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Widowhood Strategies in Preindustrial Society

The household was of utmost importance for the daily lives of the rural population in preindustrial times. The organization of production, consumption, and social welfare (for example, nursing care of children and the elderly) took place there. The division of labor within the household secured a couple's well-being in different ways. Ideally, the institution of marriage and a household gave a married couple access to different types of support: economic (income and property), service (housework and nursing care), social (social networks and status), and emotional (mutual communication and empathy).¹

The death of a spouse brought profound change to the living conditions of the surviving party. The consequences of the decline in support could be disastrous, though various kinds of compensation were available—inheritance, gifts and charity (economic support), hired domestic servants (service support), children and other relatives, or neighbors and friends (social and emotional support). Access to such compensatory measures in a peasant society depended on such factors as gender, household structure, and socio-

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A previous version of this paper was presented at the COST (A-34) workshop, "Well-Being as a Social Gendered Process," Modena, Italy, June 2006, and at the XIV International Economic History Congress, Helsinki, Finland, August 2006. Martin Dribe acknowledges financial support from the Swedish Council for Working Life and Social Research (FAS), Christer Lundh from the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation and the Ebbe Kock Foundation, and Paul Nystedt from the Bank of Sweden Tercentenary Foundation.

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1 See Helena Z. Lopata, *Widows: The Middle East, Asia and the Pacific* (Durham, 1987).

economic status. Widows, especially if they were landless, were more dependent on economic help to offset the loss of a deceased husband's income. Widowers were more in need of extra service support to replace the domestic work of a dead wife. The presence of children in the household, or nearby, was a potential source for all types of support.²

The death of a spouse could also endanger the very existence of a household. Hence, the actions taken by widowers and widows might have had a major impact on the well-being not only of themselves but also of the nonadult children who lived with them. This article investigates the strategic choices of widows and widowers in five rural parishes of southern Sweden from 1814 to 1894, focusing on the influence of demographic, socioeconomic, and gender factors. The study is limited to couples who headed their own household at the time of their partner's death. Although most previous studies have analyzed different widowhood strategies separately, this one examines the timing of different widowhood transitions simultaneously, using a competing-risk, event-history framework. It follows both widows and widowers longitudinally, from bereavement until the first observed transition in widowhood. More specifically, it identifies five alternative strategies that were available to widows and widowers in this context: (1) carrying on alone as the head of the household, if necessary with the help of family or external labor; (2) remarrying and thereby securing the continuation of the existing household; (3) entering a household headed by a child or spouse of child; (4) entering a household headed by someone other than a child or spouse of child; and (5) migrating out of the parish. This simultaneous analysis allows an assessment of how important certain factors at the individual and family level were for the timing of first transitions in widowhood. Broadly speaking, these transitions correspond to different strategies used by widows and widowers to cope with changed living conditions following the death of the spouse.

Not *all* individuals had access to *all* strategies; the unequal distribution of resources that distinguished widowed people was a

2 Nystedt, "Widowhood-Related Mortality in Scania, Sweden, during the 19th Century," *History of the Family*, VII (2002), 451-478; Frans van Poppel and Inez Joung, "Long-Term Trends in Marital Status Mortality Differences in the Netherlands 1850-1970," *Journal of Biosocial Science*, XXXIII (2001), 279-303.

consequence of demographic, socioeconomic, or gender factors. For instance, individuals without children of marriageable age faced options different from those people with such children. Individuals' own age and sex also influenced their opportunities for remarriage. Analysis of the ways in which age, gender, socioeconomic status, and the presence of minor or adult children influenced, and restricted, the choice of strategy is critical.

WIDOWHOOD STRATEGIES Historical research on widowhood has, to a large extent, concentrated on widows' living conditions and strategies after losing their spouses. In many cases, scholars have analyzed housing arrangements and household structure to determine widows' degree of independence. Studies on widows in a rural context have fixated mainly on the transmission of property between generations—inheritance, retirement contracts, wills, etc. Corresponding analyses of the situation of widowers are rare.³

The strategies outlined above are all present in the literature, even though they are usually not handled simultaneously and are seldom viewed as competing options. The first strategy (heading an independent household without remarrying) did not demand that the surviving party should make an active decision after the

3 Ida Blom, "The History of Widowhood: A Bibliographical Overview," *Journal of Family History*, XVI (1991), 191–210; Ida Bull, "Professions, Absolutism and the Role of Widows," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, XXIX (2004), 193–208; Inger Dübeck, "Legal Status of Widows in Denmark 1500–1900," *ibid.*, XXIX (2004), 209–233; Antoinette Fauve-Chamoux, "Widows and Their Living Arrangements in Preindustrial France," *History of the Family*, VII (2002), 101–116; Gísli Ágúst Gunnlaugsson and Ólöf Gardarsdóttir, "Transitions into Widowhood: A Life-Course Perspective on the Household Position of Icelandic Widows at the Beginning of the Twentieth Century," *Continuity and Change*, XI (1996), 435–458; Hanne Marie Johansen, "Widowhood in Scandinavia—An Introduction," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, XXIX (2004), 171–191; David I. Kertzer and Peter Laslett, *Aging in the Past: Demography, Society, and Old Age* (Berkeley, 1995); Beatrice Moring, "Widowhood Options and Strategies in Preindustrial Northern Europe: Socioeconomic Differences in Household Position of the Widowed in 18th and 19th Century Finland," *History of the Family*, VII (2002), 79–99; *idem*, "Conflict or Cooperation? Old Age and Retirement in the Nordic Past," *Journal of Family History*, XXVIII (2003), 231–257; John Ragnar Mylking, "Attractive Marriage Partners? Tenant Widows and Remarriages in Western Norway in the Seventeenth and Eighteenth Century," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, XXIX (2004), 225–239; Richard Wall, "Widows: Perceptions, Demography, Residence Patterns, and Standard of Living," *History of the Family*, VII (2002), 3–12; *idem*, "Elderly Widows and Widowers and their Coresidents in Late 19th- and Early 20th-Century England and Wales," *ibid.* (2002), 139–155; Maria Ågren, "Contracts for the Old or Gifts for the Young? On the Use of Wills in Early Modern Sweden," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, XXV (2000), 197–218; *idem*, "Caring for the Widowed Spouse: The Use of Wills in Northern Sweden during the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries," *Continuity and Change*, XIX (2004), 45–71.

