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## Who attends the wedding? Parents and witnesses of suburban brides and grooms (1880-1912)

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## **Introduction**

Historians have pointed an intensification of kinship ties during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, with a ritualization of different family occasions, such as funerals or weddings (Ruggles 1987; Sabeau, Teuscher, and Mathieu 2007), or related to spiritual kinship (Alfani, Gourdon, and Robin 2015; Munno 2005). This ‘familiarization’ was mainly through marriages, and especially an increase of cousin and sibling-set exchange marriages. In contrast, the relationship between the bride and groom and the witnesses to their marriage is based on a momentary event that points to an intense relationship but whose effects over time are reduced (Ruggiu 2010). However, changes can be observed in witness choices along the 19<sup>th</sup> century, especially a ‘lateralization’ process where lateral kin (siblings(-in law) and cousins) were increasingly selected at the detriment of vertical kin (uncles, grand-parents) (Bras 2011).

Much attention has been paid to witnesses, especially to distinguishing related and non-related witnesses, but much less about the precise choice of family members, with notable exceptions (Bras 2011; Gourdon 2007), or the non-related witnesses. Even less attention has been paid to the parents of the brides and grooms, except Garden (1998)’s work on Paris at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Hence, little is known about the presence or absence of parents at their child's marriage, or about the relationship between the presence or absence of parents and the call to family members or friends witnesses. However, Gourdon (2006; and Joz 2006) did show that the parents’ presence at a wedding is an important element in understanding the choice of either relatives or friends as witnesses.

The idea of this article is to provide new information about the people who attend the wedding ceremony, with a particular focus on the Parisian suburbs between 1880 and 1912. These suburbs are areas that have been the subject of relatively little research into family history or historical demography and they are still not well known (Boudjaaba and De Luca-Barrusse 2013)<sup>1</sup>, and especially for the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and even more for the beginning of the

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<sup>1</sup> Although suburban populations were the subject of seminal work in the 1980s and 1990s (Faure 1991; Jacquemet 1984; Segalen 1982), historical research has often focused on the massive urbanization and industrialization that suburbs experienced during the nineteenth century, especially from the last third of the century (Faure 1991). Furthermore, research on family history and historical demography has focused either on villages, ‘a framework of acceptable dimensions for experimenting and reconstituting families’ (Boudjaaba and De Luca-Barrusse

20<sup>th</sup> century. This research framework is particularly insightful for working on behavioural differences between natives and migrants.

Focusing on the towns of Ivry (Ivry-sur-Seine since 1897) and Noisy-le-Sec, both located in what today would be called the first suburbs of Paris, our initial step is to ascertain not only who the parents were that accompanied their children to the City Hall for their marriage and who the absent or dead ones were, but also to understand the impact of it on the choice of witnesses. The study will then look at the choice of lateral or vertical family members, on the one hand, and on the choice of non-relative witnesses, on the other hand. The analysis focuses on brides and grooms who had not been married before and emphasises the gendered dimension in the parental presence and the choice of witnesses.

### **Who attends the wedding ceremony?**

Little is known about the brides and grooms' parents. Maurice Garden (1998), in his analysis of marriages in Paris and its suburbs in 1885, indicates that about 56% of the parents of newlyweds in the suburbs<sup>2</sup> (first marriages are not distinguished from the others) were known to be alive at the time of their children's marriage. Mothers were more often alive (64%) than fathers (50%), which is logically explained by the younger age at marriage of women, combined with the younger age at which their mothers had them, as well as the lower life expectancy of men. When the parents were alive, 60% of them attended their child's wedding, and the presence of parents was more frequent in the suburbs than in Paris: 28% of marriages in Paris had no parents present, against 15% in the suburbs. Maurice Garden goes no further in his analysis, stating that 'it would be necessary to modulate these data according to the age of the spouses, their place of birth and, of course, the rank of the marriage' (Garden, 1998: 125). That is our ambition for this article, in which we add a distinction according to the husband's or wife's professional status. There is very few research on the survival or presence of parents at the marriage of their children with the exception of Gourdon (1998), who has worked on the lifespan of grandparents (which gives some insight into whether they were still alive when their children married), and van Poppel, Jong and Liefbroer (1998) who have worked on the effects of Paternal Mortality on Sons' Social Mobility.

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2013:8), or on inner cities. The suburbs are as it were 'wedged' between these two types of territory, with only a few exceptions (see in particular Brée and Gourdon 2020; Gourdon and Joz 2006; Gourdon and Robin 2017).

<sup>2</sup> 60% for Paris.

More is known, however, about marriage witnesses. Bras (2011) shows that 44% of the witnesses of the couple she studied for the Netherlands between 1830 and 1950 had no kin relation to the bride and groom and 16% with no relation given. In 19<sup>th</sup> century France, 16% of marriages had only parental witnesses and 35% had none (Dupâquier, 1989). The function of witnesses at civil marriages is far from the exclusive prerogative of the family and the marriages where all the witnesses are relatives are far less frequent than those where all the witnesses are outside the family. However, in the Netherlands (Bras, 2011), and more particularly in The Hague (van Poppel and Schoonheim, 2005), and also in Belgian Flanders (Matthijs 2003), is observed an increasingly frequent choice of family members as witnesses over the course of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and especially since the end of it, following the processes of ‘familiarization’ (Sabean et al., 2007<sup>3</sup>). Gourdon and Joz (2006) found the same tendency in Tassin, in the suburbs of Lyon, but this was not the case everywhere, as in Samoï (Gourdon, 2007). Parents were particularly under-represented during periods of massive industrialisation resulting in migratory surges, for example in Elbeuf (Hamel, 1997), Vierzon (Pauquet, 1998), Liège (Jacquemin 1994) or Saint-Chamond (Accampo 1982). It seems that migrants had a less present family network or a desire for integration, reflected in the choice of their witnesses (Gourdon, 2007). Thus, in Ivry, during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, witnesses were increasingly non-related to the bride and groom, which seems to be fairly consistent with the arrival of migrant populations who were further away from their families, but it also concerned couples born in the village (Boudjaaba, 2013). Research also shows that couples from the countryside, the north of France (Dupâquier, 1989; Rosental 1999), the upper classes (Jacquemin, 1994; Pauquet, 1998; van Poppel and Schoonheim, 2005; Gourdon, 2007), and the Jewish faith (Grange 2004; van Poppel and Schoonheim 2005) were more likely to have family members as witnesses than those from the cities, the working classes, southern France and Catholic circles. Even if the upper-class seems to be more likely to have family members than the working classes, it seems that above socio-professional status, the share of migrants and the availability of the family to serve as a witness is especially determinant. Urban workers, especially the least qualified, and domestic workers turn much more to friends or other non-relatives (van Poppel and Schoonheim, 2005; Pauquet, 1998; Garden, 1998). In Ivry, in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the brides and grooms working in the industry and who were often migrants had less family witnesses than the ploughmen who were largely natives of the city (Boudjaaba, 2013). Thus,

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<sup>3</sup> Sabean et al. (2007) have pointed to the evolution of structural changes in kinship in Europe that Matthijs have called ‘familiarization’ (2006).

friends and colleagues were more numerous among the working, craft or industrial classes. The latest also made greater use than the upper classes of permanent or recurring witnesses who may have been chosen by the administration for their ability to sign or their availability (Accampo, 1982; Kok, 2001; Jacquemin, 1994; Gourdon, 2008). Jacquemin (1994) and Oris (2002) saw this as a sign that some of the migrant couples formed in cities in the nineteenth century had a social and above all family network which was extremely limited on a local scale. They argued that marriage could itself be the somewhat precipitous but essential union of two solitudes – which would nuance the all too systematic image of chain family migration.

The parents' situation is also an important element in understanding the choice of relatives or friends as witnesses. In Tassin, as in Samois, spouses whose father had died were more likely to call on family members as witnesses, probably for a compensatory effect (Gourdon and Joz, 2006; Gourdon, 2007). On the other hand, it seems that paternal control over the choice of relatives as witnesses was weaker when the father was not present at the wedding (Gourdon and Joz, 2006). According to Gourdon (2006), the choice of marriage witnesses was in many cases the result of family negotiation, where the weight of the parents depended on their actual presence (itself certainly reflecting to a large extent their contribution to the wedding costs) and argues in favour of a stronger appeal to family members. Significantly, the average age of witnesses was much higher than that of spouses in most of the available French samples, indicating that many were from the parents' generation.

The choice of parents as witnesses can reveal the family's functioning (particularly intergenerational balances) and the positioning of young spouses within it, even if the choice of family witnesses also depended a great deal on who was available (Gourdon, 2007). Collaterals were thus probably more often on hand than ancestors for couples who migrated between birth and marriage (and perhaps those whose parents had migrated, leaving their families in the provinces). In the village of Samois, local roots, implying the presence of a large and dense family network and of fathers at their children's weddings, reinforced the choice of the fathers' brothers as witnesses, probably to guarantee the continuity of the kinship network' (Gourdon, 2007: 485). On the contrary, when looking deeper in the family members chosen as witness, Hilde Bras (2011) shows that in the process of an increasing choice of family witnesses during the 19<sup>th</sup> century, it is actually only lateral kin (siblings(-in-law) and cousins) that increases in witnesses since the 1890s when vertical one stays stable. This 'lateralization' is particularly strong in the urban higher and middle class and the farmers. If she agrees that

marriage strategies related to capitalist productive relations and social class formation played a role (Sabeian et al., 2007), she points that ‘lateralization’ continues after the heyday of family firms and argues that a broader cultural shift of ‘familiarization’ took place that which must be regarded as the main key to a better understanding of the intensification of family relations during this period. As Gourdon (2006), she insists on the importance of the presence of the parents at the ceremony and also on the important role of women in cultivating family relations. Finally, Bras (2011) also shows that the developments in the life phase of adolescence and the rise of emotional and less instrumental marriage motivations (Coontz 2005) can also be relevant elements to take into account to understand the choice of witnesses. And, if this can be relevant to the increasing choice of lateral kin, it can also be interesting to keep in mind when analysing the non-relative witnesses.

