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### *Descriptive Finding*

## **Leaving home, family support and intergenerational ties in Italy: Some regional differences**

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## Leaving home, family support and intergenerational ties in Italy: Some regional differences<sup>1</sup>

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### Abstract

In Italy young people leave home at a high age. After leaving, they usually live close to their parents and receive strong support from them (both material and affective). These behaviours are not homogeneously spread across the country and important regional differences can be found. According to the *familistic* theoretical approach, such patterns come from strong intergenerational ties. Proximity and support are considered proxies of ties' strength, so that different regional proximity and support patterns correspond to different ties' intensities.

This study aims to analyze the associations among parent-child ties, proximity and support, and to explore similarities and differences among them in four selected Italian regions (Liguria, Umbria, Sicily and Sardinia). Results show important differences among regions with respect to proximity and support, and suggest that they reflect a different intensity of intergenerational ties.

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<sup>1</sup> The two authors share the general views expressed in the paper, the comments of the results and the conclusions. However, sections 1 to 4 and 7 were edited mainly by E. Santarelli, sections 5 and 6 by F. Cottone.

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## 1. Introduction

The early adult years are marked by substantial changes as young people make the transition from childhood to adulthood. In Europe, the ages between 18 and 25 are a period of completing schooling, establishing occupations, and creating new households. During this stage of life, young people become less dependent on their parents and their well-being becomes a function of their own market participation and resources (Mulder et al. 2002).

The process of leaving the parental home and the changes through time are remarkably different among the various industrialized countries (Kiernan 1986). One of the most important differences is living *with* or *without* a partner after leaving home. Delays in first union formation are generalized in Europe, but the extent to which living alone or with roommates is an option for young adults is much greater in Northern than in Southern Europe (Cherlin et al. 1997, Cordon 1997).

In Italy, young people leave home at the highest age of Europe (Billari et al. 2001, Barbagli et al. 2003) and leaving is closely associated with first union, mostly coincident with marriage (Billari and Ongaro 1998, Billari et al. 2002).

With respect to age, Aassve et al. (2001) showed that in 1994 Italy had the highest percentage of people aged 30-34 still living with their parents in Europe (more than both Northern and other Mediterranean countries)<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, Family and Fertility Surveys (FFS) data show that in 1995 Italy had the highest median age at leaving home of cohorts born in the '60s: 26.7 years for men and 23.6 for women (De Sandre et al. 2000). Concerning the reason to leave, 59% of men and 72% of women leave home to marry, and these are the highest percentages in Europe (Billari et al. 2001).

In Italy, proximity and support are high. In no other European country is the co-residence between parents and children prolonged and supported as much as in Italy (Barbagli et al. 2003, Rosina 2007).

In this paper we focus on patterns of proximity and support between parents and their children at the time of leaving the parental home.

We define *proximity* as the spatial distance between parents and children's houses and *parental support* as any kind of material and financial support from parents to children. In this work they are both referred to the time at which children leave the family.

Several authors suggest that proximity and parental support are due to strong *intergenerational ties*, together with a welfare system which does not encourage individual autonomy (see, e.g., Micheli 2000, Dalla Zuanna 2001). Such an approach, called *familistic*, considers proximity and parental support as proxies of ties' intensity.

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<sup>4</sup> These results come from the analysis on the first wave of ECHP data of ten European countries.

Hence, different ties' intensities may cause different proximity and support patterns. As a consequence, if ties' intensity is dissimilar among Italian regions, it may sketch different regional proximity and support patterns.

Following the familistic approach, we aim to explore *whether* a correspondence exists between parent-children ties on one hand, and proximity and support on the other. We aim to do this by analyzing data of four Italian regions and comparing them with a multivariate method to observe *whether* different ties' intensities correspond to different proximity and support patterns. We use a descriptive perspective.

This paper is organized as follows. The next section briefly describes the pattern of leaving home in Italy in recent years. Section 3 presents the features of the familistic approach. In Section 4 we show some regional differences about the patterns of leaving home. Section 5 illustrates data and method of analysis and section 6 shows the results. The final section summarizes and concludes the paper.

## 2. Features of leaving home in Italy

During the last years of the '90s, the process of transition to adulthood in Italy experienced deep socioeconomic and cultural changes. Such changes reordered individual needs, destandardising the sequence of events of this transition.

The prolonged time spent in education and in looking for a stable job implies an increased age of entry into the work force and leaving home. Only once these transitions are completed, people begin to program family events (Ongaro 2001).

In Italy, the age at the end of studies rises both for men and women due to the increased investment in education. The prolonged time spent to reach a high education delays the entry into the labour market. Since in Italy a stable job is a necessary requisite to form a family, young people take on family responsibilities at a rather late age. In fact, a delay is observed also for familial events, first union and first child (Billari and Rosina 2004). Istat<sup>5</sup> data show that the median age at first marriage for women and men increased by one year since 1994 to 2002, from 26.5 to 27.6 and from 29.3 to 30.5 respectively (Sabbadini 2004). Moreover, an increasing tendency to postpone births is clear: mean age of women at childbirth was 28.5 years in 1996 and 30.9 in 2005 (Eurostat 2008).

