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Research Article

Non-intact families and adolescents' family satisfaction during the Second Demographic Transition: A test of the institutionalization hypothesis

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Non-intact families and adolescents' family satisfaction during the Second Demographic Transition: A test of the institutionalization hypothesis

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Abstract

BACKGROUND

The institutionalization hypothesis suggests that the negative association between parental separation and children's outcomes diminishes as divorce becomes more socially accepted and widespread. Although the available evidence provides little support for this hypothesis, drawing definitive conclusions remains challenging due to limitations in existing studies.

OBJECTIVE

Using a large sample of Italian adolescents (ages 14–19), this study provides a robust test by comparing children from intact ($N = 60,031$) and non-intact ($N = 7,969$) families over 25 years, between 1996 and 2020. Leveraging both temporal and regional (NUTS-2) variation in Second Demographic Transition (SDT)-related behaviors, we examine whether the negative association between non-intact families and adolescents' family satisfaction weakens as new family forms become more common.

METHODS

We apply logistic regression models to data from the Italian Institute of Statistics' repeated cross-sectional surveys, Aspects of Daily Life, augmented with a composite SDT index for 456 region–year combinations. We model two outcomes: being very satisfied with family relations and being a little or not at all satisfied.

RESULTS

Adolescents living in non-intact families report a lower probability of being very satisfied than their peers in intact families, regardless of the level of SDT diffusion. Results for the probability of being a little or not at all satisfied provide greater support for the institutionalization hypothesis, as the disadvantage of adolescents living with a single

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parent is substantially reduced. However, non-intact penalties persist even at higher levels of SDT diffusion.

CONTRIBUTION

Our results show that the negative effects of family disruptions on adolescents' well-being are more amenable to change than previously thought. However, these disadvantages should not be expected to 'spontaneously' disappear as a result of the diffusion of the SDT alone.

1. Introduction

Extensive empirical evidence indicates that children who experience parental separation and live in single-parent families or other post-separation arrangements (hereafter referred to as 'non-intact families') tend to report lower subjective well-being (SWB) compared to those in 'intact families,' i.e., households with both parents (Amato 2010; Chapple 2009; Härkönen, Bernardi, and Boertien 2017).³ Theoretical perspectives suggest that the consequences of parental separation – and related post-separation family arrangements – may vary depending on their degree of societal diffusion. Specifically, the institutionalization hypothesis posits that the negative association between parental separation and children's outcomes should diminish in contexts with high divorce rates, due to the increased normative acceptance of divorce and the institutionalization of post-separation family arrangements (Cherlin 2004; Lacey et al. 2012). In light of the upward trend in family instability that continued over several decades in post-World War II Western societies (Wagner 2020), the argument suggests that the consequences of parental separation should attenuate over time (Kalmijn 2024). Nevertheless, the available cross-national studies, usually focusing on children's educational outcomes, have found no evidence that parental separation has a weaker impact in countries and cohorts with higher divorce rates (Pong, Dronkers, and Hampden-Thompson 2003; Kalmijn 2010; Albertini and Garriga 2011; Bernardi and Boertien 2017), with some recent studies even finding stronger adverse effects (Bernardi and Radl 2014; Kreidl, Štípková, and Hubatková 2017; Guetto, Bernardi, and Zanasi 2022).

This paper adds to the debate by examining how parental separation is linked to the SWB of Italian adolescents, specifically their satisfaction with family relations. Italy, where the Second Demographic Transition (SDT) was delayed but significantly accelerated once it began, serves as an interesting case study, especially due to the

³ In this article, we use the terms separation and divorce interchangeably to refer to the dissolution of both marital and non-marital unions.

persistent and substantial geographical heterogeneity (Aassve et al. 2024). By exploiting a large, pooled sample of adolescents (aged 14–19) observed over 25 years (1996–2020), we compare children in intact ($N = 60,031$) and non-intact families ($N = 7,969$) at both the early and more advanced stages of SDT diffusion, thus allowing for a robust test of the institutionalization hypothesis.

In doing so, this paper provides several contributions. First, by focusing on children’s satisfaction with family relations rather than their educational outcomes, we respond to Kalmijn’s call “to study changes in child outcomes that are more directly connected to the social, cultural, and psychological mechanisms in the institutionalization hypothesis. It would be particularly interesting to study aspects of psychological well-being for testing the hypothesis” (Kalmijn 2024: 68). Second, we explore how sub-national variation in the diffusion of SDT-related behaviors moderates the association between parental separation, post-separation family arrangements, and adolescent children’s satisfaction with family relations. Compared to previous cross-national evidence, our approach of examining within-region (NUTS-2) and over-time variation in the diffusion of unconventional family practices minimizes the potential impact of unobserved contextual confounders. Confounding factors indeed influence cross-national studies, as countries with varying divorce rates often differ in other economic, cultural, and institutional aspects unrelated to the institutionalization hypothesis. Finally, whereas previous studies testing the institutionalization hypothesis focus solely on whether children experience parental separation, our study examines potential variation across post-separation family arrangements, specifically distinguishing between single-parent and step-parent families.

2. Theoretical background

2.1 Parental separation and adolescents’ SWB: fewer negative consequences with the diffusion of divorce?

The union dissolution process can impact the children’s well-being long before parental physical separation, due to the deterioration of the family environment and parental conflict. Although children may benefit from their parents’ physical separation when the relationship between them is severely compromised (Morrison and Coiro 1999), the period during which the break-up occurs can be particularly stressful and may result in disruptive life changes (e.g., a change in residence and school), further contributing to a decline in the children’s SWB. Additional sources of increased psychological distress and reduced SWB following parental separation derive from the broader social and cultural context. Most post-World War II Western societies have embraced a middle-

class ideology that views the first-marriage nuclear family as the model family (Coontz 1992). Until the early 1970s, marriage was almost universal, and divorce was uncommon and perceived as a 'deviant' behavior. The normative disapproval of divorce and the lengthy and challenging legal procedures to obtain it were likely to increase parental stress, in turn affecting children's well-being. In such a context, post-separation family arrangements, including step-families, have been defined as 'incomplete institutions' due to the lack of clear guidelines and norms for role performance and the limited institutionalized social support, all of which contributed to increased stress in these family structures (Ganong and Coleman 1997).

According to the institutionalization hypothesis, in countries and cohorts where divorce and 'non-traditional' family forms are more common and normatively accepted, single-parent households and step-families tend to be more ingrained in the social fabric, leading to reduced stigmatization of single parents and their children (Cherlin 2004; Lacey et al. 2012). Following the institutionalization of new family forms, children may also keep a higher frequency and quality of contact with the non-custodial parent, usually the father, after parental break-up. The classic thesis of 'family decline' (Popenoe 1993) suggests that active paternal engagement depends on a marital or romantic relationship and that non-resident divorced fathers neglect their parental duties (Furstenberg 1988). However, recent studies show that an increasing number of non-resident fathers maintain strong ties with their children without having romantic relationships with their children's mother (Van Spijker, Kalmijn, and van Gaalen 2022), due to cultural changes concerning the role of fatherhood and legal reforms regarding joint custody in post-divorce arrangements (Sodermans, Matthijs, and Swicegood 2013; Westphal, Poortman, and Van Der Lippe 2014).

Due to these social changes, the institutionalization hypothesis posits that in societies and periods with high divorce rates and widespread normative acceptance of post-separation family arrangements, parental separation's detrimental effects on children are likely to be less pronounced. A similar institutionalization hypothesis has been empirically tested regarding the 'cohabitation gap' in SWB (Soons and Kalmijn 2009; Pirani and Vignoli 2016): in countries (or regions) where cohabitation is widely accepted and common, differences in well-being between married and unmarried cohabitants are less pronounced.

