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Employment Instability and Union Dissolution: which instability matters, for whom, and where?

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Abstract

The present dissertation adds to the growing literature investigating the link between economic uncertainty and family dynamics by addressing the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution. Previous research has maintained that employment instability may either reduce the risk of union dissolution by increasing its relative costs or heighten the risk by exacerbating stress and conflict within the relationship. The present study delves more deeply into the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution. It overcomes several limitations of prior research considering different forms of employment instability through the lens of gender and its embeddedness into the economic and cultural context. The analysis focuses on Italy, a country where union dissolution is rapidly growing, although it is still at a lower level compared to European rates, and gender equality is largely "incomplete". By drawing from the best and most recent retrospective nationally-representative data provided by the National Institute of Statistics, the 2016 Multipurpose Household Survey "Families, social subjects and life cycle", the thesis applies event-history techniques observing the life course of different cohorts from 1950 to 1986. The findings emphasize the importance of fully considering different dimensions of employment instability. It is essential to distinguish among joblessness, time-limited, and permanent employment contracts, to consider the accumulation of instability throughout employment careers, and to take account of the moderating role of macro-economic conditions. The results also highlight the centrality of gender in disentangling this relationship at both the micro and macro level. Indeed, the effect of employment instability on union dissolution is gender-specific: joblessness and limited-time employment are facilitators of men's union dissolution, while for women, joblessness is an inhibitor for dissolution, and time-limited and permanent employment do not substantially differ. Nevertheless, the gendered relationship between employment instability and union dissolution changes according to contextual factors: in regions with higher gender equality, employment instability – including both joblessness and time-limited employment – is associated with a higher risk of union dissolution for both women and men.

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Introduction

After the golden age of marriage, most Western societies have experienced a drastic change in partnership patterns, and more generally in family demography. Changing trends in union formation and dissolution have been characterized by the postponement and decline of marriage and childbearing, a cohabitation boom, rising divorce rates, and high rates of separation between cohabitants (Perelli-Harris & Lyons-Amos, 2016; Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008). Family structures have generally become much more complex and diversified, with individuals experiencing multiple and de-standardized relationships, living alone, with their children, or with their new partners, thus constituting the so-called 'incomplete nuclear families', 'mono-parent families', or 'reconstituted families' (Ferro & Salvini, 2007; Perelli-Harris & Lyons-Amos, 2016). In this scenario, union dissolution is a key phenomenon since it engenders these new family forms. Union dissolution has significant social consequences, giving rise to new behaviors, such as the return to the parental home of separated men and women, or late life remarriage. It alters the dynamics of fertility, both by reducing reproductive projects due to the widespread feeling of instability of families, and on the contrary, by increasing fertility in the case of multiple unions, stimulating multi-partners fertility (Thomson, 2014; Thomson et al., 2012). Such changes are remarkable because they influence housing and living arrangements and contribute to generating new patterns of social stratification (Amato, 2000; Andreß et al., 2006; Leopold, 2018; Mikolai & Kulu, 2018; Mulder, 2013).

Changes in partnership patterns have been observed in all Western societies, with country-specific timings and extents (Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008). They have been generally explained by a combination of normative, cultural, and economic transformations interacting and influencing each other. Sociological and demographic theories identify the shift in cultural values and the hegemony of individualism, the growing participation of women in education and labor

market – with the consequent new organization of home economics – and, more recently, the incomplete revolution of gender roles as the main drivers of those radical changes in families (Becker, 1991; Giddens, 1992; Goldscheider et al., 2015; Hochschild, 1989; Lesthaeghe, 1991; McDonald, 2000; Preston, 1986; Van de Kaa, 1987). Additionally, recent studies have highlighted the role played by the growing economic uncertainty characterizing current societies in shaping family behaviors (Kreyenfeld et al., 2012; Sobotka et al., 2011; Vignoli, Bazzani, et al., 2020; Vignoli, Guetto, et al., 2020b).

Since the 1980s, capitalism and increasing globalization, with the strong deregulation, privatization, and delocalization of economies, have fundamentally reshaped the labor markets of globalized societies, generating an unprecedented level of structural and individual economic uncertainty (Vignoli et al., 2016, 2019). Economic uncertainty corresponds to a lack of clarity concerning economic prospects. In economic terms, this is understood as a situation in which agents cannot anticipate the outcome of a decision and cannot assign probabilities to the outcome (Beckert, 1996; Knight, 1921). The perception of uncertainty is thus related to growing levels of the unpredictability of the future (Colombo & Rebughini, 2019) that has become an inherent characteristic of contemporary Western societies (Bauman, 2007; Blossfeld & Müller, 2002; Mills et al., 2006; Mills & Blossfeld, 2013). The spread of new forms of flexible and time-limited work contracts, characterized by lower wages, lower bargaining power, and lower levels of social protection, have transformed labor-market entry and exit conditions, and have provoked an increasing precariousness of working paths (Barbieri & Scherer, 2009; Scherer, 2009). Furthermore, in the past two decades, the global economy has experienced a series of shocks – culminating in the Great Recession, the most dramatic financial crisis in recent memory – which has caused a drastic rise in unemployment, the spread of precarious work, and the volatility of household incomes (Bloom, 2014; Storesletten et al., 2004). Economic uncertainty has been repeatedly shown to affect family dynamics (Kreyenfeld et al., 2012). In particular, it has been proved to be part of the

explanation of marriage and fertility postponement and decline (Busetta et al., 2019; Pailhé & Solaz, 2012; Vignoli et al., 2016, 2019; Vignoli, Guetto, et al., 2020a). However, the relationship between economic uncertainty and union dissolution is far from been clearly understood. This dissertation adds to the growing literature on the nexus between economic uncertainty and family life courses, by addressing the relationship between employment instability – considered a major proxy for economic uncertainty (Kreyenfeld et al., 2012) – and union dissolution. Disentangling this relationship is especially crucial for understanding whether men and women experiencing employment instability are also those more likely to end up living in singlehood or in mono-parental families, and to bear alone housing and living expenses, thus having a double disadvantage.

Extant research on the relationship between economic conditions and union dissolution indicates a theoretical ambivalence concerning the direction of the effects at play. On the one hand, the 'relational stress hypothesis' (Conger et al., 1990; Liker & Elder, 1983) suggests that unfavorable economic conditions increase psychological distress and exacerbates marital discord, thus increasing the risk of separation. Conversely, the 'cost of divorce perspective' (Cherlin, 1979) argues that poor economic conditions may reduce divorce by raising its relative costs, i.e., those of legal settlements, household relocation, or by increasing the expenditure on consumer durables (Amato & Beattie, 2010; Cohen, 2014; Fischer & Liefbroer, 2006). Thus, the relationship between economic uncertainty and divorce is a complex one. It requires the ability to cope with the potential growing psychological distress and life dissatisfaction due to the own employment situation, existing job opportunities, and an uncertain future, but also to deal with structural economic constraints. Whether economic uncertainty leads to an increase or reduction in the risk of dissolving the current union may depend on the individuals' actual economic and employment situation but also on several individual and societal factors influencing individuals perceived/subjective economic uncertainty (Comolli, 2017; Bolano & Vignoli,

2021). These may include individual characteristics, such as personality and values, gender, cohort, education, socio-economic status, and career paths, which make individuals more or less likely to be employed in the future, but also the economic, cultural, and institutional context. With scarce economic conditions and employment opportunities, even those with relatively higher chances of success in the labor market may feel uncertainty. Likewise, in contexts with high structural gender inequality, the experience and perception of uncertainty may vastly differ for men and women.

This research thesis attempts to overcome limitations in existing research and provide novel evidence on the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution by adopting a more extensive definition of employment instability and an explicit gender perspective. Employment instability is identified through this thesis at the micro level with an individual's objective unfavorable employment spells, i.e. joblessness and time-limited employment – also accounting for the accumulation of unstable employment spells over the life-course –; at the macro level, with regional-level unemployment and time-limited work rates. In contemporary Western societies, being jobless is a major cause of economic and social disadvantage because work is a source of economic security, social inclusion, and well-being for individuals (Biegert, 2019). Likewise, time-limited jobs have been shown to have negative economic and social consequences for individuals (Scherer, 2009). However, to the best of my knowledge, no study has yet analyzed the relation between time-limited work contracts and the risk of union dissolution. Both joblessness and time-limited work may generate high levels of uncertainty since they correspond to a lack of clarity on economic prospects, as well as economic and psychological strain due to either a total lack of income from work or temporary (and often scarce) salaries. Nonetheless, disadvantages related to unstable employment, and the perceived economic uncertainty, may increase with the accumulation of joblessness or unstable employment spells (Kaplan & Herbst-Debby, 2018). Finally, at the macro-level, employment shortage and the spread of time-limited

work may translate into feelings of economic uncertainty for individuals because they generate economic penalties and uncertain futures (Vignoli et al., 2016).

The individual, interactional, and institutional dimensions of our society are shaped by gender (Risman, 2004), which not only influences definitions and perceptions of what is normal, but also opportunities and constraints of what is feasible. Thus, the gender dimension is considered throughout the thesis by observing differences and similarities between women and men in the link between employment instability and union dissolution, and by seeing whether these micro differences are the same in contexts with different gender cultures and structures.

This thesis is innovative also in that it adopts an extensive definition of union dissolution, including the end of all romantic cohabiting unions, whether formalized in a marriage or not, and it scrutinizes differences and similarities between the two types of union. Despite the vast differences between marriage and non-marital cohabitation in terms of stability (Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006; Perelli-Harris & Gassen, 2012), indeed, married and cohabiting couples have fundamentally similar features. Both types of union share households, usually resulting in economies of scale, and present themselves socially as a couple (Smock, 2000). It follows that many of the implications of couples' breakups are virtually the same because they are likely to be important in terms of economic well-being, emotional health, subsequent family formation, and responsibilities for children (Manning 2020). Yet, people choosing cohabitations instead of marriage might differ in ways that matter for risk of union dissolution: for example it has been shown that younger couples with unstable jobs generally tend to cohabit rather than marry (Manning, 2020; Vignoli et al., 2016) and that, in relatively traditional contexts such as Italy, cohabiting couples tend to be highly-educated and to practice more symmetric gender models (Asare, 2019; Piccone Stella & Salmieri, 2016). Because of this potential self-selection, in this thesis cohabitation and marriage are both included and distinguished.

Italy is an interesting setting in which to study the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution. The incidence of union dissolution is still limited in Italy compared to European rates, and marriage is still a relatively dominant institution (Rosina & Fraboni, 2004; Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008). Nonetheless, in recent decades, trend data have evidenced a strong increase in total divorce and separation rates, and a fast spread of cohabiting unions. These developments have been mirrored by one of the most rapid increases of temporary contractual arrangements in Europe, rising unemployment, and a slow and "incomplete" convergence of gender roles (Esping-Anderson, 2009; Istat, 2018, 2021b; OECD, 2018). Moreover, Italy exhibits marked regional differences, in terms of family and demographic trends, economic conditions, and gender equality, which enable comparisons and make it possible to capture the role of contextual characteristics in shaping the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution. Nonetheless, research on employment and divorce in Italy is scant, and the most recent studies available use data from more than a decade ago. This is one of the first studies on union dissolution for Italy that encompasses the time of the Great Recession.

The analysis is organized into three empirical chapters dealing with the following research questions:

1. Individual employment instability (micro-level relationship)

> 1)   *Is there a relationship between individual employment instability and union dissolution?*
>
> > 1.1)   *Does it vary according to the accumulation of employment instability?*
> >
> > 1.2)   *Does it differ by gender, cohort, and type of union?*

2. Macro-level employment instability (macro-micro relationship)

> 2)   *Is there a relationship between macro-level employment shortage and instability and the individual risk of union dissolution?*

> 2.1) *Does it vary by gender, individual employment status, and type of union?*
>
> 2.2) *Has it changed over time?*

3. Gender context and employment instability (macro-micro relationship)

> 3) *How does the gendered relationship between employment instability and union dissolution vary in different gender contexts?*

The empirical analysis applies event-history techniques making use of data from the 2016 Italian Multipurpose Survey "Families, social subjects and life cycle", conducted by the Italian National Institute of Statistics (Istat), merged with different regional-level (NUTS-2) indicators on the economic and gender context, also provided by ISTAT. These nationally representative data are unique in providing high-quality retrospective information on the occurrence of dissolutions over the past four decades.

The thesis is structured as follows. The first chapter conducts a detailed review of the theoretical debate on the rise of divorce in Western societies, paying particular attention to the role of employment instability and gender, at both the micro and macro levels. The second chapter describes the Italian context. It considers the main features of union dissolution, and its legislative and historical framework and trends, labor-market regulations and characteristics, gender culture, and welfare provisions. Chapter 3 illustrates in detail the analytical strategy and the data. Chapters 4-5-6 set out the empirical analysis, dealing respectively with the micro-level relationship between employment instability and union dissolution (Chapter 4), the relationship between macro-level employment shortage and instability and the individual risk of dissolution (Chapter 5), and the role of prevalent gendered behaviors and reconciliation policies in explaining gender differences in the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution (Chapter 6). Finally, Chapter 7 discusses the main findings and draws the conclusions.

CHAPTER 1

The rise of union dissolution in Western societies

1. Main theories on marital instability over the past century

Marital conflict is certainly not a recent phenomenon. However, in the past, tensions usually remained within the domestic walls since they were not upheld by social and legal norms (Ferro & Salvini, 2007). Nevertheless, since the 1960s, an unprecedented rapid and sharp increase in divorce rates has been observed in all Western societies, with country-specific timing and diffusion patterns (Lesthaeghe 1998; Reher 1998; Surkyn and Lesthaeghe 2004). Today, divorce rates are two to five times higher than in the 1960s, and in a number of countries around one half of all marriages end in divorce (Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008). This remarkable growth of marital instability over the past century has attracted the attention of many researchers, and it has been explained by a combination of legal, cultural, and economic transformations that interact with and influence each other.

1.1 Legislative development

Most European countries had laws regulating divorce in the first half of the twentieth century or earlier. The exceptions were Italy, Portugal, Spain and

Ireland, where divorce was introduced respectively in 1970, 1975, 1981, and 1996 (González and Viitanen 2009).

During the 1950s and 1960s, many countries allowed divorce only on the basis of the 'fault' of one of the spouses, typically adultery or physical violence. These laws were generally characterized by a marked discrimination against women: for instance, in many countries, adultery was considered a reason for divorce only if committed by women, or required stronger proof, or had to be committed in the conjugal dwelling, for men (Giddens, 1992; Todesco, 2008). In the 1970s, many countries introduced so-called 'divorce by mutual consent' based solely on the spouses' free will to sever the marital bond. Several countries went further and introduced the 'unilateral divorce', which allowed divorce on request by only one of the spouses, thus discarding the pre-requisite of mutual agreement (González & Viitanen, 2009; Todesco, 2008). There thus occurred a gradual shift in all Western societies from a concept of divorce as a punishment for a guilty spouse, to divorce as a remedy for an unhappy marriage.

Changes in the normative settings of divorce gradually led to more tolerant norms and simpler procedures. They not only made divorce possible, but also contributed to its increase over time (de Rose & Di Cesare, 2007; Fallesen, 2021; Ferro & Salvini, 2007; Friedberg, 1998; González & Viitanen, 2009; Istat, 2016b; Vignoli & Ferro, 2009). However, normative changes capture and mark attitudes and behaviors of the population, and are likely to emerge only when new values have already spread in the society (Fella et al., 2004; Goode, 1993). Indeed, the past half century has been characterized by considerable changes in values and norms concerning family life, intimate relationships, and gender roles.

1.2 Cultural shift and changes in intimate relationships

In industrialized economies, the rise of modernization, urbanization, and globalization increased the standard of living, and along with the process of

secularization, led to a shift in values towards more individualism and an increased interest in self-fulfillment. As populations became wealthier and more educated, individual needs gradually shifted away from survival, security, solidarity, and religion, and moved to individual self-realization, recognition, and educational values (Lesthaeghe, 1991; Maslow, 1954).

The theories of the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) (Lesthaeghe, 1991, 1998, 2014; Lesthaeghe & Van de Kaa, 1986; Van de Kaa, 1987, 2002) and the Ideational shift (Preston, 1986), find a close connection between the expansion of education and the shift in the values system towards more individualism, and the radical change in post-modern families. They depict a scenario of Western societies in which the well-being of individuals, in terms of career desires and personal self-realization, has assumed a central role in their partnering and reproductive choices.

Before the hegemony of individualism, the prevalent notion of marriage envisaged that individuals changed their own prerogatives and personal interests for the good of the family. Individualism, by placing the individual and his or her freedom at the top of the scale of values, has led to the affirmation of values of autonomy, independence, and personal fulfilment, to the detriment of group and family solidarity. Individuals no longer take externally supplied norms and morality for granted and stress their own freedom of choice (Lesthaeghe 2014). Forms and aims of sentimental relationships are no longer defined by the socially accepted conventions and customs, but rather by the choices and desires of individuals who decide to form a couple (Giddens 1992; Todesco 2008). Therefore, the concept of marriage has changed, and it is considered rationally and in relation to the individual benefits it can offer. Within this mindset, being trapped in an unhappy marriage is an unacceptable restriction on individual freedom.

Moreover, the expansion of education has seen women reach the same or higher level of education as that of men, and the assignment of traditional roles based on sex has come increasingly to be seen as unjust and unfair. There has

gradually occurred a massive shift in the value attached to the role of housewife and mother, which has passed from being the center of women's fulfilment to an impediment to individual accomplishment (Lesthaeghe 2014; Preston 1986). Educational expansion has also led to a major ethical shift away from strong stigmatization of certain behaviors to more tolerance and autonomy known as the "ethical revolution", involving a de-stigmatization of divorce, abortion, homosexuality, euthanasia and suicide (Lesthaeghe, 2020). According to both the SDT and ideational shift theory, this cultural shift promoting the spread of new family trends and relationship patterns occurs in a dynamic process of cohort succession as an increase in the acceptance of new subjective values across generations (Lesthaeghe 2014; Preston 1986).

Furthermore, several sociologists (e.g. Bauman 2003; Giddens 1992; Hochschild 2003) have highlighted the crucial role played by the rise of capitalism and market economies in shaping intimate relationships. They claim that in free market societies, even romantic intimacy has become a behavior subject to the rules of rationalized market exchange (Hochschild, 2003). Within the 'new' consumer culture which favors ready-to-use products, rapid solutions, and instantaneous satisfaction without the investment of a large amount of feelings and efforts, the experience of love is equated to other market products, and relationships are increasingly seen as temporary experiences in the life course which will be replaced when they no longer function (Bauman, 2003).

Overall, during the past century there has been an undeniable shift in the culture and value attached to intimate relationships and the marital bond, which may of course be part of the explanation of the rise in the divorce rate.

1.3 Changes in gender roles: economic explanation

Changes in the value system have been mirrored by a radical change in the organization of family life and gender relations. A combination of cultural and

economic transformations – namely the rise of education and feminist and liberal social movements, the expansion of the service industry, the declining earnings and job security of young men, and the growing material needs of individuals and families – has increasingly encouraged women to participate in the labor market. During its early growth, women's employment was closely associated with increased union dissolution (Becker, 1973, 1991; Becker et al., 1977; Cherlin, 1979). The theoretical assumptions linking women's employment to marital disruption originate from the notion of unequal gender roles in the family as a prevailing social norm, and they depict the rise in divorce as a product of the changing sexual division of labor.

Writing almost one century before the divorce boom, Durkheim (1893) identified the sexual division of labor as the main source of interdependence between men and women in that it produced what he termed "organic solidarity". He predicted that family unity would be threatened by female autonomy, since similar roles of men and women would shrink organic solidarity and reduce the conjugal bond to ephemeral sexual relations (Bynder, 1969; Lamanna, 2002). Nearly one century later, this argument was resumed by Gary Becker and the New Home Economics (1973, 1991; Becker et al., 1977). According to Becker, the main gain of marriage derives from the mutual dependence of the spouses, with one focusing on income provision, and the other on home production. It therefore depends in part on the extent to which investments in skills are oriented to the division of labor within marriage. Owing to culturally-rooted gender norms, the female partner usually specializes in the housework and the male partner usually specializes in breadwinning. This specialization in the gendered division of labor within nuclear families increases the benefits of marriage, and therefore enhances stability. It follows that, as women increasingly pursue careers, men's and women's 'complementary' skills begin to converge, reducing the gain of marriage and therefore increasing the probability of divorce (Becker 1973; Becker et al. 1977). The same agent of change has been reinterpreted by subsequent theories, which identify the rise in economic opportunities for women

as a necessary condition for the increase in separations (Cherlin, 1979, 1992; Degler, 1980). Within this framework, the *economic independence hypothesis* claims that women in the past, who lacked economic independence, were often trapped in unhappy marriages (Sayer & Bianchi, 2000). Hence, the rise of employment opportunities for women, and their consequent financial autonomy, eventually made it possible for them to dissolve such marriages. From this perspective, women's employment not merely represents a force driving divorce rates up, but includes the possibility that women dissatisfied with their marriages take up a job, or intensify their efforts in the labor market, in anticipation of a divorce (Vignoli et al., 2018).

1.4 The division of domestic labor and the gender revolution

Besides changing the economic role of women within the family, wives' employment is likely to generate tensions between spouses over the household division of labor (e.g. Cooke, 2006; Hochschild, 1989). Despite a substantial increase in women's participation in the labor market, in most countries men's share of housework has remained exiguous and substantially unchanged. This phenomenon has been generally attributed to a couple's 'doing gender' in their marital relationship (West & Zimmerman, 1987). By doing gender, people actively manage behaviors and social interaction in accordance with normative expectations attributable to gender roles (Cooke, 2006; West & Zimmerman, 1987). Many women therefore carry the double burden of paid and unpaid work, with the consequent lack of leisure and relationship time, stress, and feelings of injustice and resentment towards their husbands (Hochschild, 1989). In an early study, Arlie Hochschild (1989) identified the strain between the change in the role of women and the absence of change in men as a fundamental gradient of marital disruption, and called it a "stalled revolution". Several more recent studies (e.g. Bellani et al., 2018; Breen & Cooke, 2005; Mencarini & Vignoli, 2018; Oláh & Gahler, 2014) have confirmed that perceived unfairness in the

division of household labor is associated with decreased marital happiness and an increased likelihood of divorce.

Drawing on the idea of a stalled revolution, sociologists and demographers have developed new perspectives to explain the drastic change in families based on the changing equilibrium in gender relations: namely the Gender Equity Theory (McDonald, 2000, 2013), the Incomplete Revolution (Esping-Andersen, 2009), the Multiple Equilibria model (Esping-Andersen & Billari, 2015), and the Gender Revolution Theory (Goldscheider et al., 2015). With only minor differences, these perspectives depict the gender revolution as a two-stage process. The first phase is characterized by a drastic increase in women employment, with a consequent gain in women's financial autonomy. However, despite women's economic contributions, the gender division of housework within the family remains virtually unchanged; and social policies promoting gender equality at the societal level are still scant or non-existent. Thus, in this stage, union dissolution is not attributable to women's employment itself, but rather to the incoherence and unfairness due to women's assumption of economic responsibilities, the unequal division of unpaid work in the family, and a lack of public policies for reconciliation of work and family. These factors generate or intensify work/family tensions, and upset the equilibrium in the marital dyad. The second phase is characterized by a change in the gender system at the societal level, with the emergence of new policies promoting work/family balance, and men assuming more, or the same, domestic responsibility as women. Theories predict that this will lead to a new work/life balance and more gender-equal relationships, resulting in greater union stability. Nonetheless, most authors have referred to a *stalled*, *incomplete,* or *unfinished* revolution, because many countries have for long been stuck in the first stage, and societies have not been adapting to women's new role (Esping-Andersen, 2009; Gerson, 2010; Hochschild, 1989).

2. The debate on the role of economic uncertainty

By integrating classic explanations of family change, recent studies have highlighted the role played by economic uncertainty in shaping family behaviors. Economic uncertainty is an inherent characteristic of contemporary capitalist societies. It corresponds to a lack of clarity on economic prospects, and it is linked to difficulties in making plans or foreseeing the effects of future choices (Becker, 1973; Colombo & Rebughini, 2019). Indeed, economic events not only alter couples current demand but also their forecasts of future constraints and hence future demands (Adsera, 2005; Butz and Ward 1980).

Analyzing the relationship between economic uncertainty and family dynamics, research has differentiated between structural economic conditions and perceived economic uncertainty (Comolli, 2017), which have also been defined *objective* and *subjective* dimensions of economic uncertainty (Bolano & Vignoli, 2021). The first is related to the present objective economic situation, while, the latter, to the perceived uncertainty about the future (Bolano & Vignoli, 2021; Comolli, 2017; Dominitz & Manski, 1997). While the objective economic uncertainty may be easily identified with actual individual or contextual economic conditions, subjective economic uncertainty may vary in line with individuals' idiosyncratic preferences and psychological characteristics such as generalized trust, subjective well-being, risk aversion, or values (Bellani & Arpino, 2022; Kreyenfeld, 2010, 2015; Vignoli, Mencarini, and Alderotti, 2020). In addition, beside the objective and subjective perception of individuals' security over their actual employment and economic situation, recent advances in family demography posit that, when people face uncertainty, they tend to consider not only past experiences and present status, but also future expectations, which represent what people expect will happen based on the available information. According to the 'narrative framework' (Vignoli et al., 2020) "the shadows of the past and future find their synthesis in the narratives of

one's own future, which reflect contingent plans for reaching certain goals in life".

A consistent steam of research has shown that economic uncertainty, in its different configurations, dramatically influences patterns of union formation, and fertility intentions and behaviors (Bolano & Vignoli, 2021; Busetta et al., 2019; Comolli, 2017; Comolli & Vignoli, 2021; Kreyenfeld, 2010, 2015; Vignoli et al., 2016, 2019). However, its impact on union dissolution is still unclear.

The existing literature refers to objective economic conditions and posits two contrasting mechanisms to describe the expected relationship with union dissolution, i.e. the relational stress, and cost of divorce arguments (Amato & Beattie, 2010; Cherlin, 2009; Cohen, 2014; Fischer & Liefbroer, 2006). Indeed, unfavorable economic conditions may provoke stress and dissatisfaction with life, which may enhance relationship problems. The *relational stress hypothesis* claims that this leads to an increased risk of separation. By contrast, the *cost of divorce* perspective posits that unfavorable economic conditions, and the related economic hardship, may reduce divorce by raising its relative cost (i.e., legal settlement, moving to a new household, expenditure on consumer durables), or, perhaps, strengthening family bonds, although this last hypothesis has not found convincing empirical support. Thus, the relationship between economic uncertainty and divorce is a complex one. It requires the ability to cope with the potential growing psychological distress and life dissatisfaction due to the own employment situation, existing job opportunities, and uncertain future, but also to deal with structural economic constraints.

In the present section I review the extant literature linking economic uncertainty and union dissolution, specifically focusing on the role of employment instability, which is considered to be a major objective dimension of economic uncertainty (Kreyenfeld et al., 2012), and it is indeed closely related to insufficient earnings, economic insecurity, and uncertain futures (Wickrama et al., 2020).

2.1 Joblessness and union dissolution

In contemporary Western societies, being jobless is a major cause of economic and social disadvantage because work is a source of economic security, social inclusion, and well-being for individuals (Biegert, 2019). Indeed, social research maintain that the detrimental effects of job loss and unemployment are not limited to the unemployed worker but ripple out to affect those closest to him and her (Howe et al., 2004; McKee-Ryan & Maitoza, 2014). At the individual level, joblessness, unemployment, and job loss, have been repeatedly linked to union dissolution (Conger et al., 1990; Doiron & Mendolia, 2012; Di Nallo, et al., 2021; Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003; Liker & Elder, 1983; Ruggles, 1997; Solaz et al., 2020; Starkey, 1996). Previous research has generally reported a disruptive impact of unemployment on marriage and identified several potential mechanisms to explain this association.

First, joblessness may carry a large lifetime income penalty. Its associated drop in human-capital accumulation, significantly increases the risk of future unemployment, and leads to lower future wages and benefits (Adsera, 2005). The surging financial pressures and loss of income deriving from unemployment may reduce marital quality. A sudden and unexpected reduction in income may in fact generate tension in the couple, undermining the routines of family life (Conger et al. 1990; Kinnunen & Feldt, 2004; Liker and Elder 1983; Poortman 2005; Starkey 1996). It has been shown that marital relations grow more tense and conflictual as couples are forced to adapt to a much lower income (Liker and Elder 1983).

Moreover, unemployment has been directly associated with low subjective well-being, psychological distress, frustration, and depression (Marsh & Alvaro, 1990; Oesch & Lipps, 2013; Randall & Bodenmann, 2009; Whelan, 1994), which are likely to facilitate marital conflict. Psychological distress at the individual level is indeed liable to spill over and affect relationships (Howe et al., 2004; McKee-Ryan & Maitoza, 2014). Early studies on the United States found that unemployment had an indirect effect on marital quality through husbands'

behavior (Atkinson et al., 1986; Conger et al., 1990; Kinnunen & Feldt, 2004; Liker & Elder, 1983; Starkey, 1996). Husbands' employment instability negatively affected family interaction, increasing their irritability, explosiveness, and hostility, and decreasing their warmth and supportiveness toward their wives. In turn, men's hostility was associated with greater perceptions of marital instability by wives and with lower levels of satisfaction/happiness for women (Conger et al. 1990).

In addition, unemployment may be also linked to certain individual psychological traits and characteristics, e.g. personal inconstancy, mutability, or lack of reliability, or sense of responsibility, which may influence marital stability (Atkinson et al., 1986; Charles & Stephens, 2004; Doiron & Mendolia, 2012). Therefore, job loss could be a signal of the partner's characteristics that affect his/her suitability as a mate. Doiron and Mendolia (2012), distinguishing among different types of job displacement (dismissal, redundancy and temporary job ending) among men in the UK, found support for this hypothesis. They showed that job losses dependent on the worker's characteristics (dismissals) have a stronger impact on marriages than redundancies, which instead depend on the employer's characteristics.

Although most research agrees on the disruptive impact of unemployment on marital stability, the literature suggests that when marital ties are strong, unemployment does not cause marital problems; on the contrary, it could strengthen family bonds and actually improve the marriage (Thomas et al., 1980). Empirical evidence is limited, however.

2.2 A gender lens

The impact of unemployment on separation has been generally described and tested on men's unemployment. Nevertheless, from the few studies containing information on women it appears that women's unemployment does not provoke

strain on families (Liker and Elder 1983; Jensen & Smith, 1990), with the exception of a few studies in Scandinavian countries (Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003). However, such studies date back to some decades ago, when gender and family systems were different. Indeed, in male-breadwinner family systems, where men are the main providers of the family income, and women, if anything, occupy more alternative and 'compensatory' economic roles, the financial strain on families is greater when the husband is unemployed (Liker and Elder 1983; Starkey 1996). Moreover, women with a traditional view on family life, who opt for the homeworker role, and for whom not working is a 'choice', do not experience employment insecurity. However, as women's desires and aspirations are changing and the global economy more and more requires a dual-earner family, the economic roles of men and women are becoming increasingly equal. With a dual-earner model and a larger shared income, the couple should be able to maintain a higher standard of living and protect themselves against unemployment, reducing the economic hardship and relational stress generated by it, and increasing relationship stability (Blom et al., 2020; Cooke & Gash, 2010; Jalovaara, 2003; Ono, 1998; Oppenheimer, 1988, 1994).

Nonetheless, women's employment is generally associated with increased union dissolution. Conversely, non-working women, owing to their high skills' specialization in care and domestic work rather than the labor market, and lacking economic means of independence, are closely dependent on the male-breadwinner, and therefore less prone to divorce (Cherlin, 1992; Todesco, 2009). According to the *gender institution perspective*, the risk of divorce within a couple depends also on deviance from or compliance with the prevalent model; divorce is more likely when spouses' employment and earnings violate gendered norms of behavior. Hence, in still relatively traditional societies, the husband's unemployment and the wife's employment strain the marriage by violating the implicit terms of the marital contract (Killewald, 2016; Sayer et al., 2011). Therefore, the disruptive impact of both men's unemployment and women's employment on marriage are claimed to be tied to traditional gender norms and

should become weaker in more gender-equal societies. This perspective is in line with recent developments of socio-demographic theories linking marital disruption with the incomplete or stalled revolution of gender roles (Esping-Andersen and Billari 2015; Goldscheider, Bernhardt, and Lappegård 2015; Hochschild 1989; McDonald 2013). Indeed, studies on Scandinavian countries, where gender egalitarianism has a quasi-normative status, already since the beginning of the 2000s reported similar effects of his and her unemployment on separation risk. In Finland couples in which husbands, or wives, or both, are unemployed are more likely to divorce (Jalovaara 2003). Also in Norway, the effect is the same for men and women; but the magnitude of these effects is less robust than those found for other countries, giving support to the hypothesis that unemployment effects are less disruptive in more gender symmetric societies (Hansen 2005). Moreover, a recently published study (Di Nallo, et al., 2021) on the effect of unemployment on couples separating in Germany and the UK reported a similar effect of women and men unemployment in the two countries, concluding that, as the role of women on the labor market is changing, so are the consequences of female unemployment on the risk of union dissolution.

2.3 Time-limited employment

Virtually all previous research on the relation between employment uncertainty and divorce has used job loss or unemployment as an indicator of poor economic performance. However, employment uncertainty is also engendered by time-limited work contracts, which in recent decades have been spreading in all Western societies.

Included within the definition of time-limited jobs (also called 'flexible', 'precarious', or 'non-standard' employment) are fixed-term, job-on-call, job sharing, apprenticeship, training, project-based contracts, and so forth, all of which imply a multidimensional concept comprising discontinuity in time, job

insecurity, lack of social protection, and often low levels of wages and earnings (Benach et al., 2014; Benach & Muntaner, 2007; Mai, 2017; Pirani & Salvini, 2015). At the political level, time-limited contracts have been generally promoted as means to reduce unemployment, simplify the transition between education and work (Dell'Aringa & Lucifora, 2001; Garibaldi & Taddei, 2013), and help families (generally women) to reconcile work and family duties (Bertolini & Solera, 2016; Riva, 2016). In principle, such contracts can facilitate entry into the labor market, particularly where vocational education and training is not sufficiently developed, and they may encourage the selection of workers by employers and ensure a better match of job requirements to workers' needs and aspirations. However, it seems that in many European countries, time-limited contracts have failed to achieve these goals, since they mostly concern a disadvantaged fraction of the working population. Instead, they have provoked increasing segmentation, and the dualization of labor markets, where time-limited workers are generally young people, immigrants, and women, and have fewer chances of finding quality employment (Barbieri & Cutuli, 2010; Barbieri & Scherer, 2009; Biegert, 2019; Garibaldi & Taddei, 2013).

Indeed, time-limited contracts share some positive features with permanent employment; or at least they may be a way to avoid unemployment. But they also entail unfavorable conditions like unemployment (Barbieri & Scherer, 2009; Benach et al., 2014; Burgoon & Dekker, 2010; Pirani & Salvini, 2015). Several studies have in fact shown that time-limited contracts have negative consequences on individuals' private lives and health conditions because they cause a reduction of life satisfaction and subjective well-being, and an increase of psychological disorder, mental distress and depression (Benach et al., 2014; Benach & Muntaner, 2007; Gash et al., 2007; Kim et al., 2008; Pirani & Salvini, 2015; Scherer, 2009; Virtanen et al., 2005). Comprising the above-mentioned characteristics, time-limited work has been proved to affect families. In particular, it has been found to have a strong negative impact on marriage (Vignoli et al., 2016), fertility intentions (Busetta et al., 2019) and childbearing

(Vignoli et al., 2019), especially in southern European countries with low flexicurity and with scant support for work/family reconciliation (Barbieri et al., 2015). However, although there is evidence that time-limited work contracts contribute to increasing work/family conflict (Steiber, 2009), as well as conflict within the couple (Scherer, 2009), and decreasing relationship satisfaction (Blom et al. 2020), hardly any study has analyzed the relation between time-limited work contracts and union dissolution.

2.4 Accumulation of employment instability

Joblessness and time-limited work contracts may also have long-term negative consequences for employment prospects (Barbieri & Scherer, 2009; Busetta et al., 2019). From a life-course perspective, the exposure (especially in the early career) to long spells of joblessness or time-limited jobs can be significantly detrimental. Because work experiences follow upon one another and people are increasingly directed into given trajectories, patterns of path dependency may arise (Dannefer, 2003; Giesecke, 2003; Mynarska et al., 2015; Vignoli et al., 2019). Furthermore, it has been proved that higher levels of employment and income instability increase the risk of an accumulation of unstable work positions within the same household (Grotti & Scherer, 2014).

Prolonged exposure to unemployment or unstable job positions is said to operate as a chronic stressor (Glavin, 2015) and, in some circumstances, the effects of job insecurity are not immediately perceived. Stress proliferation may indeed occur in relatively long periods of time across the life course (Thoits, 2011). Nonetheless, disadvantages related to unstable employment may increase when it is continuous (Kaplan & Herbst-Debby, 2018). Few recent studies on the relationship between employment instability and fertility (e.g. Busetta et al., 2019; Ciganda, 2015; Özcan et al., 2010; Pailhé & Solaz, 2012) posit that perceptions of instability are likely to be influenced not only by our own present

situation, but also by information about previous experiences and future prospects. They thus incorporated information on the accumulation of employment instability, providing evidence that it represents a crucial marker of economic uncertainty. However, this issue is still understudied in the context of divorce research. A recently published study by Anderson et al. (2021), measures the dependence of union dissolution risk on unemployment duration in the UK. They uncover striking gender differences in the dependence of union dissolution risk on duration unemployed. For men, unemployment increases the risk of union dissolution, but this is only evident among those in the first three months of an unemployment spell, and for those whose unemployment has lasted beyond five years, with a 'J-shaped' pattern. For women, they found the opposite pattern: the very early stages of unemployment are not characterized by any difference in risk compared with the employed; however, the risk of union dissolution rises with unemployment duration and decreased after about five years of unemployment (Anderson et al 2021).

2.5 Reverse causality, selection, and anticipation

Several authors have questioned the causal relationship between employment instability and union dissolution with different claims.

First, the relationship may suffer from reverse causality. As a matter of fact, a set of studies find support for an association between union dissolution and subsequent job loss (Attewell, 1999; Covizzi, 2008; Kalmijn, 2005; Lampard, 1994) even when accounting for relevant observable characteristics, such as health status and prior unemployment. Furthermore, other studies (e.g. Charles & Stephens, 2004; Doiron & Mendolia, 2012; Vignoli et al., 2018) suggest an important role for selection on unobserved individual characteristics. There is much to suggest that relatively stable differences and psychological traits predispose individuals to experience both union dissolution and job loss or

unemployment (Anderson et al 2021). For instance, research on men job loss and union dissolution highlighted individual characteristics such as personal inconstancy, mutability, lack of reliability or sense of responsibility (Charles & Stephens, 2004; Doiron & Mendolia, 2012), which may simultaneously influence men risk of job loss and union dissolution. Another study (Vignoli et al., 2018) identify factors that jointly affect women's employment and relationship choices. They may encompass attachment to family, career orientation, and gender role attitudes. Women with more traditional values may be at the same time less likely to experience union dissolution, and more likely to be jobless, because of their attachment to family values. On the other hand, women may be more likely to work and experience union dissolution because they have a strong career orientation and a low level of attachment to family values. Thus, individual differences in characteristics which confer higher or lower risks of experiencing both union dissolution and job loss may confound the apparently causal associations between the two events (Anderson et al., 2021; Winship, 2014).

A couple of studies (i.e. Anderson et al., 2021; and Vignoli et al., 2018) directly addressed these issues of reverse causality and selection by jointly modelling job loss (or employment) and union dissolution. Anderson et al. (2021), accounting for unobserved individual characteristics influencing both processes, find no support for a connection between being separated and subsequent job loss in the UK, in contrast with the literature claiming reverse causality. Moreover, they find that job loss and union dissolution per se have modest and non-significant prospective associations with one another after accounting for this cross-process correlation. Nevertheless, they find that it is the spell of unemployment rather than the job loss itself that increases the risk of union dissolution. Accounting for the correlated unobserved heterogeneity between the two processes, unemployment is significantly associated with subsequent union dissolution whereas job loss is not (Anderson et al., 2021). Vignoli et al. (2018) showed that the correlation between women employment and marital instability can be affected by selection mechanisms. They compare

four counties and find that the multi-process specification changed the findings for Germany and Poland but not for Hungary and Italy. In Germany the destabilizing impact of women's employment on marriage is partly driven by selection effects, e.g., by women who have a weak family orientation or a low-quality marriage, or who are strongly work-oriented. The same multi-process specification for Poland yielded that unobserved factors simultaneously affect the propensity to exit employment and the propensity to exit a marriage.

A further possible issue concerning the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution is the risk of performing a so-called 'anticipatory analysis' (Hoem & Kreyenfeld, 2006a, 2006b). Indeed, most studies relied on the observed order of events (e.g., joblessness and divorce). As such, they took for granted that the divorce decision and the actual divorce happen at the same time. Such a strategy may bias the effect of women's employment on divorce risk if married women increase their involvement in the labor market because of a decline in their satisfaction with their relationship and a fear of separation (Özcan and Breen 2012; Vignoli et al., 2018). Empirical studies have provided some evidence for such anticipatory adjustments, though these adjustments do not seem to be strong (Poortman 2005; Vignoli et at., 2018). Little evidence for an anticipatory adjustment has been found for Italy, however, this pattern does not fully explain the elevated levels of disruption risk for employed women, as these levels remained high even several years after entry into employment (Vignoli et at., 2018).

2.6 Employment instability as a macro-level dimension

Employment instability may also be conceptualized as a macro-level phenomenon reflecting the general uncertainty felt by people in times of high unemployment and precariousness, in particular during economic recessions (Bloom, 2014; Comolli, 2017; Comolli & Vignoli, 2021; Kreyenfeld et al., 2012;

Sobotka et al., 2011; White, 1990). Individuals' decisions depend not only on current conditions but also on the perception of present and future economic circumstances, and contextual macroeconomic conditions may inform such perceptions (Comolli, 2021; Kreyenfeld 2010; Kreyenfeld Andersson, & Pailhé 2012). Individuals' perception of the broader uncertain macro-economic climate may translate into micro-level feelings of uncertainty regarding negative economic prospects, and it may engender anxiety and depression (Schneider, 2015; Sobotka et al., 2011; Vignoli, Bazzani, et al., 2020; Vignoli, Guetto, et al., 2020b) which may increase the divorce risk (in line with the 'relational stress hypothesis'). On the other hand, however, unfavorable economic conditions may act as a structural constraint, and constitute a barrier to union dissolution, increasing the economic cost of dissolving the current union ('cost of divorce hypothesis') (Amato & Beattie, 2010).

The current literature focusing on the relationship between macro-level economic conditions and union dissolution provides evidence for both the *relational stress* and the *cost of divorce* perspectives (Amato & Beattie, 2010; Cherlin, 2009; Cohen, 2014; Fischer & Liefbroer, 2006). Moreover, building on those hypotheses, Cherlin (2009) proposed a hybrid perspective. He suggested that the high cost of divorce only leads to its postponement. Therefore, economic downturns or crises are likely to provoke initially a drop in divorce rates due to the high cost of divorce, followed by an increase when the economy improves. Nearly all the empirical studies on the relationship between macro-economic conditions and union dissolution refer to the United States, and they report mixed empirical findings. Most studies analyze the impact of macro-level economic conditions on divorce rates, and generally support the cost of divorce hypothesis (Amato & Beattie, 2010), or the postponement of divorce argument (Schaller, 2013). To the best of my knowledge, only González-Val and Marcén (2017) study the relationship between unemployment and divorce rates in Europe, with a macro-level panel of 29 European countries covering the period from 1991 to 2012. They find that the unemployment rate negatively affects the divorce rate.