In Italy, the timing of events of the transition to adulthood has experienced a process of disconnection from age. Age norms have been shifting upwards and their social power decreased. However, such changes characterize only younger cohorts,

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<sup>5</sup> Italian National Statistical Institute.

differently from other European countries where they can be extended also to the oldest cohorts (Corijn and Klijzing 1999).

This destandardization of age does not correspond to flexibility of events' sequence. Individual careers of young Italians (educational, occupational and familial) are very rigid and discourage any changes. Higher education implies a long and full time study, which is difficult to reconcile with other projects. Changes in the employment career are difficult due to the rigidities of Italian labour market. Family changes are also limited, as in Italy family is an important institution and any attempt to weaken its role is strongly opposed. The family cares for and raises young people, slowing their transition to adulthood and providing them with more time in intermediate states (Ongaro 2001).

FFS data show that in 1996 at least 75% of people left home to form the first union, the remaining 25% to study, to work or to live on their own (Billari and Ongaro 1999). Data from the I.D.E.A. survey<sup>6</sup> show that in 2004, cohorts born in the '70s have a high propensity to stay at home until their 30s and leave only to marry (Finocchiaro and De Domenico 2006). Leaving to study or to work is frequent at a younger age and such opportunities reduce as the age increases. Then, only two options for leaving are left, i.e. to form a union or to live on one's own.

Many authors have tried to explain the peculiarities of the leaving home pattern in Italy in terms of labour market or welfare regime (see, e.g., Aassve et al. 2001, Aassve et al. 2003, Billari et al. 2002). However, economic and institutional theories might not be exhaustive. Socioeconomic improvements are spreading everywhere in Europe and are influencing basic familial structures. Nevertheless, strong differences in transition to adulthood still persist among countries.

Other authors state that it is necessary to focus on social norms to deeply understand behavioural differences, because they determine different familial relationships (Dalla Zuanna and Micheli 2004). Along with Reher (1998), many studies have been carried out in order to explain individual behaviours using a cultural and anthropological point of view (e.g. Dalla Zuanna 2001, Micheli 2000). This approach states that interactions between generations are to be taken into account, because they influence individual choices and behaviours. Following this theoretical framework, we assume that strong affective ties between parents and children encourage late departure from the parental home. Furthermore, the complexity of parent-children relationships may contribute to explain the different timing, sequencing and patterns of leaving home in Italy.

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<sup>6</sup> The main goal of this survey, carried out in 2004, is the analysis of the Italian *latest late* transition to adulthood. Sampled persons are young people aged 23-27 and 33-37 (plus a group of mothers of people still living with parents). The survey provides information on: sex, marital status, if living in parental family or alone, educational level, occupational status, income, housing conditions, financial support, intensity of relationship with parents.

### 3. Familistic interpretation of Italian transition to adulthood

Economic theories are often used to explain the peculiarities of Italian patterns of leaving home, but they are sometimes unable to clarify important regional differences. It has been said that unemployment might cause a late transition to adulthood, namely the higher the unemployment, the later the departure from home. If this held true everywhere in Italy, the age at leaving should be the highest where unemployment is the highest. However, in the South of Italy unemployment is the highest of the country, while the age of leaving home is the lowest.

On the other hand, along with the institutional theories, similar welfare systems should have the same influence on different populations. But this is not always true. In fact, for instance Khoo et al. (2002) show that conjugal and reproductive behaviours of Italian migrants are remarkable even when they relocate to countries with different welfare systems.

Hence, in order to investigate deeply into the Italian *leaving home* patterns, it is necessary to focus on the cultural background which shaped the family relationships. According to Reher (1998), Italy belongs to the Mediterranean area, where family ties are strong and proximity is high. In this “strong ties” area, the family has priority over the individuals and “*most people consider their own utility and family utility as being the same thing*” (Dalla Zuanna 2001:139). The family is perceived as a “shield” against social and economic difficulties. Consequently, children receive support until they leave home and even later. Families have great social cohesion and are very conservative. Such a model is characterized by marked temporal ties’ continuity between parents and children, persisting considerably during adolescence and adult life. Strong intergenerational relationships mean that parents consider children as their personal continuation. Parents do not encourage their children to become autonomous, but take care of them for a long time, both for affection and to let them leave with a stable job and an adequate house. Material and affective exchanges are very frequent and they imply the postponement of building a new family, buying a new house, etc. for adult children.

Italian parents’ attitudes towards their children are the result of a propensity to highlight the affective dimension of the relationship, even if it could imply a scarce maturity, autonomy and responsibility (Rosina et al. 2003). Young people react to their parents’ attitude by placing their trust and affection in them. Bonifazi et al. (1999) found that many children are generally worried of making their parents suffer when they leave home. Mazzuco (2006) shows that Italian parents experience a relevant deterioration of their satisfaction when a child leaves the family.