In all these studies, the gender dimension is rarely considered and, especially, very few studies distinguish between the husband's and the wife's witnesses. However, Gourdon (2006) has shown that the low level of autonomy of young women in 19<sup>th</sup> century society and families (early age of marriage, less mobility, marriage in the parental home and the greater presence of parents at the ceremony) leave room for the involvement of relatives and results into a higher number of family witnesses who are much older than the bride, and are more often uncles, than on the husband's side. This is why we will systematically distinguish bride and groom witnesses and parents to be able to see possible gender effects.

In this study, we will try to bring new elements to understand who attends the wedding ceremony, in four directions:

1. The parents. What is the situation of the parents at the time of the marriage of their child? And does the presence or absence of the parents at the ceremony have an impact on the choice of witnesses? Obviously, the demographic effect is important when it comes to death, and remoteness probably plays an important role in whether parents are present at the ceremony. But this question remains important; first for its impact on the witness choice (Gourdon, 2006, 2007; Bras, 2011); but also for the overall understanding of family's life. Indeed, age at marriage, spouse choice, decision to migrate, family size may be a consequence of the death of (a) parent(s) and the better knowledge of the survival and the presence of the parents at time of the marriage is an important question.

2. The witnesses. What is the share of family and non-relative witnesses and does this share change between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the eve of the First World War as in the Netherlands (Bras, 2011)?

3. Family witnesses. What family member is chosen, and will we see an increase of lateral links during the period as in the Netherlands (Bras, 2011)?

4. Non-relative witnesses. And finally, what can we learn when looking closer to the non-relative witnesses? Non-relative witnesses have not been the subject of any specific study to our knowledge. In this section about non-relative witnesses, the Noisy database (the information was not collected for Ivry) will help understand who the non-relative witnesses are. We will try to distinguish different types of non-relative witnesses to try to understand their link with the grooms and brides.

### **Ivry and Noisy**

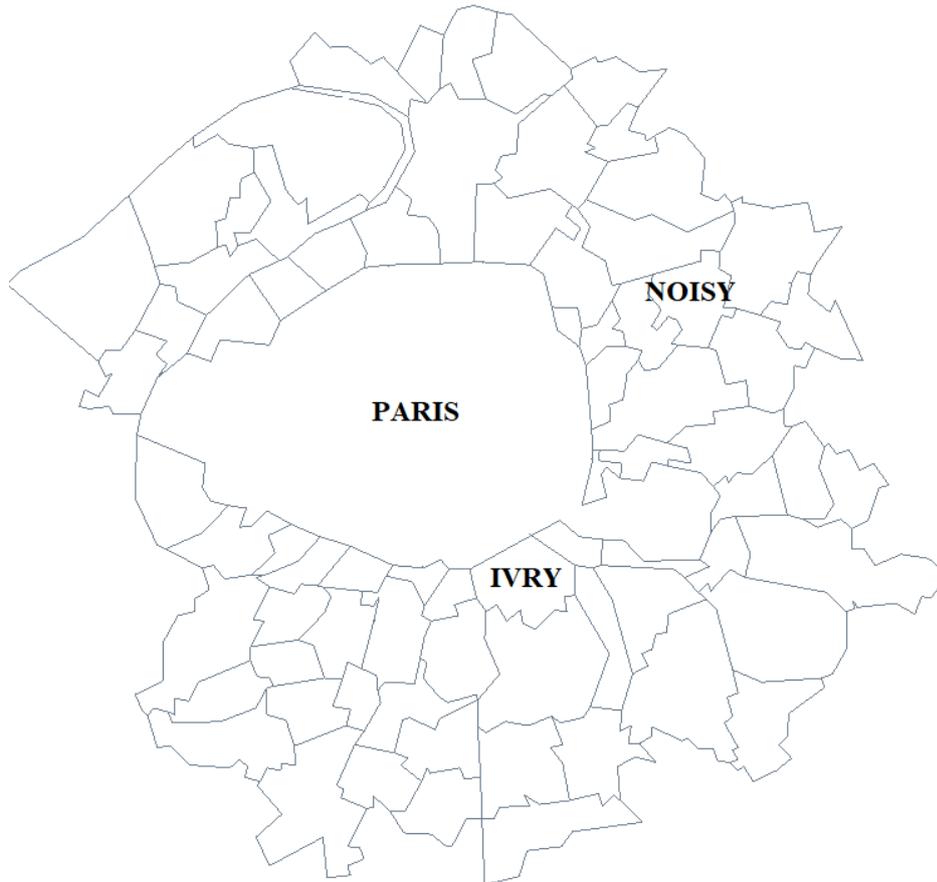
Ivry(-sur Seine since 1897) and Noisy-le-Sec are two cities of the suburbs of Paris, located in the Seine *département*<sup>4</sup>: the first one adjoining the capital, the second one located a little further on (Figure 1). Ivry and Noisy-le-Sec were two villages of equivalent size at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, this is no longer the case in our period of study. Ivry is developing earlier with a very noticeable growth since the second quarter of the century. When Noisy, in turn, began its expansion in the 1880s, Ivry was already a large town (18,442 inhabitants in 1881) and it continued to grow, reaching 38,307 inhabitants in 1911, three times more than Noisy.

In Ivry, and even more so in Noisy, until the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the population lived from agricultural activities (cereals, market gardening, mushroom growing). The development of transport and industry will then make the two cities evolve considerably. In Noisy, the creation of the train station in 1849 changed the village and its population (Espaullard 1955). Whereas until 1851, 90% of the population of Noisy lived from agriculture, in 1891, only a quarter of Noisy's inhabitants were still market gardeners or farmers. In Ivry, the Seine, the Paris-Basel road and the railway line favoured the establishment of industries (Chevalier 1950).

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<sup>4</sup> Which existed until 1968.

**Figure 1. Location of Noisy, Ivry and Paris in the Seine department.**



Thus, industrial development is more intense and diversified in Ivry than in Noisy-le-Sec. In Noisy, development was mainly due to the marshalling yard, which very quickly became a major employer in the commune: before 1914, railway workers and their families represented a large part of the population (18% of the working population in 1891). It should also be noted that there were many commercial activities in the commune. On the contrary, Ivry was the most industrialised and working-class commune in the southern suburbs of Paris before the First World War (Leriche and Varin 1984) and a lot of workers and craftsmen lived there.

These new activities (industrial and railway) require labour that the local population alone could not provide. Many provincial and even foreign migrants therefore came to work and settle in the Parisian suburbs (Farcy, 1991). In 1891, Ivry was one of the towns with the highest number of migrants and only one in six inhabitants was born in the city. On the contrary, Noisy is one of the suburban cities where the share of natives is the highest, even if only one in three inhabitants was born in Noisy, 62 % elsewhere in France and 5 % abroad.

## Sources and methods

The database compiled from civil marriage records from 1880 to 1912 counts 304 marriages for Noisy-le-Sec (out of a total of 1,809, or 17%) and 421 for Ivry (out of a total of 7,017, or 6%). This corresponds to a record of about one in ten in Ivry (which is the recommended sample for family reconstruction for example) and one in twenty in Noisy, minus the marriage records of individuals who have already been married. For this research, we are interested exclusively in brides and grooms who were single at the time of their marriage: 267 men and 274 women in Noisy, 363 men and 362 women in Ivry. Previous research on witnesses has clearly shown that in terms of marital status at the time of marriage, couples fell into two quite distinct groups: single individuals, on the one hand, and widows, widowers, divorced persons on the other, the former being much younger than the latter. For this analysis, we have chosen to focus on individuals' first marriages only<sup>5</sup>, because many of our questions concern the survival and presence of parents at the time of their children's marriage, which varied widely according to age.

The presence, absence, death or disappearance of the future spouses' parents were, in general, indicated on the marriage certificate, with one exception: when the bride and groom had reached the age of majority, they did not need their parent's consent and the information was therefore not provided. The 1804 Civil Code set the age of majority for marriage at 21 years old for girls and 25 for boys<sup>6</sup>, which meant that the consent of the parents of a couple who were minors on the day of their marriage was noted<sup>7</sup>. A refusal by the ascendants does not prevent the marriage: it only entails a delay of one month for each act. The legislator hopes by this means to prevent hasty unions by giving time to reflect to the children, who are dominated by a perhaps passing passion. Adults could send their parents a "respectful summons" instead of the request for

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<sup>5</sup> First marriages of individuals, not couples, are therefore included in the analysis of singles who married widowed or divorced persons (except when the cross-analysis requires both spouses to be single as in Table 3).

<sup>6</sup> Men could not marry before the age of 18 and women before the age of 15 (Article 144 of the 1804 Civil Code).

<sup>7</sup> "The son who has not attained the age of twenty-five years and the daughter who has not attained the age of twenty-one years may not contract marriage without the consent of their father and mother; in case of dissent, the consent of the father shall suffice." (Art. 149).

"If one of the two is dead, or is unable to manifest his will, the consent of the other is sufficient" (Art. 150).

"If the father and mother are deceased, or if they are unable to express their will, the forefathers and foremothers replace them; if there is dissent between the forefather and the foremother of the same line, the consent of the forefather is sufficient. If there is dissent between the two lines, this sharing will be consensual." (Art. 151.)

consent<sup>8</sup>. Some foreigners (such as the Swiss) did not need their parents' consent; they were considered "free", due to their specific national legislation.