While the institutionalization hypothesis has been generally formulated in terms of children's overall subjective well-being, this paper focuses specifically on satisfaction with family relations. We acknowledge that institutionalization may also operate through mechanisms extending beyond the family. For instance, as divorce and separation become more widespread, non-family actors such as peers, schools, and welfare institutions may gain importance in buffering the consequences of parental separation. These broader adaptations may influence dimensions of well-being other than family

satisfaction. Our results should therefore be interpreted as capturing one specific domain of institutionalization, with complementary outcomes such as overall life satisfaction, peer relations, or psychological adjustment likely to offer further insights. However, our chosen outcome directly taps into the family domain, which is arguably the sphere most immediately affected by parental separation, and one that is central to adolescents' well-being. Moreover, many of the key mechanisms of social change, such as the increased prevalence of joint custody arrangements and changing norms around stepfamilies, explicitly target the quality of the post-separation family environment, making family satisfaction a particularly relevant outcome for testing the institutionalization hypothesis.

2.2 Previous empirical evidence on the institutionalization hypothesis

Interestingly, the existing literature provides no evidence to support the institutionalization hypothesis applied to the consequences of parental separation. Studies have found no indication that parental separation has a weaker impact on children in countries with higher divorce rates (Pong, Dronkers, and Hampden-Thompson 2003; Kalmijn 2010; Albertini and Garriga 2011; Bernardi and Boertien 2017). A commonly cited explanation for this lack of support for the institutionalization hypothesis is based on a supposed change in the prevalence of conflict among separated parents with the societal diffusion of divorce. When the barriers to divorce are high, only high-conflict partners will seek a divorce, and in such circumstances children might benefit from parental separation (see, e.g., Pong, Dronkers, and Hampden-Thompson 2003). When divorce becomes more common, relatively low-conflict families also divorce, so that the benefits of decreasing parental conflict do not counterbalance the negative effects of parental separation. The stability of divorce penalties may thus reflect opposing trends: while the adverse effects of parental separation may decline due to the mitigating mechanisms highlighted by the institutionalization hypothesis, this trend may be offset by changes in the composition of non-intact families with respect to parental conflict, potentially resulting in more substantial penalties. Another possible explanation is the socioeconomic disadvantage often associated with non-intact families, which is hardly influenced by the societal diffusion and increasing acceptance of divorce (see, e.g., Kalmijn 2024). Not only are non-intact families increasingly prevalent among the lowest educational groups (Härkönen and Dronkers 2006; Matysiak, Styr, and Vignoli 2014; see Bastianelli, Guetto, and Vignoli 2023, for Italy), but they also consistently contribute to economic deprivation for both parents and children (Nieuwenhuis and Maldonado 2018).

Although the existing studies are valuable and reveal a consistent pattern, drawing definitive conclusions remains challenging due to several methodological limitations.

Cross-national comparisons often include a small number of countries, which limits the statistical power to detect changes in the association between parental separation and children's outcomes based on the level of divorce diffusion. Most importantly, these studies potentially suffer from confounding factors, as countries with varying divorce rates often differ in other economic, cultural, and institutional aspects which may moderate the penalties associated with divorce. Some cross-national studies also account for temporal trends, increasing the number of country-level observations and providing better control over unobserved confounders. These studies even find a stronger negative effect of parental separation on children's educational outcomes in those countries and cohorts where divorce is more prevalent (Bernardi and Radl 2014; Kreidl, Štípková, and Hubatková 2017; Guetto, Bernardi, and Zanasi 2022). However, the interplay of temporal trends and cross-country differences makes it challenging to determine whether the divorce penalty varies between countries or over time due to the increasing prevalence of divorce.

Single-country studies focusing on cohort changes in the association between parental separation and children's outcomes confirm the absence of changes in the divorce penalty over time (Sigle-Rushton, Hobcraft, and Kiernan 2005; Gähler and Garriga 2013; Gähler and Palmtag 2015). Although offering an interesting cohort perspective, statistical power remains a challenge, as these studies only compare two points in time, with a limited number of divorced parents in the older group. To the best of our knowledge, the only single-country study analyzing an extended timeframe with a substantial number of separations across the observation period is a recent work by Kalmijn (2024). This study finds a stable negative association between parental divorce and children's educational outcomes in the Netherlands for 20 birth cohorts spanning 1930 to 1991.

2.3 Our contribution

In this study, we adopt a single-country perspective, comparing children aged between 14 and 19 living in intact and non-intact families at different stages of SDT diffusion. We utilize unique data on a large sample of 68,000 Italian adolescents, approximately 8,000 of whom live in post-separation family arrangements, observed over 25 years from 1996 to 2020. Our work differs from other similar single-country studies by adopting a period rather than a cohort perspective, and by focusing on an outcome more directly linked to the sociocultural and psychological mechanisms underlying the institutionalization hypothesis – namely, adolescents' satisfaction with family relations.

Additionally, we examine how sub-national (regional) variation in the diffusion of SDT-related behaviors moderates the association between parental separation and

adolescents' satisfaction with family relations. We do this by considering a comprehensive index of SDT diffusion, encompassing trends in separation and divorce, marriage, and extra-marital births, rather than focusing solely on a crude indicator such as the divorce rate. This multidimensional approach proves particularly pertinent because single-parent households can arise not only from marital breakups but also from the dissolution of cohabiting unions, which are notably on the rise. Relying on within-region over-time variation reduces the potential impact of unobserved contextual confounders, allowing for a more robust test of the possible moderating role played by the SDT diffusion. In fact, within-region changes in the SDT net out the influence of regional time-constant unobserved characteristics. In summary, our study combines the advantages of single-country studies, which analyze variation over a long period with a sufficiently large sample size, with those of comparative designs, which allow for the inclusion of macro-level indicators of SDT diffusion.

Finally, we distinguish between single-mother and single-father households, and include more complex family arrangements, encompassing step-families with and without half-siblings. This is relevant, as theoretical perspectives offer conflicting predictions regarding the effects of these post-separation family arrangements on children's outcomes. For instance, it is unclear how the entrance of a new partner of the co-resident parent into the family unit may impact the SWB of the children, especially their satisfaction with family relations. Many children experience a decrease in the quantity and quality of contact with their non-resident parent, which may reduce parental support and supervision and in turn lower children's satisfaction with family relations. While it is theoretically unclear whether this may depend on the sex of the non-resident parent, a step-parent may represent an alternative source of support and control that could compensate for the absence of the parent. However, step-parents are generally less involved in their partner's children's lives than their biological children (Arat, Poortman, and van der Lippe 2022; Sweeney 2010), which may result in a reduced investment of both material and emotional resources. Some studies argue that children in step-families can report lower levels of well-being compared to children living stably with both parents or a single parent (Amato 2000; for Italy, see Meggiolaro and Ongaro 2014; Guetto and Panichella 2019). From a multiple-transition perspective (Amato 2010), it is the accumulation of family transitions, rather than separation itself, that may adversely affect children. While children may show resilience in response to the absence of a parent from birth or during the critical phase surrounding parental separation, the arrival of a step-parent in the household – sometimes accompanied by the presence of half-siblings – can add new sources of stress, further complicating the child's adjustment (Martinez and Forgatch 2002).

In the following paragraphs, we outline the major changes in Italian family demography over the past three decades that underpin our empirical analysis. We then

summarize our research questions, emphasizing the implications of differentiating between various types of non-intact families for testing the institutionalization hypothesis.

2.4 Italy: A 'traditional' country meets the Second Demographic Transition

Despite the enactment of the divorce law in 1970 and a gradual shift in family values, the centrality of marriage in Italy remained largely unquestioned until the late 1990s. In 2000 there were still only 15 divorces per 100 marriages, compared to an average of around 36 in the current EU-27 countries (Eurostat data). Additionally, in the same time period, less than 1 in 10 births occurred outside of marriage, in contrast to 1 in 4 in the rest of Europe. However, starting from the early 2000s the process of change accelerated in Italy, narrowing a substantial part of the SDT gap with the 'pioneer' Western European countries (Aassve et al. 2024; Castiglioni and Dalla Zuanna 2009; Pirani, Guetto, and Rinesi 2021; Pirani and Vignoli 2023). In 2021, the number of divorces out of 100 marriages reached 46 – the same as in Denmark and the Netherlands – and births outside of marriage reached 38%, compared to a European average that had risen to 42%.