Other authors found that strong vertical ties limit the diffusion of modern behavior among young people (e.g. cohabitation or births out of wedlock), as non traditional

behaviour could break family ties and this would be not convenient for children (see Rosina and Fraboni 2004, Di Giulio and Rosina 2007).

There are many regional differences about the diffusion of ties' strength. According to the familistic approach, the differences in family relationships among regions have deep historical roots. From the latter part of the Middle Ages up to the second half of the Nineteenth Century, it was common for young adults in the Italian territory to leave home early to get married. They continued to live close to their parents, creating a unique familial system, the so called *complex family*. In such a context, high proximity between generations spread. This implied continuous contact and transfers of goods and services from parents to children (Reher 1998). As a consequence, strong family ties spread across generations.

Dalla Zuanna et al. (2007) found that in Italy, strong cultural influences still persist in the intergenerational proximity of young and modern people with their parents. Differences in proximity and support are thought to reflect more the strength of cultural attitudes rather than socioeconomic factors (e.g. the availability of housing and jobs). Such diversities reflect different cultural values and intergenerational ties. Moreover, proximity and support interact reciprocally, because financial support can influence children's location and vice versa.

The existing empirical research focusing on residential proximity considered mainly the distance between old parents and their adult children. Studies on proximity and support at the time of leaving home are scarce. An important example is the book by Barbagli et al. (2003), where information refers to the time of marriage. The authors explore deeply the geographical differences on spatial proximity and support following the familistic approach. They consider proximity and support as proxies of the strength of the intergenerational ties and state that geographical differences in proximity and support can reflect the differences in the intensity of ties.

#### 4. Geographical differences in leaving home patterns in Italy

The process of transition to adulthood in Italy shows important geographical differences<sup>7</sup>. In the North, young people stay at home for a long time (Billari and Ongaro 1999). When they leave, they experience modern residential forms (e.g. cohabitation with partner, colleagues or students) with higher probability than elsewhere (Rosina and Fraboni 2004, Di Giulio and Rosina 2007). In the South, young

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<sup>7</sup> For the definition of macro-regions in this work we refer to the Istat geographical classification; **North West**: Piedmont, Valle D'Aosta, Lombardy, Liguria; **North East**: Trentino Alto Adige, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Emilia Romagna; **Centre**: Tuscany, Umbria, Marche, Lazio; **South**: Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Calabria, Puglia, Basilicata; **Islands**: Sicily, Sardinia.

adults leave home earlier than in the North. They abandon the parental home mainly to marry (women in particular) and are used to living close to their parents. The central part of Italy has an intermediate position: traditional models still persist, but innovative behaviour is spreading (Billari and Ongaro 1998).

Italian regions differ with respect to proximity and parental support as well. Rosina and Micheli (2006) show that people in Umbria, Emilia Romagna, Marche and Tuscany are likely to live with or very close to parents after marriage. In the South co-residence is less widespread, but proximity is high. Barbagli et al. (2003) show that in the North-East and the central part the share of couples living together or close to one parent after marriage is higher than in the North-West and the South.

Such geographical diversities may reflect differences in family relationships and intergenerational ties originated in past family formation systems. The Mediterranean model can not be considered homogeneous when applied to Italy, as it shows a high variety of familial models.

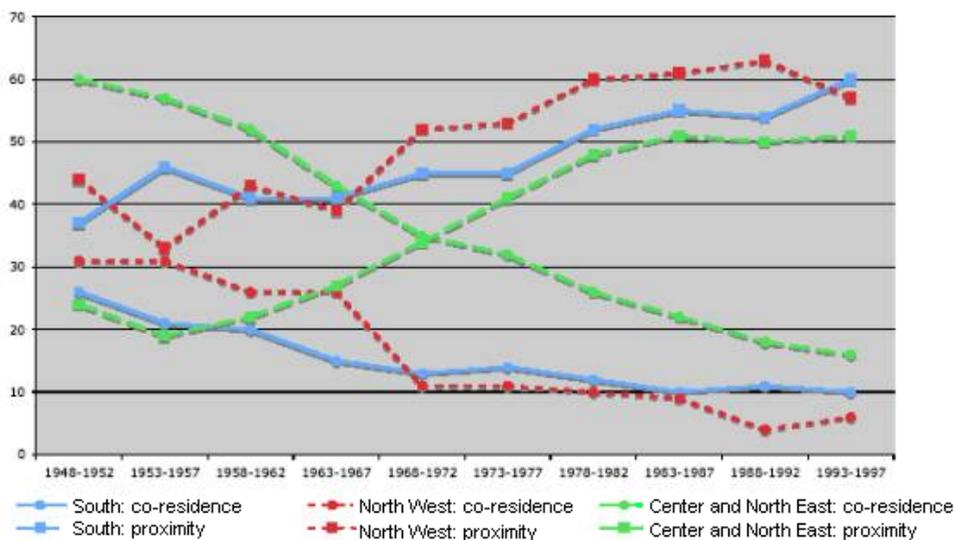
In the North and the central part, the complex family was mostly widespread. Sometimes young people left home to work as servants and came back home to live with parents and relatives. This behaviour was mostly related to the first male child and was frequently associated with sharecropping in Tuscany, Emilia Romagna, Umbria and Marche. In the South, people did not leave to work as agricultural servants, they married early and created a nuclear family close to the parental home. However, some exceptions can be found. For instance, in Sardinia only sometimes young adults worked as servants; they married late and lived in nuclear families.

