

The Role of Parental Social Class in the Transition to Adulthood: A Sequence Analysis Approach in Italy and the United States

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BACKGROUND

- During the second half of the twentieth century, life course became **increasingly complicated** and prolonged
 - **Delay:** Age at leaving parental home, age at marriage
 - **Individualization:**
 - The order of events became less clear
 - Timing and duration of events vary between individuals
- Within this framework timing and sequencing of events are still strongly influenced by **family background**
 - Mechanisms are largely unknown, but parental social class is crucial in determining the **individual resources** that influence decisions in the early phases of adulthood
 - Role of parental social class may be **context-specific**

OBJECTIVES

- Evaluate the impact of social origins on the patterns of transition to adulthood as a whole (all the events)
 - Parental social class based on parents' education
- Apply a cross-national comparative perspective to evaluate whether the role of social class is context-specific
 - Comparison **Italy vs. United States**, given the strong institutional and cultural differences

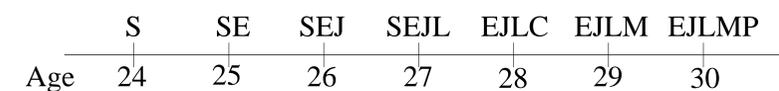
DATA & METHODS

DATA

- **United States:** NLSY79 - 1957-1964 cohorts – followed from age 14-22 to age 31-39, N = 8,636
- **Italy:** ISTAT Family and Social Subjects (2003): 1957-1964 cohorts, N = 6,002

METHODS

- Sequence Analysis (Abbott and Tsay, 2000)
- Life course trajectories represented by strings of characters



- **Contribution:** this method allows to take into account the interdependence among **all the events** of the transition
- Compute sequences dissimilarities and derive typical patterns based on similarities of trajectories (CLUSTER ANALYSIS)
- Multinomial logistic regressions to compute the predicted probability of being in one specific typology

RESULTS – Clusters and Predicted Probability to be in each Cluster

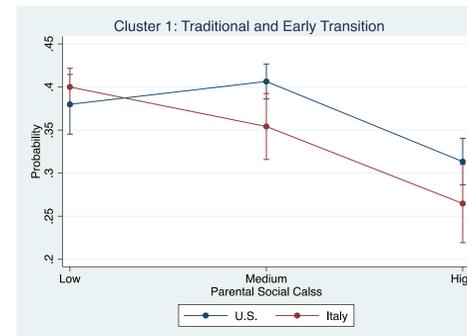
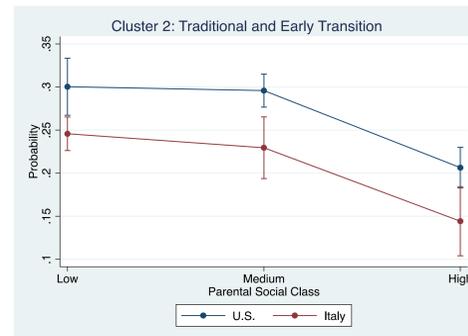
MEN

WOMEN

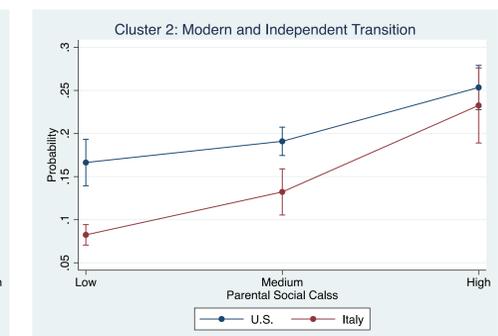
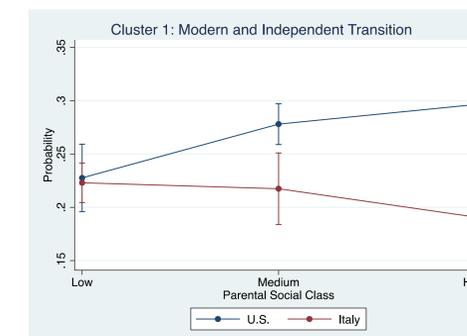
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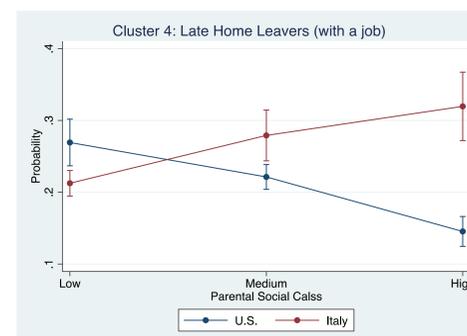
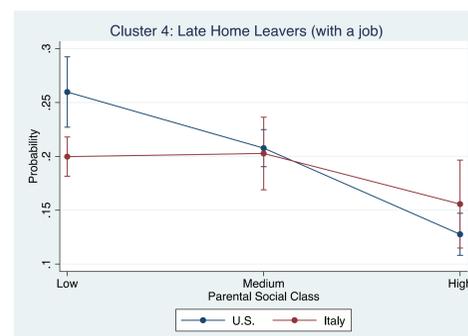
1) Traditional and Early Transition: Early achievement of independence and a fast family formation through marriage and parenthood.