The authors therefore point to a pro-cyclical evolution of the divorce rate, even after controlling for socio-economic variables and unobservable characteristics that can vary by country, and/or over time. Only a few studies adopt a micro-macro approach and thus analyze the relation between macro-level uncertainty and the individual risk of separation and, in contrast with the fully macro-level studies, they provide evidence, or partial evidence, for the relational stress hypothesis (Cohen, 2014; Fischer & Liefbroer, 2006). Fischer and Liefbroer (2006) and Cohen (2014), using different indicators, studied the impact of macro-level economic conditions on women's likelihood to divorce. Fisher and Liefbroer (2006) analyzed the effect of consumers' confidence in the Netherlands between 1972 and 1996, and found that when consumer confidence is higher, the risk of divorce is lower. Cohen (2014), instead, using state-level unemployment and foreclosure rates from 2008 to 2011, found non-significant effects for state-level unemployment, and a positive association between foreclosure rates and divorce, but this was no longer significant when state fixed effects were included. Solaz et al. (2020), analyzing the individual divorce risk in five European countries, found non-consistent effects, as the pattern varies across countries. They found a positive effect of unemployment rates on divorce for France and Italy, negative in Belgium, and non-significant in Germany and Finland.

Most studies on the economic context focus on the change in local employment opportunities. They therefore analyze unemployment rates. Nevertheless, it is crucial to also consider the quality of local employment opportunities within a given geographic locality, which is not reflected in the unemployment rate. As a matter of fact, employment instability is not solely based on whether individuals can access formal employment; it is also based on whether accessible employment is stable (Bausman & Goe, 2004; Cabrales & Hopenhayn, 1997). Areas with low unemployment rates may be characterized by a high share of time-limited job opportunities, which may influence the dissolution risk. Nevertheless, the association between the amount of time-limited jobs and union dissolution is understudied.

2.7 Employment context, individual position, and changes over time

It is crucial to take into account is that context and individual position interact with each other, and economic downturns may impact differently on individuals with different, employment status, and gender (Clark et al., 2010; Oesch & Lipps, 2013; Schneider & Hastings, 2015).

The economic context may influence how employment instability is perceived at the individual level. On the one hand, rising unemployment rates can be interpreted as a sign that there is a higher risk of job loss or of not being able to re-enter the labor market in the near future, thus increasing uncertainty about economic prospects among both the employed and the unemployed. On the other, the diffusion of unemployment might make joblessness more acceptable (Comolli, 2021; Solaz et al., 2020). Oesch and Lipps (2013), studying the impact of unemployment on subjective well-being, hypothesized that, with higher levels of unemployment, stigma and social disapproval for the unemployed would be lower, and that the unemployment experience would be less stressful. Nevertheless, their results revealed that higher levels of regional unemployment do not moderate the psychological cost of individual unemployment. On the contrary, Oesch and Lipps found evidence that the negative information that high unemployment rates provide unemployed workers in regard to their labor-market prospects, amplify their negative feelings (Oesch & Lipps, 2013).

Moreover, Amato & Beattie (2010) and Fischer & Liefbroer (2006) suggested that the association between economic conditions and union dissolution may have changed over time, because the cost of divorce has substantially changed across time periods. Fischer and Liefbroer (2006), found evidence for *the relational stress hypothesis* for the period 1972 and 1996. They explained this result by arguing that, because divorce had become a widespread phenomenon in the Netherlands, it was less costly both economically and socially and, therefore, the relational stress was predominant. By contrast, Amato and Beattie (2010)

found weak evidence for the relational stress hypothesis for the period before 1985, and strong evidence for the cost of divorce perspective in the period between 1985 to 2005. They suggested that in the latter period divorce became much more costly in the USA due to the rising costs of life, medical care, and standard of living, and therefore, in times of poor employment prospects the *cost of divorce hypothesis* became predominant.

3. Cultural and institutional context

Besides economic conditions, in order to understand the relation between employment instability and union dissolution, it is crucial also to consider its social, cultural and institutional environment. Indeed, the strength of the proposed relationship, or the importance of certain predictors, may vary according to the wider societal context (Kalmijn, 2007; Marsh & Alvaro, 1990; Wagner & Weiss, 2006). Sociology assumes that individuals are embedded in their social context, which helps them to act meaningfully despite the uncertainty of the situation (Beckert, 1996). The social context encompasses all forms of economic opportunities and constraints, social and cultural norms, policies, and power relations, inhibiting or facilitating the choices of individuals, and making their actions somehow predictable. Experience and individual attitudes towards both employment instability and union dissolution may vary considerably according to the societal context. For instance, women may or may not perceive employment instability depending on the institutionalization of women's participation in the labor market, norms on the division of domestic work, and the presence of policies to reconcile family and work (Cooke et al., 2013; Naldini & Saraceno, 2011). Likewise, employment instability is not necessarily stressful in contexts of flexible labor markets with an ample availability of jobs, or extensive social security cushions (Mai, 2017). Finally, the ease of the actual

uptake of divorce may differ according to moral and cultural norms attached to union dissolution in the society, and how much divorce costs monetarily and socially (Todesco, 2008). Several authors have already emphasized the importance of various cultural and institutional macro-factors – the level of modernization, secularization, gender norms, and the type of policies and welfare measures – which are useful to explain differences in separation trends among countries or regions, as well as differences over time and between men and women within countries (Kalmijn, 2007, 2010; Wagner & Weiss, 2006).

In this section are reviewed the main literature on the debate concerning the social, cultural, and institutional factors which may influence the relation between employment instability and union dissolution.

3.1 Gender culture

The gender culture comprises a set of beliefs, norms, and social expectations defining masculinity and femininity in a given society (Connell 2010; Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021). It defines standards and expectations about men's and women's social roles, which stem from commonly held beliefs in the community, within a range that defines a particular society, culture, and community at that point in time (EIGE, 2020). Generally, couples tend to 'do gender', that is, to reproduce their expected gender social role (West and Zimmerman 1987).

The gender culture is said to shape patterns of social recognition and social reinforcement which contributes in making romantic relationships successful (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021; Lamont 2014, 2020; West and Zimmerman 1987). When individuals and couples do not succeed in doing gender according to social expectations, this leads to social confusion, sanctions, and stigmatization (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021; West and Zimmerman 1987). Gender norms are constructed at a societal level, and thus conceptually distinct from individuals' gender attitudes, which vary across individuals (Greenstein 1995; Kalmijn, De

Graaf, & Poortman 2004). It follows that, in conservative gender cultures, even couples with more gender-egalitarian attitudes may suffer stress from violating gender norms (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021; West and Zimmerman 1987).

Indeed, gender theories agree that the role played by women's and men's labor-market performance in the prediction of divorce is closely dependent on the gender culture in a given society, and in which phase of the 'gender revolution' it is situated [section 1.4]. The gender culture shapes the symbolic value associated with the employment instability of individuals in romantic relationships. In turn, couples' employment instability, and the symbolic value associated with those, shape relationship success (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021;. Killewald, 2016). Gonalons-Pons and Gangl (2021), defined as gender *social stress mechanism*, the process through which social pressures reinforce gender culture and norms, inflicting stress on gender-non-conforming couples that can deteriorate romantic relationships and lead to separations. The authors propose *gender social stress* as a mechanism that moderates the relationship between women and men income and employment status with divorce or separation. In contexts where the gender culture mainly supports the male-breadwinner model, i.e. women are expected to be mainly responsible for care and housekeeping and men for providing income, couples conforming with their expected gender roles are more likely to have a successful relationship. By contrast, women's participation in the labor market, and men's poor economic performance, being in normative conflict with gender norms of behavior, can exacerbate discord in the couple and lead to a higher risk of separation (Killewald, 2016; Vignoli et al., 2018). Nevertheless, in contexts where the dual-earner model is the most widespread, and it is culturally expected that both women and men contribute to the household income, as well as to family and domestic responsibilities, both women and men employment instability are likely to generate stress in the couple (Di Nallo et al., 2012; Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003). However, with this cultural setting, being jobless does not reflect as badly on the husband social role, but it is an eventuality of life which can be equally

experienced by men or women. Thus, in these contexts, the stress generated from his employment instability, and the related risk of dissolution should be lower.

Thus, whether empirical studies find a positive or negative association between women's employment instability and union dissolution, and the magnitude of the negative impact of men poor economic performance and union dissolution, may depend on the extent to which the traditional division of labor is supported by the dominant gender culture in the country (Di Nallo et al., 2012; Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003; Oppenheimer, 1994; Solaz et al., 2020; Vignoli et al., 2018). Despite many authors (e.g. Cooke, 2006; Di Nallo et al., 2012; Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003; Killewald, 2016; Solaz et al., 2020; Vignoli et al., 2018) support the subsistence of the gender *social stress mechanism* (or *gender institution perspective* [section 2.2].), to the best of my knowledge, only a recent study (i.e. Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021) partly tested it empirically. Interestingly, in conformity with the *social stress mechanism*, Gonalons-Pons and Gangl (2021), found that men's unemployment is associated with higher risk of couple separation in countries where the male-breadwinner model is strongly embedded in social and cultural values, that is, where a substantial share of the population believes breadwinning is men's primary role.

3.2 Welfare provisions for work/family balance

Dynamics among women's increased labor-force participation, men's sharing of household work, and union dissolution, may depend on the social policy context. International comparative research has amply demonstrated that institutional factors influence the amount of time that men and women spend on paid work and housework (Cho, 2014; Geist, 2005; Mathieu, 2016; van der Lippe et al., 2011).

Inspired by the influential work conducted by Esping-Andersen (Esping-Andersen, 1990, 1999), the comparative literature on social policies of the 1990s'

and early 2000s' focused on identifying different welfare regimes using the concept of 'decommodification', which refers to the degree of independence of individuals from the market due to welfare state provisions. Nevertheless, welfare state regimes represent specific models of gender relationships, shared ideology, and opportunity structures (Geist 2005). Thus, feminist scholars have introduced the concept of defamilialization as a parallel to decommodification, arguing that dependence on the family or the breadwinner is as problematic as dependence on the labor market (Cho, 2014; Mathieu, 2016). Defamilialization, also called 'demotherization' (Mathieu, 2016), can be used to assess the extent to which welfare states facilitate women's (and especially mothers') autonomy to participate in the labor market, and their freedom from family dependency (Lister, 1997). Undertaking paid work requires a certain degree of relief from care responsibilities, which can be achieved through the externalization of care work either with state- or market-provided services, or indeed within the family by tasking men with care and domestic responsibilities.

The welfare state may encourage women to enter paid employment by providing services and policies that help them combine work and family responsibilities like, for instance, childcare, elderly care, paid leave, cash for care use, and so on. But they may also promote gender egalitarianism in the society and within the family by inducing couples to adopt more gender symmetric arrangements. Men are encouraged to play a greater role in caring by, for instance, the provision of paid paternity leave or father-specific parental leave (Cho, 2014; Ciccia & Verloo, 2012; Esping-Andersen & Billari, 2015; van der Lippe et al., 2011). Leave regulations not only give parents entitlement to spend time with their children; they also create norms about good motherhood and fatherhood, and as such contribute to transforming the social construction of 'normal' gender roles (Leira & Saraceno, 2002). Finally, the welfare state may create a framework that is generally more conducive to specific arrangements of paid and unpaid work, for instance, by implementing policies to remove barriers to women's employment, or by promoting an educational curriculum with an

emphasis on gender equality which may lead to high levels of progressive gender ideology (Geist, 2005).

Results reported by comparative studies indicate that greater policy support for equality reduces and may even reverse the relative divorce risk associated with a wife's employment (Blossfeld & Müller, 2002; Cooke et al., 2013; Lappegård et al., 2020; Morosow et al., 2020). However, such policies are likely to emerge only where the change in women's roles is already quite advanced and recognized within the family and in the society (Esping-Andersen and Billari, 2015). The issue of work/family reconciliation was introduced into public debate at the European level already in the early 1990s through directives, recommendations and guidelines – like the recommendations of the European Community on childcare services (1992), and parental leave (1996), and the European Employment Strategy (ESS) introduced by the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) – with the clear goals of equal opportunities for men and women in the labor market, and the full activity of all the working-age population. Conciliation policies, therefore, became an integral part of the European agenda, although there are still considerable differences among European countries in their effective development and take-up (Naldini & Saraceno, 2008, 2011).

3.3 Social protection from unemployment

Welfare provisions dealing with job security may as well influence the relation between employment instability and union dissolution since they may attenuate the severity of joblessness and time-limited work, and leverage feelings of uncertainty perceived by individuals. Factors like the presence and extent of unemployment benefits, active labor-market policies, and vocational training, may thus be of importance (Biegert, 2019; Mai, 2017).

Unemployment benefits buffer income reduction resulting from involuntary job loss, giving workers more time for job searches. Benefits may vary

considerably in terms of duration and amount paid, and are often targeted on certain categories of workers, usually excluding the most precarious types of contract. To make unemployment benefits more effective, economic transfers are frequently accompanied by additional measures like active labor-market policies and vocational training. Active labor-market policies comprise publicly funded programs such as job search assistance, public sector job creation, job placement services, and subsidized employment, designed to facilitate workers' entry or re-entry into the full-time labor force (Mai, 2017; Nativel, 2002). Vocational training, instead, enhances the skills and knowledge required for a particular job function, and thus helps prepare workers for decent jobs and keeps their skills updated in an age of rapid technological change (Kalleberg, 2012; Mai, 2017).

As part of the European Employment Strategy (ESS, 1997), the European Commission promoted the practice of combining flexibilization of employment contracts, unemployment benefits, and active labor-market policies in order to preserve Europe's competitive edge and social model in a globalized world (Boeri et al., 2012; Burroni & Keune, 2011). This model has been called 'flexicurity' defined as "a policy strategy that attempts, synchronically and in a deliberate way, to enhance the flexibility of labor markets, work organization and labor relations on the one hand, and to enhance security – employment and social security – notably for weaker groups in and outside the labor market, on the other hand" (Burroni & Keune, 2011; Wilthagen & Tros, 2004). Thus, flexicurity includes 'flexible contracts' and 'adequate unemployment benefits' coupled with a strong emphasis on active labor-market policies – that is, less rigid employment protection legislation combined with greater expenditure on unemployment benefits and active labor market policies per unemployed (Boeri et al., 2012; Cantillon, 2011). Generally, throughout Europe, unemployment benefit systems have seen modifications of the enforcement rules which increase the scope and entitlement of the schemes; but modest changes have occurred in statutory replacement rates and in the maximum duration of benefits. Some countries continue to protect jobs more than the unemployed, while others concentrate on

providing support to the unemployed rather than protecting jobs (Boeri et al., 2012). Some European countries, however, lag behind in implementing flexicurity strategies and have disproportionally increased employment flexibility with respect to unemployment schemes, giving rise to so-called 'flex-insecurity' (Sacchi, 2013).

The level of flexicurity in a country, and the presence, effectiveness, and coverage of unemployment benefits, active labor-market policies, and vocational training may alleviate the negative psychological and economic consequences of joblessness and time-limited work, and the related feelings of uncertainty, and thereby mitigate their impact on union dissolution.

3.4 Social stigmatization, educational expansion, and secularization

It is important to mention that other societal-specific cultural traits may indirectly shape the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution, influencing the way union dissolution is conceived. First, whether marital instability converts into actual divorce depends partly on how much divorce costs monetarily and socially. In section 1.2, it was pointed out that the change in expectations concerning marriage has led to the spread of separations and divorces. However, as several authors (e.g. Amato & Booth, 1991; Goode, 1993; Todesco, 2008) maintain, the increase in separations and divorces has, in turn, partly changed the expectations placed in marriage. As marital break-up becomes more common and widespread in society, it is increasingly considered to be an 'eventuality' of the life cycle without any stigmatization. Thus, individuals tend to adopt more liberal attitudes towards divorce when they experience it, know that they might experience it, or when someone in their social network experiences it. This mechanism has been confirmed in social psychology by the *theory of cognitive dissonance* (Festinger, 1957), which states that individuals tend to maintain a certain coherence between the value system and behaviors.

Dissonances between these spheres are experienced as disturbing, and tend to be reduced either by modifying behaviors or by introducing new elements into the value system which allow the behavior in question to be accepted. Therefore, as a behavior previously considered deviant becomes widespread in the society, its social acceptance increases (Amato & Booth, 1991; Todesco, 2008). When divorce rates are high, at least someone in each individual social network is likely to have experienced a divorce, so that members of that social network are more inclined to accept divorce, or at least, less likely to stigmatize those who divorce. Moreover, from an economic point of view, as social acceptability increases, the economic cost of divorce diminishes, contributing to the spread of the phenomenon. Therefore, when the divorce rate is high, both the social stigma and the economic costs attached to divorce are lower, and individuals wanting to divorce do not face high social and economic barriers. By contrast, in low-divorce contexts, the economic and social costs of divorce are higher and it may be harder for individuals to divorce (Goode, 1962).

Generally, new social behaviors and trends first emerge in specific social groups defined in sociology as 'trendsetters' or 'prior adopters'; only later, and in certain circumstances, they gradually spread to others (Rogers, 1962). According to the influential work by Goode (1962, 1993), prior adopters of divorce correspond to the most modern and highly educated couples, which have the cultural and economic means to afford a divorce. Only in a second phase, as the social acceptability of divorce increases, the relationship between social status and divorce become less significant or even the reverse (Harkonen & Dronkers, 2006; Salvini & Vignoli, 2011; Todesco, 2012). Therefore, at the macro level, the expansion of education may at first have contributed to the increase in divorce rates, as a larger number of highly-educated people were able to afford divorce. However, according to Goode's theory, with the growing frequency of divorce, this association may weaken, disappear, or even change direction. In many countries, it has already been observed a change in the educational gradient of divorce, which became more common among the lowest

educated fraction of the population (Harkonen & Dronkers, 2006). [The association between education and divorce is further explained in section 4.2.]

Finally, another major societal factor contributing to the spread of divorce is secularization, which is a process of disengagement of society from religion, which includes the separation of religion from political institutions, but also from the social sphere, so that religion is confined to the sphere of private life (Arendt, 1963; Shiner, 1967). Secularization leads to a gradual generational rejection of religion precepts, which come to be seen as limits to individual freedom (Lesthaeghe, 2014; Wuthnow, 1976), and to a gradual loss of religion's power of control over marriage (Tschannen, 1991). Progressively, the dissolution of a marriage is no longer assessed according to moral norms, but to rational and instrumental ones, which reduce the symbolic value of marriage and thus play an important role in the acceptance and spread of marital disruption. Religious precepts and dogmas, indeed, may directly deter individuals from dissolving their unions. However, at the societal level, they may also act indirectly by shaping social judgement and ideological factors (Lyngstad and Jalovaara 2010; Vignoli and Salvini 2014). Therefore, more secularized societies ease divorce uptake.

4. Correlates of divorce

Drawing on the above-outlined theories, this section presents some of the most common correlates of divorce and describes the main mechanisms through which they act.

4.1 Age, period, and cohort

Age, period, and cohort are fundamental dimensions in the explanation of divorce risk. Here 'age' refers to age at marriage, 'period' is related to calendar time, while 'cohort' denotes what is commonly termed 'generation'.

Age at marriage is associated with divorce risk: specifically, early age at marriage is consistently found to be a determinant of marital disruption (Amato, 2010; T. Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). This association has been explained by younger people's short search on the marriage market, which may result in a relatively poor match, the immaturity of the choice, and the greater number of alternatives experienced by young people. Moreover, research suggests that the association can be partly explained by individual characteristics of persons experiencing early marriage, such as parental divorce and low educational attainment (Amato, 2010; T. Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010).

Calendar time is also relevant for the prediction of divorce risk, because certain events related to specific historical periods have an impact on divorce rates and influence several generations at the same time. For instance, although it is known that modifications to legal provisions for divorce are usually simply a reflection of ongoing social and economic changes (Matysiak et al., 2014), the legalization of divorce, and the gradual simplification of divorce procedures – like the introduction of divorce by mutual consent, or unilateral divorce – partly accounts for the increase in divorce rates (De Rose & Di Cesare, 2003; Friedberg, 1998; González & Viitanen, 2009; Vignoli & Ferro, 2009).

Changes in trends from one cohort to another are instead related to shifts in cultural and educational values between generations. As stated by the SDT and ideational shift theory (Lesthaeghe 2014; Preston 1986), the shift in values promoting the diffusion of new family trends and relationship patterns occurs in a dynamic process of cohort succession. As a matter of fact, younger cohorts are consistently found to have a greater divorce risk (Bernardi & Martínez-Pastor, 2011; Ono, 1999; Vignoli & Ferro, 2009).

4.2 Education

A considerable amount of research has focused on the role of education in the explanation of divorce patterns; however, the findings on that role are controversial (Boertien & Härkönen, 2018; Perelli-Harris & Lyons-Amos, 2016; Salvini & Vignoli, 2011).

Within a 'Second Demographic Transition' framework, divorce should at first be particularly evident among better-educated people due to their greater orientation towards autonomy and a career, and more generally, post-modern values. Moreover, since highly-educated people usually reject traditional institutions and religion, marital dissolution should be an easier choice for them (Lesthaeghe, 1998; Lesthaeghe, 2010). Furthermore, from an economic point of view, education has been proved to be a powerful proxy for labor-market prospects and earnings. Hence, highly-educated couples should be more prepared to face the economic costs of divorce, e.g. legal expenses, the costs of moving into a new home and starting a new life. Moreover, considering the gender dimension, highly-educated women should have a higher level of economic independence and lower investment in family-oriented skills; factors which reduce their gain from marriage (Becker et al., 1977).

Several recent studies, however, have found evidence that higher education is beneficial to marriage and protects against divorce (Harkonen & Dronkers, 2006; Matysiak et al., 2014; Perelli-Harris et al., 2010; Perelli-Harris & Lyons-Amos, 2015, 2016). Education may in fact be an indicator of marital attraction (Boertien & Härkönen, 2018) and provide non-economic benefits that enhance the quality of the marriage (Becker, Landes, and Michael 1977). Studies adopting the mating perspective maintain that increased female education has raised the standards for what constitutes a 'minimally suitable match', thereby generating higher-quality marriages which are less likely to dissolve (Oppenheimer 1988). Furthermore, for both partners, high education may correspond to more advanced cognitive and communication skills, and problem-solving ability. Finally, higher-educated couples generally show a higher level of gender egalitarianism in the domestic

sphere, which according to recent developments of socio-demographic theories (Goldscheider et al., 2015), should lead to greater marital satisfaction and stability (Cooke, 2006; Oláh & Gahler, 2014).

Empirical studies have found evidence for both positive and negative relations between education and divorce in different countries and historical periods. As pointed out in the previous section [see section 3.1], it has been concluded that the educational gradient of divorce is closely dependent on wider societal factors (Goode, 1962, 1993; Harkonen & Dronkers, 2006; Matysiak et al., 2014; Perelli-Harris & Lyons-Amos, 2016).

4.3 Parental background

It has been observed that family background, including the parents' marital history and their education, is strongly associated with their offspring's separation and divorce risk.

In regard to the intergenerational transmission of divorce, Amato (1996) found that parental divorce affects three types of offspring outcomes: life course and socioeconomic variables like educational level or early marriage; the offspring's attitudes toward divorce; and the offspring's problematic interpersonal behavior, which may in turn increase their divorce risk (Amato, 1996). In particular, it has been shown that the offspring of divorced parents tend to have a conception of marriage as an ending experience, and evaluate divorce less negatively than persons who have grown up in families with continuously married parents. Observing their parents' divorce, children may have learnt first-hand that divorce can be a rational solution to a problematic marriage (Amato, 1996; Amato & Booth, 1991).

Regarding parental education, research generally agrees on the positive association between the mother's and father's level of schooling and their offspring's divorce risk. There seems to be a link between the parents' level of

education and their acceptance of divorce, with highly-educated parents being generally more inclined to accept their offspring's choice of divorce. This association is said to be related to the higher degree of post-modern and secularized values of highly-educated persons (Lyngstad, 2006). When parents are in favor, or at least not against, divorce, it is easier for their offspring to take this decision when trapped in a bad marriage. Moreover, parental education has been shown to be related to other family-related behaviors, including mate selection, cohabitation decisions, and early marriage, which in turn are related to a higher divorce risk (Engelhardt et al., 2002; Todesco, 2012).

However, just as the association between individual education and divorce has been observed to change over time depending on the social acceptability and diffusion of divorce, so the effects of parental education and the intergenerational transmission of divorce have been found to switch from positive to non-significant as divorce becomes socially institutionalized (Harkonen & Dronkers, 2006).

4.4 Pre-marital cohabitation

The influence of pre-marital cohabitation on the divorce risk is in part counter-intuitive. In theory, cohabitation before marriage should lead to a lower subsequent risk of divorce since the partners gain information about each other and the union first, and only unions with good prospects are converted into marriages (Lyngstad and Jalovaara 2010). It should follow that marriage without prior cohabitation increases the risk of a relatively poor match more likely to dissolve. However, empirical research finds the opposite effect: on average, couples who first chose to cohabit generally display a higher propensity to dissolve their marriage compared to those who marry without prior cohabitation (DeMaris & MacDonald, 1993; Teachman et al., 1991). The common explanation for this finding concerns unobserved characteristics of individuals

which select them into pre-marital cohabitation. Those individuals who choose to cohabit before marriage are usually more inclined towards secularized values which make them more likely to dissolve their marriage, while those who marry directly are likely to have a strong attachment to religious or conservative family values which may act as a barrier to divorce (Axinn & Thornton, 1992; Impicciatore & Billari, 2012; Lillard et al., 1995; Thornton et al., 1992).

4.5 Religion

Numerous studies at the micro-level have demonstrated the importance of religion for explanation of a variety of demographic behaviors (Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993; Thornton et al., 1992; Trovato, 1994). People who are church members are more likely to marry, to have a greater number of children, and to be less likely to divorce than their non-religious counterparts (Kalmijn, 2007; Thornton et al., 1992).

Religious precepts and dogmas may directly deter individuals from dissolving their unions; but they may also act indirectly, shaping social judgement and ideological factors (Lyngstad and Jalovaara 2010; Vignoli and Salvini 2014). Generally, research agrees that divorce risk is lower for persons who are strongly religious.

Recent research has found no strong or systematic differences among religious groups in contemporary times. However, religious homogamy seems to reduce divorce risk, even if one of the spouses is a convert to the partner's religion. Conversely, partners devoted to different religions have been shown to experience more conflicts, especially if the two denominations tend to embrace incompatible social values (Kalmijn et al., 2005; Lehrer & Chiswick, 1993).

Besides actual religious belief or practice, Western divorce research often measures non-religiosity in terms of what have been called 'secularized behaviors' – such as cohabitating without being married, or marrying with the

civil rather than the religious wedding ceremony – which have been repeatedly associated with a higher risk of dissolution (Impicciatore & Billari, 2012; Vignoli & Ferro, 2009).

4.6 Children

Research has usually found that having children reduces the risk of separation. Indeed, the presence of children indicates an investment in union-specific capital and increases the costs of divorce (Becker, Landes and Michael 1977; Wagner, 1997). It has been suggested that there may also be a selection effect, since spouses who have little trust in the continuity of their relationship should be less prone to have children (T. Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010).

However, children also raise new challenges for couples, and they may reduce relationship time and increase stress and conflict. Moreover, marriage or cohabitation could also be a 'solution' for unexpected pregnancies and therefore be built on unstable relationships which are likely to dissolve.

Nonetheless, empirical research generally confirms that having children increases relationship commitment, although the effect has been found to vary according to the number and the age of children, and to be country-specific. For instance, in the United States and Denmark, evidence has shown that having children decreases divorce risk, but when the number of children exceeds the usual low parity the risk of divorce increases (Svarer & Verner, 2008; Thornton, 1977), while in Italy and Spain, second or later births have been found to further reduce the risk of divorce (Bernardi & Martínez-Pastor, 2011; Coppola & Di Cesare, 2008; Vignoli & Ferro, 2009).This effect has been found to be stronger when the couple's children are very young, and it wanes as they grow older (Waite & Lillard, 1991). Finally, research distinguishes among children born within the union, out of wedlock, or from previous unions. These last have been found in many countries to actually increase the risk of union dissolution

(Diekmann & Engelhardt, 1999; Svarer & Verner, 2008; Waite & Lillard, 1991). However this is not the case for Italy, where children from a previous union do not inhibit marital disruption, but nor do they increase the risk as they do in other countries (Todesco, 2011).

5. Divorce and union dissolution

Most of the theories outlined in this chapter refer to separation and divorce defined as the dissolution of the marital contract. However, in Western societies, from the 1970s onwards, non-marital cohabitation began to spread, and gradually shifted from being a deviant phenomenon to a widespread and accepted behavior. Today it has become an increasingly popular living arrangement, conceived both as a pathway into marriage and as an alternative to it (Di Giulio et al., 2019; Manning, 2020; Perelli-Harris & Gassen, 2012). The increase of non-marital cohabitations has occurred in nearly every country in Europe. Nonetheless, the variation across countries remains remarkably wide, with a considerable propagation in northern and western Europe, and a later and smaller – but still significant – growth in southern and eastern European countries (Di Giulio et al., 2019; Perelli-Harris & Lyons-Amos, 2015; Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008).

Indeed, married and cohabiting couples have fundamentally similar features. Members of both types of union share a household, usually resulting in economies of scale, and present themselves socially as a couple (Smock, 2000). It follows that many of the implications of a couple's breakup are virtually the same, since it is likely to be important in terms of economic well-being, emotional health, subsequent family formation, and responsibilities for children (Manning 2020). For this reason, recent research on family dynamics

increasingly includes cohabiting couples, and studies union dissolution rather than just formal divorce. For many countries, this choice is necessary because younger people tend to cohabit rather than marry, and married couples are increasingly selected (Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006; Manning, 2020). This research thesis follows this stream of research, and considers dissolutions of both cohabitations and marriages. Therefore, some specific features of the two forms of union need to be taken into account.

5.1 Marriage, cohabitation, and union dissolution

Cohabitation is a complex phenomenon and may have different meanings for individuals. The extant research distinguishes among different configurations of cohabitation, i.e. an "alternative to being single", a "prelude to marriage," or "indistinguishable from marriage" (Heuveline & Timberlake, 2004; Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008). Such configurations may be relevant to determining the couple's risk of separation. However, the differences may be unclear even for the individuals involved in the relationship. Hence this information is usually unavailable for scientific research.

What is generally recognized by research is that, although cohabitation has become more common, marriage and cohabitation continue to have distinct meanings, with marriage representing a stronger level of commitment, and cohabitation a more flexible living arrangement requiring a lower level of engagement. As such, cohabiters have been shown to experience much higher rates of dissolution, even if the partners have children in common (Andersson & Philipov, 2002; Kelly Raley & Wildsmith, 2004; Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010). Nonetheless, research suggests that the association of non-marital cohabitations with an increased risk of union dissolution depends in part on the context and historical time, since cohabiters have been observed to experience a higher risk of union dissolution only in societies in which cohabitation is a small minority or

a large majority phenomenon (Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006). If very few people cohabit, they probably constitute a very selected part of the total population which rejects the institution of marriage and, as such, may be more inclined to separate. However, as cohabitation becomes more common, cohabiters are less selected, and dissolution rates become similar. On the other side, when cohabitation becomes the practice of the large majority of a population, the minority who still marry may likewise constitute a selective subpopulation, which may, for instance, be constituted by religious fundamentalists who reject separation (Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006).

5.2 Selection into marriage and cohabitation: legal and social aspects

Cohabitation and marriage differ in how they are conceived and recognized by the law. They confer different rights and duties, which may influence individual choices of whether to cohabit or marry (Manning, 2020; Perelli-Harris & Gassen, 2012; Todesco, 2008).

Until the late twentieth century, the state or the church regulated romantic relationships through official marriage, while unmarried couples were outside legal jurisdiction. In certain countries, non-marital cohabitation was even prohibited by the law, and it was considered a crime for a man and a woman to live together without being married. For instance, this was the case in Italy until 1968, in parts of Germany until 1970, and in Norway until 1972, although, clearly, most of the laws were no longer being enforced at that time (Perelli-Harris & Gassen, 2012). From then on, with different approaches, national governments began to establish new laws and policies to regulate the relationship between unmarried partners – such as expanding cohabitors' rights, or instituting registration systems to record civil unions – which are still evolving.

In most Western legislations, married partners are granted special rights in several life domains: for instance, the management of family income, health and

assistance, reproductive rights, adoption, taxes, insurance, residence acquisition, citizenship permit, inheritance, and pension. In some countries, such rights have gradually been extended to cohabiting couples, usually with the requirement to satisfy certain conditions, like being officially registered, or being in the cohabiting union for a minimum required time (Perelli-Harris & Gassen, 2012).

However, it should be pointed out that couples often cohabit without marrying specifically because they reject the legal institution of marriage and want to live together outside its jurisdiction. Nonetheless, one reason for rejecting that institution may be precisely to avoid the legal constraints of marriage in the eventuality of a divorce (Perelli-Harris et al., 2014, 2016). Although, ideally, people do not plan to end a relationship when they enter into it, in certain circumstances policies regulating dissolution and divorce have been found to be influential on the decision whether to cohabit or marry (Perelli-Harris et al., 2016). Post-divorce legislation may comprise laws regulating the division of property and household goods, the duty and right to pay or receive alimony, the responsibility to pay each other's debts, the right to remain in rented accommodation, and, if there are children, their custody (Perelli-Harris & Gassen, 2012). Given the specific regulations on such matters in a society, and the individual position (i.e. the presence of children, economic conditions, a foreign citizenship, etc.), some partners may decide to marry to protect themselves in the case of union dissolution, while others may take advantage of the lack of regulation to avoid a lengthy and costly bureaucratic procedure in the eventuality that their union ends.

Besides legal considerations, individuals may choose cohabitation over marriage to avoid cultural expectations concerning marriage. In contexts where cohabitation is still a marginal phenomenon, cohabiting couples are often a self-selected group seeking to break the traditional view of marriage, including its gendered division of family labor and childcare (Arosio, 2017; Manning, 2020; Perelli-Harris et al., 2014). For instance, research has shown that cohabiting fathers feel that their role is substantially different from that of married fathers,

and are more involved in childcare (Meggiolaro & Ongaro, 2019; Ono & Yeilding, 2009). Moreover, in traditional contexts, cohabiting couples are often found to have weaker relations with their respective families of origin (Castiglioni & Dalla-Zuanna, 2014), and to live at a greater geographical distance (Pirani, 2016).

5.3 Marriage and cohabitation under conditions of uncertainty

A crucial aspect of selection into marriage and cohabitation is the fact that the choice may also depend on the employment positions of the partners (Barbieri et al., 2015; Kreyenfeld et al., 2012).

Indeed, research has shown that because marriage is a resource-intensive and long-term commitment, it is often delayed or eluded when people face employment instability (e.g. Oppenheimer, 1988; Vignoli et al., 2016). Already in 1988, Oppenheimer proposed the *uncertainty hypothesis*, which focuses specifically on the role of men's unstable careers and suggests that men's non-standard and temporary employment, unemployment, or low-status jobs, engender uncertainty. Uncertainty raises the question as to whether the potential husband will be able to provide in the future and the type of life he will lead. Since work structures the lifestyle of persons, with an uncertain working career it is difficult to predict how the marriage will be. Therefore, men's employment uncertainty impedes assortative mating and makes them less attractive partners, resulting in the postponement or renunciation of marriage (Kalmijn, 2011; Oppenheimer, 1988, 1994; Oppenheimer et al., 1997). Moreover, employment uncertainty very often corresponds to insecure financial resources, which may obstruct the realization of the desired wedding ceremony (Vignoli et al., 2016). Virtually all micro-level studies in Europe and the USA confirm the hypothesis that low earnings and unemployment decrease men's probability of marrying (Blossfeld & Müller, 2002; Kalmijn, 2007; Kalmijn & Luijkx, 2005;

Oppenheimer et al., 1997). This mechanism, in the current age of uncertainty (Bauman, 2007), in principle could be extended also to women's employment uncertainty, although, as discussed, it may depend on normative expectations related to gender roles, and generally to the level of gender equality in a given country.

Several studies (e.g. Kalmijn, 2011; Vignoli et al., 2016) report empirical evidence that couples with unstable jobs and insecure financial resources, instead choose to cohabit. Various authors (e.g. Bauman, 2003; Hochschild, 2003; Manning, 2020; Mills et al., 2006), in fact, have argued that because cohabitation makes it possible to reduce costs and requires fairly low levels of commitment, it is a rational response to uncertainty. It is consequently a flexible living arrangement in a flexible labor-market environment. Therefore, when analyzing the impact of employment instability on union dissolution it is crucial to take account of the interrelation between these two processes, and to distinguish between married and cohabiting couples, because married couples with uncertain employment careers are probably a select group of people which value marriage or love highly.

Moreover, the spread of jobs with uncertain conditions is also considered to be a fundamental factor in the postponement of childbearing and the elimination of higher-parity births (Pailhé & Solaz, 2012; Vignoli et al., 2012, 2019). Employment uncertainty may in fact exert a negative income effect, which, combined with the lack of clear prospects about the future, is likely to inhibit the demand for children, or at least postpone the idea of children until economic conditions are more favorable. Offspring are also a key variable in divorce dynamics, with couples with children usually displaying a higher level of commitment and a lower tendency to divorce, at least as long as the children are young. It follows that employment instability may also have an indirect impact on divorce by hindering the demand for children.

To conclude, in order to have a correct interpretation of the impact of employment instability on union dissolution, it is essential to account for the possible interrelation of these processes (Baizán et al., 2003).

CHAPTER 2

Italian context

Underlined in the previous chapter was the importance of the socio-economic, cultural, and institutional context for full understanding of the relation between employment instability and union dissolution. Indeed, the strength of the relationship, or the importance of certain predictors, may vary according to the societal context (Beckert, 1996). Hence, this chapter provides an overview of the main features in the Italian context that characterize the relation between employment instability and union dissolution. In particular, described in section 1 are the primary aspects of union dissolution in Italy, i.e. its history, legal framework, and demographic trends. Thereafter, illustrated in section 2 are the main characteristics of the Italian labor market, with a focus on employment instability and gender differences. Discussed in section 3 are some of the crucial aspects of Italian society, i.e. cultural norms in regard to gender roles, the importance of family and religion, and reconciliation policies. Finally, presented in section 4 are previous findings on the relationship between employment status and union dissolution in Italy.

1. Union dissolution in Italy

The present research thesis focuses on union dissolution, a notion which comprises dissolutions of formal marriages but also of unmarried cohabitations. However, marriage is still a dominant institution in Italy (Rosina & Fraboni, 2004), and to understand the context of union dissolution it is important to examine the legislative and demographic development of legal separation and divorce, but also to briefly consider dynamics of family formation.

1.1 History and legal framework

Divorce was established in Italy only in 1970 with Law no. 898 of 1 December 1970, which was a few decades later than in most European countries, where laws regulating divorce had existed since the first half of the twentieth century or earlier (González & Viitanen, 2009). The introduction of divorce in Italy had been debated since the beginning of the twentieth century. However, the debate was interrupted first by World War I, and then by the advent of fascism and the Lateran Pacts of 1929, which included the fascist government's agreement to conform laws on marriage and divorce to those of the Catholic Church of Rome. After the Second World War, the debate on divorce was resumed. However, given the persistently strong influence of the Catholic Church and affiliated political parties, the introduction of divorce was still highly controversial both socially and politically. Indeed, in 1974, only four years after enactment of the divorce law, conservative and catholic parties called for a revocatory referendum, which had a fairly high participation rate of 87.7%, and resulted in 59.3% no, and 40.7% yes votes. Thus ratified was the desire of the Italian population to keep the divorce law in force (Scirè, 2007).

The law of 1970 granted divorce only if the 'fault' of one of the spouses was proved. In 1975, the year following the referendum, further legislation made it possible to request divorce simply on the basis of the permanent breakdown of

the marriage, with the mutual consent of the partners (Ferro & Salvini, 2007; Todesco, 2008). In contrast with most Western countries where divorce law replaced the existing separation laws (Ferro & Salvini, 2007), in Italy the procedure leading to the dissolution of a marriage moved through two phases: first, legal separation, and only thereafter divorce, with a minimum time between the two provisions initially set at 5 years, reduced to 3 years in 1987 (Law no. 74/1987), and drastically shortened to 1 year in cases of judicial separation, or 6 months in cases of consensual separation in 2015, with a reform known as the 'short divorce law' (Law 107/2015). The difference between the two phases is that divorce marks the definitive cessation of the effects of the marriage and consequently allows the ex-spouses to contract a new marriage. Instead, with legal separation the parties are still married, and as such it might be permanent, might result in a divorce, or might be revoked. Further, Law no. 132/2014 enacted at the end of 2014 allowed the stipulation of out-of-court agreements (with a lawyer-assisted negotiation agreement or directly at the registry office), thereby drastically simplifying procedural requirements, and making the entire divorce process much faster and less burdensome (Istat, 2016b).

1.2 Demographic trends

Until the last couple of decades Italian marital stability seemed to be an exception in the European landscape. Besides being a late-comer in the introduction of divorce, dissolution rates have always been low in Italy compared to those in most developed countries (Sobotka & Toulemon, 2008). Figure 1 shows the crude divorce rate for a set of European countries. Among them, Italy presents the lowest rates, closely followed by Spain.

Despite remaining lower than in most European countries, separation and divorce rates in Italy grew considerably over time, while marriage rates decreased to such an extent that in 2016 the number of divorces reached almost

50% of the number of marriages celebrated in the same year (see Figures 2 and 3).

Figure 1: Evolution of crude divorce rates in a set of European countries[1]
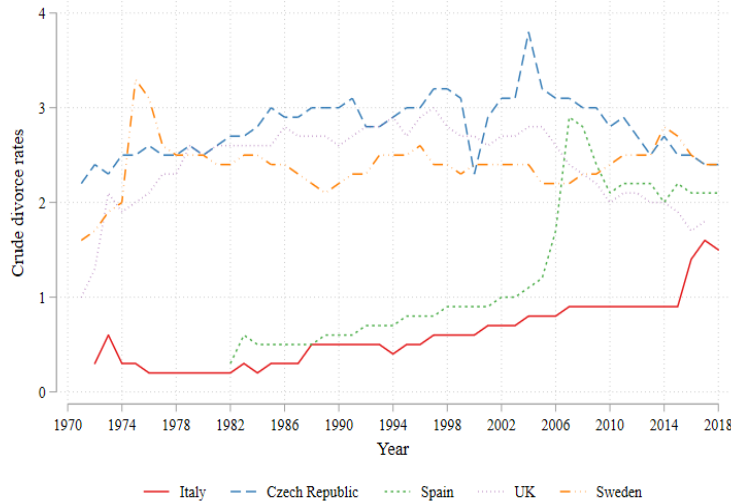
Figures 2 and 3 evidence that separation and divorce rates differ quite markedly from each other. Changes in divorce legislation, have, in fact, resulted in a strong discontinuity in divorce time-series. Examination of both the absolute values (Figure 2) and the refined divorce rate (Figure 3) shows a leap in 1987 as a result of the shortening by Law 74/1987 of the time elapsing between separation and divorce from 5 to 3 years, as well as a sharp increase in 2014, as a consequence of the introduction of Law 132/2014 and Law 107/2015, which further shortened the time between the two phases and simplified the whole procedure. Legal separation has undergone limited regulatory changes. It has therefore been more consistent over time and appears to be a more reliable indicator of dissolution trends in Italy (Ferro & Salvini, 2007). Moreover, legal separation is the first legal event marking the dissolution of a marriage, and it concerns also couples which will never conclude the procedure and convert it into divorce. Nevertheless, legal separation fails to capture all those marriages which are *de*

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[1] Own elaboration of OECD data. Source: http://www.oecd.org/social/family/database.htm

facto dissolved but have not undergone legal procedures. Indeed, it only covers couples who were formally married, completely disregarding unmarried cohabitations, which are gradually gaining importance also as an alternative to marriage (Gabrielli & Hoem, 2010; Rosina & Fraboni, 2004).