These geographical differences in proximity and support may be partially explained by different hereditary systems as well. In the North, patrilinearity was dominant: the chosen male heir lived in his parents' house with his wife, while other children lived far away. However, it is very difficult to classify past familial systems in Northern Italy, because of a great heterogeneity of living arrangements. Specific studies on this topic are quite rare (see, e.g., Viazzo and Albera 1992) and we expect that traces of such diversity can still be found. In the South, the father's inheritance was equally distributed among his children who lived on their own, but close to their parents (this kind of family was associated with large estates). Matrilinearity was prevailing, so that new couples lived mainly close to wife's parents (Barbagli and Kertzer 1992).

A convergence towards an increasing parental *close proximity* and a decreasing co-residence is currently observed among Italian macro-regions (Fig. 1), but important specific regional diversities persist (Istat 2006). It has been shown that the Istat classification of macro-regions is not suitable to reflect differences in living arrangements and new classifications are convenient (Santarelli and Cottone 2007). Literature provides useful classifications of regions according to the different kinds of the past family models, proximity and support patterns. Barbagli et al. (2003) classify

Italian regions in: the *North West*, the *North East-Centre* and the *South and Islands*<sup>8</sup>. Rosina and Micheli (2006) consider the *North*, the *Centre-North*, the *Centre-South* (including Sardinia) and the *South*<sup>9</sup>. In their studies they found current traces of past family models.

**Figure 1: Evolution of co-residence and close proximity with parents at marriage of Italian macro-regions (1948-1997).<sup>10</sup>**



Source: Viazzo and Zanotelli 2006.

Following the familistic approach, in this work we select four Italian regions to analyze the associations between intergenerational ties, spatial proximity and parental support. Then, we explore whether a correspondence can be found between ties

<sup>8</sup> Barbagli et al. (2003) used the following classification; **North West**: Piedmont, Valle D'Aosta, Lombardy, Liguria; **North East-Centre**: Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trentino Alto Adige, Emilia Romagna, Tuscany, Umbria, Marche, Lazio; **South and Islands**: Abruzzo, Molise, Campania, Calabria, Puglia, Basilicata, Sicily and Sardinia.

<sup>9</sup> This is the classification of Rosina and Micheli (2006). **North**: Piedmont, Valle D'Aosta, Lombardy, Liguria, Veneto, Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trentino Alto Adige. **Centre-North**: Emilia Romagna, Umbria, Marche, Tuscany. **Centre-South**: Lazio, Abruzzo, Molise. **South and Islands**: Calabria, Puglia, Campania, Basilicata, Sicily and Sardinia.

<sup>10</sup> In Fig. 1, drawn by Viazzo and Zanotelli (2006), the definition of close proximity includes the couples living in the same building of at least one parent or less than one kilometer from him/her.

inherited from the past and current proximity-support patterns. In order to achieve this, we chose Liguria, Umbria, Sardinia and Sicily, as they adequately represent different familial systems and ties' patterns inherited from the past.

Liguria belongs to the Northern patrilinear model, where only the male heir continued to live with his family of origin and married after having worked as servant. Umbria is a typical example of the complex family of the central part of Italy, characterized by agricultural work in sharecropping, with people marrying early and living in complex families. Sicily is representative of the South, where people did not work as servants, married early and lived close to parents without co-residing with them. Sardinia can be considered an exception in the Southern model, because of the late age at marriage. Nevertheless, in Sardinia matrilinearity prevailed as well as in the other Southern regions.

## **5. Data and methods**

In this work we investigate the regional similarities and differences about proximity and material support of young people leaving home in four Italian regions. We carry out a comparative analysis on the Istat survey data "Family, Social Subjects and Childhood Conditions 1998".

Until 1998, Italian data did not allow a detailed analysis of material flows and proximity between generations. Only intergenerational transfers occurring at the date of interview were included, but without measures of proximity. Since 1998, the Istat survey "Family, Social Subjects and Childhood Conditions" provides useful information to investigate the associations between transfers from parents to children and their proximity. The survey is carried out every five years on the private household population. Several topics are covered: household structures, demographic background, the life cycle, housing, place of residence, health status and care. In particular, the survey also provides much information on family networks, such as proximity, contacts with parents, siblings, grandparents, children and friends. The total sample size includes 20.153 families and 59.050 respondents and it is representative at a regional level.

Questions were asked about the proximity to each set of parents at the time of marriage, the reason to co-reside if the couple lived together with at least one parent, the features of couple's first home. If the house was newly built or purchased, additional questions were addressed to know whether each set of parents contributed financially<sup>11</sup> or, in case the house was a gift, who provided it (Tomassini et al. 2003).

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<sup>11</sup> Without specifying the amount of money.