With the law of 21 June 1907, the age of matrimonial majority was once again merged with that of civil majority (21 years) and respectful summons were abolished (with simple notification, partially abolished by the laws of 28 April 1922 and 17 July 1927, and totally abolished by the law of 2 February 1933). This 1907 law explains the increase in the number of uninformed data concerning the fathers and mothers of future brides and grooms after this date. For Ivry, out of 421 marriages, 42 have no information on the groom's father and 42 on his mother, 30 have no information on the bride's father and 31 have no information on her mother. For Noisy, out of 304 marriages, 14 provide no information for the groom's father, 10 for the bride's father, 19 for the groom's mother and 3 for the bride's mother. Since we don't have information on these parents, it is hard to know who they were, but we can imagine that they were not in good terms with their child. It is possible that these parents would not have given their consent when it was required (but not needed) a few years before.

This research also explores the influence of the variables mentioned in the literature review (age at marriage, occupation of the spouses, situation of the parents, place of birth) on the choice of relatives versus friends as witnesses, and then on the choice of the type of relative as a witness (uncle, brother, cousin), using multivariate regressions in order to distinguish the weight of each explanatory variable while taking into account the effect of the others. In order to shed new light on this issue, the statistical analyses in this article propose different models for grooms and brides, as gender is not considered as an independent variable. This makes it possible to take into account only the characteristics peculiar to either women or men (profession<sup>9</sup>, parents' situation, age). The quality of the civil status registers of Noisy-le-Sec and Ivry, enables us to

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<sup>8</sup> Children who have reached the age of majority fixed by Article 148 are required, before contracting marriage, to seek, by a respectful and formal act, the advice of their father and mother, or that of their forefathers and foremothers, when their father and mother are deceased or unable to express their will." Article 148 of the Civil Code of 1804.

"From the age of majority fixed by article 148, until the age of thirty for sons, and until the age of twenty-five for daughters, the respectful act prescribed by the preceding article, and on which there is no consent to marriage, will be renewed two more times, at one-month intervals; and one month after the third act, it will be possible to override it for the celebration of the marriage." (Art. 152)

"After the age of thirty, in the absence of consent on a respectful act, it may be overridden, one month later, for the celebration of the marriage"

<sup>9</sup> The occupations of men and women were classified into seven groups based on the HISCO historical occupational classification (in particular the part of the database supplied by the French researchers of the TRA survey). The classification was adapted to the specific occupations of our two cities, in particular by adding a group "employee with status", including railway employees, who were numerous in Noisy-le-Sec (See Brée and Gourdon 2020).

know precisely the relationship of witnesses with one or other of the spouses<sup>10</sup>, and therefore to envisage differentiated regressions for the groom and his witnesses, on the one hand, and for the bride and her witnesses, on the other.

Finally, a more systematic recording of information for the witnesses at Noisy-le-Sec will enable us to delve more deeply into the question of unrelated witnesses in an attempt to draw up a picture of them.

### **Survival and presence of parents at their child's marriage**

At the time of their marriage, the bride and groom may or may not have been accompanied by their parents. Some were "present and consenting", others were absent but consented to the marriage by a notarial act, and others were deceased, missing, or not mentioned because they had not recognised their child.

If we first exclude unnamed parents and 'disappeared'<sup>11</sup> parents from the analysis, it appears that in both towns, at the time of their children's marriage, one third of the parents were deceased while the other two thirds were alive. These levels are very close to those found by Garden (1988) for the Parisian suburbs in 1885, even though Garden was working on all marriages. Just under half of the men and women (48%) in the two cities had both parents alive at the time of their marriage, and 12% had both parents deceased.

Fathers were more often deceased<sup>12</sup> (39%) than mothers (26%) (Figures 2 and 3) and parents of men were more likely to be deceased than those of women<sup>13</sup>. This can be explained by the lower life expectancy of men<sup>14</sup> and by their age (and that of their fathers) at first marriage being

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<sup>10</sup> In the case of these two cities, unlike other sites studied (Gourdon and Joz, 2006), the Code Napoléon was respected, and it was mentioned precisely whether the witness was a friend (or 'non-relative') or a family member (the family relationship being specified) of a spouse, and what the precise relationship of kinship to the person who chose him or her was.

<sup>11</sup> Of which the child had no news.

<sup>12</sup> In both Ivry and Noisy, 61% of the fathers were alive and 39% were deceased; 75% of the mothers in Noisy were alive compared to 73% in Ivry (absent and unnamed parents were excluded from the analysis).

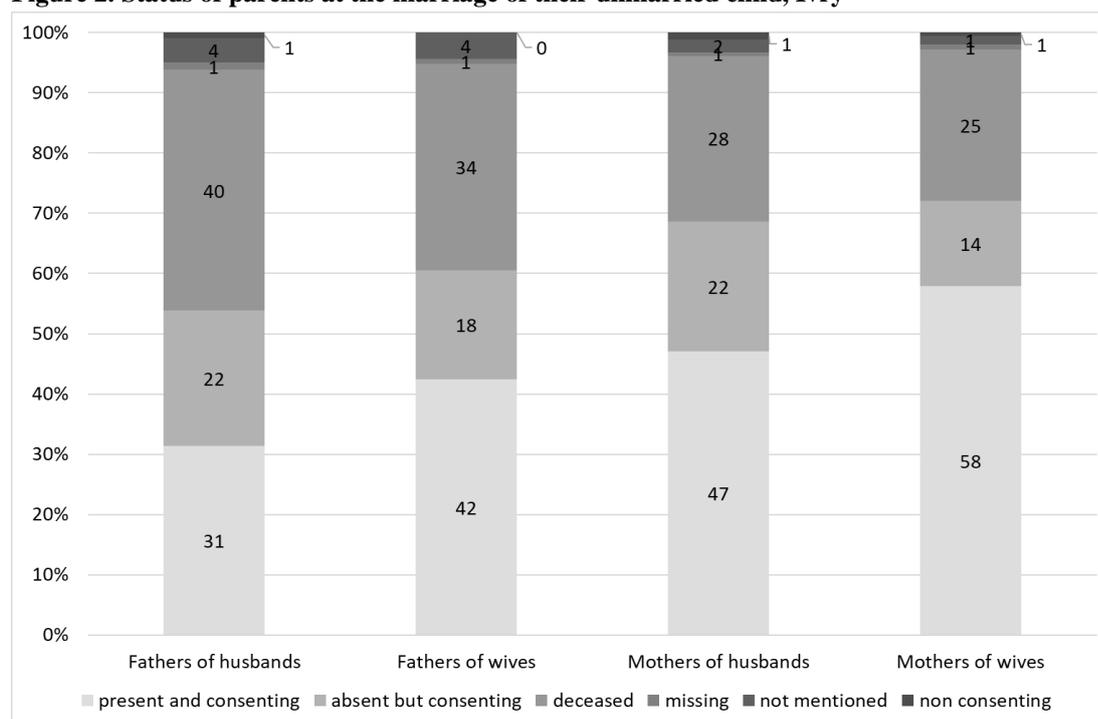
<sup>13</sup> In both cities, 40% of the fathers of the married couple had died by the time of their child's marriage (in Ivry, 42% of fathers of men and 38% of fathers of women; in Noisy, 41% of fathers of men and 39% of fathers of women) and 28% of mothers had died (in Ivry, 30% of mothers of men and 26% of mothers of women; in Noisy, 32% of mothers of men and 24% of mothers of women). In the suburban cities studied by Garden (1998) for 1885, these levels were 40% of deceased fathers of men; 40% deceased fathers of women, 35% deceased mothers of men and 33% deceased mothers of women (respectively, 50, 47, 40 and 30% in Paris).

<sup>14</sup> Life expectancy at birth for the generations 1825 to 1857 (average generation of parents of couples married between 1880 and 1912) is 37 years for men born in 1825 and 39 years for those born in 1857; for women, it is 39 and 42 years (life expectancy at 15 years is 43 years for men and 44.5 years for women born in 1825 and 44 and

higher than that of women: 29 compared with 25.5 in Ivry, and 26.5 compared with 23.1 in Noisy between 1880 and 1912.

Among living and consenting parents, 69% were present in Ivry and 79% in Noisy. In both cities, mothers were more often present than were fathers, and women's parents were more present than were those of men (with the exception of fathers of women in Noisy). It also appears that if only one of the spouses would travel to the wedding, it was more often the mother. This gendered distribution can probably be explained by the place of women in the family – they were under the authority of their father until their marriage, from which point on they came under the authority of their husband (Perrot, 1998) – and by the fact that they often married in the wife's hometown. Young women were therefore more likely to be accompanied – and controlled – than young men.

