several measures of economic status, of which the most useful for a general estimate is total assets.[136]

In the case of marriage formation, dowries can also serve as an alternative measure of a family's wealth and social status. Indeed, Samuel Cohn argues that dowry amounts are a truer representation of a family's wealth and social status than government estimates such as the Catasto. Government estimates could be and regularly were manipulated to reduce or inflate the taxable wealth—on paper—of families in or out of favor with those in power. Further, the Catasto measured a moment in time in a society where a family's worth could fluctuate drastically because of the importance of high-risk long-distance trade. By contrast with declarations of wealth in the Catasto, stinginess with regard to a dowry was rare as it undermined a family's honor, which was much less

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[134] Wills did not list the total value of the testator's estate, but rather served to bequeath certain amounts or items to named individuals or organizations and the rest to specific *haeredes universales.*

[135] Inventories sometimes—but not always—included the total value of an estate

[136] The Catasto provides four measurements of wealth: private investments, public investments, the value of all assets, and the taxable fortune. Private investments include investments in business and loans, while public investments refer to shares of the public debt. Assets include both types of investment as well as movable and immovable property, except the house of residence. Deductions for debts, items used for work, certain work animals, and a variety of other things are subtracted from total assets to determine the taxable fortune. Taxable fortune does not, however, reflect the 200 florin deduction for all women and all men below eighteen or above sixty. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 57.This deduction only applied in Florence, with a smaller per-person deduction in Pisa. David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property Survey of Florentine Domains and the City of Verona in Fifteenth Century Italy: A user's guide to the machine readable data file* (Madison, WI: DPLS, 1981), 70. Assets, therefore, provide the most accurate measure of the household's economic status in relation to other households. They serve as the basis for the division of households according to their economic status. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property Survey*, 69, 6.

variable than economic status.[137] Further, both wealth and the non-economic aspects of social status factor into dowry amounts.[138] Indeed, the dowry itself became a marker of social status for the bride, her husband and her natal family, even determining what types of clothing she could wear under Florentine sumptuary law.[139] The problem with using dowries to determine wealth is that they might be paid in two or more installments or never paid in full at all. As a result, a single dowry declaration did not necessarily reflect the full amount of the dowry. As a compilation of the various aspects of social status, and as a necessary component of the marriage process, dowry can be a valuable index of status, but it cannot be relied on in isolation.

Martines' final component of status, marriage, is not directly visible in notarial identity clusters; even in the case of wives and widows, where it might be expected, it is not consistently noted. Nonetheless, marriage was an important way to cultivate social capital by forming a horizontal bond with carefully chosen in-laws. It was both a reflection of one's (and one's family's) status, and a determinant of it. Elite families were

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[137] Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, 49.

[138] Established, elite lineages might help branches of their own family who had fallen on hard economic times by providing them with a dowry higher than might otherwise be expected based on economics alone. This was the case for some poor members of the Ridolfi clan, who benefited from a charitable bequest of dowries by Bartolomeo Iacopo Ridolfi to Ridolfi women. This example is discussed at greater length in Chapter Four. NA 14663 fol 348R-350R. Alternatively, new families with wealth but without a family name or a long history of government service might also pay higher than expected dowries, using wealth to compensate for the lack of other qualities associated with status, as Chapter Three will show. While this tactic might add prestige to marriage between two new families, Cohn notes that new families still rarely married into long-established families. Ibid., 51.

[139] The fact that a high dowry was both public knowledge and a mark of status led families to agree to higher dowry amounts than could really be paid. William J. Connell, *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 109; Diane Owen Hughes, "From Brideprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe," in *The Marriage Bargain: Women and Dowries in European History*, ed. Marion A. Kaplan, (New York: 1985), 42.

proud of the connections they made through marriage and cited them in describing their familial identity in their household record books. Buonaccorso Pitti, for example, provided a detailed description of the families that have married into his own and into which he and his siblings have married, which reads something like a who's-who list of Florentine elites.[140] In so doing, Pitti used marriage to define the identity of his lineage and hence himself. He also demonstrated his social capital and therefore made an implicit claim that he and his lineage were honorable, supported by the fact that these marriages had taken place.

Based on discussions of these four criteria of status, it is clear that status was interconnected in two senses. First, the elements of status were interconnected; those who were wealthy were also more likely to be members of major guilds, be politically active, come from established and respected lineages, and to have made and look forward to making marriage alliances with similarly elite families. In other words, those who were truly elite fared well in terms of each of these criteria, at least in the long run if not at any particular moment. Status truly was both 'socio' and 'economic.'

Further, status, social ties, and identity, are really three aspects of the same thing, with each playing into the other. Not only did individuals base their identity on community but the status of the individual was intimately connected with the status of these same communities.[141] Indeed, it is scarcely possible to discuss either the identity or the status of an individual in isolation from that of his or her family, so closely were the

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[140] Brucker et al., *Two Memoirs*, 21-22.
[141] McLean, *Art of the Network*, 21.

two dependent on one another. This does not mean, however, that identity, group membership, or even identification labels were static. Florentines, like most people across space and time, changed the way they expressed their identity as was useful to them or relevant to the situation. They also constantly were working to cultivate social ties that would be useful to them and generally raise their social status.

As identity, community, and status fed into and depended on one another, marriage depended on and supported all three. But marriage did not itself make an individual or family honorable. When considering marriage partners, families carefully evaluated the status of potential partners, as determined by wealth, including dowry, political participation, and lineage, in order to find an honorable match. The Strozzi letters, with their dissection of potential marriage partners, are a perfect example of the concerns for all of the facets of status in spousal selection; Alessandra carefully evaluated her son-in-law Marco Parenti's lineage, political service, and wealth.[142] A selection and the consequent marriage was a public statement that both families deemed the other honorable and of roughly comparable status.[143] Marriage could slightly adjust status, for example when it connected a newer wealthier family with an older lineage, but for the

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[142] Macinghi Strozzi, *Selected Letters*. See also Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 221.

[143] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber argue that with increases in dowry and a later age of marriage for men than for women, women tended to move from higher-status natal families to slightly lower-status marital families. Others have argued that there is not evidence for this is Florence. Molho, most notably, has argued that the most elite Florentine families maintained their positions over generations and through economic and political fluctuations by marrying within a tight closed circle of other elite families. Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 217. For more on this debate and how this played out among artisans, see Chapter Three.

most part it cemented and reaffirmed an individual or family's status as based on the other three criteria and previous marriages.[144]

As the next three chapters will argue, however, status both determined and was determined by marriage, for non-elites—artisans and *sottoposti*—as well as elites. All Florentines used the resources available to them—economic as well as social capital—to make marriages that would, in turn, enhance their capital and hence their status. But they did not all do so in the same way. As the availability of resources and the norms of the various communities in which they belonged were balanced.

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[144] Lorenzo Fabbri, *Alleanza matrimoniale e patriziato nella Firenze del '400: studio sulla famiglia Strozzi* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1991), 34-5.

In 1427 the twenty-five-year-old unmarried artisan, Salvi Antonio, a dealer in second-hand clothing, lived with his widowed mother in the *gonfalone* of Drago Verde, in the portion of the city south of the Arno.[1] Although he was certainly not among Florence's elite, Salvi was fairly comfortable; economically, he was better off than over 70 percent of the city's household heads. Salvi chose as his bride a woman approximately a decade his junior, sixteen-year old Giovanna Tura. Nanna, as Salvi's bride was known, was the daughter of a fellow artisan, a smith. Her family was originally from Monteficalli, to the east of the city, but had settled in the *gonfalone* of Bue, in the eastern part of the city.[2] On 21 September 1427, Salvi declared to a notary that he had received his wife's dowry of 150 florins.[3] The couple then began their life together.

In all the demographic details, Salvi and his bride were typical of fifteenth-century Florentine spouses. As historians have long held, Florentine brides were quite young and their grooms at least several years older.[4] But just because Salvi's marriage fits this pattern does not mean that all Florentines married in the same way, that they all conformed exactly to the demographic statistics of Florentine marriages as a whole.

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[1] Cat 67, fol. 447 ID 2725. Bobbin 128. See Appendix C for a summary of the notarial documents related to the union.
I am very grateful to Prof. Steven Ruggles, director of the University of Minnesota's Population Center, and Dr. Catherine Fitch, Associate Director of the Minnesota Population Center, for their assistance and direction on this chapter.
[2] Their marriage does not appear in the surviving notarial documents, but in the amendment to his Catasto declaration Salvi notes that Nanna moved in with him on 16 February, presumably in 1427 (1426 old style). Cat 67, fol. 447 Bobbin 128.
[3] NA 20704 fol. 158V.
[4] David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles: une étude du "catasto" florentin de 1427* (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques: École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1978), 404; Anthony Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy in Renaissance Florence: The Case of Women's Ages," *Renaissance Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1988): 204; R.M. Smith, "The People of Tuscany and their Families in the Fifteenth Century: Medieval or Mediterranean?," *Journal of Family History* VI (1981): 122.

Indeed, their marriage was 'typical' precisely because it fell in the center of a spectrum of possibilities for marriage. It conformed closely to what shall be called here the demographics of marriage—the average age at first marriage and age difference between spouses, the percent who never marry, and the relationship of household structure to these factors. The demographics of marriage can be useful in understanding a society at the broadest level and as a comparison with other societies. However, focusing exclusively on broad demographic patterns can obscure the differences in marriage formation patterns between various subgroups of the population, creating a picture that is deceivingly uniform. These variations are not only evidence of differences in marriage formation patterns among subgroups but also suggest differences in marriage strategies.

This chapter will explore the demographics of marriage in Florence relying primarily on the Florentine Castasto of 1427, a tax survey of the population of Florentine Tuscany. After an explanation of the source, this chapter will briefly outline the demographics of marriage as presented by other scholars. Most notable are the late David Herlihy, of the University of Wisconsin and later of Harvard and Brown Universities, and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, of the École des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, whose co-authored work on the Catasto is still taken as the definitive model of Tuscan demography, especially for the demography of marriage.[5]

This chapter will then build a new and more detailed model of marriage specifically for the population for the city of Florence in 1427. This new model will both

[5] Nearly fifteen years later, Lorenzo Fabbri called *Les Toscans* one of the three most important books on the subject of the household and marriage in Florence, along with Kent's *Household and Lineage* and Goldthwaite's *Private Wealth in Renaissance Florence.* Lorenzo Fabbri, *Alleanza matrimoniale e patriziato nella Firenze del '400: studio sulla famiglia Strozzi* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1991), 4-5.

revisit some of the basic demographics of marriage using techniques that have gained in popularity among demographers in recent decades and incorporate aspects of marriage previously unexplored, such as the relationship between marriage and a man's independence from his father. Although the model created in this is a statistical average and can tell us little about the decisions leading to marriage, it is also lived reality for some individuals, including Salvi.

Finally, the chapter will pull the broad demographic patterns of the city as a whole apart, exposing the ways that the demographics of marriage differed between socio-economic groups. These differences both challenge the idea that there was one Florentine marriage pattern and demonstrate instead that marriage differed in significant and important ways depending on socio-economic status. Ultimately, this chapter will argue that rather than thinking of Salvi's marriage as representative of all marriages, it should be seen within a spectrum of possibilities, which were shaped by a variety of social and economic factors.

There are several ways to approach the study of marriage formation using the Catasto. Marriage and age data in the Catasto provide the necessary information to determine the demographics of marriage. This quantitative approach is as representative of the entire population, or selected subgroups, as the Catasto is. Some of the most disenfranchised members of the society, including transients, those in the most dire poverty, criminals, and the elderly living alone, categories that overlap a great deal, are underrepresented in the Catasto. Further, there were some individuals and households in Florence at all social levels who were omitted because they were taxed elsewhere or

simply because they slipped through the cracks. Nonetheless, the Catasto provides a fairly accurate picture of both the entire population and its larger socio-economic subgroups.

There are also two subgroups in the Catasto that are particularly useful to the study of marriage formation: women who were deleted from their family's register because they married out of the family and men and women whose spousal status was changed to "newly married," or newlyweds. Both of these categories emerge from families submitting amendments to their original Catasto declarations, submitted between 30 June 1428 and 30 June of 1429.[6] The numbers of these cases are limited—with 79 deletions and 154 newlyweds—and favor the elite. They therefore do not provide an accurate picture of the entire population. What they do provide is the opportunity to focus on specific cases, providing a more rounded, if more anecdotal, view of marriage. Finally, the data from the Catasto can be filled out with statistics and examples drawn from the notarial contracts relating to marriage in the years 1425-1429. This chapter will rely primarily on the general population data in the Catasto. The statistics will then be

[6] In transferring the Catasto data into a standardized formula for the computer data set, Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's team created these categories as a way reflect the amendments. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber mark the newlyweds by coding their spousal status as "newly married or added in 1428-9." They note those who were deleted with a comment code, which provides additional information beyond the standard demographic categories of age, marriage, sex, and relationship to head. The comment code for individuals involved in marriages is defined as "crossed out on the declaration because of marriage (women and men)." David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Census and Property Survey of Florentine Domains and the City of Verona in the Fifteenth Century Italy* (David Herlihy, Harvard University, Department of History, Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, École Pratique des Hautes Etudes [producers] and University of Wisconsin, Data and Program Library Service [distributor] (12 September 1999) [cited December 2000]); available from http://dpls.dacc.wisc.edu/Catasto/. On the amendments, see Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 95.

fleshed out, where appropriate, by a closer look at the newlyweds, those who were married out of the family, and the notarial documents.

<u>The Source</u>

Although there was a great deal of wealth in early fifteenth-century Florentine Tuscany, the Florentine Signoria struggled to meet its fiscal needs. The *contado*—the rural areas and smaller cities under the Signoria's control—was agriculturally productive and approximately three-fifths of the Tuscan population lived off the land. Nonetheless, the majority of the wealth was mercantile, in the form of debt and movable goods located in Florence and controlled by a small group of mercantile elites.[7] During the late fourteenth and early fifteenth centuries, the Signoria derived revenue from two main sources, neither of which effectively tapped into this Tuscan wealth.[8] The *estimo* was an occasional direct tax on households based on neighbors' estimations of the value of immovable goods, i.e. land and property. The *gabelle* was a tax on salt, which families were forced to buy from the state in quantities commensurate with their estimated wealth.[9] It was the *gabelle*, rather than regular direct taxes, that had become the most regular source of revenue for the Signoria by the early fifteenth century.[10] Both of these taxes weighed most heavily on the poor and those without the political connections to avoid them.

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[7] Only 14 percent of the total population of Tuscany lived in the city of Florence, but Florentines held more than two-thirds of Tuscan wealth. The mercantile basis of this wealth is evident in the fact that nearly 60% of the Florentine wealth is located in movable goods. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 245, 46, 68.

[8] Brucker describes fluctuations in the Florentine economy from 1389 in Gene A. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence* (New York: Wiley, 1983), 79-81. For an overall assessment to the Florentine economy up to the Catasto, see Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 18.

[9] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 22.

[10] Ibid., 23.

Even if resented, these taxes sufficed to meet Signorial expenses in times of peace. War, however, was financially devastating to the commune, disrupting the economy in several ways. First, war resulted in the destruction of agricultural lands in the *contado*, decreasing the supply and raising the price of food in the city. Second, war limited trade, most importantly the import of raw materials and export of manufactured goods. This not only hurt trade-dependent industries—first among them being luxury textiles—and the majority of the urban populace dependent on them for a living, but it also affected the government through diminished tariffs and tax revenues.[11] Finally, like most northern Italian city-states, Florence depended on mercenary forces led by expensive condottiere to fight their battles, a very costly way to wage war.[12]

The government met war expenses by imposing forced loans, or *prestanze*, on the wealthiest citizens.[13] Because of the high rate of interest that the government paid on these loans, it depended on significant periods of peace in order to pay them down.[14] Such a peace lasted between 1413 and 1423, bringing an opportunity for the government to repay the principal of these loans, tax relief for the populace, and a flourishing of trade to Florence.[15] However, 1424 marked the beginning of an extended period of war with Milan, which continued off and on until 1441. This war disrupted the delicate fiscal

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[11] Steven R. Epstein, "Market Structures," in *Florentine Tuscany: Structures and Practices of Power*, ed. William J. Connell and Andrea Zorzi, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 98.
[12] Machiavelli rails against the widespread use of mercenaries in Italy, although his condemnation has more to do with what he sees as the disloyalty, cowardice, and ultimate ineffectiveness of the mercenaries than their cost. Niccolò Machiavelli, *The Prince*, ed. trans. George Bull (New York: Penguin Books, 1995), 38-45.
[13] Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 143.
[14] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 25.
[15] Years later, Florentine citizens remembered that period as a time of wealth and prosperity. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 82.

equilibrium and forced the government to squeeze the populace for cash. As the war dragged on, the two most contentious issues in Florentine politics, foreign policy—namely the making and avoiding of war—and the consequent taxation, threatened to tear the Republic apart.

The existing tax system was acceptable to neither the government nor the populace. The government was not collecting enough money. Revenues based on the *estimo* were steadily declining, while the government collected a lower percent of what it requested with each new demand for loans.[16] Meanwhile, the populace was becoming increasingly disgruntled with numerous aspects of the tax system, including the estimates provided by friends or enemies, the interest payments that the rich received, the failure to tax the movable goods of the wealthy, and the numerous exemptions available to the well-connected.[17] These complaints were driving the urban population to political agitation while inhabitants of the countryside were leaving Florentine territory to farm in other areas.[18] Finally, as Machiavelli writes in his *History of Florence,* the citizens were "so wearied of the taxes that had been imposed during that time, it was resolved to revise

[16] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 23, 28.
[17] For a description of the process of estimation and the inherent favoritism shown the rich and well connected, see Dale V. Kent and Fredrick W. Kent, *Neighbours and Neighbourhood in Renaissance Florence: The District of the Red Lion in the Fifteenth Century* (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1982), 27. Taxes were not only unequal across the social strata but also across geography, with some mountainous rural communities paying as much as 29 times more than the peasants just outside the city of Florence. Samuel Kline Cohn, *Creating the Florentine State: Peasants and Rebellion, 1348-1434* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 268.
[18] The Florentine government tried to lure these emigrant peasants—and later laborers as well—back into Florentine territory through a series of tax breaks. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 83.

them."[19] Real change was needed in the system of taxation, and the government hoped that by addressing the populace's concerns, it would see greater revenue.

In 1426, the upper houses of the Florentine government began to consider a proposal to tax according to a Catasto, a systematic self-reported catalog of assets and individuals from each household.[20] The proposed tax system was largely based on the one by the same name already in use in Venice.[21] The Catasto was seen by the general populace as "a check to the tyranny of the great, who could no longer oppress [them], or silence them with threats in the council as they had formerly done, and it therefore gave great satisfaction, though to the wealthy classes it was in the highest degree offensive."[22] Although it was these "wealthy classes" who controlled the government, they ultimately recognized the commune's desperate financial situation and the need to reunite the citizen body, divided over the issue of taxation.[23] In May of 1427, after considerable debate, they approved the Catasto. The goal was to create a tax system that was based on self-description, or at least mutual agreement between tax officials and tax-payers, and was theoretically equitable across space and socio-economic groups.

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[19] Niccolò Machiavelli, *History of Florence and the Affairs of Italy: From the Earliest Times to the Death of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (New York: M. W. Dunne, 1901), 172.
[20] Giovanni de Medici was for several centuries given credit for introducing the Catasto, based largely on Machiavelli's description of Giovanni's role in the Catasto debate in his *History of Florence*. Machiavelli wrote when the Medici controlled both the city of Florence and the papacy. He dedicated his book to the second consecutive Medici pope Clement VII. P. Berti proved that it was actually Rinaldo di Alberti who championed the Catasto in the Signoria. P. Berti, "Nuovi Documenti intorno al catasto fiorentino..." *Giornale storico degli archivi toscani* 4 (1860): 36.
[21] The pre-existing Venetian Catasto provided not only the name for the survey but also a model for the system in that it too counted all wealth, not just immovables, and allowed for many of the same deductions. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 56-57. Machiavelli states that the term Catasto comes from the Florentine term *accastare,* meaning to assign a value or appraise. He does not mention the Venetian Catasto. Machiavelli, *History*, 172-3.
[22] Machiavelli, *History*, 173.
[23] Berti, "Nuovi Documenti intorno al catasto fiorentino..." 36.

It was the household, defined as a taxable unit rather than an actual co-residential group, which formed the basic unit of the Catasto.[24] The household was the responsibility of and identified by its head, usually an adult man, and included all those who were financially dependent on or the legal responsibility of the head.[25] Each household head was responsible for submitting to the Catasto officials a detailed declaration of his or her household's economic situation. The declaration included information such as: the location and value of all the properties owned or rented by the household; the value of certain commodities, including oil, wine, and grain; the numbers and types of domestic animals; the value of any public investments, and an itemized list of all the credits and debts owned to or by the household. The declaration also included the name and—usually—the age of all household members, their relationship to the head and, often, the head's occupation. All of this information was useful in identifying the household and establishing its tax burden.

The dozens of scribes and notaries working for the Office of the Catasto collected these declarations, called *portate*, organized them by the *gonfalone* or rural district of household's primary place of residence and then arranged them alphabetically and bound them together. The officials checked the *portate* against past tax records and other fiscal documents for accuracy and missing declarations, and determined the households'

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[24] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 470.

[25] This includes relatives living elsewhere, such as young men working abroad; it generally does not include employees living with the household head, such as servants, who either declared themselves as a separate household or who were claimed by their own families. Ibid., 60.

taxable assets based on formulas of exemptions.[26] Finally, they copied the information, still organized by *gonfalone*, in a more standardized and less detailed format into the final books of the Catasto, the *campioni*. Ultimately the Catasto included over 266,000 individuals, divided into over 61,000 households in 26 different localities.[27] Of these, the city of Florence was the most populous with 9781 households containing 37, 493 individuals divided among the city's four quarters and sixteen *gonfalone*.

Naturally, families looked to minimize their tax burden while tax officials worked carefully to detect and eliminate fraud, making the final result impressive not only for its breadth and numbers but for its accuracy.[28] Like all such surveys, the Catasto was out of date before it was even finished, as the numerous amendments show, and it undoubtedly contains some level of deception despite the best efforts of the Catasto officials. Further, the Catasto has limits in terms of its use to historians; it does not lend itself well to a study of change over time as it was not repeated regularly and, because no similar data exist for elsewhere at the same period in such a complete form, comparison across space should be attempted with care.[29] Nonetheless, thanks in part to the meticulous and methodical recordkeeping of the Florentines, and in part to the survival of the majority of both the *portate* and *campioni* volumes, the Catasto provides an excellent snapshot of the

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[26] A household's assessment was .5 percent of the wealth, after all deductions. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence*, 9.

[27] The work was scheduled to be finished by July of 1428, but while officials were largely able to meet this goal for the city of Florence, minus the amendments, they required until 1430 to finish the survey in the areas beyond the city.

[28] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 98-99.

[29] There were subsequent versions of the Catasto in 1458, 1480, and at several points in the sixteenth century, although the government did not collect exactly the same information in each. The 1480 Catasto, in particular, has been the subject of extensive study by Anthony Molho, who notes that, while the document suits his study very well, it is not as detailed as the earlier ones. Anthony Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 382.

Tuscan population, accurate and wide-reaching beyond anything of its time. This makes the survey an ideal source from which to study all levels of society at that time and for comparison between various subgroups of the society. Ultimately, the Catasto remains an invaluable source for the study of any aspect of early fifteenth-century Florence and perhaps the best demographic data set for the pre-modern west.

The Catasto and *Les Toscans*

While the Catasto was rich in potential, tens of thousands of household declarations, written by individual household heads and notaries, copied in shorthand by the Catasto scribes, and collected into hundreds of volumes presented a challenge to any modern historian who wanted to study them systematically or comparatively. The Catasto records needed to be transcribed and arranged systematically before such work was possible. David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber began working on Florentine demography independently but soon collaborated on the Catasto, forming an alliance that would last over ten years.[30] Their combined team deciphered the Catasto's data from thousands of worn, hand-written documents and compiled an electronic database using the punch-card technology available in the 1970s.[31]

This collaboration produced two products of great value for scholars of fifteenth-century Florence and of European demography more generally. The first is their book,

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[30] For a reflection on this collaboration, see Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "David Herlihy and the Florentine Catasto," in *Portraits of Medieval and Renaissance Living; Essays in Memory of David Herlihy*, ed. Steven Epstein and Samuel K. Cohn, Jr, (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1996).

[31] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 101-02.

*Les Toscans et leurs familles: une étude du "*Catasto*" florentin de 1427*.[32] The goals of the book, as stated by the authors, were threefold: to make available a simple, easy-to-use index to the Catasto; to provide an initial overview of the Florentine population; and to offer a more detailed look at domestic groups across social strata in the areas under Florentine control.[33] The other result of this collaboration is the electronic database of the Catasto, which they made available for future scholarship.[34] Together, these products have made the fifteenth-century Tuscan population one of the pre-modern societies best understood by modern scholars.

Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber set up the chapter on marriage in *Les Toscans* as an investigation into whether or not the Florentine Tuscan population conformed to J. Hajnal's western European marriage pattern.[35] As such, they focus on the two demographic statistics that are the most prominent criteria for the western European marriage pattern: the rate of lifelong celibacy—that is, the number of individuals who never marry—and age at first marriage.[36] The first two-fifths of their chapter are devoted to these explorations, while the rest addresses the relationships between geography, status, and marriage, and the possible reasons for these relationships.

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[32] 1978, abridged and translated into English as David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Tuscans and their Families: A Study of the Florentine Catasto of 1427* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).
[33] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 101-02.
[34] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Catasto*. http://dpls.dacc.wisc.edu/Catasto/. There has been some criticism from historians of Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber's decision to rely on the *campioni* rather than the *portate* declarations, the latter of which contained more information in each household but were less organized and less legible.
[35] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 394.
[36] In demographic terms, celibacy is not synonymous with sexual inactivity. The large number of illegitimate children born to never-married men in Renaissance Florence certainly attests to this.

Among Florentine adults, Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber find approximately half are married at the point that the Catasto is created (see Chart 2.1a and 2.1b).[37] More than half of the remaining women had been married prior to the Catasto and were living as widows, but the same can be said with certainty about only 4 percent of the men. Another approximately 15 percent of both men and women had never married at the point of the Catasto, with a slightly higher percent of women than men. However, while the marital status of only 2 percent of women is uncertain, over one-third of the men are of indeterminate marital status. This means that it is unclear if they are married at that point, although they are not living with a spouse. It also means, however, that it is uncertain if they had ever been married in the past. The percent of men of unknown status declines as the population ages, while the number of women of unknown status rises with age. That is, demographic pattern of unknown men resembles that of bachelors, while for women it resembles that of widows. Herhihy and Klapisch-Zuber have therefore treated men of unknown status as never-married men and women of unknown status as married, but widowed, separated, abandoned, or for some other reason living apart from their husbands. This agrees with my own observations and I have found no reason to challenge this division. I will therefore follow their lead and count men of unknown status as never-married and women of unknown status as previously married.

[37] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber note that 47.7% of men and 53.5% of women are listed as married in the Catasto. For these statistics, they examine all individuals over the age of twelve, even though men were not permitted to marry until the age of 14. While this slightly inflates the percent single, the numbers provide an accurate sense of the population as a whole. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, Table 60.

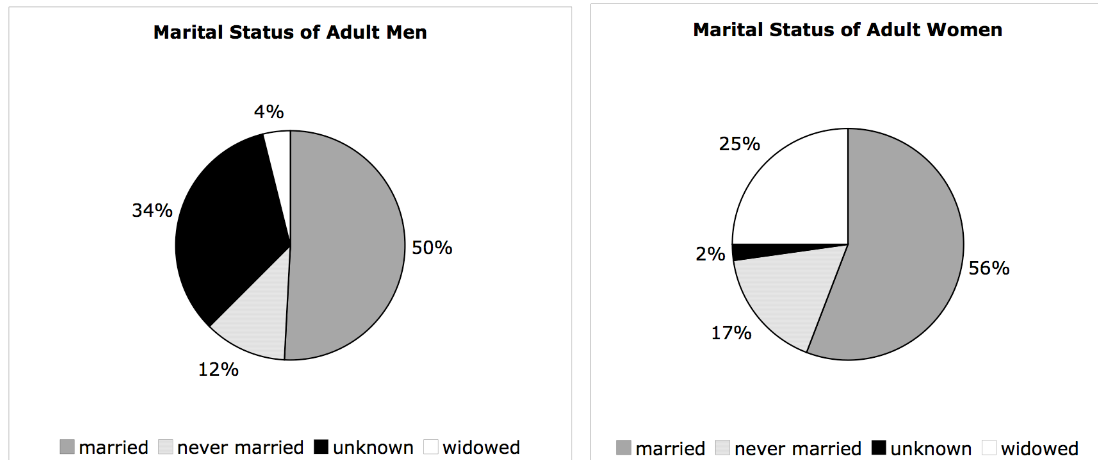

Chart 2.1a and 2.1b: Marital status of all Florentine adults (above the canonical age of marriage: 12 for women and 14 for men) in 1427 from the Catasto, n(adult men)=12,435 n(adult women)=11,018.

What is clear is that most Florentines—and most Tuscans—would eventually go on to marry at some point in their lives. Among women over age forty in 1427, less than 1 percent had never married, while for men over fifty—the age after which few men seem to have entered a first marriage—celibates make up less than 5 percent of the population.[38] This is far below the level expected for the western European marriage pattern, around 15 percent.[39] If all never-married Tuscan adults (not just Florentine) are counted, the figures rise to 16.2 percent for women and 32.3 percent for men, including men of indeterminate marital status.[40] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber conclude that while Tuscan men might have been within the range of the western European marriage pattern, based on the rates of celibacy, women were definitely not.

Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber found that Tuscan women married far younger than first-time brides under the western European marriage pattern, who generally married in

[38] Ibid., 402.
[39] J. Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective," in *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography*, ed. D. V. Glass and David E. C. Eversley, (London: E. Arnold, 1965).
[40] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 402.

their mid-twenties. Tuscan women married men far older than themselves. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber employed three separate methodologies to determine the age at first marriage for women. The first two focus on the two marriage-related subgroups in the Catasto, the women who married out of a household declaration during the period for corrections and the households in which a bride was added during the same period.[41] The third examines the percent of the population that remains unmarried at different ages, using this to calculate the average age of marriage.[42] These three different methods yield three different mean ages of marriage for women, ranging from just under eighteen to just over twenty (see the Table 2.1).[43] They are, however, consistent enough for Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber to conclude that Florentine women married young, often under the age of eighteen.[44] This is supported by records of the *Monte delle Doti*, the state-sponsored dowry investment fund, Molho and Kirshner calculate that the often-elite young women with investments in the fund married "a few months before their eighteenth birthday."[45] Elsewhere, however, Molho argues that some fathers systematically reported their daughters' ages to the *Monte delle Doti* officals as lower than they were in order to give

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[41] These two methods have the advantage of relying on actual couples but do not distinguish between first and subsequent marriages and, since the wealthy were more likely to amend their declarations, the sample is biased towards them. Ibid., 384-5. There is some overlap between the two categories of women.
[42] Ibid., 388. The third method is more representative of the population as a whole, but is based on two assumptions: that men of unknown status were single and that marriage patterns had not changed significantly over 60 or so years previous to the Catasto, that is, since the oldest members of the population had married.
[43] Menchi has argued that the age of menarche for women at this time was approximately 16, which means that women married very shortly thereafter. Silvana Seidel Menchi, "The Girl and the Hourglass: Periodization of Women's Lives in Western Preindustrial Societies," in *Time, Space, and Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte, Thomas Kuehn, and Silvana Seidel Menchi, (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001), 66.
[44] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 399.
[45] They arrive at this figure by calculating the mean age of the brides when their husband received the dowry at 18 years and 3 months. Julius Kirshner and Anthony Molho, "The Dowry Fund and the Marriage Market in Early Quattrocento Florence," *Journal of Modern History* 50 (1978): 413.

the family more time to find a spouse.[46] The mean age of Florentine men at marriage, meanwhile, was between thirty and thirty-five years of age, depending on the method used to calculate it. This means that there was a difference in the mean ages of spouses of at least a dozen years.[47]

	Married Out	Newlyweds	General Population
Men	N/A	34.41	29.95
Women	17.56	20.83	17.96
Difference	N/A	13.63	11.99

Table 2.1: Mean ages of marriage in Florence using different aspect of the Catasto data, as calculated by Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber and presented in their Table 58 (p. 399)[48]

Because women were young when they married, they were likely to outlive their spouses if they survived the perils of childbirth. [49] But despite the near universality of marriage for women, Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber find that widows frequently did not remarry.[50] By contrast, although men entered into first marriages later and less frequently than women, they were much more likely than women to remarry after the death of a spouse.[51] These two factors together—lower age of marriage for women than men and a tendency for women to not remarry—resulted in the huge discrepancy in the number of widows versus widowers recorded in the Catasto. Widowhood, it seems, was both a cycle in the lives of most women and a permanent state for them, while for men it was a brief, transient phase between young wives.

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[46] Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy," 194. Molho does not suggest that fathers misrepresented their daughters' ages to the Catasto officials, although if fathers were successful in their deception, it is possible that husbands would report their wives' ages incorrectly.
[47] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 400.
[48] Unless explicitly stated otherwise, all the data presented in charts and tables was calculated for this dissertation by the author.
[49] Approximately half of all women age 50 or higher were widows while only 10% of men were widowers at the age of 60. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 406.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid.

Across Tuscany, the largest divisions in marriage patterns were determined by gender. [52] Women consistently married much younger, remained single less frequently, and remarried less often than men.[53] These differences, however, become more exaggerated the more urban the area; in cities, men marry even later and are more likely to remain celibate for life, and urban women entered their first marriage even younger, but a higher percentage of the city's women were widows.[54] Indeed, the majority of the chapter on marriage in *Les Toscans* is dedicated to exploring variations in marriage patterns between the different areas of Tuscany.

Towards the end of their chapter on marriage, Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber address wealth as a factor shaping differences in marriage patterns both between the rich and the poor, and between those who live in rural and urban economies. Men married later in the cities, they contend, in part because a family was an economic liability there whereas in the countryside a family provided the labor necessary for agricultural productivity.[55] In particular, they argue that the wealthiest urban men seemed to be the ones most reluctant to enter into marriages, doing so later and less frequently than other men in Florence and Tuscany.[56] They do not delve further into either socio-economic difference in marriage or the reasons for them in their co-authored book.

It not an exaggeration to say that *Les Toscans* is still the most important work on Italian demography before the modern period, or on any area of Europe before 1500, and

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[52] Ibid., 410.
[53] Ibid., 404.
[54] The relative number of widows in the city might have been augmented by the immigration of widows from the countryside. Ibid., 400, 04.
[55] Ibid., 412.
[56] Ibid., 411.

it is still regarded by scholars as the definitive text on Tuscan marriage in the period. This is justified, as Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber were the first scholars to really examine Florentine marriage patterns statistically and in a way that was conducive to comparison with other data. Their work was not only groundbreaking but also provided the basis for comparison for scholars since.[57] The strength of marriage studies in *Les Toscans* is its comparative element across the regions and between urban and rural areas, in terms of general patterns. What *Les Toscans* cannot provide simultaneously is a depth of investigation on any one area within Tuscany. This is entirely appropriate for a work that provides an overview, a broad first survey of the material across the Florentine-controlled area.

Despite—or perhaps because of—the importance of *Les Toscans*, very few scholars from any discipline have worked directly with the 1427 Catasto data in the thirty years since the project was finished. Most scholars have used the data and conclusions presented in *Les Toscans* to support their own innovative work on marriage primarily using other sources—such as Julius Kirshner and Anthony Molho's joint efforts on the Monte delle Doti, the state-sponsored dowry fund, or Molho's solo work comparing the dowry fund with the 1480 Catasto, just to name a few—or have moved to examine marriage in other areas of northern Italy.[58] In this way, *Les Toscans* has served as a

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[57] For a reflection on the role of their work in the historiography of marriage, see Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Le *Catasto* florentin et le modèle européen du mariage et de la famille," in *Les Cadastres anciens des villes et leur traitement par l'informatique: actes de la table ronde*, ed. Jean-Louis Biget, et al., (Rome: Ecole française de Rome ; Diffusion, De Boccard, 1989), 23.

[58] Kirshner and Molho, "Dowry Fund," 404, Julius Kirshner, *Pursuing Honor while Avoiding Sin: The Monte delle Doti of Florence* (Milan: A. Giuffráe, 1978), 17-27; Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 18-21. For elsewhere in northern Italy, see, among others, the essays collected in Trevor Dean, *Marriage in Italy, 1300-1650* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998).

stepping-stone on the way to new and exciting conclusions on other aspects of marriage. It has also served as a point of comparison in broader studies on marriage patterns, for example by Richard M. Smith or Maryanne Kowaleski.[59] The work of two scholars directly on the 1427 Catasto—Rebecca Jean Emigh, a sociologist particularly interested in land tenure and rural demographics, and Maristella Botticini, an economist who works on dowry values—demonstrates the continued value of this source to scholars from a variety of disciplines.[60] Neither of these scholars, nor any others, however, focus specifically on the demographics of marriage, either to reexamine the work done by Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber or to build on it. The remainder of this chapter does precisely that, presenting a revised model of marriage in 1427 focused solely on the city of Florence and with an eye to differences according to social status. The conclusions are based largely—although not exclusively—on the computerized version of the Catasto, but the results are new.

Florentine Demographics of Marriage

Of the 23,453 Florentines listed in the Catasto who were of marriageable age in 1427, almost all would marry at some point in their lives.[61] Although these individuals

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[59] Smith, "Medieval or Mediterranean?," 109-10; Richard M. Smith, "Marriage in Late Medieval Europe," in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg, (Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton, 1992), 27; Maryanne Kowaleski, "Singlewomen in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The Demographic Perspective," in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 42-43.

[60] Rebecca Jean Emigh, "Traces of Certainty: Recording Death and Taxes in Fifteenth-Century Tuscany," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 30, no. 2 (1999). Maristella Botticini, "A Loveless Economy? Intergenerational Altruism and the Marriage Market in a Tuscan Town, 1415-1436," *Journal of Economic History* 59, no. 1 (1999).

[61] It is important to keep in mind that individuals who had taken formal religious vows and lived as part of a religious community were excluded from the Catasto. The numbers on celibacy do not take these individuals into account.

ranged from rich to poor, engaged in a variety of occupations, and lived within an array of household structures, marriage was a near universal for Florentine adults. The percent never married dropped drastically for women between the age of twelve until about the age of twenty (see Chart 2.2). For men, the decline was much more gradual and stretched from the early twenties until it leveled off between the ages of 48 and 52.[62] Those who had still never married when this decrease stopped made up the celibate population. While a great number of adults at any one point were unmarried—whether widowed or never married—the vast majority of the population married during their life.