Our aim is to study similarities and differences among regions with respect to parental proximity and support when children left home. Since this information is available only for married women and it is referred to the date of wedding, we include in our sample only women who left their family of origin to marry. We restrict our analysis to married women between 20 and 50 years. Since they are in different phases of their life cycle, we select women who had been married for ten years or less. Furthermore, to allow for differential responses to housing assistance received from each set of parents, we restrict our analysis to married couples in which at least one of the spouses' parents was alive at the beginning of the current marriage. It has to be taken into account that analysing married women on proximity and support at the time of marriage makes the sample a selected group with respect to the reason to leave. In fact, people who marry have a higher probability of receiving money or other material support from their parents (see Rosina and Fraboni 2004, Di Giulio and Rosina 2007). Furthermore, since the information is collected in a cross section, we do not have data on the support at marriage for women that divorced (or separated) in the past ten years. Married women could show a higher traditionalism than divorced women (not observed). Such higher traditionalism might have influenced proximity and support patterns at wedding differently from divorced women. Unfortunately our data do not allow this assumption to be verified.

The survey provides information on housing proximity to the wife's mother, father, mother in law and father in law at the time of wedding, the reason to co-reside if the couple lived with at least one parent or parent in law<sup>12</sup>, the house type and whether the couple received material support for the house. We synthesized such variables as follows: *a) spatial distance from parents* and *b) spatial distance from parents in law at the time of marriage* (in the same flat or building, within 1 km in the same municipality, more than 1 km in the same municipality, within 16 km in another municipality, between 16-50 km in another municipality, more than 50 km or abroad, parents or parents in law are dead); *c) how the couple got the first house* (it was built, rented, purchased, inherited, it was a partner property, a gift or in heritage for couples living on their own); *d) the origin of material support received for the house* (no support, support from parents, support from parents in law, from both sets of parents, from others). These variables are all included in the analysis.

In this work, data are collected in a matrix for each region, so that they are structured in a *three-way cubic* matrix  $X$ , because there are three dimensions: *individuals*, *variables* and *occasions*. The individuals are the interviewed women and the occasions are the regions. The dimensions of the matrix  $X$  are given by  $I$  women,  $J$  categories and  $K$  regions, indexed respectively by the ways  $i, j, k$  ( $i=1,\dots,I, j=1,\dots,J,$

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<sup>12</sup> From now onward, parents and parents in law are referred to the wife (if not differently stated).

$k=1,\dots,K$ ). Hence, the generic element  $x_{ijk}$  of  $X$  denotes the  $j$ -th category of the variable observed for the  $i$ -th woman in the  $k$ -th region.

In order to analyze the data represented by  $X$  we use the *Analysis of Relation Matrices* (Coppi 1986), a technique which belongs to the general class of *Multway* methods (Law et al. 1984). In demographic studies the multiway analysis has been applied to data sets with quantitative variables (see e.g. Di Giulio and Pinnelli 2007, Pinnelli and Fiori 2007). The Analysis of Relation Matrices (ARM) permits to apply the multiway approach to *categorical* variables. ARM allows for representing the different elements of  $X$  in *ad hoc* spaces, built up reducing properly the data multidimensionality and minimizing the necessary loss of information. Such an optimization process allows for the identification of new synthetic dimensions (*factors*), by which *factorial planes* can be set up where the original information is projected. Thus, we can easily investigate the associative structures in the data set.

ARM is a *descriptive* technique, i.e. it shows the inner structure of the data along with an exploratory point of view. Hence, ARM does not assume any causal relations among variables, due to the measure of association on which it is based<sup>13</sup>. The strength of ARM is that its findings can be easily interpreted, exploring similarities and differences among regions for each category. The ARM outcomes can be either investigated by Average Structure Analysis (ASA) or Detailed Structure Analysis (DSA). The former displays the average associative structure among variables. The DSA provides more detailed results, allowing a comparison of the inner structure of occasions, by the analysis of associations among units or variables. This allows detailed comparisons among occasions for each category, finding associations which are unobservable when just comparing the final results of separate analyses for each occasion. The distances among occasions-regions are interpreted as differences, the proximities as similarities. Both ASA and DSA can be represented on factorial planes.

## 6. Results

In this section we first present the results of the tabular analysis of the selected variables (Table 1) and, then, those of ARM.

The percentages of couples living in the same flat or building of husband's parents at marriage range from 6.1% of Liguria to 25.3% of Umbria, while the Southern regions show intermediate values. The percentages of couples living in the same municipality of parents in law increase everywhere with increasing distance, except for Sardinia. The amount of couples living in another municipality up to 50 km from parents in law

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<sup>13</sup> For further details on ARM see Coppi (1988) and Coppi (1998).

decreases everywhere. The same happens for the distance from wife's parents, with the exception of Sicily that has a small increase.

Umbria is the region with the highest percentage of couples co-residing or living in the same building of husband's parents (25.3%) and the lowest percentages of close proximity (only 14.3% within 1 km in the same municipality). Such values confirm the widespread use of living together or in the same building of the husband's family of origin in Umbria (25.3% versus 11% of wife's parents). Umbria has also the lowest percentage of couples that did not receive support at all. This is a clear sign of the lasting diffusion of the complex family and frequent exchange derived from the past hereditary rules.