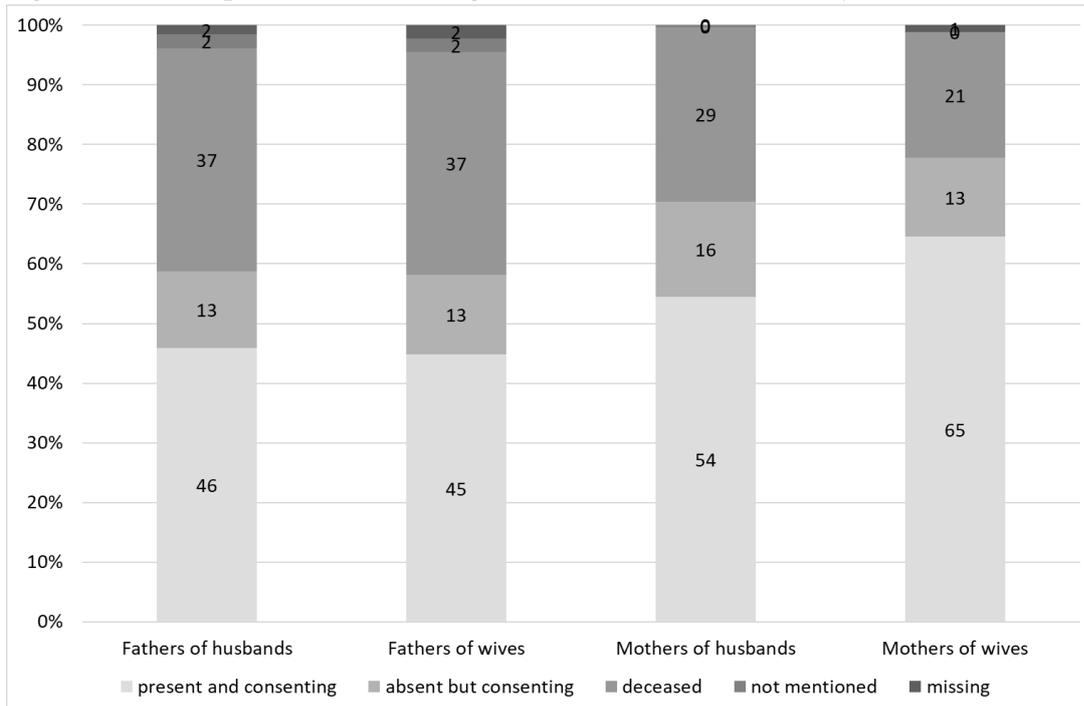
**Figure 2. Status of parents at the marriage of their unmarried child, Ivry**



Nb obs: 363 men, 362 women (no information excluded: men's fathers: 25, men's mothers: 25; women's fathers: 15; women's mothers: 15)

47 years for those born in 1857 and life expectancy at 30 years is 33.5 and 35 for men and women born in 1825 and 33.6 and 37 years for those born in 1857) (Vallin and Meslé, 2001).

**Figure 3. Status of parents at the marriage of their unmarried child, Noisy**



Nb obs: 267 men, 274 women (no information excluded: men's fathers: 8, men's mothers: 10; women's fathers: 6; women's mothers: 9)

Some of the parents of the brides and grooms also consented to the marriage of their child but were not present at the civil ceremony. They accounted for about 14% of the parents in Noisy-le-Sec (13% of the fathers and mothers of the brides, 13% of the fathers of the grooms and 16% of the mothers of the grooms) and about 19% of the parents in Ivry (22% of the fathers and mothers of the grooms, 18% of the fathers of the brides and 14% of the mothers of the brides).

Some parents – in Ivry only (9) – did not give their consent for their child's marriage. In all cases, the acts were subsequent to 1907 (see above regarding the 1907 law) and the parents non-consent were only mentioned (as well as the fact that the notification addressed to these parents had been presented).

Finally, some parents were not named<sup>15</sup> or went missing. Unnamed fathers are those who did not recognise their child at birth or afterwards<sup>16</sup>. 12 fathers (6 of brides, 6 of grooms) are not named in Noisy (2%) and one mother (of a groom); 30 fathers (4 %) in Ivry (14 of grooms, 16 of brides) and 12 mothers (2 %) (7 of grooms, 5 of brides). Unnamed fathers of illegitimate children appear much more frequently in the literature, not least because mothers are almost

<sup>15</sup> Listed as "unnamed" or simply not named in the article.

<sup>16</sup> On illegitimacy in the Paris region, see Brée, 2014.

always named in the birth certificate (except in cases where both parents are unknown, and the child has been abandoned) even if they do not subsequently acknowledge the child. However, here the number of mothers named in their child's marriage certificate but recorded as "not having recognised" their child is not negligible. Almost all children whose mothers were unnamed were 'natural' children who were not recognised by both parents<sup>17</sup>, while three quarters of children whose fathers were unnamed knew their mothers (this concerned more future husbands than future wives<sup>18</sup>).

Fathers were more often absent or missing than were mothers: 7 fathers and 5 mothers in Ivry<sup>19</sup>; 9 fathers and 2 mothers in Noisy<sup>20</sup>. Even if they accounted for only one percent of parents, the number of absent or missing parents is not negligible. They were noted as "absent", "disappeared without news" or "without known address". The report was made "under oath" or was recorded in a notarial deed. The duration of the absence (for example, 10 or 18 years) was sometimes mentioned.

The results of the logistic regressions analysing the presence versus absence of parents (other cases excluded) show that being born outside the Seine *département* (all parents for Ivry, wife's parents for Noisy) strongly reduced the likelihood of parents being present at the wedding (Table 1 and 2). Some of the parents of newlyweds born elsewhere<sup>21</sup> probably still lived there, which explains why they would have had more difficulty travelling to the wedding than parents living in the Seine *département* and, *a fortiori*, in the city. In Noisy (Brée, 2004), parents who went to the wedding usually came from not very distant regions, while those who did not come lived further away. Parents residing far away had more financial and time constraints. Given the rail network at the time, travel was expensive and tiring for elderly people (Garden, 1998).

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<sup>17</sup> In Ivry, out of 7 men whose mother was not named, only one named his father; and out of 5 women in the same situation, only one named her father. In Noisy, no father was known (or at least named) when the mother was not named.

<sup>18</sup> In Ivry, for men, 43% of mothers were known when the father was not named, compared with 75% for women; in Noisy, these proportions were 83% and 100% respectively (but the numbers are small).

<sup>19</sup> 4 fathers of husbands, 3 fathers of wives; 2 mothers of husbands and 3 mothers of wives.

<sup>20</sup> 4 fathers of husbands and 6 fathers of wives, no mothers of husbands and 3 mothers of wives.

<sup>21</sup> However, Brée (2004) points out that 25% of women born in the provinces lived with their parents at the time of their marriage, compared to 94% of Noisy women born in Noisy. These figures may seem logical since, by migrating, women moved away from their parents. However, many of the women born "elsewhere" had left with their parents (who lived in the Paris region at the time of their marriage) and could, theoretically, still have been living with them on the eve of their marriage in the Paris region. However, this was not the case, and women born in the provinces lived with their parents less often than others, even if their parents lived in the Paris region.

**Table 1. Logistic regression on the presence of consenting parents at marriage (=1) versus their absence (=0) at Noisy.**

ODDS RATIO	Father of men	Mother of men	Father of women	Mother of women
Age at marriage (ref. 21-24 years)				
15-20 years old	---	2,28	1,95	1,73
25-29 years old	0,88	1,14	0,93	0,97
30-34 years old	0,18	0,81	0,4	0,17
35 years old and over	0,18	<b>0,61**</b>	0,77	0,57
Place of birth (ref. Noisy)				
Paris	0,28	2,00	0,33	0,97
Seine (other com.)	0,81	1,41	(---)	0,69
Other	0,19	0,30	<b>0,08**</b>	<b>0,12**</b>
Prof. (ref. unskilled worker)				
Skilled workers	1,65	1,04	4163	0,53
Farmers	5,35	4,68	0,46	2,02
White collar	(---)	0,80	(---)	1,20
Owners, renters	---	---	---	---
No profession	(---)	(---)	1,17	1,21
Employees with status	0,76	0,35	---	(---)
Nb. Obs.	139	180	144	194
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0,173	0,204	0,174	0,166

Note: --- : no observation; (---) observations were excluded from the regression by the software because "it predicts failure perfectly".

\*\*\* p< 0.001%, \*\* p<0.01%, \* p<0.05

**Table 2. Logistic regression on the presence of consenting parents at marriage (=1) versus their absence (=0) in Ivry.**

ODDS RATIO	Father of men	Mother of men	Father of women	Mother of women
Age at marriage (ref. 21-24)				
15-20 years old	0,35	0,44	<b>2,50*</b>	<b>3,68**</b>
25-29 years old	0,53	<b>0,33**</b>	0,53	0,49
30-34 years old	0,37	0,51	1,42	0,45
35 years old and over	0,33	<b>0,14*</b>	1,73	0,22
Place of birth (ref. Ivry)				
Paris	1,27	(---)	0,35	1,63
Seine (other com.)	4,1	4,1	(---)	(---)
Other	<b>0,16**</b>	<b>0,17***</b>	<b>0,04***</b>	<b>0,05***</b>
Prof. (ref. unskilled worker)				
Skilled workers	1,72	1,04	1,29	0,71
Farmers	1,74	0,83	(---)	(---)
White collar	3,06	<b>10,7*</b>	(---)	(---)
Owners, renters	---	---	---	---
No profession	---	---	<b>2,61*</b>	1,35
Employees with status	---	---	---	---
Nb. Obs.	182	191	187	232
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	0,196	0,186	0,260	0,281

Note: --- : no observation; (---) observations were excluded from the regression by the software because "it predicts failure perfectly".

\*\*\* p< 0.001%, \*\* p<0.01%, \* p<0.05

The effect of age is also apparent. The mothers of the brides and grooms (in both cities) travelled less when their son was over the age of majority, and even less when he was over 35. In both cities (but the results are significant only for Ivry), regardless of the bride's place of origin, her parents travelled much more frequently if their daughter was a minor.

Finally, parents of the brides and grooms in some occupational groups travelled more readily than others. In both cities, the fathers of skilled workers were more often present and consenting than those of unskilled workers. In Noisy-le-Sec, the profile that differs most from the others is that of the fathers of farmers, who were much more often present and consenting and almost never absent. When controlling for the effect of origin and age, this effect disappears because almost all farmers are natives. But what remains is that the mothers of "white-collar" brides and grooms and the fathers of wives with no profession in Ivry are more often present than the others. This suggests that the higher social strata may have attached more importance to being present at the wedding and/or may have had more financial facility to travel (perhaps they even participated financially in the ceremony).