Importantly, these national figures hide substantial regional heterogeneity within Italy, as the timing and pace of the diffusion of new family forms differ dramatically between the affluent areas of the Centre-North and the less economically developed Southern regions. Legal separations and non-marital births first occurred in the highly industrialized north-western and central regions characterized by a more rapid secularization process (Castiglioni and Dalla Zuanna 2009). For instance, data from the Italian Institute of Statistics show that in 2000 the divorce rate averaged 18 per 100 marriages in the Centre-North and 6 per 100 in the South, ranging from 30 in Liguria (North-West) to 3 in Calabria (South). Despite the different starting points, the above-described process of family change has affected all regions of the country, and the Centre-North/South divide has been rapidly reducing, though it has not entirely disappeared. In 2019, the divorce rate tripled in the Centre-North (54 per 100 marriages), while it increased by nearly six times in the southern regions (35 per 100 marriages).

These changes in family behaviors align with shifts in attitudes and legislative changes (Guetto, Pirani, and Montecolle 2023; Pirani, Guetto, and Rinesi 2021). The first two decades of the 2000s witnessed an increase of more than 20 percentage points in the proportion of Italians who accept cohabitation as an alternative to marriage, reaching about 70%. Most notably, there has been an increase (from 62% to 70%) in the already large majority portion of the population that deems it appropriate for a couple to divorce if the marriage is unhappy, even in the presence of children. As far as the regulatory aspects are concerned, joint custody of children was introduced as the ordinary mode of

legal arrangement in 2006, and since then joint custody has increased from 20% to over 80%. All this highlights a revolutionary shift in family formation and dissolution patterns within the Italian demographic landscape, notwithstanding persisting regional disparities (Aassve et al. 2024).

2.5 Research questions and hypotheses

Before testing the institutionalization hypothesis, it is essential to first establish whether a non-intact family penalty exists in Italy – that is, whether adolescents in such families report lower SWB, specifically in the form of reduced satisfaction with family relations. Our first research question (*RQ1a*) is therefore: *Is living in a non-intact family negatively associated with adolescents' satisfaction with family relations?* Based on a substantial body of international evidence, we expect that children living in non-intact families will report lower satisfaction with family relations compared to those living with both parents (non-intact penalty hypothesis). We then additionally explore possible heterogeneity in non-intact penalties based on the type of post-separation family arrangement. Thus, our first research question is extended as follows (*RQ1b*): *Does the non-intact penalty vary between adolescents living with a single parent (a lone father or a lone mother) and those in stepfamilies (with and without half-siblings)?* Given the previously discussed theoretical ambiguity regarding the relative impact of different family forms, we refrain from formulating specific hypotheses.

Following the institutionalization hypothesis, the increased diffusion, societal acceptance, and legislative regulation of post-separation family arrangements should have attenuated the non-intact penalty among Italian adolescents – if such a penalty exists – by reducing social stigma and promoting more consistent father–child contact. Our second research question (*RQ2a*) is therefore: *Does the negative association between living in a non-intact family and adolescents' satisfaction with family relations decline with the progression of the SDT?* Recent cross-national studies have found either no change or even a stronger negative impact of parental separation on children's educational outcomes in countries where divorce is more prevalent. In this study, we investigate whether similar patterns hold at the sub-national (regional) level in Italy, focusing on an outcome more directly relevant to the institutionalization hypothesis. As we account for different post-separation family arrangements, our second research question is extended as follows (*RQ2b*): *Does the diffusion of the SDT moderate the non-intact penalty differently depending on the type of post-separation family arrangement?* Given the inherent difficulty of formulating specific expectations, we adopt a largely exploratory approach. To date, empirical research on the institutionalization hypothesis has not explicitly considered heterogeneity within non-intact families. One might expect

that as divorce becomes more widespread, its negative consequences for children will weaken, irrespective of the specific post-separation arrangement. However, less prevalent family forms such as stepfamilies – typically associated with later stages of the SDT diffusion – may continue to face greater and more persistent social stigma. Their relative rarity and alignment with more recent patterns of family diversification may limit societal acceptance, potentially exacerbating negative effects on children's family satisfaction.

3. Data, sample, and variables

3.1 Data and sample

We use data from the cross-sectional survey Aspects of Daily Life (ADL), which the Italian Institute of Statistics has conducted annually since 1993. Each round involves a representative sample of approximately 20,000 households and about 50,000 individuals. The ADL survey collects fundamental information about individuals, families, and households, including sociodemographic characteristics and a rich set of data on their habits and daily life conditions. This survey thus offers a unique possibility to investigate changes over time through standardized, up-to-date, and representative information in the Italian context.

Data collection employed a two-stage sampling method with stratification of the primary units, where municipalities served as primary units and households as secondary units. The municipalities were selected with probabilities proportional to their population size and without replacement, while households were chosen with equal probabilities and without replacement. Every member aged 14 and over of the selected households participated in the survey. The sociodemographic characteristics of the respondents were collected through face-to-face interviews, while questions about opinions, emotional status, and health were collected through a self-administered questionnaire.

Specifically, we selected 24 rounds from 1996 to 2020 (excluding 2004, when the survey was not implemented) and built a harmonized dataset that included adolescents aged 14–19 at the time of interview. Our analytical sample comprises 68,000 adolescents (ranging from approximately 2,100 to 4,700 per year of the survey) nested within 56,949 families.

3.2 Variables

Our dependent variable is the adolescents' satisfaction with family relations (hereafter SFR, or family satisfaction), collected in all the survey rounds through the following

question: Considering the last 12 months, how satisfied would you say you are with your family relations? Response categories were 1 (very satisfied), 2 (somewhat satisfied), 3 (a little satisfied), and 4 (not at all satisfied). The level of satisfaction declared by the sample of adolescents is, as expected, skewed toward positive levels: about 40% reported being very satisfied with family relations, and another 54% were somewhat satisfied, whereas only 5% and 1% were a little or not at all satisfied, respectively. Given its distribution, we created two versions of the dependent variable. In the first (*SFR_good*), we contrast the highest level of satisfaction with all lower levels. Responses were recoded into a dummy variable taking the value 1 for children who reported being very satisfied with their family relations (category 1 in the original variable) and 0 for those who were somewhat, a little, or not at all satisfied (categories 2–4). In the second version (*SFR_bad*), we focus on the ‘negative’ side of the outcome variable, and responses were recoded into a dummy variable taking the value 1 for children who were a little or not at all satisfied (categories 3–4 in the original variable) and 0 for those who were very or somewhat satisfied (categories 1–2). This dual operationalization allows us to capture the presence of very good family relations and the experience of openly negative relations as distinct outcomes.