Liguria is the region with the highest percentage of couples living far from both sets of parents: 13.4% and 15.9% of them live more than 50 kilometres far away from wife and husband's parents respectively. Furthermore, Liguria shows the lowest level of co-residence.

Important differences appear concerning the way the couples got the house at marriage. The highest percentage of couples that built their house is in Sardinia while the lowest is in Sicily (12.7% versus 3.3% respectively). Moreover, in Sardinia the percentage of presented or inherited houses (22.5%) is much lower than in Sicily (35.1%). Thus, some differences in the same macro-region (the South) appear. Sardinian couples seem more independent of parents or parents in law than Sicilian ones. In fact, 68.6% of Sardinian couples did not receive support at marriage vs. 55% of Sicilian couples. This confirms that the Istat geographical classification of regions is not useful to study patterns of proximity and support in Italy. Other classifications are needed, based on past familial models and their intergenerational transmission (Santarelli and Cottone 2007).

To introduce the findings of ARM, we first show the ASA output which provides the necessary information to interpret the factorial plane where the categories are projected (Fig. 2). We used the second and third factors to build up the factorial plane, as the first one is highly correlated to the four occasions and the representation would have been dominated by the first axis providing an unbalanced output<sup>14</sup>. In order to interpret the results of the factorial plane we consider the absolute contributions of variables and categories (which sum up to 100% for each factor). The variables which contributed mainly to the horizontal axis are "how the couple got the first house" and "the origin of support" (52.64% of the total variability). Conversely, the vertical axis is dominated by variables of proximity with both parents and parents in law (76.28% of the total variability).

We can divide the plane in four parts. The right lower part is characterized by couples who depend more on parents in law and live close to both sets of parents, either

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<sup>14</sup> For further details see Di Manno and Pinnelli (1999).

in the same building or less than 1 km in the same municipality, and received the house as a gift or in heritage. On the right upper part of the plane we find the couples that mostly live close to wife's parents. There, the house was mainly purchased.

The left upper part of the plane is featured by those couples who received support from both sets of parents and lived more than 16 kilometres from parents in law (also the couples in which the wife's parents or parents in law were dead at marriage). The left lower sector of the plane is characterized by those couples who did not receive any kind of support and whose house was neither received as a gift nor purchased.

The ASA plane confirms the typical Italian pattern: couples live close to the set of parents from whom they receive support. Moreover, couples living *with* one set of parents are different from the ones living *close* to them, confirming previous empirical evidence (Tomassini et al. 2003). Couples that purchased their house at the time of marriage are included in the area of dependent couples, while couples that rented houses are close to those not receiving any support. This shows that couples who purchased their house mostly received financial support.

As stated above, the key for reading findings of the ARM is the graphical representation of the DSA, where each category is represented for each region and similarities and differences can be easily observed. The graphical representation of the DSA allows for the comparisons among regions by each category (Fig. 3). Due to the difficulties of interpreting a graph with so many categories, we included in a circle all the points of the categories close to the barycentre.

Similarities among regions are frequent for the categories indicating independence from both sets of parents, while many differences are observed for categories of dependence from parents or parents in law. This shows that “independent couples” are a homogeneous and distinct cluster with respect to the “dependent couples” who show a high variety of relationships with parents. It seems possible to identify a typical disposition of the regions for each category. The ones referring to Sicily are oriented towards the extreme right side of the plane, showing a higher dependence level from both sets of parents.

Umbria has an intermediate position quite distant from all other regions. Since frequencies showed a high level of dependence, this suggests that Umbria is characterized by a different dependence framework from Sicily.

Liguria and Sardinia are mostly oriented on the left, showing a higher autonomy from the families of origin. In particular, it can be observed that the points referring to these regions are the closest for the categories which most characterize the plane: “house was inherited or received as a gift”, “support only from parents” and “support only from parents in law”, “distance less than one kilometre in the same municipality”. These results show that Liguria and Sardinia are very similar for what concerns the dependent couples: in particular, they are more similar for what concerns support from

parents in law than support from parents. This could be interpreted as a difference in the hereditary line: patrilinearity in the North and matrilinearity in the South, which characterizes also Sardinia. In fact, Sardinia is more similar to Sicily for what concerns “living together or in parents’ building”, “together or in parents in law’s building”. These Southern regions are also very similar with respect to couples who purchased or rented their house.

On the whole, similarities prevail for independent couples, while differences exist for couples with high proximity with both sets of parents and strong support, confirming that different patterns of intergenerational ties, inherited from the past family system, can currently be found. Furthermore, some differences exist between Sicily and Sardinia with respect to parental proximity and support at marriage, so that the usual inclusion of both regions in the “South and Islands” area might not be appropriate.