Figure 2: Total number of marriages, separations, and divorces 1970-2018[2]
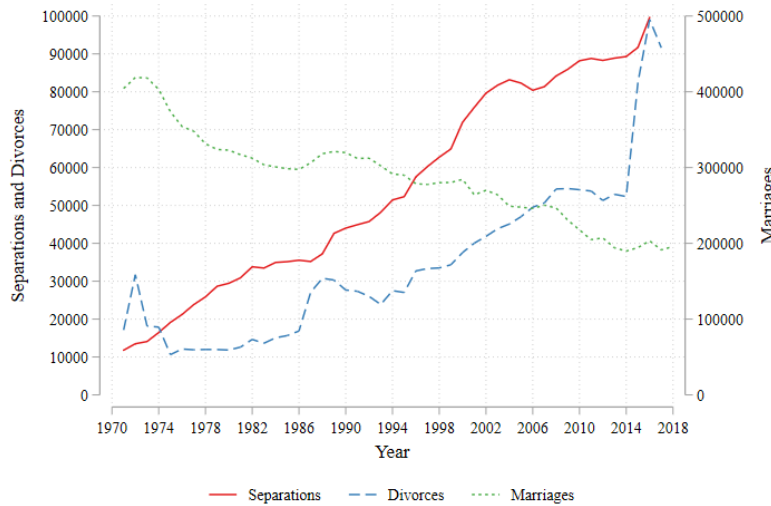
Figure 3: Refined separation and divorce rates 1970-2018[3]

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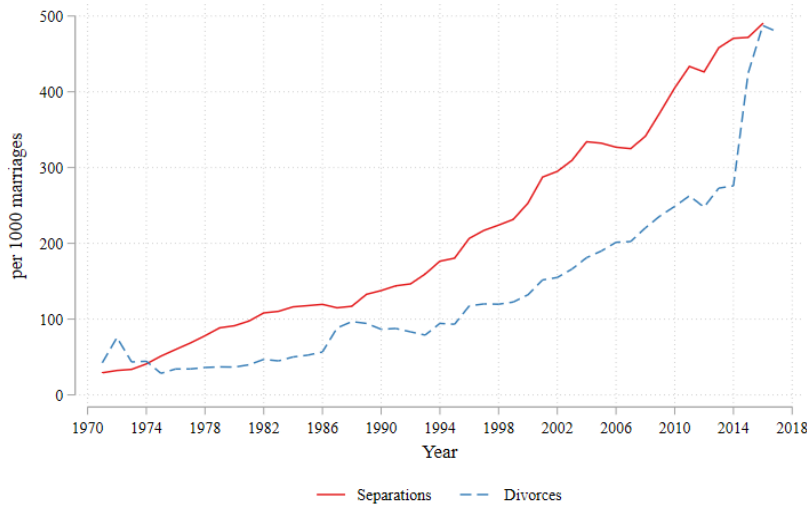
[2] Own elaboration of ISTAT data. Source: http://dati.istat.it/

[3] Number of separations and divorces per 1000 marriages. Own elaboration of ISTAT data. Source: http://dati.istat.it/

The demographic characteristics of separating couples have evolved over time. During the first decade of the 2000s the modal duration of marriage at separation was relatively stable between 5 and 9 years. However, since 2012 it has shifted to 25+ (Istat, 2021b). The mean duration of the marriage at separation is now 17 years (Istat, 2021a). In the last two decades, the share of separations relative to long-term marriages has in fact doubled, while the share of those interrupted within the first five years of marriage has diminished (Istat, 2021a). This implies also considerable changes in the modal age at divorce. Whilst in 2000 the highest number of separations diminished for both husbands and wives in the 35-39 age group, in 2018 the modal age class moved to between 40 and 44 years old for wives, and between 45 and 49 years old for husbands (representing for both groups around 20% of the total) (Istat, 2021a).

Figure 4: Regional trends in legal separations in 2007 (a) and 2018 (b)[4]
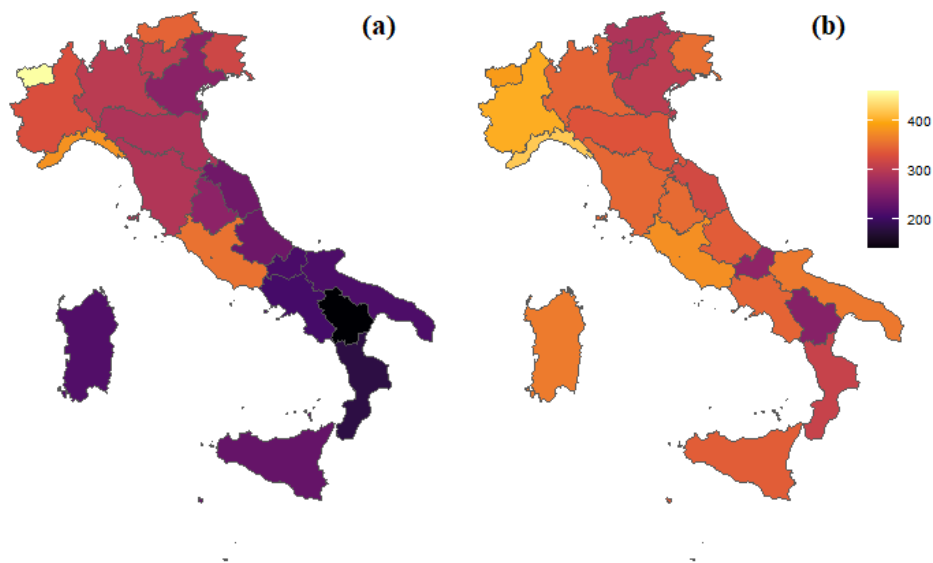
Like other demographic events in Italy, trends in separation and divorce rates have always been characterized by a marked north/south divide. In general,

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[4] Number of legal separations per 1000 marriages. Own elaboration of ISTAT data. Source: http://dati.istat.it/

separations are more common in the north, with the highest rates in Val d'Aosta and Liguria, and in some central regions, such as Lazio, while separations are still rare in southern regions, with the lowest levels in Calabria, Basilicata and Molise (Istat, 2021a). However, as can be seen in Figure 4, in the past decade the number of separations has increased drastically in southern regions as well, and regional differences are slowly converging.

1.3 Marriage and cohabitation

Family dynamics are often interconnected, and the rise of union dissolutions cannot be considered an independent phenomenon. To fully understand its development, it is necessary to briefly consider changes that have occurred in family formation practices in recent decades.

Unlike in northern and western European countries, marriage in Italy has for long maintained its centrality in family formation (Rosina & Fraboni, 2004). Divergences with other Western countries have been at times attributed to the low level of secularization and the strong role of the Catholic Church in Italy, but also to the strong ties between parents and children and the importance of parental approval rooted in Italian society (Castiglioni & Dalla Zuanna, 2009; Guetto et al., 2016; Reher, 1998; Rosina & Fraboni, 2004; Vignoli & Salvini, 2014). However, new patterns of family formations are emerging, with a tendency for couples to postpone or forgo marriage, and a growing number of unmarried cohabitations (Castiglioni & Dalla Zuanna, 2009; Guetto et al., 2016). Since the 1970s, the annual total number of marriages has gradually diminished from around 400,000 per year in the 1970s to less than 200,000 in 2018, reaching its minimum value in 2014 (see Figure 2). This decrease in the absolute number of marriages has been mainly due to a sharp decline in first marriages across generations (Istat, 2021b). Indeed, this generational drop is partly explained by the drastic change in population age structure due to the ongoing fertility decline,

which has provoked an evident reduction in the population group usually experiencing first marriage (between 16 and 34 years old). However, net of structural changes, there is still a clear growing tendency to forgo first marriage (Istat, 2019a, 2021b).

A distinctive feature of the evolution of marriage is the considerable growth of weddings celebrated with a civil ceremony rather than a traditional religious one. The percentage of non-religious weddings fifty years ago was negligible, amounting to barely 2.3% in 1970. However, it has been gradually rising, and reached 50.1% in 2018 (Istat, 2021b). This percentage can be interpreted as an indicator of secularization, and presents marked territorial variability, representing 2 out of 3 marriages in the North, and around 1 out of 3 in the South (Istat, 2019a, 2021b). In Italy, opting for a civil rather than a religious wedding ceremony is a correlate of divorce (Vignoli & Ferro, 2009). This association has been mainly explained by selection, as less traditional individuals, who are more likely to get married with the civil ceremony, are also those more likely to divorce (Impicciatore & Billari, 2012). Therefore, as the frequency of civil marriage increases, individuals will be less selected into it, and the association may change, and not necessarily be linked to an increase in divorce in the future. Nevertheless, at present, the growth of civil with respect to religious marriages points to an advance in the secularization of society which may ease divorce uptake [see Chapter 1, sections 3.1, 4.5 and 5.1].

Furthermore, cohabitations (both non-marital and pre-marital), which for long have been considered a marginal phenomenon in Italy, are gradually gaining importance and are no longer negligible, in particular in the northern and central regions, and in urban areas (Castiglioni & Dalla Zuanna, 2009; Gabrielli & Hoem, 2010; Rosina & Fraboni, 2004). Indeed, in the past twenty years, non-marital unions have more than quintupled, rising from 1.7% of all cohabiting couples in 1997, to 9.6% in 2018 (Istat, 2021a). Non-marital cohabitations are increasingly accepted across generations as an alternative to marriage, even for childbearing, and to such an extent that, in 2018, almost one in three children

were born to unmarried parents (Istat, 2019a). Until 2016, there was no national legal regulation for unmarried co-resident couples in Italy. With Law No 76/2016, stable cohabitations, characterized by emotional ties and assistance between the two partners, were recognized with some civil effects, such as the legal regime of community property, alimony payments in case of need, and patrimonial rights (Ferrari, 2017). In line with the Second Demographic Transition theory, in Italy cohabitors are the most educated and innovative members of society (Guetto et al., 2016; Rosina & Fraboni, 2004). As such, they are more likely to Ie union dissolution than married individuals. Likewise, marriages preceded by pre-marital cohabitation are those more likely to end (Impicciatore & Billari, 2012; Vignoli & Ferro, 2009). Moreover, the choice of cohabitation over marriage is associated with several factors – such as the parents' education and whether they have experienced separation, own education, younger generations, and employment status (García Pereiro et al., 2014; Guetto et al., 2016; Rosina & Fraboni, 2004; Vignoli et al., 2016) – which are also correlates of union dissolution (Vignoli & Ferro, 2009).

2. The Italian labor market

2.1 Labor-market flexibilization

The Italian labor market used to be regulated by strong employment protection legislation and a rigid system of wage determination (Garibaldi & Taddei, 2013). The "Charter of Workers' Rights" (*Statuto dei Lavoratori*), instituted by Law 300/1970, established various forms of employment protection and restrictions on individual hiring and firing procedures, such as workers' right to claim unfair dismissal.

The reform process to introduce labor-market flexibilization began in the 1980s and led to the gradual liberalization of fixed-term jobs and progressively

introduced new flexible contractual forms, in both working time and duration (P. Barbieri & Scherer, 2009). The introduction of so-called 'work-and-training contracts' (1983–1984) was followed by a relaxation of the strict rules on fixed-term contracts (L.56/1987), which were subsequently made increasingly more convenient for firms so that they could compete with strategies of labor-cost reduction (L.451/1994; L.608/1996). The main steps in the process of labor-market deregulation/segmentation were taken in 1997 with the 'Treu Law', (L.196/1997), and the following 'Biagi Law' (L.30/2003), which introduced and revised several forms of non-permanent contract – for job-on-call, job sharing, part-time, apprenticeship, training, fixed-term and project-based work – characterized by lower wages, less bargaining power and lower levels of rights and social protection (P. Barbieri & Scherer, 2009; Pirani & Salvini, 2015; Vignoli et al., 2016).

However, alongside these significant changes towards more flexibilization, legislation in regard to open-ended contracts for long remained substantially unaltered (Barbieri & Scherer, 2009; Garibaldi & Taddei, 2013; Piore, 1980). The Italian reform process was thus called "targeted", "marginal", and "asymmetric" (Barbieri & Scherer, 2009; Garibaldi & Taddei, 2013), since it applied only to new jobs and affected only a fraction of the population. It thus engendered a substantial labor-market dualization, with a 'rigid' primary labor market, in which a core group of insiders – mainly adult men – had stable and secure jobs, and a residual 'flexible' secondary labor market where jobs were unstable and unemployment spells could be long-lasting, and where youths and women were over-represented (Boeri, Conde-Ruiz, and Galasso 2012; Dell'Aringa and Lucifora 2001; Garibaldi and Taddei 2013).

Following the economic crisis, which brought about a drastic increase in unemployment, especially among workers on precarious contracts, the "Fornero Law" of 2012 (L.92/2012), and the "Jobs Act" of 2015 (L.22/2015), currently in force, provided incentives for companies to adopt more stable employment contracts: for instance, contributions devolved to the employer if a time-limited

employment relationship was converted into a permanent one, and a compulsory contribution to be paid by the employer for a non-consensual interruption of an employment relationship (Giorgi, 2018). Moreover, the Jobs Act of 2015, in an attempt to reduce the dual structure of the labor market, introduced various measures aimed at the greater flexibilization of permanent employment contracts. It did so by implementing strategies such as the revision of work-insertion contracts to ease transitions into the labor market (apprenticeship contracts), and suppression of the right to work reinstatement in the event of unfair dismissal, which was replaced by monetary compensation increasing with seniority, accompanied by an expansion of unemployment insurance benefits and recipients (Boeri & Garibaldi, 2019). However, at present, such measures have only marginally achieved their purposes (Boeri & Garibaldi, 2019).

2.2 Social protection in the case of unemployment

As a protection from involuntary unemployment, the Italian social security system   comprises different types of unemployment benefit schemes to compensate for the loss of earnings in proportion to previously earned income from work (Giorgi, 2018; INPS, 2020b).

Until 2012, benefits were characterized by a high degree of fragmentation and a low level of coverage, excluding numerous workers because they required at least two years of contributions, provided higher coverage for older workers, and in an international comparison, an ungenerous treatment (Giorgi, 2018). Following the economic crisis, in 2012 and 2015 the above-mentioned Law 92/2012 (the "Fornero Law"), and the Legislative Decree 22/2015 implementing the "Jobs Act" sought to increase the scheme's access and the degree of universality, and raised the levels of generosity of basic treatments (Giorgi, 2018).

The current Italian legislation, established by Law 22/2015, provides different types of unemployment benefits (INPS, 2020b). The main one is the New Social Insurance for Employment (NASpI), which consists of a monthly unemployment allowance paid on application by the person concerned. Its duration is equal to half of the number of weeks regularly worked in the past four years and the benefit is 75% of the average monthly salary taxable for social security purposes for the last four years. It is gradually reduced by 3% per month, starting from the fourth (INPS, 2020b). The second important group of schemes is the Earnings Top-up Fund (Cassa integrazione), which may be ordinary (*ordinaria*), extraordinary (*straordinaria*) (Law 148/2015), or take the form of a 'solidarity cheque' (*assegno di solidarietà*) (Law 74/2016). These schemes, and the related duration of the benefit, differ according to the sector that they cover (construction industry, big firms, or small and medium-size firms). Their role is to supplement or replace the wages of workers whose work has been suspended or reduced, or those who have been collective dismissed due to a company's difficulties caused by transient events not attributable to the company or its employees, including seasonal bad weather and temporary market crises (redundancies). The allowance amounts to 80% of the total remuneration that would have been due to the worker for the hours not worked, between zero hours and the contractual time limit (INPS 2020).

Compared to other OECD countries, benefit levels for recipients are fairly high (OECD, 2019). However, access to income support packages is relatively limited, since the existing schemes only address employees hired with a permanent employment contracts or certain fixed-term contracts, and self-employed and atypical workers with interrupted employment spells have greater difficult in accessing social protection (OECD, 2019). The consequence is strong protection against labor-market risks for a restricted group of 'insiders', which reinforces labor market dualization (Garibaldi & Taddei, 2013).

2.3 Labor-market trends

Since the early 1980s, Italy has been an economy with a high unemployment rate and a low employment rate, compared with those of other developed countries (Garibaldi & Taddei, 2013). During the period between 1995 and 2007 the unemployment rate fell substantially, in 2007 reaching the lowest level recorded in the last 20 years of the Italian history – 6.1%, with a long-term unemployment rate of less than 3% (Istat, 2018).

The liberalization of temporary and atypical contracts in the pre-crisis period had an important role in the observed reduction of unemployment levels by boosting hiring and job creation (Barbieri & Sestito, 2008).

Figure 5: Share of time-limited work 1985-2018[5]
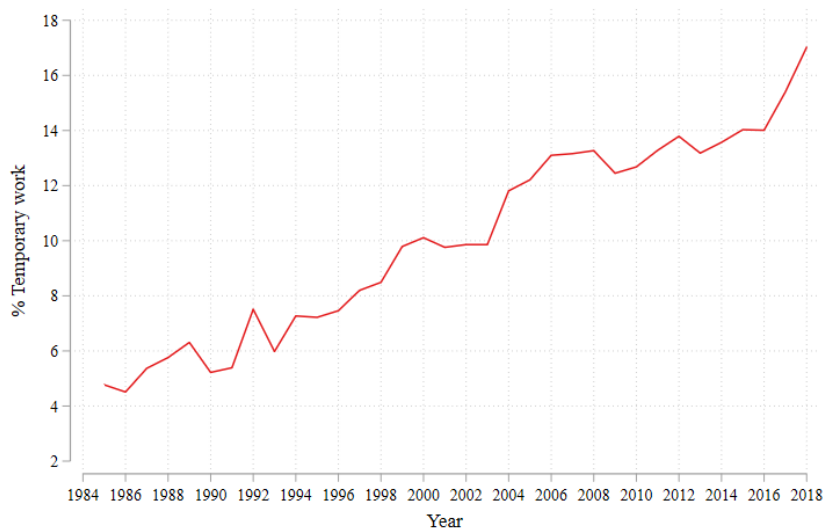
Figure 5 shows the evolution of time-limited jobs in Italy as a percentage of total employment. The spread of flexible and temporary contractual forms in Italy has been one of the most rapid in Europe, and is above the OECD average (Vignoli et al., 2016). However, at their termination, most of those temporary contracts

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[5]Share of temporary work as a % of total employment. Own elaboration of OECD data.
Source: https://data.oecd.org/emp/temporary-employment.htm

have not been transformed into permanent ones, because in a segmented labor market like the Italian one, temporary work is often used by firms as a cheaper factor of production, taking advantage of the wide regulatory gap with respect to permanent contracts (Garibaldi & Taddei, 2013).

The Great Recession was accompanied by a sizable negative shock that strongly undermined Italy's labor-market performance, leading to alarmingly high levels of unemployment (Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis 2019; Marino and Nunziata 2017). The highest post-crisis peak in unemployment, of around 13%, was reached in 2014 and moderately recovered thereafter. However, in 2018, the unemployment rate was still very distant from pre-crisis levels, with a rate of 10.5%, and the long-term unemployment rate was 6.2% (Istat 2021a; Marino and Nunziata 2017). Indeed, the workers most affected by the crisis were those with temporary and non-standard work contracts who had not seen their contracts renewed and were not covered by social protection schemes (Garibaldi and Taddei 2013). The Great Recession therefore contributed to exacerbating dualization in the labor market, amplifying the existing inequalities between age groups (Adda & Trigari, 2016). The largest increase was recorded in youth unemployment, which rose by more than 20 percentage points from 2007 to 2014, reaching over 40%, and finally starting to decrease. In particular, young first-time job seekers were faced by a collective mechanism of exclusion mainly caused by the dual structure of the labor market. In fact, the duration of first-job search was found not to be influenced by individual characteristics like class of origin, level of education, and attendance on vocational training courses, while such characteristics did matter in the search for a new job after a job loss (Bernardi et al., 2000). By contrast, older individuals record a far more stable unemployment rate. The 55-64 age group is the only age group for which unemployment in 2016 was lower than the pre-crisis level (Istat, 2016a; Marino & Nunziata, 2017). As is apparent from Figure 6, southern regions have always been characterized by much higher levels of unemployment than northern ones, while smaller differences existed between central and northern regions. Before

the crisis, in the South, unemployment rates were three times higher than in the North (Marino & Nunziata, 2017). The recession slightly reduced this gap, but this convergence seems to be a result of poor performance by northern regions rather than improvement by southern regions (Marino and Nunziata 2017).

Figure 6: Unemployment rates by macro-regions 1977-2018[6]
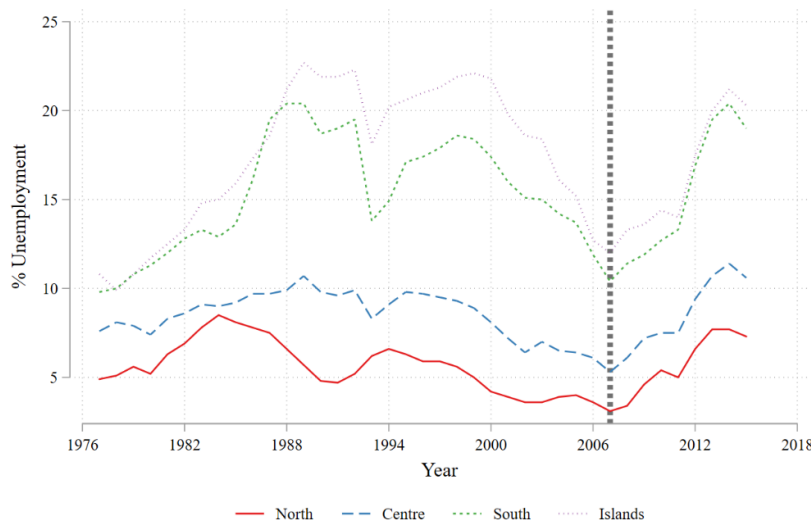
An additional feature of the Italian labor market is the existence of a large number of irregular workers, i.e. workers without a regular employment contract complying with the fiscal rules and, therefore, not directly observable from companies, institutions and administrative sources (Istat, 2017). Indeed, the actual amount of undeclared workers is unknown; however, the Italian National Institute of Statistics (ISTAT) provides some estimates combining survey and administrative data. According to those estimates, in 2017 there were 3.7 million full-time non-regular workers, mainly employees (2.696 million). The irregularity rate, calculated as the share of non-regular workers in the total number of workers, in 2017 was about 15.5% (Istat, 2017). Higher rates of

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[6] Own elaboration of ISTAT data. The vertical line represents the beginning of the Great Recession in 2007. Source: http://dati.istat.it/

irregular employment are again found in the 'outsider' segment of the labor market, i.e. young people, women, foreign citizens and irregular immigrants, and low-educated people. The sectors with the most irregular workers are agriculture, construction, hospitality, and catering (Istat, 2017). Moreover, 65% of irregular workers are found in southern regions, while in northern regions there is a substantial share of what is called 'grey' work, e.g. workers with contracts registered for fewer hours than they actually work and are paid for, and similar (De Gregorio & Giordano, 2015; European Commission, 2016; Istat, 2017).

2.4 Gender differences in labor market participation

The Italian labor market still displays striking gender differences in labor-market participation. Although the employment rate of women has been slowly approaching that of men, increasing by about 12% in the past 20 years, the difference between the male and female employment rates has remained sizeable, with a gap of about 20% (Istat, 2018). Furthermore, as shown by Figure 7, the reduction in the gender gap is also partly due to a progressive fall in the male employment rate following the Great Recession. Italian women still have one of the lowest labor-force participation rates in the OECD, even though the share of women in tertiary education has exceeded that of men (OECD, 2017).

Geographic differences in female labor-force participation are quite marked, and there seems to be no convergence path (Istat, 2018). Regional differences in female employment rates can be observed in Figure 8. The country's average employment rate of women aged 15-64 is currently 49.5% (Istat, 2021a). However, the average level in the North is almost double that in the South, with an aggregate employment rate of almost 60% in northern regions, ranging from 55.5% in Liguria and 64.8% in Trentino-Alto Adige (now Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano), 56% in central regions, ranging from 53.1% in Lazio and 60.5% in Tuscany, and 33% in southern regions, ranging from

29.1% in Sicily to 45.6% in Abruzzo (Istat, 2018). In 2018, Sicily and Campania were the two regions with the lowest female employment rates, respectively 29.1% and 29.4%, while Trentino-Alto Adige and Valle d'Aosta were those with the highest rates, respectively 64.8% and 64.1% (Istat, 2021a).

Figure 7: Employment rate by gender, 1977-2018[7]
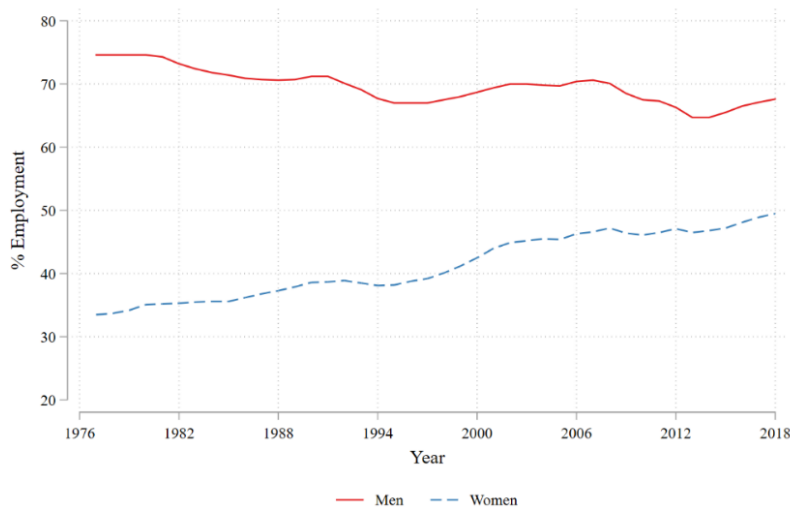
Figure 8: Women employment rate by macro-region 1977-2018[8]

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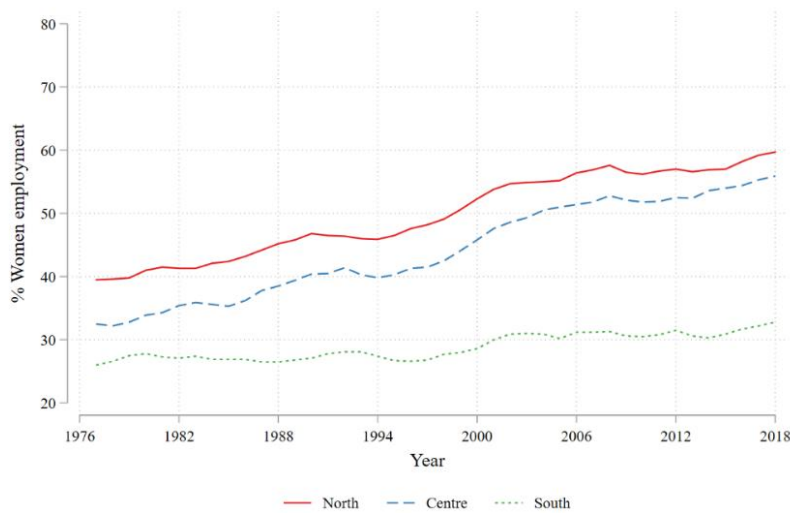
[7] Own elaboration of ISTAT data. Source: http://dati.istat.it/
[8] Own elaboration of ISTAT data. Source: http://dati.istat.it/

Figure 9: Couples share of paid work[9]
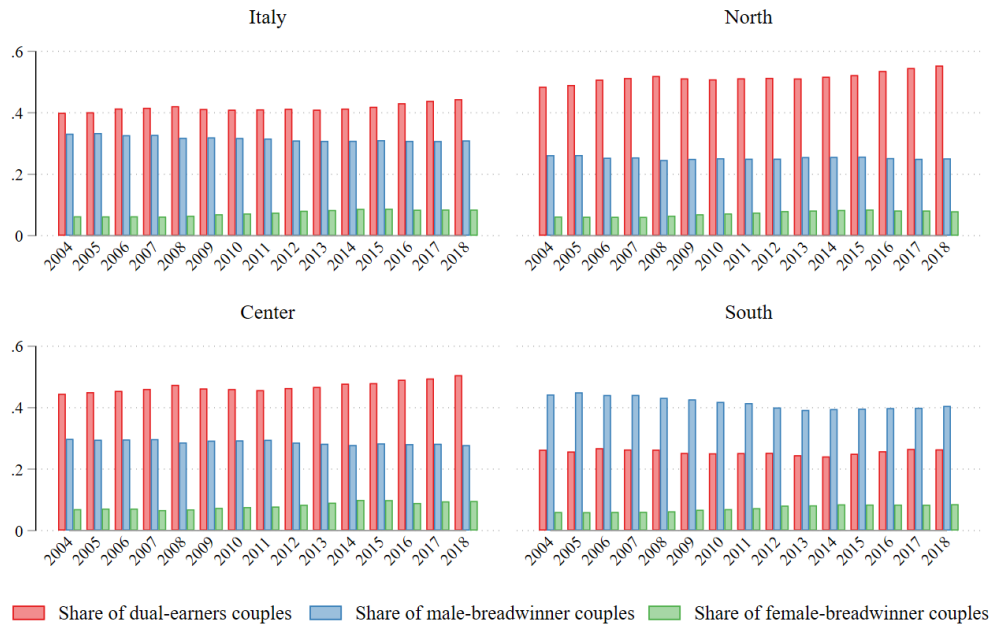
Figure 9 shows couples' share of paid work in Italy from 2004 to 2018. From a couple perspective, although at the country level the dual-earner model is now the most common, it still represents less than half of all couples (Istat, 2021a). There is still a considerable number of couples in which the man is the only breadwinner, representing around 31% of couples in 2018; while couples in which only the woman is employed amount to 10% (couples in which both partners do not work are not displayed in the figure). The amounts have not changed much over the past 15 years. However, again, there are notable territorial differences. In northern regions, couples in which only the man works amount to 25%, and the most widespread model is the dual-earner one (55% of couples). Similarly, in central Italy male-breadwinner couples represent 28%, while 50% are dual-earner couples. By contrast, in southern regions the male-breadwinner

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[9] Own elaboration of ISTAT data. Source: http://dati.istat.it/

model is still the most widespread, representing 40% of all couples, while dual-earners still represent only 26% (Istat, 2021a).

Italian women face substantial disadvantages in the labor market compared to men, for several reasons. First, as will be further developed in the next section [3.1], in Italy the burden of household responsibilities falls disproportionally on women, reducing the amount of time that they can devote to job search, and restricting the types of job that they can accept (Bernardi et al., 2000; Dotti Sani, 2012). Moreover, the cultural pattern is reinforced by the informal, contractual, and legal regulations for the Italian labor market (Bernardi et al., 2000; Del Boca & Pasqua, 2005; Solera, 2014). Women are in fact overrepresented in the 'outsider' segment of the labor market, and employers often tend to protect the jobs of adult men more than those of women, because the strong protection and long leave usually granted to working mothers in Italy dissuades employers from hiring women rather than men (Bernardi et al., 2000; Del Boca & Pasqua, 2005). In fact, due to a combination of culturally-rooted gender behaviors, the scarcity of adequate labor-market opportunities, and the lack of reconciliation services [see section 3.3], women tend to adjust their labor supply for family-related reasons, for instance when they get married, have children, or when the partner's income is insufficient (Musumeci & Solera, 2013; Solera, 2012, 2014). Adjustments may consist in taking a period of leave, moving to part-time or full-time employment, and withdrawing from the labor market; and they may be permanent, or concentrated around motherhood (Solera, 2012). Indeed, such periods of adjustment negatively affect women's careers, even if they decide to return to the labor market; and they are often linked to women's downward labor-market mobility (Musumeci & Solera, 2013). A recent study (Bertolini & Solera, 2016) has shown that low-educated women are those most at risk of withdrawing from the labor market around parenthood? To become full-time homemakers. Moreover, the choice and timing of leaving the labor market is also dependent on the type of contract (Bertolini & Solera, 2016; Solera, 2014). Women in time-limited jobs tend to leave the labor market before they have children, regardless

of whether they are high- or low-educated. Moreover, women with time-limited jobs are at greater risk of unemployment, which can also translate into discouragement and permanent withdrawal from the labor market (Bertolini & Solera, 2016).

3. Cultural and institutional aspects of Italian society

3.1 Gender norms and the gendered division of unpaid work

Italian society still displays considerable gender inequalities in both values and behaviors. In the Gender Equality Index[10], Italy scored 53.3 in 2010, and 63.5 in 2020 (EIGE 2020). Despite the considerable improvement in the past ten years, the current score is still below the EU average (67.9 in 2020), and very far from those of northern European countries such as Denmark and Sweden (scoring respectively 77.4 and 83.8) (EIGE, 2020).

Results reported by several studies (e.g. Blome, 2016; Naldini & Jurado, 2013) analyzing value surveys, have shown that in Italy, in contrast to most European countries, attitudes and values in regard to family and gender have hardly changed over the years. The dominant societal definition of what good care is, and who should provide it, has remained anchored to the woman's role (Blome, 2016; Naldini & Jurado, 2013).

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[10] The Gender Equality Index is a composite indicator developed by the European Institute for Gender Equality (EIGE). It provides a comprehensive measure of gender equality based on six core life domains, i.e. work, money, knowledge, time, power and health, and two additional domains i.e. violence against women and intersecting inequalities. https://eige.europa.eu/gender-equality-index/about

Figure 10: % Agree with quote "It's ok for a woman to engage in paid work but what women really want is a home and kids"[11]
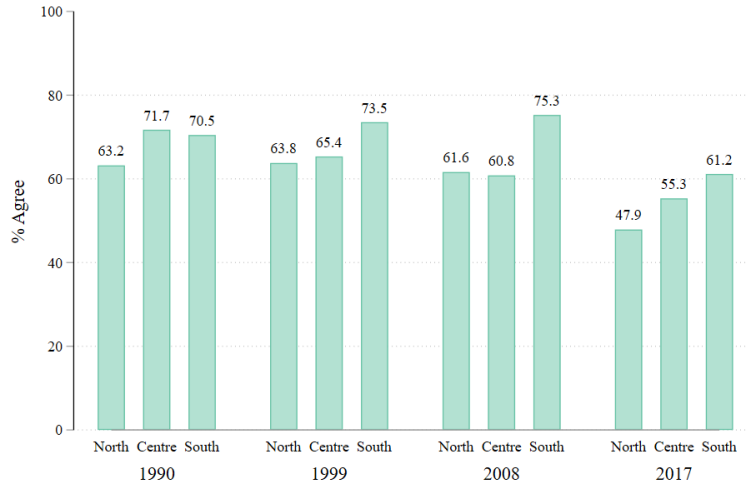
Figure 11: % Agree with quote "A pre-school child is likely to suffer if the mother is employed"[12]
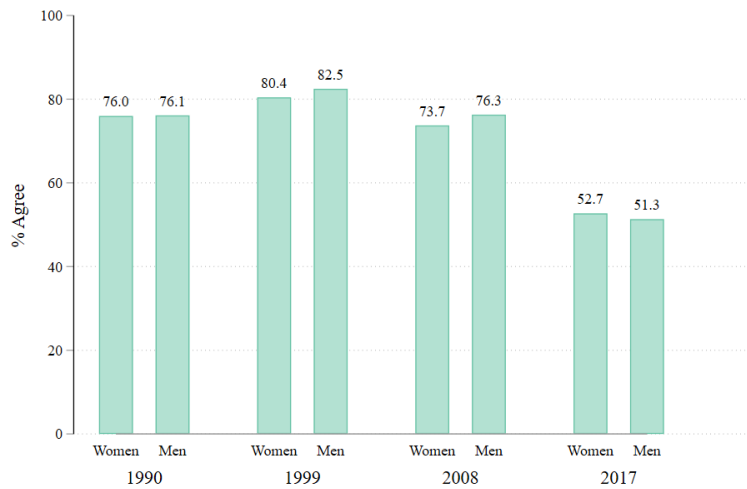
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[11] Own elaboration of European Value Study 1990-1999-2008-2017
https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/
[12] Own elaboration of European Value Study 1990-1999-2008-2017
https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/

Figure 12: % Considering very important for a stable relationship to share household choirs[13]
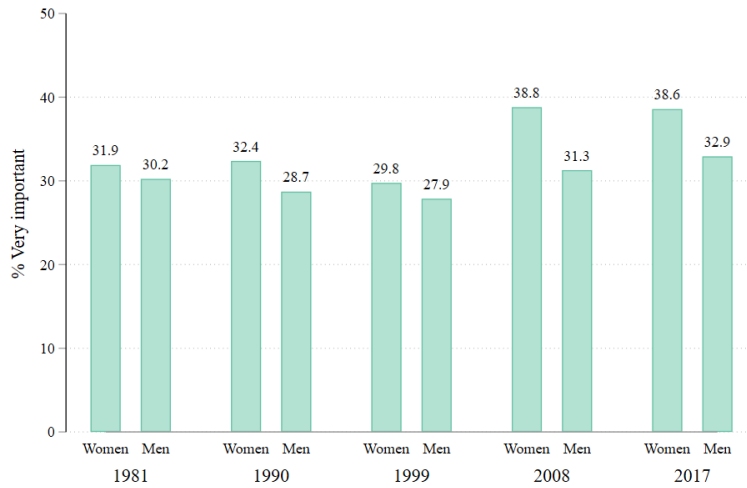
Figures 10, 11 and 12 show the percentages of agreement with three statements of the European Values Study (EVS). Attitudes towards women in the labor market (Figures 10 and 11) were basically stable from 1990 to 2008, but displayed a marked change in the last survey of 2017. Nevertheless, in 2017, with significant regional and gender differences, about half of the respondents still agreed that a woman needs a home and children to feel fulfilled, and that a pre-school child is likely to suffer if the mother is employed. Instead, Figure 12 shows a very slow increase in the percentage of respondents who considered the sharing of household chores to be very important for a stable relationship. In particular, the percentage of women increased by about 7 points in more than 30 years, while the percentage of men remained substantially unchanged, rising from 30.2% in 1981 to 32.9% in 2017.

In terms of behavior, data on the distribution within couples of domestic and care work evidences that Italy is one of the most asymmetrical countries in

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[13] Own elaboration of European Value Study 1981-1990-1999-2008-2017
https://europeanvaluesstudy.eu/

Europe (Eurostat, 2019). Italian women are still much more likely to be inactive due to domestic and care responsibilities compared to women in other European countries (Dotti Sani, 2016; Eurostat, 2021), and the burden of unpaid domestic work is unevenly carried by women, even among dual-earner couples, although with important signs of change especially among the most educated couples (Carriero, 2009; Dotti Sani, 2012, 2014, 2018a; Naldini & Solera, 2018). Nonetheless, a recent qualitative study (Naldini, 2015) reported that even in highly-educated couples with more egalitarian values and behavior, at the birth of the first child, care work is once again considered to be a predominantly female job, with the narrative of the mother's 'natural' indispensability intrinsic to the Italian culture. Moreover, the expansion of tertiary education is still limited, also compared to other European countries. In 2020, the share of individuals between 30 and 34 years old who had completed tertiary education was 27.8%, second to last in Europe, followed only by Romania (Eurostat, 2021). However, what is remarkable is that in the past decade, women's education has reached and then surpassed that of men, even on considering the entire population aged over 15 years old (Istat, 2021a). As of 2020, 13.9% of men and 16.6% of women had a tertiary education degree, and considering the 30-34 age group, the share of tertiary-educated women was 34.3% compared to 21.4% among men (Istat, 2021a), representing an important sign of change in Italian women (Salvini & Vignoli, 2011).

3.2 Familialism and secularization

Among the factors slowing down societal change in Italy, several scholars have identified the strong familialism and the slow process of secularization characterizing Italian society (Dalla Zuanna, 2004; Vignoli & Salvini, 2014).

Despite the undeniable spread of new behaviors, especially in the North and in urban areas, in Italy as a whole the historical and anthropological family

structure is largely based on kinship, and family values and strong ties still persist (Dalla Zuanna, 2004; Rosina & Fraboni, 2004). Most children still leave the parental home only at marriage – with 64% of individuals between 25 and 30 years old still living in the family dwelling (Istat, 2021a) – and children usually move close to their parents after marriage (Castiglioni & Dalla-Zuanna, 2014; Pirani, 2016). Parents help their children during the rearing of the grandchildren, and parents are assisted by their children during the last years of their lives (Naldini, 2003). Clearly, such care practices are both the cause and product of the lack of state services providing care (Naldini, 2003). The Italian welfare system has in fact been classified in the 'Southern' or 'Mediterranean model', which is characterized by a very low level of social protection and by strong family ties (Ferrera, 1996). Likewise, the economy is also steeped in familism, since it is constituted by thousands of small firms, whose founders are usually siblings or other relatives (Dalla Zuanna 2004).

In parallel, Italian society is undergoing a complex but emblematic process of secularization (Vezzoni and Biolcati-Rinaldi 2015). At the political level, the Catholic Church has expanded its influence across the various political parties – particularly with regard to matters concerning the family and sexuality – and thus plays an important role in hampering societal and policy advancement (Naldini and Saraceno 2008). About 82% of the country's population declare that they adhere to a religious faith, and 66.7% belong to the Catholic Church (Doxa 2019). However, on analyzing indicators related to the vitality of religious practice such as church attendance, research (e.g. Vezzoni and Biolcati-Rinaldi 2015) has demonstrated that during the period 1968–2010, church attendance declined – except for a period of relative stability in the 1980s and early 1990s. The decline was rapid in the 1970s, and later proceeded at a slower but steady pace from the second half of the 1990s onward (Vezzoni & Biolcati-Rinaldi, 2015).