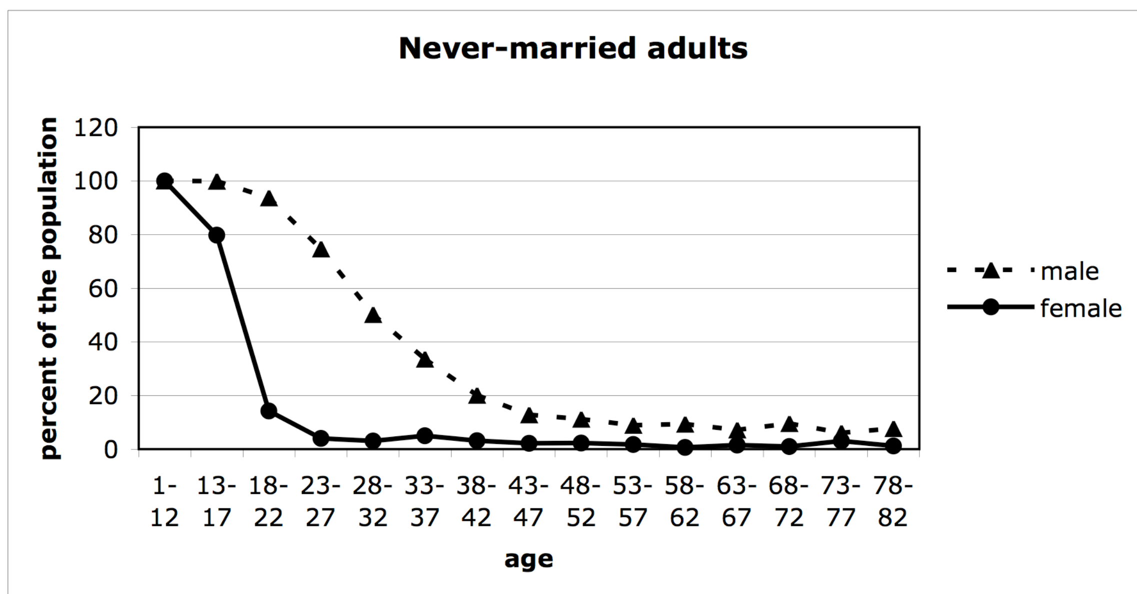

Chart 2.2: Percent of the population never married for different age groups, by gender. Drawn from the Catasto.

Women's Marriages

In some senses, the marriage patterns of Florentine women are easier to trace and explain because there is so little variation in these patterns across the society. The

[62] These age perimeters follow those set by Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber for men, but examine the next younger group for women because, as Chart 2 shows, the percent of never married women does not change significantly after that point. For more information on age grouping, see Appendix Two.

majority of the few unmarried women over the age of forty-two were domestic slaves.[63] A small number of the remaining single women were *pinzochere*, uncloistered religious women or tertiaries.[64] In addition to the unmarried women in the Catasto, there were also cloistered nuns—perhaps an additional 2.5 percent of the female population—who were not counted.[65] This means that the number of free, celibate, lay women is less than 1 percent. Even freed slaves married. It is therefore entirely justified to say that Florentine women either married or entered a convent.

Not only did women nearly universally marry, but they almost all did so quite young. Fifteenth-century Florentine authors, in their record books and advice manuals, encouraged men to seek out women in their mid- to late teens as brides. The wealthy widow and letter writer Alessandra Strozzi frets in a letter to her exiled sons over her decision on a husband for her daughter, "We've taken this decision for the best because she was sixteen and we didn't want to wait any longer."[66] Giovanni Morelli suggested

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[63] Slaves account for 12 of the 15 unmarried women aged 43-47, inclusive. They also comprise 45 of 69, or 65%, of all single women over 42. At this period, Florentine slavery was almost entirely a female phenomenon; of the 217 slaves declared in the Catasto, all are women. As Epstein notes, allowing slaves the right to marry complicated the slave's legal lack of personhood, and especially the owners' sexual use of his slave. Steven Epstein, *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 64. On the sexual use of the slaves by their owners, and its results, see Richard C. Trexler, "The Foundlings of Florence, 1395-1455," *History of Childhood Quarterly* 1, no. 3 (1974): 270. The best general work on slavery in Florence is still Iris Origo, "The Domestic Enemy: The Eastern Slaves in Tuscany in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Century," *Speculum* 30 (1955). See also Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Women Servants in Florence during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986).

[64] 3 of the 24 free, never-married women over the age of 43 were *pinzochere*.

[65] Richard C. Trexler, "Celibacy in the Renaissance: the Nuns of Florence," in *Dependence in Context in Renaissance Florence*, ed. Richard C. Trexler, (Binghamton, N.Y.: 1993).

[66] Alessandra Macinghi Strozzi, *Selected Letters of Alessandra Strozzi*, ed. trans. Heather Gregory, Bilingual ed. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997), 31.

that a bride of eighteen might be bitter from having been ignored for too long.[67] It is clear from a variety of contemporary documents, including both family *ricordanze* and the Catasto, that this went beyond a literary ideal and was in fact standard practice, not just for the elite but for all Florentines.

Research in this chapter does not rely on the SMAM (singulate mean age at marriage, or indirect mean), as Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber do, but rather on the indirect median age of marriage.[68] Although the SMAM is better suited to a small sample, the indirect median has two distinct advantages in light of the goals of this study. First, while the SMAM is heavily influenced by outliers, generally late marriages that raise the average age of marriage, the indirect median is less influenced by these outliers.[69] second, the indirect median is a more accurate measure of the age of marriage at the time that the survey is taken, although not necessarily for previous or subsequent decades. In this case, the indirect median provides the most accurate picture for the age group that is marrying

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[67] As cited in Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 400, note 12.

[68] While the SMAM used by Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber calculates how long the average individual in the population (or a subgroup) will remain single if they were to eventually marry, the indirect median (used here) is the age at which exactly half of the population that is expected to eventually marry has done so. Three steps are necessary to calculate the indirect median, following Shryock and Seigal. First, determine the percent of the population who will marry at some point in their life. This is usually done by determining the percent that have ever-married (i.e. who are married, widowed, separated, etc.) in at each age or in each age group. This percent will increase beginning in early adulthood, when people begin to marry, and continue to increase until some point after which few people marry for the first time. The percentage ever-married in the age group beyond which there is little change is the percent used in these calculations. The second step is simply to divide the percentage ever-married in half. The third step is to determine the age at which the percent ever-married matches the number determined in step two. That is, to determine the age at which exactly half of those who will ever marry have in fact done so. Usually this percent will fall between two ages or age groups and one will need to use linear interpolation to determine the final result. The result, the median age at first marriage, is the age at which half of those who will marry have already done so, and half will do so still. Henry S. Shryock and Jacob S. Seigel, *The Methods and Materials of Demography* (Washington: Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census, 1980), 293.

[69] Catherine A. Fitch, "Transitions to Marriage in the United States, 1850-2000" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2005), 244.

in and around 1427, but not necessarily for the mothers or fathers of those individuals.[70] As an immediate snapshot of marriage patterns is the goal of this research, and since there is no scarcity of cases, the indirect median is better suited to this study.

Indeed, relying on the indirect median rather than the SMAM emphasizes and reinforces the idea that Florentine women married earlier, in fact, than previous evidence has shown. The indirect median age of marriage is 17.19 years for women. This is nearly a year younger than the SMAM calculated by Herlihy and Klapish-Zuber, at 17.96.[71] The difference in the two figures illustrates the potential of outliers—in this case unusually late first marriages—to influence the SMAM.

Women married young, but they also almost all married within a very brief range of ages, as Chart 2.2 (above) illustrates. Women could not legally marry before the age of twelve according to canon law, and the Catasto suggests that people adhered to this restriction; in the Florentine Catasto there are no twelve-year-olds and only two thirteen-year-olds—less than 1 percent of the female population at that age—who are married. But while parents might have been reluctant to marry off women as young as twelve, many were already considering the prospect of marriage for their daughters, who would not remain at home much longer.[72] Indeed, while only 16.5 percent of fifteen-year-old women were married, 74.3 percent of eighteen-year-olds had married. This means that a

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[70] Due to its accuracy, this is the method preferred by the United States Census Bureau. Ibid., 242.
[71] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 399.
[72] Molho cites the example of Lena Tanagli, who in 1453 was attempting to collect a debt owed to her late husband so that she could put the money towards a dowry for her daughter. She justified her urgency by writing that, at 13, the daughter was “already close to marriageable age.” Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy," 205-6.

Florentine girl growing up in the 1410s had better than a one in two chance of marrying between her sixteenth and nineteenth birthdays.

Men's Marriage

In contrast to women's marriage patterns, the marriage formation patterns of Florentine men were much less rigid and more varied. Men differed from women not only in the pressure to marry that they faced, but also in the ways that they entered into their first marriages, their position within those marriages, and their possibilities after marriage ended. Like women, most men did eventually marry at some point in their life, but they were under less pressure to do so young, to do so within a short time frame, or even to marry at all. Men could—and did—delay entering into their first marriage until their mid-fifties. This variation makes it more difficult to pin down exact marriage formation patterns for men, but also raises interesting questions about the combination of circumstances that prompted men to delay or enter into marriage.

Men did marry later—often much later—than women. The indirect median age of marriage for men is 28.89 years, or nearly twelve years older than for women. Just as with the women's ages, however, the indirect median is approximately a year younger than the SMAM calculated by Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, at 29.95 years.[73] Again, the lower age of the indirect median reflects the presence of a handful of outliers, first time grooms who married quite late relative to other Florentine men.

Men not only married later than women, but had a much wider age range during which they entered into a first marriage. The youngest married men in the Catasto were

[73] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, Table 58.

seventeen but more than 90 percent of twenty-year-old men remained unmarried. In fact, only one quarter of those men who would marry had done so by twenty-four and it was not until the age of thirty-six that three quarters had married.[74] While approximately half of all women married in a range of three years, approximately the same proportion of the male population married in range of twelve years. While it is therefore fair to say that the vast majority of Florentine women married right around the age of seventeen, the median age at first marriage, the same cannot be said for men at their median age at first marriage—twenty-nine—or at any age. While it is possible to cite a span of a year in which women were likely to marry, it is more accurate to note a decade-long window when men often entered into their first marriage, in their late twenties or early thirties. But it was socially acceptable for men to prolong their bachelorhood for years or even decades beyond that window in a way that it was simply not for women.

Indeed, approximately one in ten men never entered into marriage, instead remaining bachelors until they died.[75] While the slave status of the majority of unmarried women readily accounts for their marital status, the complete lack of male slaves precludes such an explanation. A number of alternative hypotheses suggest themselves, but all seem unsatisfactory for more than a small minority of the celibate men. Homosexual activity was widespread among Florentine men, especially those below the age of marriage, and Herlihy has argued that homosexual activity and a late age at marriage were linked, but in the sense that men sought other men because they had to

[74] At the age of 24, 21.9% of men have married while at 37, 73.3% have done so.
[75] Again, this includes only laymen and not clergy. This means that of the 854 men age forty-eight to fifty-two, 96 were never-married.

delay marriage, not that men delayed or avoided marriage because of a sexual preference. In fact, Michael Rocke has shown that most men accused of sodomy went on to marry, and that married men were not immune from charges of sodomy.[76] Although some of these lifelong bachelors were almost undoubtedly men with no sexual interest in women, a man's sexual interest in other men—or other women, for that matter, whether slaves, prostitutes, or lower-status women—had very little to do with when and if he married.[77]

It is also possible that some of the single men were illegitimate but acknowledged sons of noble families who, Molho argues, were often prevented from marrying by their father's families in order to keep them from seeking a part of the patrimony for their children.[78] It is true that the nine men over the age of thirty who are described as illegitimate in the Catasto are all unmarried. This is, however, a very small proportion of the more than a thousand men over thirty who are never married. Ultimately, any relationship between illegitimacy and marital status is impossible to confirm from the Catasto data since so few adults declared their illegitimate status in their Catasto record.[79] Since there was no financial incentive to note one's illegitimate status for the Catasto,

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[76] Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 127-8.
[77] Ibid., 120, 128.
[78] Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 279. Kuehn is less clear on the frequency with which male bastards married in the 15th c., noting that there are examples of those who did and those who did not, although bastards had less access to familial resources than legitimate relatives. He does argue that bastards were generally careful not to sire bastard children themselves. Thomas Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 15, 163.
[79] There are 135 individuals listed as illegitimate in the computerized Catasto data, of whom 96, or 71.1%, are under the canonical age of marriage. None of the illegitimate individuals is a head of household or spouse of a head, only 35, or 24.9%, were women. Illegitimacy, it seems, is less an inherent aspect of one's identity, or at least a public part of it, than a component of one's relationship with a household head. On the disadvantages bastards faced in inheritance and in politics, see Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence*, 75, 83-6. On the uses and danger of legitimized individuals to lineages, see Thomas Kuehn, "'As if Conceived within a Legitimate Marriage': A Dispute concerning Legitimation in Quattrocento Florence," *American Journal of Legal History* 29, no. 4 (1985): 279.

and since illegitimacy was socially and legally stigmatizing, there are certainly a great number of individuals who simply did not note it. Indeed, there is not a single obvious explanation as to why some men never married.

But while there is no single explanation that explains the majority of instances of male celibacy, there are a number of social and economic factors that seem to have influenced a decision to delay marriage. This delay could be temporary or permanent, and given that a man could enter into his first marriage at any point into his mid-fifties, men waiting for the opportune moment could simply end up never marrying without making any conscious decision to do so.[80]

The trend that emerges most clearly is that, despite the importance of the extended family in Florence, a man's independence from his father's household mattered in terms of when and if he married. During their lives, fathers played a major role in controlling both their son's actions, including marriage, and the familial wealth.[81] This is true even

[80] Kirshner and Molho argue that families rarely decided early on that daughters were destined for the religious life rather than marriage, and instead delayed the decision until the young woman was of marriageable age and either voiced a desire to enter the religious life or it became clear that that family could not find her a spouse that they considered suitable. It seems likely that for most men this was also the case. But because men, unlike women, did not have a limited window in which to marry, they could simply simply delay marriage through most of their adulthood without ever deciding not to marry. Kirshner and Molho, "Dowry Fund," 413-4, 424-5.

[81] For contexts with more data, and especially for colonial America, scholars have been able to calculate the difference in the average age of marriage for men whose father's died before age 60 versus those whose fathers lived beyond sixty. They have used differences between these two sets of ages as evidence of parental control of adult children and familial property. Daniel Scott Smith, "Parental Power and Marriage Patterns: An Analysis of Historical Trends in Hingham, Massachusetts," *Journal of Marriage and the Family* 35, no. 3 (1973): 423, Table 1. The Catasto does not tell whether or not a father is living, only whether or not a son is part of his fiscal household, and while the notaries do record whether an individual's father is alive or not, they do not note when he died or whether a man is marrying for the first time. Therefore, a study of the relationship between paternal mortality and male age at first marriage is not possible for Florence within the scope of this study.

when sons were long past the age of majority.[82] It is also true in the case of legally emancipated sons.[83] Having the status of a primary household head correlated with a man's entrance into marriage.[84] This is evident when focusing on men aged twenty-eight to thirty-two, an age range in which half of all men who will marry have done so, but most have not been long married (see Table 2.2).[85] Three-quarters of the married men in this age group are primary heads of the household, a significantly higher percent than among all men in that age group.[86] Similarly, a lower percent of married men still lived with their fathers than did all men in this age group.[87] This same correlation between marriage and household independence is also clear among the group of men aged fifty-three to fifty-seven, when men were no longer entering into first marriages. Of those who were married or who had been married, 97.3 percent were heads of their own household whereas, among the small group of men of that age who had never married, only 81.4

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[82] 18 was the legal age of majority under Florentine law and 25 under Roman law, but sons far older than this were still under their father's control. Thomas Kuehn, "Emancipation in Late Medieval Florence" (Revision of thesis, Rutgers University Press/University of Chicago, 1982), 36, 44.

[83] Filippo Giovanni Carducci formally declared that he received the dowry of his daughter-in-law, with his son serving as a second receiver. This is not unusual for sons whose father's were still alive, but this case is unusual in that the notary explicitly notes that Filippo's son, Francesco, is emancipated. NA 17990 fol. 109R.

[84] It is important to remember that the households described by the Catasto are fiscal rather than physical or emotional households.

[85] This range includes both the indirect median and SMAM age at marriage. 56.8% of men aged 28 are still single, while only 38.6% of men aged 32 are single. For all men aged 28 to 32, or 51.2% are single while 49.8% have been married.

[86] 557 out of 747 married men in this age range are primary heads of household as compared to 871 out of 1499 men in all marital categories in the same age range.

[87] 135 out of 747 married men were the son of the head of household but 372 of the 1499 men in this age group, married and unmarried, lived with their fathers.

percent were independent household heads.[88] Based on these numbers, it is clear that a man's independence from his father's household and marriage were linked.

	Ever-Married Men (n=747)	All Men (n=1499)
Heads of Household	74.5%	58.1%
Sons of Head	18.1%	24.8%

Table 2.2: Relationship between household independence and marital status among men aged 28-32 in the Catasto.

It is less clear, based on the snapshot provided by the Catasto, whether household independence or marriage came first, or if they came at the same time. The high numbers of primary householders among men aged twenty-eight to thirty-two suggests that householding preceded marriage since, based on the statistical age and rates of marriage for men, these men would not have been married for long. While, such an assumption leaves much to chance, an examination of those men listed as newlyweds in the Catasto lends support to the idea that men sought to marry after establishing themselves as primary householders. Of the newlyweds, over two-thirds were primary heads of household in their original Catasto record, before adding their bride to their household.[89] While possession of an independent household might have influenced marriage, it was not a definitive factor in predicting marriage. Social, economic, familial, and political pressures—as well, perhaps, as personal preference—influenced a man's decision to enter into or delay marriage. Once delayed, marriage might eventually come about or it might not.

[88] 539 of the 554 married (or previously married) men were household heads whereas 44 of the 54 never-married men were.

[89] 54 out of 74, or 68.4%, of newlyweds. It is important to note, however, that there is no way to know how many of these were first marriages.

Age Differences

While men did marry at a much wider range of ages than women, they were almost always older than their brides, and usually by several years. The median ages of marriages suggests that the typical Florentine woman was 11.69 years younger than her husband.[90] The greater range of male ages at marriage, however, would result in a much wider range of age differences than this figure suggests. This becomes evident when examining the notarial contracts for unions between 1425 and 1429. It is possible to identify the age of both spouses, using the Catasto, in 135 unions. Even for brides who are under the age of twenty, and for whom this is likely their first marriage, the age differences between spouses range from two to thirty-two years. It is possible that the husbands of some of these teenage women were entering a second marriage, but this was not necessarily the case as men entered into first marriages until they were in their mid-fifties.

If we assume that unions in which the bride was over twenty years old were second marriages, at least for her, the mean and median age differences in second marriages in the notarial documents are nearly identical to those of all marriages. Second marriages, however, have a much broader range of age difference between the spouses. There are forty-three unions from the notarial documents in which it is possible to identify the ages of both spouses and in which the bride is over twenty. The age differences between the spouses range from a groom thirty-six years older than his wife to a bride who is twenty-two years older than her husband. The family of Piero Tommaso

[90] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber find an average difference of 11.99 years based on mean ages as demonstrated in their Table 58. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 399.

provides one extreme example. Piero, a well-to-do notary or judge living in the *gonfalone* of Chiavi, had four co-resident sons. The eldest two of these sons, aged twenty-four and twenty-three, married in the time between when Piero submitted his original declaration and the closing of the records.[91] The younger of the two married a woman who was only thirteen at the time of her marriage, and hence a decade younger than her husband. Although both spouses were slightly younger than average, their union was not particularly unusual or noteworthy. Piero's elder son, by contrast, married a woman who was forty, and presumably a widow. This was an extraordinary match even if the young man was slightly older than his recorded age at the time of the union. This union, along with the four others in which the brides were older than the grooms—and each at least five years older—are very far from typical. Their presence in the data set is a reminder, however, that such unions could occur, even in families where other unions were much closer to the average.

This example also makes clear that women could enter into marriages, or at least second marriages, well beyond their teens. An extreme example of this appears among those labeled as newlyweds in the Catasto: sixty-five-year-old Margherita was newly married to the wealthy seventy-eight-year-old Giovanni Giovanni, a resident of S. Maria Novella.[92] She unfortunately did not live to enjoy her exceptionally late marriage as she died before the Catasto was closed to amendment. While this bride was certainly an outlier in terms of age, neither she nor her husband were unique. Another bride, Antonia Filippo of the *gonfalone* of Leon d'Oro, was seventy years of age when she married the

[91] AC 80 f 53, ID 9149.
[92] AC 75, fol. 313. ID 5127. Bobbin 138.

sixty-five year old dyer Domenico Ser Andrea of the *gonfalone* of Chiavi in February of 1428.[93] Margherita's husband, meanwhile, was one of three men over seventy among the seventy-four newlywed men in the Catasto alone. The others were Bartolo Matteo, age seventy-five, and Benino Francesco del Benino, age eighty-seven; the latter lost his sixty-year-old wife and remarried a woman of unknown age between the time of his declaration and the closing of the books.[94]

While these senior brides were not completely unique in their late marriages, they were definitely unusual; most women who remarried were still of childbearing age. The seven widows in the Catasto who were deleted from their household upon their second marriage ranged in age from 19 to 42, with a mean of 28.28 and a median of 27. Of the forty-three brides in the notarial documents are definitely over twenty, the mean age is 31.6 years old while the median is 28. Men could and did remarry until the very end of their lives, while women tended to remarry while still of childbearing age, with some exceptions.

All together, this information paints a picture of Florentine marriage that is in agreement with previous studies on the topic, but that is also much more detailed and more focused on one time and place. Women did indeed marry young, younger than previously thought. Their husbands were older but they were not all as old as has been suggested. While women all entered into marriage at almost the exact same point in their lives, with very little variation, an average age at first marriage for men masks the broad age range in which men entered into marriage. Perhaps more intriguing, however, this

[93] NA 16524 fol. 19R. ID 8631.
[94] AC 78 f 59, ID 6526 and AC 66 f 156, 1132

close examination of the Catasto data has unearthed some of the factors that related to the entrance into marriage. In particular, a man's independence from his father's household was positively related to marriage. This is useful for understanding why and when men entered marriage, but also makes a strong case for a Florence tendency toward neolocality, even if it was not universally practiced.

Given this general overview, Salvi and Nanna's union, explored at the beginning of this chapter, does indeed conform to the general Florentine model. At twenty eight, Salvi was within the range of a decade in which most men married for the first time. Nanna was also within a year's range of her seventeenth birthday, the average age at which Florentine women married. If Nanna had not married at this point, she almost certainly would have done so within the following year or, at most, two. The age between them was also right in line with expectations. Further, according to the model constructed above, Salvi was in a good position to marry, as an independent householder. There is a general model of marriage and some marriages conform closely to this model. As the following section will show, however, even this detailed model masks significant differences between subgroups in the population.

Marriage and Socio-Economic Status

The above description is accurate for the whole population of Florence in 1427 with only a few minor exceptions.[95] But while it is possible to create a fairly detailed model of marriage patterns that fits the entire Florentine population, there are still

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[95] Most notably, these exceptions are domestic slaves and those few wealthy individuals who were destined for a religious life from early childhood, both of which make up a very small portion of the total population.

important and consistent differences between subgroups of that population. In particular, Herhihy and Klapisch-Zuber note that there is a direct relationship between grooms' age at marriage and wealth in Florence.[96] This is true but, as the following section will show, this correlation is not linear. Further, the two factors are inversely related for women. As with so much else in fifteenth-century Florence, marriage patterns depended on socio-economic status.

Women's Marriages and Status

Across the socio-economic spectrum, women married almost universally, but those who were the poorest married the latest. (see Chart 2.3a). The average age at first marriage declined as the wealth of a family rose and those who are the wealthiest married the earliest.[97] The same pattern is visible in the ages at marriage of women associated with different levels of the guild hierarchy (see Chart 2.3b).[98] The age difference between the groups is not great but since women all married within a very short span of time this is not surprising. In fact, since more than half of all women married within a range of three years of age, a difference of nearly half a year between the median age of marriage is very significant.

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[96] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 411.

[97] I have divided the households evenly into 5 wealth groups. Wealth group 1 represents the poorest 20% of households while wealth group 5 represents the wealthiest 20%. It is important to note that while households are evenly divided into fifths, the population itself does not divide exactly into the wealth groups since wealthier households tend to be larger, especially in the number of children. As the numbers given in the caption for Charts 2.3a and 2.3b demonstrate, however, the population is divided fairly evenly.

[98] Artisan households had median assets of 133 florins, sufficient to place a household just about the 40th percentile. Roughly 30% of artisan households fell into the second wealth group while 25% fell into the third. *Sottoposti* had median assets of 39 florins, in the 26th percentile, while the median for major guildsmen was 735 florins, just about the 70th percentile.

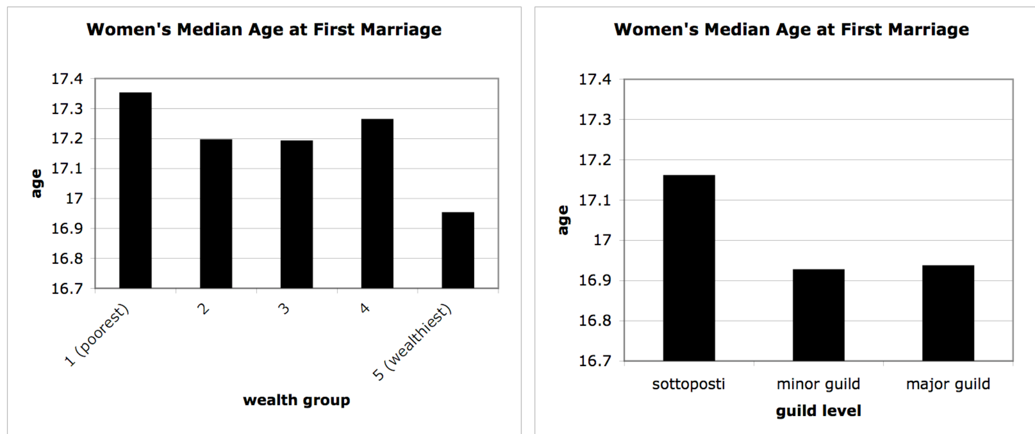

Chart 2.3a and 2.3b: Median age at first marriage for women, according to wealth and guild level, from the Catasto. For 2.3a, n(1)=1608, n(2)=1452, n(3)=1464, n(4)=1458, n(5)=1397; n(*sottoposti*)=2253 n(minor)=1116, n(major)=966. For both 2.3a and 2.3b, n represents the number of women between the ages of 12 and 47, inclusive.

The relationship between wealth and female age at marriage is most likely not coincidental but causal. Wealthier families were better able to acquire the capital to dower their daughters. The elite were eloquent in their complaints about the high cost of a dowry and an elite dowry could be ten or more times higher than the dowry of even a comfortable artisan. Ultimately, however, the elite had the economic and social capital to invest for this expense or to borrow to meet it. When all else failed, they could trade on the connections that marriage to their daughters would provide for an up-and-coming husband and offer less in dowry, although this would compromise the family's social position.[99] Further, it was in the economic and social interest of the wealthiest families to marry their daughters early. As the young woman aged, the family risked social and economic capital as they might have to pay a higher dowry or forgo the valuable

[99] The exchange of social for economic capital and vice versa in marriages is covered in much greater detail in Chapter Three.

connections of a marriage if they could not find a spouse. Poor families, living day to day, might have had the same concerns, but were not able to save as easily for this expense and could not trade on their names.

While all poor women had a little bit longer to wait before marriage, this delay especially affected the poor women who were not part of their household head's nuclear family. The vast majority of all the individuals in the Catasto are either the head of household or part of his (and much less frequently her) nuclear family, consisting of a married couple or widow and widower, and their children. [100] Almost everyone else is a non-nuclear relative of the head of the household, including in-laws (especially daughter-in-laws), secondary joint heads of household or their nuclear family members, or the parents or unmarried sisters of the head. Less often these relatives were nieces, grandchildren, and step-relations.[101] Women who were nuclear relatives all married right around the age of seventeen, with the wealthiest marrying the earliest. For women who were more distant relatives, however, the average age of marriage jumped to nearly nineteen-years-old. [102] The biggest gap in ages between immediate and distant relations is among the poorest families (see Chart 2.4). A woman who was not part of the nuclear family in one of the poorest 40 percent of households could expect to wait until she was over twenty years of age before marrying. Those who lived in the wealthiest quintile of

[100] 10847 of 12435, or 87.2%, of adult men and 8490 of 11018, or 77.1%, of adult women were nuclear family members.

[101] 1568 of 12435, or 12.6%, of adult men and 2347 of 11018, or 21.3%, of adult women were more distant relatives. The very few individuals who were neither nuclear nor more distant relatives were slaves, servants, apprentices, and a few individuals whose relationship to the head is undefined.

[102] All of the unmarried female relatives, 43.7% were sisters of the head, 27.4% were granddaughters of the head and 24.7% were a child of one of the joint heads of household, i.e. a niece of the primary head.

households, by contrast, could expect to marry, on average, around the age of eighteen.[103] The difference between the ages at which immediate family and relatives marry also decreases, although not completely steadily, as the household wealth increases. Young female relatives had to wait longer than their cousins, daughters of the head, to marry. For those who were the poorest, this wait was the longest.

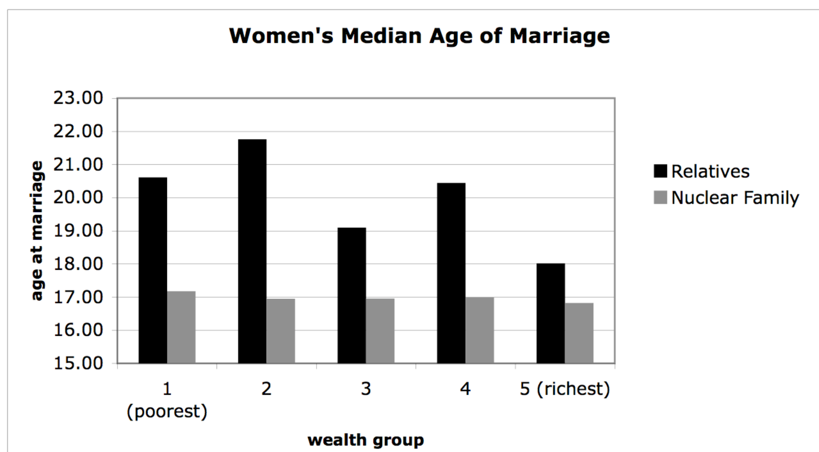

Chart 2.4: Median age at first marriage for nuclear and more distant female relatives, by household wealth, from the Catasto. n(1 nuc)=1267, n(1 rel)=92, n(2 nuc)=1172, n(2 rel)=91, n(3 nuc)=1132, n(3 rel)=137, n(4 nuc)=1178, n(4 rel)=253, n(5 nuc)=1601, n(rel)=368.

The reason for this discrepancy between nuclear and non-nuclear family is likely, again, economic. The limited resources of the family went first to marrying off daughters. It is also likely that daughters of the head made more attractive spouses, not only because they might have been better dowered but because they offered a better connection to the head of household, a desirable quality in a society where a major goal of marriage was an alliance between patriarchal families. Other women were eventually married as well, but they were not the priority of the household head. Sisters of the head also make up a large

[103] The median age of marriage for relatives in this wealth group is 18.0 years.

portion of those who are not nuclear family members from the point of view of the household head's conjugal family. If a sister was still unmarried it was often because her brother, the household head, had recently come into his inheritance and the household was not yet well established, with cash on hand to pay for dowries. It is true that many men would make provisions in their wills for the dowries of unmarried daughters, as discussed further in Chapter Three. But while a daughter was indeed entitled to this money, whether she lived with her brother or with a more distant relative, the liquid wealth might not be available soon after the expenses of a funeral and division of wealth, or her guardian might be reluctant to part with it. These women, therefore, had to delay marriage until their guardians could or would relinquish the money.

Men's Marriages and Status

Although women tended to marry earlier as familial wealth increased, Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber suggest that the relationship was reversed in the case of men. Indeed, this is, generally speaking, the case. The median age of marriage for men in the wealthiest groups is at least two years higher than those in the poorest groups. Those in the household of major guild members have a median age of first marriage nearly two and a half years higher than those whose household is headed by a minor guild member.

The relationship between wealth and age of marriage is not, however, strictly linear (see Chart 2.5a and 2.5b). Although the median ages of marriage according to guild level might suggest a linear relationship, it is important to remember that self-identified major guild members were not in fact the wealthiest or most elite members of the society (Chart 2.5b). Those who were most elite were almost all major guild members but rarely

listed an occupation in either Catasto or notarial records, preferring to identify themselves only by their family name. The median wealth for self-identified major guild members was enough to be above 70 percent of the population, while a household with the median wealth for a minor guildsman would fall just above 40 percent of the population. Those who were at the top of the socio-economic ladder actually had a lower median age at marriage (Chart 2.5a). Men whose wealth puts them in the middle of the population marry the latest. It is also these same men of middle wealth who are the least likely to marry, while the richest and poorest remain celibate equally infrequently, at least in lay society (see Charts 2.6a and 2.6b). Similarly, as wealth increases from the comfortable minor guild members to the wealthier major guild members, the celibacy rate also declines.

Chart 2.5a and 2.5b; Median age at first marriage for men, according to wealth and guild level, from the Catasto, n(1)=1592, n(2)=1573, n(3)=1725, n(4)=2213, n(5)=3048; n(*sottoposti*)=4583 n(minor)=1402, n(major)=1397

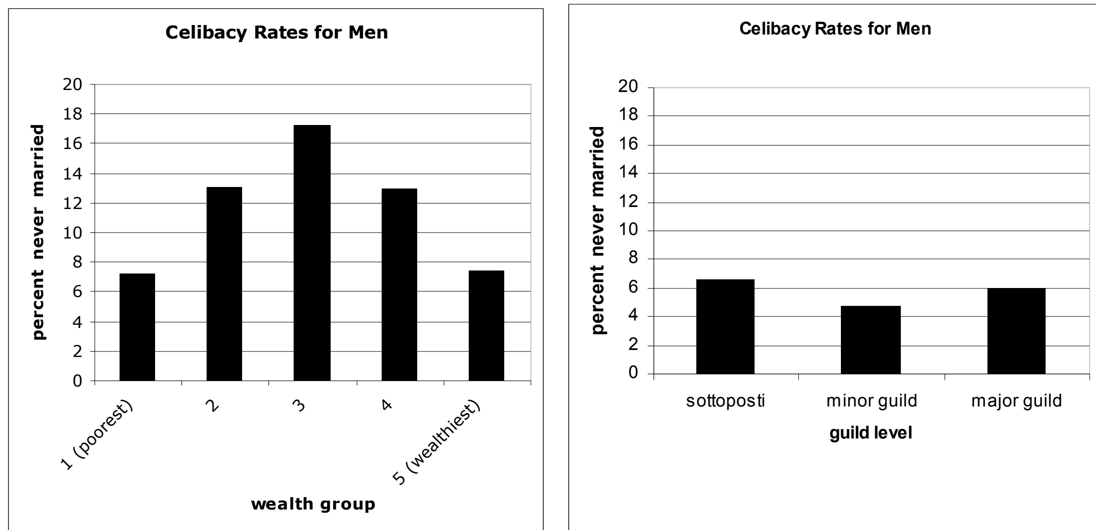

Chart 2.6a and 2.6b; Celibacy rates for men, by socio-economic status, from the Catasto (for n, see caption to 2.5a and 2.5b)

Age Difference and Status

Because men and women's age at first marriage varied according to social and economic status, the age differences between partners also differed according to status. Couples at the lower end of the socio-economic spectrum, by either measure, were on average closest in age, with husbands less than ten years older than their wives. Men at the upper end of the spectrum were two to three years older, but the couples in the fourth quintile had the greatest number of years between them, with between thirteen and fourteen years, on average, between spouses at first marriage (see Chart 7a and 7b). These differences in the number of years between spouses are due mainly to fluctuations in the age at first marriage for men, since those displayed a much greater difference than those of women. It is certainly not possible, under any circumstances, to label as companionate a marriage with an age difference of over nine years, but the marriages of the poorest were definitely less non-companionate than those of the elite.

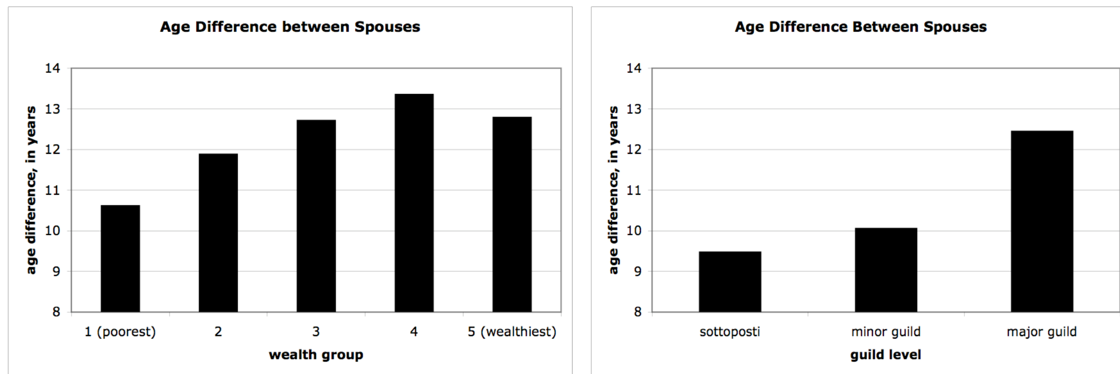

Chart 2.7a and 2.7b: Age difference between spouses, according to wealth and guild level, based on the difference in the indirect median ages at first marriage calculated from the Catasto.