death of the spouse. The immediate outcome of a spouse's death made a widow or widower automatically the head of the household, faced with the option to continue as such with or without the help of family or external labor. During the mourning period (in the Swedish case, twelve months for widows and six months for widowers), remarriage was forbidden, though planning for it, or other options, was permissible. From this perspective, the first strategy was nondecisive; the surviving spouse could adopt a wait-and-see attitude. A widow's attempt to continue running a farm, for instance, is often interpreted as a temporary measure intended to bide time before remarriage or the transference of the property to her children.⁴

The option of remaining head of the household, however, could also have been a long-term strategy. Head of household was the normal status for men, whether married or widowed, but the situation for women was different. A married woman was legally subordinate to her husband in marriage. Although widows could become heads of household, with legal competence and personal responsibilities similar to those of men, they might well have faced social pressure to relinquish the position, especially if they had land and grown children who could manage it. Nonetheless, widows might have preferred to retain this new status, which they would have lost again in the event of remarriage. Those who could support themselves might not have had so strong an incentive to remarry as those who could not.⁵

Given the high adult mortality, as well as the nature of the institutions, in rural Western Europe during preindustrial times, the second strategy (remarriage) would seem to have been the most natural course for widows or widowers after the death of the spouse. Remarriage allowed the division of labor within the household to continue as before and widowed people to remain in the same social position in relation to neighbors and the local community. Hence, remarriage may have served the purpose of

4 Fauve-Chamoux, "Widows"; Lundh, "Remarriages in Sweden in the 18th and 19th Centuries," *History of the Family*, VII (2002), 423–449.

5 Johansen, "Widowhood"; Lundh, "Remarriages"; *idem*, "Remarriage, Gender and Social Class: A Longitudinal Study of Remarriage in Southern Sweden, 1766–1894," *Continuity and Change*, XXII (forthcoming, 2007); Maria Sjöberg, "Hade jorden ett kön? Något om genuskonstruktion i det tidigmoderna Sverige," *Historisk tidskrift*, CXVI (1996), 362–396. Eva Österberg, "Bonde eller bagerska? Vanliga kvinnors ekonomiska ställning under senmedeltiden: Några frågor och problem," *ibid.*, C (1980), 281–297.

restoring their economic, social, and emotional conditions. Previous research shows that remarriage was frequent in preindustrial times, especially among men, often occurring a few years after the death of a spouse. This tendency has been explained by both demographic and socioeconomic factors. In general, the likelihood of remarriage was negatively correlated with age and greater for males. Not only did widowed people's net benefit from entering a new union determine the probability of remarriage; so did their attractiveness in the marriage market, which varied according to the interaction of socioeconomic, demographic, and gender factors. Access to alternative options—for instance, land or grown children—also influenced the propensity to remarry.⁶

Whereas the probability of remarriage was negatively correlated with age, the probability of stepping down from the position of household head (strategies three and four) was positively correlated with age. The third strategy—widowed person entering the household of a married child—has its roots in legislation that dates back to medieval times. Children were, in principal, responsible for taking care of their parents in old age; the methods for doing so varied by era and socioeconomic status. Among landholding peasants, aging couples and widows/widowers transferred the family farm to a chosen grown child in exchange for lifelong board and lodging. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, such arrangements were often formalized through written retirement contracts. This system was integral to the social-security system of the local peasant community, and it vouchsafed social reproduction by permitting the younger generation to marry.⁷

Though the peasant norm was to pass down the family farm

6 David Gaunt and Orvar Löfgren, "Remarriage in the Nordic Countries: The Cultural and Socio-economic Background," in Jacques Dupâquier et al. (eds.), *Marriage and Remarriage in Populations of the Past* (London, 1981); Johansen, "Widowhood"; Lopata, "Widows"; Lundh, "Remarriages"; Moring, *Skärgårdsbor. Hushåll, familj och demografi i finländsk kustbygd på 1600-, 1700- och 1800-talen* (Helsingfors, 1994); Mylking, "Attractive Marriage Partners?"; van Poppel, "Widows, Widowers and Remarriage in Nineteenth-Century Netherlands," *Population Studies*, IL (1995), 421–441.

7 Dribe and Lundh, "Retirement as a Strategy for Land Transmission: A Micro-Study of Pre-Industrial Rural Sweden," *Continuity and Change*, XX (2005), 165–191; Gaunt, "The Property and Kin Relationships of Retired Farmers in Northern and Central Europe," in Wall, Jean Robin, and Laslett (eds.), *Family Forms in Historic Europe* (New York, 1983). Lundh, "Households and Families in Pre-Industrial Sweden," *Continuity and Change*, VIII (1995), 33–68; *idem* and Mats Olsson, "The Institution of Retirement on Scania Estates in the Nineteenth Century," *ibid.*, XVII (2002), 373–403; Moring, "Conflict."

from father to eldest son, generation by generation, the actual transmission of property in Sweden was subject to variation because of the country's egalitarian inheritance legislation, rising property prices in the nineteenth century, and the availability of children to take control of a particular farm/household. One study finds that eldest sons were chosen most often, but, in many cases, younger sons or married daughters (or in practice, sons-in-law) assumed management of a farm and closed the retirement contract.⁸

Gaunt claimed that the formalization of retirement contracts in the eighteenth century indicates frequent disputes between the peasant generations. Moring questioned this interpretation, emphasizing instead the importance of the family in matters of wealth and care of elders. Even among those landed families without contracts, as well as among the landless, elderly people commonly lived with one of their children. The written retirement contract might have served more as an agreement between all of a family's members not to sell the farm rather than as insurance against disputes in the future. A formalized retirement contract guaranteed a retired peasant lifelong board and lodging, even if the new owner ultimately decided to sell the property for some reason. A family's importance for the security of its aged members, however, was not limited solely to co-residence, landholdings, or written contracts, even though a precondition for family support was that relatives lived nearby.⁹

The retirement-contract system was mainly a concern of peasants on freehold land. The contract regulated the rights and obligations of the involved parties and was registered as a mortgage on the property. Tenant farmers on Crown land, where land tenure was similar to freeholding, also practiced the retirement-contract system (freeholders owned their land and paid land taxes, whereas Crown tenants farmed Crown land and paid land rent). Crofters and tenants on manorial land also had a retirement policy, though it was less distinct. Since their land tenure was much weaker, they were less able to determine their successors on the

8 Dribe and Lundh, "Gender Aspects of Inheritance Strategies and Land Transmission in Rural Scania, Sweden, 1720–1840," *History of the Family*, X (2005), 293–308; *idem*, "Retirement."