As for the regressions on deceased parents versus others (not shown), they logically confirm the effect of the age of the married couple, but no other variable is significant.

### **Witnesses: friends or relatives?**

In addition to their parents, the brides and grooms were also accompanied by four witnesses. In Noisy-le-Sec, 59.3% of witnesses of unmarried brides and grooms were related to them, compared to 45.9% in Ivry. These are high proportions, particularly in Noisy, and are more likely to be found in rural areas: 60.7 % of related witnesses in Samois between 1837 and 1889 (Gourdon, 2007), 61.7 % in Herve in the second half of the nineteenth century (Neven, 2000). However, we have to be careful with comparisons because we do not take into account widowers and divorcees, who were often older than single people and therefore generally used relatives less as witnesses<sup>22</sup>. Ivry levels, close to those of Elbeuf (Elbeuf : 46% in 1872-1873 at the height of the growth of the textile industry; 55% in 1910-1911 during a period of economic stagnation), also remained higher than the Parisian and suburban levels measured for the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries (37% in 1885, Garden, 1998); 40 % in 1902, Gourdon, 2006) or

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<sup>22</sup> In Noisy, single women call non-relative for 42% and divorcees and widows for 63%; men respectively 42 and 61%. In Ivry, the differences are few: single women call non-relative for 55% and divorcees and widows for 54%; men respectively 54 and 56%.

previous periods (a quarter of the religious marriage witnesses in Belleville in 1865 (Jacquemet, 1984); a third of the witnesses in Ivry in 1835-1838 (Boudjaaba, 2013) and other urban spaces studied, especially when they were undergoing fast economic development. A third of the witnesses were related to the bride or to the groom in Vierzon in 1845 (Pauquet, 1998) or in Saint-Chamond around 1860-1880 (Jacquemin, 1994).

In detail, 11.6% of marriages in Noisy and 22.4% of marriages in Ivry, i.e., twice as many, took place without any family witnesses. The Ivry levels are close to the results of Garden (1998) for the suburbs of the Seine *département* in 1885 (21%) but the levels in Noisy are much lower. In comparison, in Tassin, in the suburbs of Lyon, between 1793 and 1895, 45.5 percent of marriages took place without any family witness (Gourdon and Joz, 2006). This figure was 33.5 per cent in the peripheral arrondissements of Paris, 26 per cent in the central arrondissements (Garden, 1998), and 30 per cent in The Hague between 1858 and 1902 (van Poppel and Schoonheim, 2005). Levels in Noisy are even lower than those calculated by Dupâquier (1989) for villages: 31 % of marriages without any family witnesses on average over the century (35 % for the national average). The proportion of marriages with four witnesses related in Noisy (26%) is close to, but higher than, the levels observed by Dupâquier (1989) for rural marriages in the Paris basin (22%). Ivry's levels are close to the levels observed for urban marriages in the Seine basin (14 %) (16 % nationally; Dupâquier, 1989).

Thanks to the work of Boudjaaba for Ivry during the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, we can observe a long-period trend. While the trend for the first part of the century was towards an increase in the number of friends among witnesses (40.1% in 1801-1812; 66.7% in 1835-1838), their share fell again at the end of the century (54.1%). There is therefore more a tendency to use family as witnesses (Matthijs, 2003; Gourdon, 2008) than a continuity in the increase in the number of friends as witnesses, linked to the arrival of migrant populations in the first part of the century (Boudjaaba, 2013). However, the increase in the population of the Parisian suburbs was no greater in the first half of the century than in the second (2015). On the other hand, migration was becoming more and more definitive (Chatelain 1967; Farcy, 1991; Faure, 2003; Kesztenbaum 2006) and it is possible that new migrants would more frequently join members of their family and thus have more relatives to call on at the time of their marriage.

### Choice of witnesses according to the parents' situation

In both cities, regardless of the spouse's sex, it was 1.5 times more common to have at least one witness declared as part of the family when both parents were present at the wedding than when neither was present. This is particularly so for women and even more so in Noisy than in Ivry (Table 3). With the exception of men in Ivry, the likelihood of having at least one related witness was lower when both or at least one parent was absent. It was higher when both parents were present or when one was present and the other was deceased (or absent, in the case of men in Ivry) (Table 4). When only the fathers of women were present, the probability of having a family witness was greater than when only the mothers were present (but this relationship was not observed for men). This is consistent with Gourdon's (2006) hypothesis on paternal control being all the stronger the more the father was physically present, and this is likely to have been more significant for women than for men.

**Table 3. Likelihood of having at least one 'family' witness, according to the presence of parents**

	Noisy women	Noisy men	Ivry women	Ivry men
Two parents pc	83.3	77.3	75.0	70.4
Mother pc father non pc	78.8	78.8	69.7	70.5
Father pc, mother non pc	83.9	77.4	78.0	69.6
No parents pc	58.8	55.6	44.8	42.7
Nb obs.	250	245	322	313

Pc: present and consenting

**Table 4. Likelihood of having at least one 'family' witness, according to cross-presence of parents**

	Noisy women	Noisy men	Ivry women	Ivry men
2 parents pc	84.2	77.3	73.9	70.5
1 pc + 1 pc	57.1	55.6	70.0	85.7
2 abc	45.0	48.0	37.1	49.0
1 dcd + 1 pc	85.7	80.8	74.2	72.0
1 dcd + 1 abc	58.3	66.7	41.9	33.3
2 dcd	67.9	60.0	44.7	42.2
Together	76.4	71.0	63.4	59.1
Nb obs.	250	245	322	313

pc: present and consenting; abc: absent but consenting; dcd: deceased

In the logistic regressions and for both cities, it is the combination of the parents' situation (models 1 and 2) that better (and significantly) explains the choice of at least one family witness, rather than the situation of each parent taken independently (models 3 and 4 in Tables 5 and 6). The married couple who made the most use of witnesses from their family circle were also those whose parents were the most present (as observed in Paris by Garden, 1998). It is therefore

likely that these were individuals born in the city where they married or at least in the Seine *département*. In both cities, the parents of the brides and grooms born outside the town where they married (with the exception of women in Ivry) were much less likely to have a family member as a witness than those born in the city, as it is the case in Tassin and Samois (Gourdon and Joz, 2006; Gourdon, 2007). The negative effect of parental absence on the likelihood of choosing a family witness persists in the multivariate regressions, and therefore when the effect of place of birth is controlled (models 2 and 4). In Ivry, there is also a negative effect of parental death (or of the association of absent parent and deceased parent). Migrants therefore used far fewer family witnesses than did natives, which confirms that migrants had less possibility of calling on their relatives and that there was no compensation for the absence of parents by other family witnesses. This result cannot be explained only by the fact that newlyweds whose parents were absent had fewer relatives present because they were more often migrants, for two reasons. First, because the correlation also appears when the parents were deceased and not only when they were absent but consenting (in Ivry only, however), possibly due to their geographical distance. Second, because it also appears when the place of birth is controlled in regression. Finally, it is possible that the more frequent presence of friends when parents were absent or deceased may be explained by less parental pressure or 'paternal control' (Gourdon and Joz, 2006) to have family representation at the marriage; the newlyweds would then turn more easily to friends than to family. Furthermore, older individuals were less likely than younger ones to have family witnesses, which confirms the results of most French samples and confirms the weight of parents (or relatives when the parents were deceased). People turned more to family witnesses when they were young, and the weight of the family declined when the couple was older. Noted that the effect is visible for both men and women<sup>23</sup>.

Finally, the effect of professional status appears rather little in our regressions, notably because it is partly erased by taking into account the place of birth (in Noisy, for example, almost all the farmers were born in the city). We note, however, that in Ivry, skilled workers were more likely

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<sup>23</sup> About the age of the bride and groom and witnesses in Noisy, Brée (2004) shows that witnesses who were relatives were older than those who were friends, which may seem logical given that people are often closer in age to their friends than to most members of their family. However, friends were also older, on average, than married people, especially for women: men's friends were, on average, 12 years and 8 months older than they were, while women's friends (always male) were, on average, 19 years and 10 months older than they were. Women's witnesses, whether family or friends, were older than those of men: men's friends were 39 years and 9 months older on average, while women's friends were 42 years and 10 months older. The same applies to the family, whose witnesses were, for men, 45 years and 4 months old and for women, 46 years and 9 months old, on average. If we consider the ages at marriage (23 for women and 27 and 1 month for men), the gaps widen all the more. It would seem that the lower age and perhaps also the minority of women were compensated for by older witnesses (such as great-uncles or 70-year-old friends) with more experience.

than unskilled workers to choose at least one family witness, but the effect was the opposite for women. The effect found in The Hague, that urban workers, especially the less skilled and domestic workers, turned more to friends is thus verified for men in Ivry but not for women. It may have been more useful for an unskilled worker to seek out someone from outside the family and possibly with an important place in the city, to find social support (Boudjaaba, 2013). On the other hand, domestic workers may have felt an obligation to choose their employers.