The main independent variable is the type of family arrangement in which adolescent children live at the time of the survey. The classification has been reconstructed considering the information provided in the survey about household members and their kinship relationships. Table 1 reports the categories considered, their size, and the satisfaction with family relations expressed by adolescents in each family type. The majority of adolescent children (85.6%) live in ‘intact families’, specifically with both parents who are in their first marriage (the so-called traditional family). This family type represents the benchmark with which other family types are contrasted, and includes children living with adoptive parents (we cannot distinguish between biological and adoptive parents). Intact families also include arrangements where the adolescent lives with both parents who are in a non-marital cohabitation and/or who have experienced a previous divorce, 2.7% of the sample. While this family arrangement is considered ‘intact’, the presence of parents who have experienced cohabitation or divorce allows us to use this family type as an interesting control group to assess the influence of parental absence net of selection into SDT-related behavior. As for non-intact families, just over 2% of the sample live in step-families, meaning with one of their parents and her/his new partner. For about half of these, 1.2% of the sample, the household also includes the presence of at least one half-sibling, who may be the child of the new partner of the parent or the child of both members of the current couple (the numbers are too low to distinguish between these situations). Approximately 8% of the adolescents in the sample live with a lone mother, and just over 1% with a lone father. Our non-intact family types represent post-separation family arrangements, encompassing both married and

unmarried union dissolutions, as well as cases in which the biological parents have never lived together. We excluded from the analytical sample adolescents living in non-intact families resulting from parental death,⁴ as our research questions focus on family dynamics associated with union dissolution. Also, existing literature in the Italian context has indicated that children living with a widowed parent tend to differ from their counterparts who have experienced parental break-up, exhibiting better educational outcomes (Guetto and Panichella 2019).

The distribution of family types in our analytical sample reflects the late onset of the SDT in Italy. Single-parent families, which are a direct consequence of divorce diffusion, are relatively common in the Italian family panorama, whereas more complex situations entailing a re-partnering of the co-resident parent, or even a further child in the new couple, remain confined to relatively low levels (Pirani and Vignoli 2023).

Regarding the dependent variable, adolescents living in intact families, particularly traditional ones, appear to be more satisfied with their family relations than their peers in non-intact families. Differences range between 7 and 10 percentage points for high levels of satisfaction, and 5 and 10 percentage points for low levels.

Table 1: Sample size and satisfaction with family relations, by family type

Living with...	N. of adolescents		Very satisfied with family relations % val.	A little or not at all satisfied with family relations % val.
	abs. val.	% val.		
<i>Intact families</i>				
two parents in their first marriage	58,197	85.6	41.3	5.2
two parents in cohabitation or with a previous divorce	1,834	2.7	37.9	7.3
<i>Non-intact families</i>				
a lone parent in a step-family	717	1.1	34.6	10.2
a lone parent in a step-family with half-siblings	781	1.2	33.8	10.2
a lone mother	5,599	8.2	32.4	11.8
a lone father	872	1.3	31.3	15.1
<i>Total</i>	68,000	100.0	40.2	6.0

Note: In all family types, no distinction is made between biological and adoptive parents. Non-intact families due to parental death are excluded.

Source: Own elaboration on ADL data, 1996–2020.

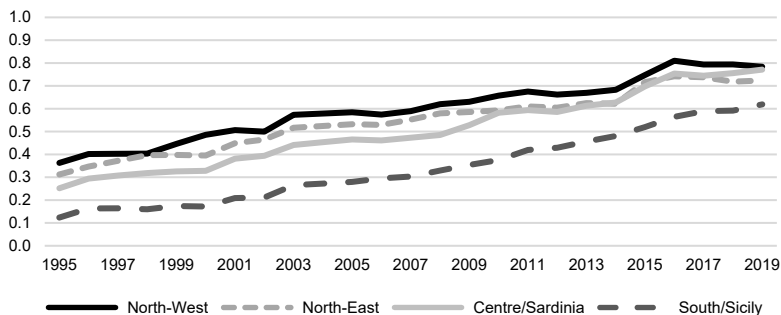
Our analysis also considered a range of potential confounders in the link between family satisfaction and family type. Regarding respondents' demographic characteristics, we considered their sex (male; female) and age (14–17; 18–19). Regarding parental characteristics, we considered the age of the parent that serves as the reference person of the household (≤ 44 ; 45–54; ≥ 55) and his/her level of education (up to lower secondary; upper secondary; tertiary or higher). Family satisfaction may be influenced by the

⁴ About 23% of adolescents in single-parent households were living with a widowed parent.

presence of other persons living in the household; we therefore considered the number of children (continuous, from 1 to 5) and the presence of other adults (yes; no). We also controlled for variables related to the socioeconomic and financial situation of the household. These variables include the evaluation of economic resources expressed by the reference person in the household (good/adequate; scarce/insufficient) and his/her social class (manager/professional; white collar; blue collar; self-employed), as well as the housing tenure status (property; rent; other). Finally, we included dummies for each region of residence in our analysis – we had to exclude Valle d’Aosta, a small region in North-West of Italy, due to the lack of some contextual data. The composition of the sample in terms of these characteristics is illustrated in Table A-1 in the Appendix.

To assess empirically whether the association between family type and children’s family satisfaction has changed with the increasing diffusion of SDT-related family behaviors, we created an SDT index based on the following indicators: (1) number of marriages per 100,000 residents aged 15 or more; (2) number of separations per 100,000 residents aged 15 or more; (3) number of divorces per 100,000 residents aged 15 or more; (4) percentage of out-of-wedlock births out of total live births. For each region–year combination, the SDT index was computed as the arithmetic mean of the normalized (between 0 and 1) indicators, so that the final SDT index ranges between 0 and 1. The SDT index was merged with the individual-level data with a 1-year lag. Since our individual-level data cover the 1996–2020 period, the SDT index goes from 1995 to 2019. Figure 1 shows the trend of the SDT index over time, aggregated by Italian macro-area. Descriptive statistics for every indicator and the overall index across the Italian regions are presented in Table A-2 in the Appendix. While the overall trend indicates a progressive SDT diffusion throughout Italy, the pace differs across macro-areas, with some convergence between the South and Centre-North in recent years.

Figure 1: SDT index over time, by Italian macro-area, 1995–2019



Source: Own elaboration on ISTAT data, various sources.

4. Methods

We implemented two logistic regression models with two-way clustered standard errors (respondents nested in families and region–year combinations), each applied to the two operationalizations of our dependent variable: *SFR_good* and *SFR_bad*. The first model specification tests our initial research question by examining the existence of a non-intact penalty in SFR (*RQ1a*) and potential differences across non-intact family types (*RQ1b*). Considering the logit transformation of $P(SFR_good_{ifrt} = 1)$, or the probability that an adolescent i from family f , region r , and time t states being very satisfied with family relations, the model specification appears as follows:

$$\text{logit}\{P(SFR_good_{ifrt} = 1)\} = Famtype_{ifrt} + Year_t + \mathbf{X}_{ifrt} \quad (1)$$

where $Famtype_{ifrt}$ represents our key independent variable (i.e., a set of dummies for the family type in which the respondent lives), $Year_t$ is the survey year introduced as a continuous variable to capture a possible linear time trend, and \mathbf{X}_{ifrt} is a vector of sociodemographic controls, including region fixed effects. Similarly, we also estimate Model 1 for the probability of being a little or not at all satisfied with family relations (*SFR_bad*).

The second model specification tests the institutionalization hypothesis, that is, whether the level of diffusion of SDT-related behaviors moderates the intensity of the non-intact penalty (*RQ2a*), and examines whether this moderating effect differs based on the type of post-separation family arrangement (*RQ2b*). We thus modified Model 1 by adding the previously described SDT index and the appropriate interaction terms. Considering the probability of being very satisfied with family relations, *SFR_good*, the model specification appears as follows (but the analogous version for the probability of being a little or not at all satisfied with family relations, *SFR_bad*, has been implemented):

$$\begin{aligned} \text{logit}\{P(SFR_good_{ifrt} = 1)\} = & Famtype_{ifrt} + \widetilde{SDT}_{rt-1} + \widetilde{SDT}_{rt-1}^2 + \\ & + Famtype_{ifrt} * \widetilde{SDT}_{rt-1} + Famtype_{ifrt} * \widetilde{SDT}_{rt-1}^2 + \\ & + Famtype_{ifrt} * Year_t + Year_t + \mathbf{X}_{ifrt} \end{aligned} \quad (2)$$

where \widetilde{SDT}_{rt-1} represents the value of the SDT index for each of the 19 Italian regions r in each of the 24 years t considered: 456 region–year combinations. The SDT index has been included in the analysis in both linear and quadratic forms, as well as with a 1-year lag. Importantly, the tilde over the \widetilde{SDT}_{rt-1} element indicates that the index has been demeaned, i.e., computed as yearly deviations from the regional means. Through this specification, the coefficient associated with \widetilde{SDT}_{rt-1} only accounts for within-region

variation over time. From an interpretative point of view, this specification enables disentangling the SDT diffusion effects from those of other unobserved time-constant regional characteristics (Fairbrother 2014). In other words, through the de-meanded specification, we avoid comparing adolescents across regions that differ in various aspects other than the diffusion of SDT-related behaviors.⁵ Model 2 simultaneously includes an interaction between our family typology and the linear time trend ($Famtype_{ifrt} * Year_t$) to account for potential changes over time in the family arrangement–family satisfaction association for reasons other than the SDT process. That is, through this interaction we control for possible contextual time-varying unobserved confounders.