These results are enriched by the Pearson correlation indices that give further detail on the general level of similarity and diversity among regions. Sardinia is highly correlated with Liguria and Sicily: the values of the correlation indices are 0.886 and 0.889 respectively. As previously observed, differences between Sicily and Sardinia do exist and are mostly related to different past family organization models, so they can be attributed to cultural differences, while similarities are probably due to common contextual elements. Sardinia and Liguria are more similar for high proximity-categories. As shown on the plane, Umbria is peculiar with respect to all the other regions. In fact, it presents the lowest correlation indices: 0.693 with Liguria, 0.727 with Sardinia and 0.754 with Sicily.

## **7. Conclusions**

In Italy young people leave home at a high age and leaving is strongly associated with first marriage. Furthermore, young Italians show lasting patterns of close proximity and strong support from the parental families (Barbagli et al. 2003, Santarelli and Cottone 2007).

According to the familistic approach, structural and institutional explanations are not sufficient to completely explain these patterns and theories based on intergenerational relationships should also be taken into account. In a strong family context like Italy, close intergenerational links cause tight proximity and intense support from parents to children, even after marriage (Reher 1998, Dalla Zuanna 2001, Dalla Zuanna and Micheli 2004). To deeply understand this peculiarity it is necessary to go back to the past family formation models that sketched ties among generations: high proximity and support between generations would correspond to strong links’ intensity

(Dalla Zuanna et al. 2007). This implies that regional differences in patterns of proximity and support would correspond to regional differences in ties' intensity (Barbagli et al. 2003).

Following this approach, in this work we analyzed whether associations between intergenerational ties, proximity and support can be found in some Italian regions and examined similarities and differences among them. We selected Liguria, Umbria, Sicily and Sardinia to represent different familial systems. The comparison was carried out by the Analysis of Relation Matrices (ARM), an explorative multiway technique which allows for the comparison of the selected qualitative variables among the regions by each category.

Our results confirm that important associations among generations, proximity and support can be found in the selected regions and may correspond to different past family formation systems.

Umbria seems to be the most traditional region, showing a lasting presence of past traces: the highest co-residence, strong family-dependence and patrilinearity. Sardinia and Sicily are quite similar, but, surprisingly, Sardinia also has many features in common with Liguria. In fact, in the past Sardinia showed quite different familial models from other Southern regions and their traces can still be found. Finally, Liguria is the region with the highest level of independence from the parental family.

Our analysis offers many insights about the associations among intergenerational ties, proximity and support and permits deep investigation into regional differences. In fact, the ARM allowed enlightening more complex associations among regions than the simple tabular analysis. The results confirm that conditions at leaving home are influenced by the cultural background. However, further studies are needed on the reasons of these associations: we need to know *to what extent* the described patterns are consequences of the high degree of familism and *to what extent* they are due to other elements that could affect the transmission of intergenerational links. Then, future research should investigate the contribution of the mobility to such behaviours, namely how important it is to determine differences both in proximity and support.

Furthermore, other studies are needed to explore whether proximity and support patterns are different when people leave home for other reasons than marriage. In fact, due to the strong influence that Italian parents have on their children's choice to leave, proximity and support pattern may vary according to the reason to leave.

To accomplish this, more detailed data are desirable with information on residential mobility, migrations and the proximity and support at the time of leaving, whatever the reason.

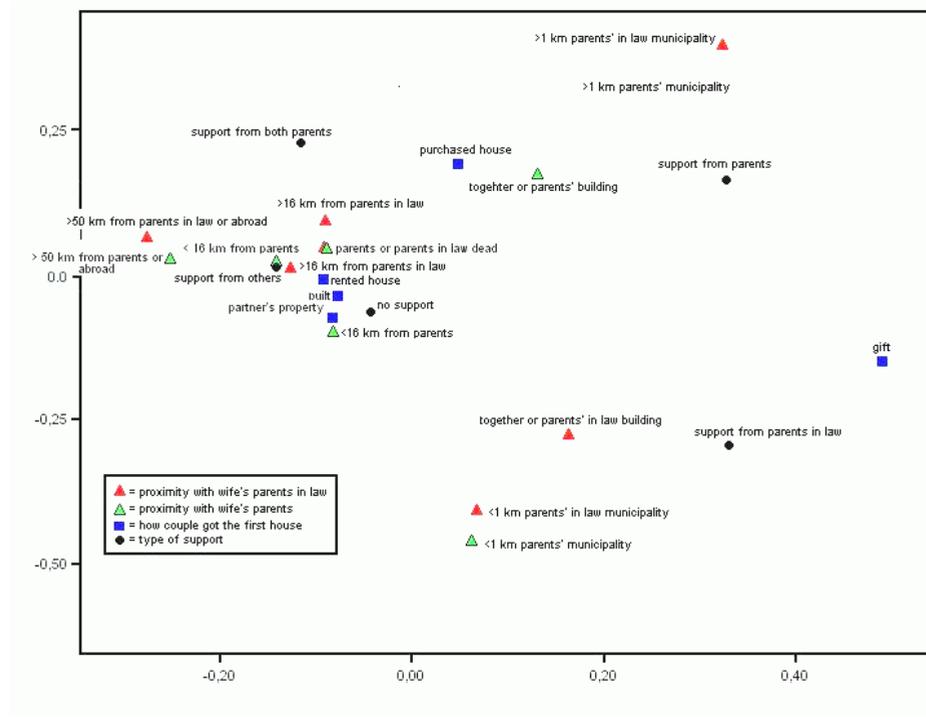
**Table 1: Women aged 20-50 years by housing proximity and support received from the family of origin at the time of marriage in the selected regions (%).**