Residence and Status

Couples at different points of the economic spectrum not only differed in the age between the spouses, but also at the patterns of residence for these new spouses. Returning to the group of men between the ages of twenty-eight and thirty-two, inclusive, men—married and unmarried—had very different residence patterns based on their economic status (see Chart 2.8). Those in the poorest quintile of the population were almost twice as likely as those in the wealthiest quintile to be the primary head of their own household.[104] Men in the wealthiest quintile were more likely to live in an extended family in which they were not the head, or at least not yet the head. The wealthiest men were approximately 50 percent more likely than the poorest to live with their fathers, and

[104] In terms of household wealth, 161 out of 212, or 74.9%, men in this age group were the primary head of their household while only 187 out of 447, or 42.4%, of the men in the poorest quintile could say the same. Similarly, when individual wealth is the examined, 77.3%, or 198 out of 256, of the poorest men are household heads versus 132 out of 320, or 41.3%, men in the wealthiest quintile.

almost seven times as likely to live in a household in which their brother was the primary household head.[105]

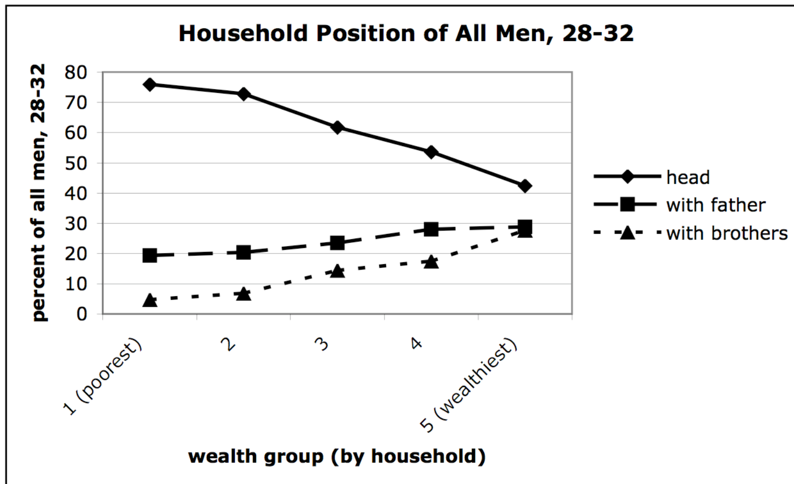

Chart 2.8: Household positions of men in between the ages of 28 and 32, inclusive, by wealth group, from the Catasto Data. n(1)=212, n(2)=250, n(3)=264, n(4)=332, n(5)=441.

These variations in residence patterns had two effects on marriage formation. First of all, male residence patterns determined the household position of a new bride. Across the social spectrum, the majority of new brides were the wife of the male head, rather than his daughter-in-law, although these brides might still live with their mothers-in-law (see Chart 2.9). A man age twenty-eight to thirty-two was mostly likely to bring his bride to his own home, however, if he was in the poorest quintile of the population. Conversely, he was mostly likely to bring his bride home to his father's or brothers' household if he was in the wealthiest quintile. It is true that across the social strata men who were householders were more likely to marry than those who were not. However, wealthier men were more willing to marry before achieving independence. This could be

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[105] 41 of 212, or 10.3%, of all men in the poorest quintile by household wealth lived with their father, compared to 127 of 441, or 28.8%, men in the wealthiest quintile. 10 of 212, or 4.7%, of those in the lowest quintile lived with a brother while 158 of 441, or 27.7%, of those in the wealthiest quintile did.

because they were more financially secure, even if they did not control their financial situation. It could also be because living with their extended families was not socially stigmatized and actually was in both the social and economic interest of the family and the man, whether married or not.

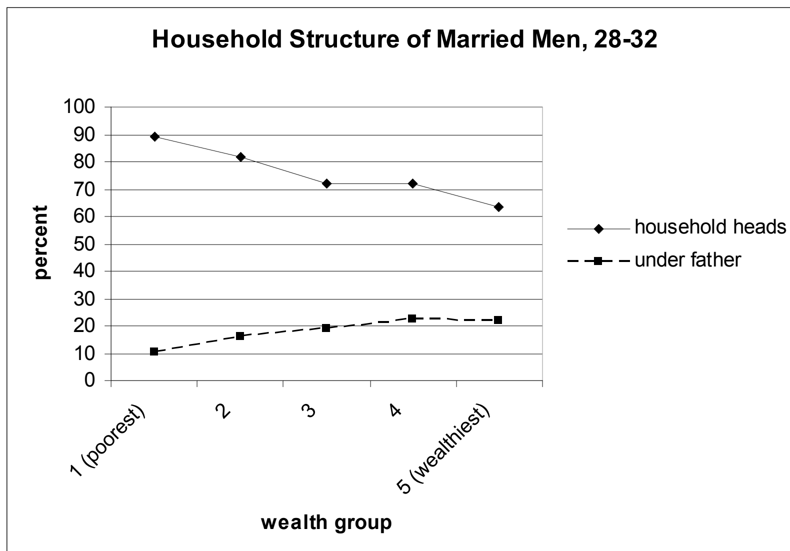

Chart 2.9: Position in household of married men aged 28-32, inclusive, by wealth group, from the Catasto data. It is important to remember that men were not married in equal numbers across the economic spectrum. There were fewer married men in the middle economic groups than at either end of the spectrum. In any wealth group, men living with their brothers never account for more than 2 percent of the married men. n(1)=136, n(2)=152, n(3)=110, n(4)=138, n(5)=209.

Reasons and Hypotheses

Women's marriage patterns did differ by socio-economic status, especially when relationships to the head are considered, but it was men's marriage patterns that really fluctuated and did so in response to a number of factors related to status. The poorest men married the earliest, then the wealthiest men, and then those in the middle, including major guildsmen at that level. The later men married, the larger the age difference between spouses. As men became increasingly wealthy, they were more likely to live

with their fathers or brothers and, moreover, to bring a wife to their father's or brothers' household.

These variations in marriage, therefore, did not simply affect men; marriage, after all, was the union of two individuals and, perhaps more importantly, of two families. It was the formation of a new branch of the family. The decisions men—and their families—made about entrance into marriage, therefore, shaped the adult experience of women and the family structure of the next generation.

The question remains, however, of why men in a middling socio-economic position were more likely to delay, even permanently, marriage than those on either end of the social spectrum. The Catasto makes this pattern clear but does not provide any explanation. Men married at a time that was socially and economically opportune or at least not too detrimental to their status, economic or social. This might happen when they needed a wife's dowry or help, when they could afford the added expense of a family, or when a socially advantageous match suggested itself. Wealthy families could afford to take on the burden of a wife and family earlier than other groups without compromising their economic status, especially since the young woman's dowry would offset the costs and a union could bring a valuable social connection. These factors would likely tip the balance in favor of marriage for wealthy young men. Wealthy families were also the most likely to send some of their sons to the church, where they would remain unmarried but not show up in the Catasto as celibates.

Poor men gained only a very small dowry in marriage—sometimes none at all—and would face the potentially crushing financial burden of a family.[106] But these men would not likely see their financial situation improve by delaying marriage. Since they were already part of the community of the poor, they would not lose social status by taking a wife from within the same community. Further, the assistance of a wife at home or through her earnings could offset the added expense of a family, or at least not make the situation any more precarious.

It was, therefore, those men in the middle of the population who had the most to lose through hasty marriage or, perhaps more accurately, the most potential to gain by delaying marriage. The financial burdens of a family were still heavy and might not allow the man to maintain the same standard of living that he enjoyed as a bachelor, or his wife the same lifestyle of her natal home. Stretching the household budget would not only make for a less comfortable living situation but would compromise the family's social status. Although a wife would bring a dowry and her domestic labor, it is unlikely that a woman of this social status would have contributed much in the way of wages to the household budget.[107] So while the possibility of marriage, of legitimate heirs, of a sexual

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[106] For more on the household purse of the poor, see Chapter Four. Also see John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 36; Richard A. Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence: An Economic and Social History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 348.

[107] Very little has been done specifically on the topic of married women's labor in Florence. Herlihy notes that women laborers fade from the records between 1300 and 1500, but he is not clear if the "lost visibility in the urban economies" was due to a decline in paid female employment or changes in employment or recordkeeping that reduced the presence of women in the documents. It is possible that women's work, and particularly married women's work, was hidden by the Florentine practice of drawing up labor contracts between the employer and the woman's husband and, hence, her legal guardian, as was the case in contracts for wet-nursing. David Herlihy, "Women's Work in the Towns of Traditional Europe," in *Women, Family and Society in Medieval Europe: Historical Essays, 1978-1991*, (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), 94; Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Blood Parents and Milk Parents: Wet Nursing in Florence, 1300-

partner with whom relations were neither sinful nor illegal, of the position of adulthood that marriage conferred might have been appealing to men of middling status, the potential losses might have encouraged them to delay it.

And indeed, artisans had the most hope of gaining by delaying marriage. Artisan men might delay marriage until the death of their fathers or until after the separation from their brothers' household in anticipation of becoming economically independent. This might be a decision individual men made on their own, it might have been based on familial pressure to avoid burdening the fiscal household, or it might have been based on social convention or some combination of the factors. They could hope to advance their social or economic status and through this to marry further up the social scale or become better prepared for the expenses of a family. Middling-status men might, finally, delay marriage in the hope that a more socially advantageous match might become available, whether a young woman with a higher dowry or more social capital. This possibility will be the focus of Chapter three.

When examined in this light, it therefore seems that Salvi's marriage to Nanna was somewhat fortuitous. Salvi was perhaps not early in establishing himself on his own, but he was certainly ahead of many of his peers in age and status in that regard. As a householder in his late twenties, it is not surprising that he would have been considering possible brides. Nanna was the daughter of a minor guildsman, with a respectable dowry, and her family apparently also thought this a good match. While Nanna's family would

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1530," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 143, 63-4.

very quickly have found someone else had the marriage negotiations with Salvi fallen through, Salvi need not have been in any rush. Although Salvi and Nanna's marriage is in some senses 'typical,' it is also the culmination of a set of circumstances that tipped the balance in favor of marriage to Salvi for Nanna's family, and towards marriage at all on Salvi's end.

On 2 October 1427, Vieri Frolio Michi entered into a betrothal contract with and married sixteen-year-old Tessa Cino.[1] Vieri was a thirty-year-old living in the *gonfalone* of Chiavi with his father, a government employee, in a household with assets sufficient to place it in the above 70 percent of the population.[2] Tessa's father, Cino Luca, was an artisan, a swordmaker, who lived in the *gonfalone* of Drago in the central quarter of S. Giovanni.[3] Unlike the groom, Cino did not come from a named family.[4] He was also less wealthy than his new in-laws but still comfortable, with assets sufficient to place him in above half the city's households.[5] Later that month, Vieri, then living in the eastern *gonfalone* of Bue, returned to the same notary and declared that he had received the agreed-upon 190 florins that made up his wife's dowry from her father Cino, concluding the marriage formation process.[6]

Vieri and Tessa's union conforms in many ways to the status-specific demographic patterns explored in the previous chapter. As two individuals from non-elite but comfortable circumstances, they married at almost the exact median age for their gender and wealth. But marriage was not simply a union of two people of the right ages,

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[1] NA 19115 fol. unnumbered (21 Oct. 1427). The notary recorded these transactions separately but on the same day. See Appendix C for a summary of the notarial documents related to the union.
[2] Cat ID 3309. As explained in Chapter One, an assessment of a household's wealth is based on that household's taxable assets, and recorded in the Catasto.
[3] Cat ID 7886.
[4] The Michi fall into the next-to-lowest of Molho's four divisions of named lineages; they were not in the core group of Florence's political and social elite, but still part of the ruling class. Anthony Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy in Renaissance Florence: The Case of Women's Ages," *Renaissance Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1988): 372.
[5] The difference in wealth could be partly accounted for by the dowry itself as Cino changed his Catasto declaration after the original submission in the summer of 1427 to reflect his daughter's marriage and, presumably, the deduction of her dowry from his taxable assets.
[6] NA 19092 fol. 109V. The dowry transaction occurred on 26 October 1427.

each of whom fit into the correct demographic pattern. Rather, it was a union of two families, the formation of an important social tie, and a public statement about each other's position in the Florentine social networks.[7] Marriage positioned the families in the social hierarchy, strengthened and advertised their position in one or more of Florence's overlapping communities by forming or cementing ties to that community.

The identity of a spouse was of utmost importance in achieving these goals. The union served as a public statement of rough equality between the spouses and their families in terms of social status. During the marriage formation process, the spouses and their families made a public declaration of this status in front of the communities that mattered most, through the public betrothal and marriage procession, through common knowledge of the details of the union, and also by involving community members in the marriage formation process. The communities participated in the union's formation as witnesses to the notarial contracts and in a variety of less formal, or at least less documented, roles. [8] The marriage formation process is then, in sum, a statement of each family's identity in terms of their geographic and occupational community and the

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[7] Love, or even fondness, between the partners was a non-issue, especially as the spouses might not meet until after the betrothal. This is not to deny that spouses might have feelings for or be attracted to one another, especially after they were married. Indeed, the household record books of elite men certainly suggested that the writers at least felt sorrow on being widowed. Among the non-elite, where daughters could not be as isolated from those outside the family, spouses might know of or even know each other before marriage. Marriage decisions, however, were based on social and economic capital. For the most part, these concerns were as important to the young couple as to their families. Olwen Hufton, "Women, Work and Marriage in Eighteenth-Century France," in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 198. In fact, Fabbri notes that families were concerned that love could distract a suitor from the more important considerations of social and political status, wealth, honor, and dowry and discouraged emotional involvement. Lorenzo Fabbri, *Alleanza matrimoniale e patriziato nella Firenze del '400: studio sulla famiglia Strozzi* (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 1991), 36-8.
[8] Fabbri, *Aleanza matrimoniale*, 35.

history, present circumstances, and aspirations of each spouse's patrilineal families as well as an opportunity to confirm and occasionally to elevate their social status.

While the elite and the *sottoposti* certainly had very different marriage patterns and communities, as Chapter Two has shown, examining these groups only in isolation from and in juxtaposition with one another allows for the focus to be directed exclusively at status-based dissimilarities. It also ignores the artisans who fit in between these other two demographic groups. Like all Florentines, artisans were using marriage to maintain and improve their social status while solidifying their position within the social networks. But because of their unique and intermediate position in the social hierarchy, the way they did so differed from the other groups.

The artisans have a marriage pattern that is more complicated than either the *sottoposti* or the elite. This chapter will first focus on a sample of artisan marriages to uncover the trends and patterns of their marriage formation process, and then proceed to compare artisan marriage patterns to those of other social groups in early fifteenth-century Florence. Artisans' marriage patterns could resemble those of the elite or the *sottoposti*, calling into question the neat dichotomy created by examining opposite ends of the social spectrum in isolation from one another. Artisans also had their own unique marriage patterns, as demonstrated in the subsequent section. This included a tendency towards social mobility, which distinguished artisan marriage from that of either the elites or the *sottoposti*. It is certainly true that some men and some women married up or down from the ends of the social spectrum, but when both wealth and guild level—only

two of the four aspects of status—are factored in, artisans demonstrated by far the greatest social mobility.[9] Their mobility is in part accounted for by their intermediate position on the social hierarchy; they could move both up and down. But it is further explained by the multiplicity of and flexibility in communities and definitions of status, which allowed artisans to move up or down in one area but remaining steady in another. By contrast, those at either end of the social spectrum were much more likely to marrying within a set community, for the *sottoposti* the geographic community of the neighborhood and for those at the top of the social hierarchy, the community of economically and politically powerful families spread across the city.[10] Finally, the chapter will focus on the issue of community solidarity, arguing that while artisans married outside their communities and extend their ties, they did not neglect the opportunity to strengthen existing social bonds.

What this chapter demonstrates is that while artisans used marriage formation to work towards the same goals of solidifying and improving their status through social networks as other Florentines, they did so in a very different way, reflecting their intermediary and fluctuating position in Florentine society. Their marriage patterns separated them from other socio-economic groups in Florence but also quite literally

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[9] For grooms who can be associated with a major guild occupation, 36.4% entered into marriages with a degree of social mobility, that is, they chose a spouse who was above or below them in terms of either wealth <u>or</u> guild status. For *sottoposti* grooms, this occurred in 44.1% of unions, but for minor guildmen marriages demonstrated mobility in 71.4% of cases where it can be measured by either or both of these statistics.

[10] Samuel K. Cohn, Jr, *The Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 81, 59-60; Anthony Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 13-15.

bound artisans to these other groups by uniting individuals of different status with one another through marriage.

Artisans and the Florentine Marriage Market

Of the sample of 387 unions in the 1425-1429 notarial documents, fifty-eight of them involve at least one spouse who can be firmly tied to a minor guild, either their own or that of a father or brother.[11] But while artisans shared a guild-level identity, and hence had the same potential for political participation at least theoretically, they were not a homogeneous group. They belonged to diverse occupational, familial, and geographic communities. They also differed in wealth and in their possession of a family name, key markers of social status, along with political participation.[12] All of these variables resulted in different marriage opportunities and decisions, even among artisans. This sample, however, provides a core group of what are undeniably artisan unions in all their variety.

As the example of Vieri and Tessa at the beginning of this chapter illustrates, artisan unions conform to the patterns of Florentine marriages as a whole. The median age of artisan brides was 17.[13] The grooms, of course, were much older than the brides;

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[11] There are undoubtedly additional minor guildsmen in the more than 150 unions in which no occupational affiliation can be ascribed to either spouse. In some cases, this occupation was recorded by the notary, and in others it is based on the occupation recorded in the Catasto. For women, we must rely on the occupation of a father or brother, if available. For more on this, see Chapter One.
[12] Lauro Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 18.
[13] In these 58 cases, there are 28 brides for whom ages can be established from the Catasto. 7 of the brides are older than 20, raising the possibility that these were second marriages for them. But even among these older brides, only one was over 30.

they ranged in age from 20 to 64, with a mean age of 31 and a median age of 28.[14] In 23 instances it is possible to identify the ages of both spouses in the Catasto and, hence, to determine the actual difference between the ages of the two spouses, rather than relying on a difference in the average age. The mean difference between the ages of the spouses was 12.2 years, with a median of 11. The differences range from as little as three years, between the twenty-year-old shoemaker Iacopo Mattei and his bride Francesca Zanobi, to as many as thirty-six years, as in the case of the sixty-four-year-old Iacopo Giovanni Luti, who married twenty-eight-year-old Ginevra Domenico Spini.[15] The husband was older in each of the artisan unions and, as with marriages in general, the difference between the spouses' ages increased almost entirely as a function of the husband's age.

The dowries among the artisans reflect their position in the middle of the society. The mean dowry amount for all of the marriages in the notarial documents (1425-1429) is 389 florins while the median is significantly lower, at 200 florins, reflecting the presence of a small number of very high dowries in the sample. In comparison, for the artisans the mean is 233 florins, with a median of 150 florins. Further, more than a third of the dowries fall between 100 and 200 florins, inclusive, indicating a fairly tight concentration in that range. For the smaller subgroup in which both spouses are associated with a minor

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[14] It is possible to determine the ages of 29 of the 58 artisan grooms.
[15] NA 17402 fol. 368V, Cat ID 8822 and 3485. NA 19092 fol. unnumbered (30 January 1426), Cat ID 9523.

guild the mean dowry is 175 florins and the median is 150 florins (see Chart 3.1).[16] Artisans' dowries reflect their economic position in the city more generally. Although the wealth declared by artisan households ranged from nothing to an amount sufficient to place them in the top 2 percent of households, the median wealth was 133 florins, an amount that would position a household above 40 percent of Florentines.[17]

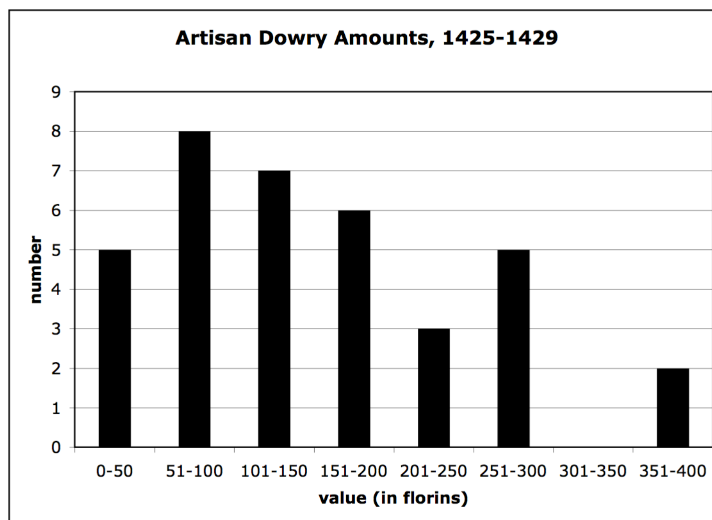

Chart 3.1: Artisan Dowry Amounts for 1425-1429; for all unions recorded in the notarial documents where at least one spouse is tied to an artisan family and a dowry amount is available; n=41. Four dowries, of 650, 700, 1000 and 1600 florins, were not charted.

But just a few examples from the pool of artisan marriages demonstrate the variety. On 25 September 1425, Antonio Duccio, a twenty-eight-year-old armorer and the son of a civic employee in the western gonfalone of *Leon Bianco*, declared that he had

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[16] There are 7 unions in which both spouses are associated with minor guildsmen and the dowry is available.

[17] By comparison, the median value of the assets declared by *sottoposti* and major guild families was 39 and 735 florins, which correspond to the 26th and 73rd percentile, respectively.

received the dowry of his wife, Niccolosa.[18] Antonio lived with his sixty-seven-year-old father, a widower, in a household in the poorest 15 percent of the population. The seventeen-year-old Niccolosa was the daughter of Antonio Giovanni, but her father had died by the time of the dowry payment. Instead, her dowry of 50 florins was paid by her legal guardian, Bernardo Antonio, a man with no obvious kin relationship to her but who was affiliated with the city's Office of Wards, which oversaw the guardianship of some fatherless children.

By contrast, another artisan, Niccolo Domenico Lenzi, also living in the western quarter of the city, but in the *gonfalone* of Leon Rosso, collected a dowry a full thirty two times greater than Niccolosa's on 1 June 1425.[19] At the time, he was a thirty-three-year-old dealer in second hand clothing, from one of the most high-status lineages in the city, according to Molho's hierarchical categorization of named families, and with more wealth than 60 percent of household heads in Florence, at least after the transfer of his wife's dowry.[20] Niccolo's wife, the eighteen-year-old Antonia Benedetto Bardi, was also an orphan like Niccolosa, but one from a powerful and well-connected lineage.[21] Although her family's bank did not enjoy the Europe-wide position of power that it had before King Edward II of England defaulted on the loans he had taken to pay for the Hundred Years War, her uncle's household was wealthy enough to be in the top 1 percent

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[18] NA 18512 fol. 56R. ID 6183. As a civil employee, his father did not work in government but rather was a *sottoposto* working for the government without participating in the political process. In their computerized version of the Catasto, Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber lump occupations such as *corriere* (town crier), *messo* (messanger), *vigilaio* (fireman), and *piffero* (fife player), all of whom worked for the city.
[19] Cat ID 5837. NA 9040 196V.
[20] Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 371.
[21] Molho places the Bardi into the highest echelon of Florentine families. Ibid., 366.

of the population. Her four brothers co-headed a fiscal household even wealthier than their uncle's. Together, the uncle and brothers agreed to pay her dowry of 1600 florins.[22] This was a very large dowry, commensurate with her family's wealth and prestige and far above what most artisans could ever dream of. It was her uncle and one of these brothers who handed it over. These two examples highlight the extreme variation in the experiences and social circles of minor guildsmen though it is important to keep in mind that these dowries, and the experiences of these artisans, are outliers.

The diversity illustrated by the examples of Antonio and Niccolo also illustrate a hierarchy of occupations among the minor guildsmen. Although all belonged to the lower guilds, members of the *Arte del Rigattieri*, the guild of the used cloth and linen dealers, seem to have been higher on the social ladder than members of other minor guilds. Of the ten artisan grooms who received the highest dowries, six were members of this guild. The same is true of two of the six artisan grooms in the wealthiest quintile.[23] In fact, of the twelve grooms associated with this guild, only two receive dowries lower than the median for all artisans. Further, a survey of all the households headed by members of this guild in the Catasto shows that their median wealth was 520 florins, almost four times that of all artisans.[24]

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[22] Cat ID 39 and 29.
[23] Wealth groups each represent one fifth of the households in the Catasto, with the poorest fifth in wealth group one and the wealthiest fifth in wealthgroup five, the highest group. For a more extended explanation, see Chapter Two.
[24] There were 156 households headed by members of this guild.

It is more difficult to establish the relative status of the minor guilds at the lower end of the social scale because there are simply not as many individuals from those guilds in the sample as there are for the *Rigattieri*. That said, butchers do consistently fall towards the lower end of the scale. The median income of all households headed by butchers was only 123 florins, lower than the median for all artisans.[25] Of the six artisan grooms whose households have assets placing them in the poorest 20 percent of the Florentine populations, two are butchers, and none of the butchers have a dowry higher than seventy florins. This is not to say that butchers are marginal or disenfranchised members of Florentine society—their minor-guild status gave them social and political capital and they were financially better off than many in the city—but among minor guildsmen, butchers as a group tended to fall towards the bottom of the hierarchy.

Among the artisan spouses, there are both brides and grooms from across the economic spectrum. For both brides and grooms the highest number fall into the second highest quintile in terms of wealth, but this is followed closely—again, for both sexes—by those in the lowest quintile, illustrating the diverse economic circumstances in which minor guildsmen could find themselves. Further, eleven of the brides and eight of the grooms came from named families.[26] But while four of the marriages involved two partners with family names, these marriages were, in other ways, still decidedly artisan marriages; the mean dowry exchanged in these four marriages was only 226 florins,

[25] There were 85 households headed by butchers.

[26] Two of the grooms and two of the brides fall into Molho's most elite category of lineages, while one more bride is in the second highest group. One bride and three grooms fall into the third highest. The other six brides and three grooms fall into the lowest category of named families, in terms of status.

slightly lower than the mean for the artisans as a whole and 76 florins higher than the median.

Thus while this sample of artisan marriages is diverse in all ways, it is important to note the similarities as well as the variation in the unions. In this, the initial example of Vieri and Tessa is useful as it illustrates many of the commonalities of artisan marriages (see Appendix C). One of the partners had a family name, although his lineage was not particularly elite. Neither family was rich, but neither was impoverished; indeed, both were quite comfortable. Tessa brought a dowry of 190 florins, in the range of 100 to 200 florins typical for artisans. Further, the connection between the spouses is not obvious, in the sense that they did not share an occupation, a parish or *gonfalone*, or a wealth level. The spouses were not even both from families of minor guildsmen. In this sense, as the next sections will show, Tessa and Vieri's union was quite typical of artisans.

Marriage within the Community: The Ways that Artisans Do Not Fit

The Geographic Community

The parish defined the geographic community and, in many ways, the social identity of fifteenth-century Florentines, at least in the notarial records. When notaries did not supply this information, the Catasto can sometimes be used to fill in the blanks.[27] The marriages make it clear how central the parish was for Florentines and particularly for the

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[27] In the 390 unions, the notary included the parish identity of 226 brides, or 58.4%, and 265 grooms, or 68.5%. In 185 of these unions, or 47.8%, the notary recorded the parish identity of both the bride and the groom. The Catasto provides a gonfalone—although not a parish—for an additional 71 grooms and 55 brides, bringing the total number of marriages in which both partners can be placed geographically, at least down to the level of the gonfalone, to 251.

non-elite. There were over sixty different parishes in the city, but almost a quarter of families across the social hierarchy nonetheless chose to marry within the parish (see Chart 3.2).[28] This is not a much smaller proportion of the population than the 30 percent who married within the *gonfalone*, each of which normally consisted of three to four parishes. This shows a strong tendency among families to look for marriage partners in the immediate neighborhood. Finally, almost half of the spouses married within the largest geographic subdivision of the city, the quarter.[29] Indeed, Vieri and Tessa married within the quarter although they came from different parishes and *gonfalone*.

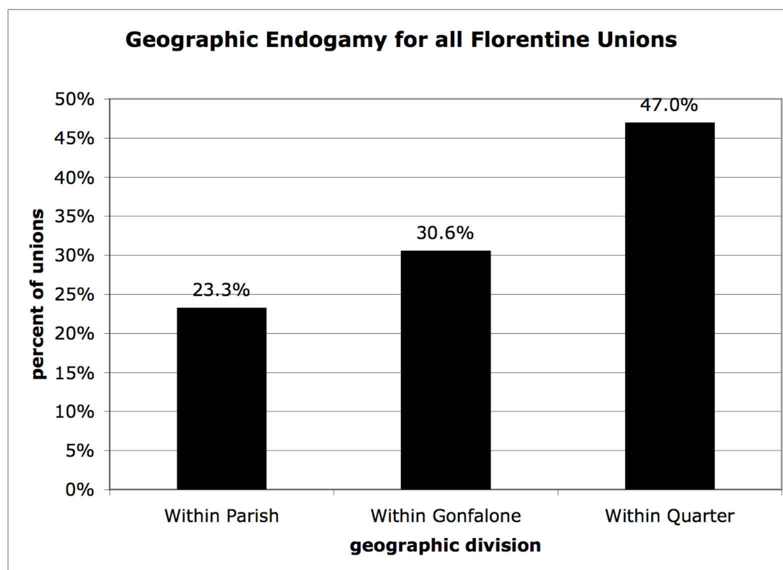

Chart 3.2: Rates of geographic endogamy, 1425-1429, for all unions from both notarial document and Catasto amendments for which the information is available; n=252.

The nearly four hundred Florentine unions from 1425-1429, examined here and presented in Chart 3.2, demonstrate the importance of the local community as a source of

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[28] 43 out of 184, or 23.3% of unions were within the parish
[29] 119 out of 252, or 47.2%, of the unions were within the quarter

marriage partners but also highlight the fact that the neighborhood was not defined strictly by the parish. Some marriages took place within the *gonfalone*, but across parish lines. [30] Especially common were marriages within Chiavi, with two heavily populated parishes, and in the Oltrarno *gonfaloni* of Drago Verde and Scala, the former of which consisted of one very large and one very small parish, in terms of population, and the latter containing five small parishes. Since each of these three *gonfalone*—and each of the parishes in them—was home to a large number of laborers in the wool industry.[31] In all of these cases and throughout the city, the parishes were in close proximity to one another and densely populated. The intra-*gonfalone* marriages are a reminder that the parish was only one of the multiple, overlapping communities with which Florentines identified.

Indeed, one's position in the social hierarchy played a major role in determining within which community one looked for a marriage partner. A survey of geographic endogamy that accounts for social status, defined through wealth and guild level confirms that for the earlier part of the fifteenth century those further down the social hierarchy were also much more likely to marry within the geographic neighborhood than their more elite neighbors, as defined through wealth or political participation. The elites were more

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[30] On the flow of the neighborhood beyond the boundaries of the parish, see Nicholas A. Eckstein, *The District of the Green Dragon: Neighbourhood Life and Social Change in Renaissance Florence* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1995), xiii. Cohn, by contrast, stresses the importance of the parish over the gonfalone as the site for marriage formation in the mid-fourteenth and late-fifteenth centuries, arguing that in the later fifteenth century it would have been as likely to find a marriage partner outside the city as to find one inside the quarter but outside the parish. Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, 39.

[31] On the concentration of occupational groups in certain neighborhoods, see Franco Franceschi, *Oltre il 'Tumulto:' I lavoratori fiorentini dell'Arte della Lana fre Tre e Quattrocento*, vol. 38 (Florence: Unione Regionale delle Province Toscane, 1993), 314.

likely to extend their search for a spouse across the city.[32] As Charts 3.3 and 3.4a and b show, artisans—those in minor guilds, whose median wealth fell just above the 40th percentile—had notably different marriage patterns than those on either end of the spectrum.

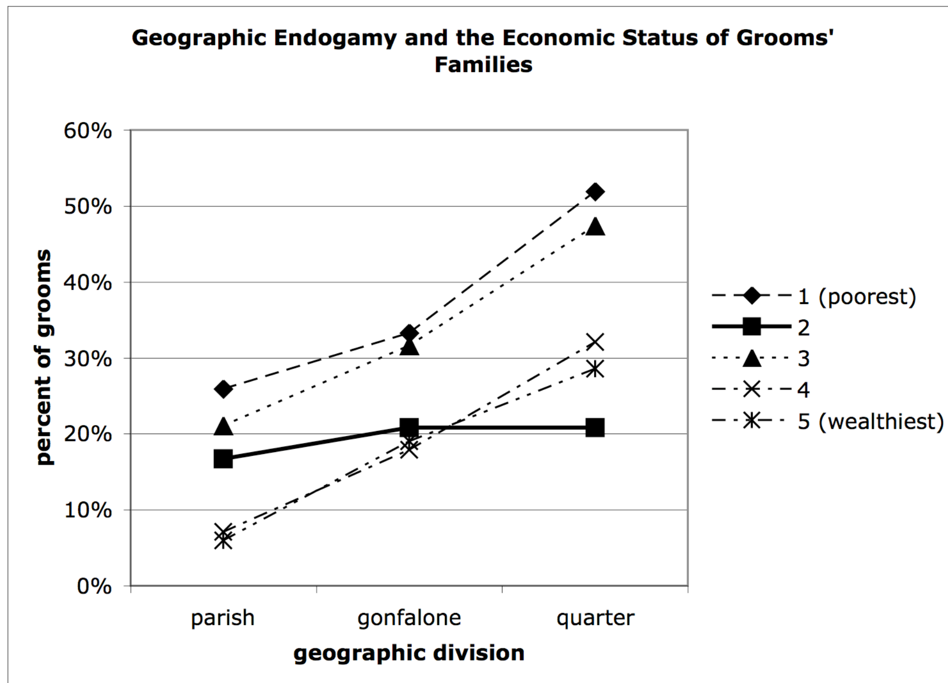

Chart 3.3: Geographic endogamy of grooms, according to wealth group, with 5 being the wealthiest; n(1)=19, n(2)=13, n(3)=16, n(4)=42, n(5)=59.

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[32] Cohn argues that in the later fifteenth century the laboring classes (roughly equivalent to the *sottoposti* under discussion here) were eleven times more likely to marry within the gonfalone than the elite were. Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, 81.

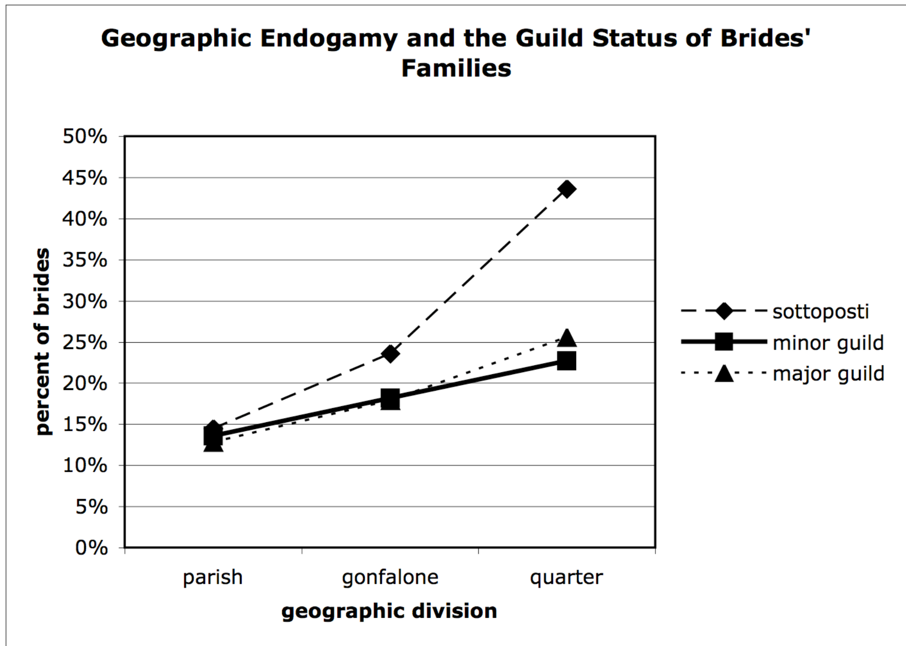

Chart 3.4a: Percent of all brides associated with an occupation who marry within each geographic level of endogamy, divided by guild level; n(*sottoposti*)=41, n(minor)=15, n(major)=27.

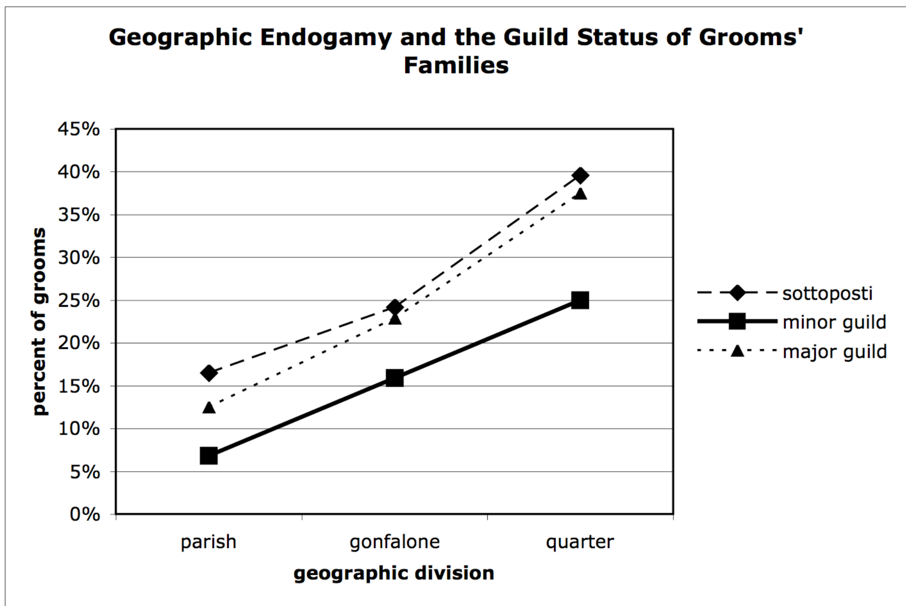

Chart 3.4b: Percent of all grooms associated with an occupation who marry within each geographic level of endogamy, divided by guild level; n(*sottoposti*)=72, n(minor)=24, n(major)=33.

But while status and geographic endogamy follow certain broad patterns in that the elites definitely did demonstrate less of a tendency towards geographic endogamy than those at the bottom of the social hierarchy, those in the middle in terms of wealth or guild level do not fit into this schema. In the guild-level division, the minor guildsmen seem to defy placement into the patterns to which the other groups conform. Like Tessa's father, in the example that opened this chapter, minor guildsmen did not seem to have had the same desire as the *sottoposti*, or even as minor guildsmen, to find sons-in-law within the neighborhood or the quarter of the city.[33] Although they do increase their rate of geographic endogamy as the size of the geographic unit increases, they do not do so at the same rate as the other groups, nor do they fall neatly between the *sottoposti* and the major guildsmen, as might be expected.