9 Gaunt, "Property and Kin"; Maria Antonia Gomila Grau, "Residence Patterns of Aged Widows in Three Mediterranean Communities and the Organization of the Care," *History of the Family*, VII (2002), 157–173; Moring, "Widowhood"; *idem*, "Conflict."

farm or croft, requiring the approval of landlords for both the proper time of retirement and the choice of their replacement. Landlords frequently accepted retired tenants' or crofters' married children as lessees or contractors, and thus as caregivers for widowed parents. However, retirement arrangements between such parents and children were less common than those devised by freeholders, though customs varied a great deal between different estates.¹⁰

The fourth strategy for widowed people, entering a household not headed by one of their children, had various reasons in its favor. A substantial number of retirement contracts involved unrelated persons of different generations, including widows or widowers who wanted to retire. On freehold land, this option often made sense for parents, or a surviving parent, who needed to retire when no suitable child was available. Furthermore, new owners were obliged to accept farms with valid retirement contracts attached to them. On manorial land, retirement agreements between unrelated people of different generations were more common, probably because landlords controlled the transfers of properties between generations in order to ensure the continued production capacity of the property. An efficient retirement system facilitated the recruitment of labor, and served as an incentive for tenants and crofters to stay for longer periods. It also provided elderly leaseholders with incentives to retire, thereby allowing younger and more vigorous labor to ensue. Furthermore, in manorial parishes, because the poor law made landlords responsible for the old and the poor, a well-functioning retirement system helped to keep the manors' poor-relief costs in check.

Widowed people who had neither economic resources to offer in exchange for pension benefits, adult children to board them, the wherewithal to serve as household heads, nor prospects in the marriage market, had only one remaining option—to live as lodgers in households headed by someone other than their own child. The category of lodgers contained a wide variety of people, from unmarried soldiers or craftsmen to worker families, paupers, and old widows/widowers. Those boarders sufficiently young and healthy paid their rent either in cash or by doing work that implied their viability in the labor force. Sometimes widowed lodg-

10 Lundh and Olsson, "Institution."

ers were waiting for remarriage, without the resources to keep up an independent household.¹¹

The poor-relief system stipulated that old people who were unable to work and were devoid of economic resources could be housed and nursed in households headed by someone other than their own child. In one of the various care-giving systems, those who housed elderly or incapacitated people received reimbursement or a reduction in taxes or rent. Sometimes, responsibilities devolved to employers—in rural communities, usually the landowners. In this case, poor relief coordinated with an attempt to regulate the migration of poor people, and others who might constitute a future liability. Because of the complex nature of the lodger institution, the move into a new household by a widow or widower could have signified either a continuation of occupational life, an adaptation to wholly new conditions, or a marginalization within the poor-relief system.¹²

The fifth strategy, leaving the parish of residence altogether, was a mix of the other four strategies. After settling down, migrants had to make choices similar to those made by those who did not migrate—whether to remain a widowed household head; to remarry; or to enter a household headed by a child, the spouse of child, or somebody else. However, even though most migrants only traveled short distances, the emotional and financial costs of leaving a familiar social and physical environment could have been high. Some of them certainly increased for the elderly; previous research maintains that such migration declined dramatically with age. Hence, the strategy to move out of the parish after the death of a spouse may have reflected a deterioration of living conditions to a level at which a migrant had little to lose.¹³

11 Lundh, “Husmän och torpare under Duveke gods 1766–1894,” in *idem* and Kerstin Sundberg (eds.), *Gatehus och gatehusfolk i skånska godsmiljöer* (Lund, 2002).

12 Dribe, *Liv och rörelse: Familj och flyttningar i 1800-talets svenska bondesamhälle* (Hedemora, 2003), 39–58; Lundh, “Life-Cycle Servants in Nineteenth Century Sweden: Norms and Practice,” in Fauve-Chamoux (ed.), *Domestic Service and the Formation of European Identity: Understanding the Globalization of Domestic Work, 16th–21st Centuries* (Bern, 2004); Artur Montgomery, *Svensk socialpolitik under 1800-talet* (Stockholm, 1951); Göran B. Nilsson, “Svensk fattigvårdslagstiftning 1853–71,” in Henrik Berggren and *idem*, *Liberal socialpolitik 1853–84* (Uppsala, 1965), 1–164; Anne-Marie Skoglund, *Fattigvården på den svenska landsbygden år 1829* (Stockholm, 1992).

13 Dribe, “Migration of Rural Families in Nineteenth Century Southern Sweden: A Longitudinal Analysis of Local Migration Patterns,” *History of the Family*, VIII (2003), 247–265.

DATA AND METHODS The data herein are based on family reconstitutions performed within the Scanian Demographic Database for five rural parishes in southern Sweden—Hög, Kävlinge, Halmstad, Sireköpinge, and Kågeröd—all of them about 10 kilometers from the coast in western Scania, which is the southernmost province of Sweden. In 1830, the five parishes had 3,978 inhabitants. By 1895, the population had increased to 5,539, implying an average annual population growth rate of 0.5 percent during this sixty-five-year period—somewhat slower than that for rural Sweden as a whole, which was 0.6 per cent per year during the same period.¹⁴

The data for the family reconstitutions—births, marriages, and deaths from the late seventeenth century until 1894—are of high quality. The results, derived automatically via a computer program and checked manually, were linked to other sources, chiefly poll-tax registers and the catechetical-examination registers. The database contains all of the individuals born in the five parishes, or migrating into them. Instead of sampling any particular group (a birth cohort for example), this study followed each individual from birth, or time of arrival in the parish, to death, or out-migration. Hence, the data do not suffer from many of the drawbacks that often vex standard family reconstitutions, because information on both in- and out-migration is available at the individual level. The catechetical-examination registers—which are available from 1814 in Kågeröd, 1821 in Halmstad and Sireköpinge, and 1829 in Hög and Kävlinge—also provide information about the household context of the individuals. The study period begins at these dates in the different parishes.¹⁵

14 The Scanian Demographic Database is a collaborative project between the Regional Archives in Lund and the Research Group in Population Economics at the Department of Economic History, Lund University. The source material is described in Elisabeth Reuterswärd and Franceska Olsson, “Skånes demografiska databas 1646–1894: En källbeskrivning,” *Lund Papers in Economic History*, XXXIII (1993), 1–62, and the quality of data is analyzed in Tommy Bengtsson and Lundh, “Evaluation of a Swedish Computer Program for Automatic Family Reconstitution,” *Lund Papers in Economic History*, VIII (1991), 1–43. For data on the population development in Sweden, see Statistics Sweden, *Befolkningsutvecklingen under 250 år* (Stockholm, 1999).