Figure 13: Percent of individuals in couple who rarely or never go to church, 1993-2016[14]
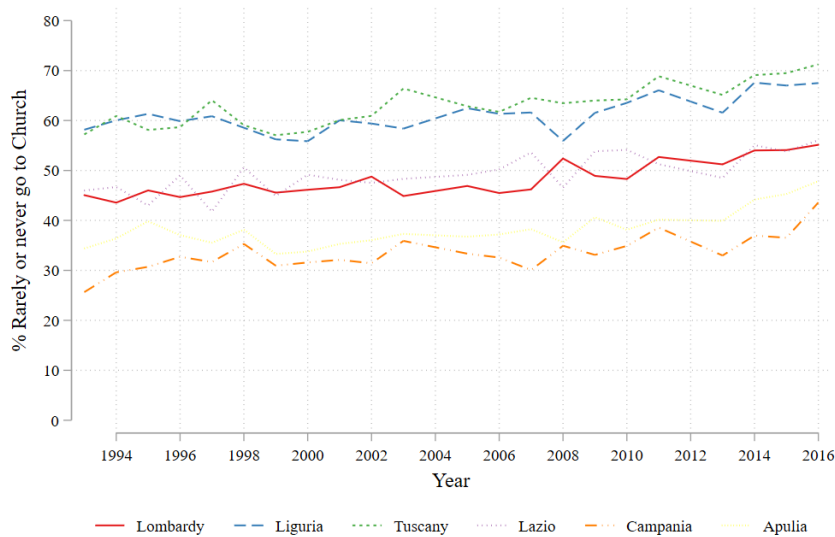
Figure 13 shows the percentage of individuals in stable relationships, either cohabiting or married, who declared to have rarely or never attended religious services for selected regions in the north, center, and south of the country, from 1993 to 2016. Despite regional differences, all the regions surveyed displayed a slow but constant rise in the percentage of people rejecting religious practice. Moreover, it seems that southern regions are gradually catching up with central and northern ones. However, although religious practice has greatly decreased in Italy, religious precepts and dogmas have been found to indirectly shape social judgement and ideological factors influencing family behaviors (Vignoli and Salvini 2014).

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[14] Own elaboration of Istat survey data "Aspects of Daily Life" 1993-2016. Percent of individuals above 18 in a stable couple, cohabitation or marriage, who report to rarely or never attend Church for selected region in the north, centre, and south of the country.

3.3 Reconciliation policies

Traditional expectations about family responsibility and gender roles, the long tradition of a rigid familistic system, and 'imperfect secularization', combined with the scant presence of women in politics, have jointly hampered the introduction and development of policies promoting work/family balance and gender equality (Blome, 2016; Knijn & Saraceno, 2010; Naldini & Jurado, 2013; Riva, 2016). In fact, although the number of women in the labor market has been constantly increasing, especially in northern regions, reconciliation policies are still quite limited, and have been characterized by a certain inertia in recent decades (Naldini & Saraceno, 2008).

The issue of reconciling family and working life was introduced at the European level already at the beginning of the 1990s, with the clear objective of equal opportunities of men and women in the labor market (Naldini & Saraceno, 2011). The legal framework of work/family policy in Italy is based upon Article 37 of the Constitution, which stipulates both gender equality in the workplace and that "working conditions must allow women to fulfil their essential role in the family and ensure adequate protection for mothers and their children" (Knijn & Saraceno, 2010), and officially entered the political agenda with law 285/1997, which fostered the introduction of policies, at central and local level, for the promotion of social rights, quality of life, and the development of children and adolescents (Naldini, 2003).

In a first stage, Italy was called an "early bird" in welfare reforms, since already in the 1960s and 1970s it started to develop good quality childcare and maternal leave arrangements (Knijn & Saraceno, 2010). However, this development slowed down, and increasingly lagged behind societal advancement, including the rise in women's labor-force participation, and demographic and familial changes such as the increase in marital instability, lone motherhood, and ageing kinship (Knijn & Saraceno, 2010). The availability of child-care provided by the state for under 3-year-old children remained limited, favoring instead care given by grandparents and family members (Naldini &

Saraceno, 2011). Figure 14 shows the trend over time (between 2004 and 2016) of the percentage of children 0-3 years-old using childcare facilities on the total number of children aged 0-3 in the region. Again, there is a clear regional divide between north-center and south-islands. Nevertheless, even in the regional area with the highest use of childcare services the percentage hardly reach the 20% and it does not seem to be increasing over the last decade.

Figure 14: Percent use of childcare facilities of 0-3 years old[15]

To cope with the lack of policies and services, the introduction of flexible working contracts and the amendment of part-time employment were presented also as a way to resolve work/family issues, allowing parents (usually mothers) to have more flexible or reduced work schedules (Bertolini & Solera, 2016; Riva, 2016).

The only significant policy shift in recent years has been introduced by Law 53/2000 on parental leave, which acknowledged an individual entitlement for fathers. Within this new framework, working fathers are individually entitled to

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[15] Percent of 0-3 years old in childcare facilities computed on the total number of 0-3 years old in the area for each year. Own elaboration of Istat data.

a portion of the parental leave, which is 10 months in total until the child reaches the age of 8, of which neither parent can take more than 6 months (INPS, 2020a). The law also establishes an incentive for fathers to take parental leave: if a father takes at least 3 months of leave, he is entitled to an additional month, leading to a total of 11 months of leave for the family (INPS, 2020a). Another important innovation under this law concerns the greater degree of flexibility with which the leave may be taken for single days or only a few days a week (INPS, 2020a; Naldini & Saraceno, 2008; Riva, 2016). Moreover, Law 92/2012 established a compulsory (but still symbolic), leave available to employed fathers within the fifth month of the newborn child, initially set at 2 days, and gradually extended to 7 days by Law 27/2019 (INPS 2020a). These policies have sought to promote gender equality by granting men responsibilities and rights more similar to those of women (Knijn & Saraceno, 2010). The acknowledgement of and incentive for men's caring responsibilities are said to represent one of the major cultural policy shifts in recent years in Italy (Saraceno 2007). However, this shift in policy has not actually changed fathers' behavior, and the uptake of parental leave by fathers has remained scant (Knijn & Saraceno, 2010; Naldini & Jurado, 2013). This may be due to cultural norms, but also to the low compensation rate for the leave, which corresponds to only 30% of the salary. Nonetheless, many fathers, and in particular young ones, are not even entitled to the parental leave. Although non-standard contracts have been presented as a way to cope with the issue of work/life reconciliation, many of them do not give entitlement to the new parental leave. Moreover, flexible contracts have also generally increased the sense of insecurity and uncertainty, further reducing the uptake of parental leave by eligible fathers (Naldini and Saraceno 2008).

Generally, and similarly to the recipients of unemployment benefits [see section 2.2], fixed-term employees have access to parental leave on the same conditions as permanent workers, but only within the duration of their contracts (Bertolini & Solera, 2016; INPS, 2020a). Since 2000, women with atypical jobs have been entitled to a suspension of their contract, and the extension of its

duration for up to 5 months in the case of maternity, paid by the National Social Security Institute (INPS), with an allowance equal to 80% of the previous income. Moreover, since 2007, mothers and fathers with atypical contracts have also been entitled to 3 months of optional parental leave paid at 30% of their salary (Bertolini & Solera, 2016; INPS, 2020a). In any event, no coverage is foreseen in the transition from one contract to another, unless the worker is eligible for unemployment benefits (Bertolini & Solera, 2016; INPS, 2020a). To compensate for the lack of public services, several companies have begun to provide family services, e.g. nurseries, childcare for their employees, increasing inequalities in the access to family services between labor-market insiders and outsiders. Moreover, since the Constitutional reform of 2001, social services, including family services and child care, have become of regional competence. This has given rise to poorer social services in the southern regions, increasing cross-regional differences; and it has further impeded the expansion of women's employment in southern regions (Naldini & Saraceno, 2011).

Overall, inequalities in the chances of reconciliation contribute to amplifying territorial inequalities, and between labor-market insiders and outsiders (Bertolini, 2006; Bertolini & Solera, 2016; Saraceno, 2005). In this scenario, the advent of the Great Recession, and the related financial crisis and austerity measures adopted to cover the extensive Italian public debt, included a large-scale retrenchment and recalibration of the welfare system with negative consequences on the development of work/family services (Dotti Sani, 2018b; León & Pavolini, 2014).

4. Employment and union dissolution in Italy: previous findings

Despite the above-outlined degree of traditionalism and stagnation in policies and beliefs, in the last few decades important social, demographic and economic changes have occurred in Italy. Particularly pertinent to this thesis is the constant growth of separation and divorce rates, and the important changes in labor-market conditions and composition. However, only few studies have analyzed the impact of employment conditions and characteristics on union dissolution in Italy.

De Sandre (1980) was the first to show the increase in marital disruption among women of high socio-economic status in the first half of the 1970s: a finding later confirmed by, among others, De Rose (1992) on micro data. In her pioneering study on divorce in Italy, using data from the retrospective "Italian Structure and Family Behaviour Survey" of 1983, De Rose (1992) found that the women most exposed to the risk of marital disruption were those who had married at a very young age, who had opted for a period of cohabitation before marriage, who had no more than one child, who were better educated, with full-time jobs, and who lived in large towns in the north-west of Italy. De Rose concluded from her findings that, in Italy at that time, the still modest frequency of family dissolution could be explained by women's scant participation in the labor market and in skilled occupations, by strong cultural norms, and by the high value given to the roles of mother and wife.

Vignoli and Ferro (2009) followed up on this study with data collected by the Istat *Italian Multipurpose Survey on Family and Social Subject* twenty years later, in 2003. Although over time the incidence of divorce had risen both in absolute terms (+75%) and in terms of rates – with the period total divorce rate climbing from 80 to 151 divorces per 1,000 marriages – correlates of marital break-up remained essentially unchanged. In particular, Vignoli and Ferro found that women's employment status still had a very strong positive impact on marital

dissolution, with a divorce risk almost twice as high among both temporarily and permanently employed women. This finding supported the contention that women's economic autonomy enables them to exit unhappy relationships, and that their nonconformity with their traditional gender role destabilize marriages. Likewise, because higher education is linked to better economic prospects and job opportunities, and to more individualistic values, it is a correlate of higher divorce risk.

A subsequent comparative study (Vignoli et al., 2018) focused on the impact of women's employment on divorce. For Italy, it used data from a more recent version of the 2009 *Italian Multipurpose Survey on Family and Social Subjects*. It reported that, among the four countries examined in the paper (i.e. Germany, Hungary, Poland and Italy) the magnitude of the effect appeared to be strongest in Italy, where employed women had a 50% higher risk of marital disruption compared to non-employed women. Moreover, the authors found that the risk of marital disruption increased markedly after a woman entered employment, and decreased with time, suggesting that the positive effect of women's employment on divorce in Italy is partly driven by anticipation – that is, women look for a job when they foresee a divorce. Nevertheless, anticipatory behavior did not explain the overall impact of employment on marital stability in Italy, because the positive relationship between the two processes was still observed several years after a woman had entered employment; and even ten years after employment entry her risk of divorce was more than 20% higher than that of a non-working woman. Country differences were explained by the higher dominance of the male breadwinner family model in Italy, unfavorable conditions for work/family reconciliation, and relatively low female employment rates (Vignoli et al., 2018).

In the aforementioned studies, only women were included in the analysis, while men were completely disregarded. The first study analyzing gender differences in divorce predictors in Italy was conducted by De Rose and Di Cesare (2003), using data from the Fertility and Family survey of 1996. In particular, they focused on the extent to which employment plays a different role

for women with respect to men. Their analysis showed that, whilst a number of characteristics – early marriage, pre-marital cohabitation, number of children, and religion – had the same effect for men and women, an important difference was apparent in regard to employment status. Full-time employed woman had a much higher separation risk than non-working women, while the same condition for men had precisely the opposite effect.

Again using data from the 2003 *Italian Multipurpose Survey on Family and Social Subjects*, Salvini and Vignoli (2011) – in a study focused on the role of education, comparing women and men – confirmed that employed women were about 41% more likely to dissolve their union. By contrast, employed men were about 14% less likely to dissolve their union (although the effect was not statistically precise).

It is evident from the foregoing review that research on employment and union dissolution in Italy is outdated and suffers from several limitations. First, most research lacks a gender comparison and focuses only on women. Moreover, existing research dates back to at least a decade ago, and therefore fails to capture the process of labor-market flexibilization, the major changes in values and behaviors occurring across generations (Özcan & Breen, 2012; Preston, 1986), as well as new demographic trends such as the expansion of cohabitation (Guetto et al., 2016; Perelli-Harris & Lyons-Amos, 2015). Finally, the role of the broader economic and social context is vastly underplayed. Italian divorce research has for long suffered from a general lack of suitable quantitative data with which to study the matter. The recently released *Italian Multipurpose Survey on Family and Social Subjects 2016,* described in detail in Chapter 4, thus offers an opportunity to fill the existing gap and gain novel insights into the Italian case.

CHAPTER 3

Data and Methodology

The aim of this research thesis is to contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution in its micro, macro, and gender dimensions. For this purpose, the thesis is organized into three empirical chapters, as follows. Chapter 4 deals with the micro-level relationship between employment instability and union dissolution. It analyzes the association between joblessness, time-limited work, and their accumulation over the life course, on the one hand, and union dissolution on the other. The relationship between employment instability and union dissolution is studied through the lens of gender, disentangling differences across cohorts, and between married and cohabiting couples. Chapter 5 considers employment instability in its macro-level configuration. It studies the relationship between unemployment and temporary work rates and the individual risk of union dissolution of women and men. Moreover, it examines whether macro-level employment conditions have different impacts on the risk of union dissolution for individuals with different employment status and type of contract, and type of union (marriage vs. cohabitation), and whether the relationship has changed over time due to the advent of the Great Recession. Finally, Chapter 6 analyzes whether the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution varies in contexts with a different diffusion of gendered behaviors regarding the share of paid and unpaid work, and with a different presence and uptake of work/family reconciliation services. This chapter presents and describes in detail the data, sample selection, variables, and analytic strategy adopted in the empirical chapters.

1. Data

All three empirical chapters make use of micro data from Istat's nationally representative 2016 "Families and Social Subjects and the life cycle" survey. The survey is the main Italian statistical source on family structure and social characteristics. It is part of the Multipurpose thematic household survey cycle, and it has been conducted approximately every five/six years since 1998 (Istat, 2019b).

In 2016, the survey was carried out in December on a sample of 32,585 individuals aged 18 and older distributed among 852 Italian municipalities of different demographic size. The sampling design was complex and made use of two different sampling schemes based on the clustered structure of the population in municipalities, provinces, regions (NUTS-2), and macro-regions (NUTS-1). Sampled individuals were then randomly drawn from the municipality's registry lists. Interviews were carried out by municipal surveyors with a face-to-face interview in the sampled individuals' dwelling by means of the Papi (Paper and Pencil interview) technique. The total non-response rate[16] for the survey was 21.25% (Istat, 2021c). Sampling weights were applied to correct for non-responses and to match the known demographic values for the overall population with respect to age, gender, and municipality (Istat, 2019b).

The survey provides vast information on respondents' families and relationships, and detailed (monthly) retrospective information on education, employment and career paths, fertility, and partnership histories, making it possible to adopt an event history analysis approach.

In Chapters 5 and 6, regional-level (NUTS-2) yearly time-series indicators, respectively on the employment and gender context, provided by ISTAT are merged to the survey. All macro-level indicators are described in detail in sections 4.2 and 4.3.

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[16] Ratio between the number of units for which no data were collected for some reason (death, absence, or refusal to reply) and the total number of units designated for data collection.

2. Sample selection

The analysis focuses on individual's first cohabiting union, including both marriages and unmarried cohabitations. Because the focus of this thesis is on employment and job position, the analysis is limited to the working-age population (aged from 15 to 60). Despite the capacity for individuals above the age of 60 to still be active in the labor market, I excluded them from the analysis since they fall into the category of "grey divorces" (Brown & Lin, 2012) – itself a distinct phenomenon. I also cut the sample at 50 and 55 years old and found that the results were substantially the same [see Tables 1.1 and 1.2 in the Appendix.]. Moreover, in order to differentiate between casual or fleeting relationships and committed unions, those respondents who dissolved their union before their 20s, or those whose union lasted less than three months, were excluded. Additionally, I excluded cohorts born before 1950 because divorce in Italy was possible only after 1970 and time-limited jobs have only been spreading since the 1980s. Cohorts born after 1986 were also excluded because, at the time of the interview, they would have been too young to have experienced the event of union dissolution.

In Chapter 4 the final sample consists of N = 6,612 women and N = 5,901 men who entered a first union, including 9,448 direct marriages, 1,469 non-marital cohabitations, and 1,596 cohabitations which resulted in marriages during the observation period. Of these, N = 1,209 women (N = 379 cohabitations and N = 830 marriages) and N = 1,155 men (N = 493 cohabitations and N = 662 marriages) experienced union dissolution.

In Chapters 5 and 6 the sample is reduced because macro-level indicators were only available since 2000 for Chapter 5, and 2004 for Chapter 6. The final sample in Chapter 5 consists of N = 6,163 women, and N = 5,500 men who entered a first union, of whom, respectively, N = 789 women and N = 764 men eventually separated. In Chapter 7, instead, the sample consists of N = 5,975 women, of whom N = 616 had their first union dissolved, and N = 5,293 men,

with N = 585 dissolutions. A summary of sample size and dissolutions for each chapter is reported in Table 1.

Table 1: Sample size and dissolutions for each empirical study

	Period covered	WOMEN		MEN	
		N	Dissolutions	N	Dissolutions
Chapter 4	1965-2016	6,612	1,209	5,901	1,155
Chapter 5	2000-2016	6,163	789	5,500	764
Chapter 6	2004-2016	5,975	616	5,293	585

After union histories had been constructed and the sample had been selected, only the variables defining the type of union, parental union condition, and employment status presented missing values. For all three variables, these values were below 2% and somewhat equally distributed in terms of demographic and socio-economic characteristics. Hence, these cases were deleted from the analysis.

3. Analytical strategy

In the three empirical chapters, the analysis adopts an event-history continuous time approach to data analysis, making use of the monthly precision of the collected histories. In event history analysis, estimates are performed by means of a maximum likelihood estimation, including the duration until the occurrence of the event of interest, where the duration is measured from the time at which an individual becomes exposed to the 'risk' of experiencing the event (Jenkins, 2004). In this thesis, the event of interest is union dissolution, and individuals become exposed to the risk of experiencing such an event when their relationship

starts. The transition rate (also called hazard, intensity, failure, or risk function) expresses the instantaneous risk of experiencing an event at time t given that the event did not occur before t, and it is defined as:

$$h(t) = \lim_{\Delta t \to 0} \frac{Pr \ (t \leq T < t + \Delta t | T \geq t)}{\Delta t}$$

In other words, the transition rate represents the probability of future changes in the dependent variable per unit of time, or the propensity to change states from origin j to destination k at time t (Blossfeld et al., 2019) – in this case, the probability of union dissolution at a point in time, given that the relationship continued until that point.

In all event-history models in the empirical chapters is adopted a semi-parametric proportional hazard approach where the baseline risk is specified with a piecewise constant function.

Proportional hazard models (also known as multiplicative hazard models), which can be written in the following form:

$$\theta \ (t, X) = \theta_0(t) \ \exp(\beta'X)$$

are characterized by the baseline hazard function $\theta_0(t)$, which depends on t and summarizes the pattern of duration dependence, assumed to be common to all persons, and $exp(\beta'X)$, which is a person-specific non-negative function of covariates X (which does not depend on t, by construction), which scales the baseline hazard function common to all persons. The proportional hazard property implies that, in a proportional hazard model, each regression coefficient summarizes the proportional effect on the hazard of absolute changes in the corresponding co-variate and this effect does not vary with transition time (Jenkins, 2004).

With a piecewise constant specification, the time axis is partitioned into a number of intervals using cut-points. The risk of separation is assumed to be constant within each defined time period, yet it is allowed for variation across periods. An advantage of this model specification is that the overall shape of the

hazard function does not have to be imposed in advance (Blossfeld et al., 2019; Jenkins, 2004). The baseline hazard rate (θ) is constant within each of the K intervals but differs between intervals.

This expression may be rewritten as:

$$\theta\left(t, X_t\right) = \begin{cases} \overline{\theta}_1 \exp(\beta' X_1) & t \in (0, \tau_1] \\ \overline{\theta}_2 \exp(\beta' X_2) & t \in (\tau_1, \tau_2] \\ \vdots & \vdots \\ \overline{\theta}_K \exp(\beta' X_K) & t \in (\tau_{K-1}, \tau_K] \end{cases}$$

Figure 1 shows the shape of the baseline hazard analyzed in the present research, i.e. the piecewise constant transition rate of union dissolution. All episodes are measured in months since the beginning of a union. The time axis (measuring months since the beginning of a union) is portioned into defined intervals: 0 to 3 years, 4 to 7 years, 8 to 14 years, 15 to 20 years, and 20+ years. The predicted hazard of union dissolution is higher in the first 3 years and gradually diminishes in each defined period, given that the relationship survived until that point.

Figure 1: Piecewise constant transition rate model[17]

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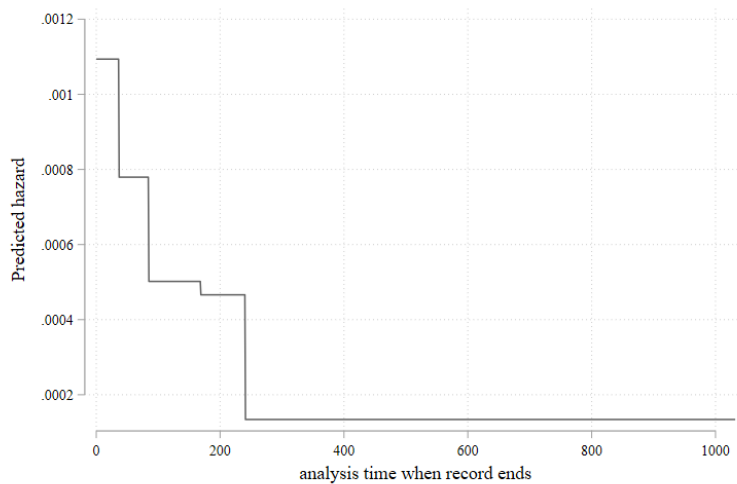
[17]Own elaboration of Istat data "Families and Social Subjects and the life cycle" of 2016, 1950-1986 cohorts for the period 1965-2016

Figure 2 shows a non-parametric estimation of the survival function for women and men, without accounting for any covariate, computed with the product-limit method, also known as the Kaplan-Meier (1958) method. The survival function is the probability that no event has occurred before time t:

$$S(t) = Pr(T \geq t)$$

Individuals who have not yet experienced the event are said to have 'survived'. The product limit method is based on calculating a risk set at every point in time when at least one event occurred. The figures show that, after 2 years (60 months) from the beginning of the union 94% of women, and 91% of men, are still in their union (survived). After 25 years (300 months) the percentage of women and men still in the union amounts to about 78% for both. Finally, after 480 months (40 years) since the beginning of the first union, about 76% of women and 74% men are still in the union.

Figure 2: Kaplan-Meier survival estimates for women and men[18]

In Chapters 5 and 6, the regional dimension is included. Regional level time series variables are merged to the Istat survey by region and year [a more detailed description of the variables is provided in sections 4.3 and 4.4.]. To model two levels of analysis, region fixed effects are included.

4. Variables

4.1 Dependent variable

The event under study is the risk of union dissolution (including all first unions), be they cohabitations or marriages. For non-marital cohabitations, union dissolution corresponds to the reported date of relationship termination and, for marriages, to the date of *de facto* separation, i.e., separations not yet accompanied by legal provision. For those cohabitations which result first in marriage and then in union dissolution, the event corresponds to the *de facto* separation from the marriage. The moment of *de facto* separation is in fact the moment that marks the marriage's dissolution, and it is consistent with the relationship terminations used for non-marital unions. For 395 dissolutions (between women and men), however, the date of de-facto separation was missing, but the date of legal separation or divorce was reported. For those dissolutions, the date of *de facto* separation was estimated with an imputation procedure on the distribution of lags (between *de facto* separation, legal separation, and divorce) observed in women and men with complete information, for each cohort (Vignoli & Ferro, 2009). For a robustness check the final model was run with and without imputed values and using the date of legal separation or divorce instead of *de facto* separation. The results proved stable [see Tables 2.1 and 2.2 in the Appendix.].

4.2 Individual-level measures of employment instability

In order to analyze the relation between current employment conditions and the risk of union dissolution, I built a time-varying variable identifying the respondents' employment status and type of contract. Respondents' employment history was based on the collection of employment episodes. The Istat survey includes up to eleven employment episodes reported by respondents, with monthly-precise information on the beginning and end of the employment spell. Individuals move from one episode to the next when their contracts end. Thus, to individuals with several job contracts there correspond several job episodes. The time-varying variable was constructed starting from two original variables in the dataset indicating respectively whether the respondent was employed permanently or on a time-limited basis, and his/her work position (i.e. employee, self-employed worker, consultant). The final variable was coded as *permanently employed* (as a reference category), *jobless, time-limited employed,* and *self-employed*. Time-limited contractual arrangements comprise jobs-on-call, job sharing, apprenticeships, training, project-based contracts, seasonal work, and all other types of time-limited employment.

To assess the influence of employment instability accumulation over the course of a relationship (Chapter 4), I constructed two additional indicators measuring: the number of months of joblessness; and the number of months working in time-limited jobs, over the total number of months since the beginning of the union. In order to gain more comprehensive understanding of the patterns of accumulation of employment instability, I coded the two ratios into categories measuring whether the respondent was *never jobless* (reference)*, jobless up to 25%, between 25–50%,* or *over 50% of the relationship duration.* Similarly, for time-limited work, I measured whether the respondent was *never in a time-limited job* (reference), *for up to 10%, between 10–20%,* or *over 20% of the relationship duration*. The cut-off points were located based on the variables' distribution, through an exploratory ('backwise') approach, i.e. starting from a large amount of categories and then removing step-by-step non-meaningful

categories, with a rational of balancing parsimony and assuring a meaningful sample size. On slightly modifying the cut-off points, the results were not affected [see different cut-off points in Table 3.1 and Figure 1 in the Appendix.].

4.3 Macro-level indicators of employment instability

To measure macro-level employment instability, I adopted two regional-level (NUTS-2) indicators provided yearly by Istat (Istat, 2021a) on unemployment and temporary work rates. The unemployment rate is defined as the share of people of working age (15-65) who are without work and are available for work, and have taken specific steps to find work, in the total labor force constituted by employed and unemployed persons. The indicator of the share of time-limited work is a measure of the number of time-limited workers over the total number of workers over 15 years old. Both indicators are time-varying because they vary yearly from 2000 to 2016. For a more meaningful interpretation of the results, both indicators were transformed into percentages and centered to their mean value.

4.4 Macro-level indicators of gender context

To study differences in the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution in different gender contexts, I built three NUTS-2 level indicators respectively on the share of paid and domestic and care work, and reconciliation policies.

The indicator on the share of paid work is a measure of the percentage of dual earner couples over the total number of couples in the region aged between 25 and 65 years old, with and without children. The indicator stems from the Labor

Force Survey (LFS), conducted by Istat, and it's available from 2004 to 2016 (Istat, 2021a). For the analysis, I coded this indicator into three categories defining a low (< 25%), mid (>25% and <55%) and higher (>55%) share of dual earner couples.

The second Indicator measures the symmetry in the share of care and domestic work among dual-earner couples aged between 25 and 64 years old. It derives from the Time-Use Survey, conducted in the years 2003, 2008 and 2013. The values for these three points in time were attributed also to the year preceding the survey and the three years following it, as shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3: Attribution of yearly values of the index of asymmetry in the division of domestic and care work

2002 2003 2004 2005 2006 2007 2008 2009 2010 2011 2012 2013 2014 2015 2016
|_____| |_____| |_____|
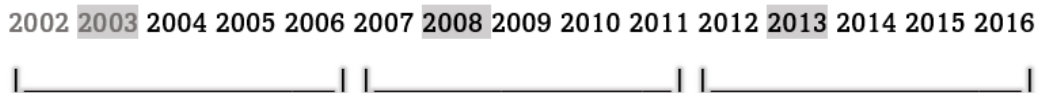
A perfect symmetry would be represented by a 50, meaning that each partner attended to half of the care and domestic tasks. In Italian regions, this index ranges from 65 to 85, meaning that in all regions care and domestic work falls disproportionally on women. The index was coded into categories: low symmetry (>80), mid (<80 and >67), higher (<67).

Finally, the presence and uptake of reconciliation services is measured with an indicator on the percentage of children aged 0-3 attending childcare in the total number of children of the same age in the region (NUTS-2). The indicator has been provided by Istat since 2004 (Istat, 2021a). Also this indicator was coded into three categories: low (below 5%), mid (between 5% and 20%) and higher (above 20%). Displayed in Chapter 6 [Tables 1, 2 and 3] are all values for each region and year for the three indicators.

4.5 Control variables

The model equation also includes the primary correlates of union dissolutions as identified by the literature [Chapter 1, section 4]: years since union formation; type of union (marriage vs. cohabitation); number and age of children; cohort; parental education and separation (Amato, 2010; T. Lyngstad & Jalovaara, 2010; Vignoli & Ferro, 2009). Years since union formation, type of union (marriage or cohabitation), and number and age of children are time-varying. A descriptive table with exposure time and occurrences (i.e. union dissolutions) for all individual level variables is provided in Table 2.

In Chapter 4 the region is included as a control as a macro region (North – Centre – South), while in Chapter 5 and 6 the regional variable is at the NUTS-2 level. The regional variable indicates the region of residence of the respondent, and it is time-varying, as individuals may move among regions over their life course. The survey includes two original regional variables: one constant, reporting the region of residence at the time of the interview, and the other time-varying, indicating the region where the respondent resided during each employment spell. Therefore, for jobless individuals the time-varying region of residence was missing. For those individuals, I imputed as region of residence the region of the preceding employment spell, if any, or the region of residence at the time of interview if the respondent had never worked in the observed time. For a robustness check, the models of Chapters 5 and 6 were run with and without imputation and using NUTS-1 instead of NUTS-2 regions, and the results were fairly stable [see Tables 4.1-4.5 in the Appendix.].

Added in Chapter 5 are two regional-level control variables on the GDP-per capita and separation context, again provided by Istat. GDP per-capita is available yearly and thus constitutes a time-varying variable in its continuous form, centered on its mean value and divided by 1000, to represent a change of 1000 euros from the average. The separation context is an indicator of the separation culture in the region and measures the yearly number of legal separations per 1000 marriages, coded into three categories: low separation

context (below 250), mid (between 250 and 310), and high separation context (above 310).

Table 2: Exposure and events (survey variables)

	Women-months observed in union		Failures		Men-months observed in union		Failures	
	Abs. value	%	Abs. value	%	Abs. value	%	Abs. value	%
Years since union formation								
0-3	232496	13.3	243	20.1	204247	15	337	29.2
4-7	287884	16.5	295	24.4	245063	18	291	25.2
8-14	429582	24.6	325	26.9	356067	26.2	260	22.5
15-20	290214	16.6	187	15.5	231123	17	154	13.3
20+	507176	29	159	13.2	323994	23.8	113	9.8
NUTS-1 region								
North	757495	43.4	643	53.2	576265	42.4	630	54.5
Center	303106	17.4	247	20.4	224015	16.5	221	19.1
South and Islands	686751	39.3	319	26.4	560214	41.2	304	26.3
Cohort								
1950-1959	767060	43.9	227	18.8	621462	45.7	262	22.7
1960-1969	588987	33.7	410	33.9	466105	34.3	411	35.6
1970-1986	391305	22.4	572	47.3	272927	20.1	482	41.7
Type of union								
Marriage	1651275	94.5	830	68.7	1264728	93	662	57.3
Cohabitation	96077	5.5	379	31.4	95766	7	493	42.7
Number and age of children								
childless	318980	18.3	507	41.9	289588	21.3	659	57.1
1 age 0-6	290232	16.6	181	15	244102	17.9	132	11.4
1 age 7+	234384	13.4	181	15	162385	11.9	112	9.7
2 youngest 0-6	260693	14.9	109	9	217133	16	75	6.5
2 youngest 7+	390266	22.3	164	13.6	287617	21.1	131	11.3
3 or more	252797	14.5	67	5.5	159669	11.7	46	4
Parents are separated								
No	1667020	95.4	1060	87.7	1302431	95.7	1059	91.7
Yes	80332	4.6	149	12.3	58063	4.3	96	8.3
At least one parent with higher education								
No	1514463	86.7	886	73.3	1192482	87.7	875	75.8
Yes	232889	13.3	323	26.7	168012	12.4	280	24.2

Education								
None or primary	244985	14	52	4.3	130603	9.6	47	4.1
Lower secondary	598304	34.2	304	25.2	510890	37.6	391	33.9
Upper secondary	656118	37.6	581	48.1	561252	41.3	528	45.7
Tertiary	247945	14.2	272	22.5	157749	11.6	189	16.4
Employment status and type of contract								
Jobless	848766	48.6	391	32.3	164420	12.1	194	16.8
Permanent worker	634936	36.3	585	48.4	782506	57.5	606	52.5
Time-limited	99033	5.7	110	9.1	79505	5.8	89	7.7
Self-employed	164617	9.4	123	10.2	334063	24.6	266	23
% Joblessness								
Never	273259	15.6	384	31.8	584915	43	628	54.4
Up to 25%	467286	26.7	281	23.3	590054	43.4	291	25.2
25% to 50%	196901	11.3	122	10.1	78556	5.8	58	5
More than 50%	809906	46.4	422	34.9	106969	7.9	178	15.4
% Time-limited								
Never	1390237	79.6	942	77.9	1155247	84.9	983	85.1
Up to 10% of time	137287	7.9	54	4.5	60462	4.4	19	1.6
10% to 20%	59880	3.4	40	3.3	31691	2.3	15	1.3
More than 20%	159948	9.2	173	14.3	113094	8.3	138	12

Notes: exposures and events of survey variables, based on the 1965-2016 sample (chapter 4)

5. Data limitation

The data have some limitations. First, the employment characteristics of ex-partners were unavailable, thereby excluding the possibility of a couple-level analysis. Moreover, despite the data providing detailed information on past and current employment spells, details on unemployment spells were lacking. Therefore, it was only possible to determine whether the individual was not working, without being able to distinguish between inactivity and unemployment. However, joblessness, rather than unemployment, has been

suggested to be more impactful when studying the consequences of economic constraints on family outcomes (Härkönen, 2011). Many of the social and demographic consequences of economic inactivity are identical to those of unemployment because the key point is whether a person is working, not whether s/he is actively looking for work. For this reason, many studies have expanded their focus to joblessness instead of unemployment (Busetta et al., 2019; Clasen et al., 2006). In line with this research, the lack of an indicator of personal unemployment should not compromise the analysis. Moreover, although the Istat survey provides (subjective) information on the respondents' income, this was only collected at the time of the interview. Hence it would be incorrect to use this variable in the analysis because of the risk of performing a so-called 'anticipatory analysis' (Hoem & Kreyenfeld, 2006a, 2006b). Nevertheless, I controlled for the respondents' and their parents' levels of education since these are well-established proxies for socio-economic status (Barone, 2009; Koops et al., 2017). Finally, the Istat survey does not include retrospective information on unpaid work, which has been shown to be an important variable in the definition of the gendered relationship between paid work and union dissolution (Bellani et al., 2018; Mencarini & Vignoli, 2018; Sigle-Rushton, 2010). This limitation is only partly accounted for in Chapter 6 by including a regional-level time-varying variable on the share of domestic and care work.

CHAPTER 4

Employment instability and union dissolution:
A complex micro-level relationship

1. Introduction

The present empirical chapter address the relationship between individual-level employment instability and union dissolution. As introduced, existing research indicates theoretical and empirical ambivalence concerning the direction of the effects of employment instability on union dissolution, providing theoretical arguments and evidence for both the *relational stress* and the *cost of divorce* hypothesis [outlined in the introduction and Chapter 1]. Yet, existing studies suffer from a series of limitations.

First, virtually all prior research has only used unemployment as an indicator of economic performance. This is somewhat dismissive of the fact that employment instability is also engendered by time-limited work contracts, characterized by time discontinuity, insecurity, lack of rights and social protection, and generally low earnings, thereby favoring uncertain futures (Benach et al., 2014; Benach & Muntaner, 2007; Pirani & Salvini, 2015). Thus, in the present chapter, employment instability is identified with joblessness and time-limited employment—both of which generate high levels of uncertainty since they correspond to a lack of clarity on economic prospects, as well as economic strain from either a total lack of income from work, or temporary (and often scarce) salaries. To the best of my knowledge,

no study has yet analyzed the relation between fixed-term work contracts and the risk of union dissolution.

Second, while the grand majority of past studies have considered measures of employment status (i.e., being unemployed), a series of recent papers have added that not only the *status*, but also—and especially—the *persistence* of employment instability affects family dynamics, providing evidence that it represents a crucial marker of economic uncertainty (Busetta et al., 2019; Ciganda, 2015; Özcan et al., 2010; Pailhé & Solaz, 2012). As a matter of fact, the accumulation of employment instability, including information on past and present experiences, may better capture future economic prospects.

Third, prior research has generally lacked a gender perspective, despite it being already well-established that employment status may have a different meaning for women and men's partnership choices (de Rose & Di Cesare, 2007; Sayer et al., 2011). In societies with a prevalent male-breadwinner family system, when the wife is not employed, her cost of divorce is typically higher since she is likely to be financially dependent on the marriage (Sayer & Bianchi, 2000). Conversely, when the husband is jobless, the stress mechanisms may be predominant due to his poor performance as a provider (Cherlin, 1979; Conger et al., 1990). The few studies including gender comparisons (e.g. Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003; Liker & Elder, 1983; Ono, 1998; for Italy, de Rose & Di Cesare, 2007) date back to over a decade ago and, importantly, it has been shown that, as the economic role of men and women equalizes, gender differences gradually disappear (Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003; Oppenheimer, 1994). Therefore, as the economic roles and aspirations of men and women have tended to converge across generations, analyzing recent cohorts is especially crucial. Furthermore, there may well be an evolution regarding the gender relationship between employment conditions and couple stability across generations.

Finally, existing research tends to focus on divorce of married couples (Conger et al., 1990; de Rose & Di Cesare, 2007; Doiron & Mendolia, 2012). Nevertheless, unmarried cohabitation is becoming an increasingly common living arrangement (Perelli-Harris & Lyons-Amos, 2015) also in Italy (Gabrielli & Hoem, 2010; Guetto

et al., 2016), and younger couples (both within and outside of Italy) with unstable jobs generally tend to cohabit rather than marry (Manning, 2020; Vignoli et al., 2016). For this reason, it is important to include both type of couples, keeping in mind, however, that they vastly differ in term of stability, and may be hit by employment instability in different ways.

To address oversights of past research, this chapter aims at clarifying the complex micro-level relationship between employment instability on union dissolution by:

i.   considering not only the effect of joblessness, but also the type of employment contract;

ii.   evaluating both the status and accumulation of instability over the life course;

iii.   assessing changes across cohorts;

iv.   distinguishing between marriage and cohabitation;

v.   analyzing each point through the lens of gender.

Moreover, a final section is dedicated to the issue of **causation and selectivity**.

2. Research hypothesis

2.1 Joblessness

Since Italy still demonstrates relevant gender differences in the allocation of time and responsibilities between paid and unpaid work—and the prevalence of traditional gender attitudes—the first hypothesis (Hypothesis 1) is that the individual-level relation between joblessness and union dissolution will likely still be the opposite for women and men. Jobless women should form more stable relationships than their permanently employed counterparts since they are economically dependent on their husbands and comply with traditional gender

norms. Therefore, non-employed women should face a high economic and social cost of divorce. Conversely, women with permanent contracts (representing a select group of women), who enjoy greater economic independence, are therefore more likely to leave unhappy relationships since their cost of divorce is lower (Killewald, 2016; Sayer et al., 2011). Moreover, due to the general scarcity of reconciliation policies and family services, and the persistence of a traditional gender culture in the division of domestic labor and responsibilities, working women are more likely to experience work-family conflict, often resulting in high relational stress (Collins, 2020). It follows that jobless women are expected to be less likely to experience union dissolution than women with permanent contracts (Hypothesis 1a).

I expect to observe the opposite relation for men. Since, in Italy, men are expected to be a family's main provider, jobless men are more likely to exhibit stress and frustration (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021; Kim & Luke, 2020), thereby generating relationship conflict which, in turn, increases the risk of separation. Moreover, as jobless men in a dominant male-breadwinner context do not comply with gender norms, they can therefore be considered unsuitable husbands, further increasing relational stress. Conversely, men with secure jobs are likely to form more stable relationships as they fit the role of an effective family provider. Therefore, I expect jobless men to more frequently experience union dissolution than permanently employed men (Hypothesis 1b).

2.2 Time-limited jobs

Likewise, I anticipate a different relationship between time-limited contracts for women and men (Hypothesis 2). In the Italian context, time-limited forms of employment could represent an unfortunate "solution" to preserve the male-breadwinner family system by allowing women to work and contribute to the household's income without undermining the male-breadwinner role thus complying with existing gender norms (Kim & Luke, 2020). Consequently, in line with the *gender stress mechanism* [described in Chapter 1, section 3.1], these

women should face lower levels of relational stress than their permanently employed counterparts. Moreover, since time-limited jobs often confer little-to-no economic independence, and are characterized by certain degrees of uncertainty, I expect women with time-limited work contracts to face a high cost of divorce due to their economic dependence. It follows that women with time-limited jobs should be less likely to experience union dissolution than permanently employed women (Hypothesis 2a). In a similar vein, women engaged in time-limited employment are expected to be less reliant on their husbands' economic support, making them more likely to experience union dissolution than jobless women. Moreover, as time-limited contracts offer a more flexible employment status compared to permanent employment—and are therefore less disruptive of traditional gender norms—we anticipate the union dissolution risk of women with time-limited contracts to be in-between their jobless and permanently employed counterparts (Hypothesis 2b).

Men with time-limited contracts, instead, do not conform to their bread-winner roles and may engender economic hardship and uncertainty for the future of their families. This can lead to high relational stress and exacerbate tensions within couples, resulting in their dissolution. Therefore, time-limited employed men are expected to be more likely to experience union dissolution than permanently employed men (Hypothesis 2c). However, men with time-limited employment can at least financially contribute to the household to a certain extent (and so slightly conform to their bread-winner roles), especially compared to jobless males. I thus expect the union dissolution risk of men with time-limited employment in-between their jobless and permanently employed counterparts (Hypothesis 2d).

2.3 Accumulation of employment instability

As observed in fertility research (Busetta et al., 2019; Özcan et al., 2010; Pailhé & Solaz, 2012), the role of employment instability is likely dependent on its accumulation over a life-course or, in the case of union dissolution, on the accumulation of employment instability over the time spent in a union (Hypothesis

3). Limited periods of joblessness or time-limited employment may in fact be a contingency, and thus, not necessarily influence union dissolution.

As for the previous hypotheses, I expect the effect to differ between genders. For women, the accumulation of jobless may increase economic dependence on their partners. Moreover, women in relationships who spend significant periods outside of the labor market could well be doing so out of a choice to dedicate more time to familial responsibilities. Consequently, we expect to observe a reduction in the risk of dissolution as time spent jobless increases (Hypothesis 3a). I expect a different association for the accumulation of time-limited jobs. While women engaged in time-limited work for a short period may not have the financial means with which to cope with a separation—especially compared with the permanently employed— those working in time-limited jobs for a considerable time may reach sufficient economic independence relative to women who do not engage in paid work at all. Accordingly, I expect the accumulation of time-limited work to gradually increase women's dissolution risk (Hypothesis 3b).

For men, a brief (or relatively short) length of time spent jobless or in unstable employment may be insufficient to generate significant levels of stress within a couple or to be reflective of their unsuitability as partners. However, prolonged employment instability is likely to exacerbate relationship tension and increase the risk of dissolution. Therefore, according to the amount of time spent in employment instability, the effect may not be monotonic (Hypothesis 3c).

Indeed, individuals with long spells of employment instability may be a very select group [see Chapter 1, section 2.5]. For instance, women employed for less than half of the relationship may be a select, and more traditionally-minded, cluster, thereby less likely to dissolve a union (Vignoli et al., 2018). Similarly, men may experience long spells of unemployment due to their suffering from mental disorders or depression, which may also make them undesirable partners. Therefore, as I cannot control for the reason beyond the accumulation of unstable employment spells [see Chapter 4 on data and methods], I can only aim to uncover its potential association with union dissolution. A more formal test would necessarily require richer longitudinal data that are—as yet—unavailable for Italy.

