

Sessione 29: Social stratification and union dissolution in a comparative perspective

In the last decades, Western societies have been involved in huge demographical changes, and especially the incidence of divorce and the share of children living in non-intact families have increased. This has provided stimuli to understand whether, and how, union dissolution is shaped by social stratification – family socioeconomic background, educational and occupational attainment – and to what extent this new state of affairs may contribute to the reproduction of social inequality. According to the “Diverging Destinies” thesis, the demographic changes associated to the Second Demographic Transition contribute to an increase in social inequality as divorce is more widespread among the lowest strata of the social hierarchy and has overall negative effects on children’s life chances, which are concentrated among less-educated and poorer families. However, empirical evidence linking divorce and social inequality is mixed, and more comparative research is needed as results often vary based on the country under investigation.

To shed additional light on these issues, the session welcomes empirical contributions on the relationships between social origins, education, employment and union dissolution. Given the role that both “structural” and “ideational” factors play in the diffusion of divorce – especially in the Italian case – contributions aiming at disentangling the role played by values vis-à-vis socioeconomic factors for the diffusion and consequences of union dissolutions are particularly welcomed. Selected papers will address the following topics, among others: how values, social origins, educational and occupational attainment are associated to the experience of union dissolution and divorce; how such associations vary across time and space; consequences of parental separation and different types of post-divorce arrangements (e.g. joint custody) for children’s socioeconomic outcomes; pre- and post-divorce parental conflict and involvement.

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