**Table 5. Logistic regression on the presence of at least one 'family' witness in two (=1) versus none (=0) for each spouse, Noisy.**

ODDS RATIO	Noisy women				Noisy men			
	Mod. 1	Mod. 2	Mod. 3	Mod. 4	Mod. 1	Mod. 2	Mod. 3	Mod. 4
Parents (ref 2 pc)								
1 pc + 1 pc	0.251	0.330			0.368	0.534		
2 abc	<b>0.154***</b>	<b>0.249*</b>			<b>0.271**</b>	0.421		
1 pc + 1 dcd	1.129	1.331			1.239	1.078		
1 abc + 1 dcd	<b>0.263**</b>	0.407			0.588	1.18		
2 dcd	0.397	0.491			0.441	0.659		
Mother (ref. pc)								
Dcd			0.535	0.614			0.651	0.723
Abc			<b>0.332*</b>	0.462			0.394	0.475
Other			---	---			---	---
Father (ref. pc)								
Dcd			0.819	0.933			0.824	1.164
Abc			0.387	0.450			0.601	0.954
Other			0.423	0.477			0.564	1.184
Place of birth. (ref N/I)								
Paris		0.330		0.260		0.225		<b>0.173*</b>
Other Seine cities		<b>0.114*</b>		<b>0.141*</b>		<b>0.187*</b>		<b>0.173*</b>
Outside the Seine		<b>0.155**</b>		<b>0.150**</b>		<b>0.154*</b>		<b>0.139**</b>
Mar. age (ref. 21-24)								
15-20 years old		2.231		1.810		---		---
25-29 years old		1.421		1.389		<b>0.454*</b>		<b>0.451*</b>
30-34 years old		1.217		0.974		0.697		0.516
35 years old and over		3.986		3.308		0.298		<b>0.183**</b>
Prof. (ref. unskilled workers)								
Skilled workers		0.553		0.557		0.705		0.667
Farmers		0.979		1.006		0.681		0.616
White collar		0.351		0.383		1.216		1.187
Owners. renters		---		---		---		---
No profession		0.664		0.719		---		---
Employees with status		---		---		0.500		0.457
Pseudo r <sup>2</sup>	0.083	0.167	0.075	0.149	0.051	0.122	0.040	0.124
Nb. Obs.	250	247	260	257	245	234	253	242

pc: present and consenting; abc: absent but consenting; dcd: deceased

\*\*\* p< 0.001%, \*\* p<0.01%, \* p<0.05

**Table 6. Logistic regression on the presence of at least one 'family' witness in two (=1) versus none (=0) for each spouse. Ivry.**

ODDS RATIO	Ivry women				Ivry men			
	Mod. 1	Mod. 2	Mod. 3	Mod. 4	Mod. 1	Mod. 2	Mod. 3	Mod. 4
Parents (ref 2 pc)								
1 pc + 1 pc	0.825	0.848			2.509	5.119		
2 abc	<b>0.209**</b>	<b>0.235**</b>			<b>0.402*</b>	0.550		
1 pc + 1 dcd	1.018	1.009			1.078	1.393		
1 abc + 1 dcd	<b>0.255***</b>	0.320			<b>0.209**</b>	<b>0.273**</b>		
2 dcd	<b>0.286***</b>	<b>0.297**</b>			<b>0.306**</b>	<b>0.401*</b>		
Mother (ref. pc)								
Dcd			0.637	0.666			<b>0.466**</b>	<b>0.485**</b>
Abc			<b>0.363*</b>	<b>0.398*</b>			<b>0.285***</b>	<b>0.322**</b>
Other			0.756	0.600			<b>0.612***</b>	<b>0.052***</b>
Father (ref. pc)								
Dcd			<b>0.557*</b>	0.566			0.591	0.724
Abc			<b>0.456*</b>	0.478			0.935	1.149
Other			<b>0.221**</b>	<b>0.265*</b>			1.035	1.324
Place of birth. (ref N/I)								
Paris		0.685		0.592		<b>0.284*</b>		0.384
Other Seine cities		1.053		0.825		0.799		0.868
Outside the Seine		0.560		0.544		<b>0.359*</b>		<b>0.395*</b>
Mar. age (ref. 21-24)								
15-20 years old		0.317		0.624		0.338		0.286
25-29 years old		0.880		0.850		1.029		0.909
30-34 years old		1.885		1.631		0.624		0.567
35 years old and over		<b>0.139*</b>		0.237		<b>0.117*</b>		<b>0.118*</b>
Prof. (ref. unskilled workers)								
Skilled workers		<b>0.516*</b>		<b>0.483*</b>		<b>2.301**</b>		<b>2.085**</b>
Cultivators		0.270		0.299		3.089		2.818
White collar		0.903		1.652		2.080		1.785
Owners. renters		---		---		---		---
No profession		0.824		0.809		---		---
Employees with status		---		---		---		---
Pseudo r <sup>2</sup>	0.083	0.112	0.069	0.103	0.051	0.147	0.075	0.139
Nb. Obs.	250	322	347	347	245	313	338	338

pc: present and consenting; abc: absent but consenting; dcd: deceased

\*\*\* p< 0.001%, \*\* p<0.01%, \* p<0.05

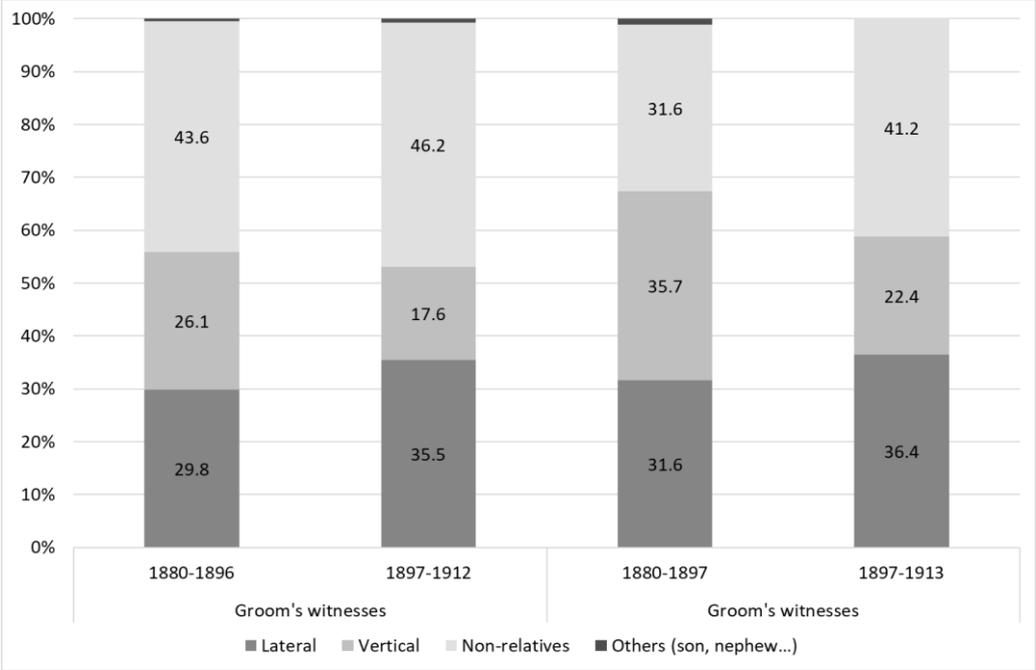
### Family witnesses: who to choose?

Going further in the analysis, we can distinguish lateral (brothers(-in law), cousins) and vertical (uncles, grand-fathers) witnesses within the family witness and also separate the periods of analysis in two: before and after 1897 to be able to observe changes<sup>24</sup>. We can first see that lateral family members are more often called in Ivry (two third of family witnesses) than in Noisy (59%) (Figures 4 and 5). Then, in both cities, we observe an increase in 'lateralization' as in the Netherlands (Bras, 2011) before and after 1897, that is stronger in Noisy (from 50 to

<sup>24</sup> In addition to being the middle of the whole period, 1897 was chosen because from that year onwards women could be chosen as witnesses.

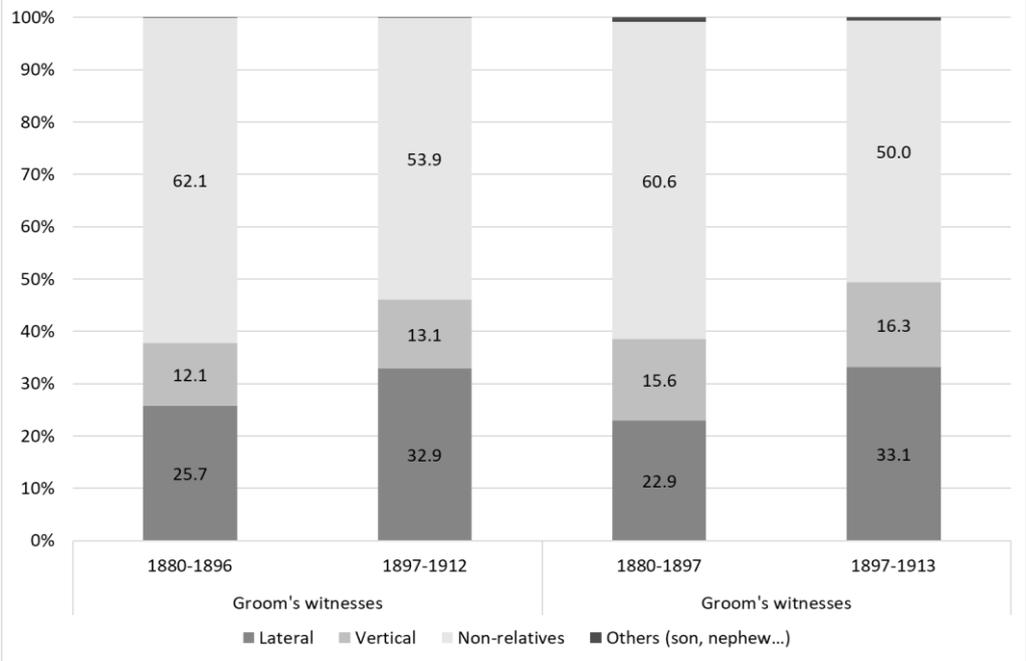
64%) than in Ivry (64 to 69%). In the two cities, men call more often lateral witnesses in the two periods and women have more often vertical ones, but lateralization occurs for both sexes.