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2.4 Changes across cohorts

I expect gender differences in the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution to gradually diminish across cohorts (Hypothesis 4).

Because women's desires and aspirations are changing, and because the modern economy requires both partners to work, the economic role of women has not only become more established but also constitutes an important source of income for families in recent cohorts. Therefore, as observed in the 'trendsetters' Scandinavian countries (Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003), the relation between women's employment instability and union dissolution in recent cohorts may well have become more similar to that described for men (Hypothesis 4a).

On the other hand, because women more actively contribute to a family's economic status, the uncertainty and economic hardship generated by men's employment instability should be less significant in recent generations. Hence, I expect the disruptive effect of employment instability to reduce in magnitude across cohorts (Hypothesis 4b).

2.5 Marriage and cohabitation

Previous studies have reported that in countries where cohabitation continues to be a marginal phenomenon (as in Italy), cohabiting couples are often a self-selected group rejecting the traditional view of marriage, including its gendered division of labor. By contrast, married couples are likely to display more traditional family attitudes (Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006; Meggiolaro & Ongaro, 2019; Perelli-Harris et al., 2014).

Therefore, gender differences in the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution are expected to be less pronounced in cohabiting couples (Hypothesis 5). In particular, similarly to what hypothesized for changes across cohorts, for cohabiting women employment instability is expected to generate stress

as it does for men (Hypothesis 5a), while for cohabiting men the stress mechanism is expected to be less marked (Hypothesis 5b).

3. Empirical analysis

3.1 The gendered effect of joblessness and time-limited employment

As a first descriptive glance, Table 1 displays the time at risk, number of dissolutions, and absolute monthly risk of experiencing union dissolution for each employment category and contract type, separately for women and men. For women, the category with the highest rate of union dissolution is time-limited employment, followed by permanent employment, with joblessness displaying the lowest rate. We observed an opposite pattern for men: the category with the highest dissolution rate is jobless, closely followed by time-limited employment, while permanent and self-employment have the lowest rates. However, these differences may be constituted by compositional effects that must be controlled for in a multi-variable analysis.

Table 1: Exposure time and risk of dissolution by employment status and type of contract

Employment status and type of contract	Person-months	Dissolutions	Absolut monthly risk per 1000	95% Confidence Interval	
WOMEN					
Permanent	634,936	585	0.9	0.0009	0.0010
Jobless	848,766	391	0.5	0.0004	0.0005
Time-limited	99,033	110	1.1	0.0009	0.0013
Self-employed	164,617	123	0.8	0.0006	0.0009
Total	1,747,352	1,209	0.7	0.0007	0.0007
MEN					
Permanent	782,506	606	0.8	0.0007	0.0008
Jobless	164,420	194	1.2	0.0010	0.0014
Time-limited	79,505	89	1.1	0.0009	0.0014
Self-employed	334,063	266	0.8	0.0007	0.0009
Total	1,360,494	1,155	0.9	0.0008	0.0009

Table 2: Relative risk of union dissolution for women and men. Piecewise constant exponential model

VARIABLES	WOMEN			MEN		
		(1)			(1)	
	RR	Robust s.e.	P-val	RR	Robust s.e.	P-val
Years since union formation						
1-3	1			1		
4-7	**1.52**	0.172	0.000	**1.33**	0.134	0.005
8-14	**1.53**	0.184	0.000	**1.26**	0.148	0.048
15-20	**1.54**	0.237	0.005	**1.43**	0.220	0.021
20+	1.04	0.177	0.798	0.81	0.150	0.264
Region						
North	1			1		
Center	1.00	0.094	0.965	1.10	0.106	0.309
South	**0.80**	0.075	0.016	**0.81**	0.076	0.023
Cohort						
1950-1959	1			1		
1960-1969	**1.62**	0.175	0.000	**1.76**	0.185	0.000
1970-1986	**2.22**	0.250	0.000	**1.94**	0.222	0.000
Cohabitation	**3.89**	0.368	0.000	**4.66**	0.429	0.000
Children						
Childless	1			1		
1 age 0-6	**0.55**	0.066	0.000	**0.39**	0.048	0.000
1 age 7+	0.89	0.124	0.412	**0.70**	0.112	0.025
2 youngest 0-6	**0.45**	0.066	0.000	**0.29**	0.047	0.000
2 youngest 7+	**0.63**	0.097	0.003	**0.56**	0.090	0.000
3 or more	**0.44**	0.088	0.000	**0.36**	0.078	0.000
Separated parents	**1.63**	0.196	0.000	1.17	0.165	0.255
At least one parent is highly educated	1.13	0.108	0.215	**1.46**	0.145	0.000
Education						
None or elementary	1			1		
Lower secondary	**1.46**	0.277	0.048	**1.47**	0.271	0.036
Upper secondary	**1.67**	0.319	0.008	**1.39**	0.256	0.075
Tertiary	**1.68**	0.345	0.011	1.31	0.272	0.199

Employment status and type of contract						
Permanent	1			1		
Jobless	**0.74**	0.069	0.001	**1.58**	0.170	0.000
Time-limited	1.23	0.159	0.106	**1.37**	0.195	0.028
Self-employed	1.09	0.132	0.497	1.01	0.099	0.925
Observations	202,619			160,087		
Individuals	6,612			5,901		
Dissolutions	1,209			1,155		

Note: In bold $p<0.10$

Table 2 displays an event history piecewise constant exponential model for women and men. The model parameters, produced as maximum-likelihood estimates, are shown in the form of relative risks. The models include all the individual-level control variables described in chapter 4 and the time-varying indicator of employment status and contract type.

Analyzing the results of Table 2, we note the confirmation of hypotheses 1–1b. The relation between joblessness and union dissolution is in fact opposite for women and men (Hypothesis 1); specifically, joblessness in women is associated with a 26% lower risk of dissolution compared with permanent employment (Hypothesis 1a), while this risk is 58% higher for men (Hypothesis 1b). Moreover, for men, time-limited employment is associated with a 37% higher risk of union dissolution, whereas the effect was not statistically precise for women. These findings offer support for hypotheses 2c and 2d, as time-limited employment for men is associated with a higher risk of union dissolution relative to permanent employment (Hypothesis 2c), but lower than joblessness (Hypothesis 2d). Such results highlight the importance of distinguishing between time-limited and permanent employment contracts when studying men's union dissolution. Hypotheses 2a and 2b, however, are unsupported in that we found no clear effects for women—the risk of union dissolution for time-limited employed women is not statistically different from permanent employees.

Figure 1: Predicted survival curves by employment status and type of contract for women and men[19]
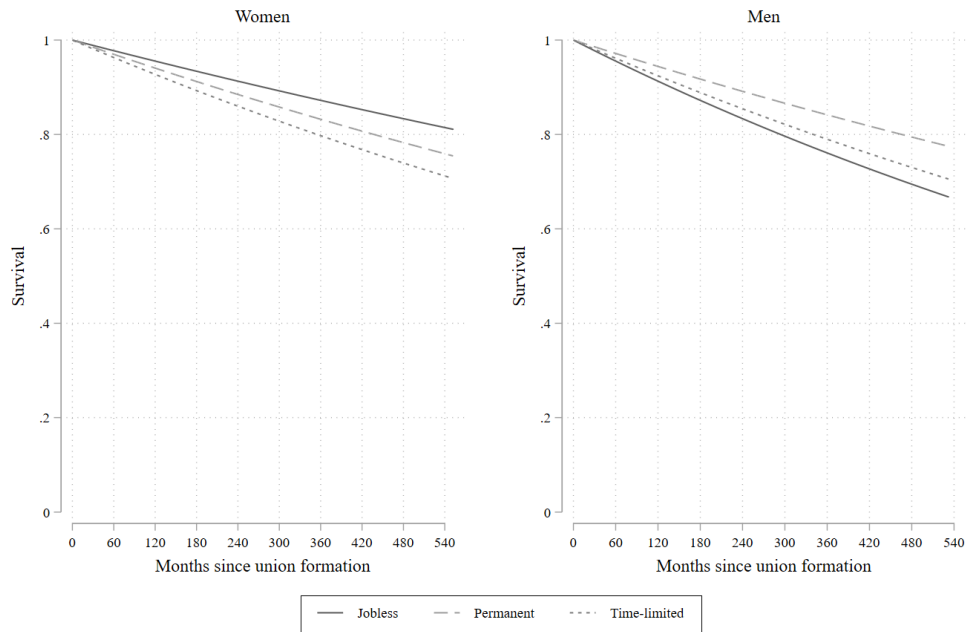
To provide a more substantive interpretation of the results, Figure 1 shows predicted survival curves for jobless, permanent, and time-limited employed women and men. The difference in the estimated share of those still in a union after 10 years (or, 120 months) between jobless and permanently employed women is approximately 2 percentage points, namely 96% and 94%, respectively. After 20 years (240 months), the difference increases to roughly 3 percentage points, with a share of 91% and 88%, respectively. Conversely, for men, the difference in the estimated share of those still in a union after 10 years between jobless and permanently employed is approximately 3 percentage points, with 91% of jobless men still in a union compared with 94% of permanently employed men. After 20 years, the difference rises to 6 percentage points, namely 89% and 83%, respectively. The estimated share of time-limited employed men still in a union after 10 and 20 years lies in between, and is closer to joblessness than to permanent employment, namely 92%

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[19] Source: Own computation of Istat survey data "Family and Social Subjects and life cycle" of 2016. Based on model 1. Note: predicted values for employment status and type of contract with all other covariates set at their mean value.

after 10 years and 85.5% after 20 years. The difference in the estimated share of time-limited and permanent employed men still in a union is 2 percentage points after 10 years, and 3.5 percentage points after 20 years.

3.2 The accumulation of joblessness and time-limited employment

Table 3 displays two event history models, separately for women and men. Model 1 measures employment instability through the two cumulative indicators on the percentage of time in the relationship time spent jobless and in time-limited employment. Model 2, instead, includes simultaneously the variable on employment status and type of contract, and those on the accumulation of employment instability, to assess the each's importance conditional on the others.

Analyzing model 1 for women, it can be noted that the accumulation of joblessness is linked to a lower risk of union dissolution. Relative to continuously employed women, the risk of union dissolution is 48% lower for women jobless for up to 25% of the union, and 38% lower for women outside of the labor force for over half of their union. Thus, women with spells of joblessness experience a lower risk of union dissolution compared to those in continuous employment. However, in contrast to Hypothesis 3a, the risk of union dissolution seems to slightly increase (instead of decrease) in line with time spent jobless in the relationship. Increasing the time spent in time-limited jobs is also associated with a gradual rise in women's risk of union dissolution, to the extent that women who engage in time limited jobs for over one fifth of the relationship are approximately 60% more likely to experience union dissolution than those who have never worked time-limited jobs. In line with Hypothesis 3b, this result could be explained by the fact that, for women, working in time-limited jobs for considerable periods of time may actually increase their economic independence compared with women who do not engage in paid work at all. These results suggest that, for Italian women, there is no clear difference in the association between permanent and time-limited contracts and

union dissolution. Rather, whether a woman is employed or not is the more salient factor.

As hypothesized, short periods of joblessness for men are instead associated with a lower risk of union dissolution, corresponding to a 45% risk reduction for those without a job for up to 25% of the relationship. However, men out of work for over half of their relationship can expect a 69% increase in the risk of union dissolution compared to those who never experience periods of joblessness. Thus, these results suggest that a considerable accumulation of joblessness for men is extremely detrimental for relationships. It can be observed a similar non-monotonic tendency for the accumulation of time-limited employment—which initially causes a 55% risk reduction, followed by a 43% increase of the risk of dissolution after spending over 20% of the relationship in time-limited jobs.

Figure 2: Coefficients plots for women and men according to the accumulation of joblessness and time-limited work over the relationship[20]
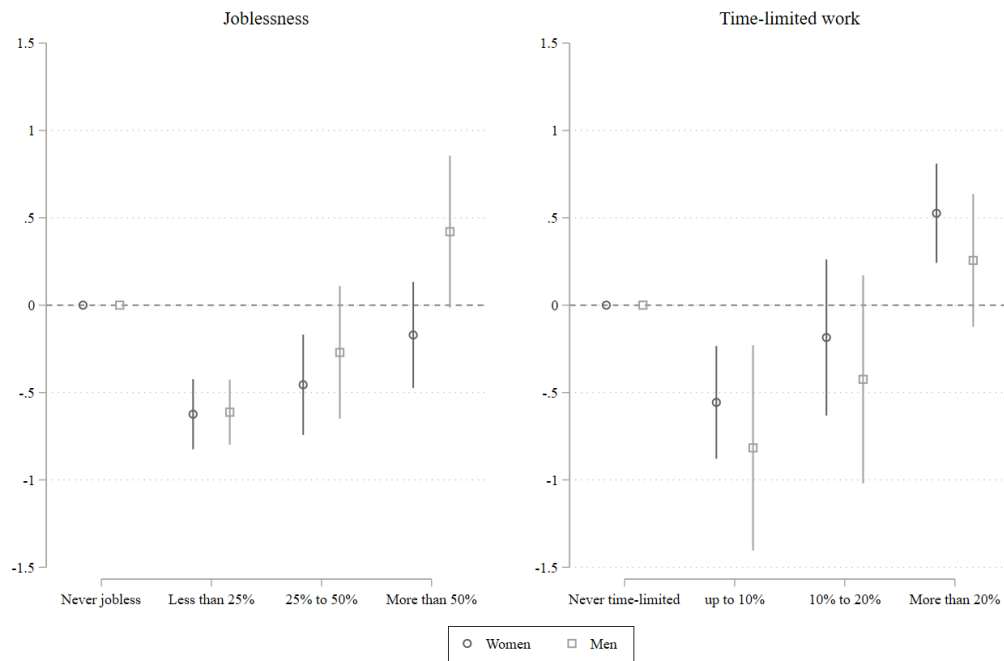
Model 2 includes all variables simultaneously. The results did not substantially differ from those presented in models 1 and 2. Generally, and in line with Hypothesis 3, the relation between employment instability and union dissolution seems to depend also on the former's accumulation over the time spent in the relationship. However, more information about the factors beyond these periods of joblessness—i.e., whether it is voluntary or not—would be beneficial to more deeply explain these findings. In figure 2 are shown the coefficient plots, based on model 2 of table 3, for the variables of accumulation of joblessness and time-limited work for women (marked with a circle, in dark grey) and men (marked with a square, in light gray).

Table 3: Relative risk of union dissolution for women and men. Piecewise constant exponential model

VARIABLES	WOMEN (1)			WOMEN (2)			MEN (1)			MEN (2)		
	RR	Robust s.e.	P-val	RR	Robust s.e.	P-val	RR	Robust s.e.	P-val	RR	Robust s.e.	P-val
Employment status and type of contract												
Permanent				1						1		
Jobless				**0.69**	0.104	0.014				1.13	0.244	0.580
Time-limited				0.87	0.161	0.448				1.18	0.272	0.467
Self-employed				1.10	0.135	0.436				0.96	0.095	0.696
% of relationship jobless												
Never jobless	1			1			1			1		
Up to 25%	**0.52**	0.053	0.000	**0.54**	0.055	0.000	**0.55**	0.052	0.000	**0.54**	0.052	0.000
25% to 50%	**0.56**	0.078	0.000	**0.63**	0.093	0.002	0.80	0.141	0.207	0.76	0.148	0.162
More than 50%	**0.62**	0.063	0.000	0.84	0.131	0.271	**1.69**	0.193	0.000	**1.52**	0.338	0.058
% of relationship in time-limited jobs												
Never time-limited	1			1			1			1		
Up to 10%	**0.57**	0.094	0.001	**0.57**	0.094	0.001	**0.45**	0.135	0.008	**0.44**	0.132	0.006
10% to 20%	0.83	0.186	0.409	0.83	0.190	0.417	0.67	0.206	0.196	0.65	0.199	0.163
More than 20%	**1.60**	0.166	0.000	**1.69**	0.245	0.000	**1.43**	0.179	0.004	1.29	0.251	0.187
Individuals	6,612						5,901					
Dissolutions	1,209						1,155					

Note: in bold p<0.10 Controlled for all variables included in table 2.

3.3 Changes across cohorts

Figure 3 displays two Kaplan-Meier survival estimates for the three studied cohorts of 1950-1959, 1960-1969, 1970-1986, respectively for women and for men. Without accounting for other covariates, the survival rate decreases across cohorts, meaning that more recent cohorts are much more likely to dissolve their unions, for both women and men. After 20 years (240 months) of relationship, about 7% of women and 9% of men in the 1950-1959 cohort had dissolved their first union, whilst in the youngest cohort, the percentage who had dissolved their union in the first 20 years was about 25% and 27%, respectively, for women and men. Therefore, there is a noticeable increasing tendency to dissolve the first union across generations.

Figure 3: Kaplan-Meier survival estimates by cohorts for women and men [21]

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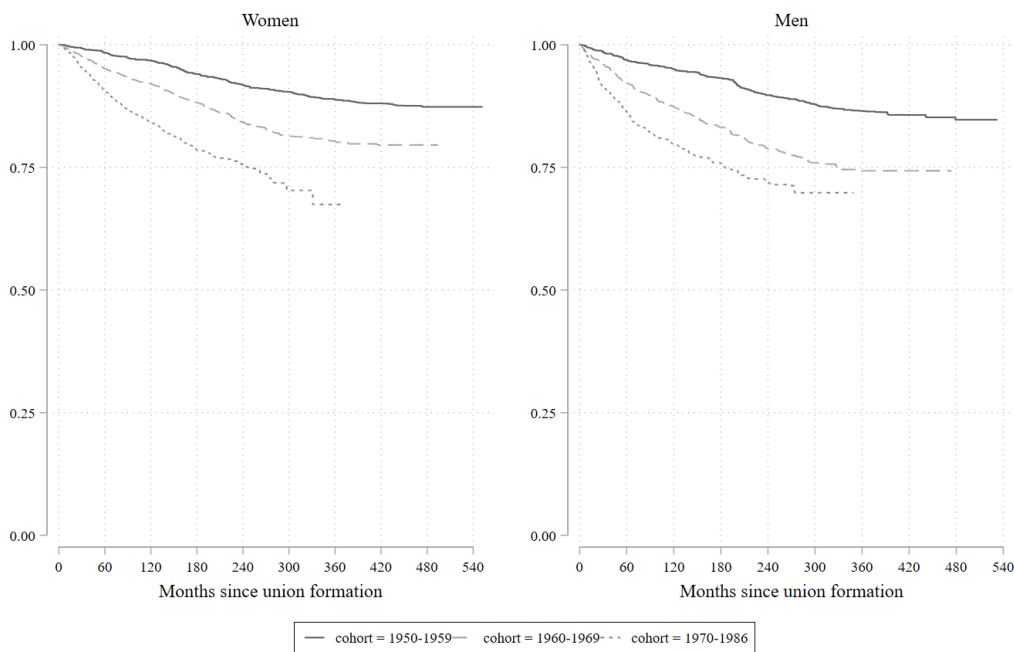
[21] Source: Own calculations on data from the Istat "Family and Social Subjects and life cycle" survey of 2016. Not controlled for other variables.

Table 4: Relative risk of union dissolution for women and men, differences across cohorts. Piecewise constant exponential model.

VARIABLES	WOMEN			MEN		
	RR	Robust s.e.	P-val	RR	Robust s.e.	P-val
Cohort* Permanent						
1950-1959	**0.65**	0.099	0.005	**0.62**	0.087	0.001
1960-1969	1			1		
1970-1986	1.13	0.143	0.349	1.17	0.145	0.204
Cohort 1950-1959						
Permanent	1			1		
Jobless	**0.59**	0.107	0.003	1.20	0.283	0.445
Time-limited	0.64	0.221	0.194	1.25	0.393	0.470
Self-employed	0.84	0.223	0.520	1.04	0.198	0.839
Cohort 1960-1969						
Permanent	1			1		
Jobless	**0.62**	0.095	0.002	**2.00**	0.334	0.000
Time-limited	1.12	0.256	0.609	0.59	0.187	0.094
Self-employed	0.93	0.192	0.734	1.17	0.175	0.282
Cohort 1970-1986						
Permanent	1			1		
Jobless	0.91	0.119	0.481	**1.45**	0.236	0.022
Time-limited	**1.51**	0.261	0.018	**1.80**	0.328	0.001
Self-employed	1.32	0.238	0.120	0.85	0.141	0.315
Observations	202,619			160,087		
Individuals	6,612			5,901		
Dissolutions	1,209			1,155		

Note: In bold p<0.10. Controlled for all variables included in Table 2.

The aim of this section is to understand whether the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution has changed across generations. This goal is pursued in Table 4, which accounts for the interaction between cohort and employment instability in a multi-variable framework, while controlling for the set of covariates presented in Table 2 (not shown).

In Table 4, the relative risk for the different cohorts refers to the reference category, i.e. permanently employed persons. Relatively to the 1960-1969 cohort, for permanently employed women, the risk of dissolving the first union is 35% lower for the 1950-1959 cohort, and 13% higher (but not statistically significant) for the 1970-1986 cohort. Similarly, for permanently employed men the risk of dissolving the union is 38% lower for the oldest cohort and 17% higher (again not statistically significant) for the youngest cohort, relatively to permanently employed men born between 1960 and 1969.

By contrast, the difference in the risk of union dissolution between permanently employed and jobless women seems to decrease across generations. In the oldest cohort, jobless women have a 41% lower risk of dissolving their union compared to permanently employed women. Similarly, in the following cohort, the risk is 38% lower, and, in the most recent cohort, the risk is 8% lower, and not statistically different from that of permanently employed women in the same cohort. For men, the risk of dissolving the union for the 1960-1969 cohort is more than twice that for permanently employed men in the same birth cohort, while the risk is only 47% higher for jobless men in the youngest cohort. These results seem to confirm theories predicting that, in more recent cohorts, gender differences in the relationship between joblessness and union dissolution gradually converge (Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003).

A similar pattern emerges for women with time-limited employment. For the first two cohorts, there are no significant differences between women in permanent and those in time-limited employment. For the youngest cohort of women, however, time-limited employment is associated with an approximately 50% higher risk of union dissolution relatively to permanent employment. As regards joblessness, these results confirm theories predicting a shift in the role of employment instability for younger generations of women, which is expected to be more similar to what is observed for men. Younger generations of women are likely to give more importance to their working careers, and their salaries are expected to contribute to the household income. Hence their employment instability may engender stress in the couple just like that of men (Hansen, 2005). Also for men,

however, estimates are significant only for the youngest cohort. Nevertheless, when interpreting changes in the role of time-limited employment across generations it is important to bear in mind that time-limited employment was only introduced in the 1980s, and the main measures for labor-market deregulation/segmentation were enacted in the late 1990s and early 2000s with the 'Treu Law' (L.196/1997), and the following 'Biagi Law' (L.30/2003). Therefore, the three cohorts have been affected by time-limited employment in a very different way.

3.4 Marriage-cohabitation differentials

Both married and cohabiting couples are included in the analysis as younger couples—overrepresented in unstable jobs—are usually more likely to cohabit rather than marry directly, or even marry at all (Manning, 2020; Vignoli et al., 2016). However, previous studies have reported that in contexts where cohabitation continues to be a marginal phenomenon (as is the case in Italy), cohabiting couples are often a self-selected group breaking the traditional view of marriage, including its gendered division of labor (Liefbroer & Dourleijn, 2006; Meggiolaro & Ongaro, 2019; Perelli-Harris et al., 2014).

Therefore, I re-estimated model 1, augmented with an interaction term between union type and employment arrangements displayed in Table 5. Results are substantially the same, but with one exception. In contrast to married women, for cohabiting women, both joblessness (despite not significant at the 5% level) and time-limited employment are associated with a higher risk of dissolution—just as with men. Therefore, the stabilizing effect of women's joblessness over their unions is driven by married women—consistent with the fact that they are likely to display more traditional family attitudes compared to their cohabiting counterparts. These results are consistent with the hypothesis 5a, postulating that for cohabiting women employment instability is expected to generate stress as it does for men. However, in contrast with hypothesis 5b, I do not find the stress mechanism to be less marked for men in cohabiting couples (Hypothesis 5b). For cohabiting men, which should

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embrace less traditional values, being jobless seems to be as stressful as for married men. Nevertheless, research finds that attitudes about men's economic roles have been slower to change than attitudes about women's economic roles (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021; Knight and Brinton 2017), therefore, changes may still be ongoing and thus may appear in a later stage.

Table 5: Relative risk of union dissolution for women and men, differences between married and cohabiting couples. Piecewise constant exponential model.

	WOMEN			MEN		
VARIABLES	RR	Robust s.e.	P-val	RR	Robust s.e.	P-val
Married*Permanent	1			1		
Cohabiting*Permanent	**2.73**	0.334	0.000	**4.87**	0.585	0.000
Married * Permanent	1			1		
Married * Jobless	**0.58**	0.061	0.000	**1.38**	0.204	0.032
Married * Time-limited	0.96	0.164	0.821	1.31	0.264	0.173
Married * Self-employed	0.91	0.130	0.511	1.20	0.137	0.116
Cohabiting * Permanent	1			1		
Cohabiting * Jobless	**1.33**	0.219	0.086	**1.76**	0.274	0.000
Cohabiting * Time-limited	**1.82**	0.371	0.003	**1.40**	0.285	0.095
Cohabiting * Self-employed	**1.50**	0.334	0.068	0.76	0.127	0.102
Observations			202,619			160,087
Individuals			6,612			5,901
Dissolutions			1,209			1,155

Note: In bold p<0.5. Controlled for all variables included in table 2.

4. Cause-effect ambiguity

In this chapter, I have relied on the observed order of events (e.g., employment exit and union dissolution). It is worth considering that such a strategy may lead to an upward bias in the effect of women's employment on the risk of union dissolution if women increase their involvement in the labor market as a direct response to a decline in their relationship satisfaction and fear of union disruption [see Chapter 1, section 2.5] (Oppenheimer, 1988; Özcan & Breen, 2012; Vignoli et al., 2018). Support for such anticipatory adjustments can be found in the empirical literature for Italy (Vignoli et al., 2018).

Thus, as a sensitivity check, shown in table 6, I re-estimated a set of models excluding those women who entered the labor market during the three years preceding union disruption. While the results are substantially unchanged after excluding these cases, the estimated relative risk for jobless women is no longer statistically different from the permanently employed (it is only significant when considering the 10% level.). This change suggests that it is likely that few women unsatisfied with their current relationships entered the labor market with a view to possible separation. Thus, without claiming causation, results indicate a statistical association between women joblessness and union dissolution.

Table 6: Relative risk of union dissolution for women, excluding those who started a new job within 3 years before the end of the union. Piecewise constant exponential model

VARIABLES	RR	Robust s.e.	P-value
Years since union formation			
1-3	1		
4-7	**1.56**	0.192	0.000
8-14	**1.61**	0.207	0.000
15-20	**1.67**	0.270	0.001
20+	1.10	0.197	0.582
Region			
North	1		

Center	0.98	0.099	0.840
South	**0.77**	0.077	0.010
Cohort			
1950-1959	1		
1960-1969	**1.57**	0.177	0.000
1970-1986	**2.16**	0.256	0.000
Cohabitation	**3.94**	0.399	0.000
Children			
Childless	1		
1 age 0-6	**0.55**	0.069	0.000
1 age 7+	0.88	0.128	0.375
2 youngest 0-6	**0.44**	0.069	0.000
2 youngest 7+	**0.59**	0.096	0.001
3 or more	**0.43**	0.089	0.000
Separated parents	**1.44**	0.192	0.006
At least one parent is highly educated	1.15	0.117	0.163
Education			
None or elementary	1		
Lower secondary	**1.64**	0.332	0.015
Upper secondary	**1.84**	0.376	0.003
Tertiary	**1.92**	0.420	0.003
Employment status and type of contract			
Permanent	1		
Jobless	0.92	0.089	0.383
Time-limited	1.15	0.171	0.351
Self-employed	1.12	0.145	0.383
Observations	200,502	200,502	200,502
Individuals	6,472	6,472	6,472
Dissolutions	1,069	1,069	1,069

Note: In bold $p<0.5$

5. Conclusions

This chapter has addressed the relationship between individual-level employment instability and union dissolution. It has overcome several limitations of prior research by providing novel evidence through the lens of gender.

The results suggests that, even when analyzing recent data, the effect of employment instability on union dissolution is gender-specific. Joblessness is found to be a facilitator of men's dissolution and an inhibitor of women's dissolution. Moreover, men with time-limited contracts were found to have a far greater risk of dissolution than their permanently employed counterparts, while no clear pattern was found for women. Thus, these findings highlight the importance of distinguishing between time-limited and permanent employment, especially when studying the risk of union dissolution for men. For women, however, there seems to be no clear divide in the association between permanent and time-limited work contracts and union dissolution. The central factor is instead whether or not a woman is employed. In the Italian context, the gendered effect of employment instability on union dissolution is deeply rooted in marked gender differences in the allocation of time and responsibilities between paid and unpaid work. Employment instability renders women economically dependent on their husbands, contributing to a rise in the economic and social cost of divorce. On the other hand, men's employment instability probably generates relational stress when the male partner is the main income provider. Furthermore, in a dominant male-breadwinner context, men's employment instability clashes with prevailing gender norms, while women employment instability does not.

Moreover, the results show a non-monotonic relationship between employment instability and union dissolution. For women, the accumulation of periods of joblessness remains associated with a lower dissolution risk compared with that of women in continuous employment. However, a considerable accumulation of time spent in time-limited jobs is associated with a higher risk of union dissolution relative to those who have never worked in time-limited jobs. It can thus be argued that, for women, working in time-limited jobs for a considerable amount of time

may increase economic independence relative to those who do not engage in paid work at all. For men, instead, the initial effect of employment instability appears to be a rise in the cost of divorce, thereby substantially reducing the risk of dissolution. Only when the persistence of employment instability reaches a certain level does relational stress emerge and increase the risk of dissolution. In particular, a large accumulation of joblessness for men appears to be especially detrimental for relationships. Overall, a 'J-shaped' association emerges between instability of employment careers and union dissolution. It seems clear that individuals with accumulated employment instability are, in all probability, highly selected.

Moreover, both the negative and positive associations between women and men joblessness and union dissolution appear to become weaker across generations, in line with the idea that the gendered relationship between employment instability and union dissolution should gradually converge across generations, which should become more egalitarian in terms of division of paid work (Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003; Oppenheimer, 1994).

Finally, this chapter has proved that when both marriages and non-marital cohabitations are included in the analysis, it is important to consider differences and individual selection in these two types of union, since the stabilizing effect of women's employment instability on their unions has been found to be entirely driven by married women – consistently with the fact that they are likely to display more traditional family attitudes compared to their cohabiting counterparts (Perelli-Harris et al., 2014).

 The chapter offers two novel findings. First, it is shown – for the first time for Italy, at least – that time-limited employment arrangements negatively impact on a couple's stability. Second, the study has been a first attempt to include a measure of persistence of employment instability in the study of union dissolution. However, more information on joblessness is needed to deepen the understanding of this relationship – i.e., whether it is voluntary or involuntary – or more income data in order to measure the individual capacity to cope with employment instability.

CHAPTER 5

Employment shortage and instability and couples' breakups

1. Introduction

Research on employment instability and union dissolution often fails to take account of the fact that employment instability may also be conceptualized as a macro-level phenomenon (Sobotka et al., 2011). Regardless of individual employment status and type of contract, the employment context gives positive or negative information about the availability of jobs in the local labor market, which may influence individuals' decisions about whether or not to separate (Cohen, 2014; Fischer & Liefbroer, 2006). As a matter of fact, individuals' decisions depend not only on current conditions but also on the perception of present and future economic circumstances, and contextual macroeconomic conditions may inform such perceptions (Comolli, 2021; Kreyenfeld 2010; Kreyenfeld Andersson, & Pailhé 2012). Just like at the micro-level, in principle, the association between macro-economic conditions and union dissolution may be either positive or negative. Macro-level employment shortage and instability may reflect the general uncertainty felt by people in times of high unemployment and precariousness (Bloom, 2014; Kreyenfeld et al., 2012; Sobotka et al., 2011). Individuals' perceptions of the broader macro-economic climate may translate into micro-level feelings of uncertainty regarding negative economic prospects, engendering anxiety and depression (Schneider, 2015; Sobotka et al., 2011; Vignoli, Bazzani, et al., 2020; Vignoli, Guetto, et al., 2020b) which may heighten the relational stress, and

thus increase the risk of dissolution (in line with the *relational stress hypothesis*) (Cohen, 2014; Fischer & Liefbroer, 2006). On the other hand, however, the feelings of future economic uncertainty engendered by the lack of stable job opportunities may act as a structural constraint and constitute a barrier to union dissolution by increasing the actual of perceived economic cost of dissolving the current union (as postulated by *the cost of divorce hypothesis*) (Amato & Beattie, 2010).

Empirical research on the relationship between macro-economic conditions and union dissolution has found evidence for both perspectives. While most studies have focused on union dissolution at the macro-level (i.e. divorce rates), to my knowledge only a handful of studies (i.e. Fischer & Liefbroer,2006; Cohen,2014; Solaz et al., 2020, adopt a micro-macro approach and analyze the relation between macro-level economic conditions and the individual risk of separation, with mixed findings [see Chapter 1, sections 2.6 and 2.7].

Most studies accounting for the role of the employment context focus on the change in local employment opportunities. They therefore analyze unemployment rates (Amato & Beattie, 2010; Cohen, 2014; Schaller, 2013; Solaz et al., 2020). Nevertheless, in recent years, and particularly in the aftermath of the Great Recession, unemployment alone has no longer been sufficient to capture the effects of an increasingly turbulent and uncertain economic climate. It is necessary also to consider the level of stability of the employment available within a given geographical area, which is not reflected in the unemployment rate. In fact, employment instability is not solely based on whether individuals can access formal employment; it also depends on the quality of accessible employment (Bausman & Goe, 2004; Cabrales & Hopenhayn, 1997; Wenger & Kalleberg, 2006). In this chapter, therefore, the economic environment is characterized by the unemployment rate but also by the extent of job instability, which may potentially influence union dissolution.

Furthermore, it is crucial to consider that context and individual position interact with each other, and that the macro-level employment context may differently affect individuals with different employment status and contract, type of union (cohabitation vs. marriage), and gender (Clark et al., 2010; Oesch & Lipps, 2013;

Schneider & Hastings, 2015). Individuals differing in these characteristics may indeed experience a different level of stress and divorce cost. Therefore, the introduction of these dimensions helps to better explain the predominance of the relational stress or cost of divorce mechanism.

This chapter analyzes the relationship between macro-level employment conditions – i.e. employment **shortage** and **instability**, and union dissolution – by considering its variations across:

(i)   individual employment instability,

(ii)   type of union,

(iii)   and gender.

Moreover, the economic literature reports an array of evidence showing that uncertainty increases strongly in recessions, at both the macro and micro levels (Bloom, 2014; Storesletten et al., 2004). Thus, the chapter analyzes whether the association between employment shortage and instability and union dissolution has changed because of the increasing levels of uncertainty brought about by the **Great Recession**. The shock provoked by the Great Recession may have substantially increased the cost of divorce, influencing the relationship between the employment context and union dissolution (Amato & Beattie, 2010) [see Chapter 1, section 2.6].

In the present chapter, employment shortage and instability are quantified with two macro indicators respectively measuring the percentage of unemployment at the regional (NUTS-2) level, and the incidence of time-limited employment in total employment at the regional (NUTS-2) level. Finally, to characterize the economic context better, and in an attempt to disentangle the effects of macro-level employment uncertainty and economic hardship, the analysis adds a control for yearly regional GDP per capita in order to capture contingent regional growth not yet transformed into occupation. The analysis is restricted to the period between 2000 and 2016 because the regional level indicator on temporary work is available only for that timespan. Nevertheless, it was a period of high employment instability which also encompassed the Great Recession, and therefore provides an excellent

opportunity to capture instability in local employment structures, and hence assess its relationship with union dissolution.

2. Research hypothesis

2.1 Employment context and union dissolution: relational stress or cost of divorce?

Employment shortage and instability – identified with regional unemployment rates, and the share of time-limited employment in total employment in the region – give negative information about the lack and instability of job opportunities in the local labor market, which may influence the individual choice of separation. The relational stress and cost of divorce hypothesis described in the previous chapter for the micro-level relationship can be transposed to the contextual level. As at the micro-level so at the contextual level, theory and empirical research predict and report evidence for the two contrasting mechanisms. On the one hand, the macro-economic climate may generate micro-level feelings of uncertainty regarding economic prospects, which could possibly engender anxiety and depression in individuals (Schneider, 2015; Sobotka et al., 2011; Vignoli, Bazzani, et al., 2020; Vignoli, Guetto, et al., 2020b), which may increase the relational stress, and thus heighten the risk of dissolution (*Relational stress hypothesis 1a*) (Cohen, 2014; Fischer & Liefbroer, 2006). On the other hand, the lack of stable job opportunities, and the related feelings of economic uncertainty, may act as a structural constraint and constitute a barrier to union dissolution by increasing the actual and perceived economic cost of dissolving the current union (*Cost of divorce hypothesis 1b*) (Amato & Beattie, 2010). Therefore, to clarify this complex relationship, both hypotheses need to be tested in the Italian context *(Hypothesis 1a vs. 1b).*

2.2 Inhibiting or amplifying effect of employment shortage and instability on individual employment instability

Macro-level employment conditions may influence in different ways individuals with different employment statuses and types of contract. Extant literature reports two contrasting mechanism through which employment conditions may influence individuals with unstable job positions (Oesch & Lipps, 2013). On one hand, unfavorable employment conditions may operate through a sociological channel: if an unemployment crisis or time-limited employment hits many people in the community, the psychological cost of being unemployed or time-limited employed diminishes. The underlying idea is that in times of near full employment and large availability of stable job opportunities, being unemployed or in time-limited employment reflects negatively on an individual. Yet, in contexts with high level of unemployment and time-limited work opportunities, stigma and social disapproval for those with unstable careers should diminish. Following this perspective, employment instability should generate lower relational stress in context with more unstable employment conditions. On the other hand, however, the worsening of employment conditions may have the opposite impact on individuals with unstable employment: as regional unemployment or time-limited work increases, jobless and time-limited employed people may face ever bleaker labor market prospects (Oesch & Lipps, 2013). Such negative prospects may further rise the relational stress in the couple, increasing the risk of dissolution.

Hence, in principle, employment shortage and instability may either inhibit or amplify the effects of employment instability found at the micro-level. For women, unfavorable employment conditions are likely to *amplify* the individual-level relationship. Women dissatisfied with their union and with no job or a time-limited one may face a high level of uncertainty and be discouraged from ending their union by poor job prospects (Ruggles, 1997). Thus, employment shortage and volatility may further increase the *cost of divorce* for these women. By contrast, permanently employed women should still be able to afford union dissolution, nevertheless, they could still face uncertainty about their future job prospects. Therefore, unfavorable

employment conditions, are expected to reduce the risk of union dissolution for jobless and time-limited employed women (Hypothesis 2a), while permanently employed women are likely to be less strongly influenced by the unfavorable employment context (Hypothesis 2b).

For men with unstable careers, employment shortage and instability may either *inhibit* or *amplify* the effects of employment instability found at the micro-level. On the one hand, an unfavorable employment context may *inhibit* the negative relationship between joblessness and time-limited employment and union dissolution. Adverse labor-market conditions may in fact forgo or postpone the separation until it becomes economically more affordable (Cherlin, 2009; Schaller, 2013) (Hypothesis 2c). On the other hand, they may *amplify* the micro-level mechanism, accentuating the relational stress (Oesch & Lipps, 2013), and therefore the risk of break-up, because the couple may feel trapped in those jobless or precarious circumstances. Thus, employment shortage and instability may cause jobless or time-limited employed men to face a 'double disadvantage' (Hypothesis 2d). Permanently employed men, instead, even in times of poor employment conditions, should be able to support the family, and should be less affected by changes in the employment context, despite, indeed, they may still feel insecure about their job prospects (Hypothesis 2e).

2.3. Employment context and type of union

Similarly, the employment context is expected to affect married and cohabiting couples in different ways. Adverse economic conditions may engender stress in a couple's life. However, whether this stress actually turns into dissolution of the union may also depend on the level of commitment of the partners. As anticipated in the previous chapters, marriage and cohabitation in Italy still differ substantially with respect to the level of commitment required (Manning, 2020; Vignoli et al., 2016). More committed married couples, although they are dissatisfied with their marriage, in a time of poor economic conditions may choose to stick together or at

least wait for the economic situation to improve. For cohabitors instead, it may be easier to end their relationship since they are not bound by legal marriage.

Moreover, union dissolution may be much more economically costly for married rather than cohabiting couples, so that their *cost of divorce* may substantially differ. Married couples usually make considerable economic investments in the marriage, and they probably own a house or have several mutual goods. Moreover, legal divorce procedures to dissolve the marital contract may be expensive. Instead, cohabiting couples, although they may own mutual goods and face relocation expenses, are likely to encounter a much lower *cost of divorce.*
It follows that, in conditions of employment shortage and instability, the cost of divorce mechanism may be predominant for married couples (Hypothesis 3a), while cohabiting couples may suffer from a greater relational stress (Hypothesis 3b).

2.4 Changes over time

As anticipated, research suggests that the *cost of divorce* has changed over time (Amato & Beattie, 2010; Fischer & Liefbroer, 2006). Consequently, the relationship between unemployment conditions and union dissolution may have changed as well. Also in this regard, however, the literature reports two contrasting hypotheses. On the one hand, the greater frequency of separation may have reduced the cost of separations both socially and economically (Fischer & Liefbroer, 2006). From this perspective, in recent times the cost of divorce should be lower than it used to be, and therefore the relational stress mechanism may have been predominant in more recent years. On the other hand, however, the literature reports that the cost of divorce may have increased over time as people's standards of living have risen in Western societies, and divorce may be a greater threat to people's financial expectations (Amato & Beattie, 2010). The Great Recession and the consequent increasing economic uncertainty may have exacerbated the relational stress but also the costs related to separation. Therefore, the Great Recession may

have either an amplifying (Hypothesis 4a) or inhibiting (Hypothesis 4b) effect on union dissolution.

3. Empirical analysis

3.1 Employment shortage and instability and union dissolution

Table 1 displays an event history piecewise constant exponential model respectively for women and men. All models are controlled for region fixed-effects. The model parameters, produced as maximum-likelihood estimates, are shown in the form of relative risks. The models include all the individual-level variables described in Chapter 4, and, in the last part of the table, highlighted in gray, the time-varying indicators for individual employment instability, the indicators of employment shortage and instability, and the control for GDP per capita.

These estimates are slightly different from those shown in Chapter 4 because here the analysis is limited to the period 2000-2016. Nevertheless, at the individual level, joblessness is still associated with a lower risk of dissolution for women, and joblessness and time-limited employment with a higher risk of dissolution for men.

Controlling for all the individual and macro-level variables, it appears that when unemployment rises to 1% above its average, the risk of union dissolution decreases for both women and men by 7 and 9% respectively. The share of time-limited employment in total employment in the region seems to lead to similar results, and to be associated with a lower risk of dissolution of about 5% for both women and men. However, the estimates are significant only at the 10% alpha level for women, and not statistically precise for men. Finally, consistently with these results, in regions with greater economic prosperity, measured in GDP per capita, the risk of union dissolution is higher. On increasing GDP by 1000 euros, the risk of union dissolution increases by 16% for women and 18% for men.