15 Bengtsson and Lundh, “Evaluation”; Dribe, *Leaving Home in a Peasant Society: Economic Fluctuations, Household Dynamics and Youth Migration in Southern Sweden, 1829–1866* (Lund/Södertälje, 2000), 18–30; Alice B. Kasakoff and John W. Adams, “The Effect of Migration on Ages at Vital Events: A Critique of Family Reconstitution in Historical Demography,” *European Journal of Population*, XI (1995), 199–242; Steven Ruggles, “Migration, Marriage and

The population at risk comprises widows and widowers who were living in an independent household when their partner died. Thus, widowed individuals lodged in another household are not included in the analysis, since they, from our perspective, can be said to have chosen their widowhood strategy in advance. Widows and widowers in the risk population are followed longitudinally from time of spouse's death until they remarried, entered a married child's household, entered a household not headed by one of their own children, or out-migrated. The strategy of remaining as head of the household corresponds to the risk population. Since the analysis concerns the first transition after becoming widowed, individuals are excluded from the risk population after experiencing their first transition. Individuals without a transition into any of these states continued to head their own household until death or the end of the time period studied (December 31, 1894). The analysis observes the individual widows or widowers for a maximum period of ten years after bereavement. However, as shown below, most transitions took place much sooner after widowhood.¹⁶

The timing of these transitions is the focus of attention. In the multivariate analysis, the risk (or hazard) of these different transitions (or events) is modeled as a Cox proportional-hazards model, in which the transitions are seen as competing risks. Since the point is to investigate the impact of conditions at the moment of widowhood on the timing of the different strategies, all covariates are time-invariant and refer to the time of entry into widowhood. The models include social status to measure the influence of access to resources on the strategies chosen. Age at widowhood is treated as a continuous covariate to measure the linear effect of becoming widowed at an older age. Specifications with factorized age covariates were also attempted, but the different age patterns between different transitions made it difficult to find a suitable subdivision into more than two categories. We distinguish children by age—older and younger than fifteen—and older children by sex as well,

Mortality: Correcting Sources of Bias in English Family Reconstitutions," *Population Studies*, XLVI (1992), 507–522; *idem*, "The Limitations of English Family Reconstitution: English Population History from Family Reconstitution, 1580–1837," *Continuity and Change*, XIV (1999), 105–130.

16 With the exception of migration, the strategies do not necessarily involve a physical move but mainly a change of headship.

since the death of a parent could have affected sons and daughters differently, as discussed in the previous section. The study period is divided into two sub-periods to measure changes in the choice of strategy. Finally, parish of residence is included to control for location-specific differences not captured by the other covariates in the model.

The risk population consists of 862 individuals, 576 widows and 286 widowers. Table 1 shows the social structure of the sample. We employ a four-category social structure, although in the sex-specific analyses, we use a reduced two-category subdivision due to the small sample size. The first group consists of freeholders and tenants on Crown land (about 10 percent of the risk population) who had sufficient land at their disposal to provide for their families and pay land rents or taxes. Although freeholders and Crown tenants were by no means in the same position, their situations with regard to inheritance and subdivision of land were similar in many respects, especially when compared to those of other social groups. Both employed non-family members, and both typically produced a surplus for the market.¹⁷

The second group comprises tenants on noble land who cultivated landholdings above subsistence level (about 10 percent of the widows and widowers). As participants in a manorial system, their socioeconomic conditions, as well as their political rights, differed in important respects from those of freeholders and Crown tenants. Although they also employed labor outside the family, they leased their farms only for a certain number of years at the time. At least until the 1860s, they paid most of their rent in labor, working on the demesne.

The third group, semilandless people (about 35 percent), consists of smallholders with land below subsistence level and crofters (*torpare, gatehusmän*), some of whom had landholdings equal to that of smallholders and some of whom lacked land altogether. Unfortunately, because the sources do not permit a distinction between crofters with and without land, the semilandless group is heterogeneous. The fourth social group, the landless (slightly more than

17 We define 1/16 *mantal* (a rough measure of the productive potential of the farm) as the limit of subsistence, which is also the definition employed in contemporary society (see Dribe, *Leaving Home*, 18–30, for a discussion). See Dribe and Lundh, “Gender”; Carl-Johan Gadd, *Den agrara revolutionen 1700–1870* (Stockholm, 2000), 76, 198–202, for a discussion about the difference between freeholders and Crown tenants.

Table 1 Social Structure in the Sample (by Percentage)

| | WIDOWERS | WIDOWS |
|--------------|----------|--------|
| Freeholder | 9 | 11 |
| Tenant | 12 | 11 |
| Semilandless | 34 | 37 |
| Landless | 45 | 41 |
| N | 286 | 576 |

NOTE Social structure is at the time at widowhood.

SOURCE The Scanian Demographic Database, Lund University.

40 percent), contains various occupations without access to land—artisans, soldiers, married servants, and agricultural workers. The percentages show that the majority of the families, those in the third and fourth groups, were unable to support themselves through land ownership, relying on supplementary income from wage work.

The social distribution of this sample of widows and widowers is similar to the population as distinguished by childbearing age (twenty-five to fifty-five) in the parishes during the period studied herein: Among household heads, 10 percent were freeholders or Crown tenants, 13 percent manorial tenants, 31 percent semilandless, and 47 percent landless. When using the two-category social structure, one group consists of the landed peasants—freeholders and tenants—and the other group is a combination of the landless and the semilandless people.

EMPIRICAL RESULTS Table 2 reports the distribution of first outcomes. It shows that about 60 percent of all individuals chose one of the alternative strategies; hence, about 40 percent stayed as household heads until they died or to the end of the study period. On average, widowers took about three years and widows almost five years to embark on any of the four strategies (the time when 50 percent had experienced a transition of any kind). Thus, most of the transitions took place soon after widowhood.