Similarly, there is generally an indirect relationship between wealth and endogamy; that is, the wealthier grooms were less likely to marry within the geographic area. Across all levels there was, unsurprisingly, a gradual increase in levels of endogamy as the size of the geographic area under consideration increases. However, the second wealth group, which included the highest concentration of artisans, does not conform to the pattern.[34] Instead, this group demonstrates a level of parish endogamy between that of the third and fourth group, lower than the overall patterns would suggest. The level of endogamy increases only marginally from 16.7 percent at the parish level to 20.8 percent

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[33] See Appendix C for a summary of the notarial documents related to the union.
[34] While a household with assets equal to the median for artisans would fall just above the division between the second and third wealthgroup, 30% of artisans fell into the second wealth group and 25% into the third.

at the level of the quarter. Not only does the second wealth group not conform to the increase in geographic endogamy as the geographic area increases, but it shows the lowest rate of endogamy of the whole population at the level of the quarter. All of the rest of the wealth groups confirm so neatly to the same curve that it is not possible to dismiss the pattern in the second group as a minor variation. The incongruity in both the second wealth group and the minor guildsmen suggest that artisans were defining the pool of marriage partners very differently from the rest of the population.

Hierarchical Communities

Geographic communities included individuals and families from across the Florentine social spectrum. Other communities consisted of members who could be more accurately defined as social peers, at least in terms of one aspect of status or another. Occupational or guild communities were used by Florentines for self-definition, and the city of Florence determined political participation in terms of guild-level communities (minor guild, major guild, *sottoposti)*. While Florentines did not have reified communities defined through wealth, they certainly recognized wealth as a criterion of social status. It is therefore important to consider not just how individuals and families at different levels of the society, defined in terms of these groups, married within the geographic community, but also how often they married within the groups themselves, especially in light of whether or not they also chose to marry within the parish community.

Actual occupational endogamy, marriage to a spouse associated with the same occupation, was very rare indeed. It did occur, but only nine times in all of the 387 unions. For example, on 15 August 1428, Cecca, the daughter of Stagio Giovanni, a weaver, was betrothed to Zanobi Niccoli, also a weaver. Weaving, however, was an extremely common occupation, the second most common occupation in the Catasto in fact. The handful of other families that married within an occupation were similarly engaged in extremely common occupations, working as notaries, apothecaries, used clothing merchants, and workers in the wool industry. The frequency of the occupation, combined with the fact that three of these nine couples also married within the parish, suggests that intermarriage within an occupation was not a factor in spousal selection.

But while marriage within the occupation or within the narrow confines of a single guild was rare, intermarriage within the guild level, between major guildsmen, minor guildsmen, or *sottoposti*, was quite common. In just over half of the cases where both spouses have a clear affiliation with an occupation do they marry within the level of the guild.[35] But, just as with geographic endogamy, those in the minor guilds diverge from the major guilds and *sottoposti*; while over a half of the major guildsmen and *sottoposti* marry within the guild level, only just over a third of the minor guildsmen do so.[36]

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[35] 35 out of 68, or 51.5%

[36] 7 of 12 *sottoposti* unions, or 58.3%, are guild-level endogamous and 19 of 30 major guild unions, or 63.3% are, only 9 of 26 minor guild unions, or 34.6%, are endogamous.

While wealth might not have created community in the sense that guild membership or even shared guild level did, it was certainly also a factor in Florentine social status and community. Marriage tended to occur within the geographic or guild-level community, so too it occurred in the community, so to speak, of the wealth group. In fact, nearly two thirds of Florentines married within their wealth group.[37]

Wealth group endogamy is high for all Florentines within the sample, but it is not uniformly high at different levels of the social hierarchy. Those who married within the wealth group were an elite contingent according to all of the measures that have been applied so far. Since determining wealth endogamy for a couple is only possible when the Catasto records of both spouses can be securely identified and since this is easier to do for the elite, it is not perhaps surprising that those who marry within the wealth group are by and large elite. But if this were simply an increased ability to trace wealth information for the elites, then the group of unions that were definitely exogamous in terms of wealth would be similarly elite. In fact this is not the case; where economic information is available for both spouses but the marriage was not endogamous in terms of wealth, the spouses and the unions are less elite. What we have, therefore, is very wealthy families marrying other similarly wealthy families.

The data show a strong tendency towards lateral rather than vertical movement in the social hierarchy for both the urban poor and the elite. Indeed, scholars have long

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[37] 57 out of 87, or 65.5%

accepted that the elite preserved their position through careful status-based endogamy.[38] Even when faced with rising dowry costs in the sixteenth century, elite Florentines increased the number of women who became nuns and men who remained lifelong bachelors, actually increasing rates of endogamy, rather than intermarring with those of inferior social status.[39] The urban poor married other individuals with similar status but sought spouses within their neighborhood, rather than city-wide. The groups at either end of the social spectrum favored an endogamous pattern within a fairly consistent community using marriage as a way to reinforce existing community ties and identity. Only those in the middle do not fit into the model of endogamous marriage.

Marriage out of the Community

The General Population: Towards Social Stability

This general picture of endogamy suggests that marriage, in the vast majority of cases, was a confirmation of social status rather than an avenue to social mobility. When scholars have examined social mobility and marriage, they have generally focused on the downward social mobility of women and particularly the relationship between women's mobility and dowry amounts.

David Herlihy posits that when women married significantly younger than men did, as was the case in Florence, there would be fewer men than women on the marriage

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[38] Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, 60; Fabbri, *Aleanza matrimoniale*, 43; Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy," 288.

[39] Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy," 299, 334. By contrast, Chojnacki argues for Venice that the most elite, most ancient families could, in hard economic times, marry down for the financial benefits while counting on their lineage to preserve the family's status but that the nouveau riche could not afford to take that chance. Stanley Chojnacki, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice: Twelve Essays on Patrician Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 60.

market at any time due to the natural decline in the population as it aged.[40] This problem was exacerbated by the reluctance on the part of Florentine men—especially elite men—to marry at all and because of the higher number of surviving children in elite families and disinclination to spread the patrimony too thinly.[41] Families at all social levels sought to offset the disadvantage their daughters faced on the marriage market by offering increasingly large dowries. Nonetheless, these factors combined to channel elite women into downwardly-mobile marriages in an effort to preserve the patrimony.[42] Diane Owen Hughes, however, argues that the number of potential husbands was expanded by widowers, who had both a high rate of remarriage and a preference for young, virgin brides, while widows remarried much less frequently.[43] Molho also notes that if men outnumbered women at anywhere near the rate that the Catasto suggests, women would have been scarce indeed and actually at an advantage on the marriage market.[44]

Certainly, the ways in which these various demographic factors interacted were complex, and there are the numerous unknowns in the demographic data, but culture as

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[40] David Herlihy, "The Medieval Marriage Market," *Medieval and Renaissance Studies* 6 (1976): 13.
[41] David Herlihy, "Three Patterns of Social Mobility," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3, no. 4 (1973): 646.
[42] Herlihy, "Medieval Marriage Market," 19; David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles: une étude du "catasto" florentin de 1427* (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques: École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1978), 417.
[43] Diane Owen Hughes, "From Brideprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe," in *The Marriage Bargain: Women and Dowries in European History*, ed. Marion A. Kaplan, (New York: 1985), 41.
[44] Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy," 216.

well as demography and economics shaped the possibilities of marriage.[45] In particular, as a comparison of the ages at marriage shows, men had several decades during which they could enter into a first marriage without social censure, while women almost all married by the age of twenty. The limited window in which women married also reduced their options, while men had more time at their disposal to wait for an optimal bride (or an optimal dowry). As Molho has shown, fathers used deception to extend the time they had to find a husband for their daughters.[46] Even when they succeeded in prolonging the period during which a daughter might marry by an extra year or two, the window of opportunity to find a socially acceptable marriage was short indeed. Grooms definitely had the advantage of time on their side.

The limitation of time was just one of a number of disadvantages brides' families faced on the marriage market, all of which might suggest downward marriage for brides. Nonetheless, a general tendency of endogamy is evident in Florentine marriages overall. Almost half of all Florentines for whom we have the information married within the guild level. An examination of social movement in terms of wealth yields similar results as only a third of the unions for which the information exists demonstrate a discrepancy of wealth large enough to place the spouses in separate wealth groups. In a total of 131

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[45] Chabot, in particular, stresses the importance of cultural and social factors over demography in shaping marriage patterns, while Grubb argues that demographics, some laws, and religion pushed marriage patterns in one direction while economics and inheritance pushed in the opposite. Isabelle Chabot, "La dette des familles: Femmes, lignages et patrimoines à Florence aux XIVe et XVe siècles" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, European University Institute, 1995), 98; James S. Grubb, *Provincial Families of the Renaissance: Private and Public Life in the Veneto* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.
[46] Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy," 194.

unions, either guild or wealth endogamy can be evaluated, and sometimes both.[47] For nearly two-thirds of the unions, the bride and groom are social peers by the measures available.[48] This still leaves a third of the unions, however, that demonstrate some form of mobility and demonstrate that the society was not completely static.

Because so many factors went into determining status, a move up based on one of these many factors might be a lateral or even downward move when defined in other ways. Although the number of unions in which both wealth endogamy and guild-level endogamy can be studied is too small—at only twenty-five—for a detailed statistical study, it is noteworthy that no bride married down in terms of both wealth and guild level, and only one bride married up in terms of both. Salvestra Niccolo Tucci from the Oltrarno *gonfalone* of Drago Verde, was the daughter of a barber, a *sottoposto*, with sufficient assets to place him in the middle quintile in terms of wealth. Salvestra married Domenico Giovanni, a twenty-six-year-old baker and minor guildsmen living with his father in the *gonfalone* of Unicorno, just across the river. Domenico's family had sufficient taxable assets to be in the fourth quintile in terms of wealth.[49] Salvestra had a dowry of 170 florins, 10 florins above both the median dowry paid for *sottoposti* women and those received by minor guildsmen. But in another important sense, Salvestra did not, in fact, move up; Salvestra came from a named family, the Tucci, while her groom did

[47] In some cases, the information is available for either wealth or guild level endogamy, while in other cases it is available for both.
[48] 85 out of the 131 unions, or 65.4%, are endogamous by the measures available.
[49] NA 17383 fol. 635V.

not.[50] Even in this lone case, therefore, Salvestra moved up economically and politically but she did not make a huge social leap by any social measure. Salvestra's union demonstrates that social movement through marriage, while it did occur, was not widespread or drastic in terms of the distance an individual or family moved on the social ladder once the multiplicity of factors contributing to status are factored in.

Further, Salvestra's marriage is an excellent example of the power of a family name in the marriage market. As Table 3.1 shows, women with family names were significantly more likely to marry up than those without family names, at least below the wealthiest quintile. The fourth quintile, for example, contains twenty-eight brides from a variety of different occupational backgrounds, including three major guildsmen, seven minor guildsmen and eight *sottoposti*. While an equal number of these women married up and down, three quarters of those who married up come from named families while none of those who move down did so.

	marry down	marry within wealthgroup	marry up
1	-	5/0	6/3
2	0	1/0	2/1
3	0	2/0	4/2
4	4/0	13/7	4/3
5	9/9	35/28	-

Table 3.1: Social movement of brides, according to the wealth group of their natal family. The number before the slash is the total number who move in that direction, while the number after the slash is the number of those women who came from named families.

[50] According to Molho's division of named lineages into four groups, the Tucci fall into the lowest category; they are named—a mark of prestige—but not included in his list of 417 ruling lineages. Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy," 207, 13.

While the number of women from the lowest wealth group is less representative, based on its smaller size, social mobility is again evident, but also again the degree of mobility is not drastic once the multiple aspects of status are considered. Among the three named brides in this quintile is Gentila Iacopo Machiavelli.[51] Gentila was the eldest daughter living with her parents and three younger siblings—including a younger sister who would also need a dowry—in the central *gonfalone* of Drago. The household had no taxable assets whatsoever, a unique situation among the fifteen Machiavelli households in the Catasto.[52] Her groom, Leonardo Luca Malefici, was the wealthiest of the men marrying a bride from this economic level.[53] The twenty-year-old head of household—his father was dead by the time of his marriage and he was living alone—had assets to place him above sixty percent of households. He was also the only one of the grooms marrying a bride from this economic level from a named family, although from a lineage further down the social hierarchy than his bride's.[54] It certainly did not hurt Gentila's marriage prospects that her dowry of 300 florins was fully twice the amount of the second largest dowry among brides in her wealth group, and equivalent to Leonardo's taxable assets at the time of the Catasto. Given her family's constrained economic situation, Gentila married quite well, and with a very respectable dowry. While it seems likely that her extended family helped to provide her with a dowry her father

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[51] NA 1501 129R. Cat ID 8000.
[52] Of the 15 Machiavelli households, only one other had assets that put them among the poorest third of the city's households. See Cat ID 870. Nine of the fifteen households had assets sufficient to place them among the wealthiest 25%.
[53] Cat ID 888.
[54] Although Molho puts the Machiavelli lineage among in the top level of the city's named families, the Malefici fall into the lowest group.

could not afford, a topic further explored in Chapter Four, her family name and the social capital that came with that were valuable assets in matching Gentila with a wealthier husband.

In the case of Gentila and some of the other women from named families, it is not clear that their marriages to wealthier men should be called marrying up. Another way to think of this is that they were marrying back into their appropriate station, from which their immediate families—but perhaps not their lineages—had temporarily fallen. This, at least, is how the bride's wealthier kinsmen would have seen the situation. And indeed this is a fair read, since the husbands received a dowry far higher than the current financial situation of their fathers- or brothers-in-law dictated. Further, the husband joined a kin network which consisted mainly of people of commensurate wealth and social status as himself, his wife's immediate natal family excluded. Therefore, although he married down economically, in several other important senses he married horizontally or even up.

It is important to note that Gentila was not unique as a woman marrying up. Tessa's marriage to Vieri, described at the beginning of this chapter and in Appendix C, also involved social mobility, as his family was wealthier than hers. For the minority of spouses who are socially mobile, the direction of the mobility was not determined by gender. That is to say, brides, on the whole, were as likely to move up socially as to move down. Of couples that were not from the same guild level, seventeen brides moved up, according to guild affiliation; one of whom was an artisan and the rest *sottoposti*, four married major guildsmen and the remainder married artisans. Another fifteen moved

down; three artisan brides who married *sottoposti* and twelve major guild brides, four of whom married artisans and eight *sottoposti*. This makes the exchange nearly equal, or even slightly favorable to upward social mobility by brides. Brides who move between wealth groups are also almost as likely to move up as to move down.[55] Finally, when both measures of endogamy are examined, the pattern remains the same. The brides who are socially mobile by either definition (or both) can be divided almost evenly between brides who marry up, by one or both measures, and brides who marry down.[56]

Debate on social mobility and marriage in Florence has long focused on the issue of whether or not there was downward social mobility for brides. These debates have considered the issue largely with regard to demography, dowry, and the secondary position of women in such a patriarchal society. An examination of a sample of real marriages from across the social spectrum, however, makes it clear that the issue is much more multifaceted. Women were permanently tied to their natal patriline, as Chapter One demonstrated, not simple transients to be shuffled out of the family as quickly and cheaply as possible. While downward social mobility of daughters and sisters might have conserved the patriline's economic capital, it eroded the social capital in a way that did affect the status of the family. Further, status was so multifaceted that, when multiple aspects are considered and the scope of the study extends across the social spectrum, a great deal more mobility is visible than when the extent of the study is more limited.

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[55] 13 brides, all of them from the top two quintiles, marry down while 16, spread approximately equal across the lower four quintiles, marry up.
[56] 27 brides marry down while 29 marry up.

Although social mobility was limited in any marriage, it did occur and it was not unidirectional.

The Artisan Population: Towards Social Mobility

As when brides and grooms were evaluated separately, the sample of all artisans examined here shows a tendency away from status-based endogamy of any sort. Artisans were much less likely than the population in general to marry within the guild (34.4 percent versus 53.3 percent). They were also less likely to marry within the wealth group (42.8 percent versus 61.5 percent). But while the artisans shied away from the status-based endogamy of the elite, they also did not seek out the geographic endogamy of the urban poor. Less than one in five artisan couples married within the parish, noticeably lower than the nearly one in four for the population as a whole.[57] Less than a third of the artisans married within the *gonfalone* and less than half married within the quarter, numbers equal to or slightly lower than the rates of endogamy for the population as a whole.[58] In fact, like Tessa, many artisan brides did not marry in the wealth group, the guild level, or the geographic neighborhood.

But the reverse side of decreased patterns of endogamy, especially in terms of guild-level and wealth-group endogamy, is increased social mobility. Of the fifty-eight artisan unions, twenty-one of which do not provide enough evidence to evaluate social endogamy of any sort, fully twenty-six demonstrate evidence of social mobility—either

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[57] 5 out of 28 couples, or 17.8% as compared to 23.3% for the population as a whole.
[58] Of the 33 couples for whom there is a gonfalone and quarter, 10, or 30.3%, married within the gonfalone and 14, or 42.4%, married within the quarter

upward or downward—in terms of guild level, wealth group, or both. Ten brides married down, seven in terms of guild level and the other three in terms of wealth. Two of the three brides who married into households poorer than their natal household, however, also married within the guild level. In addition to the two artisan brides who married poorer artisan husbands, there are three artisan brides who married *sottoposti*, and four brides from major guild households who married artisan husbands.

One of the major guild brides, Agnoletta Iacopo Mangiatroi, was from a fairly elite background: she was from a named family, her father's household had assets sufficient to place him in the wealthiest quintile of households, and he was not only a major guildsmen but a judge, someone whose occupation allowed him to play a leading role in his guild.[59] Agnoletta married Bernardo Miniato, a minor guildsman—a beltmaker—from an unnamed family but with sufficient wealth to put him in the same economic quintile as his wife's family, at least after the transfer of the dowry.[60] Bernardo's father had died by the time of his marriage and he headed a household, which he shared with his younger brother. Bernardo was not only well off, but apparently of good social standing, as he was able to receive a dowry of 700 florins. While this was less than the dowry received by some elite men, for example the 1600 florins that Antonia Benedetto Bardi brought, it was approximately equal to the 725 florins that was the mean dowry received by men of commensurate wealth and certainly more than most

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[59] Cat ID 6570. The marriage is recorded in Cat 78 fol. 131 (bobbin 144). Although named, her lineage is in the lowest of Molho's four groups of named lineages, and hence not a part of his ruling class. Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 394.

[60] Cat ID 4262.

minor guildsmen, even wealthy ones, could expect. It is notable, however, that Agnoletta was a twenty-two year old widow, with a nineteen-year-old unmarried sister still at home. Her family's anxiety over the number of young, single women in their household and her status as a widow, along with the fact that Bernardo was already head of his household, might have all combined to facilitate this union.

The other three major-guild brides who moved down, however, were associated with less elite occupations within the major guilds. Two were the daughters of notaries and the third was the daughter of an apothecary.[61] The former two married members of the *Arte del Rigattieri*, while the latter married a shoemaker. One of the notaries' daughters brought a dowry of 150 florins, while the apothecary's daughter brought only 90 florins with her. In none of these cases is it possible to evaluate the wealth of the brides' natal homes, but it seems that their families either did not have much to spend on dowries or did not want to spend what they had. In either case, these families found respectable artisan husbands to accept their daughters for a relatively modest dowry.

The brides who married from artisan into *sottoposti* households display similar trends of small social steps. They were daughters of a stoneworker, a table maker, and a linen dealer.[62] They married husbands with respectable *sottoposti* occupations; a votive maker, a doublet maker, and a dyer, respectively. In the two cases where the wealth group of both spouses is known, the husbands were as wealthy as the brides' natal families, in the third and fourth wealthiest quintiles. Therefore, although the brides were

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[61] NA 11115 fol. 100, NA 17402 fol. 265R-V, and NA 15101 fol. 59.
[62] Cat 79 fol. 391 (bobbin 146), NA 16524 fol. 41, NA 15956 fol. unnumbered (19 May 1427).

moving to households with less access to political power, and lower status in that regard, they were not moving into homes that were less financially comfortable. Despite this, they brought rather small dowries. The dyer received 75 florins while the doublet maker received 100. This admittedly small sample of major and minor guild brides who married down, therefore, suggests that when a family married their daughter down in terms of guild level, they were able to pay a slightly smaller dowry than they would otherwise—and also to pay less than the groom's peers might—even if the bride was moving to a financially comfortable home and to a husband with a respectable, if less politically powerful, trade. The transfer of social capital through the brides' fathers political status augmented the dowry and offset the grooms' financial loss.

The same exchange of economic for social or political capital occurred when brides married up. Of the fifteen brides who married up, eleven did so in terms of guild level, and all of those eleven moved from natal households of *sottoposti* into marital homes of minor guildsmen. The *sottoposti* brides came from a variety of different economic backgrounds; two were from the next to highest quintile in terms of wealth, while four were from the poorest quintile. The occupations of their fathers ranged from locksmiths and knife makers—the two wealthier households in this sample—to the weavers, dyers, and tailors who were the most prominent and politically powerful of the *sottoposti*, to carders and wool washers, disenfranchised laborers in the wool industry. The husbands were not particularly high-status even within the ranks of artisans. There are two used-clothing dealers, but there are also three shoemakers and two carpenters,

more middling occupations. Economic information is only available for three of the husbands, of whom one is in the next-to-wealthiest quintile and the other two are among the poorest.

	all artisans	artisans who marry peers	*sottoposti* women who marry up	*sottoposti* who marry peers
dowry range	38 to 1600	60 to 300	50 to 300	55 to 400
mean dowry	241	165	173	162
median dowry	150	140	200	150

Table 3.2: Dowry statistics and social mobility

Despite what may have been the limited social standing of these artisan husbands, *sottoposti* families were willing to pay, in terms of dowry, for this marriage connection. The dowry amounts of seven of these fifteen unions are available. The mean dowry for these unions is 173 florins, while the median is even higher, at 200 florins (see Table 3.2).[63] These figures are higher than those for *sottoposti* unions without social mobility; it is logical that in order to marry their daughters up, *sottoposti* had to pay more.[64] But the dowries of those marrying up are fairly high even when compared to the group of artisans as a whole. In fact, the dowries are higher than for those artisan unions without social mobility.[65] Since the wealth level of the *sottoposti* and the artisans who marry social equals was quite similar, with the available household asset information spreading the

[63] Most dowry samples are unduly influenced by a few very high amounts while most of the data is clustered lower, forcing the mean far higher than the median. Here the data are actually clustered higher, with a few low outliers forcing the mean down, lower than the median.
[64] This is based on a total of 13 unions in which both a dowry and either occupation or wealth information is available for both partners, to determine social mobility, and the occupational affiliation of at least one partner is known, to determine *sottoposto* status.
[65] This is out of a total of 6 unions.

families of the brides and grooms across the lower four quintiles of wealth, it is not surprising that their dowries are fairly similar. Although the number of cases is small, the patterns serve to further emphasize the exchange of economic for social capital.

Florentines had to pay to marry their daughters to someone of higher political standing, as determined by guild level. A groom, however, was compensated for forming marital ties with a family of lower political standing with a larger dowry than he might otherwise expect. Many grooms, and particularly artisans of middling standing, were willing to marry women of lower status. It is reasonable to hypothesize that, particularly for younger artisan grooms at the beginning of their careers, this boost of cash was an investment in the long term economic health—and hence, indirectly, status—of their families. While this makes sense from an economic standpoint, it is contrary to the idea that endogamy was the primary governing factor in marriages, and that downward social mobility of men was rare.

It is further noteworthy that in unions where there was social mobility, there was almost no geographic endogamy at the parish level. In the ten artisan unions that involved social mobility—six in which the bride married up and four in which the groom married up—for which we can also evaluate geographic endogamy, there is only one instance of marriage within the parish.[66] Of the twenty-seven brides who married down, only two

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[66] The only instance in which there is parish level endogamy is one in which the bride, the daughter of a shoemaker in the poorest wealth group, married an innkeeper, another minor guildsmen but, in this case, one in a slightly better economic position, with assets that placed him in the next wealth group up. This union is described in detail at the beginning of Chapter Four and Appendix C. NA 4622 fol. 99V.

married within the parish and three within the *gonfalone*.[67] None of the twenty-nine upwardly mobile brides married within the parish, while seven of them married within the *gonfalone*.[68]

Indeed, parish endogamy seems to be in opposition to social mobility. It might seem logical that if a father wanted to marry his daughter to a man of higher social standing, he would look first among the men he might know in the parish or in his immediate community, defined in another way. Perhaps one of these men, who knew the father and quite possibly had at least seen the daughter, would be more likely to agree to such a union. Instead, fathers seem to have looked outside the parish when seeking a more elite husband, or when willing to marry a daughter down. It thus seems that, across the social spectrum, families looking for a spouse from a different social background looked beyond the boundaries of the parish and, really, beyond the boundaries of their known communities. One possible explanation is that, since the percent of exogamous marriages was small, one was more likely to find a spouse who would agree to such a union by expanding the circle of potential spouses.

Social Mobility: Why and Why Not?

While it is possible to study the patterns of social mobility in marriage, it is much more difficult to understand the reasons behind them, and notaries recorded only the transactions without any hint at the decisions or steps leading there. Certainly, a balance

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[67] Geographic information exists for both couples in 15 instances at the parish level and in 21 instances on the level of the gonfalone.
[68] The sample size for this is 10 at the level of the parish and 20 for the gonfalone.

of social and economic capital was an important factor in the decision. This was a rare instance in the marriage formation process in which the families of brides and grooms faced the same dilemma. For both genders, marrying up was a gain in social capital, but came at the cost of economic capital, in terms of paying a higher dowry or receiving a lower one. A downward marriage was more advantageous in terms of economic capital but could be costly in social capital.

Abstract calculations such as these obscure the myriad of factors that affected individuals chances on the marriage market. Attractiveness, physical health, reputation, and education all played into the selection of a partner. [69] Unfortunately for historians, these characteristics were not recorded by the notaries in the marriage contracts and cannot be factored into this evaluation. On the one hand, one of the benefits of studying a large sample that spans the social spectrum is that some of these factors that might play a large role in a small number of unions have a more negligible impact on the larger population. On the other, it is sometimes possible to trace the age and the legitimacy of the spouses, which also played a role in a Florentine's marriage prospects.[70] Older brides, whether marrying as virgins or as widows, were less desirable than young women for the majority of men.[71] The families of widows might have to augment the original dowry,

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[69] Herlihy, "Medieval Marriage Market," 12; Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 221.
[70] There are no women or men who are recorded as illegitimate in this sample of artisans. Illegitimacy seems to have played a larger role in more elite households, where illegitimate children almost invariably married down. Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 250; Anna Bellavitis, *Identité, mariage, mobilité sociale : citoyennes et citoyens à Venise au XVIe siècle* (Rome: Ecole française de Rome, 2001), 236. For more on illegitimacy, see Thomas Kuehn, *Illegitimacy in Renaissance Florence* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2002), 162-64.
[71] Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy."

returned from the first marriage, or accept marriage down the social spectrum, as might have been the case for Angoletta Iacopo Mangiatroi, the young widow whose father, a wealthy judge, married her to well-off beltmaker.[72]

Angoletta's marriage, possibly influenced by the presence of a nineteen-year-old unmarried sister, is also an excellent reminder that since marriage was a family concern it is important to consider not just the situation of the spouses but of their entire family. A family with many daughters could not afford to dower the women as well as they might if there was only one. The wills of fathers make this clear. For example, when the wealthy shoemaker Aringo Corsi dictated his will on 4 October 1429, he had three unmarried daughters under the age of ten.[73] To each of these girls, Maddalena, Filippa, and Ginevra, he willed a dowry of 200 florins. If only two should marry, then those two would get 300 florins each. This was, however, the limit to the amount he thought appropriate to spend on a dowry; he stipulated that even if only one daughter married, the dowry should still be 300 florins. For Aringo's young girls, at least, the chances of any one of them marrying upward was enhanced if one of her sisters did not marry at all.

Sons were not unconstrained by family dynamics in marriage either, but brothers could be a liability or a positive factor on the marriage market. On the one hand, in a

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[72] But widows, under the right circumstances, could also marry up. Bernardo Stoldo Rinieri, in 1476 and on the heels of his wife's death, married a widow of lower social standing than himself. He explained in his record book that he married in order to have someone to supervise his four young children. Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 245.

[73] NA 9042 fol. 137R. Cat ID 1859. The daughters ages are listed in the Catasto. They seem to be the product of a second marriage, since in 1427 Aringo, then aged 66, was married to a 35 year old woman and had 4 children under the age of seven living in the household, in addition to a 44 year-old married son, a daughter-in-law, and 2 grandsons, ages 9 and 14.

society that practiced partable inheritance—at least nominally—men with more brothers received a smaller inheritance.[74] This was less a problem in mercantile Florence than elsewhere in Europe, as elite cadet sons could open a successful business as well as the elder sons and the non-elite were all dependent on their own skills and ingenuity to supplement any inheritance anyway. On the other hand, well-placed brothers not only increased each other's social capital through the connection itself, acted as a business partners or investors in one another's business ventures. There were a huge variety of factors in spousal selection and inevitably a combination of these factors occasionally led to social mobility.

Why social mobility was so much more common among artisans than in other social groups in Florence is in fact a two-part question: why were other social groups relatively immobile, and then why were artisans more mobile. The simplest response to both of these questions is that artisans were more mobile because they were in an intermediate position in the social hierarchy. They could move either up or down, essentially doubling their opportunities for mobility, while for elites or *sottoposti* mobility socially often—but not always—occured through unions with artisans. Artisans served as an important node of connection in social movement in the society. But there

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[74] D.O. Hughes argues that although partable inheritance was the norm in late medieval Genoa, one son, usually the eldest often received the major property, for example the lineage's tower, in its entirety. In Florence, household heads strongly encouraged their sons to live together and share the lineage's assets and wrote their wills with this in mind. In reality, however, such joint households often broke up after the death of the *paterfamilias*, although historians debate how often and how quickly. Diane Owen Hughes, "Urban Growth and Family Structure in Medieval Genoa," *Past and Present* 66 (1975): 11; Fredrick W. Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence: Family life of the Capponi, Ginori, and Ruccellai* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 44, 47; Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 506.

was also movement even within artisan-artisan marriages. Of the five artisan grooms who married out of their wealth group, three married artisan women. Similarly, four of the twenty-two artisan brides married artisans of a difference economic background. These figures not only emphasize the multiplicity of factors involved in status, but also the small steps that were the form of most mobility.

Small steps or not, elites worked very hard to avoid social mobility since for them it would have been downward social mobility. In order to maintain their social position, they carefully selected partners from a very limited pool of candidates and, simultaneously, limited or prohibited marriage in instances where it would have been too much of a drain on the patrimony.[75] Further, marrying strictly within the circle of other wealthy and politically powerful Florentines, the entire circle remained fairly tightly closed to social climbers, securing the position of the entire community.

But marriage for those at the top of the Florentine hierarchy was not simply defensive; it was not just about preserving status and patrimony. It was also about tightening alliances within a very small circle of elite and powerful people. Since these bonds were so important, not only socially but also politically and economically, it was risky to "sell" those rights away by marrying down in exchange for the economic benefits of the dowry.[76] Alessandra Strozzi famously complains to her son in a series of letters that they must settle on Marco Parenti as an in-law because she could not afford to give

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[75] Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 225, 79.
[76] Fabbri notes that economic distress was the most common reason for considering downward mobility in marriage. Fabbri, *Aleanza matrimoniale*, 44.

her daughter the higher dowry that a more established family would require. Marco was absolutely elite, but his family was not quite as old and established as the Strozzi line. Given her choice, Alessandra, like most elite Florentines, would have avoided any hint of downward social mobility in marriage.

By contrast, the *sottoposti,* and particularly the urban poor could gain a great deal through an upwardly mobile marriage. The obvious problem they faced was a lack of capital. Fathers lacked the capital to move daughters up. Potential grooms lacked the capital to attract brides with more social standing who were willing to pay as high a dowry as the grooms might get by marrying a social peer, and young men who could not hope for much of an inheritance and who were about to start families could ill-afford to accept a lower dowry. The families of both brides and grooms concentrated their social capital within the neighborhood and so did not have the connections to find matches that might have been economically suitable and still allow for limited social mobility beyond their immediate communities.

Further, it is not clear that *sottoposti* and the urban poor wanted to move up, especially if that meant sacrificing other connections. They had a strong community within the parish and found their partners within that community. When moving up, they would gain in prestige in some circles but, since most individuals who married up the social ladder did so outside of their immediate neighborhood, they would be sacrificing this opportunity to reinforce and even enhance their position within the neighborhood. If

it was indeed neighborhood bonds and status within the neighborhood that mattered most to *sottoposti*, this was a notable sacrifice.

Artisans were particularly mobile in their marriages. Since they had some political clout and some financial security, if certainly not wealth, they were often already well established within the local community. It is possible that by selecting a groom outside both his guild and his parish for a spouse for his ward or in-law, an individual was extending ties beyond the community in which he was already established. It goes without saying, however, that there were not simply a few homogenous social groups in Florence, the elite, artisans, *sottoposti*. These groups represent different areas across the spectrum of the Florentine social hierarchy. There were individuals and families that did not fall neatly into any of these categories; there was also a great social variety within each of these groups; and there were people moving up and down between them. Those who married up or down, could represent poorer branches of elite families (such as Gentila Iacopo Machiavelli), illegitimate offspring who could not marry at the station of their fathers, widows or widowers, or wealthy new families who sought to move up the social ladder. A large portion of these socially mobile individuals passed through the artisan group.[77] This was due to both the intermediate position of artisans in the Florentine hierarchy and the variety among the artisans themselves.

Artisan Communities: Witnesses and Stability

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[77] Fabbri notes the example of Violente, the illegitimate daughter of Lorenzo Strozzi (and hence Alessandra Strozzi's granddaughter), who in 1486 married the shoemaker Francesco Stefano. Ibid., 48.

The fact that artisans were socially mobile and exogamous in their marriage patterns does not mean that they lacked a strong community, or even that their community did not play a role in the marriage formation process. Artisans did involve members of the community in their marriages, thereby cementing their identity within and strengthening existing ties. Although artisans were less likely than those at the extremes of the social spectrum to choose their neighbors as spouses, the community members show up as witnesses to the marriage formation contracts.

For a notarial contract to be valid, it needed to be witnessed not just by the notary, but by at least two other individuals as well. The notary recorded the presence of these witnesses and their identities.[78] Any male citizen could serve as a witness on any contract, although good legal standing and reputation certainly added to his credibility as a witness if the document was challenged.[79] Because of the need for witnesses, the notary would occasionally ask those waiting to record a contract of their own, or even passers-by, to serve as witnesses.[80] There are also individuals, generally notaries, who might be called serial witnesses. These men turned up in the notarial contracts again and again.[81]

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[78] In Florentine notaries, this occurred at the beginning of the contract, after the date and place, and before the body of the contract. By contrast, in Southern France the witnesses were listed at the end. Kathryn L. Reyerson and Debra A. Salata, *Medieval Notaries and their Acts: The 1327-1328 Register of Jean Holanie* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 2004), 26.
[79] To say that women did not serve as witnesses to notarial contracts is not to say that they did not appear as witnesses in court cases, at least elsewhere in Europe. Kathryn L. Reyerson, "Le témoignage des femmes à partie de quelques enquêtes monpelliéraines du XIVe siècle," in *L'enquête au Moyen Âge*, ed. Claude Gauvard, (Rome: École Française de Rome, (forthcoming)), 155. For the importance of having a good reputation to one's ability to serve as a witness, see R. H. Helmholz, "Crime, Compurgation and the Church Courts," in *Canon Law and the Law of England*, (London: Hambledon Press, 1987), 137-8.
[80] Reyerson and Salata, *Medieval Notaries*, 26.
[81] These notaries might have been working in locations where people gathered to have contracts of all sort notarized, and pulled in to acting as a witness. Of the 168 witnesses for artisan unions, 6 appeared as

Rectors of churches and government officials working for the city's Office of Wards, which served as the guardian of some minors whose fathers had died, also appear as witnesses as an incidental part of their professional obligations. Occasionally, therefore, the witness's only connection to the parties in the contract was as a convenient, available witness, with no further relationship whatsoever.

In most cases, however, witnesses showed a greater sense of investment in or connection with the contracts or the parties involved. For example, the artisan Piero Bernardo, a tanner from the Oltr'arno *gonfalone* of Scala, crossed the river and walked over to the center-city *gonfalone* of Vaio on 1 July 1425.[82] There, probably in the Duomo itself, he witnessed the betrothal of the artisan Giovanni Lorenzo, a carpenter.[83] His fellow witness was Benghi Lorenzo, a purse maker from the gonflone of Chiavi and a neighbor of the bride's family. A group including the two witnesses, the notary, and the groom then walked east to Chiavi, where the bride, Felice Tommaso lived with her father, a cutler.[84] There, the notary recorded the marriage, observed by the same two witnesses, probably at the bride's father's home. The witnesses might have then joined in the meal that the bride's father customarily hosted to celebrate the marriage. By the time he walked back to his home across the river, Giovanni had probably spent most of his day involved in the formation of this union.

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witnesses to contracts in 4 or more unions. 5 of the 6 were notaries, including Ser Monte Giovanni, who served as a witness in 6 cases.

[82] NA 16536 fol. unnumbered (1 July 1425). Cat ID 445. See Appendix C.

[83] Benghi Lorenzo is Cat ID 8575. Giovanni Lorenzo cannot be identified.

[84] Cat ID 4525

In the above example, both witnesses followed the couple through both steps of the marriage formation process that took place in two quite separate locations. That alone suggests dedication to this particular union on the part of the witnesses. But there are also other possible ties between the witnesses and the couple. Piero was an artisan like the groom and Benghi, the other witness, was a skilled *sottoposto*, like the bride's father, and came from the same *gonfalone* as the bride's family, albeit from the next parish over. The witnesses, therefore, suggest guild-level and geographic connections to the couple. It is also likely that there were connections that are not obvious. Was Piero previously a neighbor of one of the spouses? Was he in a confraternity with a member of one of the families? Did they share a mutual acquaintance or even a tie through marriage or a godparent? It is impossible to answer these questions, but it is clear that Piero was a peer of the groom at the political level and that he felt a degree of devotion to the couple.