These results provide evidence for the *cost of divorce hypothesis* in the Italian context, i.e. unfavorable economic conditions act as a barrier to union dissolution by increasing its perceived and actual costs, thus confirming Hypothesis 1b. Regardless of the individual employment status and type of contract, the elevated relative costs, coupled with the feelings of uncertainty in regards to future employment and economic prospects, appear to prevent individuals from breaking up. Interestingly, differently from what was found at the individual level, at the macro-level employment instability has the same effect of reducing the risk of union dissolution for women and men.

Table 1: Relative risk of union dissolution for women and men. Piecewise constant exponential model

VARIABLES	WOMEN			MEN		
	RR	Robust s.e.	P-value	RR	Robust s.e.	P-value
Years since union formation						
1-3	1			1		
4-7	**1.40**	0.208	0.023	1.13	0.150	0.368
8-14	1.20	0.189	0.239	0.97	0.149	0.828
15-20	1.22	0.245	0.323	1.07	0.220	0.728
20+	1.05	0.260	0.833	0.72	0.183	0.196
NUTS-2 region	Yes			Yes		
Cohort						
1950-1959	1			1		
1960-1969	**2.64**	0.520	0.000	**2.29**	0.420	0.000
1970-1986	**4.57**	1.083	0.000	**2.74**	0.595	0.000
Type of union						
Marriage	1			1		
Cohabitation	**3.67**	0.428	0.000	**3.79**	0.417	0.000
Children						
Childless	1			1		
1 child age 0-6	**0.56**	0.086	0.000	**0.35**	0.055	0.000
1 child age 7+	0.91	0.155	0.599	**0.58**	0.106	0.003
2 youngest 0-6	**0.48**	0.085	0.000	**0.22**	0.043	0.000

2 youngest 7+	**0.66**	0.120	0.022	**0.48**	0.086	0.000
3+	**0.47**	0.111	0.001	**0.33**	0.083	0.000
Separated parents	**1.57**	0.220	0.001	1.18	0.202	0.321
At least one parent is highly educated	1.00	0.114	0.990	**1.54**	0.178	0.000
Education						
None or elementary	1			1		
Lower secondary	1.25	0.359	0.436	1.09	0.253	0.710
Upper secondary	1.35	0.391	0.306	1.02	0.240	0.917
Tertiary	1.52	0.461	0.172	0.89	0.233	0.656
Employment status and type of contract						
Permanent	1			1		
Jobless	**0.65**	0.079	0.000	**1.46**	0.190	0.004
Time-limited	1.28	0.206	0.130	**1.56**	0.257	0.007
Self-employed	1.17	0.172	0.290	0.98	0.116	0.860
% Regional unemployment	**0.93**	0.020	0.001	**0.91**	0.019	0.000
% Time-limited work in region	**0.94**	0.035	0.086	0.95	0.034	0.120
GDP per capita /1000	**1.16**	0.023	0.000	**1.18**	0.027	0.000
Observations	106,775			91,354		
Individuals	6,163			5,500		
Dissolutions	789			764		

Note: in bold p<0.10

3.2 Employment context and individual employment instability

Explored in this section is whether employment shortage and instability have a different impact on individuals with different employment statuses and types of contract. For this purpose, displayed in Table 2 are the interaction terms between individual employment status and type of contract and the regional unemployment rate (model 1), and between individual employment status and type of contract and share of time-limited work in the region (model 2). All models are controlled for the set of individual and macro-level control variables presented in Table 1.

The estimates for employment status and type of contracts are based on a context with average unemployment in models 1, and average share of time-limited work, in models 2. The relative risks for individual level employment instability remain substantially unchanged for both women and men.

By considering the interaction terms in models 1, one can determine that if the level of unemployment rises to 1% above its average, it is associated with a decrease in the risk of union dissolution for both women and men with all types of contracts. Thus, in contrast to my set of hypotheses 2 predicting a different impact of employment shortage on individuals with different employment status and gender, employment shortage hampers union dissolution for all women and men, regardless of their individual employment position.

Figure 1 displays the predicted hazard ratio of union dissolution for the interaction between unemployment rate and individual employment status and type of contract for women and men, respectively. From Figure 1 it can be clearly visualized the pattern described above. When the percentage of regional unemployment increases, the hazard of union dissolution decreases for all women and men. For all levels of unemployment, the hazard of union dissolution remains the lowest for jobless women and permanent employed men. Nevertheless, an interesting path emerges for men. At very high unemployment levels, the hazard of union dissolution for men with different types of contracts appears to converge. Hence, employment shortage acts as a barrier to union dissolution for all. However, the aggregate unemployment has a stronger moderating effect on the risk of divorce

among those with unstable employment (both jobless and with time-limited work). With rising regional unemployment, their risk of union dissolution converges to the lower risk of the permanently secure employed. Thus, higher aggregate unemployment rates attenuate the social norm of work, lowering the stigmatization of employment instability for men, and reducing the risk of union dissolution among the jobless and time-limited employees. This finding suggests that in contexts with high level of unemployment, stigma and social disapproval for those with unstable careers diminishes, in conformity with the hypothesis proposed by Oesch and Lipps (2013).

Figure 1: Predicted hazard ratio of union dissolution for women and men
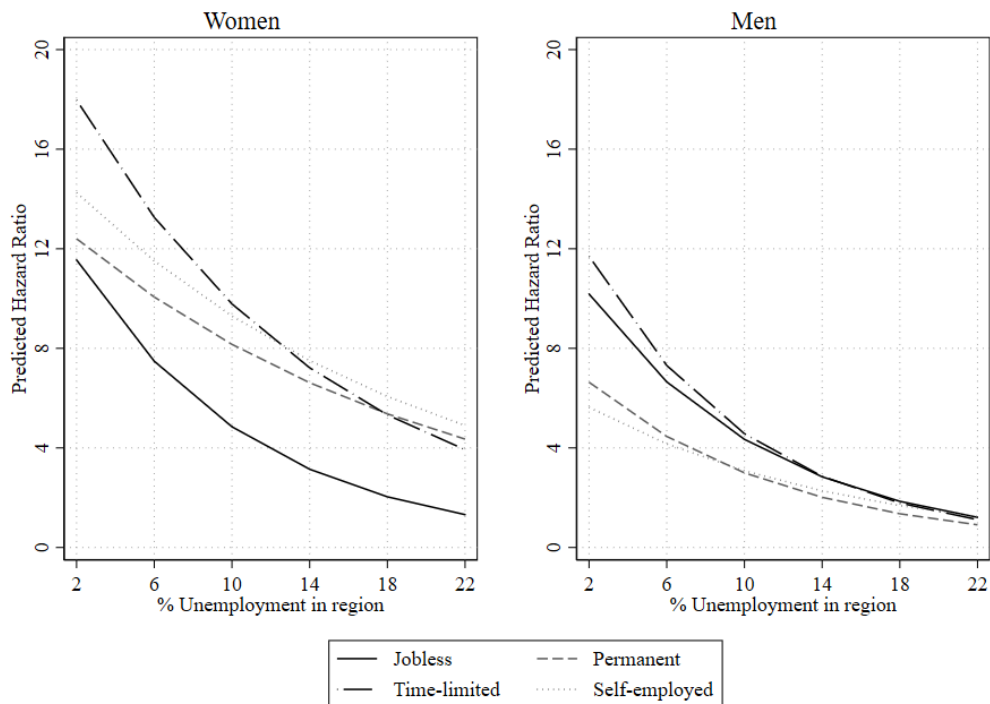
The interaction terms between individual employment status and type of contract and the share of time-limited work in the region seem to point to similar conclusions. In regions with a higher share of time-limited work, the individual risk of union dissolution seems to be lower. However, most estimates are not statistically significant. Notably, the only statistically precise estimate obtained is for time-limited employed men, who see a reduction of about 10% in their risk of union dissolution as the share of time-limited employment rises above its average. This result might be explained by the fact that, despite time-limited jobs increase the risk of union dissolution for men, being in time-limited employment in a context where time-limited jobs are common it is a relatively less stressful experience, and therefore the associated relational stress, and risk of union dissolution is lower. Thus, for men I found evidence for the hypothesis claiming that if an unemployment crisis or time-limited employment hits many people in the community, the psychological cost of being unemployed or time-limited employed diminishes.

Table 2: Relative risk of union dissolution for women and men. Interaction between employment status and type of contract and regional unemployment (1) and interaction between employment status and type of contract and share of time-limited work (2).

VARIABLES	WOMEN (1) RR	Rob.s.e.	P-val	WOMEN (2) RR	Rob.s.e.	P-val	MEN (1) RR	Rob.s.e.	P-val	MEN (2) RR	Rob.s.e.	P-val
Employment status and type of contract												
Permanent	1			1			1			1		
Jobless	**0.59**	0.071	0.000	**0.64**	0.075	0.000	**1.45**	0.190	0.005	**1.45**	0.186	0.004
Time-limited	1.19	0.203	0.300	1.26	0.202	0.154	**1.52**	0.257	0.014	**1.54**	0.246	0.007
Self-employed	1.14	0.174		1.16	0.169	0.312	1.03	0.123	0.792	0.98	0.114	0.869
Contract * % Unemployment												
Permanent * Unempl	**0.95**	0.024	0.038				**0.91**	0.020	0.000			
Jobless * Unempl	**0.90**	0.022	0.000				**0.90**	0.028	0.001			
Time-limited * Unempl	**0.93**	0.033	0.035				**0.89**	0.035	0.003			
Self-empl * Unempl	**0.95**	0.030	0.091				**0.93**	0.026	0.007			
Contract * % Time-limited												
Permanent * Time-limited				0.95	0.037	0.182				0.95	0.038	0.231
Jobless * Time-limited				0.91	0.045	0.068				0.93	0.045	0.156
Time-limited * Time-limit				0.95	0.055	0.337				**0.89**	0.052	0.050
Self-empl * Time-limited				0.95	0.046	0.314				0.96	0.040	0.343
% Regional unemployment				**0.93**	0.020	0.001				**0.91**	0.019	0.000
% Time-limited work in region	**0.93**	0.035	0.075				0.94	0.034	0.112			
Observations	106,775						91,354					
Individuals	6,163						5,500					
Dissolutions	789						764					

Note: in bold p<0.10. Controlled for all variables displayed in table 1.

3.3 Marriage-cohabitation differentials

Shown in Table 3 are the interactions between employment shortage and instability and type of union (cohabitation vs. marriage). The relative risks for the variable 'union type' are estimated in a context with average regional unemployment and share of time-limited work. Generally, unmarried cohabiting couples are more than 4 times at risk of union dissolution than married couples are.

On considering the interaction between regional unemployment and type of union, it is apparent that employment shortage has a moderating effect for married couples, being associated with a reduction in the risk of union dissolution of about 9% for women and 12% for men, in line with Hypothesis 3a.

For cohabiting couples, employment shortage also seems to slightly moderate the risk of union dissolution. However, the effects are smaller in magnitude, relatively to married women and men, and not statistically significant. Nevertheless, in contrast with Hypothesis 3b, at the macro-level employment shortage does not provoke relational stress for Italian couples.

Also on looking at the interaction between union type and the share of time-limited employment opportunities in the region, there is no evidence for the relational stress mechanism, and the cost of divorce mechanism seems to be predominant for both married and cohabiting couples. Nevertheless, in this case, the association is only statistically precise for cohabiting couples, which see a reduction of 8% (women) and 12% (men) in their risk of union dissolution. This result is consistent with the fact that individuals with time-limited jobs are generally over- represented in cohabiting couples (Manning, 2020; Vignoli et al., 2016). Hence, cohabitors may be strongly influenced by the spread of time-limited work. The results are therefore in line with Hypothesis 3a, given the predominance of the cost of divorce mechanism for married couples, while Hypothesis 3b is not confirmed because there is no evidence supporting the relational stress hypothesis for cohabiting couples.

Table 3: Relative risk of union dissolution for women and men. Piecewise constant exponential model. Interaction between type of union and regional unemployment and type of union and share of time-limited work in region.

VARIABLES	WOMEN			MEN		
	RR	Robust s.e.	P-value	RR	Robust s.e.	P-value
Union type						
Marriage	1			1		
Cohabitation	**4.28**	0.556	0.000	**4.55**	0.541	0.000
Union type*%Unemployment						
Marriage * Unempl	**0.91**	0.022	0.000	**0.88**	0.020	0.000
Cohabitation * Unempl	0.97	0.030	0.382	0.96	0.028	0.207
Union type * % Time-limited						
Marriage * Time-limited	0.94	0.038	0.109	0.96	0.037	0.345
Cohabitation * Time-limited	**0.92**	0.045	0.078	**0.89**	0.042	0.017
GDP per capita /1000	**1.16**	0.023	0.000	**1.18**	0.027	0.000
Observations	106,775			91,354		
Individuals	6,163			5,500		
Dissolutions	789			764		

Controlled for all variables reported in table 1. In bold p<0.10

3.4 Changes over time

Period effects are shown in Table 4. In model 1, the effect of period is estimated only controlling for the time elapsed since the beginning of the union and regional fixed effects. Model 2 is controlled for all individual and macro-level variables displayed in Table 1, while included in model 3 are the interactions between employment shortage and instability and period. Without accounting for individual and macro-level characteristics, the risk of union dissolution has indeed increased over time for both women and men (model 1). Nevertheless, on controlling for individual and contextual variables influencing union dissolution (model 2), the period beginning with the Great Recession seems to be associated with a lower risk of dissolution for both women and men, suggesting that the cost of divorce increased in that period, confirming Hypothesis 4b.

Has the negative effect of employment shortage and instability on divorce increased due to the uncertainty brought about by the Great Recession?
Shown in model 3 are the interaction terms, reporting the effects of a 1% increase in employment shortage and instability before and after 2007. Employment shortage and instability seem to be associated with a reduction in the likelihood of union dissolution in the same way before and after 2007.

Table 4: Relative risk of union dissolution for women and men. Piecewise constant exponential model. Interaction between type of union and regional unemployment and type of union and share of time-limited work in region.

VARIABLES	WOMEN (1)			WOMEN (2)			WOMEN (3)			MEN (1)			MEN (2)			MEN (3)		
	RR	s.e.	P-val	RR	s.e.	P-val	RR	s.e.	P-val	RR	s.e.	P-val	RR	s.e.	P-val	RR	s.e.	P-val
Period *(Before 2007)*	1			1			1			1			1			1		
After 2007	**2.64**	0.239	0.000	0.88	0.145	0.437	0.94	0.167	0.748	**2.22**	0.204	0.000	**0.77**	0.118	0.092	0.78	0.136	0.151
Period* % Unemployment																		
Before 2007*unempl							**0.91**	0.028	0.001							**0.92**	0.026	0.004
After 2007*unempl							**0.95**	0.023	0.025							**0.92**	0.026	0.001
Period* % Time-limited																		
Before 2007* T-l							0.94	0.052	0.297							**0.88**	0.044	0.010
After 2007* T-l							0.93	0.041	0.118							0.99	0.043	0.735
GDP per capita /1000				**1.18**	0.036	0.000	**1.19**	0.038	0.000				**1.24**	0.042	0.000	**1.27**	0.045	0.000
% Regional Unemployment				**0.93**	0.020	0.001							**0.91**	0.019	0.000			
% Time-limited work in region				0.94	0.036	0.117							0.95	0.034	0.196			
Observations	106,775									91,354								
Individuals	6,163									5,500								
Dissolutions	789									764								

4. Conclusions

In this chapter I have analyzed the association between the employment context and union dissolution. Potentially, employment shortage and instability may either increase or reduce the risk of union dissolution, in line with the relational stress and cost of divorce perspectives, which can be extended to the macro-level. Through the analysis of two indicators of employment shortage and instability – identified with regional unemployment rates and the share of time-limited jobs in total employment in the region – and controlling for individual- and macro-level characteristics, this analysis furnishes novel evidence on the above association.

The results show that in the Italian context, and in the period observed, employment shortage and instability give negative information about the availability and quality of jobs in the local labor market which is likely to generate uncertainty about the future reducing the individuals' risk of separation. Thus, this chapter provides empirical evidence that at the macro-level the cost of divorce is the dominant mechanism. Interestingly, differently from what was found in Chapter 4 in regard to the individual-level relationship, at the macro-level employment instability has the same effect of reducing the risk of union dissolution for both women and men. For women, this result is in line with the effect found at the individual level: an unstable individual or contextual employment situation is linked with a high cost of divorce which in turn predicts lower chances of union dissolution. For men, instead, micro- and macro-level employment instability have an opposite relationship with union dissolution. Nevertheless, macro-economic conditions are not imputable to the individual and may therefore have a very different meaning and impact on individual feelings. Whilst at the micro-level a man's poor performance in the labor market may be a sign of his personal defeat, which may provoke high levels of stress or depression, or be linked to personal characteristics also related with his unsuitability as a partner, macro-level adverse economic conditions are structural barriers imposed by the labor market and the economic cycle which are not imputable to the individual but can generate feelings

of uncertainty about the future. As such, individuals and their partners may prefer to wait for better economic conditions before they end their unions.

Moreover, the results show that employment shortage reduces the risk of union dissolution in a similar way for all women and men regardless of their individual employment status. However, for men, it appears that the aggregate unemployment has a stronger moderating effect on the risk of divorce among those with unstable employment. With rising regional unemployment, their risk of union dissolution converges to the lower risk of the permanently employed. Thus, higher aggregate unemployment rates lower the stigmatization of employment instability for men. Likewise, the diffusion of time-limited work appears to have a significant effect in reducing the risk of union dissolution only for time-limited employed men and cohabiting couples. Interestingly, this goes in contrast with the effects found at the micro-level in Chapter 4. At the individual level, time-limited employed is associated to a higher risk of union dissolution for men in general [see Chapter 4, section 3.1], and for both women and men in cohabiting couples [see Chapter 4, section 3.4]. Nevertheless, an increasing diffusion of time-limited work in the region of residence appears to moderate the perceived relational stress, slightly reducing their risk of union dissolution. Such results are in line with theories claiming that unfavorable employment conditions operate through a sociological channel. If unemployment and time-limited employment hit many people in the community, the psychological cost of employment instability diminishes. Hence, in contexts where unemployment and time-limited work are widely diffused, they may be linked to a relatively lower relational stress.

Finally, on accounting for individual and macro-level characteristics influencing union dissolution, it seems that, at least for men, in the period following the Great Recession the risk of union dissolution was lower than in the preceding period, suggesting that, for men, the cost of divorce has increased with the Great Recession. As economic conditions influence in the same way women and men, at the individual level, mechanisms related to women's and men's gender roles seem to be crucial and more decisive in predicting the risk of union dissolution. Therefore,

to deepen this analysis, in the next chapter the context of union dissolution is further characterized in its gendered aspects.

CHAPTER 6

Societal gender equality, employment instability, and union dissolution

1. Introduction

In the previous chapters it was shown how individual employment instability has a different meaning for women's and men's partnership choices, with joblessness being associated with a reduction in the risk of union dissolution for women, and joblessness and time-limited employment with an increase in that risk for men. Nevertheless, in Chapter 5, I found that, at the macro-level, unstable employment conditions are associated with a reduction in the risk of union dissolution for both women and men, regardless of their individual employment status and type of contract. Thus, to explain gender differences in the individual-level relationship between employment instability and union dissolution it is necessary to consider different contextual dimensions.

Gender theories agree that the role played by women's and men's labor-market performance in the prediction of union dissolution is closely dependent on the gender culture in a society (Killewald, 2016; Oppenheimer, 1994), and in which phase of the gender revolution are situated [see Chapter 1, section 1.4 and 3.2]. The gender culture in a society defines normative expectations about men's and women's social roles. As discussed in Chapter 1 [section 1.4, 2.2 and 3.2], in male-breadwinner contexts, where women are expected to be mainly responsible for care and housekeeping and men for providing income, because women's participation in the labor market, and men's poor economic performance are in normative

conflict with gender norms of behavior, they can exacerbate discord in the couple and lead to a higher risk of separation (Killewald, 2016). By contrast, as societies become more egalitarian, women's employment and men's poor performance in the labor market should be less harmful for couple stability as they don't clash with prevalent gender norms (Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003; Oppenheimer, 1994). Moreover, from an economic perspective [see Chapter 1, section 2.2], in male-dominated labor markets, it is more difficult for women to find job opportunities allowing them to live independently, and thus women employment instability is linked to strong economic dependency on the man, and structural economic constraints. As the dual-earner model becomes the norms, however, dual earner couples, disposing of a greater joint income, should be less affected from a poor performance in the labor market of one of the partners and thus they should constitute more stable relationships (Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003; Oppenheimer, 1994).

Therefore, in this chapter I analyze the extent to which gender differences in the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution depend on the level of gender equality in the region. The level of gender equality in the region is here characterized through three dimensions of objective equality defined by gendered behaviors underlying the gender division of paid and unpaid work, and reconciliation policies. Women's participation in paid work is the first step towards a more egalitarian society because it gives women economic independence from the family. Nevertheless, gender equality is only achieved when women have equal opportunities as men, which imply an equal sharing of household responsibilities within couples, as well as the presence of reconciliation services to support the dual-earner model [see Chapter 1, section 3.3].

These three dimensions of gender equality are measured here with three indicators: respectively, the percentage of dual-earner couples in the region; the symmetry in the division of domestic and care work among dual-earner couples; and the percentage of children aged between 0 and 3 years old attending childcare services [a more detailed description of the indicators is provided in Chapter 3, section 4.4]. These objective indicators provide a measure of the socio-cultural

embeddedness of women in paid work, men in unpaid work, and institutional support. The analysis considers differences in the likelihood of union dissolution between women and men with different employment statuses and types of contracts in contexts with low, mid, and high equality for each of the three indicators. The period covered extends from 2004 to 2016.

2. Research hypotheses

According to the literature presented in Chapter 1 [section 3.2], the level of gender equality in a region may alter the gendered relationship between employment instability and union dissolution. Outlined in the present section are the expected mechanisms for each of the three indicators for the gender context.

2.1 Share of paid work

The gendered relationship between employment instability and union dissolution may depend on the prevalent model of division of paid work within couples. In contexts where the male-breadwinner is the predominant family model, generally, jobless women are economically dependent on their male partners, and their employment status is in line with their expected gender role. Hence it should not generate stress or tension in the couple. By contrast, permanently employed women are economically independent, and their role in the labor market does not fit with their expected gender role and may therefore threaten the couple's stability (Killewald, 2016). Women with time-limited jobs may be 'in between' because they could be partly economically independent, but their economic position should not be a threat to the male-breadwinner. However, as the share of dual-earner couples increases, and the dual-earner model becomes the one most widespread, permanently employed women are no longer in contrast with their normative gender role, and women's incomes should be as important for the economic sustenance of

families as men's. Therefore, their employment instability may generate stress and tension in the couple just like that of men does (Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003). Yet, in contexts where most women are active in the labor market, some women may choose to end their relationship even if they are momentarily jobless, because they know that they can find a job (Ruggles, 1997). Therefore, in regions where the share of dual-earner couples is low – and the male-breadwinner is the most common family type – jobless and time-limited employed women are expected to be less likely to experience union dissolution than permanently employed women, while in regions where the dual-earner model is the most common arrangement, women without jobs, or with unstable jobs, should gradually experience a higher risk of union dissolution relatively to permanently employed women, and the relationship may even reverse *(Hypothesis 1a)*.

By contrast, in regions where men are expected to be the main income providers, their employment instability corresponds to a lack of compliance with men's expected gender role and is therefore likely to undermine couple stability, whereas permanently employed men should be more stable partners (Killewald, 2016). Nevertheless, in regions where the dual-earner model is prevalent, theories predict that men's job instability should provoke less strain on families because the dyad can count on a second income (Oppenheimer, 1994). Thus, in regions with a low percentage of dual-earner couples, men's job instability is expected to be harmful for families, while in regions where the dual-earner model is the prevalent arrangement, the negative association between employment instability and union dissolution should gradually diminish *(Hypothesis 1b)*.

2.2 Share of domestic and care work

The relationship between individual employment status and union dissolution may also depend on the prevalent model of the division of domestic and care work. In fact, many studies have identified the tension between the change in the economic role of women and the absence of change in men's domestic and care work as a

fundamental gradient of marital disruption (Bellani et al., 2018; Breen & Cooke, 2005; Hochschild, 1989; Mencarini & Vignoli, 2018; Oláh & Gahler, 2014).

In contexts where the responsibility for household work is mainly placed on women, jobless women may easily fulfil their gender role within the family, and should therefore be the least likely to experience union dissolution. Conversely, permanently employed women are likely to carry the double burden of paid and unpaid work. The resulting lack of leisure and relationship time, stress, and feelings of injustice and resentment towards their husbands may increase the risk of union dissolution (Hochschild, 1989). Again, time-limited employed women may be found in between: their job position should enable them to combine work and family responsibility better than can permanently employed women. As it becomes common for men to participate in domestic and care work, permanently employed women should experience less work/family conflict, and consequently less risk of union dissolution. Therefore, in regions with low symmetry in the division of household work, jobless women are likely to face a much lower risk of union dissolution relatively to permanently employed women, and time-limited employed women to be in between. Instead, in regions with a relatively higher symmetry in the share of domestic and care tasks, differences in the risk of union dissolution between permanently employed and jobless and time-limited employed women should be less marked *(Hypothesis 2a)*.

Similarly, men with unstable jobs in a context where men are only expected to contribute to family responsibilities economically are likely to experience a clash with their gender role, and thus, a high risk of union dissolution. By contrast, in contexts where it is acceptable for men to contribute to household work, their job instability should be less harmful for family life because they may still contribute to family needs in the household. Thus, in regions with low symmetry in the division of household work, men with unstable job careers should be much more likely to experience union dissolution than permanently employed men, while this gap is likely to reduce in regions where men participate more in domestic and care work *(Hypothesis 2b)*.

2.3 Reconciliation policies

The dynamics between employment instability and union dissolution may also depend on the social policy context. In regions with scant provision of family-friendly services, permanently employed women are likely to experience a strong conflict between paid and care work, which may intensify work/family tensions (Cooke et al., 2013; Vignoli et al., 2018). Women in time-limited employment should be better able than permanently employed women to combine work and family responsibility. As a matter of fact, time-limited employment has been also promoted as a means to help women to reconcile work and family responsibility (Naldini & Saraceno, 2011). Likewise, jobless women are likely to be less influenced by the lack of childcare services. Therefore, in regions with scant provision of family services, jobless and time-limited employed women should be less likely to experience union dissolution than permanently employed women. In regions with a relatively high provision of childcare services, instead, given the greater support for work/family reconciliation provided to employed women, the gap in the risk of union dissolution between permanent employed and jobless and time-limited employed women is expected to gradually reduce, and may even reverse (Cooke et al., 2013; Lappegård et al., 2020) *(Hypothesis 3a)*.

Likewise, the presence of family services should reduce couples' conflict over the division of domestic and care labor, and it should therefore be beneficial for men's union stability as well. Moreover, policies to reconcile work and family should induce couples to adopt more gender symmetric arrangements (Esping-Andersen & Billari, 2015), which, in turn, should reduce the risk of union dissolution for men with unstable employment. Therefore, in contexts with a relatively high use of family services, the difference in the risk of union dissolution between permanently employed and jobless and time-limited employed men should diminish *(Hypothesis 3b)*.

3. Empirical analysis

Presented in this section are the results of the empirical analysis. Sub-section 3.1 provides a descriptive analysis of the three regional indicators on the gender context and exposure time and risk of dissolution for each level of the gender context indicators. Then, set out in sub-section 3.2 are the results of the event history analysis.

3.1 Descriptive analysis

Tables 1, 2 and 3 display the values for the indicators on the percentage of dual-earner couples, the symmetry in the division of care and domestic work, and the use of childcare facilities for each region and year [a more detailed description of the indicators is provided in Chapter 3, section 4.4]. In all three tables, highlighted in light grey are values which define contexts with relatively high gender equality, and in dark grey those defining contexts with low gender equality. Regions are ordered according to their macro-regional area, and dotted lines separate regions from the northern, central, and southern areas of the country.

From Table 1 it can be seen that the diffusion of the dual-earner model is still limited in Italy. Here, defined as a 'high diffusion' of the dual-earner model is when the percentage of dual-earner couples in the region is more than 55% of all couples. This target has only been reached by the following regions: Emilia Romagna since 2006, Trentino Alto Adige (Autonomous Provinces of Trento and Bolzano) since 2009, and Aosta Valley only in 2010 and 2014. A low presence of dual-earner couples is defined as being when the share of dual-earner couples is less than 25% of all couples. The southern regions of Campania, Apulia and Sicily are below this threshold for the whole period observed (except for Apulia in 2016, when it reached 25.3), and Calabria, which was slightly above this threshold before 2011 but belongs in this category between 2012 and 2016.

The index of asymmetry in the share of domestic and care work among dual-earner couples ranges from 65.3 to 85, meaning that no region has a symmetric share of household work. In all the regions and years analyzed women carry out more domestic duties than their male partners even when employed in the labor market. Here defined as a (relatively) high symmetry in domestic work is when women perform less than 67% of all domestic and care work. In this category are found the regions of Piedmont, Lombardy, Friuli and Umbria for the most recent period. A low symmetry is defined as when women perform more than 80% of all domestic and care tasks. Belonging in this category are the southern of regions Abruzzo, Campania and Apulia for the oldest period, and Campania, Apulia, Molise, Basilicata, Calabria, and Sicily for the following period.

Finally, shown in Table 3 is the percentage of children aged between 0 and 3 years old in the total number of children of the same age attending childcare facilities for each region and year. The percentages are quite low, suggesting that many mothers are probably out of the labor market at least until their children are 3 years old. Regions are defined as having a high use of childcare services when the percentage of 0-3 year-old children receiving childcare is above 20. This segment comprises the following regions: Aosta Valley, Emilia-Romagna, and Tuscany; Friuli, but only for the years 2010-2011 and from 2014 to 2016; and South Tyrol for 2015 and 2016. Low attendance is defined as when less than 5% of children aged below 3 years old attend childcare services. Again found in this category are the southern regions of Campania, and Calabria, Apulia and Sicily for several years, and Molise before 2008.

Overall, the selected indicators depict a scenario with still important gender inequalities, and with considerable regional differences, marked by a sharp north/south divide.

Table 1: % of dual earner couples in the region

	NUTS-2 Regions	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
North	**Piedmont**	47.0	48.2	50.3	50.7	51.7	50.2	49.9	50.6	51.0	50.0	49.9	51.7	53.2
	Aosta Valley	52.0	52.0	52.0	52.0	52.0	52.0	56.0	54.2	54.2	50.0	56.5	52.2	52.2
	Lombardy	48.8	48.7	50.7	51.0	50.8	50.6	50.5	50.2	50.6	51.5	52.1	52.4	53.7
	Trentino-Alto Adige/South Tyrol	51.6	51.3	51.8	53.1	54.4	55.2	55.4	55.1	55.3	57.7	58.2	59.5	60.0
	Veneto	45.7	47.2	48.1	48.1	50.5	49.5	49.4	49.9	49.9	48.8	50.4	49.6	50.2
	Friuli	46.4	48.0	50.4	51.6	51.8	49.2	49.0	51.0	50.8	50.2	51.1	49.8	50.6
	Liguria	43.1	42.9	46.4	47.6	48.8	48.8	49.0	48.8	46.6	45.4	46.5	50.8	51.1
	Emilia-Romagna	54.3	54.7	56.2	57.5	57.3	56.2	54.9	55.9	56.0	55.1	54.9	55.2	58.0
Centre	**Tuscany**	48.0	48.0	49.3	49.9	50.7	49.7	49.1	48.4	50.3	51.3	51.7	53.6	54.5
	Umbria	46.2	46.2	46.8	49.4	50.6	48.0	48.3	46.8	45.8	47.0	46.7	48.8	49.1
	Marche	49.5	49.2	49.0	49.8	51.9	50.8	49.7	47.6	48.7	48.3	50.7	49.7	48.5
	Lazio	40.4	41.7	41.6	41.9	43.4	42.6	42.8	43.2	43.2	43.2	44.6	43.7	45.7
South	**Abruzzo**	40.5	41.2	41.6	40.3	43.4	39.1	39.1	41.2	40.7	39.8	38.7	39.2	38.8
	Molise	34.9	33.3	33.9	36.1	37.1	35.5	33.9	33.3	33.9	31.7	32.2	35.0	35.6
	Campania	24.4	22.5	23.8	23.1	22.4	21.3	21.6	20.7	21.7	22.1	21.9	22.2	23.7
	Apulia	23.8	22.4	23.8	24.5	24.4	23.2	22.9	23.5	24.4	23.7	24.1	25.0	25.3
	Basilicata	31.4	32.2	31.6	29.9	30.2	30.4	31.3	29.3	29.6	31.0	31.3	31.3	33.0
	Calabria	28.9	27.7	28.2	26.2	26.0	25.3	26.1	26.4	23.9	22.5	21.4	21.5	23.4
	Sicily	23.1	24.2	25.5	24.6	24.5	24.2	23.5	23.0	22.7	21.7	20.8	21.5	21.8
	Sardinia	32.0	31.5	32.0	33.9	33.8	32.5	32.6	35.2	34.6	31.2	30.4	33.8	35.1

Legend: Low < 25% - High > 55 %   Source: Labor Force Survey (LFS) Istat, own elaboration

Table 2: Index of symmetry in the share of domestic and care work in dual-earners couples

NUTS-2 Regions		**2004-2006**	**2007-2011**	**2012-2016**
North	**Piedmont**	71.4	68.9	65.3
	Aosta Valley	73.9	78.4	71.7
	Lombardy	75	71.5	66.2
	Trentino-Alto Adige/South Tyrol	75	72.3	69.3
	Veneto	71.4	70.5	67.5
	Friuli	72.6	68.9	66.6
	Liguria	75.7	72.8	71.1
	Emilia-Romagna	71.6	71.3	67.5
Centre	**Tuscany**	73.9	74.1	67.6
	Umbria	76.4	74.3	66.7
	Marche	73.8	70.9	71.5
	Lazio	77.4	76.4	69.8
South	**Abruzzo**	81.4	76.9	75.3
	Molise	78.5	79.9	73.5
	Campania	82.1	75	76.9
	Apulia	81.3	75.9	78.9
	Basilicata	85	79.7	77.7
	Calabria	80.6	81.8	75.9
	Sicily	78.4	80.9	74.2
	Sardinia	76	70.2	69.3

Legend: Low > 79 – High < 67   Source: Time Use Survey 2002-2003, 2007-2008, 2012-2013 (ISTAT), own elaboration

Table 3: % of children between 0- and 3-years old attending childcare services

	NUTS-2 Regions	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016
North	**Piedmont**	13.6	13.5	14.9	14.3	14.5	14.9	15.6	15.3	13.2	13.5	12.4	12.2	12.4
	Aosta Valley	56.5	40.1	25.4	24	28.3	25.6	27.6	21.7	20.4	22.2	24.6	24.7	22.6
	Lombardy	15.6	13.8	14.9	15.9	16.6	18.9	19.3	18.1	16.8	17	15.5	15	15.6
	Trentino-Alto Adige/South Tyrol	12.3	12.5	12.4	14.5	15.1	17.1	19.7	17.5	18	19.4	18.8	20.1	20.9
	Veneto	10.9	10.7	12.6	11.4	12	12.6	12.7	13.3	10.4	10.8	10	10	10.5
	Friuli	9.4	10.9	12.3	15.4	15	17.9	20.4	21.1	15.5	19.9	21.9	20.3	22.2
	Liguria	16	16.8	16.4	15.5	17	16.8	17	17.6	15.6	15.7	14.6	14.8	15.1
	Emilia-Romagna	27.6	28.2	27.7	28.3	28.3	29.9	29.9	27.2	26.8	26.2	25.6	25.3	25.3
Centre	**Tuscany**	24.1	20	22.2	21.6	21.7	20.6	21.3	20.8	21.8	21.6	21.7	22.2	23.3
	Umbria	13.8	13.8	14	15	23.5	28	28	23.8	15.4	15.8	15.2	15.9	15.8
	Marche	23.3	17.2	15	15.5	16	16.2	17.1	17.2	16.5	15.7	16.5	15.9	16
	Lazio	9.4	10.4	11.1	12.1	12.8	13.9	15.4	17.3	17.3	16.3	17.1	17	16.9
South	**Abruzzo**	6.8	7.2	7.2	8.7	9.9	10.2	9.8	9.9	9.8	10.1	10.1	9	8.4
	Molise	3.2	3.9	4.8	4.8	4.8	5.4	5.5	11.3	10.4	8.6	10.7	10.9	11.8
	Campania	1.7	2.1	1.8	2.2	2.8	2.8	2.8	2.9	2.6	2.7	2.6	3	3.6
	Apulia	5	5.2	4.4	4.6	4.9	5	4.6	4.6	4.3	4.5	5.3	6.4	6.5
	Basilicata	5.1	5.6	5.4	6.9	6.8	7.8	7.6	7.5	6.9	6.5	6.6	6.3	6.9
	Calabria	2.1	2.3	2.4	2	2.7	3.5	2.4	2.5	2.1	1.4	1.2	2	2.2
	Sicily	6	6.4	6.3	5.5	6	5.3	5.6	5.5	5.5	5	4.6	4.8	5.2
	Sardinia	10	9.1	8.7	9.4	10	13.3	17.3	13.1	12.9	10.7	10.7	10.4	11.3

Legend: Low < 5% - High > 20%   Source: ISTAT, own elaboration

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Table 4: Exposure time and risk of dissolution by gender context indicators

	Person-months	Dissolutions	Absolute monthly risk per 1000	95% Confidence Interval	
WOMEN					
% Dual earner couples in region					
Low	321653	81	0.3	0.0002	0.0003
Medium	1273026	468	0.4	0.0003	0.0004
High	66358	67	**1.0**	0.0008	0.0013
Symmetry in share of hh work in region					
Low	364849	50	0.1	0.0001	0.0002
Medium	1236126	519	0.4	0.0004	0.0005
High	60062	47	**0.8**	0.0006	0.0010
Childcare attendance in region					
Low	309974	84	0.3	0.0002	0.0003
Medium	1079771	403	0.4	0.0003	0.0004
High	271292	129	**0.5**	0.0004	0.0006
Total	1661037	616	0.4	0.0003	0.0004
MEN					
% Dual earner couples in region					
Low	232184	75	0.3	0.0003	0.0004
Medium	982757	443	0.5	0.0004	0.0005
High	60851	67	**1.1**	0.0009	0.0014
Symmetry in share of hh work in region					
Low	294244	62	0.2	0.0002	0.0003
Medium	932178	482	0.5	0.0005	0.0006
High	49370	41	**0.8**	0.0006	0.0011
Childcare attendance in region					
Low	275472	103	0.4	0.0003	0.0005
Medium	795873	376	0.5	0.0004	0.0005
High	204447	106	**0.5**	0.0004	0.0006
Total	1275792	585	0.5	0.0004	0.0005

Note: highest absolute monthly risk for each variable marked in bold

For descriptive purposes, Table 4 displays the time at risk, number of dissolutions, and absolute monthly risk of experiencing union dissolution for all levels of each gender context indicator, separately for women and men. For both women and men,

and for all indicators, the category with the highest rate of union dissolution is the one representing the highest level of gender equality. From a descriptive analysis it therefore emerges that, in regions with higher shares of dual-earner couples, greater symmetry in the division of domestic and care work, and more frequent use of childcare facilities, the monthly risk of union dissolution is the highest. However, these differences may be constituted by compositional effects that must be controlled for in a multi-variable analysis.

3.2 Event history analysis

Displayed in Table 5 are four successive models analyzing the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution in different gender contexts. In the first model are all the individual level variables presented in Chapter 3, and the three indicators characterizing the gender context. Model 2 adds an interaction between the percentage of dual-earner couples in the region and individual employment status and type of contract. Model 3 includes an interaction between symmetry in the division of domestic work and individual employment status and type of contract. Finally, in model 4, an interaction between childcare service use and individual employment status and type of contract is included. The analytical strategy is the same as in Chapter 5, i.e. the analysis is segmented by gender. In order to control for cultural and historical regional differences, all models are controlled for region fixed effect, and standard errors are clustered in regions.

In model one, it is apparent that, overall, on controlling for all individual characteristics and the gender context, as in the previous chapters, joblessness is associated with a reduced risk of union dissolution for women, and joblessness and time-limited employment with an increased risk of union dissolution for men.

3.2.1 Diffusion of the dual-earner family model

In regions with larger shares of dual-earner couples, both women and men experience a higher risk of union dissolution (model 1). This seems to be in line

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with the economic independence hypothesis: a large share of economically independent partners facilitates union dissolution. This result can be also interpreted as a sign of an incomplete gender revolution in Italy: the raise of women employment overall seems to be associated to an increased risk of union dissolution. Nevertheless, inspection of model 2 shows that the level of diffusion of the dual-earner model in the region alters the individual-level relationship between employment instability and union dissolution. In model 2 the estimates relative to the percentage of dual-earner couples in the region refer to permanently employed women and men, for whom the risk of union dissolution does not increase in regions with a larger share of dual-earner couples. The interaction in model 2 for women shows that, in contexts with a low percentage of dual-earner couples (below 25% of all couples), jobless women have an approximately 70% lower risk of experiencing union dissolution relatively to permanently employed women. Such risk is only about 30% lower in contexts where the percentage of dual-earner couples ranges between 25% and 55%. Notably, in contexts with a large share of dual-earner couples (more than 55% of couples), the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution changes direction and becomes similar to what was found for men: joblessness and time-limited employment are associated with a higher risk of union dissolution relatively to permanently employed women. These results are in line with *hypothesis 1a* and with theories predicting that, as women's economic role becomes the norm and institutionalized in the society, gender differences in the relationship between employment status and union dissolution will diminish or even disappear. On analyzing model 2 for men, however, one finds no evidence supporting *hypothesis 1b:* the relative risk of union dissolution for men with unstable employment careers does not seem to decrease in contexts with a larger share of dual-earner couples. The dynamics between men's employment status and type of contract and union dissolution appear to be rather stable in different gender contexts. Figure 1 displays graphically the risk of union dissolution for jobless and time-limited employed relatively to permanently employed (represented by the horizontal line) for women (first row)

and men (second row) in contexts with low, mid, and high share of dual earner couples.