Table 2 also shows pronounced differences between widows and widowers. Widowers were considerably more prone to remarry, whereas widows were considerably more likely to enter households not headed by their own children. That widows were

Table 2 Alternative First Outcomes for Widows and Widowers (by Percentage)

| | WIDOWERS | WIDOWS |
|---|------------|------------|
| Remarriage | 33 | 11 |
| Entering child household ^a | 9 | 12 |
| Entering non-child household ^b | 11 | 25 |
| Migration | 9 | 11 |
| Death | 28 | 25 |
| Head of independent household at end of period | 10 | 16 |
| Total | 100 | 100 |
| N | 286 | 576 |
| Median time to first transition (death excluded) ^c | 2.75 years | 4.87 years |

^aHousehold headed by a child or the spouse of child.

^bHousehold headed by somebody other than a child or the spouse of a child.

^cBased on Kaplan-Meier estimate of remaining head of an independent household.

SOURCE The Scanian Demographic Database, Lund University.

also more likely to leave the parish, to enter a child's household, and to remain as household heads clearly points to fundamental differences in the conditions of widows and widowers in preindustrial peasant society. Widowers had a greater opportunity, and/or a greater need, to find a new spouse and remarry. Widows tended to fall back on family networks or to find ways to cope that would allow them to maintain full independence and authority.

The strategy of retiring to the household of a married child was not equivalent to physically moving from a former residence. Retirement entailed a simultaneous transfer of property (ownership or leasing contract) and of position as head of household from parent to grown child. When the vast majority of widows or widowers entered the household of one of their children, they clearly stayed on the same property unit (98 percent of the cases in this sample), though the data do not reveal whether they moved to another building on the property. In several landless families, the older and younger generation lived in separate households on the same property while working as laborers or artisans. Eventually, widows or widowers would move into the household of the younger generation. Landless widowers and widows, however, usually went from their own house to that of a married child. Landholding peasants normally moved to a retirement cottage on

the farm or took new quarters within their own house when transferring headship.

Tables 3 through 5 display the results of multivariate hazard regressions, in which the factors associated with the different transitions can be analyzed simultaneously in more detail. In Table 3, the risk population consists of both widowers and widows. Table 4 reports results for widowers and Table 5 for widows. In the gender-specific tables, the two-category social categorization reduces the number of estimated parameters and obtains convergence of the regression maximum-likelihood algorithms.

The gender differences in Table 3 show that widows were less likely to make a transition at all, and thus more likely to remain as head of an independent household, which might reflect, in part, their preference for the kind of independence not accorded to married women—full control of productive and political resources. But this lower likelihood of a transition for widows compared to widowers is mainly due to a lower likelihood of remarriage. Widows were more likely than widowers to enter other households, especially those not headed by their own children. As Table 2 indicates, widows and widowers largely chose different strategies: Widowers generally remarried, whereas widows either remained single, heading an independent household, or entered other people's households as lodgers.

The strategies that widowed people chose are associated with social status, although no effects on the overall likelihood of experiencing a transition are evident. As expected, landless and, to a lesser degree, semilandless people were less likely to enter a child's household than landed peasants were; they were more likely to enter households not headed by their own children and to leave the parish. The implication is that the children of the poor lacked the productive resources to support their widowed parents or that widowed people lacked the assets to negotiate a retirement deal. As is clear from Tables 4 and 5, the difference in social status among migrants is particularly strong for widowers, but the effects on entering a child's household are similar for widows and widowers.

Age at widowhood has a negative effect on all transitions combined; the older the widowed people, the less likely were they to experience a transition. Age at widowhood shows a strong negative effect on remarriage and migration; widowed people of ad-

vanced age were more apt to enter a child's household. Becoming widowed ten years later lowered the likelihood (hazard) of remarriage by about 50 percent, and increased the risk of entering a household headed by a child, or the spouse of a child, by about 50 percent. This pattern held for widows and widowers, although the effect of age on entering a child's household was somewhat stronger for widowers, and the age effect on remarriage was stronger for widows.¹⁸

The presence of children under fifteen in a household when a parent died lowered widowed people's likelihood of entering other households, whether headed by their own child or not, and increased the likelihood of remarriage (the latter effect is only statistically significant for widowers). Table 3 demonstrates that a majority (53 percent) of the widowed population had children under fifteen living at home at the time of bereavement.

About 30 percent of widows and widowers had sons or daughters older than fifteen living at home when they were widowed (see Table 3). The sex of the children had an effect on the likelihood of different transitions. The presence of sons older than fifteen lowered the chance of remarriage by about 40 percent (statistically significant at the 10 percent level); the corresponding effect of daughters is smaller and not statistically significant. The gender-specific results clearly show that this difference was most pronounced for widows (see Tables 4 and 5). The fact that adolescent sons lowered the remarriage propensity of widows might have something to do with the transmission of land or housing between generations, although it is difficult to fully reconcile with the different effects for sons and daughters. Sons might have been more eager to safeguard their takeover than daughters and thus more liable to discourage their mothers from remarrying. Another, more reasonable possibility is that the presence of a son older than fifteen in the household diminished the need for a new husband to take charge and assume the male work load. This situation also avoided potential conflicts between a son and a new husband.

18 The relative risks (or hazard ratios) for remarriage or for entry into a child's household with a single year of increased age at widowhood is directly presented in Table 3 (0.93, 1.04). The relative risk (or hazard ratio) for remarriage with ten years of increased age at widowhood is calculated as $0.93^{10}=0.48$, and the corresponding relative risk of entering a child's household is $1.04^{10}=1.48$.