**Figure 4. Share of different types of family witnesses for the first marriages in Noisy**



Nb obs.: 214 for the first period; 394 for the second period

**Figure 5. Share of different types of witnesses for the first marriages in Ivry**



Nb obs.: 254 for the first period; 586 for the second period

In Ivry, men chose their brothers (29%) a bit more than their brothers-in-law (26%) followed by their and uncles (21%) and cousins (15%) (Table 7). On the contrary, uncles accounted for 26% of the brides' witnesses, followed by brothers-in-law (24%) and brothers (20%), then cousins (14%). In Noisy-le-Sec (Table 8), the preference for uncles is more pronounced and also applied to men (32% of men choices, 34 % of women's). Both men and women chose their maternal uncle (2/3 of avuncular recurrences specified) over their paternal uncle (1/3)<sup>25</sup>. The choices of the brides and grooms from Noisy were therefore more similar to those of newlyweds in rural areas (as in Samoï, Gourdon, 2007) than to those in Ivry, whose distribution of family witnesses more closely resembles those in the urban areas studied (Elbeuf, towns in Berry or The Hague in particular; (Hamel 1997; Pauquet 1998; van Poppel and Schoonheim 2005).

Distinguishing the periods, it appears that in both cities and for men and women, uncles are less often chosen after 1897 than before. In the opposite, lateral-relations, and especially brothers, are more often chosen as witnesses. After 1897, brides and grooms could also choose women as witnesses. In both cities, women chose women witnesses more frequently (12% in Noisy, 14% in Ivry) than men did (8% in Noisy, 9% in Ivry). Sisters were the more frequently called, especially by women: 6% of family witnesses in both cities, in comparison to 3% for men in Ivry and 4 % for men in Ivry. Then came the cousins and the aunts.

**Table 7. Relationship of family witnesses to the bride and groom, Ivry**

	Witnesses of men			Witnesses of women		
	1884-1896	1897-1912	1884-1912	1884-1896	1897-1912	1884-1912
Uncle	25.9	18.9	20.8	28.7	25.5	26.4
Brother	27.1	29.7	29.0	19.1	21.1	20.5
Brother-in-law	24.7	26.6	26.1	29.8	21.5	23.8
Cousin	16.5	14.0	14.7	12.8	15.0	14.4
Women	0.0	8.6	6.2	0.0	13.8	10.0
Other links	5.9	2.3	3.3	9.6	3.2	5.0
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
Nb obs.	85	222	307	94	247	341

**Table 8. Relationship of family witnesses to the bride and groom, Noisy**

	Witnesses of men			Witnesses of women		
	1880-1896	1897-1912	1880-1912	1880-1896	1897-1912	1880-1912
Uncle	42.7	25.1	31.7	38.6	31.0	33.9
Brother	18.8	24.6	22.4	13.6	19.0	16.9
Brother-in-law	12.8	16.4	15.1	12.1	13.3	12.8
Cousin	22.2	17.4	19.2	18.6	17.3	17.8
Women	0.0	7.7	4.8	0.0	11.5	7.1
Other links	3.4	8.7	6.7	17.1	8.0	11.5
Total	100.0	100.0	100	100.0	100.0	100.0
Nb obs.	117	195	312	140	226	366

<sup>25</sup> Men even chose their maternal uncle slightly more than women: 66.7% against 60.6%.

Multivariate regressions<sup>26</sup> (Table 9) show that several variables explain the differentiated choice of family witnesses. Few variables explain the choice of uncles, even though they are preferred by almost everyone (with the exception of the men in Ivry, who turn more to their brothers). The descriptive analysis showing that the younger the bride and groom, the more likely they were to choose uncles, is not validated in the multivariate regressions. Only the men from Noisy outside the Paris region seem not to have chosen their uncles, whereas the women from Ivry born in the Paris suburbs chose them more than other members of their families. Migrants therefore obviously chose their uncles a little less than did natives (probably because they less often lived nearby). In Noisy, women also chose their uncles less frequently when their father is dead. This result supports the hypothesis of the weight of the father on the choice of witnesses. Finally, Noisy women chose their uncles more when they were skilled workers than unskilled ones.

As to brothers, they seem to have been chosen more often by the older brides and grooms in Noisy, who may be freer to choose their witnesses. In Ivry, it is the parents' situation that best explained the choice of brothers: when parents were absent, missing or deceased, young people turned more readily to a brother. This tends to confirm a more personal choice of the bride and groom when their parents are not there. Finally, in both cities, married people born in the Paris region (Paris or the suburbs) were much less likely to choose a brother than those born in the provinces. This may have been a generational effect of migration: it is possible that migrants were more surrounded by age-peers than by their uncles or other ancestors (Gourdon, 2007). Also, women in Ivry chose their brother more often when they are owners or annuitants. This could go in the same direction as Bras (2011)'s findings about the important role of women in cultivating family relations. Her results rather concern the education of women but the social position of women with proprieties or money could work in the same direction.

Brothers-in-law account for a quarter of the family witnesses in Ivry and 14% in Noisy, without any real preference for either sex. In Ivry, women chose their brother-in-law when their father was absent, and men made the same choice when their mother was absent. Here again, the absence of the parents may have left more space to choose an age-peer.

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<sup>26</sup> The logistic regressions adopt all the explanatory variables of the models in the table, i.e. age group, marital status of parents, department of birth, occupation of the husband or wife and period. Only variables with a significant effect at the threshold of at least 5% are reported in the table.

**Table 9. Choice of family witnesses in Ivry and Noisy**

**Uncle (=1) versus other family witnesses**

<b>Significant variables</b>	<b>Modality</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>P&gt;  z </b>
<b>Ivry Men</b>			
<b>Ivry Women</b>			
Place of birth (ref : Noisy/Ivry)	Suburbs	6.093	<b>0,002</b>
<b>Noisy Men</b>			
Place of birth (ref : Noisy/Ivry)	Other	0.437	<b>0,041</b>
<b>Noisy Women</b>			
Father's situation (ref: pres and cons.)	Deceased	0.394	<b>0,002</b>
Occupation (ref : unskilled workers)	Skilled workers	0.252	<b>0,009</b>

**Brother (=1) versus other family witnesses**

<b>Significant variables</b>	<b>Modality</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>P&gt;  z </b>
<b>Ivry Men</b>			
Father status (ref : pres et cons.)	Abs. and cons.	3,197	<b>0,024</b>
<b>Ivry Women</b>			
Age group (ref: 21-24 years old)	25-29 years old	0,280	<b>0,038</b>
Father's situation (ref: pres et cons.)	Deceased	2,211	<b>0,030</b>
	Missing	14,359	<b>0,046</b>
Place of birth (ref : Noisy/Ivry)	Paris	0,166	<b>0,009</b>
	Owners, annuitants	8,805	<b>0,046</b>
<b>Noisy Men</b>			
Age group (ref: 21-24 years old)	30-34 years old	3.531	<b>0,025</b>
	35 years old and over	6.123	<b>0,021</b>
Place of birth (ref : Noisy/Ivry)	Outside the Seine	2.644	<b>0,046</b>
<b>Noisy Women</b>			
Age group (ref: 21-24 years old)	25-29 years old	2.778	<b>0,021</b>

**Brother-in-law (=1) versus other family witnesses**

<b>Significant variables</b>	<b>Modality</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>P&gt;  z </b>
<b>Ivry Men</b>			
Mother situation (ref: pres and cons.)	Abs and cons.	4.128	<b>0,015</b>
<b>Ivry Women</b>			
Father's situation (ref: pres and cons.)	Abs and cons.	3,355	<b>0,028</b>
<b>Noisy Men</b>			
<b>Noisy Women</b>			

**Cousin (=1) versus other family witnesses**

<b>Significant variables</b>	<b>Modality</b>	<b>OR</b>	<b>P&gt;  z </b>
<b>Ivry Men</b>			
Father's situation (ref: pres and cons.)	Abs and cons.	0,119	<b>0,015</b>
<b>Ivry Women</b>			
Place of birth (ref : Noisy/Ivry)	Outside the Seine	0.400	<b>0,044</b>
Occupation (ref : unskilled workers)	Without prof.	2,416	<b>0,026</b>
<b>Noisy Men</b>			
	Abs and cons.	0.113	<b>0,038</b>
Mother's situation (ref: pres and cons.)	Abs and cons.	5.696	<b>0,035</b>
<b>Noisy Women</b>			
Occupation (ref : unskilled workers)	White collars	4.907	<b>0,041</b>

As to cousins, they were more often chosen by women of Ivry born there than by migrants, and more by white collars women of Noisy. Men of the two cities tend to choose their cousins less often when the father is absent. When the father is absent, it is often because the groom has migrated by himself or, at least, without his parents. Therefore, it is likely that the rest of the family, especially the cousins, also remained in the village and could not be mobilised. Finally, the regressions show no significant correlation to explain the choice of a female witness, but this can be explained by the very small numbers of women chosen as witnesses even when the law allows it.

### The non-relative witnesses

Among the people who attend the wedding, the non-related witnesses are those about whom we know less. In the Noisy's database, the age, occupation and addresses of the witnesses have been collected. Thanks to this information, it is possible to create a typology of non-related witnesses. For men's witnesses, ten categories have emerged (Table 10). We have considered as 'older', the witnesses who were at least 10 years older than the groom, 'younger' the witnesses who were at least 10 years younger than the groom, and as 'same age' the witnesses who have a 0 to 10 years gap. Occupations and city of residence are distinguished between the same and different ones. Witnesses have been considered as professional or recurrent when they appeared several times in the database as 'friends' and live close to the City Hall or are explicitly mentioned as employees of the municipality. For women, the category cannot be that fine because it is not possible to compare their profession to their witness' ones<sup>27</sup>. Finally, we have kept the two periods of time that we have already used in the analysis.