Figure 1: Relative risk of union dissolution for women and men in contexts with low mid and high diffusion of the dual-earner model[22]

WOMEN
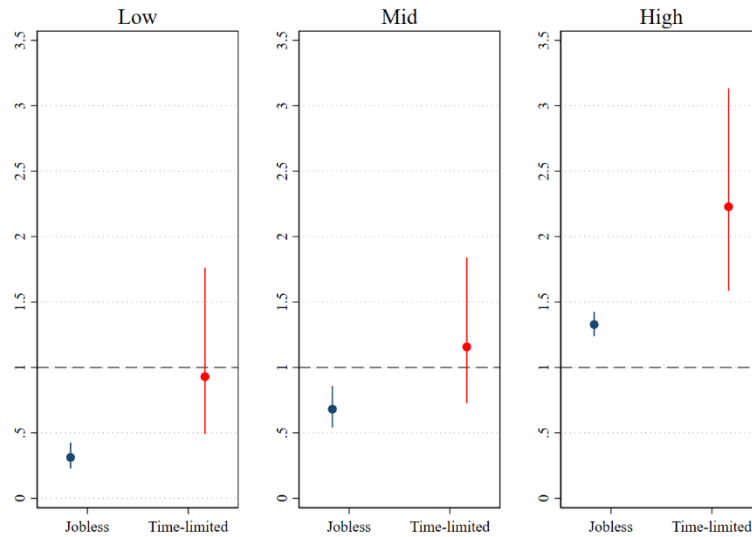
MEN

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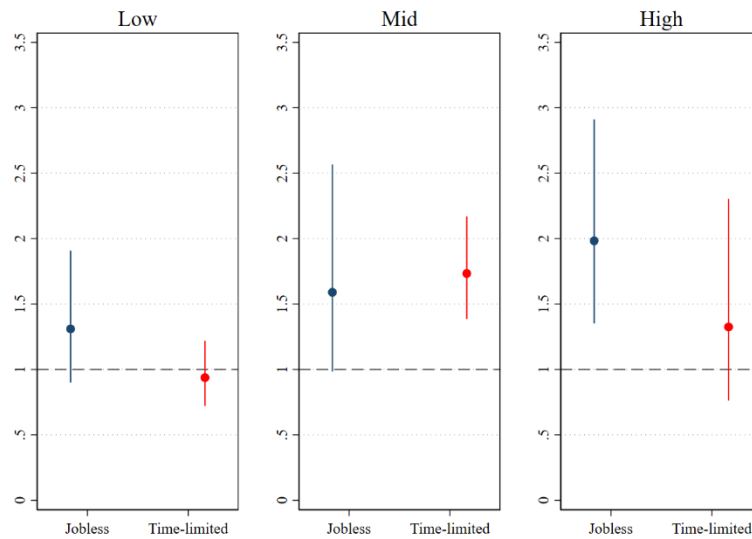
[22] Based on model 2, controlled for all individual and macro-level characteristics

3.2.2 Symmetry in the division of domestic work

As regards symmetry in the division of domestic and care work, model 1 shows that a relatively greater symmetry is associated with a reduction in the risk of union dissolution for both women and men, in line with theories claiming that men's contribution to care and domestic work stabilizes relationships. In model 3, estimates for the same variables refer to permanently employed women and men. For these, in regions with relatively greater symmetry in the division of domestic and care tasks, the risk of union dissolution decreases by 34% and 26%, respectively. Again, these results are in line with the idea that, especially for working couples, a more equal division of domestic and care work is beneficial for union stability. From the interaction in model 3, for women the pattern seems to be similar to the one observed for the indicator on the percentage of dual-earner couples. In contexts with low symmetry, jobless and time-limited employed women appear to be at lower risk of union dissolution than permanent employed ones, and the association reverses in contexts with relatively higher symmetry. These results are in line with *hypothesis 2a*; however, most estimates are not statistically precise. For men, in contexts with low or medium symmetry in the sharing of household tasks, employment instability is significantly associated with a higher risk of union dissolution. In regions with greater symmetry, differences between permanently employed, jobless, and time-limited employed are not statistically precise, although estimates still point to a positive association between employment instability and union dissolution. Thus, there is weak evidence supporting *hypothesis 2b* (because differences between permanently employed and jobless and time-limited employed are no longer significant in contexts with a relatively high male contribution to household work). The risks of union dissolution for jobless and time-limited employed relatively to permanently employed (represented by the horizontal line) are shown in figure 2, respectively for women (first row) and men (second row), in contexts with low, mid, and high symmetry in the share of care and domestic work.

Figure 2: Relative risk of union dissolution for women and men in contexts with low, mid, and high symmetry in the share of domestic and care work[23]

WOMEN
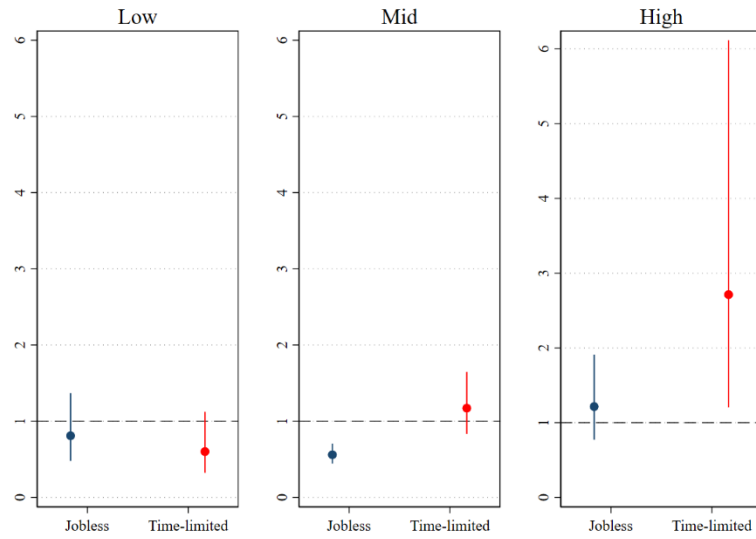
MEN

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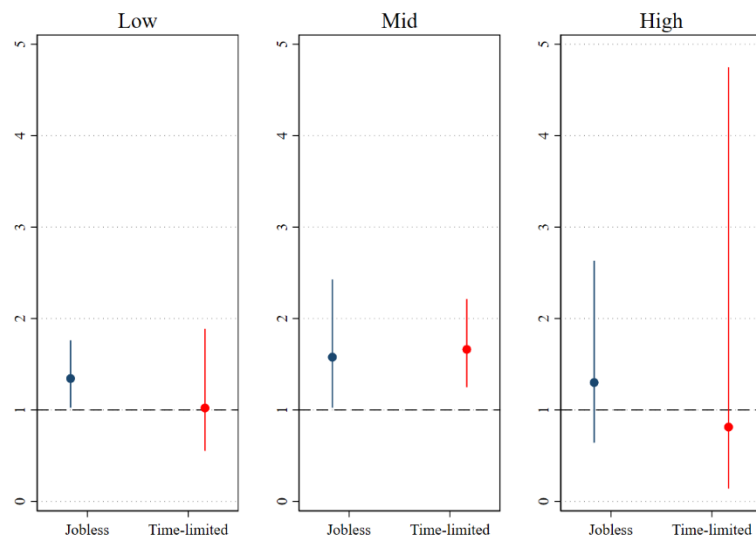
[23] Based on model 3, controlled for all individual and macro-level characteristics

3.2.3 Reconciliation policies

Finally, the role of reconciliation policies is analyzed. Model 1, for men, shows a striking reduction in the risk of union dissolution associated with an increase in childcare service use. Relatively to the medium scenario, low use of childcare facilities is associated with an almost 5 times greater risk of union dissolution, while high attendance at childcare facilities is associated with a reduction of the risk of union dissolution amounting to more than 40%. For women, estimates are not statistically significant; nevertheless, the relationship seems to be similar. In model 4, again, the estimates for the variable on the use of childcare services refer to permanently employed women and men. The results are similar to those of the previous models. Finally, on looking at the interaction in model 4, the pattern is similar to those found for the other 2 analyzed indicators on the gender context. In contexts with scant use of childcare facilities, jobless women have a risk of ending their union that is 55% lower than that of permanently employed women. In regions with medium use of childcare facilities, the relative risk of union dissolution for jobless women is only 38% lower, while in contexts with high use, the difference between jobless and permanently employed women is about 20% and is not statistically significant. Thus, as expected, because reconciliation policies help women to combine work and family, they appear to narrow the gap in the risk of union dissolution between permanently employed and jobless women, in line with *hypothesis 3a*. Moreover, no significant difference is found between permanent and time-limited employed women in regions with low-to-medium use of childcare services, whilst in regions with high use, time-limited employment is associated with a 64% greater risk of dissolution. Reconciliation services promote gender equality in the society and enable women to gain an economic role in the family similar to that of men. Therefore, in contexts where such services are well developed and widely used, women's employment instability is likely to provoke stress in the couple just like that of men. For men, instead, model 4 shows that, although use of childcare services reduces the risk of union dissolution for all men, the dynamics among men with different employment statuses and types of contract remain substantially unchanged. Men with unstable job careers are constantly those

at higher risk of union dissolution relatively to permanently employed men in all three gender contexts analyzed. In figure 3 are displayed the relative risks of union dissolution for women and men.

Figure 3: Relative risk of union dissolution for women and men in contexts with low, mid, and high use of childcare[24]

WOMEN
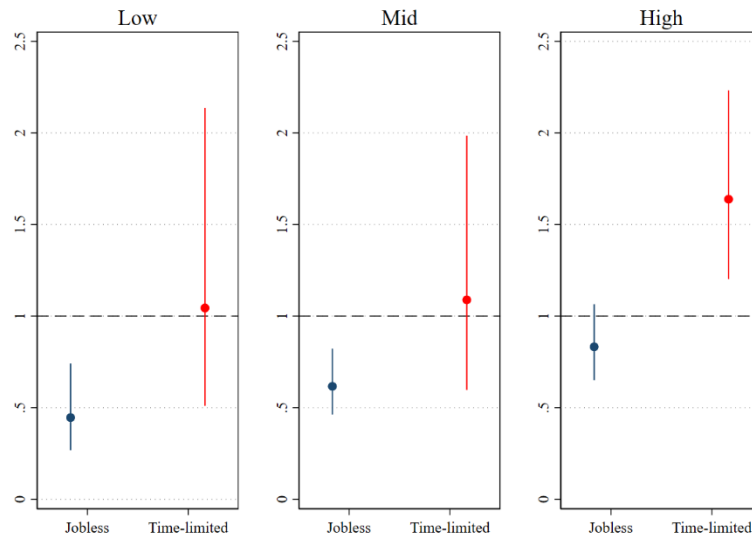
MEN

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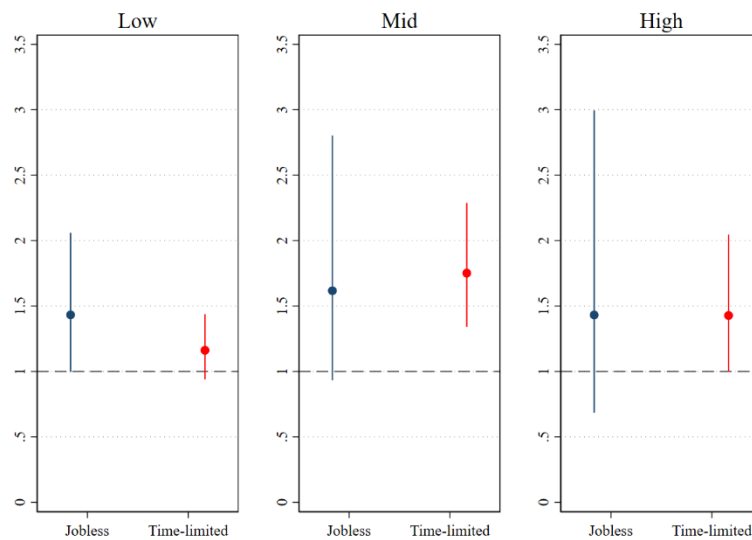
[24] Based on model 4, controlled for all individual and macro-level characteristics

Table 5: Relative risk of union dissolution for women and men. Piecewise constant exponential model

	WOMEN								MEN							
	(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)		(1)		(2)		(3)		(4)	
	Individual and macro level variables		Dual earner * Employment status		Hh choirs * Employment status		Childcare * Employment status		Individual and macro level variables		Dual earner * Employment status		Hh choirs * Employment status		Childcare * Employment status	
VARIABLES	RR	s.e.	RR	s.e.	RR	s.e.	RR	s.e.	RR	s.e.	RR	s.e.	RR	s.e.	RR	s.e.
Employment status and type of contract																
Permanent	1								1							
Jobless	**0.62*****	0.074							**1.53****	0.294						
Time-limited	1.22	0.230							**1.55*****	0.195						
Self-employed	1.06	0.293							0.97	0.063						
% Dual earner couples in region																
Low	**0.62*****	0.088	0.87	0.113	**0.58*****	0.086	**0.61*****	0.087	1.01	0.244	1.00	0.323	0.99	0.237	1.01	0.245
Medium	1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1	
Higher	**1.46*****	0.201	0.97	0.073	**1.46*****	0.202	**1.46*****	0.197	**1.25*****	0.084	1.07	0.108	**1.24*****	0.086	**1.25*****	0.086
Symmetry in share of hh work in region																
Low	0.85	0.202	0.88	0.210	0.69	0.175	0.85	0.199	1.27	0.361	1.26	0.362	1.42	0.494	1.26	0.366
Medium	1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1	
Higher	**0.79*****	0.057	**0.79*****	0.057	**0.66****	0.056	**0.79*****	0.056	**0.73*****	0.070	**0.73*****	0.070	**0.74*****	0.084	**0.73*****	0.069
Childcare attendance in region																
Low	1.06	0.347	1.06	0.355	1.09	0.362	1.36	0.509	**4.86*****	1.285	**4.85*****	1.217	**4.83*****	1.261	**5.00*****	1.525
Medium	1		1		1		1		1		1		1		1	
Higher	0.69	0.303	0.69	0.306	0.71	0.322	0.60	0.257	**0.57*****	0.065	**0.57*****	0.069	**0.56*****	0.066	**0.59*****	0.083

% dual earner * Employment status						
Dual earner: low						
Permanent	1				1	
Jobless	**0.31***	0.050			1.31	0.251
Time-limited	0.93	0.304			0.94	0.126
Self-employed	1.02	0.629			**1.49***	0.343
Dual earner: mid						
Permanent	1				1	
Jobless	**0.68***	0.081			**1.59***	0.389
Time-limited	1.16	0.275			**1.73***	0.199
Self-employed	0.90	0.296			**0.83***	0.052
Dual earner: high						
Permanent	1				1	
Jobless	**1.33***	0.048			**1.98***	0.388
Time-limited	**2.23***	0.388			1.32	0.374
Self-employed	**3.26***	0.700			**1.66***	0.068
Symmetry in share of hh work *Employment status						
Symmetry: low						
Permanent			1		1	
Jobless			0.81	0.217	**1.34***	0.186
Time-limited			0.60	0.192	1.02	0.320
Self-employed			1.27	0.710	0.87	0.272
Symmetry: mid						
Permanent			1		1	
Jobless			**0.56***	0.067	**1.58***	0.347
Time-limited			1.17	0.203	**1.66***	0.243
Self-employed			1.10	0.349	0.96	0.079

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	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)
<u>Symmetry: higher</u>								
Permanent			1				1	
Jobless			1.21 0.281				1.30 0.468	
Time-limited			**2.71**** 0.125				1.81 0.732	
Self-employed			0.60 0.376				1.15* 0.070	
Attendance to childcare * Employment status								
<u>Childcare: low</u>								
Permanent				1				1
Jobless				**0.45***** 0.116				**1.43*** 0.266
Time-limited				1.04 0.381				1.16 0.126
Self-employed				0.63 0.277				1.32 0.256
<u>Childcare: mid</u>								
Permanent				1				1
Jobless				**0.62***** 0.091				**1.62*** 0.454
Time-limited				1.09 0.335				**1.75***** 0.239
Self-employed				1.09 0.372				0.91* 0.050
<u>Childcare: higher</u>								
Permanent				1				1
Jobless				0.83 0.105				1.43 0.539
Time-limited				**1.64***** 0.259				**1.43*** 0.262
Self-employed				1.24 0.695				0.87 0.124
Observations	82,392	82,392	82,392	82,392	71,162	71,162	71,162	71,162
Individuals	5,975	5,975	5,975	5,975	5,293	5,293	5,293	5,293
Dissolutions	616	616	616	616	585	585	585	585

Note: controlled for all individual level variables as in chapter 4 and 5.

4. Conclusions

Overall, in Italy, the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution is the opposite for women and men, with joblessness being associated with a reduction in the risk of union dissolution for women, and joblessness and time-limited employment with an increase in that risk for men. This chapter has analyzed the extent to which these gender differences depend on the level of gender equality in the society. For this purpose, it has modeled the relationship between employment status and union dissolution for women and men over time and in regions with different levels of gender equality. It has measured gender equality with three objective regional-level indicators of the share of paid and unpaid work within couples, and the uptake of reconciliation services.

The analysis has provided evidence that the gendered relationship between employment instability and union dissolution depends on the level of gender equality in the society. In fact, in regions with higher gender equality, the opposite association of women's and men's employment instability and union dissolution disappears. Not only is women's employment instability no longer associated with a lower risk of union dissolution, but it becomes positively associated with union dissolution, leading to the conclusion that in contexts with higher gender equality, employment instability – including both joblessness and time-limited employment – is associated with a higher risk of union dissolution for both women and men. This result is particularly evident when considering the share of paid work within the couple and the diffusion of the dual-earner model; but the pattern holds for the other two indicators as well. Such results provide evidence for theories predicting that, as women's economic role becomes the norm and institutionalized in the society, gender differences in the relationship between employment status and union dissolution diminish or even disappear (Oppenheimer, 1994). Nevertheless, in contrast with theories claiming that in contexts where the dual-earner model is prevalent men's employment instability is less harmful for union stability, the results reported in this chapter show that, at least in Italy, the dynamics between

men's employment status and type of contract and union dissolution are rather stable in different gender contexts.

Importantly, this chapter has also highlighted that, although the raise in the share of dual-earner couples is associated with an increase in the risk of union dissolution for both women and men, a higher level of symmetry in the division of domestic and care work, and the uptake of reconciliation services, is instead beneficial for couple stability. Therefore, because women's participation in the labor market is constantly increasing, the development of reconciliation services and policies to induce couples to adopt more symmetric gender arrangements are important measures also to prevent union dissolution.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion and discussion

The present dissertation adds insights to the growing literature investigating the link between economic uncertainty and family dynamics by addressing the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution in Italy. Previous research has determined that employment instability may either reduce the risk of union dissolution by raising its relative costs or increase the risk by exacerbating stress and conflict within the relationship (Amato & Beattie, 2010; Cohen, 2014; Fischer & Liefbroer, 2006). This study has remedied several limitations of prior research by providing new evidence including different dimensions of employment instability, different types of unions and a gender perspective, and accounting for the economic and social context. The analysis has focused on the Italian context in light of the most reliable and extensive retrospective data available, which make it possible to implement event history techniques to scrutinize the effect of time-constant and time-varying characteristics, and to observe cohorts from 1950 to 1986.

At the individual level, the results reported in Chapter 4 suggested that, even when analyzing recent data, in Italy the effect of employment instability on union dissolution is gender-specific. Joblessness is a facilitator of men's union dissolution and an inhibitor of that of women. Moreover, men with time-limited contracts were found to be at a far greater risk of dissolution than their permanently employed counterparts, while no clear pattern was found for women. Such findings highlight the importance of distinguishing between time-limited and permanent employment, especially when studying the risk of union dissolution for men. For women, however, there seems to be no clear divide in the association between permanent

and time-limited work contracts and union dissolution. The key factor is instead whether or not a woman is employed [Chapter 4, section 2.1].

Nonetheless, the relation between employment instability and union dissolution appears to be far more complex than might be assumed at first glance. Without accounting for the persistence of employment instability, the emerging pattern is partial and simplistic. Indeed, the results in Chapter 4 show a non-monotonic relationship between employment instability and union dissolution. For women, the accumulation of periods of joblessness is still associated with a lower dissolution risk compared with that of women in continuous employment. However, a considerable accumulation of time spent in time-limited jobs is associated with a higher risk of union dissolution relative to those women who have never had time-limited jobs. It could thus be argued that, for women, working in time-limited jobs for a considerable time may increase economic independence compared to those who do not engage in paid work at all. For men, instead, the initial effect of employment instability appears to be a rise in the cost of divorce, thereby substantially reducing the risk of dissolution. Only when the persistence of employment instability reaches a certain level does relational stress emerge and increase the risk of dissolution. In particular, a consistent accumulation of joblessness for men appears to be especially detrimental to relationships. Overall, a 'J-shaped' association emerges between instability of employment careers and union dissolution [Chapter 4, section 2.2]. It seems clear that individuals with accumulated employment instability are, in all probability, highly selected.

In Italy, the gendered effect of employment instability on union dissolution is deeply rooted in gender differences in the allocation of time and responsibilities between paid and unpaid work. Employment instability renders women economically dependent on their partners, contributing to a rise in the economic and social cost of divorce. On the other hand, men's employment instability generates relational stress when the male partner is the main income provider: in a dominant male-breadwinner context, men's employment instability not only generates family economic difficulties, but it also clashes with prevailing gender norms. The results reported in both Chapter 4 and 6 provide empirical evidence

supporting this idea, both at the micro- and macro-level. As a matter of fact, at the individual level it appears that, among younger cohorts and cohabiting couples, which should be relatively more egalitarian (Manning, 2020; Meggiolaro & Ongaro, 2019; Perelli-Harris et al., 2014), gender differences in the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution diminish. For both younger cohorts and cohabiting couples, the convergence in the gendered relationship occurs due to a change in the relationship for women. For the youngest cohort of women, the negative relationship between joblessness and union dissolution is no longer significant, while time-limited work is associated with a greater risk of union dissolution. Among women in cohabiting unions, the relationship reverses and becomes similar to that found for men, i.e. the risk of union dissolution is higher for women with no jobs or unstable ones [Chapter 4, section 2.3 and 2.4].

Moreover, in Chapter 6, analyses of the gender context in which employment instability occurs furnished further evidence for the idea that the gendered relationship between employment instability and union dissolution depends on the level and type of gender equality in the society. In regions with higher gender equality, both within the labor market and within the family, the opposite association of women's and men's employment instability and union dissolution disappears, once again because of a change in the relationship for women. In contexts where the dual-earner model is the prevalent one, the relationship between women's employment instability and union dissolution reverses, and employment instability, including both joblessness and time-limited employment, is associated with a higher risk of union dissolution for both women and men. This result is particularly evident when the gender context is described with the diffusion of the dual-earner model. However, the pattern holds also when considering the share of domestic and care work, and the presence and uptake of child-care services [Chapter 6]. Such results provide evidence for theories predicting that, as women's economic role and a dual earner-dual carer arrangement become the norm and are institutionalized in the society, gender differences in the relationship between employment status and union dissolution diminish or even disappear (Hansen, 2005; Oppenheimer, 1994). Nevertheless, in contrast with theories claiming that, in

more egalitarian couples and contexts, men's employment instability is less harmful for union stability, and that generally union dissolution should depend less on the individual employment position (Jalovaara, 2003; Oppenheimer, 1994), the present research shows that the dynamics between men's employment status and type of contract and union dissolution are rather stable, even among those that are considered to be more egalitarian groups (i.e. younger cohorts or cohabitors) [Chapter 4] and in more egalitarian gender contexts [Chapter 6]. Nevertheless, research finds that attitudes about men's roles have been slower to change than attitudes about women's roles (Gonalons-Pons & Gangl, 2021; Knight & Brinton, 2017), therefore, changes may still be ongoing and may appear in a later stage. This may be due to the fact that, in Italy, the gender revolution is still 'stalled' in its first stage (Gerson, 2010; Goldscheider et al., 2015; Hochschild, 2003), and even regions well-performing in terms of women's participation in the labor market, are still far from achieving equality in the domestic sphere, and state services and support for work/family balance are still insufficient [Chapter 6, section 3.1].

Thus, the present dissertation provides strong evidence that the inequality in the gendered division of labor within couples and in the society is a crucial explanatory factor for gender differences in the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution. Jobless women have more stable unions because they are economically dependent on the family. Removing obstacles produced by the unequal gender division of paid work within families and the society, this research thesis has shown that, at the individual level, employment instability negatively affect couple stability for both women and men, as it has been found for some other - more gender egalitarian - European countries (Di Nallo et al., 2021; Hansen, 2005; Jalovaara, 2003). Nonetheless, theories predict that this individual negative effect of employment instability ought to diminish if domestic and care responsibilities are equally shared within couples, and couples are supported by a more comprehensive system of policies for work/family balance. Unfortunately, it has not been possible for this thesis to empirically test this part of the theory because the data lack retrospective information on couples' division of domestic and care work [Chapter 3, section 5], and Italian regions do not provide a setting with an

equal division of unpaid work and extensive reconciliation services [Chapter 6, section 3.1].

Furthermore, Chapter 5 revealed that the negative impact of employment instability on relationships only occurs at the individual level. On the contrary, when employment instability is conceptualized in its macrolevel dimension, the association is the opposite: the lack of stable job opportunities acts as a structural constraint and constitutes a barrier to union dissolution by raising the economic cost of dissolving the current union as envisaged by the *cost of divorce* perspective [Chapter 5, section 3.1]. This negative association between macro-level unemployment and temporary work rates with union dissolution is the same for women and men, and holds for all individuals regardless of their individual employment status and type of contract, and whether they are spouses or cohabitants [Chapter 5, section 3.2 and 3.3]. Nevertheless, it appears that poor economic conditions attenuate the stigma and social disapproval for those men with unstable careers. With higher aggregate unemployment and time-limited work rates, the risk of union dissolution among the jobless and time-limited employees diminished and becomes similar to those experienced by the permanently employed. Hence, employment instability at micro- and macro-level has an opposite relationship with union dissolution. After all, macro-economic conditions are not imputable to the individual. They may therefore have a very different meaning and impact on individual feelings. At the individual level, poor performance in the labor market may be a sign of personal defeat. In contemporary capitalist societies, work is a source of economic security, social inclusion and well-being (Biegert, 2019). Hence, joblessness may provoke high levels of stress, frustration, dissatisfaction and depression (Marsh & Alvaro, 1990; Oesch & Lipps, 2013) which exacerbate the risk of union dissolution. Moreover, employment instability may be linked to personal characteristics related to a person's own unsuitability as partner, e.g. personal inconstancy, lack of reliability, or no sense of responsibility [Chapter 1, section 2.1]. On the other hand, a macro-level adverse employment context is a structural economic constraint imposed by the labor market and the economic cycle, an external condition which does not depend on the

individual but acts as a barrier to union dissolution by increasing uncertainty and the costs related to a separation, thus, binding couples to stick together. In principle, this may have either positive or negative effects for individuals and couples, as on one hand, can induce couples to strengthen their bonds during hard times (Thomas et al., 1980), but on the other, may force them to continue unhappy relationships, at least until the economy improves (Cherlin, 2009).

Overall, this study has enhanced understanding of the role of employment instability in union dissolution, and categorically rejects the notion of any simple, uniform, and unidirectional relationship. The findings have emphasized the importance of fully considering different dimensions of employment instability: the distinction among joblessness, time-limited, and permanent employment contracts; the role of the accumulation of instability throughout employment careers; and the moderating role of macro-economic conditions. Moreover, the results highlight the centrality of the gendered dimension in disentangling this relationship. For a full understanding of the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution it is crucial to elucidate gender differences, and importantly, to consider the cultural and institutional gender context in which employment instability is experienced.

This dissertation also contributes to Italian research on divorce. De Sandre (1980) was the first to show the increase in marital disruption among women of high socio-economic status in the first half of the 1970s – a finding later confirmed by, among others, De Rose (1992) using micro data. Later, other micro-level studies available for Italy all pointed to a positive gradient between women's socio-economic position and marital dissolution (Vignoli & Ferro, 2009; Vignoli et al., 2018). My results confirm that, even with recent data, this situation remains substantially unchanged – at least regarding the role of women's employment status in marriage (and not cohabitation) dissolutions. Moreover, prior studies comparing men's and women's employment statuses date back several decades – the most recent studies available made use of data from 1996 (de Rose & di Cesare, 2007) to 2003 (Salvini & Vignoli, 2011). Using data from 2016, my results on the one hand reiterate previous evidence, depicting a contemporary Italian society that

remains somewhat traditional in terms of couples' role sets; on the other they yield novel insights into the role of time-limited work, the accumulation of unstable employment, and macro-level employment conditions.

This dissertation has some limitations. First, because the survey consulted did not include information on ex-partners, this study was unable to explore both sides to the couples in the analysis. Accordingly, it could control only for the respondent's information in predicting dissolution risk. However, it has previously been suggested that information about both partners' contributions to paid and unpaid work are needed to properly assess the effect of women's employment on union dissolution (Mencarini & Vignoli, 2018; Oláh & Gahler, 2014; Sigle-Rushton, 2010). Second, the data did not make it possible to distinguish unemployment from inactivity. Although joblessness has been proven to be a valid indicator of employment instability in family research (Busetta et al., 2019; Härkönen, 2011), I acknowledge that unemployment and inactivity may have different roles in exacerbating stress or the cost of separation. The negative association between employment instability and union dissolution (for women in recent cohorts and cohabiting unions and in dual-earner contexts, and men in general), is a remarkable finding, since individuals disadvantaged in the labor market are also those more at risk of ending up in single households or mono-parental families, and thus be at a double economic disadvantage, with possible negative consequences for social stratification and child poverty (Amato, 2000). However, this thesis did not address social stratification. Despite all models accounted for individuals' and parents' educational background, the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution is likely to be moderated by social class. Individuals with higher socio-economic background may dispose of relatively more tools to deal with uncertainty and economic strain. Also, income data, not available in the survey, would be necessary to measure the individual means to cope with employment instability [Chapter 3, section 5]. Thus, further research should address how this relationship vary according to individuals' socio-economic background and social and economic resources. Finally, although Italy presents significant regional differences making it possible to study the impact of

many contextual conditions on the relationship between employment instability and union dissolution, because this has been a study on a single country, the impact of many relevant policies, which do not differ across regions, could not be evaluated. The relationship between employment instability and union dissolution is a complex one. It is defined by the weighting of the stress generated by the lack or the instability of paid work, and actual economic constraints, which may indeed differ among societies. The stress generated by the lack of work may vary according to the cultural importance attached to work in defining a person's identity and value in a given society, but also by the level of economic hardship provoked by unstable employment, which may in turn depend on the level of decommodification, economic prosperity and inequalities, and welfare-state support in the society. Finally, both stress and economic barriers due to employment instability depend on the gender division of labor in the society and in which phase of the gender revolution it is situated. Hence, further research in different contexts is necessary to understand whether these results can be extended to other countries.

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APPENDIX

1. Sample selection: different age limits

Table 1.1: Robustness check, age<50

	WOMEN			MEN		
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Years since union formation						
1-3						
4-7	1.52***	1.59***	1.57***	1.33***	1.34***	1.35***
	(0.172)	(0.180)	(0.178)	(0.135)	(0.135)	(0.136)
8-14	1.53***	1.66***	1.62***	1.32**	1.35**	1.36***
	(0.186)	(0.201)	(0.197)	(0.154)	(0.159)	(0.161)
15-20	1.54***	1.74***	1.68***	1.54***	1.59***	1.60***
	(0.241)	(0.271)	(0.263)	(0.243)	(0.256)	(0.260)
20+	1.23	1.41*	1.36*	1.22	1.31	1.33
	(0.220)	(0.249)	(0.240)	(0.252)	(0.273)	(0.277)
Region						
North						
Centre	1.00	0.99	1.00	1.11	1.07	1.07
	(0.095)	(0.095)	(0.096)	(0.109)	(0.106)	(0.105)
South	0.79**	0.73***	0.75***	0.83**	0.76***	0.75***
	(0.076)	(0.070)	(0.073)	(0.079)	(0.075)	(0.075)
Cohort						
1950-1959						
1960-1969	1.55***	1.43***	1.43***	1.68***	1.60***	1.61***
	(0.176)	(0.164)	(0.165)	(0.183)	(0.187)	(0.185)
1970-1986	2.11***	1.96***	1.97***	1.86***	1.70***	1.70***
	(0.243)	(0.230)	(0.231)	(0.216)	(0.214)	(0.213)
Cohabitation	3.93***	4.02***	4.02***	4.77***	4.81***	4.81***
	(0.375)	(0.392)	(0.393)	(0.447)	(0.462)	(0.463)
Children						
Childless						
1 age 0-6	0.55***	0.55***	0.55***	0.39***	0.40***	0.40***
	(0.066)	(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.049)
1 age 7+	0.91	0.89	0.90	0.68**	0.69**	0.69**
	(0.129)	(0.126)	(0.128)	(0.113)	(0.116)	(0.116)
2 youngest 0-6	0.45***	0.44***	0.45***	0.28***	0.29***	0.29***
	(0.066)	(0.064)	(0.066)	(0.045)	(0.047)	(0.047)
2 youngest 7+	0.63***	0.60***	0.61***	0.48***	0.50***	0.50***
	(0.101)	(0.097)	(0.098)	(0.082)	(0.087)	(0.087)
3 or more	0.46***	0.43***	0.45***	0.32***	0.32***	0.32***
	(0.093)	(0.088)	(0.090)	(0.074)	(0.076)	(0.076)

Separated parents	1.59***	1.63***	1.64***	1.09	1.14	1.13
	(0.193)	(0.202)	(0.202)	(0.156)	(0.157)	(0.156)
At least one parent is highly educated	1.12	1.09	1.09	1.46***	1.44***	1.44***
	(0.109)	(0.109)	(0.109)	(0.148)	(0.146)	(0.146)
Education						
None or elementary						
Lower secondary	1.45*	1.51**	1.51**	1.51**	1.43*	1.43*
	(0.289)	(0.300)	(0.301)	(0.292)	(0.274)	(0.275)
Upper secondary	1.67**	1.76***	1.74***	1.43*	1.32	1.33
	(0.337)	(0.354)	(0.352)	(0.276)	(0.255)	(0.256)
Tertiary	1.71**	1.80***	1.78***	1.35	1.29	1.29
	(0.366)	(0.388)	(0.385)	(0.293)	(0.279)	(0.279)
% relationship jobless						
Never jobless						
Up to 25%		0.51***	0.53***		0.54***	0.54***
		(0.054)	(0.055)		(0.053)	(0.053)
25% to 50%		0.56***	0.63***		0.80	0.77
		(0.079)	(0.095)		(0.147)	(0.153)
More than 50%		0.62***	0.89		1.74***	1.63**
		(0.065)	(0.137)		(0.204)	(0.373)
% relationship in time-limited jobs						
Never time-limited						
Up to 10%		0.55***	0.55***		0.46**	0.45***
		(0.094)	(0.094)		(0.141)	(0.138)
10% to 20%		0.79	0.79		0.70	0.67
		(0.183)	(0.186)		(0.214)	(0.206)
More than 20%		1.57***	1.63***		1.43***	1.27
		(0.167)	(0.242)		(0.184)	(0.256)
Employment status and type of contract						
Permanent						
Jobless	0.73***		0.66***	1.62***		1.09
	(0.069)		(0.099)	(0.180)		(0.246)
Time-limited	1.23		0.90	1.39**		1.20
	(0.160)		(0.169)	(0.201)		(0.284)
Self-employed	1.06		1.08	1.00		0.96
	(0.132)		(0.135)	(0.100)		(0.098)
Observations	183,084	183,084	183,084	141,803	141,803	141,803
Individuals	6602	6602	6602	5887	5887	5887
Dissolutions	1161	1161	1161	1098	1098	1098

Robust seeform in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Table 1.2: Robustness check, age<55

VARIABLES	WOMEN			MEN		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Years since union formation						
1-3						
4-7	1.52***	1.58***	1.56***	1.33***	1.34***	1.35***
	(0.172)	(0.180)	(0.177)	(0.135)	(0.135)	(0.136)
8-14	1.53***	1.66***	1.63***	1.28**	1.32**	1.33**
	(0.185)	(0.200)	(0.196)	(0.150)	(0.155)	(0.157)
15-20	1.56***	1.75***	1.69***	1.44**	1.49**	1.50**
	(0.241)	(0.269)	(0.262)	(0.224)	(0.234)	(0.238)
20+	1.13	1.28	1.24	0.93	1.01	1.02
	(0.194)	(0.217)	(0.210)	(0.177)	(0.193)	(0.195)
Region						
North						
Centre	1.01	1.00	1.01	1.10	1.05	1.05
	(0.095)	(0.094)	(0.095)	(0.107)	(0.103)	(0.103)
South	0.80**	0.74***	0.76***	0.81**	0.74***	0.74***
	(0.076)	(0.069)	(0.073)	(0.076)	(0.072)	(0.072)
Cohort						
1950-1959						
1960-1969	1.55***	1.42***	1.43***	1.73***	1.65***	1.65***
	(0.168)	(0.157)	(0.158)	(0.183)	(0.185)	(0.183)
1970-1986	2.12***	1.98***	1.99***	1.93***	1.76***	1.76***
	(0.238)	(0.227)	(0.227)	(0.221)	(0.215)	(0.215)
Cohabitation	3.89***	3.98***	3.98***	4.69***	4.73***	4.73***
	(0.369)	(0.384)	(0.385)	(0.434)	(0.447)	(0.448)
Children						
Childless						
1 age 0-6	0.55***	0.54***	0.55***	0.39***	0.40***	0.40***
	(0.065)	(0.065)	(0.066)	(0.048)	(0.049)	(0.049)
1 age 7+	0.88	0.86	0.87	0.69**	0.70**	0.70**
	(0.123)	(0.120)	(0.122)	(0.112)	(0.115)	(0.114)
2 youngest 0-6	0.45***	0.44***	0.45***	0.29***	0.29***	0.29***
	(0.066)	(0.064)	(0.066)	(0.046)	(0.047)	(0.047)
2 youngest 7+	0.61***	0.59***	0.60***	0.52***	0.54***	0.54***
	(0.096)	(0.093)	(0.094)	(0.085)	(0.089)	(0.089)
3 or more	0.44***	0.42***	0.43***	0.36***	0.36***	0.36***
	(0.088)	(0.084)	(0.086)	(0.078)	(0.080)	(0.080)
Separated parents	1.59***	1.64***	1.64***	1.08	1.13	1.13
	(0.193)	(0.201)	(0.201)	(0.155)	(0.156)	(0.155)
At least one parent	1.13	1.10	1.10	1.47***	1.44***	1.45***
is highly educated	(0.109)	(0.108)	(0.108)	(0.146)	(0.145)	(0.145)
Education						
None or						

elementary						
Lower secondary	1.56**	1.63**	1.63**	1.41*	1.32	1.33
	(0.311)	(0.323)	(0.323)	(0.260)	(0.243)	(0.244)
Upper secondary	1.80***	1.89***	1.87***	1.33	1.22	1.23
	(0.362)	(0.378)	(0.377)	(0.245)	(0.225)	(0.226)
Tertiary	1.82***	1.91***	1.89***	1.24	1.18	1.18
	(0.389)	(0.409)	(0.407)	(0.259)	(0.244)	(0.245)
% relationship jobless						
Never jobless						
Up to 25%		0.51***	0.53***		0.54***	0.54***
		(0.053)	(0.055)		(0.051)	(0.052)
25% to 50%		0.55***	0.62***		0.80	0.78
		(0.077)	(0.092)		(0.143)	(0.151)
More than 50%		0.62***	0.87		1.71***	1.61**
		(0.064)	(0.134)		(0.197)	(0.360)
% relationship in time-limited jobs						
Never time-limited						
Up to 10%		0.56***	0.57***		0.45***	0.45***
		(0.094)	(0.094)		(0.137)	(0.135)
10% to 20%		0.82	0.82		0.69	0.67
		(0.185)	(0.188)		(0.209)	(0.202)
More than 20%		1.58***	1.65***		1.44***	1.31
		(0.165)	(0.241)		(0.182)	(0.256)
Employment status and type of contract						
Permanent						
Jobless	0.74***		0.68***	1.60***		1.07
	(0.069)		(0.102)	(0.173)		(0.235)
Time-limited	1.24		0.89	1.38**		1.17
	(0.160)		(0.166)	(0.198)		(0.270)
Self-employed	1.09		1.10	1.02		0.98
	(0.133)		(0.136)	(0.101)		(0.097)
Observations	195,059	195,059	195,059	153,015	153,015	153,015
Individuals	6607	6607	6607	5897	5897	5897
Dissolutions	1197	1197	1197	1139	1139	1139

Robust seeform in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Note: trying different age limits results are unchanged, therefore I proceeded with the biggest sample, excluding those over 60 years old.