The ties between spouses and witnesses could stretch not only across space but also across time, as an example from slightly further down the social hierarchy demonstrates. Giovanna, from the *gonfalone* of Drago Verde, south of the Arno, was the daughter of the late shoemaker Giovanni Baldino. On 2 June 1426, Ser Matteo Domenico Sofferoni recorded her betrothal to Tommaso Leonardo, who was a threadmaker and *sottoposto* in the wool industry living in the same gonfalone.[85] Representing Giovanna was her guardian, Tommaso Ceccardi, a wool carder also from Drago Verde. Despite the fact that both spouses and the guardian lived south of the Arno, the betrothal took place

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[85] NA 19338 fol. unnumbered (2 June 1426). See Appendix C.

across the river in the central quarter of S. Giovanni, in the *gonfalone* of Vaio. The witnesses, Antonio Lando, a weaver, Tommaso Cecco, a carpenter, and Francesco Giovanni, of unknown occupation, were all from S. Giovanni, and the first two were from the same parish in Vaio, S. Michele Vicedomini where the betrothal occurred.[86]

This might suggest that the witnesses were simply men in the area who were asked to step off the street to serve as witnesses. This, however, does not seem to have been the case. Two week after the betrothal, on 19 June 1426, the same notary recorded the couple's marriage, again in Vaio.[87] The exact same witnesses turned out for the marriage. It seems extremely unlikely that the same three men were simply loitering about, waiting to be called as witnesses, again nor was it either required or standard for the same witnesses to appear for both steps. It is not clear what the connection was between the witnesses and the couple in this case; one witness and both the guardian and groom worked in the wool industry, but in different occupations and in the major industry in Florence at the time. It is also unclear what the couple's connection to Vaio was. One possibility is that the bride's natal family was from that area, but there is no way to confirm that. It is clear, however, that the couple had lasting connections to the three individuals who served as their witnesses to portions of their marriage formation process.

Such connections between witnesses and artisan couples were far from unusual; in fact, the vast majority of witnesses to artisan unions were part of the spouses'

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[86] Of the three, it is only possible to identify Antonio Lando in the Catasto, Cat ID 4903.
[87] NA 19338 fol. unnumbered (19 June 1426).

community, defined in one way or another.[88] There are 159 witnesses to artisan marriages.[89] Of these, it is possible to compare the occupation, neighborhood (either parish or *gonfalone*), or wealth level of the witness to that of either the bride or groom, and sometimes both, in 136 cases. Even with information missing, it is clear that the witnesses came from the same neighborhood, occupation, or wealth group as one of the other of the spouses over half the time.[90] If guild-level connections with other artisans are also considered, the percent of artisan unions with a witness from within the community jumps to over two-thirds.[91] Artisans, indeed, showed a greater tendency towards community in selecting their witnesses than in selecting their marriage partners.

Artisans most often selected witnesses from within their own geographic neighborhood. In almost half of the cases where it is possible to make a determination, the witness came from the same neighborhood as either the bride or the groom, or both.[92] This was true whether or not the bride and groom were from the same neighborhood; both couples who did and did not marry within the neighborhood had a slight preference

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[88] Fabbri argues that for all of Florence, the number and makeup of those participating in marriage formation reflects the centrality of marriage to Florentine society. Fabbri, *Aleanza matrimoniale*, 50.
[89] This excludes witnesses who were labeled as being from outside the walls of Florence, the six "serial witnesses," and one individual who was an employee of the Office of Wards.
[90] 78 out of 136 cases, or 57.3%. This is true despite the fact that it is rare to have all three categories of information for any individual, and not unusual to lack any information beyond a name for one of the spouses. This no doubt leaves a great number of connections hidden.
[91] There are an additional fifteen witnesses of artisan marriages who are themselves artisans, although they do not demonstrably share an occupation, wealth group or neighborhood with either spouse, for a total of 93 witnesses with shared community out of 136 witnesses, or 68.4%.
[92] This is true in 58 of the 122 cases, 47.5%, for which there is geographic data on the witness and at least on of the partners. In 45 out of 56, or 77.6%, of cases where they came from the same neighborhood, they were actually from the same parish. In the remaining 13 cases, the witnesses were certainly from the same gonfalone as at least one spouse and in 5 cases there is also the possibility that they were from the same parish but only the gonfalone and not the parish is available for one of the parties.

for witnesses from within the neighborhood.[93] The stage of the marriage process did, however, have an effect on the rate at which witnesses were affiliated with brides as opposed to grooms. The bride's family largely organized the betrothal and marriage, but dowry declarations were generally controlled by the groom. The effect that this had on witnesses is striking: in betrothal and marriage cases, all witnesses were neighbors of the bride or both spouses. In the dowry cases, however, neighbor witnesses were neighbors of the groom three quarters of the time.[94] But this is not because either spouse was simply grabbing witnesses off the streets; almost two thirds of the witnesses in artisan unions traveled outside of their home neighborhoods to get to the location in which the notary recorded the contract.[95] The example of the witnesses who trekked across the city for Giovanni Lorenzo and Felice Tommaso's betrothal and marriage, cited above, illustrates this point well. The witness, Benghi Lorenzo, was a neighbor of Felice's family, but he walked with Felice's father beyond the neighborhood to witness the betrothal at the largest church in the city before walking back to witness the marriage in his own neighborhood. He was not involved because the events of the marriage formation process occurred near to him; they did not. It seems unlikely that a witness simply asked in from the streets happened to be from the same neighborhood as the bride's family. Instead neighbors like Benghi likely were asked and willing to serve as witnesses—even when

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[93] 16 of 31 witnesses, or 51.5%, came from the same neighborhood that the spouses shared, while 25 of 45 witnesses, or 55.6%, came from the neighborhood of one or the other spouse, when the spouses did not share a neighborhood.
[94] Of 19 witnesses who were neighbors, 15 of them, or 78.9%, were neighbors of the groom.
[95] 75 out of 119 witnesses, or 63%, were party to a contract not recorded in their home parish or gonfalone.

that entailed a good deal of walking—because they were in a shared community and valued that community.

But families did not ask just anyone in the neighborhood to serve as a witness; they specifically asked their social peers, at least in an economic sense. Witnesses were from the same wealth group as either the bride or the groom approximately half the time.[96] Further, witnesses who were neighbors were almost twice as likely to be social peers than were witnesses from outside the neighborhood.[97] Selecting witnesses from the neighborhood cemented social bonds with a community of economic peers within the geographic community.

Although the community of neighbors, and particularly of economic peers within the neighborhood, was the community in which spouses were most likely to look for witnesses, there was also a sizable minority of artisan spouses who looked within their occupational community. First of all, witnesses in artisan marriages were themselves artisans approximately a third of the time.[98] Further, almost one in five of the witnesses shared an occupational affiliation with the bride or the groom.[99] The occupation was approximately as likely to be that of the bride's father or brother as that of the groom.[100] Since there were only a handful of instances among all of the Florentine unions that

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[96] 27 out of 58 cases, or 46.6%.
[97] 17 of the 23 witnesses from within the gonfalone, or 63.0%, were also from the same wealth group, whereas only 11 of the 29, or 37.9%, from outside the gonfalone were.
[98] 32 out of 94 cases, or 34.0%. 12 of the 61 non-artisan witnesses were notaries, possibly selected for reasons of convenience rather than based on any community ties.
[99] 15 of 85 cases, or 17.6%.
[100] 6 witnesses shared an occupation with the bride, and 8 with the groom. In one instance, the witness, a used-clothing dealer, shared an occupation with both spouses' families.

involved spouses from the same occupation—fewer, in fact, than the number of co-occupational witnesses in this much smaller sample of artisan unions—the number of co-occupational witnesses is particularly striking. This highlights the importance of occupational communities, especially for artisans.

These occupational ties were important in and of themselves and, moreover, they seem to have been an adequate substitute for geographic ties. Witnesses who shared an occupational affiliation with one of the spouses were much less likely to share a neighborhood with either spouse than were artisan witnesses in general.[101] This is true not only at the occupational level, but also at the guild level; while over a third of all witnesses were from the same neighborhood as at least one of the spouses in artisan marriages, this was true of only a quarter of witnesses who were themselves artisans, as opposed to nearly half of those who were not.[102] This highlights the importance of occupational communities to identity and Florentine social networks. It also reinforces the idea, further explored in Chapter Four, that various social bonds were activated at different points and for different roles in the marriage formation process. Further, the prominence of occupational identity in witness selection argues for the continued importance of the occupational community to artisans even as the real political power of the guilds declined.

<u>Towards a model of artisan marriages…</u>

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[101] 4 of these 15 witnesses shared a neighborhood with one or both spouses, compared with nearly half of all artisan witnesses.

[102] 18 of the 22 witnesses from beyond the neighborhood, or 45.0%, were artisans, this was true of only 6 of the 18, or 25.0%, who were from the neighborhood.

The degree to which artisan marriage patterns conformed to those at either end of the social spectrum depends on the level at which one looks. At the level of the individual, the demographic level, both artisan women and men married later than elites, and men married latter than the *sottoposti* as well. At the level of the couple, artisans were slightly further apart in age than other Florentines, whether elites or *sottoposti*.

If we then move to consider not just the demographics of the couple but their identities, as defined in their own terms, through their communities, artisans appear even more distinct from those at either end of the social spectrum. While both elites and *sottoposti* married endogamously, within the city-wide community of elites or the neighborhood, respectively, artisans were less inclined to do so. Some marriages were endogamous, in one or both of these senses, but artisans were much more likely to marry outside one of these communities. At the level of the community, however, artisans did use marriage patterns to solidify existing bonds to individuals and to the community at large through marriage. But they did so by involving community members in the marriage process, rather than by choosing them as spouses.

These broader patterns, when compared with those of the rest of the population, highlight the intermediary position of artisans and the fact that the Florentine social structure was fluid rather than caste-like.[103] Because artisans were in a central position in the social hierarchy, they could be more mobile. They could move up or down the social spectrum, but there was also a greater range of lateral movement. This was facilitated by

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[103] Herlihy, "Three Patterns," 624.

a larger population of social peers than the elite had and a greater tendency to marry beyond the neighborhood than the *sottoposti*, hence expanding their city-wide networks in the way that the elite did. They balanced economic and social capital and the various aspects contributing to status. In so doing, they solidified existing bonds through relationships to witnesses. Simultaneously, marriages improved their positions within the city's social networks, either by forming bonds with those of higher status or simply by increasing their social ties beyond existing communities.

On 10 October 1429 in the *gonfalone* of Unicorno, Niccolaio Andrea declared to the notary Ser Bindo Cassi that he had received his wife's dowry.[1] The twenty-eight-year-old artisan Niccolaio, an innkeeper, was originally from Lucca but living in Unicorno, in the western quarter of the city.[2] He was well enough established in his Florentine neighborhood at that point to submit his Catasto declaration as a resident of Florence and both of the witnesses for his dowry transaction came from the neighborhood. His nineteen-year-old wife, Bartolomea, was also from the same neighborhood, where her shoemaker father, Iacopo Ventura, lived with his wife, adult son, and widowed mother.[3] Their union, therefore, bound artisan neighbors, cementing the immigrant Niccolaio's ties to his new neighborhood while reinforcing both households' positions in the geographic, occupational, and status-based communities.

Bartolomea and Niccolaio's dowry contract was a simple, straightforward transaction between two artisan families, but the social and economic relationships that led to it were more complicated. As this chapter argues, even seemingly straightforward unions not only built on relationships between peers, as Chapter Three demonstrated, but also depended on a network of hierarchical social connections. More elite individuals were symbolically and socially important to the union, and also occasionally lent capital, both social and economic, that helped bring the union to fruition.[4]

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[1] NA 4622 fol. 99V.
[2] Cat ID 5225.
[3] Cat ID 5737.
[4] These individuals were not necessarily wealthy or among the most powerful in Florence, but rather slightly better off than the spouses.

In the union outlined above, Niccolaio was significantly better off economically than his wife's family; he had assets substantial enough to place him above 25 percent of the population. His father-in-law, Iacopo, had no taxable assets, a situation shared by approximately 15 percent of the city's population. This would have made it very difficult for Iacopo to accumulate the necessary capital for Bartolomea's dowry, and indeed this seems to have been the case. In Niccolaio's 1427 tax declaration, submitted a full two years before the dowry exchange, he is not only already married to Bartolomea, but the two had an infant daughter, Margherita.[5] While it is difficult to establish the average time lapse between marriage and dowry payment, two years is significantly longer than the usual few months.

In the end, it was not Iacopo who paid his daughter's forty-two florin dowry but Battista Piero, a man wealthier than approximately 65 percent of Florentines. Battista does not seem to have been a relative of Iacopo's and was certainly not a neighbor; in fact, he lived across the city in the eastern *gonfalone* of Leon Nero.[6] Despite the economic and geographic distance between the two, Battista and Iacopo were both shoemakers, and therefore members of the same guild. When Iacopo did not have cash for a dowry, necessary for his daughter's honorable marriage and his household's connection to an economically better-off neighbor, he relied on the social networks to which he had access. A wealthier member of the same occupation and a guild brother

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[5] Cat 75 fol. 363 (bobbin 139).
[6] Cat ID 3857.

assumed the role of patron. Iacopo entered into a position of obligation while elevating Battista's social status by emphasizing his wealth and generosity to his client.

As Chapter Three shows, the marriage formation process provided the opportunity to connect individuals and families of similar socio-economic status to one another as spouses, in-laws, and witnesses, and offered an opportunity for limited social mobility. This chapter argues that it was also a point at which Florentines relied upon, created, and cemented vertical patronage relationships, connecting those at different levels of the social hierarchy not as peers, as spousal selection did, but in a vertical or client-patron relationship.[7] A client could be connected to his or her patron in a number of ways: through neighborhood affiliation or geographic proximity, through a guild or confraternity, as employee/employer, through relationships of blood or marriage, or through an intermediary.[8] While patron/client relationships could involve economic transfers, they were primarily social, based on *amicizia*, a word Florentine letter writers used again and again in requests for favors. It indicated an indefinable bond of mutual good will and obligation.

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[7] On the importance of social patronage and how it differs from artistic patronage, see Jill Burke, *Changing Patrons: Social Identity and the Visual Arts in Renaissance Florence* (University Park, Pa.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2004), 4-6.

[8] For a discussion of the importance of geography to patronage, see Dale V. Kent and Fredrick W. Kent, *Neighbours and Neighbourhood in Renaissance Florence: The District of the Red Lion in the Fifteenth Century* (Locust Valley, NY: J. J. Augustin, 1982), 5-8. For bonds between wool workers of different socio-economic levels, see Franco Franceschi, *Oltre il 'Tumulto:' I lavoratori fiorentini dell'Arte della Lana fre Tre e Quattrocento*, vol. 38 (Florence: Unione Regionale delle Province Toscane, 1993), 307-8. For a description and discussion of the bonds formed by one individual, Bartolommeo Cederini, is presented in F. W. Kent and Gino Corti, *Bartolommeo Cederni and his Friends: Letters to an Obscure Florentine* (Florence: Olschki, 1991), 16-19.

While Florentines were deeply devoted to their Republic, without a ruling nobility, they also depended on ties of *amicizia*.[9] These personal connections were the conduits through which the acts of daily life took place.[10] Finding work or building a career, sorting through a legal issue, or finding a marriage partner, as well as more mundane daily tasks, were facilitated by having social networks that were large, diverse, and included well-connected people; in other words, Florentine life was made easier by possessing social capital.[11] Despite its importance, the term *amicizia* is almost entirely absent from the notarial vocabulary, which favored more concrete, legally defined relationships and identities.[12] In notarial registers, vertical ties are evident instead in dowry donations and through the acceptance of certain roles in the marriage formation process.

There are numerous examples of Florentine elites forming and calling on patronage relationships with other elites and with the peasants who worked their rural holdings. Scholars debate the extent to which these relationships bridged the huge gulf separating the elite from the poorest urban workers in what has sometimes been referred

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[9] On the importance of the idea of republicanism, even as the reality faded, see Susan Mosher Stuard, *Gilding the Market: Luxury and Fashion in Fourteenth-Century Italy* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2006).

[10] Frederick W. and Dale Kent argue that while Florentines supported the idea of a more equitable and objective tax system, the Catasto, they also resented the fact that they, individually, could not rely on social networks to ease their own tax burdens. They continued to present pleas to the tax officials and ask their neighbors and friends to verify their stories. Kent and Kent, *Neighbours and Neighbourhoods*, 29.

[11] Susan Reynolds, *Kingdoms and Communities in Western Europe, 900-1300*, 2nd ed. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), 2.

[12] For the meaning and use of *amicizia* in Florentine letters, see Paul Douglas McLean, *The Art of the Network: Strategic Interaction and Patronage in Renaissance Florence* (Durham N.C.: Duke University Press, 2007), 62.

to as a double city.[13] Some, most notably Molho, have argued that while the elite certainly had contact with the urban poor, these relationships were characterized by fear and animosity, not the *amicizia* that defined client/patron relationships.[14] Others, led by Dale Kent and F.W. Kent, contend that although the elite did fear the mob, they also established personal ties of *amicizia* with known individuals among the urban poor, such as neighbors, servants, and employees. Indeed, Dale Kent has argued that these clients provided the political support that proved so vital to the Medici ascendance in the second quarter of the fifteenth century.[15]

As this chapter demonstrates, networks of patronage—as visible in marriage formation patterns—not only stretched across the city, but artisans played an active role in them as both clients of elites and patrons to those further down the social hierarchy, whether *sottoposti* or less well-off artisans, as is evidenced by the tie between Iacopo and Battista. Patronage relationships, therefore, simultaneously reinforced and tied together a hierarchy of artisans. Further, the position of artisans as central on the Florentine social ladder means that artisans could serve as the nodes of connection between elites and laborers in the networks that made up Florentine society. They were the conduits for social mobility, as demonstrated in Chapter Three, but they also played a central role in a chain of patron/client relationships that stretched across the social hierarchy of Florence.

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[13] F.W. Kent, ""Be Rather Loved than Feared:" Class Relations in Quattrocento Florence," in *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, ed. William J. Connell, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 15.
[14] Anthony Molho, "Cosimo de' Medici: Pater Patriae or Padrino?," *Stanford Italian Review* 1, no. 1 (1979): 32.
[15] Dale V. Kent, *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence 1426-1434* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 16.

Although others have studied the ways that social networks of the elite dominated Florentine culture and politics, this study extends the scope to include artisans. This will better illuminate the position of artisans within the city, and also argue that these vertical networks connected all Florentines.

Patrons played a variety of roles in the process of marriage formation. This chapter focuses specifically on two roles, arbitrator and dowry provider. Individuals who served in either of these roles acted as patrons to the groom and, especially in the latter role, the bride and her family. This chapter explores the meaning of these marriage-specific relationships for Florentine society as a whole but will focus primarily on ways that artisans were both clients and patrons in these relationships. Finally, it examines the role of marriage for forming and reinforcing these extremely important vertical bonds.

Arbitrators

Given that the marriage formation process was so important to establishing the social identity and status of Florentines, the selection of a spouse and the financial negotiations leading up to a marriage could hardly be left to chance. Rather, trusted men, carefully chosen by the families, supervised these decisions and negotiations. Among elite families, each household would hire a *sensale*, or marriage broker, to find suitable, available spouses and then to oversee the negotiations. Families would also enlist kin and friends—individuals to whom they had a more personal connection—to search out potential spouses and negotiate the specifics of the marriage contract, such as the dowry

amount, makeup, and terms of payment.[16] Finally, the families would begin the legal steps towards a marriage through a notarized betrothal (*sponsalitum*) contract, overseen by witnesses and formally approved by two arbitrators, men invited by the families to supervise the proceedings. While the sources do not exist to track the process in such detail for artisans, both elite and artisan marriage negotiations resulted in betrothals approved by arbitrators.

The Betrothal Contract

The betrothal, in fifteenth-century Florence, was the most public part of the marriage formation, perhaps along with the procession of the bride and her dowry to her new husband's home after the marriage.[17] As opposed to the actual marriage, which usually took place in the home of the bride's father or guardian, or the dowry exchange, which was for all intents and purposes a business deal conducted at home or wherever the notary was working, the betrothal took place in the parish church. The church was not only a public space; it was the center of the parish community, one of the most important communities for Florentines in terms of both their identity and their social connections.

In the church, for all to observe, would be a small crowd consisting of the notary, the groom and perhaps his father or another relative, the bride's father or another man

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[16] Osvaldo Cavallar and Julius Kirshner, "Making and Breaking Betrothal Contracts ("Sponsalia") in Late Trecento Florence," in *"Panta rei": Studi dedicati a Manlio Bellomo*, ed. Orazio Condorelli, (Rome: Il Cigno Edizioni, 2004), 397.

[17] On how this parade fit into the larger marriage formation process, see Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Zacharias, or the Ousted Father: Nuptial Rites in Tuscany between Giotto and the Council of Trent," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1985), 186-7; Isabelle Chabot, "La dette des familles: Femmes, lignages et patrimoines à Florence aux XIVe et XVe siècles" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, European University Institute, 1995).

serving as her legal guardian (often a brother or an uncle), at least two witnesses, and the arbitrators. The bride herself was usually absent; her presence was not necessary as consent by proxy was perfectly legal, and Florentines did not see any reason for a bride and groom to become acquainted with one another before the marriage.[18] After recording the date, place, and identity of the witnesses, the notary wrote that the bride's guardian promised she would accept the groom as her future husband, and the groom promised to accept the bride and her dowry (see Appendix C for a sample contract).[19] Then the notary listed two *prudentes et onesti viri* who served *in arbitrator*. These arbitrators, the notary would record, were in agreement with the terms set, and particularly with the *arrhae sponsalicae*, a sum of money roughly equal to the dowry that, in the event that the betrothal was called off, would be forfeited by the party that broke the contract.[20] The contract legally bound the two parties to each other and to the terms set.

The actual betrothal, and the role of the arbitrators, was largely a public and legal confirmation of already concluded negotiations. As Molho has shown with the elite Cino Rinuccini's personal record of the events leading up to his 1460 marriage, the details of the marriage settlement had already been established by the time of the formal betrothal.[21] In his *ricordanze*, Cino wrote that most of the men from the extended

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[18] Klapisch-Zuber, "Zacharias," 184.
[19] For the most detailed description and explanation of the betrothal contract in Renaissance Florence, see Cavallar and Kirshner, "Bethrothal Contracts," 395-404.
[20] Ibid., 409-10.
[21] Anthony Molho, *Marriage Alliance in Late Medieval Florence* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1994), 183.

Rinuccini family determined and agreed to the financial details of the marriage, and only after that, at the formal betrothal, the arbitrators agreed to the terms.

But the fact that the negotiations were concluded before the betrothal does not make the arbitrators irrelevant. In Cino's case, one of the arbitrators, Lorenzo Vettori, also served as a marriage broker and active participant in the marriage negotiations through the process leading up to the betrothal. The other arbitrator was new to the marriage negotiations but a very major player in Florentine politics and society more generally; he was Giovanni de Medici, the younger brother of Florence's leading citizen, Piero, and the son of Cosimo the Elder.[22] In addition to the instrumental role that Lorenzo played in the negotiations, both arbitrators were, as Molho argues, "highly respected friends [called on] to add the prestige of their personal social standing to the legal arrangements already concluded by the two parties."[23] The Rinuccini family, therefore, chose arbitrators based on the individual's involvement with the negotiations and the desire of the family to tie themselves publicly to the individual.

Artisan Betrothals

Families less elite than the Rinuccini rarely kept the *ricordanze* that would allow historians to follow the step-by-step process of marriage formation for them; all that remains for the non-elite is the betrothal contract recorded by the notary, and that only sometimes. Although canon law strongly encouraged marrying couples to contract both a betrothal and a marriage, a betrothal was not strictly necessary for a legally valid

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[22] Ibid.
[23] Ibid.

marriage under either cannon or Florentine law.[24] Words of present consent, exchanged as part of the actual marriage and usually followed by consummation, were sufficient to constitute a legally binding union under both ecclesiastical and secular law, although a marriage without a dowry or notarial documentation was very weak under Florentine law. Because the betrothal was not absolutely necessary, S. K. Cohn argues—and Julius Kirshner and Oscaldo Cavallar agree—there are very few betrothals relative to the number of marriage contracts among fourteenth century notarial documents. Further, those betrothal records that exist tend to be for quite elite families.[25]

In contrast to the late fourteenth-century evidence considered by the abovementioned scholars, betrothals from 1425 to 1429 were neither rare nor limited to the elite. Of the 387 unions from 1425 to 1429 in the surviving notarial documentation, about a third involve a betrothal contract.[26] Marriage and dowry contracts do outnumber betrothals, but not in such numbers as to suggest that the use of betrothals was in any way rare. Based on this sample of notarial contracts, it is also clear that the use of betrothals was not restricted to the elite. Slightly over a third of the brides in the betrothals came from named families, a marker of elite status, almost the exact same proportion as in all of the notary-recorded unions.[27] Similarly, the brides were from families associated with

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[24] Cavallar and Kirshner, "Bethrothal Contracts," 403.
[25] Cohn finds that for the late 14th c., a betrothal contract exists for less than one in nine marriages. Samuel K. Cohn, Jr, *The Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Academic Press, 1980), 19; Cavallar and Kirshner, "Bethrothal Contracts," 403.
[26] 136 of the 390 unions involve a betrothal. For many of the unions, multiple steps of the marriage appear in the notarial document. Among those who have a betrothal, only about 25% do not also have a marriage or dowry exchange.
[27] 48 out of 136 betrothals and 146 of 387 unions.

major guilds in approximately 13 percent of the total betrothals.[28] 10 percent of the brides were from families associated with minor guilds and 13 percent came from families with *sottoposti* trades. As with the brides, a third of the grooms had surnames and just over twelve percent were associated with the major guilds. [29] In contrast to their future wives, however, a full twenty-one percent of the grooms are associated with a *sottoposto* trade, mostly as skilled laborers in the cloth or clothing industries.[30] While it is therefore fair to say that those at the very bottom of the social hierarchy—day laborers and the indigent—did not often appear in betrothals, by no means did only the elite use betrothals.

But while the brides and grooms in the betrothal cases came from a variety of different social backgrounds, at least amongst those citizens of Florence with taxable assets, their families consistently chose more elite men to serve as arbitrators. In the 136 betrothal cases in the notarial documents, almost all of which name two arbitrators, 192 different Florentine men served in this role.[31] Although the rate of affiliation with the major and minor guilds, and non-guild occupations is very similar to that of the brides' or grooms' families, the proportion of the individuals with surnames jumps from about a third for the spouses to fifty-six percent for the arbitrators.[32] Furthermore, of the 129

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[28] In 47 of the 136 betrothals can the trade of the bride's father or brother (where her brother serves as her guardian) be identified either through the notarial record or through a Catasto identification.

[29] Out of 136 betrothals, 48 have surnames and 17 are major guildsmen.

[30] 29 of the 136 grooms have trades below the guild level, with 3 tailors, 3 dyers and 3 weavers.

[31] In some cases there are no arbitrators listed, the names are illegible, the men are from outside the city, or only one arbitrator is recorded.

[32] 88 of the 195 men, or 45%, have a recorded occupation, with 38 non-guild occupations, 25 minor guildsmen and 24 major guildsmen. 110 out of 195 have surnames.

arbitrators identifiable in the Catasto, fully 59 belong to households within the wealthiest quintile of the population; as a whole, the arbitrators were a wealthy group, as well as socially elite.

The differences in social status between the spouses and the arbitrators might make it seem that there would be little common ground between them, but in fact geography seems to have played a major role in linking them together. In the cases in which the *gonfalone* of both the bride's family and the arbitrator can be determined, they shared a *gonfalone* forty-five percent of the time.[33] The grooms came from the same *gonfalone* as their arbitrators thirty-four percent of the time.[34] Given that spouses were from the same *gonfalone* in only 30 percent of cases, these figures confirm that the neighborhood was fertile ground for interaction between those at different levels of the social hierarchy, and particularly for the sort of interactions that would lead to the strengthening of vertical social bonds.

Some elite individuals seem to have been especially popular as arbitrators. The forty-three-year-old Francesco Andrea Quaratese, of the *gonfalone* of Scala, was certainly in need of a steady supply of socially prominent arbitrators; between 1427 and 1429 he was responsible for the marriages of four young women. Two were his daughters and two were more distant relatives, members of the Quaratese family whose fathers were no longer living. As one of the most socially prominent members of the Quaratese family, Francesco assumed guardianship of the orphaned young women and the

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[33] Of the 116 cases in which both *gonfalone* can be identified, they are the same in 52 instances.
[34] The *gonfalone* match in 40 of the 116 instances in which they can both be identified.

responsibility for finding husbands for them. And he was in a good position to help; his household was among the fifty richest in the city, according to the Catasto.[35]

But Francesco still looked to someone even more elite to serve as the arbitrator. For all four unions, he enlisted the help of Niccolo Giovanni Da Uzzano, a man in his late sixties, living, like Francesco, in the Oltrarno *gonfalone* of Scala.[36] Niccolo was not only the head of the sixth wealthiest household in the entire city and the wealthiest in Scala, he was also the leader of the anti-Medici party that dominated the government at that particular moment.[37] With Niccolo's help, and with very handsome dowries of over a thousand florins each, Francesco fulfilled his duty of seeing each of the young women in his care married to a man of appropriately elite social rank.[38]

It was not only elites, such as the Quaratese or Rinuccini families, who sought the help of prominent arbitrators, and it was not only those at the apex of Florentine society who agreed to serve as arbitrators. Benedetto Piero was a dyer in his late forties living in the *gonfalone* of Chiavi with his wife and five children under the age of fourteen. His household assets, in the Catasto, placed him among the city's wealthiest quintile of households.[39] Despite his wealth, however, Benedetto did not come from a named family and his occupation—he was a weaver—made him ineligible for membership in a major

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[35] Cat ID 48.
[36] Cat ID 34.
[37] Niccolo da Uzzano's role in politics in this period is described by in Book IV of Niccolò Machiavelli, *History of Florence and the Affairs of Italy: From the Earliest Times to the Death of Lorenzo the Magnificent* (New York: M. W. Dunne, 1901), 158-69.
[38] The young Quaratese women's husbands were from some of the wealthiest and more prominent families in Florence, including the Dellaluna, the Giucciardini, and the Tebalducci. NA 9040 fol. 320R, NA 9040 fol. 342R-V, NA 9040 fol. 424R, NA 10638 fol. 234R.
[39] Cat ID 8581.

or minor guild, and hence he was excluded from political participation. Due to these factors, his status more generally would have been lower than that of many individuals with similar assets. He was established financially but—like all wealthy Florentines, and especially those who were not part of an old named family line or a major guild—needed to maintain and build his social network. One way in which he did this was to participate actively in the marriages of others as an arbitrator, increasing his visibility as a patron. He acted as the arbitrator in three betrothals occurring between 1425 and 1428, recorded by two different notaries.[40] The notary Ser Giovanni Dino Peri recorded the betrothal of Filippo Giovanni and Sandra Matteo in 30 May 1425, and also drew up the betrothal contract for Abramo Giovanni and Niccolosa Domenico on 2 December of that same year. Ser Alesso Galuzzi recorded that Bartolomeo Antonio and Domenica Niccolo were betrothed on 16 December 1428.[41]

The three unions that Benedetto participated in did not involve wealthy families. It is only possible to identify with certainty the Catasto entry of two of the spouses' families involved – that of Sandra Matteo and Abramo Giovanni—but both of these families had assets that placed them in the bottom forty percent of the population in terms of wealth.[42] Further, in each case the *arrha sponsalicia* was lower than 150 florins. For Domenica and Niccolosa the amount was 100 florins each. Sandra's *arrha* was 140

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[40] NA 16536 fol. unnumbered and NA 16524 fol. 40R.
[41] For Filippo Giovanni and Sandra Matteo NA 16536, fol. unnumbered (30 May 1425), Abramo Giovanni and Niccolosa Domenico NA 16536, fol. unnumbered (2 Dec 1425), and Bartolomeo Antonio and Domenica Niccolo NA 16524 fol. 40R.
[42] Abramo Giovanni is Cat ID 8430 while Sandra Matteo is Cat ID 4009, headed by her father, Matteo Orlandino.

florins but the dowry, paid seven months after the simultaneous betrothal and marriage, was only 115 florins. Keeping in mind that the median dowry in the notarial contracts of this period was 200 florins, an *arrha* (and presumably a dowry) of 100 to 150 florins was sufficient to place these women well above the ranks of the urban poor—whose dowries might be supplemented by charitable donations.[43] It is, however, a paltry sum compared to the thousand florins or more that a young woman of the Florentine elite, such as one of the Quaratese women or women of Benedetto's own economic standing might bring with her to her marriage.

While the spouses whose unions Benedetto was involved in did not share his economic standing, they were, in two of the three cases, part of his neighborhood. Two of the betrothals took place in Benedetto's *gonfalone* of Chiavi, in his parish church of S. Piero Maggiore.[44] The other four families, the notaries recorded, were members and residents of Benedetto's parish of S. Piero Maggiore, at least at the time.[45] They might have been poorer than he was, but the individuals and families involved in these unions

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[43] This amount is also above the 50 florins threshold that Cohn uses as the cutoff point of the *populo minuto,* the laboring classes. Cohn, *Laboring Classes*, 71.

[44] While the location of Sandra's betrothal is not recorded, her dowry exchange does occur there a few months later. NA 16536 fol. unnumbered (19 November 1425).

[45] The notary did not record where Domenica's betrothed, Bartolomeo, resided. Presumably he lived under the roof of his father, Antonio, who gave his permission for the union, but the notary did not record where Antonio lived. Filippo, Sandra's betrothed, was identified with the parish of S. Piero Maggiore at the time of his betrothal, but when he accepted his wife's dowry, only seven months later, he was identified with the parish of S. Ambrogio, also in Chiavi. Since the two parish churches were no more than 400 meters apart, he hardly moved a great distance, and perhaps it was not his residence that changed at all, but only the way that either he or the notary identified his parish affiliation. Only Sandra's family lived beyond Benedetto's neighborhood, in the *gonfalone* of Leon Nero. Her parish church, S. Iacopo fra le Fosse, was no more than 600 meters from S. Piero Maggiore. Unlike Filippo's parish of S. Ambrogio, however, S. Iacopo fra le Fosse was in both a different *gonfalone* and a different quarter of the city, making it administratively completely separate.

were all part of the parish community, along with Benedetto. They shared with him the concerns of the *gonfalone* and they also would have met him in the public spaces of the streets and church.

In addition to sharing space and a geographically defined identity with the spouses and their families, Benedetto also had an important occupational tie to many of them. Benedetto is clearly identified as a dyer, in both betrothals recorded by Ser Peri Giovanni di Dino and in his Catasto entry. Like Benedetto, all three of the grooms and the father of one of the brides—all of the spouses who can be identified by occupation—worked in the dyeing industry.[46] Dyeing was one of the larger industries in the city, the eleventh most frequently cited occupation in the Catasto, but such a high number of dyers in Benedetto's circle was certainly more than coincidence. These individuals, including Benedetto, had ties to one another—whether personal or through an intermediary—through the community of dyers. The grooms and other family members were not Benedetto's equals in the industry, as the difference in wealth makes clear. They might have been his employees or subcontractors, either at the point of the betrothal or in the past, or he might simply have known them through the social network of the industry. Just as between Iacopo, the poor shoemaker struggling to pay his daughter's dowry at the beginning of this chapter, and Battista, the much wealthier shoemaker who supplied the

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[46] Both Sandra's father, Matteo, and her betrothed, Filippo, as well as Domenico are described as dyers. Abramo was described by the notary somewhat more ambiguously as one who *laborat in arte tinte*, someone who works in the dying industry, although his Catasto entry identifies him as a dyer. The notaries did not list an occupation for either Domenica or Niccolosa's father, the latter of whom was dead at the time of the betrothal.

funds, employment within a shared industry opened the door for closer vertical connections, cemented during the formation of a marriage.

As poorer and less well-connected families sought arbitrators, they, like those above them on the social scale, looked higher, even if only relative to their own status. Antonio Domenico was a man of modest means, with household wealth lower than nearly 75 percent of the population.[47] In his mid-sixties, he was a *sottoposto*, working as a weaver of wool and living in the Oltrarno *gonfalone* of Drago Verde, with a high concentration of laborers in the textile industry.[48] Antonio was well below both Niccolo da Uzzano, the effective head of Florentine government of this neighborhood, and Benedetto Piero, the wealthy dyer. Nonetheless, his age, skilled trade, and modest—yet not indigent—financial circumstances still might have made him an influential figure within his poorer community of woolworkers. The fact that, on 2 June 1426, he served as an arbitrator for Giovanna Giovanni's betrothal attests to this.[49] Giovanna's father, a shoemaker, was no longer living and instead Tommaso Ceccardi, also living in the *gonfalone* of Drago Verde, served as her guardian. Tommaso was a comber of raw wool and hence another laborer in the textile industry with a less skilled and lower status

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[47] Cat ID 1979

[48] For a short description of the Drago Verde neighborhood of S. Spirito, see Nicholas A. Eckstein, "The Brancacci, The Chapel, and the Mythic History of S. Frediano," in *The Brancacci Chapel: Form, Function and Setting*, ed. Nicholas A. Eckstein, (Florence: Leo S. Olschki, 2007), 16-17. For a longer account, see Nicholas A. Eckstein, *The District of the Green Dragon: Neighbourhood Life and Social Change in Renaissance Florence* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1995).

[49] NA 19338, fol. unnumbered (2 June 1426).

occupation than a weaver.[50] Giovanna's future husband Tommaso Leonardo, was also a wool worker, a treadmaker, living in Drago Verde. While neither Giovanna nor Tommaso Leonardo can be identified with certainty in the Catasto, her *arrha* of 100 florins suggests that both she and her future husband were people of modest means, comfortable but by no means wealthy. The other arbitrator in the betrothal was Domenico Corrodo, who lived across the river in Leon Bianco and whom the notary described as part of the Ghibelline party.[51] While most marriages took place in the parish of one of the spouses, usually the bride, this one occurred across the river, in the central quarter of S. Giovanni where the witnesses were from. Antonio, however, made the journey across the river with Giovanna's guardian and future husband in order to formalize their marriage plans.

The spouses and their families, when looking for an arbitrator, turned to economically and socially important men within their community. This community could be defined by the neighborhood or through occupation, as well as other social networks, such as confraternities. Occasionally, the arbitrator could be connected to the family in more than one way as was the case with Benedetto, who shared both occupation and neighborhood with those in whose betrothals he served. The role of the arbitrator allowed the families of the spouses to involve an important individual in the marriage formation

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[50] Master craftsmen, such as weavers, could become secondary members in the *Arte della lana*, which gave them some rights to control standards, but could not participate in guild administration or government along with the merchants. Those below the master-craftsman level, such as cleaners and carders, could not open their own shop or participate in the guild at all. Franceschi, *Oltre il 'Tumulto'*, 84.
[51] Cat ID 6003.

process. It is possible that a prestigious, well-connected, and elite arbitrator would help the family negotiate a more favorable dowry or create a union with a family slightly higher on the social ladder than they might otherwise be able to do. But if the arbitrators were able to materially improve the marriage negotiations for the family, a question that cannot be answered through a historical record that only preserves the final results, it is unclear to what degree they did so through their own intimate knowledge of the marriage market or through their bartering skills—honed in Florentine business dealings but equally valuable in Florentine marriage negotiations—and how much they did so simply by adding prestige through association with the family.