Table 3 Cox Proportional-Hazards Estimates of Different Widowhood Transitions—Widowers and Widows 0–10 Years after Entering Widowhood

| COVARIATE | MEAN | ALL TRANSITIONS | | REMARRIAGE | | ENTERING CHILD HOUSEHOLD ^a | | ENTERING NON-CHILD HOUSEHOLD ^b | | MIGRATION | |
|----------------------|-------|-----------------|----------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------|----------|---|----------|-----------|----------|
| | | REL.RISK | WALD-P | REL.RISK | WALD-P | REL.RISK | WALD-P | REL.RISK | WALD-P | REL.RISK | WALD-P |
| Sex | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Males | 0.29 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| Females | 0.71 | 0.71 | 0.00 | 0.21 | 0.00 | 1.22 | 0.45 | 2.28 | 0.00 | 0.89 | 0.66 |
| Socioeconomic status | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Freeholder | 0.12 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| Tenant | 0.09 | 1.13 | 0.57 | 1.56 | 0.19 | 1.15 | 0.75 | 1.76 | 0.29 | 0.54 | 0.36 |
| Semilandless | 0.38 | 0.92 | 0.66 | 1.04 | 0.89 | 0.60 | 0.21 | 1.50 | 0.42 | 0.82 | 0.67 |
| Landless | 0.41 | 1.16 | 0.42 | 1.15 | 0.62 | 0.27 | 0.00 | 2.44 | 0.07 | 1.96 | 0.12 |
| Age at widowhood | 51.72 | 0.97 | 0.00 | 0.93 | 0.00 | 1.04 | 0.01 | 0.99 | 0.25 | 0.94 | 0.00 |
| Children < 15 in hh | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Not present | 0.47 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| Present | 0.53 | 0.84 | 0.12 | 1.85 | 0.01 | 0.62 | 0.08 | 0.78 | 0.21 | 0.58 | 0.03 |
| Sons > 15 in hh | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Not present | 0.71 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| Present | 0.29 | 1.00 | 0.97 | 0.63 | 0.09 | 1.94 | 0.01 | 0.93 | 0.72 | 0.88 | 0.67 |
| Daughters > 15 in hh | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Not present | 0.71 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| Present | 0.29 | 0.99 | 0.92 | 0.81 | 0.39 | 1.70 | 0.03 | 0.65 | 0.06 | 1.39 | 0.27 |
| Period | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1814–1860 | 0.45 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| 1860–1895 | 0.55 | 0.61 | 0.00 | 0.46 | 0.00 | 0.67 | 0.09 | 0.45 | 0.00 | 1.18 | 0.50 |

| Parish | 0.17 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
|------------------------|---------|---------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| Hög | 0.21 | 0.94 | 0.76 | 0.60 | 0.11 | 1.18 | 0.74 | 0.43 | 0.06 | 1.99 | 0.15 |
| Kävlinge | 0.17 | 1.64 | 0.01 | 0.77 | 0.39 | 2.09 | 0.14 | 2.34 | 0.01 | 1.89 | 0.21 |
| Halmstad | 0.21 | 1.48 | 0.04 | 1.06 | 0.84 | 1.28 | 0.61 | 1.52 | 0.24 | 2.18 | 0.11 |
| Sireköpinge | 0.24 | 2.06 | 0.00 | 0.99 | 0.96 | 2.71 | 0.03 | 2.82 | 0.00 | 2.37 | 0.07 |
| Kågeröd | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Events | 472 | 157 | 82 | 3530.9 | 153 | 81 | 3530.9 | 61(13) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 |
| Total time at risk | 3530.9 | 231(13) | 85(13) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 |
| LR test statistic (df) | 159(13) | 231(13) | 85(13) | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 |
| Overall p-value | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | 0.0000 |

^aHousehold headed by a child or spouse of child.

^bHousehold headed by somebody else than a child or spouse of child.

SOURCE The Scania Demographic Database, Lund University.

Table 4 Cox Proportional-Hazards Estimates of Different Widowhood Transitions—Widowers 0–10 Years after Entering Widowhood

| COVARIATE | MEAN | ALL TRANSITIONS | | REMARRIAGE | | ENTERING CHILD HOUSEHOLD ^a | | ENTERING NON-CHILD HOUSEHOLD ^b | | MIGRATION | |
|----------------------|-------|-----------------|----------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------|----------|---|----------|-----------|----------|
| | | REL.RISK | WALD-P | REL.RISK | WALD-P | REL.RISK | WALD-P | REL.RISK | WALD-P | REL.RISK | WALD-P |
| Socioeconomic status | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Peasant | 0.19 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| Non-peasant | 0.81 | 0.92 | 0.65 | 0.84 | 0.48 | 0.45 | 0.13 | 1.21 | 0.75 | 8.04 | 0.05 |
| Age at widowhood | 55.05 | 0.96 | 0.00 | 0.94 | 0.00 | 1.06 | 0.03 | 1.02 | 0.47 | 0.92 | 0.00 |
| Children < 15 in hh | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Not present | 0.51 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| Present | 0.50 | 1.01 | 0.97 | 1.81 | 0.02 | 0.39 | 0.11 | 0.82 | 0.70 | 1.35 | 0.53 |
| Sons > 15 in hh | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Not present | 0.79 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| Present | 0.21 | 1.30 | 0.21 | 0.84 | 0.62 | 3.58 | 0.01 | 1.55 | 0.34 | 1.53 | 0.53 |
| Daughters > 15 in hh | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Not present | 0.71 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| Present | 0.29 | 0.90 | 0.62 | 0.81 | 0.51 | 2.13 | 0.12 | 0.53 | 0.23 | 1.47 | 0.54 |
| Period | | | | | | | | | | | |
| 1814–1860 | 0.47 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| 1860–1895 | 0.53 | 0.62 | 0.00 | 0.51 | 0.00 | 0.44 | 0.07 | 0.58 | 0.19 | 1.42 | 0.44 |

| Parish | I.00 | ref.cat. | I.00 | ref.cat. | I.00 | ref.cat. | I.00 | ref.cat. | I.00 | ref.cat. |
|------------------------|------|----------|------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|--------|----------|
| Hög | 0.16 | | 0.75 | 0.55 | 0.21 | 0.19 | 0.35 | 0.23 | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| Kävlinge | 0.19 | 0.90 | 0.75 | 0.55 | 0.21 | 0.19 | 0.35 | 0.23 | 6.23 | 0.10 |
| Halmstad | 0.22 | 0.99 | 0.97 | 0.61 | 1.02 | 0.98 | 1.10 | 0.88 | 2.26 | 0.50 |
| Sireköpinge | 0.15 | 1.60 | 0.15 | 0.18 | 0.58 | 0.52 | 0.66 | 0.60 | 4.56 | 0.21 |
| Kågeröd | 0.28 | 1.52 | 0.18 | 0.48 | 1.50 | 0.56 | 1.12 | 0.86 | 6.07 | 0.11 |
| Events | | 168 | | | 25 | | 27 | | 23 | |
| Total time at risk | | 1008.1 | | | 1008.1 | | 1008.1 | | 1008.1 | |
| LR test statistic (df) | | 54(10) | | | 47(10) | | 10(10) | | 34(10) | |
| Overall p-value | | 0.0000 | | | 0.0000 | | 0.4298 | | 0.0002 | |

SOURCE The Scania Demographic Database, Lund University.