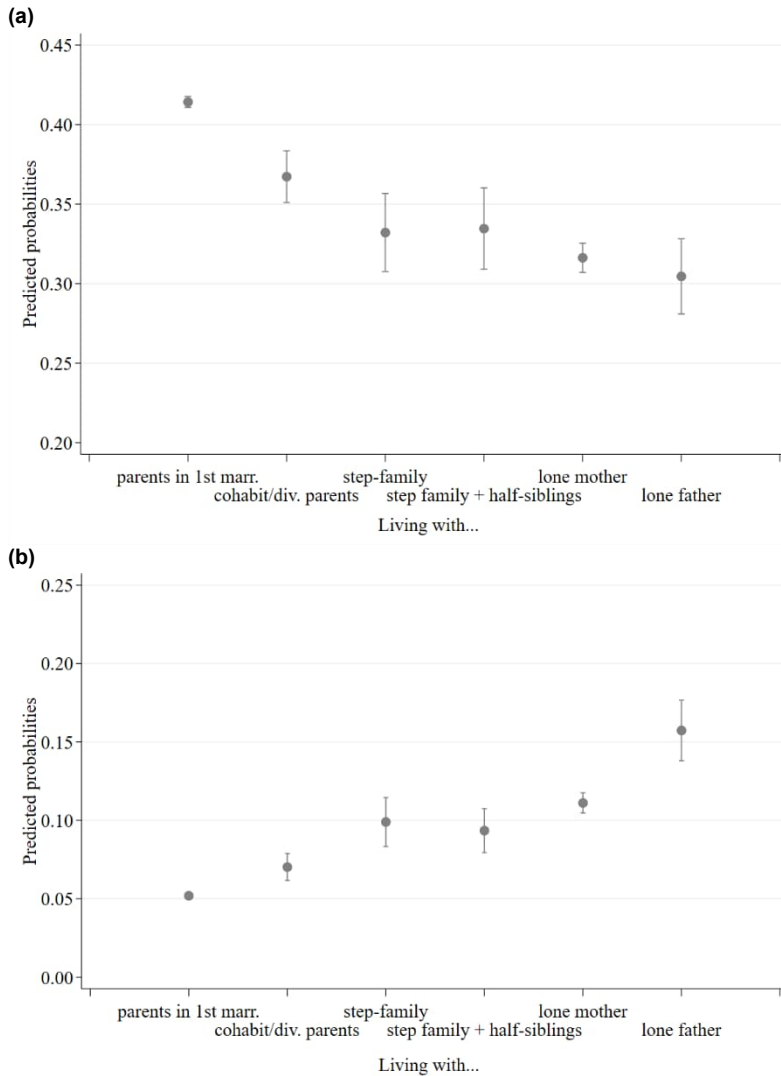
5. Results

5.1 Differences in the SFR between adolescents in different family arrangements

Model 1 enables the assessment of potential variations in adolescents' satisfaction with family relations depending on the type of family arrangement they live in. Results, in terms of predicted probabilities of being very satisfied with family relations (SFR_good) for each family arrangement, are reported in panel (a) of Figure 2, while predicted probabilities of being a little or not at all satisfied (SFR_bad) are reported in panel (b). The figures include 83.5% confidence intervals around predictions, so overlapping intervals indicate a lack of statistical significance at the 5% level (Cumming 2009).

⁵ A potential limitation of this approach is that the hypothesized mitigating effect, such as reduced social stigma, may only emerge after a certain threshold of SDT diffusion is reached. In this case, year-to-year changes in the index may have little impact unless the baseline level is already high. To address this, we also estimate models separately by macro-area of residence. Notably, however, within-region variance in the SDT index over our observational window is larger than between-region variance, supporting the choice to prioritize within-region comparisons.

Figure 2: Predicted probabilities for Italian adolescents to be very satisfied – (panel a) and a little or not at all satisfied (panel b) with family relations, by family type



Note: Estimates obtained from two logistic regression models specified as in Equation (1). 83.5% confidence intervals based on two-way clustered standard errors.

Source: Own elaboration of ADL data, 1996–2020.

Starting from the first outcome operationalization, we see that even after adjusting for demographic and socioeconomic characteristics, adolescents living with both parents in their first marriage exhibit the highest predicted probability of being very satisfied with their family relations (41.4%). Adolescents living with both parents who are in a non-marital union or who have had a previous divorce show a significantly lower probability of being very satisfied (36.7%). The predicted probability is substantially lower when considering non-intact family arrangements; that is, post-separation families where the adolescent lives with only one of the parents. This suggests that parental absence exerts a specific influence on adolescents' SFR, net of possible factors characterizing parents who have adopted 'non-traditional' family behaviors. Addressing differences across non-intact families, the predicted probability of being very satisfied with family relations is slightly higher for children in step-families (33%, regardless of the presence of half-siblings) compared to those in single-parent families (around 31%, for both lone mothers and lone fathers).

The results for our second outcome (*SFR_bad*), displayed in panel (b) of Figure 2, mirror the first outcome, reflecting the reversed coding of the variable. The probability of being a little or not at all satisfied with family relations is indeed the lowest for adolescents living with both parents in their first marriage (5%), and increases slightly for adolescents living with two parents in cohabitation or with a previous divorce (7%). Adolescents living in non-intact families show the highest probabilities: 9% and 11% for those living in step-families and with a lone mother, respectively. The non-intact penalty experienced by adolescents is exacerbated for those living with a lone father, as the probability of reporting low SFR reaches almost 16%.