But beyond materially improving the marriage formation process, the role of the arbitrator allowed a family to cement a social bond with someone higher up the social hierarchy. The arbitrator basically played the role of more-elite patron to the less-elite client of the spouse or spouse's family, a relationship that could be played out at any social level. The family gained the assistance of the arbitrator in the marriage and through association with him. They also built on their social capital through the connection and thereby could presumably activate connections in the future with the patron and, through him, his social network. The arbitrator, in turn, assisted the family that initially approached him, the other spouse's family, and the couple, thereby placing several families in a position of gratitude to him. He increased his social capital, through several vertical bonds. He also set himself up in a position where these families would turn to him again the next time they needed help. The families owed him a certain amount of

respect for his assistance, elevating his position in regard to theirs. This was not just a relationship hammered out between the families involved but instead played out very publicly, in the betrothal in the public space of the parish church, in front of and in the eyes of their various communities. The individual who filled the role of the arbitrator contributed to establishing the social standing of each of the players, and their position in relationship to the members of their various communities.

Dowry Providers

The role of the arbitrator allowed for the creation or reinforcement of bonds of patronage through its largely ceremonial function. But, as the example of Bartolomea and Iacopo at the beginning of this chapter makes clear, families could not simply rely on the prestige of a patron to bring a marriage to fruition. Brides' families also needed more material help to pay a dowry commensurate to the family's social status, a huge economic burden but also a necessary part of the marriage formation process for all Florentines. Fortunately, individuals like the shoemaker Battista stepped in as patrons and charitable donors, helping Florentines scrape together the money necessary for an appropriate dowry.[52]

In her will, recorded on 9 November 1425 in the north-central *gonfalone* of Vaio and included in the notarial register of Ser Ugolino di Peruzzo, Niccolosa, the widow of Rinaldo Giannozzi Gianfiglia and daughter of Iacopo de Alberti, demonstrated her

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[52] See the beginning of this chapter and Appendix C.

awareness of the importance of dowries for women.[53] She left several bequests to named individuals:

> Similarly, for the love of God she leaves to Maddalena, the eldest daughter of Nannino Dino, staying on the *Corso dei Tintori* [near S. Croce] to help with her dowry if and when she marries, 30 florins.
> And to Brigida, daughter of the late Filippo Cino of the parish of S. Trinita, to augment her dowry if and when she marries, 45 florins.

While these amounts were not large, they would alone make a modest but respectable dowry for a poor woman. In order to collect this sum, the young women had to marry and, with this bequest, they had the means to do so. While Niccolosa's bequests are not unusual, her will shows her to have been keenly attuned to the social realities of these individual women, and eager to step in and help them.

The importance of dowry in fifteenth-century Florence, socially, legally, and economically, cannot be overstressed. A union without a dowry was seen as little more than concubinage, at least by Florentine elites. The lack of dowry could also undermine the validity of the union if it was challenged in court. Further, a woman cohabiting without marriage did not enjoy the legal and economic protection of a wife and widow if she could not prove, through witnesses and notarial contracts, that she had brought a dowry with her to the union. According to Florentine law, the dowry belonged to the woman as a wife and a widow. Courts were quite consistent in enforcing a woman's right to her dowry over her husband, former in-laws, or creditors. The dowry therefore served

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[53] NA 20704 fol. 123V.

as a woman's financial safety net throughout her life. Finally, a dowry was a marker of social status for the woman, her natal family, and her husband.[54]

While dowries were an important concern for all marriages, the amount of the dowry varied with the social status of the two families and the broad spectrum of amounts reflects the huge gap between the richest and the poorest in Florentine society. The 275 dowry and *arrhae* amounts recorded in the notarial documents between 1425 and 1429 range from a mere 25 florins—a charitable gift—to a princely 3200 florins. The average dowry was 372 florins but, as with all economic statistics in Florence, the average is heavily influenced by a small number of very high dowries.[55] The median dowry is 200 florins. It is quite possible that even the averages in the surviving notarial records are higher than the reality, as several of the books with the most marriage contracts were produced by notaries who had a decidedly elite clientele.

To understand the economic burden of the dowry, it is helpful to put these amounts in perspective. John Henderson, in his study on poverty, notes that a Florentine manual laborer in the early fifteenth century might earn as much 33 florins per year.[56] A skilled worker could hope for 45 to 50 florins annually.[57] To keep oneself fed, Henderson estimates that the cost would be approximately 1.5 florins monthly.[58] Further, the annual

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[54] Molho calls Florentine dowries "barometers of families' status." Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 17.
[55] These data include both first and second marriages. The three dowries of three thousand florins or higher all went to daughters of the Borromeo Filippo Borromei. NA 9040 fol. 185V, 197R, and 285V.
[56] These amounts have been converted from lira to florins.
[57] John Henderson, *Piety and Charity in Late Medieval Florence* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 365.
[58] Ibid. Goldthwaite gives a considerably lower estimate on the price of food, placing it at about .75 florins per month. Richard A. Goldthwaite, *The Building of Renaissance Florence: An Economic and Social History* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1980), 347.

rent for an artisan might be 7 florins, while a laborer could pay approximately 3 florins.[59] Overall, the Catasto officials established that the minimum cost of living for a Florentine adult in 1427 was 14 florins per year.[60] Bartolomea's dowry of 42 florins, therefore, would have been more than her impoverished shoemaker father took in per year and commensurate with the family's annual expenses.

The amount of a dowry was common knowledge in the community, passed along by word of mouth and in letters, and used to fix a family's position in society. It was even used to determine what women could wear, according to sumptuary laws.[61] Dowry amounts were rising in Florence at a much quicker pace than wages or inflation.[62] The cost could leave fathers and family heads in a desperate position, "terrified by the birth of a daughter" and torn between providing her with a respectable dowry and preserving the

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[59] Eckstein, *Green Dragon*, 23, 33. A prostitute, however, might have to pay as much as three to four florins per month for a room in which to ply her trade, making her quarters twelve times as expensive as the laborer's. Brucker finds that Rosso di Giovanni de'Medici declared this much in monthly income from each of the six rooms he rented to "*femine mundane*" in his 1427 Catasto entry. Gene A. Brucker, *Renaissance Florence* (New York: Wiley, 1983), 59.
[60] Goldthwaite, *Building*, 348.
[61] William J. Connell, *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 109; Diane Owen Hughes, "From Brideprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe," in *The Marriage Bargain: Women and Dowries in European History*, ed. Marion A. Kaplan, (New York: 1985), 42.
[62] Why dowries were so high in Florence is unclear. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber favor a demographic explanation while Molho, along with Isabelle Chabot, argues that demography cannot be the only factor David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles: une étude du "catasto" florentin de 1427* (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques: École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1978); Chabot, "La dette des familles", 98; Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 324-6. Dowry inflation was by no means limited to Florence but a problem throughout northern Italy. See, for example, Stanley Chojnacki, "Dowries and Kinsmen in Early Renaissance Venice," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 5, no. 4 (1975): 571-2; Trevor Dean, "Fathers and Daughters: Marriage Laws and Marriage Disputes in Bologna and Italy 1200-1500," in *Marriage in Italy, 1300-1650*, ed. Trevor Dean and K. J. P. Lowe, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 97.

patrimony for the rest of the family, including their wives and other daughters.[63] By the fifteenth century, this individual and familial anxiety was a collective concern of the entire society.[64]

Further, it is clear that dowries were a source of anxiety to all families; even a modest dowry was more than the poorest parents could hope to leave to their daughters. While in some cases families could save on their own to cover a modest dowry, provided that times remained good, other families did not have the liquid wealth to cover a dowry. The assets they had were tied up in tools, household goods, and other necessities that could not be liquidated without compromising the family's livelihood.[65] To amass the capital for a dowry even as small as Bartolomea's was therefore an extremely pressing concern.

The responsibility of providing a dowry, legally and through convention, belonged to the bride's father or to his heir if he was dead. In fact, young women were

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[63] Dante Alighieri, *The Paradiso*, ed. trans. John Freccero (New York: Penguin, 1970), Canto 15 lines 103-04. On the tensions created by this dowry system and its escalating amounts, see Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "The Griselda Complex: Dowry and Marriage Gifts in the Quattrocento," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 213. On a possible relationship between dowry costs and the higher number of girls than boys abandoned to the *Ospidale degli Innocenti*, Florence's foundling hospital, see Richard C. Trexler, "The Foundlings of Florence, 1395-1455," in *The Children of Renaissance Florence*, *Power and Dependence in Renaissance Florence, Volume 1* (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1993), 19

[64] The collective anxiety was so high that in 1425 the Signoria stepped in to create the *Monte delle Doti*, the public dowry investment fund. Julius Kirshner and Anthony Molho, "The Dowry Fund and the Marriage Market in Early Quattrocento Florence," *Journal of Modern History* 50 (1978).

[65] The most expensive item in most poor households was the bed, and, after that, the kitchen cabinet. Franceschi, *Oltre il 'Tumulto'*, 294. Even among the wealthy, the problem of coming up with enough liquid capital remained, and often created conflict between mothers, who depended on the return of their liquid dowry for their comfort in widowhood, and daughters, who were in a compromised and vulnerable position as long as their dowries remained unpaid. For a case study of such a conflict at a slightly later period, see Giulia Calvi, "Maddalena Nerli and Cosimo Tournabuoni: A Couple's Narrative of Family History in Early Modern Florence," *Renaissance Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (1992): 326.

legally entitled to a dowry appropriate to their station when they came of marriageable age. It was up to her father to save, raise the money, or ask for help on his daughters' behalf, a task fathers took quite seriously. Even on their deathbeds, fathers were careful to address their daughters' dowries in their wills.[66] In several cases, notaries recorded that a dowry was paid by a bride's father, along with someone else, when the notary also noted that the bride's father is dead.[67]

Fathers, however, were not the only people giving dowries to young women, a fact one might miss if one relied only on the dowry contracts. Instead, funds for the dowries came from a wide variety of relatives and non-relatives. In some cases, these funds took the form of a gift for the purpose of marriage, and often were contingent upon marriage, as were the widow Niccolosa's bequests to Maddalena and Brigida. In other cases, an individual would augment the paid dowry of an already married woman. For example, Buona, the widow of Domenico Niccolo, added to the dowry that her daughter, Caterina and her son-in-law, the civil servant Domenico Vigoroso, has already received by notarizing a dowry augmentation of 24 florins.[68] In either case, the money was not simply a gift for the young woman—or her husband—to spend, but rather it very specifically a dowry, legally the property of the bride during and after the marriage.

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[66] A dowry could again be willed if a girl's new guardian died before she reached marriageable age. Obviously this increased the chance for confusion or mismanagement of the considerable sums in the intervening years. For one such example, which eventually turned into a court case, see Thomas Kuehn, "Law and Arbitration in Renaissance Florence," in *Law, Family and Women: Toward a Legal Anthropology of Renaissance Italy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 55-56.
[67] For example, when Agnolo Chirico Pepi accepts his wife Margherita's dowry of 650 florins in July of 1427 from Margherita, her mother, and her brother. The notary notes, however, that the money that Margherita handed over was from her late father, presumably through his will. NA 11696 fol. 275R-V.
[68] NA 9034 fol. 5R-V. Cat ID 222.

Even when the dowry went to a wealthy young woman or a relative, giving money away in this manner was good for the donor's soul. Indeed, dowry bequests and other donations of dowries were becoming an increasingly popular form of charity in the early fifteenth century, as donations of alms were declining.[69] Young women were seen as members of the "deserving poor" who, with timely intervention, could avoid being a financial or moral drain on the commune. Young women were also among the "shame-faced poor," those whose economic status—while not abject—had declined drastically relative to their social status defined otherwise, and who were uncomfortable announcing their need.[70] Gentile Iacopo Machiavelli, the woman from an impoverished household but with an elite family name, whose marriage to the better-off Leonardo Luca Malefici was described in Chapter Three and Appendix C, likely fell into this category.[71] The logic was that with help these poor women would assume their proper role in society, as wives and mothers, as members of a marital lineage of the proper social status, avoiding both dishonor and destitution, both of which were harmful to the *res publica*.

But, especially for those who left dowries to specific, named women, donors were not only interested in simply performing an act of charity for its own sake. They were also interested in helping these specific women, most often relatives, neighbors, or

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[69] Cohn traces the number of dowry bequests relative to other charitable gifts in Siena and notes a sharp increase between 1375 and 1425. Samuel Kline Cohn, *Death and Property in Siena, 1205-1800: Strategies for the Afterlife* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1988), 28. Similarly, Henderson finds that in Florence in the early 1400s confraternities were giving less to poor families and more to widows and undowered young women. He notes that changing patterns in giving might be linked to a desire to eliminate, rather than relieve, poverty and the declining view of the chronically poor as worthy recipients of charity. Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 384, 54.

[70] Henderson, *Piety and Charity*, 397.

[71] NA 1501 fol. 129R. Cat ID 8000.

employees. These dowry bequests demonstrate that, even when a father did pay the bulk of his daughter's dowry, other individuals in the daughter's social network might have supplemented the dowry.[72] Further, they highlight the extent that social networks far beyond the patriline provided support for individuals even in marriage, a situation that is traditionally thought of as a concern of the patrilineal family.

A survey of testaments written from 1425 through 1429 shows testators bequeathing dowries or dowry augmentations to female relatives, mostly to granddaughters and nieces.[73] For the most part, both the donors and the recipients in wills are quite elite; about half of the young women have family names, and none received a dowry of less than 150 florins. Maria Piero Vecchietti, for example, received a bequest of 300 florins from her paternal grandfather, Niccholetto Piero Vecchietti, presumably her legal guardian and the heir of her late father.[74] The money, however, came not from the Vecchietti patrimony but from the combined dowries of Maria's mother and paternal grandmother, both also deceased.[75] It is not clear if these bequests constituted the extent of Maria's dowry or if they supplemented a dowry already bequeathed to her by her father; the wealth of her grandfather and Maria's status as sole heir suggest that her

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[72] Chojnacki has demonstrated that this was the case in Venice. Stanley Chojnacki, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice: Twelve Essays on Patrician Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 140.

[73] A search for wills written between 1425 and 1429 in the ASF's Notarile Antecosimiano collection reveals bequests of dowries to 5 granddaughters, one the daughter of a daughter; one possibly illegitimate. In addition, another will includes dowry bequests to 3 sisters, nieces of the testator. There are undoubtedly more wills in other collections, including the papers of individual families.

[74] NA 2546 fol. 49-65. The will was written on 14 October 1428.

[75] Maria received 200 florins from the dowry of her mother, Mea, and another 100 from the dowry of her grandmother.

dowry was more extensive. Maria was also her grandfather's universal heir, meaning that she received all that was left of his estate after his other bequests and outstanding debts were satisfied.

In these bequests, Niccholetto was employing a good economic strategy. By making specific bequests to Maria, and doing so from her mother and grandmother's dowries, Niccholetto guaranteed that Maria would receive at least the 300 florins from his estate, since the Florentine court system would protect money from or for a dowry against creditors. Further, he did so without draining the ancestral patrimony, since his gifts came from money that other women brought into the patrilineal household when they married in, although in this case her status as universal heir makes this irrelevant. He therefore satisfied his duties to ensure her respectable marriage and preserve the wealth and reputation of his household, even if he did not live long enough to oversee the details.

Beyond the close family line, however, wealthy individuals were concerned with the dowries of their communities more broadly, including poorer members of the named family group, other relatives, and even associates. In his will, the wealthy Bartolomeo Iacopo Ridolfi, of the *gonfalone* of Ferza, left 1500 florins for the purpose of supplementing the dowries of young women.[76] Unlike many donors, however, Bartolomeo did not leave the money to be dispensed among *puellis pauperis*, as most donors requested, but specifically to young women born into the extended Ridolfi family. These young women might enjoy a measure of social status by way of their family name,

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[76] NA 14663 fol. 348R-350R. Cat ID 1103.

but not all were wealthy and some might even be considered shame-faced poor. Bartolomeo—rather hyperbolically—wrote that these girls should not be reduced to begging for their dowries. He also extended his offer of a dowry supplement beyond the family to those who were affiliated with the Ridolfi including, potentially, families related through marriage, neighbors, or even employees.

The dowries, however, were not pure altruism. They confirm how important marriage was for the patriline, and provide evidence of one way that Florentines looked to expand their networks and social capital. When women from the Ridolfi family married well, it reinforced the prestige of the entire extended family. It also provided the family with an opportunity to form valuable social connections. Perhaps most importantly, an old and respected kin network could not maintain its status while its own young women married far below the family's desired social rank. Donating dowries to the members of one's family or social group, therefore, helped the status of the social group while also elevating and emphasizing the donor's position as a patron and head of the family.

The importance of these strategies in his bequest is evident in the detailed directions Bartolomeo left for the oversight and distribution of his charitable gift. The dowry money, Bartolomeo Iacopo Ridolfi specified, would be placed in the form of shares of the public debt, and controlled by consuls of the elite wool merchant's guild. The consuls would select one hundred girls to receive fifteen florins each in the year following Bartolomeo's death. Bartolomeo's dowry fund was not entirely unique in

fifteenth-century Florence; Molho found a similar fund established by Giovanni Borromei, who left two thousand florins in an account of the *Monte delle Doti*.[77] The money was distributed to young women nominated and approved by a committee of elite associates of the testator, including his widow. As Molho points out, the money then went only to women who might not have been wealthy but who were already connected to Giovanni's elite circle.[78] The same is true of Bartolomeo's gift; his generosity was limited to those who were a part of his larger social network and were able to approach and gain the approval of the elite consuls of the *Arte della Lana* even as he reached out to those beyond his branch of the family and even beyond the patriline. He was using dowry to reinforce his position as an elite member of an established social network and to help those within his network.

Like Bartolomeo, most elite testators who left money to those outside their nuclear families left it to distant relatives or non-relatives who were part of a shared community, very frequently a geographic community. Sandra Domenico, for example, left money to two young sisters who lived in the same parish as she did, S. Maria del Fiore in the *gonfalone* of Drago.[79] Similarly, those Florentines with familial roots or properties in the countryside often remembered their rural communities when making bequests. The wealthy notary Ser Piero Lorenzo, living in the *gonfalone* of Leon d'Oro, but originally from the countryside, left dowries of twenty-five to fifty lira (roughly six to

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[77] Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 108.
[78] Ibid., 109.
[79] NA 19095, packet 5 (19 February 1426).

fourteen florins) to six different young women from his rural community.[80] In each of these cases, as well as several others, both male and female testators sought simultaneously to perform an act of charity, "for the love of God and health of their soul," as the notarial formula ran, and to help—and be remembered by—those who were a part of their community.

In most cases, it is impossible to determine the exact relationship between the donors and non-relative receivers of dowry bequests, even when they live in the same neighborhood. Often the fathers of the young women wewre dead, making the women difficult to trace in the Catasto or to associate with an occupational guild. The fact that almost none of the unrelated young women come from a named family, as opposed to nearly half of the testators and related women, suggests that the women are socially beneath the donors and the testators are acting in the role of a patron to the poorer members of their social network even if the nature of that social tie is unclear.

In eight instances, however, it is quite clear that the testator enjoys a hierarchical relationship with the recipient of a gift, as these three female and five male testators leave dowries to women who are explicitly described as the domestic servants or former servants of the testator. The eight young women, four of whom are from the countryside and the other four of unknown origins, receive dowries or dowry supplements ranging from 10 florins to 150 florins. The average bequest was forty florins, a respectable dowry

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[80] NA 2546 fol. 1R-17V.

for a poor artisan or laborer in the city.[81] These dowries would seem even more substantial in the countryside, where dowries tended to be lower.[82]

Servants did not, however, only receive gifts of dowries on the death of their employers. Iacopa Niccolo was from the rural town of Signano, in the upper Arno valley, but had lived in the city for a period working as a servant for Taddea, the widow of Adimari Rinieri. [83] Iacopa then married Domenico Iacopo, a shoemaker from her hometown. Domenico made the journey back to the city, in August of 1426, to receive—and notarize his receipt of—his wife's dowry from Taddea, the former employer, who provided twenty of the forty-one florins.

The presence of servants among those receiving dowries raises the issue of life-cycle servanthood in Florence.[84] Certainly, it is one thing to prove that some young servant women received bequests or gifts of dowries, something that is hardly surprising given the popularity of dowries as a form of charity in the early fifteenth century. It is quite another to prove that these young women entered service in order to earn a dowry and marry. However, there is evidence that proves that this was at least occasionally the

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[81] Instead of a cash dowry, one woman was instead given usufruct of a house for two years, an unnamed quantity of money, a cloak, and cloth. NA 9042 fol. 136R-V. I have not attempted to factor the value of this gift into the average.
[82] Wards of the *Ospedale degli Innocenti*, the famous Florentine orphanage that opened in 1445 often married men from the countryside, as the paltry dowries provided by the hospital seemed more acceptable to those from the countryside than the city. Richard C. Trexler, "The Foundlings of Florence, 1395-1455," in *The Children of Renaissance Florence*, (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1993), 7-34.
[83] NA 9040 fol. 247V.
[84] Klapisch-Zuber found 10 marriage contracts, mostly for after 1450, in which a girl under the age of 10 was contracted as a servant in exchange for the payment of all wages as a dowry when she reached the age of marriage. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Female Celibacy and Service in Florence in the Fifteenth Century," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 173.

case. On 29 April 1425, the Florentine Ubaldino Guasconi, of the *gonfalone* of Leon D'Oro, transferred property to Paola Ciabattini, a resident of the rural village of Montale as the fulfillment of a contract of employment that can only be described as life-cycle servanthood.[85] Over a year earlier, Braccino Ciabattini, Paola's brother and guardian after their father's death, had entered into a contract with Ubaldino. Braccino promised that his sister would work for Ubaldino as a servant in his home. In exchange, Ubaldino promised to give Paola a dowry when she married. The next year, Paola married Niccolo, also from Montale. At the time of their marriage, Braccino promised his new brother-in-law a dowry of 15 florins. The property transfer of April 1425 represents the payment of this dowry from Ubaldino, Paola's former employer, to Niccolo, her husband, but as a dowry belonging to her and her heirs.

In Paola's case, she and her brother entered into a contract of service for the purpose of obtaining a dowry for her. Like the majority of the servants in the testaments, Paola was from the countryside and she returned there to marry. It is not impossible that poorer girls within the city of Florence also entered into such contracts, although documentation that would prove this has not surfaced. It is clear, however, that of the many creative ways Tuscans sought to fund dowries, servanthood was one. Further, Florentines were inarguably involved in life-cycle servanthood, at least as employers of rural young women. As such, Florentines bound themselves to their former employees,

[85] NA 18510 fol. 361R. Ubaldino is Cat ID 7530. Paola and her brother are from the village of Fugnano, outside of S. Gimignano, but are living in the village of Montale, outside of Pistoia. The contract is a *donatio inter vivos*, not a dowry contract.

and their natal and marital families, in a lasting way. They served as patrons both as employers and as providers of the dowry.

While the burden of providing a young woman's dowry fell onto the shoulders of her father, a wide range of relatives, neighbors, and employers helped. Some did so, no doubt, out of genuine affection for the young woman or her family, and others purely for the sake of performing charity where they knew charity was needed. For others, however, the gift took care of an employee or relative, either from an explicit contract, in the case of Ubaldino and Paola, or a less-explicit duty to care for poorer members of one's social network as a patron and a Christian, such as Battista's obligation to Bartolomea's father or Bartolomeo's concern for his Ridolfi relatives. In many cases, the dowry gift filled more than one of these functions. As a result, Battista accrued both the spiritual benefit of performing the act and the social benefits of acting as a patron and elevating his or her position in society.

Marriage and Patronage

Marriage formation serves as an excellent lens through which to examine patronage on account of the universality of marriage as an experience for Florentine women and as a source of anxiety for Florentine household heads. Florentines across the social spectrum shared many of the experiences of marriage formation. The formation of a new union was also, across the social spectrum, an occasion for the coming together not just of social peers but of clients and patrons. Finally, all of this occurred in front of witnesses as well as notaries, who recorded the proceedings and preserved these records.

Networks of patronage were a way of life in fifteenth-century Florence. As has been amply demonstrated by others, the elites tied themselves together while working toward their own interest at the expense of others through extensive and active networks of patronage.[86] Politics, economic life, justice, and, as this and other studies make clear, marriage, all moved within the conduits of patronage.[87] But patron/client relationships were not limited to a closed circle of elites. Indeed, the division between the elite and the non-elites was anything but clear-cut. The links of patron/client relationships extended the full breadth of the Florentine social hierarchy.

Certainly there is evidence in the marriage records of the bonds of *amicizia* between urban elites and their rural dependents, where scholars on both sides of the debate have long accepted that bonds of patronage existed. The numerous dowries paid by urban elites to rural young women, both in wills and otherwise, join the dowries, loans, and debt forgiveness that historians have already noted flowing to the country during the fifteenth century.[88] Further, urban elites were willing to employ rural young women as servants and then assist in their marriages, either as a stipulation to the labor contract or in addition to it. In the case of these maidservants, it is true that urban elites might have been more willing to help rural associates than those in the city—or rural women and their families were more willing to accept this form of help—although more

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[86] Molho, *Marriage Alliances*, 13.
[87] McLean, *Art of the Network*, 49.
[88] Molho, "Cosimo," 12.

research is necessary to firmly establish the parameters and patterns of life-cycle servanthood in Tuscany.

It is clear, however, that in numerous and consistent ways all across the social spectrum, patrons were involved in the marriages of their clients. Molho, once the strongest opponent of bonds of *amicizia* reaching to the working poor, concedes that "a fair number" of dowry fund accounts were created by patrons or charitable donors.[89] Similarly, at a time just before the dowry fund, the notarial documents demonstrate that patrons found a variety of ways to contribute to the honorable and socially beneficial marriage of less well-off, even if not necessarily poor, women in their social circles. Through bequests, charitable contributions, gifts to relatives, financial rewards for former employees, or simply through unexplained payments like the one Battista made for Bartolomea, patrons allowed for or facilitated marriages for young women while also relieving their guardians of some of the financial burden and anxiety that dowries caused.

Very importantly, however, patrons did not only play a role in the marriages of the *miserabili* who, like Bartolomea and her father Iacopo at the beginning of this chapter, had no assets. Indeed, many of the women who received gifts of dowries were not destitute. Further, patrons were in most cases men more elite than the spouses, but they were by no means all wealthy and powerful men. Women of comfortable or high status, like Niccolosa, frequently wrote wills and left dowries for named and unnamed recipients, among other small gifts. Wealthy artisans acted as the patrons of those who

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[89] Anthony Molho, "Deception and Marriage Strategy in Renaissance Florence: The Case of Women's Ages," *Renaissance Quarterly* 41, no. 2 (1988): 104.

shared their occupation or neighborhood but who were less well-off, while artisans of more modest economic stature, further down on the social spectrum but still respected members of their small communities, served as patrons to those even further down the social hierarchy than they were. Like Antonio Domenico, the weaver in Drago who served as an arbitrator, many were simply a few rungs above the spouses on the social ladder. These patrons did not show up by chance on the day of the very public betrothal or when a dowry was needed. They were affiliated with the families beforehand and used whatever status or resources they had to act as patrons.

In that sense, both arbitrators and donors of dowries acted out of *amicizia*, out of the indefinable sense of goodwill and mutual but unequal obligation that was the foundation of Florentine networks of patronage. In the continually changing social landscape of Florence, bonds or patronage needed to be constantly reinforced and activated. This was necessary both for the sake of maintaining the bonds but also for the sake of those involved, who depended on the bonds to accomplish small and large tasks. Marriage formation both offered the opportunity to reinforce these vertical bonds, just as Chapter Three showed it did for horizontal bonds, and was a point at which people depended on them for help.

The existence of *amicizia* across social strata does not mean that class conflict did not exist. It did, and other scholars have proven that sufficiently.[90] But Florentines also

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[90] The scholar who has worked most extensively on class conflict in Tuscany is Samuel Cohn. His more recent work centers on the tensions between the urban elite and those living in the *contado*, but his earlier works forced on conflict within the city, most notably. Cohn, *Laboring Classes*.

had to live together in a small geographic space and in an economy dependent on thousands of poorly paid textile workers who had already revolted successfully once. In order to keep instances of physical conflict as low as they were, it was imperative that social institutions be in place to maintain the established order. The patronage system served this purpose.[91] It is possible that the patronage system worked because the elites actively sought to tie those further down the social scale to them in order to minimize class consciousness and the possibility or revolt, as Rodolico suggested they did in the period before the Ciompi revolt.[92] It is also possible that the post-Ciompi workers took advantage of elite fear and their own newfound power to enter into clientage and, through that, better their situation, as F.W. Kent posits.[93] Based on this research alone it is impossible to say. But it is clear that such networks existed, were used consistently at the point of marriage formation, and, ideally, benefited both the client and the patron.

Certainly, the marriage formation process was not the only opportunity in Florentine life for the reinforcement of these bonds; apprenticeships, rental agreements, funerals, and business deals also highlight their importance, as many other scholars have pointed out.[94] Nonetheless, marriage served as an excellent and often necessary point at which to activate those bonds. Further, as one of the most important transitional moments for women, and one of the few major transactions in which women were necessarily

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[91] Reynolds, *Kingdoms*, 2.
[92] Niccolò Rodolico, *Il Popolo Minuto* (Florence: Olschki, 1968), 9-11. For a brief explanation of the Ciompi revolt of 1378, see Chapter One, note 71.
[93] Kent, "Be Rather Loved than Feared," 49.
[94] On relationships between tailors and their wealthy clients, see Carole Collier Frick, *Dressing Renaissance Florence: Families, Fortunes, and Fine Clothing* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002), 69. On relations between landlords and tenants, see Eckstein, *Green Dragon*, 36.

central, the process makes clear the vital role that women could play in the male-dominated social networks of Florence as both patrons and clients, both givers and receivers of charity.

Further, as a defining event for individuals and for entire families, the marriage formation process established the social identity of women for as long as their marriage lasted. As both this and the previous chapter have shown, however, it also cemented the social position of both families involved as the family passed a generational juncture. Marriage formation, both as a process and in the actual union of the couple, established and reinforced the position of the couple and their families in the social networks. The process created opportunities to strengthen bonds with those above and below them, as well as with social peers. For artisans, as Chapter Three explained, it also provided the opportunity to expand these networks through social mobility and a broadening of the community.

Artisan marriages, therefore, tied artisan families to the social network. They also played an important role in tying the social network itself together, by uniting various communities, by creating and activating patron/client relationships that stretched across the entire social spectrum, and by allowing for social mobility through the society. These processes provided stability and reinforced the existing structures, while at the same time providing enough lateral and vertical mobility to serve as a safety valve for the society. The mobility provided artisans and those below the guild level with hope of maintaining

or improving their situation within the established system, even as the system was changing in a way increasingly unfavorable to them.

These social systems, as has been stressed repeatedly, extended across Florentine society. They were not limited to the elite or to any other social group, nor can any group be seen as closed, or examined in isolation from the others, as the example of the marriage formation process makes so clear. Further, these social systems, which marriage both illustrates and is so vital to, are the basis for the functioning of the Florentine political and economic, as well as social, systems.

"The want of affection in the English is strongly manifested towards their children […] By the ancient custom of the country, every inheritance is divided into three parts; for the church and funeral expenses, for the wife, and for the children. But the lady takes care to secure a good portion for herself in secret, first, and then the residue being divided into three parts as aforesaid, she being in possession of what she has robbed, of her own third, and that of her children besides (and if she have no children, the two-thirds belong to her by right) usually bestows herself in marriage upon the one of those apprentices living in the house who is most pleasing to her, and who was probably not *displeasing* to her in the lifetime of her husband; and in his power she places all her own fortune, as well as that of her children, who are sent away as apprentices into other houses. […] It is not considered any discredit to a woman to marry again every time that she is left a widow, however unsuitable the match may be as to age, rank, and fortune."

Andrea Trevisano, Venetian visitor to England, 1497[1]

Fifteenth-century northern Italians realized that marriage and family relations were not the same everywhere, even within Roman Christian lands. The late fifteenth-century Venetian traveler known as Andrea Trevisano expressed a degree of distaste for English customs in general, but what revolted him most were their familial patterns. What we might read as praiseworthy marital affection and freedom of choice for women struck Andreas as a shocking lack of concern for children and a general inversion of "natural" priorities: husbands passing their wealth to wives—women from another patriline—rather than their own sons; women choosing their own partners rather than submitting to the reasonable judgment of their brothers and fathers, who wanted what was best for them and the family; marriage between elite women and servants; and no concern for the next generation of the patriline. The Florentine marriage formation process provided a valuable opportunity to preserve or improve the status of the family, in the generation in question and for the future, and to form valuable social bonds with a variety of individuals. For the English to marry in such a way that they forfeited the opportunity to do either was simply beyond the comprehension of poor Andreas.

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[1] Charlotte Augusta Sneyd, *A relation, or rather A true account of the island of England; with sundry particulars of the customs of these people, and of the royal revenues under King Henry the Seventh, about the year 1500* (London: Camden Society, 1847), 25-7.

Modern scholars have similarly identified major differences between fifteenth-century Florentine and English marriage patterns. In particular, Richard M. Smith charts two types of household formation in pre-industrial societies, which differ in three major ways: a late or an early age at first marriage for the spouses; neolocal residence of the newly married couple compared to residence with the husband's extended family; and the mobility of individuals and couples before versus after marriage, namely servanthood before marriage or the division of the extended household after marriage.[2] He associated the first pattern—late marriage by partners who had traveled and lived independently before marriage and who established their own household—with northwestern Europe, particularly England, and juxtaposed it with evidence from Tuscany. This division between northwestern and "Mediterranean" or "Southern" marriages has become common in general works on pre-modern Europe.[3] Although scholars have differed on how closely English marriages conformed to John Hajnal's European marriage pattern of late, companionate marriage and high celibacy, conceived of as a modern phenomenon, most see the late medieval English patterns as much closer to it than Italian marriages were.[4]

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[2] Richard M. Smith, "Marriage in Late Medieval Europe," in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society c. 1200-1500*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg, (Gloucestershire: Alan Sutton, 1992), 26.

[3] Ibid., 18, P. J. P. Goldberg, "Marriage, Migration, and Servanthood: The York Cause Paper Evidence," in *Woman is a Worthy Wight: Women in English Society, C. 1200-1500*, ed. P. J. P. Goldberg, (Gloucestershire, England: Alan Sutton, 1992), 2. For general works, see Shannon McSheffrey, *Love and Marriage in Late Medieval London* (Kalamazoo: Medieval Institute Publications, 199), 16; Jennifer Ward, *Women in Medieval Europe 1200-1500* (London: Pearson Education, 2002), 28; Cissie Fairchilds, *Women in Early Modern Europe* (Harlow, England: Pearson, 2007), 64.

[4] Smith has gone so far as to argue that the late medieval English patterns conform to Hajnal's European marriage pattern, but most other scholars are careful to state that they do not. Hanawalt argues that while 1377 poll tax evidence might suggest that late medieval England did conform to Hajnal's pattern, this depends heavily on interpretation, while "both the Suffolk poll tax returns and the Halesowen materials suggest that Hajnal's depiction of the medieval English population as non-European is correct." Smith,

The juxtaposition between English and Florentine marriages is based on a comparison of largely peasant and burgher marriages in England with a single Florentine model of marriage, usually based on the entire population or on the elite.[5] A study of Florentine artisans marriage fills an important void in the discussion of comparative marriage patterns in Europe more broadly. This chapter will reexamine the idea of a northwestern European / northern Italian dichotomy in light of the new information uncovered through the focused study of artisan marriages presented in the previous three chapters and the more limited secondary writings on marriage elsewhere in northern Italy. It will compare and contrast the Florentine and Italian situation with the patterns uncovered in England, where the scholarship on marriage has been richest in the last ten years.

This chapter will highlight the variety in marriage in the city of Florence, in northern Italy, and in England, by focusing specifically on four aspects of marriage formation that have been prominent in the English historiography and that the previous chapters have addressed: age at first marriage, rates of single adults, residency patterns, and lifecycle service. The first two have been explored for Florence and in comparisons between Florence and elsewhere but not from a perspective that accounts for status-based differences. Of the latter two, Florentine lifecycle service is rarely considered in the comparative perspective, and only in such a way as to stress difference, while neolocality in Florence has not been examined at all. A fifth element that will be investigated here is

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"Marriage," 25; Barbara Hanawalt, *The Ties that Bound: Peasant Families in Medieval England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 96.

[5] Smith draws very heavily on the co-authored and independent work of Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber for his arguments about Southern European societies.

dowry, which was important not only in the marriage formation process but also after the marriage had been formed.

Marriage formation in England and Florence (and Northern Italy more broadly) was not the same in its practice or results. Nonetheless, this chapter will ultimately argue that, when the full range of marriage formation patterns are considered for both areas and status-based differences within each region are factored into this consideration, differences are less great and the areas of overlap much larger than previously thought.

Age at Marriage

Numerous scholars have noted the late age of marriage for women in England. Barbara Hanawalt argues that peasant men and women probably married in their twenties in fourteenth- and fifteenth-century England.[6] Smith contends that women in northwestern Europe were over the age of twenty-three at marriage, and their husbands were generally over twenty-six.[7] P.J.P. Goldberg's data for the city and countryside of York does not provide a large enough sample size to establish an average age of marriage, but he concludes that marriage was late, especially in the city, and to a partner of roughly the same age.[8] This age similarity—along with other demographic factors such as the absence of the older generation—forced couples to rely more on each other

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[6] Hanawalt, *Ties that Bound*, 204.
[7] Smith, "Marriage," 26.
[8] P. J. P. Goldberg, *Women, Work, and Life Cycle in a Medieval Economy: Women in York and Yorkshire c. 1300-1520* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1992), 272. Similarly, McSheffrey synthesizes these different attempts to pin down the ages at first marriage by stating that both men and women married in their mid-twenties. McSheffrey, *Love and Marriage*, 26.

and be more flexible in their gender roles, and consequently undermined male authority and identity.[9]

By contrast, Florentine women married at the median age of just past seventeen to men with a median age of nearly twenty-nine, or almost twelve years older, on average than their brides.[10] These figures were not, however, typical of northern Italy at this time. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber calculate that the figures for the smaller cities and rural areas of Tuscany are just over eighteen for women and between twenty-five and twenty-six for men, making the average difference between spouses between seven and eight years.[11] James S. Grubb finds that the average first-time bride in the Veneto was slightly older—twenty years old—and her groom slightly younger—between twenty-five and twenty-eight.[12] Consequently, the average age difference was only five or six years there.