2. Dependent variable: de facto separation, legal separation, and divorce

Table 2.1: Robustness check: for married couples de-facto separation without imputation (excluding missings)

VARIABLES	WOMEN (1)	(2)	(3)	MEN (1)	(2)	(3)
Years since union formation						
1-3						
4-7	1.30**	1.37**	1.35**	1.23*	1.24*	1.24*
	(0.164)	(0.173)	(0.171)	(0.137)	(0.137)	(0.138)
8-14	1.21	1.34**	1.31**	1.21	1.25*	1.25*
	(0.166)	(0.185)	(0.181)	(0.153)	(0.161)	(0.161)
15-20	1.19	1.37*	1.33	1.38*	1.41*	1.43*
	(0.228)	(0.262)	(0.254)	(0.249)	(0.261)	(0.265)
20+	0.93	1.08	1.05	0.98	1.08	1.10
	(0.201)	(0.231)	(0.225)	(0.223)	(0.249)	(0.252)
Region						
North						
Centre	1.05	1.04	1.05	1.07	1.02	1.02
	(0.119)	(0.119)	(0.120)	(0.119)	(0.115)	(0.115)
South	0.92	0.85	0.87	0.79**	0.70***	0.70***
	(0.104)	(0.097)	(0.100)	(0.089)	(0.083)	(0.083)
Cohort						
1950-1959						
1960-1969	1.83***	1.69***	1.68***	1.93***	1.85***	1.86***
	(0.259)	(0.242)	(0.241)	(0.263)	(0.268)	(0.269)
1970-1986	2.73***	2.56***	2.56***	2.07***	1.91***	1.92***
	(0.391)	(0.372)	(0.370)	(0.299)	(0.294)	(0.297)
Cohabitation	7.00***	7.24***	7.26***	7.38***	7.34***	7.37***
	(0.785)	(0.833)	(0.833)	(0.821)	(0.830)	(0.836)
Children						
Childless						
1 age 0-6	0.62***	0.61***	0.62***	0.35***	0.36***	0.37***
	(0.087)	(0.086)	(0.087)	(0.053)	(0.055)	(0.055)
1 age 7+	0.93	0.89	0.91	0.53***	0.54***	0.54***
	(0.165)	(0.158)	(0.161)	(0.108)	(0.111)	(0.111)
2 youngest 0-6	0.50***	0.48***	0.49***	0.29***	0.29***	0.29***
	(0.091)	(0.089)	(0.092)	(0.055)	(0.057)	(0.057)
2 youngest 7+	0.79	0.75	0.76	0.47***	0.50***	0.49***
	(0.158)	(0.150)	(0.153)	(0.095)	(0.102)	(0.101)
3 or more	0.53***	0.49***	0.51***	0.30***	0.30***	0.30***
	(0.131)	(0.122)	(0.126)	(0.082)	(0.084)	(0.084)
Separated parents	1.70***	1.76***	1.76***	1.30*	1.36**	1.36**
	(0.226)	(0.236)	(0.236)	(0.200)	(0.202)	(0.201)

At least one parent is highly educated	1.12	1.09	1.08	1.39***	1.36***	1.36***
	(0.125)	(0.124)	(0.123)	(0.157)	(0.155)	(0.155)
Education *None or elementary*						
Lower secondary	1.39	1.45	1.45	1.38	1.31	1.31
	(0.367)	(0.382)	(0.384)	(0.307)	(0.288)	(0.288)
Upper secondary	1.56*	1.62*	1.62*	1.43	1.34	1.34
	(0.411)	(0.428)	(0.430)	(0.318)	(0.295)	(0.296)
Tertiary	1.83**	1.88**	1.87**	1.34	1.30	1.30
	(0.505)	(0.525)	(0.526)	(0.331)	(0.320)	(0.320)
% relationship jobless *Never jobless*						
Up to 25%		0.50***	0.51***		0.56***	0.57***
		(0.061)	(0.063)		(0.063)	(0.064)
25% to 50%		0.51***	0.57***		0.84	0.87
		(0.087)	(0.101)		(0.168)	(0.190)
More than 50%		0.66***	0.85		1.89***	2.03***
		(0.081)	(0.155)		(0.245)	(0.487)
% relationship in time-limited jobs *Never time-limited*						
Up to 10%		0.54***	0.54***		0.36***	0.35***
		(0.104)	(0.105)		(0.140)	(0.137)
10% to 20%		0.54**	0.53**		0.60	0.57*
		(0.160)	(0.161)		(0.196)	(0.186)
More than 20%		1.94***	1.97***		1.52***	1.37
		(0.233)	(0.347)		(0.212)	(0.287)
Employment status and type of contract *Permanent*						
Jobless	0.81*		0.76	1.56***		0.91
	(0.091)		(0.132)	(0.191)		(0.217)
Time-limited	1.53***		0.97	1.45**		1.15
	(0.221)		(0.215)	(0.230)		(0.289)
Self-employed	1.19		1.23	0.97		0.93
	(0.177)		(0.182)	(0.113)		(0.110)
Observations	194,905	194,905	194,905	154,542	154,542	154,542
Individuals	6,217	6,217	6,217	5,605	5,605	5,605
Dissolutions	816	816	816	862	862	862

Robust seeform in parentheses *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.10$

Table 2.2: Robustness check: for married couples time to legal separation and divorce instead of imputed de facto-separation

VARIABLES	WOMEN			MEN		
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(1)	(2)	(3)
Years since union formation						
1-3						
4-7	1.57***	1.63***	1.60***	1.34***	1.34***	1.35***
	(0.188)	(0.196)	(0.193)	(0.141)	(0.141)	(0.143)
8-14	1.75***	1.89***	1.84***	1.38***	1.42***	1.43***
	(0.217)	(0.232)	(0.228)	(0.162)	(0.168)	(0.169)
15-20	1.95***	2.16***	2.09***	1.69***	1.73***	1.75***
	(0.298)	(0.327)	(0.318)	(0.260)	(0.270)	(0.274)
20+	1.52**	1.69***	1.64***	1.06	1.17	1.18
	(0.256)	(0.282)	(0.274)	(0.187)	(0.208)	(0.210)
Region						
North						
Centre	0.97	0.96	0.96	1.10	1.05	1.05
	(0.094)	(0.094)	(0.094)	(0.108)	(0.103)	(0.103)
South	0.73***	0.68***	0.70***	0.77***	0.69***	0.69***
	(0.072)	(0.067)	(0.070)	(0.076)	(0.071)	(0.071)
Cohort						
1950-1959						
1960-1969	1.66***	1.57***	1.56***	1.78***	1.69***	1.70***
	(0.182)	(0.176)	(0.175)	(0.192)	(0.191)	(0.191)
1970-1986	2.34***	2.23***	2.22***	2.02***	1.85***	1.85***
	(0.271)	(0.264)	(0.262)	(0.240)	(0.231)	(0.231)
Cohabitation	4.58***	4.64***	4.64***	5.35***	5.38***	5.39***
	(0.445)	(0.461)	(0.461)	(0.508)	(0.520)	(0.522)
Children						
Childless						
1 age 0-6	0.55***	0.55***	0.56***	0.36***	0.37***	0.37***
	(0.069)	(0.069)	(0.070)	(0.048)	(0.050)	(0.050)
1 age 7+	0.89	0.88	0.89	0.77*	0.78	0.78
	(0.125)	(0.123)	(0.125)	(0.119)	(0.122)	(0.121)
2 youngest 0-6	0.36***	0.35***	0.36***	0.25***	0.25***	0.25***
	(0.058)	(0.056)	(0.058)	(0.045)	(0.047)	(0.047)
2 youngest 7+	0.68**	0.67***	0.67**	0.52***	0.55***	0.55***
	(0.106)	(0.103)	(0.104)	(0.084)	(0.089)	(0.088)
3 or more	0.41***	0.40***	0.41***	0.32***	0.32***	0.32***
	(0.085)	(0.082)	(0.084)	(0.070)	(0.072)	(0.072)
Separated parents	1.59***	1.63***	1.63***	1.17	1.21	1.21
	(0.199)	(0.206)	(0.207)	(0.168)	(0.167)	(0.166)
parents highly educated	1.11	1.09	1.09	1.46***	1.44***	1.44***
	(0.111)	(0.112)	(0.111)	(0.148)	(0.146)	(0.146)

Education
None or

elementary						
Lower secondary	1.84***	1.90***	1.89***	1.54**	1.45*	1.45*
	(0.366)	(0.377)	(0.377)	(0.305)	(0.284)	(0.285)
Upper secondary	2.19***	2.28***	2.26***	1.54**	1.43*	1.43*
	(0.438)	(0.454)	(0.453)	(0.305)	(0.282)	(0.283)
Tertiary	2.16***	2.25***	2.21***	1.41	1.34	1.35
	(0.465)	(0.484)	(0.480)	(0.313)	(0.296)	(0.297)
% relationship jobless						
Never jobless						
Up to 25%		0.56***	0.58***		0.54***	0.54***
		(0.059)	(0.061)		(0.052)	(0.053)
25% to 50%		0.63***	0.71**		0.91	0.90
		(0.091)	(0.107)		(0.158)	(0.166)
More than 50%		0.63***	0.87		1.69***	1.64**
		(0.069)	(0.143)		(0.204)	(0.349)
% relationship in time-limited jobs						
Never time-limited						
Up to 10%		0.60***	0.60***		0.45***	0.44***
		(0.102)	(0.102)		(0.135)	(0.132)
10% to 20%		0.85	0.84		0.77	0.73
		(0.193)	(0.196)		(0.228)	(0.220)
More than 20%		1.62***	1.71***		1.41***	1.24
		(0.174)	(0.266)		(0.182)	(0.246)
Employment status and type of contract						
Permanent						
Jobless	0.74***		0.69**	1.53***		1.03
	(0.072)		(0.110)	(0.170)		(0.211)
Time-limited	1.27		0.88	1.39**		1.22
	(0.170)		(0.174)	(0.205)		(0.284)
Self-employed	1.11		1.13	0.98		0.94
	(0.140)		(0.143)	(0.099)		(0.097)
Observations	202,418	202,418	202,418	159,920	159,920	159,920
Individuals	6,537	6,537	6,537	5,840	5,840	5,840
Dissolutions	1135	1135	1135	1094	1094	1094

Robust seeform in parentheses *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.10$

Note: without the imputation many marriages are excluded for the analysis. Nevertheless, results are virtually the same. The only relevant difference is that, without the imputation, time-limited employed women are significantly more likely to break-up than permanent employed. This could be driven by the relative higher number of cohabitors in this sample (as this trend has been shown for cohabiting women in chapter 4 table 5).

3. Accumulation of employment instability

Table 3.1: Robustness check, different cut off points of accumulation of joblessness and time-limited work over the relationship

VARIABLES	WOMEN	MEN
Years since union formation		
1-3		
4-7	1.61***	1.35***
	(0.182)	(0.136)
8-14	1.69***	1.32**
	(0.203)	(0.153)
15-20	1.77***	1.52***
	(0.271)	(0.234)
20+	1.20	0.93
	(0.202)	(0.172)
Region		
North		
Centre	0.98	1.04
	(0.093)	(0.100)
South	0.70***	0.72***
	(0.067)	(0.070)
Cohort		
1950-1959		
1960-1969	1.50***	1.64***
	(0.165)	(0.176)
1970-1986	2.06***	1.73***
	(0.239)	(0.201)
Cohabitation	4.02***	4.71***
	(0.387)	(0.440)
Children		
Childless		
1 age 0-6	0.55***	0.40***
	(0.065)	(0.049)
1 age 7+	0.87	0.69**
	(0.120)	(0.111)
2 youngest 0-6	0.44***	0.30***
	(0.064)	(0.047)
2 youngest 7+	0.61***	0.57***
	(0.093)	(0.091)
3 or more	0.42***	0.36***
	(0.082)	(0.078)
Separated parents	1.71***	1.23
	(0.205)	(0.165)

At least one parent	1.11	1.42***
is highly educated	(0.108)	(0.141)
Education		
None or elementary		
Lower secondary	1.56**	1.44**
	(0.296)	(0.264)
Upper secondary	1.81***	1.32
	(0.347)	(0.246)
Tertiary	1.87***	1.31
	(0.386)	(0.272)
% relationship jobless		
Never jobless		
Up to 20%	0.51***	0.55***
	(0.054)	(0.053)
20 to 40%	0.55***	0.62**
	(0.080)	(0.120)
40 to 60%	0.54***	0.94
	(0.082)	(0.184)
60 to 80%	0.54***	1.45*
	(0.094)	(0.327)
More than 80	0.70***	2.04***
	(0.081)	(0.258)
% relationship in time-limited jobs		
Never time-limited		
Up to 10%	0.57***	0.44***
	(0.094)	(0.134)
10 to 20%	0.86	0.69
	(0.190)	(0.208)
20 to 30%	1.04	1.14
	(0.225)	(0.316)
30 to 40%	1.69**	0.88
	(0.402)	(0.312)
More than 40%	2.09***	1.87***
	(0.269)	(0.249)
Observations	202,619	160,087
Individuals	6,612	5,901
Dissolutions	1,209	1,155

Robust seeform in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: slightly modifying the cut off points results were not affected, therefore I opted for a lower number of categories with a rational of balancing parsimony and assuring a meaningful sample size.

Figure A1: Coefficient plot - accumulation of joblessness and time-limited work over the relationship with different cut off points.
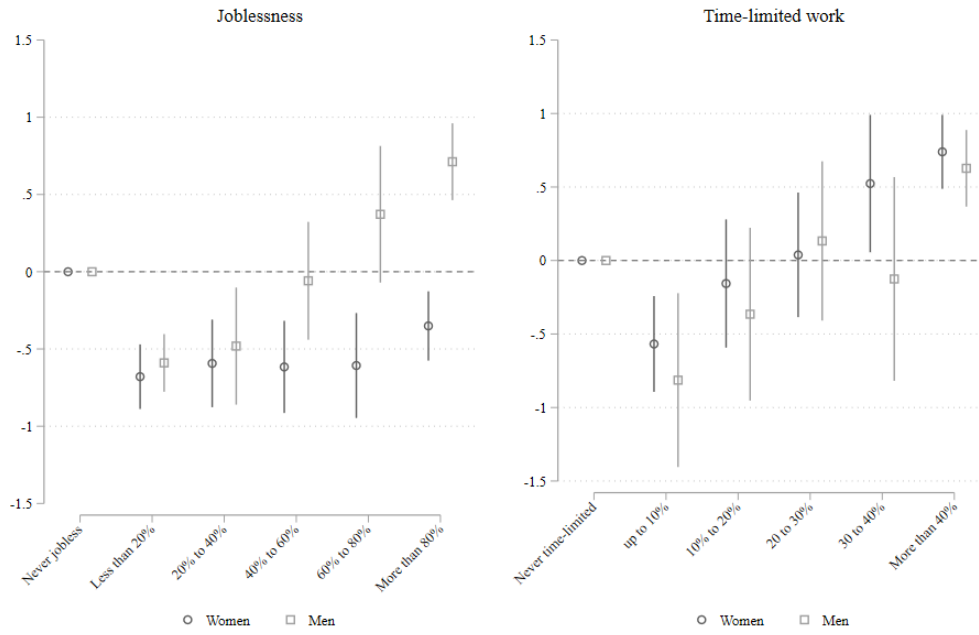
4. Region

Table 4.1: chapter 5, without imputation: women

VARIABLES	WOMEN					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Years since union formation						
1-3						
4-7	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.10	1.11	1.10
	(0.194)	(0.195)	(0.195)	(0.200)	(0.196)	(0.193)
8-14	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90	0.90
	(0.140)	(0.140)	(0.139)	(0.145)	(0.142)	(0.139)
15-20	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.85	0.84	0.83
	(0.215)	(0.216)	(0.213)	(0.220)	(0.216)	(0.216)
20+	0.56*	0.56*	0.56*	0.58	0.56*	0.56*
	(0.186)	(0.188)	(0.187)	(0.196)	(0.191)	(0.190)
After 2007	0.82	0.82	0.82	0.81	0.82	0.77
	(0.287)	(0.288)	(0.288)	(0.287)	(0.289)	(0.297)
Cohort						
1950-1959						
1960-1969	2.86***	2.87***	2.88***	2.95***	2.90***	2.87***
	(0.699)	(0.705)	(0.724)	(0.746)	(0.721)	(0.724)
1970-1986	4.02***	4.03***	4.07***	4.24***	4.12***	4.03***
	(1.071)	(1.083)	(1.152)	(1.232)	(1.146)	(1.132)
Cohabitation	3.05***	3.06***	3.05***	3.61***	3.23***	3.06***
	(0.447)	(0.450)	(0.449)	(0.607)	(0.536)	(0.445)
Children						
Childless						
1 age 0-6	0.60***	0.60***	0.60***	0.60***	0.59***	0.60***
	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.096)	(0.092)	(0.091)	(0.096)
1 age 7+	0.92	0.92	0.92	0.90	0.91	0.92
	(0.255)	(0.254)	(0.256)	(0.247)	(0.249)	(0.254)
2 youngest 0-6	0.41***	0.41***	0.41***	0.41***	0.41***	0.41***
	(0.078)	(0.078)	(0.078)	(0.081)	(0.079)	(0.078)
2 youngest 7+	0.73	0.73	0.72	0.73	0.73	0.72
	(0.196)	(0.199)	(0.195)	(0.199)	(0.198)	(0.196)
3 or more	0.45**	0.45**	0.45**	0.46**	0.45**	0.45**
	(0.168)	(0.168)	(0.167)	(0.175)	(0.171)	(0.168)
Separated parents	1.47*	1.47*	1.47*	1.45*	1.46*	1.46*
	(0.305)	(0.305)	(0.306)	(0.305)	(0.309)	(0.308)
At least one parent is highly educated	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97	0.97
	(0.118)	(0.118)	(0.116)	(0.120)	(0.121)	(0.117)
Education						
None or elementary						
Lower secondary	0.89	0.89	0.89	0.88	0.88	0.89
	(0.371)	(0.375)	(0.377)	(0.368)	(0.367)	(0.373)

Upper secondary	1.02	1.02	1.01	1.01	1.02	1.02
	(0.369)	(0.374)	(0.379)	(0.370)	(0.367)	(0.370)
Tertiary	1.06	1.06	1.05	1.04	1.05	1.06
	(0.396)	(0.404)	(0.413)	(0.394)	(0.395)	(0.398)
Employment status and type of contract						
Permanent						
Time-limited	0.87	0.87	0.86	0.88	0.87	0.87
	(0.164)	(0.161)	(0.165)	(0.164)	(0.165)	(0.163)
Self-employed	1.15	1.14	1.11	1.14	1.14	1.15
	(0.248)	(0.236)	(0.244)	(0.246)	(0.248)	(0.251)
% Regional unemployment	0.95**	0.95**			0.95**	
	(0.025)	(0.026)			(0.025)	
% Time-limited work in region	0.95		0.95	0.94		
	(0.033)		(0.033)	(0.034)		
GDP per capita /1000	1.15**	1.15**	1.15**	1.15**	1.15**	1.16*
	(0.084)	(0.083)	(0.084)	(0.083)	(0.083)	(0.094)
Separation context						
Low						
Mid	2.19***	2.19***	2.19***	2.18**	2.18***	2.19***
	(0.650)	(0.648)	(0.648)	(0.659)	(0.651)	(0.596)
higher	2.26**	2.26**	2.26**	2.26**	2.26**	2.25**
	(0.777)	(0.775)	(0.776)	(0.781)	(0.774)	(0.720)
Contract * % Unemployment						
Permanent * Unempl				0.95*		
				(0.026)		
Time-limited * Unempl				0.94		
				(0.045)		
Self-empl * Unempl				0.94**		
				(0.030)		
Contract * % Time-limited						
Permanent % Time-limited		0.96				
		(0.036)				
Time-limited * % Time-limited		0.94				
		(0.048)				
Self-empl * % Time-limited		0.95				
		(0.033)				
Union type*%Unemployment						
Marriage * Unempl					0.93**	
					(0.027)	
Cohabitation * Unempl					0.99	
					(0.030)	

Union type * % Time-limited						
Marriage * Time-limited					0.93**	
					(0.031)	
Cohabitation * Time-limited					0.99	
					(0.049)	
Period* % Unemployment						
Before 2007*unempl					0.98	
					(0.035)	
After 2007*unempl					0.94**	
					(0.027)	
Period* % Time-limited						
Before 2007* T-l					0.91**	
					(0.042)	
After 2007* T-					0.98	
					(0.046)	
Observations	45,485	45,485	45,485	45,485	45,485	45,485
Individuals	3,870	3,870	3,870	3,870	3,870	3,870
Dissolutions	600	600	600	600	600	600

Robust seeform in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.10

Table 4.2: chapter 5, without imputation: men

	MEN					
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Years since union formation						
1-3						
4-7	1.17	1.17	1.17	1.17	1.17	1.16
	(0.181)	(0.185)	(0.184)	(0.182)	(0.181)	(0.180)
8-14	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.25	1.24
	(0.274)	(0.277)	(0.276)	(0.270)	(0.273)	(0.272)
15-20	1.35	1.35	1.35	1.37	1.36	1.35
	(0.374)	(0.374)	(0.373)	(0.377)	(0.375)	(0.374)
20+	0.76	0.76	0.76	0.78	0.77	0.76
	(0.244)	(0.245)	(0.244)	(0.249)	(0.244)	(0.240)
After 2007	1.02	1.03	1.02	1.01	1.02	0.97
	(0.199)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.200)	(0.196)
Cohort						
1950-1959						
1960-1969	1.49	1.49	1.48	1.51	1.50	1.49
	(0.484)	(0.481)	(0.482)	(0.486)	(0.484)	(0.476)
1970-1986	1.83**	1.82**	1.82**	1.87**	1.84**	1.82**
	(0.540)	(0.539)	(0.541)	(0.561)	(0.547)	(0.524)
Cohabitation	3.56***	3.58***	3.57***	4.15***	3.65***	3.56***
	(0.552)	(0.562)	(0.564)	(0.438)	(0.481)	(0.555)
Children						
Childless						
1 age 0-6	0.42***	0.42***	0.42***	0.42***	0.42***	0.42***

	(0.070)	(0.071)	(0.070)	(0.069)	(0.070)	(0.070)
1 age 7+	0.58***	0.58***	0.58***	0.57***	0.58***	0.58***
	(0.077)	(0.076)	(0.077)	(0.074)	(0.076)	(0.077)
2 youngest 0-6	0.21***	0.21***	0.21***	0.21***	0.21***	0.21***
	(0.041)	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.041)	(0.042)	(0.042)
2 youngest 7+	0.47***	0.47***	0.47***	0.47***	0.47***	0.47***
	(0.076)	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.076)	(0.076)
3 or more	0.29***	0.29***	0.29***	0.29***	0.29***	0.29***
	(0.076)	(0.077)	(0.077)	(0.076)	(0.076)	(0.076)
Separated parents	1.15	1.15	1.15	1.16	1.15	1.15
	(0.154)	(0.155)	(0.154)	(0.159)	(0.155)	(0.155)
At least one parent is highly educated	1.53***	1.53***	1.54***	1.51**	1.52***	1.54***
	(0.241)	(0.242)	(0.247)	(0.243)	(0.246)	(0.241)
Education *None or elementary*						
Lower secondary	1.14	1.14	1.15	1.17	1.15	1.14
	(0.269)	(0.269)	(0.264)	(0.260)	(0.266)	(0.267)
Upper secondary	0.97	0.96	0.97	0.99	0.97	0.96
	(0.229)	(0.226)	(0.223)	(0.222)	(0.227)	(0.228)
Tertiary	0.82	0.82	0.83	0.85	0.83	0.83
	(0.187)	(0.184)	(0.181)	(0.179)	(0.183)	(0.187)
Employment status and type of contract *Permanent*						
Time-limited	1.45***	1.46***	1.47***	1.43***	1.44***	1.45***
	(0.144)	(0.147)	(0.136)	(0.152)	(0.148)	(0.140)
Self-employed	1.05	1.05	1.10	1.06	1.05	1.05
	(0.087)	(0.087)	(0.099)	(0.092)	(0.091)	(0.087)
% Regional unemployment	0.95***	0.95***			0.95***	
	(0.015)	(0.015)			(0.015)	
% Time-limited work in region	1.02		1.02	1.01		
	(0.031)		(0.031)	(0.031)		
GDP per capita /1000	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.97
	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.046)	(0.045)	(0.045)	(0.050)
Separation context *Low*						
Mid	1.11	1.11	1.11	1.12	1.12	1.08
	(0.464)	(0.464)	(0.459)	(0.464)	(0.465)	(0.481)
higher	1.39	1.39	1.38	1.39	1.39	1.34
	(0.538)	(0.539)	(0.527)	(0.537)	(0.539)	(0.558)
Contract * % Unemployment						
Permanent * Unempl				0.94***		
				(0.021)		

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Time-limited * Unempl				0.94***		
				(0.016)		
Self-empl * Unempl				0.96**		
				(0.017)		
Contract * % Time-limited						
Permanent % Time-limited	1.02					
	(0.028)					
Time-limited * % Time-limited	0.98					
	(0.036)					
Self-empl * % Time-limited	1.04					
	(0.049)					
Union type*%Unemployment						
Marriage * Unempl				0.93***		
				(0.019)		
Cohabitation * Unempl				0.98		
				(0.015)		
Union type * % Time-limited						
Marriage * Time-limited					1.01	
					(0.034)	
Cohabitation * Time-limited					1.04	
					(0.035)	
Period* % Unemployment						
Before 2007*unempl						0.96
						(0.022)
After 2007*unempl						0.94***
						(0.019)
Period* % Time-limited						
Before 2007* T-l						0.99
						(0.038)
After 2007* T-l						1.04
						(0.039)
Observations	59,921	59,921	59,921	59,921	59,921	59,921
Individuals	4,291	4,291	4,291	4,291	4,291	4,291
Dissolutions	722	722	722	722	722	722

Robust seeform in parentheses *** $p<0.01$, ** $p<0.05$, * $p<0.10$

Note: without the imputation jobless women and men are excluded from the analysis, thus here can only be assessed differences between permanent and time-limited employed, which are indeed unchanged with and without imputation. Importantly, also the effect of the macro-indicators are stable. To include also jobless individuals in the following model the analysis is repeated with the imputation but using macro-regions (NUTS-1) instead of NUTS-2 regions.

Table 4.3: Chapter 5, macro-region (women)

VARIABLES	WOMEN					
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Years since union formation						
1-3						
4-7	1.52**	1.52**	1.52**	1.51**	1.52**	1.53**
	(0.274)	(0.275)	(0.274)	(0.274)	(0.275)	(0.279)
8-14	1.40***	1.40***	1.41***	1.39***	1.41***	1.41***
	(0.159)	(0.156)	(0.158)	(0.158)	(0.156)	(0.161)
15-20	1.45**	1.45**	1.45**	1.46**	1.46**	1.47**
	(0.259)	(0.257)	(0.262)	(0.266)	(0.262)	(0.264)
20+	1.07	1.07	1.08	1.10	1.07	1.10
	(0.201)	(0.202)	(0.201)	(0.205)	(0.201)	(0.208)
NUTS-1 region						
North-west						
North-east	0.76	0.77	0.77	0.78	0.77	0.72
	(0.179)	(0.181)	(0.184)	(0.181)	(0.181)	(0.167)
Centre	0.86	0.87	0.84	0.85	0.86	0.86
	(0.114)	(0.115)	(0.108)	(0.112)	(0.115)	(0.116)
South	0.32	0.33	0.32	0.32	0.33	0.32
	(0.229)	(0.239)	(0.225)	(0.226)	(0.241)	(0.223)
Island	0.24*	0.23*	0.25*	0.24*	0.24*	0.22*
	(0.191)	(0.185)	(0.205)	(0.187)	(0.189)	(0.171)
After 2007	1.21	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.55
	(0.225)	(0.223)	(0.226)	(0.223)	(0.224)	(0.574)
Cohort						
1950-1959						
1960-1969	1.91***	1.91***	1.92***	1.97***	1.91***	1.92***
	(0.421)	(0.419)	(0.424)	(0.440)	(0.424)	(0.427)
1970-1986	2.93***	2.93***	2.97***	3.08***	2.93***	2.99***
	(0.593)	(0.606)	(0.600)	(0.648)	(0.605)	(0.621)
Cohabitation	3.72***	3.73***	3.75***	4.23***	7.78***	3.72***
	(0.438)	(0.442)	(0.449)	(0.547)	(4.997)	(0.440)
Children						
Childless						
1 age 0-6	0.59***	0.59***	0.59***	0.58***	0.59***	0.58***
	(0.087)	(0.088)	(0.087)	(0.085)	(0.088)	(0.086)
1 age 7+	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95	0.95
	(0.192)	(0.192)	(0.192)	(0.187)	(0.191)	(0.191)
2 youngest 0-6	0.52***	0.52***	0.52***	0.52***	0.52***	0.51***
	(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.082)	(0.083)	(0.082)	(0.081)
2 youngest 7+	0.69*	0.69*	0.69*	0.70*	0.69*	0.69*
	(0.137)	(0.135)	(0.137)	(0.139)	(0.135)	(0.136)
3 or more	0.51***	0.52***	0.51***	0.52***	0.51***	0.51***
	(0.121)	(0.121)	(0.121)	(0.121)	(0.120)	(0.120)
Separated parents	1.53**	1.53**	1.52**	1.53**	1.52**	1.53**
	(0.287)	(0.285)	(0.281)	(0.286)	(0.284)	(0.286)

At least one parent is highly educated	1.00 (0.133)	1.00 (0.133)	1.00 (0.132)	1.01 (0.137)	0.99 (0.131)	1.00 (0.133)
Education						
None or elementary						
Lower secondary	1.19 (0.283)	1.19 (0.284)	1.20 (0.286)	1.19 (0.284)	1.19 (0.285)	1.20 (0.282)
Upper secondary	1.25 (0.273)	1.25 (0.279)	1.25 (0.276)	1.25 (0.271)	1.25 (0.274)	1.26 (0.272)
Tertiary	1.44 (0.336)	1.44 (0.344)	1.42 (0.342)	1.43 (0.336)	1.44 (0.339)	1.45 (0.335)
Employment status and type of contract						
Permanent						
Jobless	0.66*** (0.068)	0.37** (0.183)	0.61*** (0.057)	0.66*** (0.068)	0.67*** (0.067)	0.66*** (0.068)
Time-limited	1.28* (0.184)	0.89 (0.654)	1.19 (0.196)	1.26 (0.190)	1.29* (0.186)	1.28* (0.184)
Self-employed	1.20 (0.281)	1.39 (1.809)	1.12 (0.245)	1.18 (0.277)	1.20 (0.280)	1.19 (0.280)
% Unemployment	0.99 (0.016)	0.99 (0.016)			0.99 (0.016)	
% Time-limited work	1.02 (0.050)		1.02 (0.050)	1.02 (0.050)		
GDP per capita /1000	0.91* (0.049)	0.91* (0.049)	0.91* (0.049)	0.91* (0.048)	0.91* (0.049)	0.91* (0.049)
Separation context						
Low						
Mid	1.09 (0.102)	1.08 (0.103)	1.09 (0.101)	1.07 (0.101)	1.08 (0.102)	1.18* (0.110)
higher	1.06 (0.111)	1.06 (0.109)	1.07 (0.113)	1.05 (0.111)	1.06 (0.109)	1.16 (0.135)
Contract * % Unemployment						
Jobless * unempl			0.97 (0.021)			
Permanent * Unempl			1.01 (0.012)			
Time-limited * Unempl			0.99 (0.036)			
Self-empl * Unempl			0.99 (0.038)			
Contract * % Time-limited						
Jbless * time-limited		1.05 (0.068)				
Permanent % Time-limited		1.01				

		(0.050)				
Time-limited * % Time-limited		1.03				
		(0.065)				
Self-empl * % Time-limited		0.99				
		(0.087)				
Union type*%Unemployment						
Marriage * Unempl				0.98		
				(0.019)		
Cohabitation * Unempl				1.03**		
				(0.012)		
Union type * % Time-limited						
Marriage * Time-limited				1.04		
				(0.057)		
Cohabitation * Time-limited				0.98		
				(0.050)		
Period* % Unemployment						
Before 2007*unempl						1.01
						(0.016)
After 2007*unempl						0.98
						(0.019)
Period* % Time-limited						
Before 2007* T-l						1.05
						(0.055)
After 2007* T-						1.02
						(0.052)
Observations	106,775	106,775	106,775	106,775	106,775	106,775
Individuals	6163	6163	6163	6163	6163	6163
Dissolutions	789	789	789	789	789	789

Robust seeform in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Table 4.4: Chapter 5, macro-region (men)

	MEN					
VARIABLES	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)
Years since union formation						
1-3						
4-7	1.20	1.21	1.21	1.20	1.20	1.20
	(0.226)	(0.228)	(0.220)	(0.225)	(0.225)	(0.225)
8-14	1.10	1.10	1.11	1.09	1.10	1.09
	(0.183)	(0.193)	(0.178)	(0.185)	(0.185)	(0.180)
15-20	1.24	1.24	1.25	1.24	1.24	1.23

	(0.397)	(0.401)	(0.392)	(0.397)	(0.392)	(0.392)
20+	0.72	0.72	0.72	0.73	0.72	0.71
	(0.186)	(0.191)	(0.186)	(0.190)	(0.183)	(0.180)
NUTS-1 region						
North-west						
North-east	1.00	1.02	1.01	1.01	1.02	1.04
	(0.389)	(0.390)	(0.389)	(0.388)	(0.379)	(0.390)
Centre	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.18	1.20	1.20
	(0.140)	(0.135)	(0.144)	(0.133)	(0.138)	(0.147)
South	1.36	1.40	1.36	1.38	1.41	1.37
	(0.848)	(0.844)	(0.847)	(0.829)	(0.882)	(0.849)
Island	1.27	1.12	1.31	1.22	1.27	1.36
	(1.110)	(0.945)	(1.123)	(1.075)	(1.103)	(1.188)
After 2007	1.07	1.07	1.07	1.07	1.07	0.92
	(0.127)	(0.129)	(0.129)	(0.125)	(0.126)	(0.298)
Cohort						
1950-1959						
1960-1969	1.66***	1.66***	1.65***	1.68***	1.65***	1.65***
	(0.300)	(0.305)	(0.300)	(0.304)	(0.303)	(0.297)
1970-1986	1.93***	1.92***	1.90***	1.97***	1.92***	1.90***
	(0.330)	(0.338)	(0.323)	(0.341)	(0.332)	(0.320)
Cohabitation	3.72***	3.74***	3.74***	4.07***	5.97**	3.72***
	(0.279)	(0.290)	(0.299)	(0.249)	(4.146)	(0.278)
Children						
Childless						
1 age 0-6	0.37***	0.37***	0.37***	0.36***	0.37***	0.37***
	(0.066)	(0.067)	(0.065)	(0.067)	(0.066)	(0.066)
1 age 7+	0.60***	0.60***	0.60***	0.59***	0.60***	0.60***
	(0.106)	(0.102)	(0.105)	(0.102)	(0.102)	(0.106)
2 youngest 0-6	0.23***	0.23***	0.23***	0.23***	0.23***	0.23***
	(0.075)	(0.073)	(0.075)	(0.076)	(0.076)	(0.075)
2 youngest 7+	0.50***	0.49***	0.49***	0.50***	0.50***	0.50***
	(0.078)	(0.082)	(0.075)	(0.077)	(0.076)	(0.077)
3 or more	0.35***	0.34***	0.34***	0.35***	0.35***	0.35***
	(0.088)	(0.090)	(0.086)	(0.090)	(0.087)	(0.088)
Separated parents	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20	1.20
	(0.160)	(0.157)	(0.153)	(0.162)	(0.160)	(0.159)
At least one parent is highly educated	1.57**	1.57**	1.56**	1.57**	1.57**	1.57**
	(0.291)	(0.294)	(0.296)	(0.292)	(0.288)	(0.291)
Education						
None or elementary						
Lower secondary	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.06	1.04	1.04
	(0.367)	(0.381)	(0.358)	(0.368)	(0.368)	(0.365)
Upper secondary	0.99	0.99	0.98	1.00	0.99	0.99
	(0.308)	(0.310)	(0.298)	(0.308)	(0.309)	(0.306)
Tertiary	0.83	0.83	0.83	0.85	0.84	0.83
	(0.232)	(0.231)	(0.221)	(0.230)	(0.230)	(0.229)

Employment status and type of contract

Permanent

Jobless	1.41*	0.40	1.39**	1.39	1.40*	1.40*
	(0.280)	(0.233)	(0.206)	(0.283)	(0.279)	(0.281)
Time-limited	1.52**	0.49	1.47***	1.52**	1.52**	1.52**
	(0.278)	(0.220)	(0.176)	(0.288)	(0.287)	(0.280)
Self-employed	0.97	1.20	1.02	0.98	0.97	0.97
	(0.055)	(0.348)	(0.061)	(0.057)	(0.055)	(0.055)
% Unemployment	0.95***	0.95***			0.95***	
	(0.016)	(0.015)			(0.016)	
% Time-limited work	0.99		0.99	0.99		
	(0.086)		(0.085)	(0.085)		
GDP per capita /1000	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.98	0.99
	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.026)	(0.027)	(0.026)	(0.026)

Separation context

Low

Mid	1.11	1.11	1.11	1.11	1.10	1.06
	(0.173)	(0.167)	(0.169)	(0.172)	(0.164)	(0.161)
higher	1.48*	1.49*	1.48*	1.49*	1.48*	1.41
	(0.351)	(0.340)	(0.346)	(0.349)	(0.343)	(0.339)

Contract * % Unemployment

Jobless * unempl			0.94***			
			(0.007)			
Permanent * Unempl			0.95*			
			(0.025)			
Time-limited * Unempl			0.93***			
			(0.020)			
Self-empl * Unempl			0.98			
			(0.022)			

Contract * % Time-limited

Jbless * time-limited	1.07					
	(0.068)					
Permanent % Time-limited	0.97					
	(0.089)					
Time-limited * % Time-limited	1.06					
	(0.092)					
Self-empl * % Time-limited	0.96					
	(0.083)					

Union type*%Unemployment

Marriage * Unempl					0.94***	
					(0.017)	

Cohabitation * Unempl					0.97* (0.015)	
Union type * % Time-limited						
Marriage * Time-limited					1.01 (0.103)	
Cohabitation * Time-limited					0.97 (0.067)	
Period* % Unemployment						
Before 2007*unempl						0.94*** (0.019)
After 2007*unempl						0.96*** (0.015)
Period* % Time-limited						
Before 2007* T-l						0.98 (0.095)
After 2007* T-						0.99 (0.077)
Observations	91,354	91,354	91,354	91,354	91,354	91,354
Individuals	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500	5,500
Dissolutions	764	764	764	764	764	764

Robust seeform in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: using macro-region (NUTS-1) instead of region (NUTS-2) I include the possibility that individuals moved within the macro-region, thus the imputed cases are more likely to be at least in the right macro-area. Nevertheless, adopting NUTS-1 level indicators the analysis loose in variability and precision of the indicators (e.g. the average unemployment level in the macro-area may be distant from the unemployment level in the region of residence). For men, results are basically unchanged, for women there are more differences and most results are not statistically significant but the key results seem to hold.

Table 4.5: chapter 6, without imputation

VARIABLES	WOMEN				MEN			
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
Years since union formation								
1-3								
4-7	1.22	1.23	1.22	1.22	0.96	0.96	0.96	0.96
	(0.226)	(0.227)	(0.227)	(0.226)	(0.224)	(0.224)	(0.224)	(0.225)
8-14	0.89	0.91	0.88	0.89	0.88	0.87	0.88	0.88
	(0.165)	(0.171)	(0.166)	(0.168)	(0.172)	(0.177)	(0.171)	(0.174)
15-20	0.82	0.85	0.82	0.83	1.00	1.00	1.00	1.00
	(0.263)	(0.280)	(0.264)	(0.269)	(0.262)	(0.265)	(0.263)	(0.263)
20+	0.63	0.66	0.62	0.65	0.53**	0.53**	0.53**	0.53**
	(0.253)	(0.272)	(0.250)	(0.265)	(0.150)	(0.154)	(0.151)	(0.150)
After 2007	2.88***	2.87***	2.88***	2.88***	2.70***	2.67***	2.70***	2.70***
	(0.699)	(0.687)	(0.708)	(0.701)	(0.605)	(0.600)	(0.605)	(0.604)
Cohort								
1950-1959								
1960-1969	3.08***	3.11***	3.12***	3.11***	1.91*	1.90*	1.91*	1.90*
	(0.920)	(0.930)	(0.951)	(0.946)	(0.678)	(0.673)	(0.677)	(0.671)
1970-1986	5.52***	5.70***	5.57***	5.62***	2.72**	2.72**	2.73**	2.69**
	(1.584)	(1.749)	(1.561)	(1.708)	(1.073)	(1.089)	(1.070)	(1.062)
Cohabitation	2.95***	2.98***	3.01***	2.99***	3.44***	3.49***	3.45***	3.46***
	(0.439)	(0.449)	(0.439)	(0.461)	(0.575)	(0.590)	(0.566)	(0.587)
Children								
Childless								
1 age 0-6	0.51***	0.50***	0.51***	0.51***	0.36***	0.36***	0.36***	0.36***
	(0.085)	(0.085)	(0.081)	(0.086)	(0.077)	(0.078)	(0.078)	(0.077)
1 age 7+	0.88	0.86	0.89	0.88	0.54***	0.54***	0.54***	0.54***
	(0.255)	(0.245)	(0.260)	(0.248)	(0.088)	(0.086)	(0.088)	(0.088)
2 youngest 0-6	0.38***	0.37***	0.38***	0.37***	0.19***	0.19***	0.19***	0.19***
	(0.089)	(0.088)	(0.089)	(0.091)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.048)	(0.048)
2 youngest 7+	0.83	0.81	0.85	0.83	0.49***	0.49***	0.49***	0.49***
	(0.261)	(0.246)	(0.269)	(0.260)	(0.078)	(0.077)	(0.078)	(0.079)
3 or more	0.48**	0.47**	0.51**	0.48**	0.30***	0.30***	0.30***	0.30***
	(0.151)	(0.149)	(0.158)	(0.155)	(0.077)	(0.078)	(0.078)	(0.078)
Separated parents	1.65**	1.65**	1.68**	1.66**	1.29	1.29	1.28	1.28
	(0.418)	(0.419)	(0.432)	(0.424)	(0.209)	(0.209)	(0.208)	(0.207)
At least one parent	1.02	1.01	1.01	1.02	1.40*	1.41*	1.39*	1.39*
is highly educated	(0.131)	(0.133)	(0.137)	(0.134)	(0.265)	(0.269)	(0.265)	(0.268)
Education								
None or elementary								
Lower secondary	2.63	2.62	2.61	2.67	1.30	1.30	1.30	1.30
	(1.651)	(1.654)	(1.633)	(1.687)	(0.397)	(0.405)	(0.401)	(0.399)
Upper secondary	3.08*	3.08*	3.04*	3.12*	1.08	1.10	1.08	1.09
	(1.963)	(1.977)	(1.940)	(2.010)	(0.316)	(0.325)	(0.317)	(0.317)
Tertiary	2.95*	2.96*	2.95*	2.98*	0.89	0.90	0.90	0.90
	(1.805)	(1.853)	(1.808)	(1.861)	(0.313)	(0.317)	(0.314)	(0.314)

Employment status and type of contract								
Permanent								
Time-limited	0.95				1.59***			
	(0.256)				(0.137)			
Self-employed	1.03				1.08			
	(0.293)				(0.092)			
% Dual earner couples in region								
Low	1.07	1.21	1.03	1.07	0.82	0.72	0.81	0.82
	(0.204)	(0.430)	(0.198)	(0.205)	(0.184)	(0.174)	(0.185)	(0.188)
Medium								
High	1.58***	1.20*	1.59***	1.59***	1.41***	1.22*	1.41***	1.42***
	(0.248)	(0.121)	(0.244)	(0.244)	(0.138)	(0.143)	(0.137)	(0.140)
Symmetry in share of hh work in region								
Low	0.79	0.79	0.83	0.80	1.10	1.10	1.14	1.10
	(0.214)	(0.211)	(0.283)	(0.214)	(0.232)	(0.233)	(0.256)	(0.232)
Medium								
High	0.72***	0.73***	0.74***	0.72***	0.81***	0.81***	0.89*	0.81***
	(0.059)	(0.061)	(0.066)	(0.061)	(0.046)	(0.048)	(0.058)	(0.047)
Childcare attendance in region								
Low	0.85	0.85	0.86	0.94	3.05***	3.10***	3.05***	3.01***
	(0.114)	(0.118)	(0.113)	(0.167)	(0.190)	(0.187)	(0.172)	(0.238)
Medium								
High	0.37*	0.37*	0.37	0.35*	0.65***	0.65***	0.65***	0.67***
	(0.223)	(0.224)	(0.224)	(0.188)	(0.072)	(0.080)	(0.072)	(0.095)
% dual earner * Employment status								
Dual earner: low								
Permanent								
Time-limited		0.71				1.37*		
		(0.237)				(0.229)		
Self-employed		0.69				1.76***		
		(0.312)				(0.178)		
Dual earner: mid								
Permanent								
Time-limited		0.95				1.71***		
		(0.326)				(0.153)		
Self-employed		0.91				0.92		
		(0.287)				(0.079)		
Dual earner:								

<u>high</u>
Permanent

Time-limited	1.28		1.18
	(0.227)		(0.327)
Self-employed	3.10***		2.09***
	(0.717)		(0.149)

Symmetry in share of hh work *Employment status

<u>Symmetry: low</u>
Permanent

Time-limited	0.50**		1.28
	(0.137)		(0.291)
Self-employed	1.36		1.12
	(0.625)		(0.338)

<u>Symmetry: mid</u>
Permanent

Time-limited	0.88		1.67***
	(0.224)		(0.152)
Self-employed	1.12		1.11
	(0.367)		(0.097)

<u>Symmetry: higher</u>
Permanent

Time-limited	2.22**		1.27
	(0.708)		(0.224)
Self-employed	0.37***		0.80
	(0.137)		(0.125)

Attendance to childcare * Employment status

<u>Childcare: low</u>
Permanent

Time-limited		0.73	1.48***
		(0.207)	(0.177)
Self-employed		0.78	1.34
		(0.346)	(0.245)

<u>Childcare: mid</u>
Permanent

Time-limited		1.01	1.73***
		(0.416)	(0.202)
Self-employed		0.97	1.04
		(0.340)	(0.100)

<u>Childcare: higher</u>
Permanent

Time-limited		0.93	1.32*
		(0.362)	(0.190)
Self-employed		1.45	1.02
		(0.795)	(0.209)

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Observations	35,348	35,348	35,348	35,348	46,511	46,511	46,511	46,511
Individuals								
Dissolutions								

Robust seeform in parentheses *** p<0.01, ** p<0.05, * p<0.1

Note: without the imputation jobless women and men are excluded from the analysis. Nevertheless, it can be observed that differences between time-limited and permanent employed are unchanged, and so are unchanged the effects of the selected macro indicators.