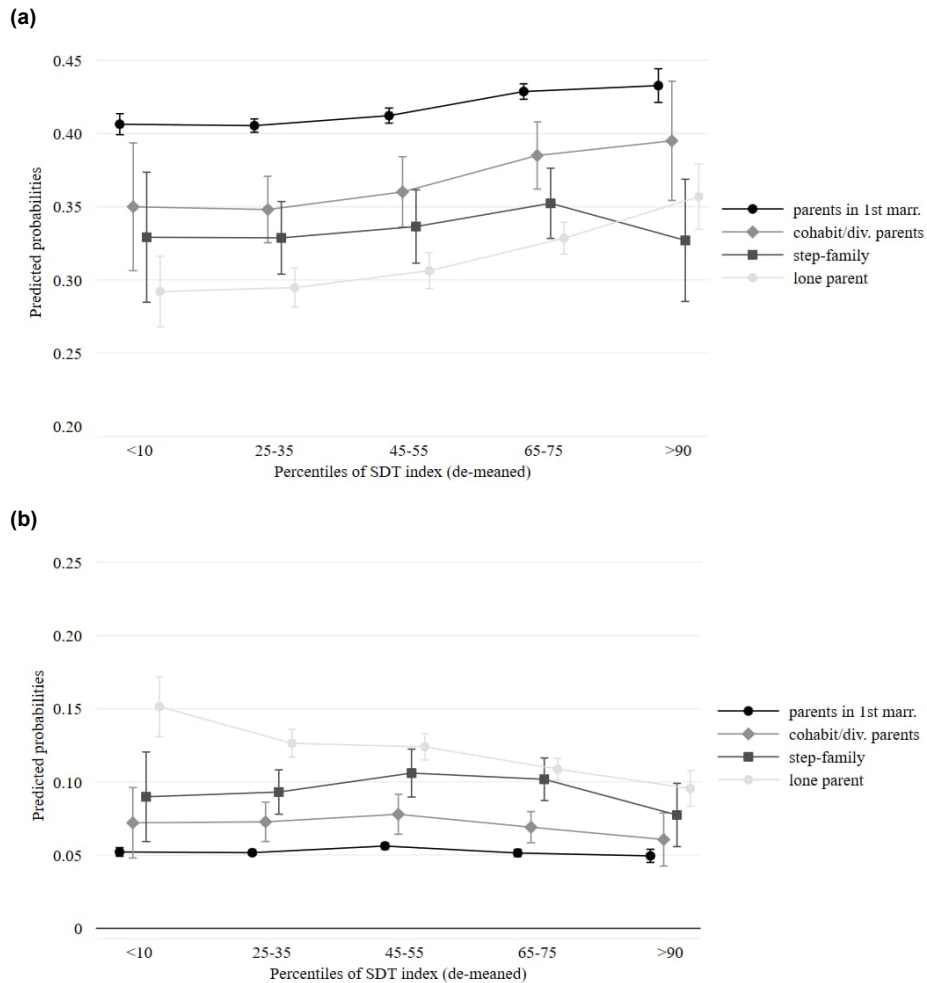
Overall, the results of Model 1 are consistent with the non-intact penalty hypothesis (*RQ1a*), showing a substantial gap in SFR between adolescents who live with both parents and those who do not. Differences between adolescents in single-parent and step-parent families align more with the argument that step-parents can provide an alternative source of emotional support and control and thus compensate for the absence of a parent, rather than with the 'multiple transitions' perspective. However, the differences between these types of non-intact families are small and not statistically significant, which is consistent with the notion – raised in relation to our *RQ1b* – that opposing mechanisms may be at work, effectively balancing each other out. The exception is adolescents living with a lone father, who show a particularly high risk of reporting low satisfaction with family relations. This might be due to the fact that the large majority of children live with their mother following parental separation; thus, adolescents living with a lone father may represent cases in which additional challenges or conflicts with the mother are present, potentially signaling more complex family situations.

5.2 Non-intact families and family satisfaction: Testing the institutionalization hypothesis

The results of Model 1 are derived from a large sample pooling 25 years of major changes in Italian family demography. Although the survey year was controlled for, the question arises: Did the association change over time in response to the varying diffusion of SDT-related behaviors across Italian regions? To explore this and address our *RQ2a*, we estimated Model 2. To provide more robust evidence, and given previous results, we present here results obtained by aggregating some family types due to their smaller sample sizes, specifically step-families regardless of the presence of half-siblings, and lone parents regardless of their gender. The analysis performed on the original six family arrangements separately (not shown but available upon request) led to similar findings, although with a higher degree of statistical uncertainty. In addition, to easily and concisely display our results, we computed the percentiles of the \widetilde{SDT} index and then recoded them into some meaningful groups: under the 10th percentile, 25th–35th percentiles, 45th–55th, 65th–75th, and over the 90th percentile. For the sake of clarity, we recall that our model includes the de-meaned version of the SDT index, i.e., the yearly deviations from the regional means. Considering variations over the \widetilde{SDT} percentiles approximates the diffusion process of the SDT; however, changes should be understood in relative rather than absolute terms. Figure 3, therefore, shows the predicted probabilities, again with 83.5% confidence intervals, of reporting very high (panel a) and a little or not at all (panel b) satisfaction with family relations by (aggregated) family type, averaged across the groups defined by the \widetilde{SDT} percentiles. Full model results, including the estimated effects of the confounders, are presented in Table A-3 in the Appendix.

The predicted probability of being very satisfied for adolescents living with both parents in their first marriage consistently exceeds that of other family types, regardless of the diffusion of SDT-related behaviors. At low levels of the \widetilde{SDT} index (under the 10th percentile), the difference between adolescents living with married parents and those living with cohabiting or divorced parents equals 5.6 percentage points (statistically significant at the 5% level), whereas it reduces to 3.8 percentage points (not statistically significant) for the highest levels of the \widetilde{SDT} index (over the 90th percentile). The increasing trend of high family satisfaction for adolescents living with both parents who are in a non-marital cohabitation and/or have experienced a previous divorce probably derives from a reduction in the stigma toward new family behaviors – non-marital cohabitations and marital dissolutions – and is consistent with previous findings about the closing of the satisfaction gap between cohabiting and married partners (Soons and Kalmijn 2009; for Italy, Pirani, and Vignoli 2016).

Figure 3: Predicted probabilities for Italian adolescents to be very satisfied (panel a) and a little or not at all satisfied (panel b) with family relations, by family type and percentiles of the SDT index



Note: Estimates obtained from two logistic regression models specified as in Equation (2). 83.5% confidence intervals based on two-way clustered standard errors.
 Source: Own elaboration of ADL data, 1996–2020.

When considering non-intact families, adolescents living with a lone parent are less satisfied than their counterparts living with both parents, regardless of the diffusion of SDT-related behaviors. The satisfaction gap equals 11.4 percentage points when the $\widetilde{\text{SDT}}$ index is at low levels (under the 10th percentile) and remains similar at intermediate levels of SDT diffusion (10–11 percentage points between the 25th and 75th percentiles), but it eventually reduces at the highest levels of the $\widetilde{\text{SDT}}$ index (7.6 percentage points, significantly different at the 5% level compared to the 45th–55th percentiles). As far as step-families are concerned, their trend in family satisfaction is basically flat, regardless of the values of the $\widetilde{\text{SDT}}$ index. When SDT-related behaviors are relatively less diffused, adolescents in these families are substantially less satisfied with family relations relative to our benchmark (a difference of 7.7 percentage points). This gap persists throughout the SDT diffusion process, reaching 10.7 percentage points at the highest levels of the $\widetilde{\text{SDT}}$ index. However, the difference between the two predicted gaps (7.7 and 10.7 percentage points) is not statistically significant, suggesting that the disadvantage remained relatively stable as SDT-related behaviors became more widespread.

Overall, focusing on our first outcome (*SFR_good*), which indicates very high satisfaction with family relations, the results highlight relatively stable differences in family satisfaction between adolescents in intact and non-intact families. This contrasts with both the theoretical expectations of the institutionalization hypothesis and the recent cross-national findings of higher divorce penalties in countries where divorce is more common. In fact, interaction coefficients between the non-intact family dummies and the $\widetilde{\text{SDT}}$ index are not statistically significant (see Table A-3 in the Appendix), and their introduction does not improve the overall model fit (as indicated by a likelihood-ratio test).

Results concerning our second outcome (*SFR_bad*) provide some support for the institutionalization hypothesis. Panel (b) of Figure 3 indeed shows a monotonic decline in the probability that adolescents living with a single parent report being a little or not at all satisfied with family relations, shifting from 15.1% to 9.6% at the lowest and highest levels of the $\widetilde{\text{SDT}}$ index respectively (see Table A-3 in the Appendix for full model results). The same probability remains stable at approximately 5% for children living with both parents in their first marriage – virtually identical, at the highest levels of the $\widetilde{\text{SDT}}$ index, to that of children living with two unmarried parents or who have been divorced. The penalty of adolescents in single-parent households compared to their peers in intact families thus declines from 10 to approximately 5 percentage points.