Thus both the ages at which the spouses married and especially the difference in ages between them were importance factors in marriage formation that differed among the geographic regions of northern Italy and between there and England. But in addition

[9] When husbands were the same age as their wives they were at a disadvantage in establishing a highly patriarchal relationship and the marriage was considered companionate. More recently, scholars have stressed the variety of affective or emotional ties that can exist within families or households and which seem to have little to do with structures. Mavis E. Mate, *Daughters, Wives and Widows after the Black Death: Women in Sussex, 1350-1535* (Woodbridge: Boydell Press, 1998), 188; Barbara J. Harris, "Space, Time, and the Power of Aristocratic Wives in Yorkist and Early Tudor England, 1450-1550," in *Time, Space, and Women's Lives in Early Modern Europe*, ed. Anne Jacobson Schutte, Thomas Kuehn, and Silvana Seidel Menchi, (Kirksville, MO: Truman State University Press, 2001), 246; Mary S. Hartman, *The Household and the Making of History: A Subversive View of the Western Past* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 196.

[10] These figures differ slightly from those presented by Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber because they are calculated using the indirect median rather than the singulate mean (SMAM). For more information on the difference in calculation and results, see Chapter Two.

[11] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber find that the average age of marriage, calculated using the SMAM, in a small city is 17.93 years for women and 26.49 years for men, while the figures for the countryside are 18.36 years and 25.63 years, respectively. David Herlihy, "Did Women have a Renaissance?: A Reconsideration," *Medievalia et Humanistica* (1985): 399.

[12] James S. Grubb, *Provincial Families of the Renaissance: Private and Public Life in the Veneto* (Baltimore, Md.: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 4.

to regional variation, there was a great deal of difference in the average age of marriage among people across the socio-economic hierarchy in both Florence and England. The wealthiest and most elite Florentine women married the earliest, while poorer women and particularly poor orphans married later, delaying marriage until after they turned twenty.[13] This is likely due to the difficulty of accumulating a dowry.[14] Among Florentine men, patterns were different but status still played an important role. Elite men married later than the urban poor but those who married latest were those at the center of the socio-economic hierarchy. Diane Owen Hughes argues that artisans in twelfth-century Genoa similarly married later than their more wealthy and prominent neighbors. She ascribes this difference to the fact that artisan parents simply could not afford to split what little wealth the household had to provide a dowry or marriage portion and also could not do without the labor of the adult children.[15] These economic restrictions, Hughes contends, meant that artisan marriages could be more of a partnership because the spouses entered the marriage with equally little and because the labor of both was necessary to keep the household afloat.[16]

In Florence, however, the economic restrictions seem to have had a much greater effect on the age at marriage of men than women and on men of middling status more

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[13] See Chapter Two and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Female Celibacy and Service in Florence in the Fifteenth Century," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 170.

[14] Kirshner and Molho have previously made this connection in relation to the higher age of marriage for women with lower investments in the Florentine dowry fund, the *Monte delle Doti*. Julius Kirshner and Anthony Molho, "The Dowry Fund and the Marriage Market in Early Quattrocento Florence," *Journal of Modern History* 50 (1978): 431.

[15] Diane Owen Hughes, "Urban Growth and Family Structure in Medieval Genoa," *Past and Present* 66 (1975): 22.

[16] Ibid.: 24.

than on the poorest. The relative consistency of women's ages at first marriage suggests a very strong social imperative for women across the socio-economic spectrum to marry before the age of twenty, an imperative that was stronger than any economic or social incentive to delay marriage.[17] The variation in men's ages, meanwhile, is perhaps based on the lack of property to divide among the city's poorest citizens, which therefore removed an incentive to delay marriage. Men of middling status had both the desire and the potential for upward mobility and were willing to delay marriage for the best opportunity. The result was that those marriages in the middle of the socio-economic spectrum were on average the least companionate, at least in terms of the age gap between the spouses.

But just as ages at first marriage were not consistent across the Florentine population, recent work has similarly focused on status-based differences in northwestern Europe. The pattern of late marriages defined as "English" or "northwestern European" did not, in fact, apply to all English in the later Middle Ages but was restricted to the non-elite. Aristocratic marriage patterns were very different, a fact that has always been acknowledged by scholars but one that has become more clear in recent years as there has

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[17] There are examples of surviving 13th and 14th c. Italian vernacular poems written in the voice of a young woman begging her parents to find her a husband and not allow her to grow old at home. Christopher Kleinhenz, "Pulzelle e maritate: Coming of Age, Rites of Passage, and the Question of Marriage in Some Early Italian Poems," in *Matrons and Marginal Women in Medieval Society*, ed. Robert Edwards and Vickie L. Ziegler, (Woodbridge, Suffolk, UK: Rochester Boydell & Brewer, 1995), 97. Several of Boccaccio's stories begin by expressing wonder that such an attractive young woman as the protagonist remained unmarried, simultaneously touching on social anxieties about such actions and signaling that this would be a story of that young woman's sexually awakening outside of marriage. See, for example, Giovanni Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, ed. trans. G. H. McWilliam (New York: Penguin Classics, 1995), IV.5.

been more work specifically on this group.[18] Barbara Harris has noted that, of aristocratic marriages between 1450 and 1550, more than half of the brides were below the age of sixteen and the grooms were also mostly in their teens.[19] Further, there is evidence in England and elsewhere in Northern Europe of occasional very young marriages, essentially child marriages, among the aristocracy.[20] Harris describes an English case in which the bride was seven and the groom ten, although the marriage contract stipulated that the couple could not consummate the union until she was sixteen.[21] If such marriages or betrothals occurred in Florence, they have not yet been brought to light in court cases, the family account books of the wealthy, or government documents, including the Catasto or the records of the *Monte delle Doti*, the state sponsored marriage fund, all well-used sources,. Florentine women married earlier than many northern European women, but clearly not as young as some. Likewise, Florentine men married around the same time or a little later than the English peasantry or urban burghers, but they did so much later than the English aristocracy.

The most unusual factor about Florentine marriages, therefore, is not the youth of the brides but the degree and consistency of difference in the ages between spouses.

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[18] Hajnal himself suggests that the aristocracy did not follow the European marriage pattern until much later than the general populace. J. Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns in Perspective," in *Population in History: Essays in Historical Demography*, ed. D. V. Glass and David E. C. Eversley, (London: E. Arnold, 1965), 116. For an examination of the intersections of gender and class in late medieval England, see Mate, *Daughters, Wives and Widows*, 179-92.

[19] Harris, "Space, Time," 248-50; Maryanne Kowaleski, "Singlewomen in Medieval and Early Modern Europe: The Demographic Perspective," in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, ed. Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 60.

[20] Most of the women involved in these marriages were heiresses whose early marriages served in part to protect young women and their property from coming under royal guardianship in the not-unlikely event that they were orphaned. Barbara J. Harris, *English Aristocratic Women, 1450-1550: Marriage and Family, Property and Careers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 57.

[21] Harris, "Space, Time," 254.

Florentines were not unique in observing marriages between teenage brides and significantly older men. The wealthy bourgeois Menagier de Paris, who wrote a tract on running a household in the early 1390s, was probably in his fifties when he married his fifteen-year-old bride. While such "May-December" matches certainly occurred in Northern France and in England—Chaucer's fictional Wife of Bath alone claims to have made three—they were perhaps the exception to the rule, or at least more common in fabliaux than in real life.[22] By contrast, the age differences between spouses in Florence were large and consistent across the social-economic hierarchy.[23]

Further, while English marriages were often companionate, marriages of widows to younger men were as striking as those of younger women to much older men. It does not seem that anyone has conducted a large-scale study of the ratio of marriages where the wife was older to those where the husband was senior.[24] However, the number of widow remarriages and the desirability of wealthy widows as brides for young men without inheritances and journeymen looking to establish themselves in their trade suggests that brides older than their husbands were not unusual and that women might remarry long past their prime child-bearing years.[25]

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[22] Geoffrey Chaucer, *The Riverside Chaucer*, ed. trans. Larry D. Benson, 3 ed. (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1987), 105, 54; Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, III.4. In both Chaucer and Boccaccio, stories that feature a young wife and elderly husband almost invariably focus on her trysts.

[23] Scholars of the text generally accept Jérôme Pichon's claim that the author was at least fifty at the time he wrote, and that he was a legal or governmental official. Jérôme Pichon and Société des Bibliophiles Français, *Le Ménagier de Paris, traité de morale et d'économie domestique composé vers 1393, par un bourgeois parisien; ... Publié pour la première fois par la Société des bibliophiles français.* (Geneva: Slatkine Reprints, 1966), xxv-xxvii. Eileen Edna Power, *The Goodman of Paris (Le ménagier de Paris)* (London: G. Routledge & sons, ltd., 1928), 1.

[24] Goldberg has done a small-scale study (n=31) from cause paper evidence and notes that the mean difference for urban couples was 2.9 years. Goldberg, "Marriage, Migration," 9-11.

[25] Hanawalt, *Ties that Bound*, 224; Vivien Brodsky Elliott, "Single Women in the London Marriage Market: Age, Status and Mobility, 1598-1619," in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of*

By contrast, remarriage in general was not particularly common for women in Florence. Of the 134 unions where it is possible to determine the ages of both spouses, only 4 seem to involve a bride older than the groom, all of which seem to be remarriages for the bride.[26] Remarriages as well as first marriages generally involved younger women; of the brides entering a second marriage, more than half of the women were under thirty. Even with the rare younger husband, the average age difference between the remarried women and their spouses was just over thirteen years, with the man senior, a figure slightly higher than the difference between average ages for all spouses.[27] The degree of this difference did vary across the Florentine social hierarchy, as artisan men tended to delay marriage, increasing the difference. Nonetheless, marriage between an older man and a younger woman was very consistently the norm across Florentine society, at all social levels and in both first and subsequent marriages.

Thus, while there was a great deal of range in the age at which Florentine men entered into their first marriages, this range was perhaps not as wide as it was in England as men did not marry as young as aristocratic Englishwomen. English women had a much larger range of ages at which they would first marry, since they would marry both older and, less frequently, earlier than their Florentine counterparts. The averages ages of Florentine women at first marriage might have been earlier and men later than in

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Marriage, ed. R. B. Outhwaite, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 88. It is likely that these marriages between journeymen and the widows of masters that Andrea Trevisano, the Venetian traveler, referred to in his condemnation of widow-apprentice marriages, quoted at the beginning of this chapter.

[26] Since nearly all Florentine women (over 90%) were married by the age of 20, I have assumed that all marriages after that age were remarriages, at least for the bride. There are 41 such marriages that can be identified in my data set.

[27] The age difference can only be calculated when both spouses can be identified in the Catasto, and ages are listed for both. This is the case in 134 unions.

England, supporting the idea that English marriages were more companionate and, perhaps, more egalitarian in their power structure, at least in terms of the quotidian functioning of the household. But the range of ages in both societies, and especially in England, seriously complicates any conclusions that can be drawn from the differences in averages.

Single People

The data on single women is not particularly rich for any area of England in the Middle Ages, although it improves as one moves into the early modern period and it is clear that single women were more prevalent in the cities than in rural areas. Overall, however, rates appear to have been higher in England than in Italy. Hanawalt notes that some young people in the English peasant village remained single for life, although they were definitely in the minority.[28] Because of both the higher rates of lifelong celibacy and a later age of marriage, Judith Bennett and Amy Froide calculate that almost a third of all adult women in England in 1377 never married, a figure that Maryanne Kowaleski also cites in her article on the subject.[29] Kowaleski places Tuscany and other Mediterranean populations, where she argues that the less precise data available also suggest a low rate of celibacy, in contrast to the northern European figures with a much higher rate of both lifelong celibacy and numbers of singlewomen.[30]

Nearly all lay, adult Florentine women married and did so at a young age. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber put the figures for single women over the age of twelve—including

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[28] Hanawalt, *Ties that Bound*, 96.
[29] Judith M. Bennett and Amy M. Froide, "A Singular Past," in *Singlewomen in the European Past, 1250-1800*, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 2; Kowaleski, "Singlewomen," 51.
[30] Kowaleski, "Singlewomen," 50.

those who would eventually marry—at slightly over 18 percent in the city, and even lower in the countryside.[31] As Chapter Two demonstrated, the ratio of unmarried to married women dropped rapidly as women progressed through their teens; no more than 5 percent above the age of twenty were single, and over half of those were slaves who did not marry.[32] While widowhood was quite common, a period of singleness before marriage did not exist beyond childhood for most women who were not slaves. And while a study of female slavery has its own merits, it does not increase understanding of a normative part of adult female existence.

Again, however, this divide deserves to be reconsidered. The higher number of never-married women in England is a result of later marriage as well as of a higher celibacy rate. A higher age at marriage means that a larger percent of adult women—usually defined as those above the canonical age of marriage, twelve—are singlewomen, and the more steeply that the population declines with age, the more this population of young, not-yet-married women affects the rate of singlewomen. Consider, for example, two hypothetical populations with an age curve similar to that of Florence, one with an average age of first marriage of sixteen and all women married by the age of twenty, and one in which twenty-one is the average age of marriage and all women are married by the age of 30. In the first, 12.3 percent of the adult women would be never-married, compared to 22.9 percent in the second, while both populations have a celibacy rate of

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[31] David Herlihy and Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans et leurs familles: une étude du "catasto" florentin de 1427* (Paris: Fondation nationale des sciences politiques: École des hautes études en sciences sociales, 1978), 405.

[32] While laws differed across northern Italy on whether or not slaves could marry, and the consequences of that marriage, in practice Florentine slaves did not marry. Steven Epstein, *Speaking of Slavery: Color, Ethnicity, and Human Bondage in Italy* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001), 64.

zero. Hence, in some ways differences in the rates of never-married women confirm differences in average ages of marriage rather than suggesting a second, independent criterion in marriage patterns.

Both women who married later than the average and those who never married are important to demographers because they reduced the overall fertility of a population. They are also important to social historians because attitudes towards singlewomen reflect anxieties about women and patriarchy more generally. Across western Christendom at this point, adult single laywomen—those who were not safely hidden away in a nunnery—were seen by the male elite as threatening. They challenged the patriarchal order, the established norm in which senior men governed the household and the society, by living outside of a male-headed house. They also threatened public morality through their perceived uncontrolled sexuality, a problem both in its own right and because they were a temptation to men.[33] These fears manifested themselves not only in misogynistic literature and art, but also in laws and economic practices imposed by the patriarchal governments.[34]

In addition to the threat they posed to society, however, a singlewoman also posed a threat to her own family. She could be a financial drain, since the family needed to provide her with room and board through her life rather than a one-time dowry payment. She could also be a weak link in the family's reputation for morality and honor. Further, a single, uncloistered woman further compromised her family in that the family lost both

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[33] Amy M. Froide, *Never Married: Singlewomen in Early Modern England* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 20; Barbara Hanawalt, *The Wealth of Wives: Women, Law, and Economy in Late Medieval London* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007), 105; Klapisch-Zuber, "Female Celibacy," 166.
[34] Froide, *Never Married*, 20.

the opportunity to form valuable social bonds through her marriage and the benefits of her prayers, which they would have if she were a nun.

The loss of social and even economic capital—real and potential—to the woman's natal family was clearly greatest where the patriline was strongest, where there was the most dedication to shared social capital, shared honor, and shared decision-making with regard to marriage. This was certainly the case among the elite in England, who were invested in both the social capital of marriage and the preservation of the patrilinial status, defined through economic capital, male heirs of certain paternity, and the sexual purity of women before marriage.

It is less clear that the natal families of English peasant and burgher women were as heavily invested in the marriages of their daughters.[35] It is precisely these peasant (and burgher) women who remained single the longest and were the most likely to never marry. Both Bennet and Hanawalt have argued for less family investment in terms of time and money in marriage at this level. There is also evidence that premarital sexual relations, if they were discreet and between people who could marry, were tolerated—although not exactly condoned—as part of the path to a conjugal union, perhaps because children were more important than sexual honor, or perhaps because at this social level a father's sense of honor was not as closely tied to his daughter's virginity as it was elsewhere.[36] This does not appear to have been the case among non-elite Florentines, whether artisans or *sottoposti*. Not only did women marry very soon after their more elite

[35] Judith M. Bennett, *Women in the Medieval English Countryside: Gender and Household in Brigstock before the Plague* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1987), 96; Hanawalt, *Ties that Bound*, 200.
[36] Hanawalt, *Ties that Bound*, 196.

neighbors, but several years younger than their English counterparts. Further, there is little evidence of premarital sexual relations. In fact, Herlihy has argued—and Rocke concurs—that some men might have engaged in homosexual relations during their long bachelorhood for precisely this reason.[37] While moralists certainly did not approve of this alternative, Florentine families and cultural norms left little room for the threat to patrilineal honor that single women posed at all social levels. Florentine women married young and nearly universally.

Residence Patterns and Family Structure

Nineteenth-century French social commentator Frederick Le Play described the premodern family as extended while Hajnal mentioned a man's need for "an independent livelihood" before marrying as a possible cause for delay of marriage and hence of adherence to the modern European marriage pattern.[38] This livelihood could come from savings or an inheritance, passed on before or after the death of a man's father and manifested itself in a separate household for the newly-married couple. The importance of neolocality to the relationship between a later average age at first marriage and pre-marital wage labor has now been widely accepted for English society in general from the late medieval period through the Industrial Revolution. Several scholars of different parts

[37] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 414, Michael Rocke, *Forbidden Friendships: Homosexuality and Male Culture in Renaissance Florence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 119. See also Rocke's note 12, p. 256, for a fuller historiography.

[38] Hajnal, "European Marriage Patterns," 133-4. The prominence of neolocality in definitions of the European marriage pattern increased, however, after Hajnal. For Smith, neolocality had displaced celibacy rates as one of two essential features of the European marriage pattern in his definition. He then uses neolocality to differentiate between the northwestern European and Mediterranean where, he writes, peasants tended to live in multiple-generation extended households. R.M. Smith, "The People of Tuscany and their Families in the Fifteenth Century: Medieval or Mediterranean?," *Journal of Family History* VI (1981): 108, 20.

of northern Europe have stated quite frankly that beginning in the later Middle Ages and by the Early Modern period, at least among the poor, there could be no marriage without the money to establish an independent household.

But not all households in later Medieval England were neolocal. Harris argues that many marriages among the aristocracy created extended households.[39] The partners were often too young to live on their own and families, at any rate, were unable or unwilling to divide the household wealth while the patriarch or his widow were alive. Further, Froide's work on singlewomen calls to question the isolation of even neolocal households. A man often relied on his sisters' help in establishing his new household while still a bachelor. Even once they headed their own household, the married couple continued to be dependent on both spouses' kin, and sometimes also housed family members. Singlewomen might rotate among the households of their siblings, parents, and other relatives as they were needed and wanted.[40] Such arrangements were not only economically and emotionally comfortable, but also allowed for the maintenance of a patriarchal structure only semi-dependent on actual co-residence at any point in time. Hence, the English household, even when physically nuclear, did not exist in isolation from the extended family.

Throughout northern Italy, the household structure—as well as marriage formation—was focused on the maintenance of the patriline and usually run by men.[41]

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[39] They might live with either the bride's or the groom's family. The families decided who would house and support the (often underage) couple as part of the marriage agreement. Harris, "Space, Time," 250.
[40] Froide, *Never Married*, 74-75.
[41] In fact, the laws strongly favored keeping the estate intact in the male line, presumably through primogeniture, but the 13th c. Sienese were more inclined to distribute their goods among the male heirs, as

Prominent fifteenth-century authors, most notably Leon Battista Alberti, urged readers to keep their families under one roof for both economic and emotional reasons.[42] When a Florentine couple did not establish their own home, they lived with the groom's family rather than the bride's.[43] In most cases, however, they lived on their own. While Florentines had a smaller average household size than Tuscans in general, due mainly to the larger number of single-individual households, it was not unique in having a predominance of nuclear rather than extended families.[44] Grubb finds that in the Veneto, only 25 percent of households had 3 generations, and 17 percent had more than one married couple.[45] In Tuscany and in Florence, the nuclear family is by far the most frequent household structure, followed in Florence by lone individuals.[46] Even for Prato, where Klapisch-Zuber argues that the proportion of extended households in the late

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their wills make clear. In the absence of male heirs, they preferred near female relatives over more distant male relatives, also despite the laws. Elena Brizio, "La dote nella normativa statutaria e nella pratica testamentaria senese (fine sec. XII- metà sec. XIV)," *Bullettino Senese di Storia Patria* CXI (2004): 14, 17.

[42] Leon Battista Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, ed. trans. Renée Neu Watkins (Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1969), 55-56. Najemy suggests that while Alberti has his speaker verbalize a fairly standard contemporary ideology of the family, we should not be read the text as in complete support of this ideology. John M. Najemy, "Giannozzo and his Elders: Alberti's Critique of Renaissance Patriarchy," in *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, ed. William J. Connell, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 78.

[43] Of the nearly 40,000 individuals in the Catasto, there are 3 married (not widowed) women living in households headed by their fathers or mothers, one of which does not appear to have a husband in the household, and no married women living with their brothers.

[44] In Tuscany as a whole, Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber find the average size of the (fiscal) household in the Catasto was 4.42 individuals; this figure was lower in the cities and lowest of all in Florence, with 3.80 people per household. Wealthy noble households in the city and poorer rural sharecropper families both tend to have larger than average households. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 472.

[45] Grubb, *Provencial Families*, 85.

[46] It is important to remember that the Catasto's fiscal households were not necessarily synonymous with co-residential units, and were not always free from control or oversight by a parent not listed as part of the fiscal unit. These households were not necessarily self contained legal or economic units, productive units, or tied together by affection reserved for those within the unit. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 482-85. For a similar caution for Douai, see Martha C. Howell, *The Marriage Exchange: Property, Social Place, and Gender in Cities of the Low Countries, 1300-1550* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1998), 12.

fourteenth and early fifteenth century was increasing, the percent of married couples living with one or more parents (almost always his) increased from 11 to 19 percent, a substantial change but by no means universal virilocality.[47] While these statistics should not obscure either the great diversity in household structures or the likelihood that any individual would live in a variety of household structures during his or her life, it is true that the majority of households at any one time were nuclear.[48]

This does not mean that extended families were unimportant. As in England, there is copious evidence of not only affective bonds but the sharing of economic capital, labor, and decision-making. The patriline was very important in Florence, both before and after marriage, and whether under a shared roof or not. What it does show is that, as in England, head of household status seems to have been an important factor in determining when men married. This was true for all levels of the social hierarchy, but, as in England, wealthier men were more likely to live in a household headed by someone else, and to bring a bride home to that house. Since these same wealthiest Florentine men married at an earlier average age than those towards the middle of the economic spectrum, it is possible that they were less concerned to wait to establish their own households, or that

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[47] Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Demographic Decline and Household Structure: The Examples of Prato, Late Fourteenth to Late Fifteenth Centuries," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, (Chicago: University of Chicago, 1985), 32, 34.

[48] Herlihy has argued that households cycled from extended to nuclear and back again as its members aged, but F.W. Kent contends that the elite households he has examined were remarkably stable over the long run. In the early 1970s, Goldtwaite argued for the centrality of the nuclear family, but a decade later he backed away from that stance and stressed the importance of ties to the extended family, even when they did not share a roof. David Herlihy, "Mapping Households in Medieval Italy," *Catholic Historical Review* 58 (1972); Fredrick W. Kent, *Household and Lineage in Renaissance Florence: Family life of the Capponi, Ginori, and Ruccellai* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1977), 44; Richard A. Goldthwaite, "Organizzazione economica e struttura famigliare," in *Banks, Palaces, and Entrepreneurs in Renaissance Florence*, (Aldershot, Hampshire: Variorum, 1995), 4-5.

they accepted that they might never establish that household. Not all Florentines were willing or able to live neolocally—or to allow their sons or brothers to do so—and the region and socio-economic status of the couple played a role in determining who was willing to spend their first few years of marriage living virilocally just as it did in England.[49]

Life-Cycle Service

The majority of new brides in both England and northern Italy moved into a marital household headed by their husband. Brides, as well as grooms, needed to contribute to these households. Ideally, women would rely on their parents for a dowry, but not all parents could provide one. Life-cycle service provided young women with a chance to earn money for their own dowries through domestic labor. It offered them the benefit of remaining in a patriarchal framework even as they lived outside of the natal home. Upon marriage, these young women stopped working as servants, took charge of their own marital homes (often in their home villages), and might have employed servants of their own. The women would make use of the skills and contacts they acquired in service in order to run their own homes and households more profitably.[50]

Young women in England, according to Goldberg, entered service around the age of twelve. They worked in one-year contracts and left service sometime in their mid-

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[49] Grubb attributes the more companionate marriages of the Veneto to a greater willingness on the part of men in the Veneto than in Florence to live with their parents during the first few years of marriage, although Chapter Two demonstrates that elite Florentine men were in fact much more likely to live in their natal home with their brides than were men of lower socio-economic standing. Grubb, *Provencial Families*, 6.

[50] Jane Whittle, "Servants in Rural England c. 1450-1650: Hired Work as a Means of Accumulating Wealth and Skills before Marriage," in *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain, 1400-1900*, ed. Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 89.

twenties.[51] There is debate concerning the degree to which service rendered young people independent of their parents' economic contribution to marriage and of their supervision and guidance in selecting a partner.[52] Evidence from wills suggests that women received not only movables but also immovable goods in the form of land and buildings from their parents, meaning that many parents still provided their daughters with some marriage portion when they could.[53] Nonetheless, no one argues that service was not a phase of life for many women in England.

Given the importance of both accumulating a dowry and remaining in the patriarchal household for young Florentine women, as well as the poverty of so many families, life-cycle service would seem like a good option. And indeed, some young women did serve before marriage. Testators made bequests of money specifically for the purpose of a dowry to women who were their former or current servants. Employers also made gifts of cash to servant women as their dowries outside of wills. One of these gifts was specifically said to fulfill the terms of a contract for service.[54]

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[51] Goldberg, *Women, Work*, 169-70.
[52] In a recent volume of essays, Catherine Frances argues that parents played a significant role in both spousal selection and contributing to their children's marriage portion. A husbandman, for example, would contribute to his daughter's marriage portion, providing an amount equivalent to perhaps 2 years of his daughter's earnings. In the same volume of essays, Jane Whittle argues that savings from service could be great, since servants received room and board as part of their remuneration and hence did not need to spend money. Although service alone, without inheritance, would not provide enough to buy a livable amount of land in the tight 16th c. land market, it was the main means of accumulating wealth to set up house. Catherine Frances, "Making Marriages in Early Modern England: Rethinking the Role of Family and Friends," in *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain, 1400-1900*, ed. Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 46-48; Jane Whittle, "Servants in Rural England c. 1450-1650: Hired Work as a Means of Accumulating Wealth and Skills before Marriage," in *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain, 1400-1900*, ed. Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 100-05.
[53] Hanawalt, *Wealth*, 52, Kathryn Jean Staples, "Daughters of London: Inheritance Practice in the Late Middle Ages" (Unpublished Dissertation, University of Minnesota, 2006), 156.
[54] See Chapter Four.

Nevertheless, servants are elusive figures in fifteenth-century Florentine history, and young female servants particularly so. But servants were absolutely present in Florentine society.[55] They come and go in the household accounting books of the elite; the details of their supervision factor into Alberti's treatise on running a household; they receive gifts in their masters' wills; they appear in the tales of Boccaccio; and they peek out of the artwork of the period, dutifully surrounding and raising the prestige of their masters.[56] Nonetheless, there are extremely few individuals labeled as servants in the Catasto. This is because servants, even those living with their masters, were supposed to be declared in the fiscal household of their natal family or as heads of their own households. But because only the occupations of household heads are listed, non-heads who worked as servants would simply be described as sons, daughters, or wives. Further, heads of households might have omitted, through misunderstanding or absent-mindedness, their dependents who were living away, working as servants.[57]

There were also social reasons for downplaying the fact that a young woman was working as a servant. Even though young female servants were within a patriarchal household and technically under the guardianship and protection of their employers, their

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[55] Klapisch-Zuber argues that servants were fairly scarce in Florence, based on the numbers of servants included in household record books. While it seems likely that they were not numerous, there were certainly more than those she was able to uncover in the surviving materials. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "Women Servants in Florence during the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt, (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1986), 60.
[56] Alberti, *The Family in Renaissance Florence*, 88; Boccaccio, *The Decameron*, IV.10.
[57] Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber cite this oversight as a factor contributing to the very high number of men and boys compared to women and girls. Herlihy and Klapisch-Zuber, *Les Toscans*, 60, 332.

position—and specifically their virginity—was still precarious and suspect.[58] Indeed, there are more than enough examples to justify this sense of vulnerability and danger. Bernardo Niccolo Machiavelli—Niccolo's father—recorded in his family account book a protracted incident in 1475 in which he discovered that his servant girl Lorenza, or Nencia, the daughter of Lazerino, had been seduced and impregnated by his neighbor and relative, Niccolo Alessandro Machiavelli, with the promise of some garments. After consulting with Nencia and with his wife's brother, who knew Nencia's father and who had acted as an intermediary to the labor contract, Bernardo sent Nencia to live with a midwife until the baby was born. He also arranged her marriage, along with a dowry of approximately 25 florins (100 lira) which he coerced from Niccolo, her seducer, and more than 4 florins that Bernardo himself had invested for Nencia in the state dowry fund, the *Monte delle doti*.[59] Guardianship could be taken very seriously, but even then it could fail to protect young women.

That life-cycle service existed in Florence is not a new discovery. Klapisch-Zuber has stated that parents would contract girls approximately eight or nine years old to serve for a term of around ten years and in the end to receive a dowry and be placed in an appropriate marriage.[60] Despite this evidence and research, lifecycle service has not been

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[58] Although not as much so as before the plague or in the 16th c. Klapisch-Zuber, "Female Celibacy," 177. Poorer English women were also in a vulnerable position before marriage. Mate, *Daughters, Wives and Widows*, 33.

[59] This incident transpired between fall 1475 and spring 1476. It isn't clear what becomes of the baby. Bernardo Machiavelli, *Libro di ricordi: a cura di Cesare Olschki* (Florence: F. Le Monnier, 1954), 15-23.

[60] Klapisch-Zuber, "Female Celibacy," 173-74. Based on her work on household record books, these young single women made up only about a quarter of household servants in Florentine homes in the first half of the 15th c., while married and widowed women were more frequently employed. Klapisch-Zuber, "Women Servants," 63.

seen as an important element of the Florentine marriage pattern.[61] This is in sharp contrast to England, where it has been not only well studied, but seen as an integral component of the marriage formation process. Indeed, while acknowledging the presence of a limited number of female servants in southern Europe, Goldberg remarks that "the most interesting evidence for regional diversity relates […] not to marriage patters *per se*, but to servanthood" because of the rarity and low-status of the servants in northern Italy, and their lack of affective ties to their employers.[62] While young female servants were less numerous in Florence, at least, their position in the household and society was not as dissimilar from their English counterparts as such a description would suggest.

Service was a part of the life experience and marriage formation process of many young women in England, but also in Scotland, France, and across much of Scandinavia, at least in the early modern period.[63] It was also undeniably a part of the Florentine experience. Cases are both rare and buried in the mountains of contracts in the Florentine archives. It is also not clear exactly who the women were who earned their dowries in this way nor how widespread it was. It does seem likely that service was less common and more socially limited than in England; in the limited number of cases I have seen, all of the women seem to have come from the countryside, worked in the city, and then returned to the countryside to marry. Florentines were, however, undeniably involved in life-cycle service, even if only as employers, while Tuscan women, although perhaps not

[61] Goldberg, *Women, Work*; Smith, "Medieval or Mediterranean?," 117.
[62] Goldberg, "Marriage, Migration," 2.
[63] Amy Louise Erickson, "The Marital Economy in Comparative Perspective," in *The Marital Economy in Scandinavia and Britain, 1400-1900*, ed. Maria Ågren and Amy Louise Erickson, (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2005), 9; Olwen Hufton, "Women, Work and Marriage in Eighteenth-Century France," in *Marriage and Society: Studies in the Social History of Marriage*, ed. R. B. Outhwaite, (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1982), 186-203.

Florentines, made use of this system to provide for or enhance their marriage prospects. Obviously this is an area begging for further research, but it is clear that service was a regular avenue to marriage for some portion of the Tuscan population on a regular basis, just as it was in England.

Dowry

Dowry, as the discussion of lifecycle servanthood demonstrates, was an important aspect of marriage formation across the social spectrum in both England and Florence. It supplied crucial economic capital to the new household, whether the household was conjugal or extended, wealthy or poor. Florentine writers explained dowry as money to support the burdens of matrimony.[64] But it was more than just that. Dowry was important to the respectability of the marriage and both families, to the financial security of the woman, and even in some cases to determining the validity of the marriage.[65] The extent and nature of the control that a woman had over her dowry shaped her standing in the marriage and afterwards by establishing her economic position in her natal and marital households. It could, in some circumstances, also give her a degree of independence from the men in her life and from the patriarchal structures surrounding her, although the extent to which this was the case varied considerably. This was true in England, in Florence, and across Europe at this point.

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[64] Julius Kirshner, *Pursuing Honor while Avoiding Sin: The Monte delle Doti of Florence* (Milan: A. Giuffráe, 1978), 1.

[65] Although some early medieval legal texts asserted that there could be no marriage without dowry, by the 12th c. canon law did not require a dowry. However, in some areas and in the absence of conclusive evidence that a marriage had or had not taken place, judges might rely on a dowry as one of the 'sign and symbols' that did not alone make marriage but proved that a valid marriage had taken place. Luciano Musselli and Emanuela Grillo, *Matrimonio, transgressione e responsabilità nei penitenziali: alle origini del diritto canonico occidentale* (Padua: CEDAM, 2007), 106. On definitions of dowry, see Kirshner, *Pursuing Honor*, 3.

In Florence, a woman's dowry was an indicator of her status, the status of her natal family, and the status of her husband. A woman was legally entitled to a dowry commensurate with her status from her father or guardian. In an effort by civic leaders to help Florentines in providing dowries for their daughters, the government introduced its unique dowry fund, the *Monte delle Doti*, which allowed citizens to invest money for a set period in the name of a young woman.[66] Most of the recipients were wealthy young women, but some poorer women also had investments made in their names by matrilineal or patrilineal kin, employers, patrons, or benefactors.[67] Indeed, endowing poor women became an extremely popular form of private and institutional charity.[68] In England, dowry was similarly a social necessity for marriage, even for poor women. In most cases the bride's father provided the dowry, but Hanawalt has found that urban properties could be passed from mother to daughter as dowries, and the role of life-cycle service as another potential source of a dowry for English women is clear.[69] Thus, while the proportion of dowries that came from father, mother, employment, and other relatives, might differ from Florence to England, all of these sources were important in supplying the dowry that was, in both cases, an integral part of the marriage formation process.

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[66] Other city-states also grappled with the problem of dowry inflation. Both Martin V and Innocent VIII imposed dowry caps within Rome in the fifteenth century. The situation was similar in Venice, where the civic government imposed new dowry caps in the 1420s that granted exemptions to non-noble families who were contracting marriages with patrician men. Irene Fosi and Maria Antonietta Visceglia, "Marriage and Politics at the Papal Court in the Sixteenth and Seventeenth centuries," in *Marriage in Italy, 1300-1650*, ed. Trevor Dean and K. J. P. Lowe, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 199, 202; Stanley Chojnacki, *Women and Men in Renaissance Venice: Twelve Essays on Patrician Society* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2000), 60.

[67] Kirshner and Molho, "Dowry Fund," 412-14.

[68] Nicholas A. Eckstein, *The District of the Green Dragon: Neighbourhood Life and Social Change in Renaissance Florence* (Florence: L.S. Olschki, 1995), 35; Kirshner, *Pursuing Honor*, 14; Steven Epstein, *Wills and Wealth in Medieval Genoa, 1150-1250* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1984), 186.

[69] Bennett, *Women*, 83; Hanawalt, *Wealth*, 56.

Once married, a Florentine husband legally controlled the dowry. Although it belonged to his wife, he could invest it as he saw fit.[70] He could not alienate it against her will, but he could do so with her permission, and occasionally permission was coerced. Beyond this, married women had no legal right to oversee their own dowries, but their families occasionally found ways to retain a modicum of control over the dowry and the marital situation of their daughter, usually through protracted payment of the dowry.[71] This strategy could backfire, however, as wives whose dowries had not yet been paid could be in a precarious situation in their marital homes, to which they had not contributed financially.[72]

In England, however, a woman's relationship to her dowry and to marital property in general begun to differ drastically from the Florentine patterns beginning with the point of marriage.[73] Under English common law, a married woman was a *femme couvert* or under coverture; that is, her husband's legal identity covered hers and he took legal responsibility for her in all areas.[74] Although some property might be jointly owned, the

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[70] This was also the case elsewhere in northern Italy and in Montpellier. Kathryn L. Reyerson, "Women in Business in Medieval Montpellier," in *Women and Work in Preindustrial Europe*, ed. Barbara Hanawalt, (Bloomington: University of Indiana Press, 1986), 118.

[71] This has been best studied outside of the Florentine context. In Siena, protracted payment kept the bride from being dependent on the goodwill of her husband or his family, a situation the Elena Brizio claims would have been intolerable to the Sienese elite. In the Veneto, it allowed the bride's family influence in the conjugal household for some time after her marriage. Brizio, "La dote," 18; Grubb, *Provencial Families*, 20, 25.

[72] Giulia Calvi, "Maddalena Nerli and Cosimo Tournabuoni: A Couple's Narrative of Family History in Early Modern Florence," *Renaissance Quarterly* 45, no. 2 (1992): 327.

[73] Some aristocratic women received jointure, an independent annual income paid by their husband or his lineage that they could spend as they chose, during the marriage and in widowhood. This replaced the customary widow's third.

[74] A woman could choose to operate as a *femme sole*, as a single woman, for certain legal purposes. While some scholars have pointed to this possibility as evidence of women's rights, Marjorie McIntosh has more recently undermined this argument by reexamining the advantages and disadvantages of *femmes sole* status

husband controlled all of it, including the dowry, and could treat it as he liked or alienate it as he chose.[75] In some cases, coverture involved a rescinding of rights that women had enjoyed when single; for example, Cristina Penifader attended court sessions up until the point of her marriage, as was her right as a landowner, but could not continue to do so as a married women.[76] In practice, however, English women could and did enjoy real power in the household, as partners in their husbands' businesses, over the household economy, and as executors of their husbands' wills.[77] Many also ran their own businesses, contributing and in some cases largely providing for the household economy.[78] Nonetheless, women did give up very real legal rights, especially over their dowries and other property, when they married.

In widowhood, the dowry was all that a Florentine woman could count on. Widows had very little claim on the husband's estate beyond their own dowry. Further, after they had received a dowry from their patrilineal home, they could only claim the right to room and board and nothing more.[79] In their wills, husbands acknowledged their wives dowries, and would sometimes also leave them their personal items in usufruct, meaning that the widow could use those items for her life but did not have the right to

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and pointed out how rarely women chose to claim it. Marjorie K. McIntosh, "The Benefits and Drawbacks of Femme Sole Status in England, 1300-1630," *Journal of British Studies* 44, no. 3 (2005): 401-38.