^aHousehold headed by a child or spouse of child.

^bHousehold headed by somebody else than a child or spouse of child.

Table 5 Cox Proportional-Hazards Estimates of Different Widowhood Transitions—Widows 0–10 Years after Entering Widowhood

| COVARIATE | MEAN | ALL TRANSITIONS | | REMARriage | | ENTERING CHILD HOUSEHOLD ^a | | ENTERING NON-CHILD HOUSEHOLD ^b | | MIGRATION | | |
|----------------------|-------|-----------------|----------|------------|----------|---------------------------------------|----------|---|----------|-----------|----------|--|
| | | REL.RISK | WALD-P | REL.RISK | WALD-P | REL.RISK | WALD-P | REL.RISK | WALD-P | REL.RISK | WALD-P | |
| Socioeconomic status | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Peasant | 0.22 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | |
| Non-peasant | 0.78 | 0.97 | 0.83 | 1.01 | 0.97 | 0.46 | 0.01 | 1.19 | 0.48 | 1.31 | 0.46 | |
| Age at widowhood | 50.39 | 0.97 | 0.00 | 0.91 | 0.00 | 1.03 | 0.12 | 0.98 | 0.05 | 0.95 | 0.00 | |
| Children < 15 in hh | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Not present | 0.45 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | |
| Present | 0.55 | 0.73 | 0.03 | 1.63 | 0.23 | 0.71 | 0.30 | 0.72 | 0.12 | 0.47 | 0.02 | |
| Sons > 15 in hh | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Not present | 0.68 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | |
| Present | 0.32 | 0.84 | 0.24 | 0.49 | 0.13 | 1.68 | 0.08 | 0.77 | 0.26 | 0.72 | 0.34 | |
| Daughters > 15 in hh | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Not present | 0.71 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | |
| Present | 0.29 | 1.08 | 0.61 | 1.12 | 0.80 | 1.79 | 0.06 | 0.70 | 0.16 | 1.35 | 0.39 | |

| Period | 0.44 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 0.43 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 0.64 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 0.11 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 0.48 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 0.22 |
|--------------------|------|---------|----------|---------|------|----------|--------|------|----------|------|----------|----------|--------|------|----------|--------|----------|
| 1814–1860 | 0.44 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 0.43 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 0.64 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 0.11 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 0.48 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 0.22 |
| 1860–1895 | 0.56 | 0.62 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.43 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.64 | 0.00 | 0.48 | 0.11 | 0.00 | 0.00 | 0.48 | 0.00 | 1.41 | 0.22 |
| Parish | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
| Hög | 0.17 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 0.62 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 1.88 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. | ref.cat. | 1.00 | 1.00 | ref.cat. | 1.00 | ref.cat. |
| Kävlinge | 0.22 | 0.98 | 0.94 | 0.30 | 0.62 | 0.30 | 1.88 | 3.00 | 0.30 | 0.54 | 0.30 | 0.25 | 1.76 | 0.54 | 0.25 | 1.76 | 0.30 |
| Halmstad | 0.15 | 2.33 | 0.00 | 0.75 | 1.14 | 0.75 | 3.00 | 2.15 | 0.08 | 3.37 | 0.08 | 0.00 | 2.10 | 3.37 | 0.00 | 2.10 | 0.18 |
| Sireköpinge | 0.24 | 1.42 | 0.14 | 0.30 | 0.61 | 0.30 | 2.15 | 4.30 | 0.19 | 1.90 | 0.19 | 0.12 | 1.67 | 1.90 | 0.12 | 1.67 | 0.34 |
| Kågeröd | 0.22 | 2.42 | 0.00 | 0.96 | 0.98 | 0.96 | 4.30 | 0.01 | 0.01 | 3.83 | 0.01 | 0.00 | 1.78 | 3.83 | 0.00 | 1.78 | 0.27 |
| Events | | 304 | | 64 | | 64 | 57 | | 126 | | 58 | | 58 | | | 58 | |
| Total time at risk | | 2522.8 | | 2522.8 | | 2522.8 | 2522.8 | | 2522.8 | | 2522.8 | | 2522.8 | | | 2522.8 | |
| LR test statistic | | 111(10) | | 102(10) | | 102(10) | 42(10) | | 82(10) | | 26(10) | | 26(10) | | | 26(10) | |
| Overall p-value | | 0.0000 | | 0.0000 | | 0.0000 | 0.0000 | | 0.0000 | | 0.0037 | | 0.0037 | | | 0.0037 | |

^a Household headed by a child or spouse of child.

^b Household headed by somebody else than a child or spouse of child.

SOURCE The Scania Demographic Database, Lund University.

The presence of sons and daughters older than fifteen within a household had a similar positive effect on widowed people moving into another child's household. The sex of the children does not seem to have mattered a great deal in this regard, neither for widows nor for widowers. The presence of daughters older than fifteen also lowered the likelihood of entering a household not headed by a widowed person's own child; no corresponding effect is evident for sons older than fifteen.

Finally, the period covariate indicates a declining likelihood of experiencing a transition over time for both widows and widowers. The cause was a lower likelihood of remarriage and entrance into a household not headed by an offspring during the second period.

The basic premise of this study is that, in a preindustrial rural context, the loss of a spouse usually impelled the surviving party to adapt quickly by choosing between certain strategies: to remain the head of the household, to remarry, to enter a household headed by a child or the spouse of child, to dissolve the household and enter into an unrelated person's household, or to migrate out of the parish. About 60 percent of the widowed persons chose one of these strategies before they died—the choice generally made shortly after bereavement, often within three to four years. One of the options, remarriage, was not allowed during the mourning period (six months for males and one year for females). Widowed people probably devised their strategies during the first months after the death of their spouse.