Similar to the previous 'good' outcome, there is no clear trend for children in step-families: their probability of being a little or not at all satisfied with family relations fluctuates between 8% and 10% throughout the distribution of the $\widetilde{\text{SDT}}$ index. However, the gap with children living with both parents in their first marriage also reaches its lowest

value (2.8 percentage points, statistically significant at the 5% level) at the highest levels of the SDT index (over the 90th percentile).

These conclusions are confirmed when implementing Model 2 separately for Centre-North and Southern regions (results not shown but available upon request), even though the two areas differ notably in both the baseline levels and the timing of the diffusion of SDT-related behaviors (see Table A-2 in the Appendix).

6. Conclusions

The institutionalization hypothesis predicts that the penalties associated with parental separation decline as divorce becomes more prevalent in society. In contexts where divorce and other ‘non-traditional’ family behaviors are common, these family forms tend to gain normative acceptance, alleviating the social stigma faced by parents and children. Moreover, simplified legal procedures for divorce reduce parental stress, while increased regulation of post-separation family arrangements supports stronger relationships between children and non-custodial parents, further enhancing children’s well-being.

In this paper, we tested the institutionalization hypothesis for Italy. Compared to other Western European countries, Italy was a latecomer to the Second Demographic Transition (SDT), but in the period under investigation (1996–2020) the country experienced significant demographic shifts, including substantial increases in legal separation, divorce, non-marital cohabitation, and out-of-wedlock childbearing (Aassve et al. 2024). These changes in family behaviors were accompanied by evolving social attitudes and legal reforms, such as the 2006 introduction of joint custody as the default legal arrangement following parental separation. Although widespread, the diffusion of new family behaviors exhibits substantial regional heterogeneity. Our empirical strategy leverages this regional and temporal variation in SDT-related behaviors to evaluate if and how these changes influenced the association between parental separation and adolescents’ satisfaction with family relations (SFR).

The results indicate that Italian adolescents in non-intact families report lower satisfaction with family relations than their peers in intact families. Importantly, this disadvantage does not appear to be driven solely by unobserved characteristics of parents whose family patterns reflect SDT-related behaviors; rather, the separation process and parental absence seem to play a central role. Indeed, adolescents living with both parents – whether in a non-marital cohabitation or in a union where one or both parents have experienced a prior separation – report levels of family satisfaction comparable to those of peers whose parents are in their first marriage. By contrast, adolescents living with a single parent exhibit substantially lower satisfaction with family relations compared to

both types of intact families. There are no substantial differences across various non-intact family types, such as single-parent or step-parent families, although adolescents living with a lone father report substantially higher penalties for the more negative outcome, i.e., the probability of reporting little or no satisfaction with family relations.

The distinctions between different family types, and the focus on two distinct outcomes – ‘good’ and ‘bad’ family relations – emerged as decisive in our empirical test of the institutionalization hypothesis. In fact, the disparity between adolescents in intact and non-intact families in terms of the ‘good’ outcome, namely the probability of reporting very high satisfaction with family relations, remains stable regardless of the level of SDT diffusion. However, different trends are observed for adolescents in single-parent and step-parent families. While the penalty for adolescents living in single-parent families, relative to peers living with both parents, narrows slightly over the SDT diffusion, the penalty for adolescents living in step-families appears especially persistent. These results are consistent with the arguments raised in relation to our *RQ2b*, suggesting that less prevalent family arrangements, typically associated with later stages of the SDT, may face more persistent social stigma.

The results for our ‘bad’ outcome appear to support the institutionalization hypothesis more consistently. Again, this is especially true for adolescents living with a single parent. This group was at a substantially higher risk of reporting being a little or not at all satisfied with family relations during the early stages of SDT diffusion, but their disadvantage relative to children living in intact families substantially reduced as SDT-related behaviors diffused.

Our findings are in contrast to those of recent cross-national studies that have reported higher penalties for children living in non-intact families in countries with higher divorce rates (Bernardi and Radl 2014; Kreidl, Štípková, and Hubatková 2017; Guetto, Bernardi, and Zanasi 2022). One possible explanation is that our analysis focuses on a measure of children’s subjective well-being which is more directly connected to the institutionalization hypothesis. However, substantial non-intact penalties persist even at the highest levels of SDT diffusion. The literature has offered two explanations for the stickiness of non-intact penalties: compositional changes in separated families in terms of parental conflict, and the socioeconomic disadvantage associated with parental separation. However, neither explanation seems applicable to our case. First, we did not observe changes in non-intact penalties over time for reasons other than the SDT diffusion (which would have been captured by the $Famtype_{ifrt} * Year_t$ component in Model 2). Second, unlike most studies that focus on educational attainment, our psychological outcome is minimally influenced by parental education and other variables related to the household’s economic standing. In fact, the results remain virtually unchanged regardless of the inclusion of these variables.

A more plausible explanation for the persisting penalties in adolescents' family satisfaction is that the institutionalization hypothesis may overemphasize the role of cultural changes associated with SDT diffusion in reducing the non-intact penalty. For instance, the role of social stigma may be less relevant than the disruptive effects of factors such as increased stress and reduced frequency and quality of parent–child contact after separation. In this regard, legal changes in Italy that established joint custody as the default post-separation arrangement did not result in a substantial increase in joint physical custody or father–child contact. Most children in single-parent families reside with their mothers, and fathers remain substantially disadvantaged in terms of frequency of contact, even when children form their own families (Tosi and Guetto 2024).

Our study provides a uniquely robust empirical setting to test the institutionalization hypothesis, encompassing both substantive and methodological aspects. However, our data lacks information on the timing of parental separation and possible re-partnering, forcing us to inevitably blend short- and long-term consequences of parental separation. Another implication of using cross-sectional data is that we can only observe mean differences in adolescents' SFR across family types, preventing us from untangling the effects of (multiple) family transitions. Furthermore, our data does not allow us to differentiate single-parent households based on post-separation custodial arrangements, i.e., whether parents share the physical custody of their child(ren). Despite these limitations, our findings suggest that the negative effects of family disruptions on adolescents' well-being may be more amenable to change than previously thought. At the same time, they indicate that these disadvantages should not be expected to disappear 'spontaneously' as a result of the diffusion of the SDT alone.

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Appendix

Table A-1: Descriptive statistics of the sample (N = 68,000)

Sex of the respondent		Parental social class	
Male	51.4	Manager/professional	12.1
Female	48.6	White collar	29.8
Age of the respondent		Blue collar	33.4
14–17	66.7	Self-employed	16.7
18–19	33.3	n.a.	7.9
Parental age		Housing tenure	
< = 44	26.1	Rent	17.7
45–54	59.5	Property	74.9
> = 55	14.4	Other	7.4
Parental education		Region	
Up to lower secondary	53.6	Piedmont	7.1
Upper secondary	35.6	Lombardy	8.0
Tertiary or higher	10.8	Trentino-Alto Adige	6.1
N. children in the household		Veneto	5.7
1	18.2	FVGiulia	2.9
2	55.0	Liguria	2.9
3	21.3	Emilia-Romagna	4.4
4	4.4	Tuscany	4.4
5	1.3	Umbria	2.5
Other adults in the household		Marche	3.8
No	96.0	Lazio	5.4
Yes	4.0	Abruzzo	4.2
Economic resources evaluation		Molise	3.0
Good/adequate	58.5	Campania	9.7
Scarce/insufficient	41.5	Puglia	7.4
		Basilicata	4.0
		Calabria	6.1
		Sicily	8.0
		Sardinia	4.6

Note: Parental characteristics refer to the parent who serves as the reference person of the household.

Source: Own elaboration of ADL data, 1996–2020.