[75] It is true that his grant of her property did not hold up after his death unless she had freely assented, but such "free assent" is difficult to establish when a woman had few legal rights. Bennett, *Women*, 110.

[76] Ibid., 107.

[77] Hanawalt, *Wealth*, 120.

[78] Judith M. Bennett, *Ale, Beer, and Brewsters in England: Women's Work in a Changing World, 1300-1600* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), 35.

[79] Diane Owen Hughes, "From Brideprice to Dowry in Mediterranean Europe," in *The Marriage Bargain: Women and Dowries in European History*, ed. Marion A. Kaplan, (New York: 1985), 33.

bequeath them.[80] Andreolo Niccolo Sacchetti left his wife only her dowry and usufruct of her possessions, nothing more except black cloth and a veil for mourning, which he also left to his children, servants, and sister.[81] His young sons were his universal heirs and were entrusted to the guardianship of the city's Office of Wards and his brother. Since Andreolo's wife, Tita Albizi Tosi, would have been only twenty-nine when he wrote the will on 10 August 1429, he might have assumed that she would soon remarry. Andreolo dedicated considerably more ink to his patriline, and particularly to securing the place of his young sons within his patriline, than to his widow.

Giovanni Michele, who wrote his will on 6 February 1430, was more generous. He stipulated that his wife Viaggia would receive her dowry, clothes, and ornaments, as well as movables worth 100 florins. He also left Viaggia use of all of his possessions, but only as long as she continued to live with their son, his universal heir.[82] While Viaggia was not unique in her position, usufruct of the husband's possessions was certainly not universal, as Tita's case demonstrates. In all cases it is clear that the wife was not the heir but only the possessor of the property while she remained within the structure of her patriarchal marital household, headed by a different member of his patriline after the husband's death.[83]

But widows' rights even to their dowries and whatever else their husbands might have left them did not go unchallenged in Florence. The return of the dowry was often

[80] Epstein, *Wills and Wealth in Medieval Genoa, 1150-1250*, 7.
[81] NA 2546 fol. 85-88. Cat ID 3139.
[82] NA 2546 fol. 127-131.
[83] Isabelle Chabot, "Lineage Strategies and Control of Widows in Renaissance Florence," in *Widowhood in Medieval and Early Modern Europe*, ed. Sandra Cavallo, (New York: Longman, 1999), 141.

fraught, as widows fought with their husbands' heirs, often their own children, over their ability or willingness to return the dowry.[84] Young widows were also often caught between the desires of their marital and natal families. The former were reluctant to part with the dowry. The latter were eager to reclaim their young daughters and sisters, along with the dowry, and form new marital alliances. Klapisch-Zuber claims that this created a painfully impossible situation for the young widow, who would be a "cruel mother" if she left her children but who was nonetheless often immediately reclaimed—along with her dowry—for remarriage by her patriline, who "never totally relinquished control over the dowries [and] claimed a perpetual right to the women's bodies and their fertility."[85] In any case, the decision of where to live was rarely up to the widow alone.

But northern Italian widows could also be important economic and social figures. Alessandra Strozzi, the Florentine widow and letter writer, controlled the finances and marriage alliances of her marital household while her sons were in exile. In Venice, Chojnacki has emphasized that the women held over their growing dowries made them important actors in their natal and marital homes.[86] Based on Venetian women's contributions to dowries, Madden and Queller argue that women's awareness of the

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[84] Elena Brizio notes the tension between mothers and sons in 13th c. Siena while Calvi provides a detailed case study of the conflict between a mother, who needed the dowry to live on, and her daughters, who had been promised it as their own dowries. Brizio, "La dote," 27; Calvi, "Maddalena Nerli," 326. Indeed, such conflicts over wills were common enough that Thomas Kuehn warns scholars against assuming that intentions described in wills were carried out. Thomas Kuehn, "Law, Death, and Heirs in the Renaissance: Repudiation of Inheritance in Florence " *Renaissance Quarterly* 45, no. 3 (1992): 487.

[85] Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, "The "Cruel Mother": Maternity, Widowhood, and Dowry in Florence in the Fourteenth and Fifteenth Centuries," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), 123.

[86] He notes that women not only control increasingly large amounts of their own wealth but were also the heirs of growing portions of their husbands' estates. Chojnacki, *Women and Men*, 5, 160.

dowry's importance led them to augment the dowries of their female relations to the best of their abilities.[87]

Much of the conflict over the role of dowry and of women's role in marriage formation more broadly, especially between scholars of Florence and Venice, has less to do with regional differences and more to do with the theoretical standpoints of the various scholars involved. Chojnacki—himself very much a part of this debate—divides scholars into two groups: those who focus on legal and ideological restrictions placed on women, and those who focus on the choices women could make.[88] It is true that the majority of those who stress women's limitations with regard to their dowries focus on Florence, but this does not necessarily mean that the difference was regional. Perhaps, as Herlihy suggests, emphasis on the importance of the role of the patriline has led to an under-evaluation of women's portion and control of the familial wealth in Florence.[89]

Once the conflicting interpretations of dowry are separated from the practices themselves, dowry worked very similarly in the two cities. There were real differences in law and custom between Florence and Venice, for example Florence instituted the *Monte delle Doti* while Venice imposed caps to combat dowry inflation, both of which were ineffectual. There are also dissimilarities in sources. Chabot argues that the number of wills written by Venetian women, and particularly by Venetian wives, far exceeds those

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[87] Thomas F. Madden and Donald E. Queller, "Father of the Bride: Fathers, Daughters, and Dowries in Late Medieval Venice," *Renaissance Quarterly* 46, no. 4 (1993): 698.
[88] Chojnacki, *Women and Men*, 6.
[89] David Herlihy, "Foreward," in *Women, Family, and Ritual in Renaissance Italy*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1985), x. Chabot discounts this possibility, stressing instead that legal restrictions limit people in very real ways. Isabelle Chabot, "Richesses des femmes et parenté dans l'Italie de la Renaissance, Une Relecture," in *La famille, les femmes et le quotidien (XIVe-XVIIIe siècle): textes offerts à Christiane Klapisch-Zuber*, ed. Christiane Klapisch-Zuber, et al., (Paris: Publications de la Sorbonne, 2006), 268-73.

of Florence.[90] While there might be fewer than in Venice, there are copious female-authored wills for Florence as well, although mostly written by widows.[91] These differences, while significant, suggest a range of possibilities for the provision and control of dowry in both places. While Venetian women might have enjoyed certain freedoms more frequently than their Florentine counterparts, some Florentine women also exercised a good deal of control over their dowries. In both cases, as throughout northern Italy, the dowry was a large sum relative to the wealth of the family transferred between a woman's natal and marital families, both of which were patrilineal. The woman could exercise some control over the distribution of her dowry after her death, but this control was limited by law, by the economic status of her family, and by the woman's status *vis a vis* and her relationship to her male guardians.

The widow's portion worked very differently in England. A widow, by custom and law, was entitled to control and use one-third of her late husband's estates during her lifetime, whether she remarried or not.[92] It was also quite common for a widow to be the

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[90] Chabot, "Richesses des femmes ", 273.

[91] By the 16th c. approximately 40% of wills are female-authored. Chabot herself relies heavily on wills for her dissertation research on dowry and inheritance. Isabelle Chabot, "La dette des familles: Femmes, lignages et patrimoines à Florence aux XIVe et XVe siècles" (Unpublished PhD Dissertation, European University Institute, 1995), 90. I am grateful to Gregory Murray for his willingness to share his insight into 16th c. wills.

[92] This proportion increased to one-half if the couple had not had children. In the event that there were minor children, the widow controlled the third belonging to the children if she served as their guardian. In London, approximately half of all children were under the guardianship of their mothers after their fathers' deaths. Hanawalt, *Wealth*, 58, 22. A man might also assign guardianship of his minor children to someone other than his widow (if she was alive), and often—but not always—the property would also be under the control of the guardian. In cases where a noble man held land from the crown, his heir (or co-heirs, in the case of daughters but no sons) became wards of the king, who could control their land, arrange their marriages, or sell the rights of guardianship for a profit.

executors of her husband's will, giving her effective control over all of his property.[93] While the potential for legal and economic power on the part of these women was therefore great, they were limited in two important ways. First, women were largely dependent on the provisions made by their husbands for their inheritance and also for its smooth transfer.[94] Secondly, when there was no property—because of debts, a husband's mismanagement, or simple poverty—any fraction of the estate was not particularly useful. There was, nonetheless, at least the possibility of financial independence.

As a widow, an English woman was no longer under coverture but could operate independently as a *femme sole*. As Froide argues, a widow had "had earned the right to live outside a male-controlled household" through marriage and by supplying a portion of the wealth and labor necessary to create the household in the first place. In part, however, she had this right because she still lived in a patriarchal household, her marital household, albeit one in which the patriarch was absent and the patriarch's assistant—his wife—was in charge. [95] Widows could then remain single or enter into another marriage, often of their own choosing.[96]

Remarriage meant that a woman lost her *femme sole* status, and her control over her own and her late husband's property, but it could also bring several advantages. Of

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[93] Mate finds that in Sussex, men named their wives as executrixes more than 50% of the time. Mate, *Daughters, Wives and Widows*, 105.
[94] Ibid., 134.
[95] Froide, *Never Married*, 17.
[96] How often they remarried varied; parish registered indicate that widows in London remarried in a quarter to a third of cases, while Harris's work on aristocratic women indicates that 58 percent of peers' widows and 85 percent of knights' widows remarried. While some women, especially young, childless, or wealthy widows, might be pressured into remarriage, there is also evidence of women rejecting suitors or marrying men entirely of their own choosing. The first statistic is based on the work of Wrigley and Schofield, as cited in Hanawalt, *Wealth*, 106; Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 162.

course, one of these could be the companionship of a man of her own choosing. Additionally, a woman with considerable wealth could enter into a marriage on very different terms, either marrying up the social scale, or marrying a less wealthy or younger man and establishing a balance of marital power that was tilted towards her.[97] In such marital households, the husband was legally in charge, but the demographics of the couple opened the opportunity for a more equal balance of power in the relationship in a way that rarely occurred in Florence.

Further, if a woman outlived several husbands, she could improver her economic position, accumulating thirds from each of her successive marriages. For example, Thomasine Bonaventure of London became an extremely wealthy woman over three childless marriages to progressively wealthier men—the last the mayor of London—in the latter half of the fifteenth century.[98] For poorer widows, however, marriage could mean an easing of the burdens of poverty.[99] In fact, the importance of her husband's wealth to a woman's own was so great that Kathryn Staples has argued that London women were more likely to leave goods to sons than daughters because daughters' wealth could come through marriage while that was not the case for sons.[100] This is a very interesting juxtaposition to the situation in Venice, where women made bequests to other women because they realized that dowry and dowry augmentations were a woman's primary sources of wealth.[101]

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[97] Harris, *English Aristocratic Women*, 166.
[98] Hanawalt, *Wealth*, 111.
[99] Mate, *Daughters, Wives and Widows*, 120.
[100] Staples, "Daughters", 155.
[101] Chojnacki, *Women and Men*, 134-36; Madden and Queller, "Father of the Bride," 685-711.

The chief difference between Florentine and English dowries, then, does not lie in the importance of the dowry for marriage formation; in both cases it was a vital aspect of marriage formation across the social spectrum. The divergence is in the relationship between women, dowry, and the law during the marriage and in widowhood. During the marriage, Florentine women's dowries were in many ways more secure and protected than their English counterparts. A woman not only knew exactly what she was entitled to upon widowhood—the value of their dowry—but the courts were also quite proactive in protecting a woman's rights to her dowry. She was also entitled to return to her patrilineal natal family after her marriage, although this might not be an option for every woman and her status in the household might be decidedly second-class.[102] In England, by contrast, a wife had very little protection against her husband's mismanagement of the household. She would get a third of whatever he had at his death, regardless of the amount or form of wealth she brought into the marriage or contributed during its course. Further, although a widow's family might take her in—and indeed many widows and singlewomen did live with their natal kin—a woman was not legally entitled to this treatment. An English woman's legal rights during the marriage and upon widowhood were not as assured as her Florentine counterpart's, although in both cases theoretical rights could be eroded by the realities of poverty.

But the rights and possibilities for a woman's self determination in widowhood were much stronger in England than in Florence. In widowhood, a woman emerged from

[102] Recognizing the vulnerability of widows, the Florentine government created a sort of housing project for poor widows and their families. Richard C. Trexler, "A Widows' Asylum of the Renaissance: The Orbatello of Florence," in *The Women of Renaissance Florence*, (Asheville, NC: Pegasus Press, 1998).

coverture to assume the position of a head of household. Certainly she still lived in a patriarchal society in which her gender was a disadvantage, and in many cases she was limited by the realities of poverty, but she had the legal right to act independently. This was not the case in Florence, where women remained legal minors their whole lives. If a Florentine woman severed her ties with her marital family she had the right to return to her natal family but, among the elite at least, this often meant that she left behind her children in the process. She returned as a dependent daughter under the control of the patriarch, whether that was her father, brother, or uncle. For a poorer woman, even this might not be an option if she lacked family, if there were no in-laws interested in caring for her children, or if no family could afford to take her or her children in. While English women were only full legal beings in widowhood, as single women, or when their husbands established *femme sole* status for them, Florentine women never had an independent legal identity and, further, remained perpetually tied to their natal families both legally and in terms of their identity.

Because the Florentine family was built around the patriline, women were not in charge as long was there was a man would could step into the position of head. Further, the relatively minor importance of the conjugal couple in the Florentine household—as opposed to the conjugal bond between two patrilines—meant that women were less integrated into their marital families as wives than they were as mothers, through the children. Although English women were legally powerless within their marriages, even when they exercised real power, the conjugal couple was central. When the wife was all

that remained of that couple, her power was strong. But these differences manifested themselves after the marriage formation process rather than before or during.

Marriage Patterns, Patrilines, and Florentine Artisans: Going Forward

When the range of Florentine marriage patterns is set against the range of English marriage patterns, the resultant image is not one of opposition but of overlap. Florentine women married young, but so did some English women, and some English men, for that matter. Those Englishwomen who delayed marriage often worked in service for a time, but this was also the route to marriage for at least some Tuscan women. Most couples in both England and Florence established their own households, especially below the elite level. Dowry was inextricably linked to the marriage formation process across the social spectrum in both areas. When status-based differences are factored into geographic comparisons of marriage, the differences become much more blurred and the number of similarities increases. Further, the most consistent difference in marriage patterns between the two areas lies neither in the marriage formation process nor the demography of marriage, but rather in the social and legal parameters of the economics of marriage as manifested in the way that dowry was treated. These differences only emerged after the marriage formation process had ended and, even more so, after the marriage itself had ended.

The challenges presented to the traditional northwestern European/ Mediterranean dichotomy of marriage formation patterns highlights several important caveats for working with the demography of marriage. The demographics of marriage provide an excellent benchmark for comparison across space or time. Statistical differences can

suggest ways the people's lives differed from one another across societies and within a single society. But averages—means, medians, standard deviations—do not necessarily represent the experience of the majority of real individuals, or even of a single person. Although the average age of first marriage in Florence is just below twenty-nine, men entered into first marriages from the time they were in their late teens until their mid-fifties. Further, when they married depended on a number of factors, such as status as a household head and wealth, just to name two. We therefore must avoid making the leap from "the average age of marriage for men was X" to "men married at X."

Second, demographics do not represent agency, reasoning behind actions, or the nature of personal relations. Florentine men in the middle income group married later than their counterparts at either end of the social spectrum. It is possible that this was because they did not have the wealth to begin a new family and did not want to compromise the modest wealth that they had. This is, however, conjecture. Similarly, while it is logical that a husband who was a decade or more his wife's senior was the unchallenged authority of the household, this is not necessarily the case any more than it is that a marriage between spouses of the same age was egalitarian or partnership-based. In many ways this caveat is similar to the move, over the last four decades, to disconnect household structure from bonds of affection.[103] In both cases, the two might be related, but are not necessarily so or necessary so to the same degree in all cases, and to assume that they are is dangerous.

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[103] Marzio Barbagli, *Sotto lo stesso tetto: Mutamenti della famiglia in Italia dal 15. al 20. secolo*, Nuova ed. (Bologna: Il Mulino, 1996), 17.

This work should also not be interpreted as an attack on the European marriage pattern as a concept. Hajnal saw this as a modern pattern, coming into existence only in the early modern period. Medievalists have examined their data in light of his criteria but for the most part have been careful to state—for both England and Florence—that nowhere does their data does wholly conform to it. The development of the European marriage pattern much later in Italy than in England and the supposed dichotomy between the two in the late medieval period has made it tempting to see the English data as representing an early development of the European marriage pattern. The European marriage pattern was not, however, yet in existence in either England or Italy in the fifteenth century.

Marriage in the fifteenth-century—whether in England or in Florence—was not an individualistic act. It was, rather, a concern of the family and the community for all but the most disenfranchised. Elite parents, certainly, used their children's marriages to ensure the proper transmission of the patrimony and the maintenance of the family's social standing. This was true in Florence, in England, and everywhere in between. Further, in Florence, parents of more modest backgrounds also shared these concerns and worked to help their children make the best matches possible. They did this both out of parental love, as Andreas Trevisano notes in the epigraph at the beginning of this chapter, but also out of concern for the family and, indistinguishable from that, for themselves, as their identity and status was bound with that of the family.

In Florentine society, social ties determined status, community membership, and even identity. Marriage was one of the most important social bonds one could form. The choice of a partner shaped the kinship network of not only the spouses but also their families. It also both established and advertised the place of the families within Florentine society in terms of the communities to which they belonged and in terms of their position within the social hierarchy. Marriage was a statement of parity between the families, and often strengthened existing ties of friendship between them. It could emphasize the importance of each family's membership in a shared community, often a geographic community or an occupational (and, since participation in the republican government depended on guild membership, political) group. It is thus easy to see how marriage connections were one of the four major components of social status in fifteenth-century Florence, along with wealth, lineage, and political participation.[1] The aspects of status were deeply entwined and interconnected both in the sense of their dependence on one another and in the sense that status was dependent on all four. Of the elements, however, marriage offered each generation of a family the most opportunity for either social mobility or the solidification of their status. Each new marriage was a fresh chance to make a statement about its status, even if that statement was built on the status the family had cultivated over generations. Marriage was therefore a very important and public decision for the entire family.

The importance of marriage to status was universal across the Florentine social hierarchy but as this dissertation has demonstrated, marriage was not used in the same

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[1] Lauro Martines, *The Social World of the Florentine Humanists, 1390-1460* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1963), 18.

way across all levels of society. Certainly, the elite and the urban poor used marriage in different ways, but the multifaceted nature of status—for example, the differential levels of access to political power—complicate such a division. Florence cannot be seen as a society divided in two: the rich and the poor, or the governing and the governed. As this dissertation has shown, it is more accurate to imagine it as a spectrum and, even further, as a web of social relations expanding both horizontally and vertically across the social spectrum. There were not only gradations among the elite and the urban poor, but there were also many, many Florentines who fell into neither group but instead somewhere in between.[2] Florentine artisans, the skilled craftsmen of the minor guilds and their families, fell firmly into this intermediate group. In the 1420s, as the Florentine republic edged closer and closer to an oligarchy and artisans were marginalized in favor of increasingly powerful elite factions, the potential to play even a minor role in government was socially and symbolically important to artisans and to the society as a whole.

The multifaceted nature of Florentine identity and status assured that artisans were a disparate group, but because of their membership in one of the fourteen minor guilds artisans did share a political status and, because of that, a social identity. This identity reflected more than shared political role. Certainly, they offered and expected dowries between those at either end of the social spectrum, as might be expected given their intermediary position in terms of wealth, but the differences go beyond that. Indeed,

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[2] Scholars of 15th c. Florence have recognized, certainly, the multilayered social hierarchy. For a discussion of the historiography on Florentine social division, from one of the most vocal opponents of a binary division, see F.W. Kent, ""Be Rather Loved than Feared:" Class Relations in Quattrocento Florence," in *Society and Individual in Renaissance Florence*, ed. William J. Connell, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 18-22.

in many ways their marriage patterns differentiated them from those at either end of the social spectrum. They married in such a way as to demonstrate awareness of a community of artisans. As Chapter Three showed, in one third of the artisan marriage contracts, at least one of the two or three witnesses is also an artisan, and one in five witnesses of artisan marriages shared an occupation with either the groom or the bride's father. They also turned to wealthier members of the artisan community for patronage, whether asking someone to fill the largely symbolic role of arbitrator or provide much more material support in the form of dowry assistance. Artisans were aware of occupational and guild-level communities and cemented ties to those communities during their marriage formation process.

Florentine artisans represented a significant portion of Florentine society. They formed a social community that was sizable—nearly a quarter of all Florentine households in the Catasto and over 40 percent of those households that listed an occupation were headed by artisans—and politically active, even if not at the center of Florentine politics. Perhaps even more valuable for the study of Florentine society more broadly, is the role that artisans, and particularly artisan marriages, played in forming ties across status-based communities. Artisans were not only central in the social hierarchy but also central to many of the ties that connected across the entire social spectrum, and hence central to Florentine society as a whole.

Bringing Florentines into the broader social web through artisans' wide-ranging marriage connections created avenues for social mobility, not least of all for the artisans themselves. It has long been clear that there was some degree of social mobility in

Florence.[3] For example, Gregorio Dati, undeniably one of Florence's elite in the late fourteenth century in terms of his wealth, his political activities, and his marriage connections, was the grandson of a purse-maker with a shop on the Ponte Vecchio.[4] But the extent and avenues of social mobility have not been well studied beyond the case of the Medici and other similarly elite Florentines, such as Dati, who rose quickly from relatively humble origins.[5] By focusing on artisans, this dissertation has demonstrated the small upward and downward movements below the level of the elite that could, nonetheless, affect a family's status in the present and when pursued over generations. The central position of artisans and their role in social mobility was especially important as the oligarchs struggled to maintain a semblance of republicanism and those further down the hierarchy grappled with the reality that their power—economic, social, and political—was becoming ever more limited and dependent on their social ties.

Artisan marriage patterns, therefore, provide a lens through which to study social bonds between individuals and groups. They highlight the importance of vertical and horizontal ties and the ways that these ties allowed for social mobility. It was through personal ties, both within and between communities, that Florence functioned. These social ties were ever more necessary for the city's continued operation as political, economic, and social capital became increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few

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[3] Ibid., 18; David Herlihy, "Three Patterns of Social Mobility," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 3, no. 4 (1973): 645-46; Gene A. Brucker et al., *Two Memoirs of Renaissance Florence: The Diaries of Buonaccorso Pitti and Gregorio Dati* (New York: Harper & Row, 1967), 15.
[4] Brucker et al., *Two Memoirs*, 107.
[5] Dale V. Kent, *The Rise of the Medici: Faction in Florence 1426-1434* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1978), 29.

families. Marriage, of course, was one of these ties and provides an excellent vantage point from which to examine both social bonds and communities more broadly.

But in addition to their role in Florentine society, artisan marriages fill a void in the comparative study of marriage. By demonstrating the variety of marriage patterns in Florence and by examining residence patterns and lifecycle service along with age of marriage and celibacy, and through comparison with the increasingly diverse picture of marriage in England, the established juxtaposition between marriage in the two regions is increasingly untenable. Multiple marriage patterns existed in both regions, and there was a great deal of overlap between the areas. Florentine artisans are not representative of either Florentine society or late medieval and early modern marriage patterns more broadly. They are, however, critical to an understanding and a complete picture of either.

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Appendix A: Florentine Guilds

Major

1. *Arte dei Medici e Speziali* (spice importers and merchants, apothecaries, Physicians, also painters)
2. *Arte dei Giudici e Notai* (judges and notaries)
3. *Arte della Seta/ Por Santa Maria* (silk cloth manufacturers and retailers, also precious metal smiths)
4. *Arte della Lana* (woolen cloth manufacturers)
5. *Arte di Calimala* (international merchants, cloth finishers)
6. *Arte del Cambio* (bankers)
7. *Arte dei Vaiai e Pellicciai* (fur merchants)

Minor

1. *Arte di Pietra e Legname* or *Maestri di pietra e legname* (master builders and carpenters, inc masons, architects, sculptors)
2. *Arte dei Beccai* (butchers)
3. *Arte dei Calzolai* (shoemakers)
4. *Arte dei Fabbri* (smiths)
5. *Arte dei Rigattieri* (used-clothes dealers)
6. *Arte dei Vinttieri* (wine retailers)
7. *Arte dei Albergatori* (innkeepers)
8. *Arte degli Oliandoli e Pizzicagnoli* (sellers of oil and cheese)
9. *Arte dei Galigai* (tanners)
10. *Arte dei Corazzai* (armorers)
11. *Arte dei Chiavaiuoli* (ironworkers)
12. *Arte dei Corregiai* (girdlemakers)
13. *Arte dei Legnaiuoli* (woodworkers)
14. *Arte dei Fornai* (bakers)

Source: Najemy, John M. *Corporatism and Consensus in Florentine Electoral Politics, 1280-1400*. Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 1982.

Appendix B: Florentine Geographic Communities

The list below shows the civic breakdown of space, and lists the parishes, named for saints, that were in each of the *gonfalone*. Some parishes occur twice, under two different *gonfalone.*

1. Quarter of Santa Croce (east)
    a. Bue
        i. S. Appellinare
        ii. S. Croce
        iii. S. Firenze
        iv. S. Simone
    b. Caro
        i. Orsanmichele
        ii. S. Cecilia
        iii. S. Piero Sceraggio
        iv. S. Romolo
        v. S. Stefano al Ponte
    c. Leon Nero
        i. S. Croce
        ii. S. Iacopo fra le Fosse
        iii. S. Romeo/S. Remigo (parish had two names)
    d. Ruote
        i. S. Martino
        ii. S. Stefano alla Badia
        iii. S. Procolo
2. Quarter of S. Giovanni (central)
    a. Chiavi
        i. S. Procolo
        ii. S. Ambrogio
        iii. S. Maria in Campidoglio
        iv. S. Piero Maggiore
        v. S. Bartolommeo al Corso
    b. Vaio
        i. S. Procolo
        ii. S. Bartolommeo al Corso
        iii. S. Maria Nipotecosa
        iv. S. Benedetto
        v. S. Margherita degli Alberghi
        vi. S. Maria in Campo
        vii. S. Michele in Paichetto
        viii. S. Michele Visdomini
        ix. S. Piero Celoro
    c. Drago

            i. S. Cristofano degli Adimari
            ii. S. Leo
            iii. S. Marriage Maggiore
            iv. S. Rufillo
            v. S. Salvatore
            vi. SS. Tommaso
            vii. S. Marco
            viii. S. Maria Nipotecosa
            ix. S. Maria dei Fiori (the Duomo)
            x. S. Michele Berteldi
    d. Leon D'Oro
        i. S. Marco
        ii. S. Iacopo in Campo Corbolini
        iii. S. Lorenzo
        iv. S. Maria dei Fiori (the Duomo)
3. Quarter of Santa Maria Novella (west)
    a. Leon Bianco
        i. S. Donato dei Vecchietti
        ii. S. Maria Novella
        iii. S. Piero Buonconsiglio
        iv. S. Michele Berteldi
    b. Leon Rosso
        i. S. Andrea
        ii. S. Maria degli Ughi
        iii. S. Miniato fra le Torre
        iv. S. Pancrazio
        v. S. Paolo
    c. Unicorno
        i. S. Lucia Ognissanti
        ii. S. Trinità
    d. Vipera
        i. S. Maria sopra Porta/ S. Biagio (parish had two names)
        ii. SS. Apostoli
4. Quarter of Santo Spirito (south, on the other side of the Arno River)
    a. Drago Verde
        i. S. Frediano
        ii. S. Maria in Verzia
    b. Ferza
        i. S. Felice in Piazza
        ii. S. Pier Gattolino
    c. Nicchiò
        i. S. Iacopo sopr'Arno
        ii. S. Spirito
        iii. S. Felicità

d. Scala
    i. S. Giorgio
    ii. S. Gregorio
    iii. S. Lucia de'Bardi/ S. Lucia Magnoli (parish had two names)
    iv. S. Maria sopr'Arno
    v. S Niccolò

Source: Cohn, Samuel K., Jr. *The Laboring Classes in Renaissance Florence*, New York: Academic Press, 1980.

Appendix C: A Key to the Players in some of the Unions Cited

Individuals given in the following form:

Name Patronymic Family Name (Catasto ID), Parish/Gonfalone, occupation

Information not available is omitted, as are individuals who are not named in the notarial transaction. The unions are listed here in the order in which they appear in the dissertation.

NA 17402 fol. 324V-5R Notary: Ser Antonio Leonardo Pugi

Bride: Francesca ('Cecca') Bartolomeo
Bride's Father: Bartolomeo Pagolo (deceased)

Groom: Lodovico Tamerighi (3364), S. Simone/ Bue, shearer
Groom's Father: Tamerighi Ser Lodovico (3469), S. Simone/Bue, wool cleaner
Groom's Mother: Agniola Domenicho (3469), S. Simone, Bue

Betrothal
Date: 6 February 1427
Place: S. Simone/Bue
Witnesses: [blank]
Arbitrators: Piero Giovanni (5850), Leon Rosso, Tailor
Giovanni Alessandro, S. Simone/Bue (originally from Prato), wool cleaner
Marriage
Date: 6 February 1427
Place: S. Simone/Bue
Witnesses: [blank]
Dowry Receipt
Date: 12 March 1427
Place: S. Simone/Bue
Witnesses: Giovanni Alessandro (see Betrothal)
Nardo Manetto (3391), S. Simone/Bue, wool cleaner
Amount: 78 florins

NA 20704 fol. 158V Notary: Ser Ugolino di Peruzzo

Bride: Giovanna ('Nanna') Tura, S. Apellinare/Bue
Bride's father: Tura Stefano, S. Apellinare/Bue (originally from Monteficalli), smith

Groom: Salvi Antonio (2725), Drago (originally from Scopeto), wool merchant

Dowry Receipt
Date: 21 September 1427
Place: S. Maria in Campo/Vaio
Witnesses: Michele Frosino, rector of S. Maria Novella
Antonio Giovanni, S. Appellinare/Bue
Amount: 150 florins

NA 19115 fol. unnumbered (21 October 1427) Notary: Ser Iacopo di Silvestro

Bride: Tessa Cino (7886), S. Maria del Fiore/Drago or Leon d'Oro
Bride's Father: Luca Cino (7886), S. Maria del Fiore/Drago or Leon d'Oro, sword maker

Groom: Vieri Frolio Michi (3309), S. Ambrogio/Chiavi then S. Simone/Bue

Betrothal
Date: 21 October 1427
Place: S. Maria del Fiore/Drago or Leon d'Oro
Witnesses: Barolomeo Lodovico (6734), S. Lorenzo/ Leon d'Oro, middleman
Zanobi Taldo, S. Michele Visdomini/Vaio, furrier
Bartolomeo Giovanni (8254), S. Maria del Fiore/Drago, carpenter
Filippo Salvestro, S. Maria Novella/Leon Bianco, bridlemaker
Arbitrators: Martino Domenico
Niccolo Michele
Marriage
Date: 21 October 1427
Place: S. Maria del Fiore/Drago or Leon d'Oro
Witnesses: Barolomeo Lodovico (see Betrothal)
Zanobi Taldo (see Betrothal)
Bartolomeo Giovanni (see Betrothal)
Filippo Salvestro (see Betrothal)
Dowry Receipt
Date: 26 October 1427
Place: S. Simone/Bue
Witnesses: Ser Monte Giovanni, notary
Francesco Iacopi (3600), S. Simone/Bue, shearer
Domenico Francesco, S. Piero Maggiore/Chiavi, baker
Amount: 190 florins

NA 4622 fol. 99V Notary: Ser Bindo Cassi
Bride: Bartolomea ('Mea') Iacopo (5225), S. Lucia Ognissanti/Unicorno
Bride's Father: Iacopo Ventura (5737), S. Lucia Ognissanti/Unicorno, shoemaker

Groom: Niccolaio Andrea (5225), S. Lucia Ognissanti/Unicorno (originally from Lucca), innkeeper

Dowry Receipt
Date: 10 October 1429
Place: S. Lucia Ognissanti/Unicorno
Witnesses: Agostino Francesco (4908), S. Lucia Ognissanti/Unicorno
Bernardo Leonardo Turadini, S. Lucia Ognissanti/Unicorno
Dowry Amount: 42 florins
Payer of Dowry: Batista Piero (3857), Leon Nero, shoemaker

Cat 78 fol. 131 (bobbin 144)

Bride: Angoletta Iacopo, Leon d'Oro
Bride's Father: Iacopo Francesco Mangiatroi (6570), Leon d'Oro, judge

Groom: Bernardo Miniato (4262), Vaio, beltmaker

Catasto Ammendment
Dowry Amount: 700 florins

NA 16536 fol. unnumbered (1 July 1425) Notary: Ser Giovanni Dino Peri
Bride: Felicia Tommaso (4524), S. Ambrogio/Chiavi
Bride's Father: Tommaso Domenico (4525), S. Ambrogio/Chiavi, cutter

Groom: Giovanni Lorenzo, carpenter

Betrothal
Date: 1 July 1425
Place: S. Maria del Fiore/ Drago or Leon d'Oro
arrha sposalita: 300 florins
Witnesses: Benghi Lorenzo (8575), S. Piero Maggiore/Chiavi, purse-maker
Piero Bernardo (445), S. Niccolo/Scala, tanner
Arbitrator: Manno Mannucci Benincase (6334), S. Pancrazio/Leon Rosso, carpenter
Marriage
Date: 1 July 1425
Place: S. Ambrogio/Chiavi
Witnesses: Benghi Lorenzo (see Betrothal)
Piero Bernardo (see Betrothal)

NA 19338 fol. unnumbered (2 June 1426) Notary: Ser Matteo Domenico Sofferoni

Bride: Giovanna Giovanni, S. Frediano/Drago Verde
Bride's Father: Giovanni Baldino, S.Frediano/Drago Verde, shoemaker
Guardian: Tommaso Ceccardi, S. Frediano/Drago Verde, wool comber

Groom: Tommaso Leonardo, S. Maria in Verzaia/Drago Verde, threadmaker

Betrothal
Date: 2 June 1426
Place: S. Maria in Campo/ Vaio
Witnesses: Antonio Lando (4903), S. Maria in Campo/Vaio, weaver
Tommaso Cecci, S. Maria in Campo/ Vaio, carpenter
Francesco Giovanni, S. Michele Visdomini/Vaio
Arbitrators: Antonio Domenico (1979), S. Maria Verzaia/ Drago Verde, weaver
Domenico Corrado (6003), Leon Bianco
arrha sposalita: 100 florins

Marriage
Date: 19 June 1426
Place: S. Maria in Campo/Vaio
Witnesses: Antonio Lando (see Betrothal)
Tommaso Cecci (see Betrothal)
Francesco Giovanni (see Betrothal)

NA 20704 fol. 144 (same couple as NA 19338 above) Notary: Ser Ugolino di Peruzzo
Dowry Receipt
Date: 3 November 1426
Place: S. Maria in Campo/ Vaio
Witnesses: Antonio Domenico (see Bethrothal)
Andrea Iacopo Cini, S. Maria in Campo/Vaio
Amount: 90 florins

Appendix D: Terms

artisan: a man with an occupation that would make him eligible for membership in one of the fourteen minor guilds. These guilds could participate in the city's republican government, albeit in a secondary position to the seven major guilds. Also, members of that man's immediate family.

bride: a woman at any stage in the marriage formation process.

contado: the area controlled by the city of Florence outside the city walls.

gonfalone: the smallest civic (as opposed to ecclesiastical) division of space. There were 16 in the city and each consisted of approximately 4-5 parishes.

groom: a man at any stage in the marriage formation process

laboring classes: term used by Samuel K. Cohn Jr in his 1980 monograph to designate the *sottoposti* and the urban poor, who were poorer and/or further down the social hierarchy than the *sottoposti*. I have chosen to study these two groups—both below the guild level—together, as *sottoposti.*

marriage formation process: the process that began with the search for a spouse and ended with the final payment of a dowry, the last step in creating a binding marriage in the fifteenth-century Florentine tradition. It could involve three types of notarial acts: the *sponsalia* (betrothal), *matrimonium* (marriage), and *confessio dotis* (declaration of dowry payment). It does not, however, always involve all three notarial acts. Dowry augmentations and bequests of dowries are technically outside this process, although obviously related.

Monte delle Doti: the city's public dowry fund. It was created in 1425 but attracted few investor until revisions in the terms in 1433. An individual could invest money for the dowry of a specific young woman. After a set number of years (contracts varied), the fund would pay back the money, along with a very high interest rate, to the woman's husband if the she had married and consummated the marriage. Created partly to help with dowry inflation (although some argue that it ultimately contributed to it) and partly to help the cash-strapped state, it ultimately failed because of the interest rates. Marriages in the late 1420s did not involve *Monte* dowries, but the creation of the fund reflects the widespread anxiety about dowries in that period, as well as the organization and importance of the civic government in daily life.

named family: literally, a family with a surname. In the 1420s, only approximately a third of Florentines had a surname and those who did were almost invariably elite, to the extent that simply having a family name was an indicator or high social status. Children took the

family name of their father, if he had one, but women did not adopt the family name of their husbands.

parish: the smallest ecclesiastical definition of space, defined as the area in which parishioners of a specific church lived. There were over 50 in Florence at this time. Notaries identified individuals in contracts by listing their parishes.

quarter (ital. *quartiere*): civic division of the city into 4 units, each consisting of 4 gonfalone and centered around (and named after) the major church or ecclesiastical structure: S. Maria Novella (in the west); S. Giovanni (in the center, after the baptistery); S. Croce (in the east); S. Spirito (in the south, below the river).

Signoria – the governing body of the city of Florence and Florentine-controlled Tuscany.

sottoposto (pl. *sottoposti*): A trade or occupation for which no guild existed, and hence those who practiced the trade could not participate in the guild-based republican government. Also, a laborer who practices such a trade and his family. Although these were individuals without political power (officially), they were nonetheless skilled laborers and had generally steady work in that trade, distinguishing them from unskilled laborers. For the sake of simplicity and clarity, however, all men who did not belong to a guild are considered under the heading of *sottoposti*, along with their co-resident families.

union: the connection between a bride and a groom brought to fruition through the marriage formation process, which could involve up to three steps. In modern terms, a marriage, but I use the term “union” to avoid confusions with the “marriage” (*matrimonio*) which was only one of the steps in creating a legally valid and binding Florentine union.