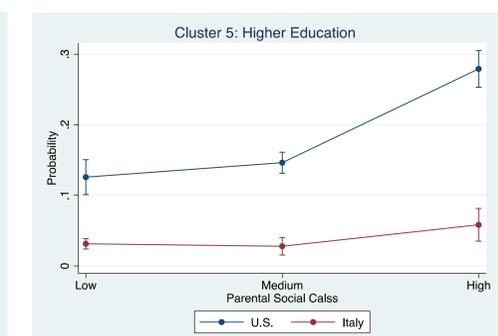
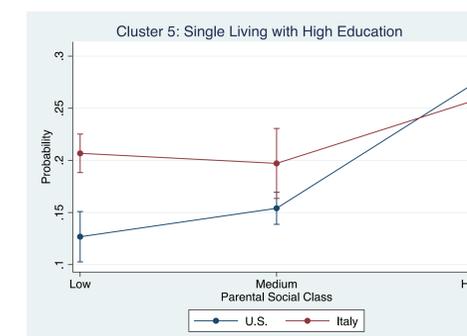
2) Modern and Independent Transition: Leave parents when finish school and find a job, but not necessarily to marry. Substantial delay of childbearing.



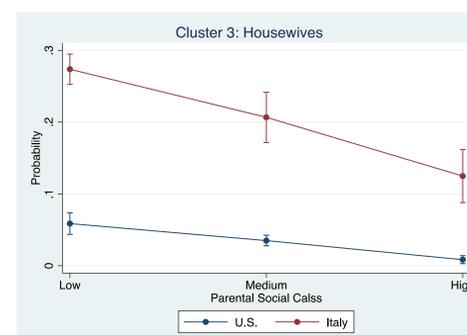
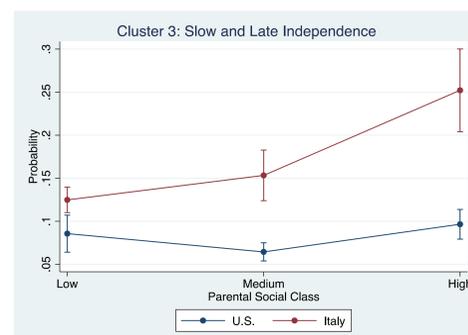
3) Late Home leavers (with a job): Finish school and find a job early, but do not move out from parents' home. Strong postponement of family formation.



4) High Education: Leave their family very soon, usually to go to college. Find a job while studying and experience some delay in family formation.



5) MEN - Slow and Late Independence: Still in school and with parents in their late 20s. Many never form a family. **WOMEN - Housewives:** Exit education and leave parents early, but never work. Leave to form a family.



DISCUSSION

- A **higher social class** is associated with a **postponement** in the transition
- Patterns towards independence and family formation are **more rapid** and less standardized **in the U.S.** than in Italy, independent of social class
- The effect of parental background is **context-specific** in an *unexpected* way
 - U.S.:** Modern trajectories more widespread among individuals with a **higher parental status**. In contrast with existing literature
 - Italy:** A **more affluent family of origin** is not only a **protection factor** in the presence of economic constraints, but also a **golden cage** that children are not encouraged to leave even if they have already completed education and started a job

FUTURE RESEARCH

- Need to extend the analysis to other countries to see how institutions, family and culture interact in different contexts
- Possibility to update the analysis considering more recent cohorts (born between 1980 and 1984) through NLSY97 – maximum age so far is 31