Table A-2: Descriptive statistics concerning the indicators of SDT diffusion and SDT index

	N. of marriages per 100,000 residents 15 and over			N. of separations per 100,000 residents 15 and over			N. of divorces per 100,000 residents 15 and over			% of out-of-wedlock births out of total births			SDT index		
	mean	min	max	mean	min	max	mean	min	max	mean	min	max	mean	min	max
<i>North-West</i>	424.7	305.6	565.2	192.9	140.7	269.7	144.5	68.1	268.7	23.0	8.8	39.2	0.598	0.326	0.870
Piedmont	425.7	323.7	552.6	190.6	143.6	223.8	143.8	68.1	237.2	23.6	10.0	38.1	0.598	0.334	0.814
Lombardy	418.1	305.6	565.2	176.8	140.7	203.1	127.7	73.2	221.9	20.5	8.8	33.6	0.555	0.326	0.767
Liguria	430.4	345.2	517.1	211.3	150.4	269.7	161.9	106.5	268.7	24.9	11.9	39.2	0.642	0.429	0.870
<i>North-East</i>	433.5	308.8	650.7	163.5	105.0	212.3	122.0	59.0	220.5	23.7	6.8	42.5	0.547	0.239	0.773
Emilia-Romagna	391.5	314.2	500.0	170.9	129.5	188.3	125.8	81.7	212.3	25.9	12.7	36.9	0.593	0.375	0.773
Veneto	455.1	326.0	607.2	148.4	105.0	176.8	108.6	59.0	205.7	19.7	6.8	34.1	0.484	0.239	0.710
FVGiulia	410.4	308.8	589.1	179.7	136.6	212.3	135.5	59.5	220.5	21.5	11.0	35.1	0.574	0.352	0.772
Trentino-AA	476.9	393.9	650.7	155.0	124.5	193.8	117.9	68.2	211.7	27.9	13.2	42.5	0.537	0.283	0.745
<i>Centre + Sardinia</i>	449.7	297.4	618.2	162.8	62.1	243.8	104.3	35.5	209.9	21.4	5.1	44.4	0.508	0.196	0.808
Tuscany	451.7	349.1	559.8	171.4	105.9	191.2	124.7	63.4	209.9	24.5	9.8	41.7	0.553	0.294	0.782
Umbria	455.1	329.6	584.7	153.4	62.1	208.7	92.5	47.7	201.7	18.4	6.3	38.6	0.466	0.207	0.764
Marche	419.6	297.4	545.8	143.6	82.6	182.2	93.5	35.5	172.8	19.8	5.3	36.6	0.483	0.223	0.745
Lazio	457.3	319.0	559.9	203.4	141.8	243.8	121.2	70.8	195.3	21.8	5.1	39.0	0.563	0.339	0.783
Sardinia	464.6	313.2	618.2	142.1	75.3	195.9	89.7	38.7	193.1	22.6	8.9	44.4	0.472	0.196	0.808
<i>South + Sicily</i>	528.9	314.8	787.8	126.7	27.1	212.0	69.1	15.8	186.2	12.4	2.4	35.2	0.344	0.081	0.752
Abruzzo	433.8	331.5	551.5	149.1	90.4	200.5	89.3	31.0	186.2	16.1	4.1	35.2	0.456	0.210	0.752
Molise	435.4	314.8	551.1	115.3	27.1	186.4	63.8	19.0	137.9	11.5	2.9	29.7	0.369	0.128	0.650
Campania	632.1	474.8	787.8	143.5	74.2	201.5	66.9	31.0	136.5	11.3	4.6	23.9	0.300	0.081	0.574
Puglia	563.1	412.1	729.8	135.8	67.6	212.0	72.4	28.9	160.3	14.6	6.9	29.6	0.351	0.113	0.655
Basilicata	510.0	408.1	645.5	96.4	38.0	166.7	53.3	15.8	139.3	8.9	2.4	22.2	0.286	0.095	0.529
Calabria	550.8	437.5	660.2	102.9	41.4	182.9	56.5	19.6	129.7	10.4	3.7	21.8	0.284	0.097	0.555
Sicily	577.1	454.1	702.2	143.8	71.6	207.0	81.9	31.8	164.9	14.4	8.0	27.0	0.360	0.142	0.639

Source: Own elaboration on ISTAT data, various sources.

Table A-3: Full results from Model [M2]: Odds Ratios for being very satisfied (*SFR_good*) and a little or not at all satisfied with family relations (*SFR_bad*)

	Very high SFR		Little or not at all SFR	
	OR	P-value	OR	P-value
Family type (ref.: Parents in 1st marriage)				
Cohabiting/divorced parents	0.797	0.004	1.421	0.015
Step-family	0.715	0.000	1.965	0.000
Lone parent	0.630	0.000	2.362	0.000
Survey year (centered at 2008)	0.995	0.411	0.964	0.010
Family type * survey year (interaction)				
Cohabiting/divorced parents	1.020	0.556	0.994	0.921
Step-family	1.027	0.444	1.069	0.251
Lone parent	0.996	0.820	1.022	0.446
SDT index (de-meaned)	1.611	0.149	5.365	0.016
SDT index (de-meaned) ²	4.464	0.007	0.188	0.126
Family type * SDT index (interaction)				
Cohabiting/divorced parents	0.494	0.679	1.023	0.994
Step-family	0.237	0.414	0.043	0.299
Lone parent	1.765	0.539	0.134	0.140

Table A-3: (Continued)

	Very high SFR		Little or not at all SFR	
	OR	<i>P-value</i>	OR	<i>P-value</i>
Family type * SDT index^2 (interaction)				
Cohabiting/divorced parents	1.986	0.799	0.285	0.796
Step-family	0.523	0.814	0.200	0.720
Lone parent	1.969	0.670	8.120	0.348
Sex of the respondent (ref.: Male)				
Female	0.987	0.385	1.195	0.000
Age of the respondent (ref.: 14–17)				
18–19	0.858	0.000	1.057	0.126
Parental age (ref.: 45–54)				
< = 44	1.022	0.280	0.992	0.847
> = 55	0.932	0.004	1.100	0.063
Parental education (ref.: upper secondary)				
Lower secondary	0.985	0.470	0.976	0.541
Tertiary or higher	1.035	0.265	1.020	0.745
N. children in the household (1–5 cont.)	0.956	0.000	1.070	0.003
Other adults in the household (ref.: No)				
Yes	0.883	0.003	1.021	0.812
Econ. resources evaluation (ref.: Good/adequate)				
Scarce/insufficient	0.872	0.000	1.438	0.000
Parental social class (ref.: White collar)				
Manager/Professional	0.998	0.954	0.934	0.283
Blue collar	0.987	0.598	0.956	0.347
Self-employed	1.013	0.643	1.005	0.929
n.a.	0.965	0.333	1.147	0.059
Housing tenure (ref.: Property)				
Rent	0.965	0.149	1.072	0.129
Other	0.989	0.730	0.974	0.685
Region (ref.: Piedmont)				
Lombardy	1.012	0.802	1.244	0.007
Trentino-AltoAdige	1.300	0.000	1.041	0.681
Veneto	0.884	0.006	1.474	0.000
FVGiulia	1.082	0.211	1.312	0.003
Liguria	1.240	0.001	0.853	0.111
Emilia-Romagna	0.978	0.674	1.294	0.001
Tuscany	1.178	0.001	0.989	0.893
Umbria	1.049	0.434	1.160	0.233
Marche	0.895	0.063	1.273	0.050
Lazio	0.999	0.978	0.973	0.771
Abruzzo	1.044	0.327	0.968	0.742
Molise	0.884	0.031	1.077	0.479
Campania	0.868	0.005	0.735	0.001
Puglia	0.809	0.000	0.946	0.611
Basilicata	0.914	0.101	0.852	0.135
Calabria	1.016	0.737	0.785	0.014
Sicily	1.039	0.408	0.664	0.000
Sardinia	0.783	0.000	1.065	0.527
Constant	0.881	0.003	0.038	0.000

Note: Estimates obtained from two logistic regressions specified as in Equation (2), with two-way clustered standard errors. Parental characteristics refer to the parent who serves as the reference person of the household.

Source: Own elaboration of ADL data, 1996–2020.