The results of this study show that the demographic, socioeconomic, and gender-related factors that influenced this choice of strategy were, to some extent, interacting. The differences in the way that widows and widowers handled the situation are obvious. Widowers were generally more likely to remarry, whereas widows were either more prone to remain unmarried heads of household or to become lodgers in an unrelated household. Socioeconomic factors also influenced the choice of strategy. Peasants who owned or leased land were more inclined to transfer a farm to one of their children and to live in that child's household, whereas landless people were more likely to dissolve an existing household and live as inmates in an unrelated household or to migrate out of their parish.

Age affected widowers and widows in a similar way. Older people were more likely to enter a child's household, whereas younger people tended more to remarry and to migrate out of their parish. The presence of adolescent children in a household affected both remarriage and the likelihood of entering a household headed by someone other than an offspring. The effect, however, depended on the sex of the children, as well as on that of the widowed person. Sons living at home discouraged widows, more than they did widowers, from remarrying, whereas daughters lowered the likelihood of both widows and widowers entering a child's household. For both widows and widowers, the presence of minor children in the household increased the likelihood of remarriage and lowered the probability of entering an unrelated household.

The strategy of retiring as head of household and entering a household headed by a child or the spouse of child required children willing and able to board a widowed parent. In this regard, children were highly valued assets in preindustrial society, before the development of the welfare state and well-functioning capital and insurance markets. In fact, this role of children as welfare providers for parents in old age is considered one of the most important reasons for high fertility in preindustrial societies, often more important than the directly productive contribution of children.¹⁹

One factor that facilitated entry into a child's household was access to land that could be exchanged formally for a retirement contract with a child. Lack of such a productive resource severely constrained landless and semilandless people from adopting the strategy, even though crofters and cottars sometimes made such formal retirement arrangements. Occasionally, the death of a parent enabled a child to get married; in these cases, marriage, transfer of the headship of the household, and retirement coincided.

The results herein clearly demonstrate the importance of age at widowhood for the choice of strategy. Remarriage could be considered an investment in maintaining a household and the living standards of the surviving family. However, it required that widowed people not be too old to continue their previous work. The net benefits of remarriage increased with the remaining life

19 Ronald D. Lee, "A Cross Cultural Perspective on Intergenerational Transfers and the Economic Life-Cycle," in Andrew Mason and George Tapinos (eds.), *Sharing the Wealth: Demographic Change and Economic Transfers Between Generations* (New York, 2000).

expectancy of widows/widowers; younger ones also had an easier time finding new partners in the marriage market.

To remain heads of a household, widowed people had to be healthy enough to manage the added responsibilities. Surviving parties had to assume the work load of a dead spouse or enlist kin or outside help to perform it. Widowed people who chose this strategy, especially widows, tended to be in the early stages of their family life cycle, with children who were minors. Widows and widowers later in their family life cycle, with grown children, were more likely to retire to a household headed by an adult child or the spouse of a child, although, as noted, this option depended to a large extent on social status.

Strategy was also greatly influenced by gender. Remarriage was considerably more common for widowers in all social groups. The role of head of household was normal for married men; widowhood or remarriage did not change widowers' status as it did widows'. Husbands were the legal representatives of their households within the local community—a status of special importance so far as non-peasants were concerned. Non-peasant widowers could make a good match in the non-peasant segment of the marriage market if in possession of a work and housing contract that guaranteed the financial support of the household. Non-peasant widows, however, were at a competitive disadvantage. They could offer service support in a household but usually had no opportunity to assume a dead husband's work duties or remuneration. Their only chance to keep a household intact was to remarry someone who could replace a husband in this respect. Tenant widows experienced a similar situation; they had to remarry quickly in order to be able to stay on the farm. This situation is different from what Mylking observed in Norway, where tenant widows were attractive marriage partners because of their ability to inherit tenancy from a deceased husband and transfer it to a new one.²⁰

Inheritance legislation was favorable to the remarriage prospects of widowers who farmed freehold land. In general, widowers brought more property into a new marriage than widows did. The fact that husbands owned two-thirds of the matrimonial

20 For a more in-depth analysis of the intricate interaction between sex, socioeconomic status, and household structure in the case of remarriage, see Lundh, "Remarriages"; *idem*, "Remarriage, Gender and Social Class." Mylking, "Attractive Marriage Partners?"

property and wives only one-third had important ramifications for the compensation due the direct heirs of the first marriage (the children). Greater allotment of property made widowers better prepared for remarriage, and probably more attractive marriage partners, than widows.

Among freeholders, not only the ability but also the willingness to remarry probably varied between the sexes. If they remarried, farmer widows lost their legal competence and position as heads of household to their new husband, who became their guardian and the manager of the farmstead with all of its possessions. Furthermore, the emotional costs of remarriage were greater for widows than for widowers, especially among landowning peasants. Since widows were more apt to retire and surrender the management of a farm to one of the adult children than widowers were, their prospective remarriage was in conflict with the expectations of grown children. Hence, while waiting for a retirement solution, peasant widows on freehold land might reasonably continue to manage a farm on their own with the help of servants and grown children.

Similar gender-related arguments apply in the case of widowed people entering another household, headed either by one of their children or by somebody else. Compared to widowers, widows were more likely to enter the household of one of their children and, particularly, a household not established by one of their children. Relinquishing an independent household to enter someone else's might have been more awkward for widowers than for widows, since men were not accustomed to being incidental household members without authority. Moreover, the ability to perform traditional gender-related work in a new household probably decreased faster for men with age. Widows could most likely continue to perform such household tasks as cooking, child care, etc., at older ages than widowers could expect to perform farm work effectively. From this perspective, widowers not only had greater opportunities to remarry and remain heads of a household, due to demographic and sociocultural factors; they also had more to lose if they did not—even more if abstaining from remarriage meant a higher risk of becoming a less influential person in another household.

This study clearly demonstrates that both demographic and socioeconomic factors were important determinants in widowed

people's course of action. It is not easy, however, to establish a distinct connection between the different strategies chosen and the well-being of those involved. To a large extent, the standard of living of the widowed depended on the same factors that influenced their choice of strategy. People with land and adult children were generally in a better position than those without land and/or children to negotiate a reasonable arrangement in widowhood. Remarriage was also largely conditioned upon the widows or widowers being able-bodied workers; it was distinctly less of an option for older and weaker individuals. Hence, the very choice of entering a child's household, remarrying, or continuing as an independent household head—as opposed to entering a stranger's household or leaving a parish altogether—may well be an indicator of a higher level of well-being.