		Liguria	Umbria	Sicily	Sardinia
<b>Housing proximity with parents in law at marriage</b>	together or same building	6.1	25.3	12.3	12.7
	within 1 km (same municipality)	20.7	14.3	26.5	36.3
	more than 1 km (same municipality)	25.6	23.1	33.6	22.5
	within 16 km (another municipality)	13.4	11.0	5.7	9.8
	16-50 km (another municipality)	8.5	8.7	1.9	3.9
	more than 50 km or abroad	15.9	6.6	8.6	7.9
	parents in law are dead	9.8	11.0	11.4	6.9
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Housing proximity with parents at marriage</b>	together or same building	6.1	11.0	13.7	9.8
	within 1 km (same municipality)	24.4	17.6	30.3	26.5
	more than 1 km (same municipality)	29.3	27.4	31.3	24.5
	within 16 km (another municipality)	12.2	15.4	3.3	14.7
	16-50 km (another municipality)	9.8	9.9	4.3	4.9
	more than 50 km or abroad	13.4	11.0	9.0	11.8
	parents are dead	4.8	7.7	8.1	7.8
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Please, can you tell us if your house at marriage was:</b>	built	3.7	6.5	3.3	12.7
	purchased	26.8	24.2	8.5	12.7
	inherited or received as a gift	12.2	19.8	35.1	22.5
	partner's property	8.5	11.0	10.0	6.9
	rented	42.7	16.5	39.3	39.2
	missing <sup>15</sup>	6.1	22.0	3.8	6.0
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>
<b>Did you receive support for the house at marriage? If yes, from whom?</b>	no support	63.4	40.7	55.0	68.6
	support only from parents	6.1	22.0	17.5	14.7
	support only from parents in law	11.0	20.8	21.8	9.8
	support from both sets of parents	11.0	4.4	1.9	1.0
	support from others	8.5	12.1	3.8	5.9
<b>Total</b>		<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>100</b>

Source: own elaborations on Istat data "Family, Social Subjects and Childhood Conditions", 1998.

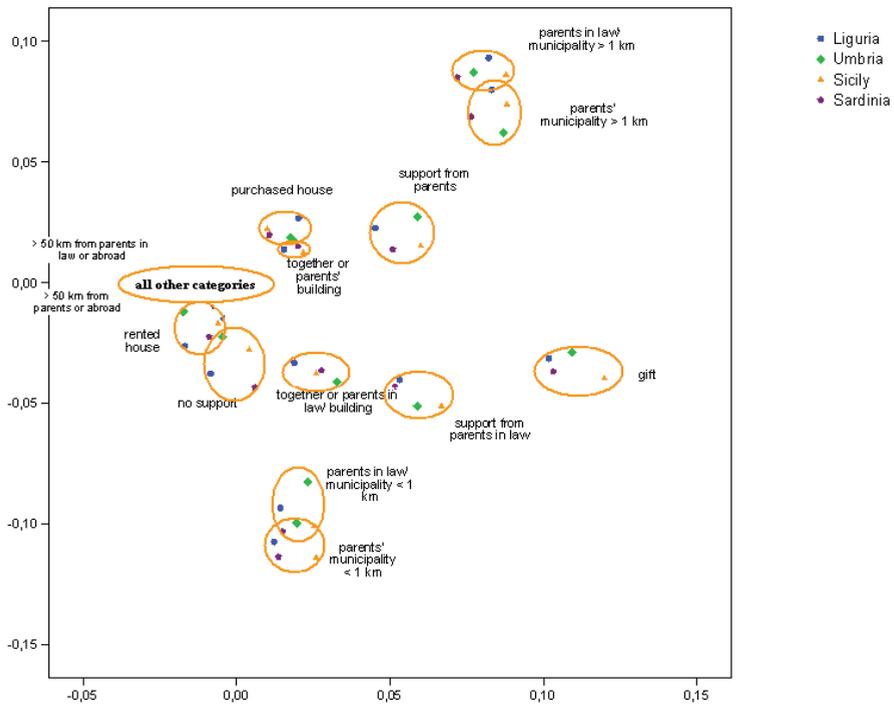
<sup>15</sup> Missing values are due to: a) not answered questions and b) women who lived together with parents or parents in law at the time of marriage.

**Figure 2: ARM: Average Structure Analysis (ASA)**



Source: own elaborations on Istat data "Family, Social Subjects and Childhood Conditions", 1998.

**Figure 3: ARM: Detailed Structure Analysis (DSA)**



Source: own elaborations on Istat data "Family, Social Subjects and Childhood Conditions", 1998.

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