**Table 10. Categories for men's witnesses, Noisy.**

Age	Occupation	City	Before 1897 (%)	After 1897 (%)
Witness older (> 10 years)	Same	Same	13.5	1,9
		Different	1.4	3.8
	Different	Same	18.9	19.9
		Different	16.2	19.9
Same age 0-to-10-years gap	Same	Same	8.1	12.8
		Different	17.6	10.9
	Different	Same	18.9	14.1
		Different	0.0	12.8
Witness younger			2.7	1.9
'Professional' witnesses			2.7	1.9
Nb. Obs.			74	156

<sup>27</sup> We have tried to compare the witnesses' occupation to the husband or the father's ones but only two witnesses had the same occupation as them (on 93).

Different observations can be made from these results. Between the two periods, grooms choose more often same-age witnesses, and less often witnesses living in the same city or who have the same occupation as them.

In the details, 47% of the non-related witnesses chosen by the grooms are the same age before 1897 and 53% after 1897. Also, grooms choose more often people of their age but with different occupations after 1897 than before. Witnesses with the same occupation but who do not live in the same city are especially less chosen whereas witnesses with different occupations and who do not live in the same city are more often chosen. This could indicate an evolution in the choice of witnesses that would slip from work colleagues to friends as we understand it today. The increase of same age peers, and the more frequent choice of friends than of work colleagues can be related to the development of a phase of adolescence since working-class children earn their own wages and can free themselves a little from their parents (Gillis 1974; Hanawalt 1992). This new phase of youth is also connected with the rise of more emotional and less instrumental marriages for which couples, if they choose more their spouse (Coontz 2005), could also wish more and more to choose their witness themselves to share this day (Bras, 2011). However, we must be careful because these evolutions can also be a consequence of a diversification of occupations, it would lead to choosing more often people with professions different from oneself.

On the contrary, older witnesses are less often chosen after 1897. Grooms chose almost three-times less often older witnesses who have the same occupation as them after 1897 (5.8) than before (14.9) and a bit more older people who have a different occupation (from 35.1 to 39.7). These witnesses often have the same age and/or occupation as the groom's fathers and the decrease of their presence could indicate that grooms chose more often their witness after 1897 than before. There is indeed a tendency, especially in the first period, to take important people from the family or circle of friends as witnesses. These people have an important social status by virtue of their profession, with many "notaries", "owners", "doctors", and a much larger number of traders, annuitants, or entrepreneurs than in the married population (and this regardless of the age of the witnesses). These witnesses were also sought for their rank with a "lieutenant in the Republican Guard", an "inspector in the East Company" or a "Sergeant in the general staff of the Place de Paris"; or for their titles such as "Pharmacist first class", "Officer of the Academy", "Knight of the Order of Agricultural Merit and of the Nicham of Tunis", "Bachelor of Law", or "Knight of the Legion of Honour" All the titles and decorations that each person may have received in his or her life are recorded and it seems that an attempt is made to surround oneself with

the most influential, richest, or at least the highest in the social ladder, as witnesses of marriage in order to have some big names (“*du beau monde*”) (Zola, 1887: 180).

When considering the age of the groom, it appears, logically, that the oldest are those who chose youngest witnesses and the youngest oldest witnesses. But what is more interesting is that the older the groom, the more same-age witnesses with different occupations as the groom. Said otherwise, it seems that the older the groom gets, the more he chooses a witness that we have identified as a friend.

Finally, the number of witnesses that we have identified as ‘pro’ decreases between the two periods. These witnesses live very close to the City Hall. One is a baker and the other are city employees. What is interesting is that they don’t appear much in the singles database but much often when also considering second or more marriages of divorcees and widows.

As for women, the categories can only take into account the age and the address (Table 11). It appears that, as for men and even more, same-age witnesses are more frequent after 1897 (40%) than before (27%). As for men also, the share of older witnesses from the same city decreases whereas those of a different city are a bit more frequent.

**Table 11. Categories for women’s witnesses, Noisy.**

Age	City	Before 1897 (%)	After 1897 (%)
Witness older (> 10 years)	Same	45.9	32.0
	Different	16.2	20.0
Same age 0-to-10-years gap	Same	14.9	21.7
	Different	12.2	18.3
Witness younger		8.1	4.6
‘Professional’ witnesses		2.7	3.4
Nb obs.		74	156

## Conclusion

This article asked the question of who attends the wedding ceremony in an attempt to capture part of the network of couples who marry for the first time in the Parisian suburbs at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. The research focused on three groups: parents, family witnesses and unrelated witnesses.

The analysis about the parents of the grooms and brides aimed to know the share of men and women whose parents were still alive at the time of their marriage and, among the living, who came to the wedding ceremony. It appears that less than half of the married couples still had

both parents at the time of marriage, even though they were, on average, under 30 and even under 25 years of age (29 as opposed to 25.5 years old in Ivry, 26.5 as opposed to 23.1 in Noisy); this gives an idea of the high mortality rate of the generations born in the years 1850-1880. Fathers were more often dead than mothers, and men's parents were more likely to be deceased than women's, which is fairly well explained by the higher age of men (and their fathers) at marriage, and by male mortality occurring more frequently and earlier, especially in worker contact. Concerning living parents, 69% (Ivry) to 79% (Noisy) were present at the marriage. Most of those present were the mothers of the spouses and the parents of the women. This gendered distribution can probably be explained here by the place of women in the family – they were under the authority of their father until their marriage, from which point on they came under the authority of their husband (Perrot, 1998) – and by the fact that they often married in the wife's hometown. Young women were therefore more likely to be accompanied – and controlled – than young men. Moreover, parents travelled to attend the wedding much more readily when the girls were minors. The absence of parents at a marriage is also explained by the migration of the bride and groom between birth and marriage, as migrants had a reduced likelihood of being accompanied to the City Hall by their parents. Parents living far away had more financial and time constraints to travel to their child's wedding than those living in or near the same city.

Newlyweds were therefore accompanied, or not, by their parents at their wedding, as well as by four witnesses. These witnesses were relatives in 59% of cases in Noisy and in 46% of cases in Ivry. These are high proportions, particularly in Noisy, and are more likely to be found in rural areas. But these proportions also are high because single people are younger than the average brides and grooms and so they call more often family. In both cities, when the parents were present at the wedding, the witnesses were more likely to be chosen from within the family. This result confirms the hypothesis of a paternal or parental hold that was loosened when the father – or parents – was absent or deceased (Gourdon and Joz, 2006), and which seems have weighed more heavily on women than on men. The choice of relatives as witnesses is also explained by the place of birth of the married couple: family witnesses were used more by natives, who probably had more relatives nearby than migrants.

When distinguishing lateral and vertical parents, it appears that lateral family members are more frequently called than vertical ones (especially in Ivry, and especially for men). We also observe an increase in 'lateralization' as in the Netherlands (Bras, 2011) in both cities between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup>. However, this is accompanied by an increase

of the share of non-relative witnesses in Noisy (and a strong decrease of vertical-family ones) whereas, in Ivry, the share of non-related witnesses decreases (the vertical ones remain almost stable). In Noisy, the specific analysis of non-relative witnesses also seems to show a more frequent appeal to age-peers that could show that bride and grooms choose more often their witnesses between their friends (or colleagues) than between the (working-)relations of their fathers. This result is consistent with the increase of love marriage (Coontz 2005): if people choose their spouses more often, notably thanks to the relaxation of family and community pressure, then it seems logical that they also choose their witnesses more often. There is thus a familiarisation of ritual practices but, at the same time, less family pressure - linked in particular to the distance due to migration, which implies a more frequent choice of lateral witnesses and, among the non-family witnesses, more witnesses of the same age, too, who could be described as friends.

How then can the differences between Ivry and Noisy be explained? They are probably linked to the seniority of migration which is itself also linked to the socio-professional composition of the two cities. In Ivry, where the migrations are earlier than in Noisy, Boudjaaba (2013) observes an increase of non-related witnesses between the beginning and the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century but their share fell again at the end of the century. Therefore, it seems that non-relative witnesses are called when there is not enough family members around to serve as witnesses (moreover, if those family members have already been walled for more important rituals as to be god-fathers or god-mothers for instance (Alfani, Gourdon, and Robin 2015)). This decrease of family witnesses is thus observed in Noisy at the end of the century and in the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century when migrations are becoming more important. At the same time, in Ivry, it is possible that migrants – the inhabitants of Ivry are still very numerous not to be born in the city - join their family already settled in previous waves of migration. This means that they have more 'stock' of families available than their predecessors. The periods of migration can therefore explain the more or less frequent use of family members. These two different tendencies do not prevent that in both cities, we observe an increase of age-peers as witnesses than probably show a new propensity and possibility to choose both one's spouse and one's witnesses, and thus a relaxation of the weight and pressure of the family, especially of fathers.

To further explore the issues raised in this article, it would be interesting to extend the research to other cities in the Paris suburbs, and to other suburbs, in particular to test the hypothesis of the effect of different migratory waves on the choice of witnesses. Furthermore, it would also be necessary to reproduce and refine the analysis of non-parental witnesses to find out whether

the brides and grooms are indeed increasingly mobilising non-family witnesses of their own age, who could therefore be considered as friends, which would be consistent with the rise in love marriages: if one chooses one's spouse, does one not also choose more witnesses to share a decision that is then a little more one's own?

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