The impact of women’s employment on marriage dissolution: real effect, selection or anticipation?

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Background

• **Independence hypothesis:** women’s employment destabilises marriages (Becker et al. 1977, Parsons 1940, Hobson 1990, Ruggles 1997)

• **Criticism – interdependence hypothesis:**
  – Rising women’s labour force participation
  – Changing gender roles (Sigle-Rushton 2010, Jalovaara 2003)
  – Shift in household organisation from production to consumption (Stevenson & Wolfers 2007, Raz-Yurovich 2012)
  – Additional income provided by a woman reduces marital strain income effect (Oppenheimer 1997, Cherlin 2000)
  – Similarity of economic activities and interests may improve understanding between spouses (Ross & Sawhill 1975)
Background

• The role of the **country context** (Cooke 2006, Kaplan and Stier 2010, Cooke et al. 2013)

  – **welfare policies** – they define the extent to which the state supports women’s economic independence from their partners, e.g., by providing publically funded childcare and offering financial support to the economically weaker partner in case of a union disruption,

  – **gender norms** – they define the extent to which a deviation from the gendered division of work is feasible and socially accepted,

  – **economic situation of households**: labour market situation of men and the level of men’s earnings relative to family maintenance costs
Background

1. **Selection** of divorce-prone women to employment due to unobserved time-constant characteristics (gender attitudes, family orientation)

2. **Anticipation** of union breakdown may motivate taking up a job

→ So far no studies that accounted for these unobserved factors
Objective

• To re-evaluate the independence hypothesis, **taking into account selection and anticipation**

• To evaluate how the differences in economic situation of households mediate the effect of women’s employment on marital stability
  
  – Comparison of Italy and Poland
Context of Italy and Poland

SIMILARITIES
• strong attachment to family
• predominance of Catholic values
• delayed diffusion of new family behaviours
• weak public support for working parents
• traditional gender role attitudes

MAJOR DIFFERENCES
– Italy:
  • long prevalence of traditional male breadwinner model
  • still relatively low levels of women’s employment
– Poland:
  • longer history of women’s labour force participation
  • adoption of the dual earner – female double burden model (women expected to provide care and income!)
  • Women’s income needed to satisfy couples’ material aspirations
Research Hypotheses

- **Hypothesis 1**: the effect of women’s employment on marital disruption is expected to be positive and significant in Italy (independence hypothesis)

- **Hypothesis 2**: the effect of women’s employment on marital disruption is expected to be less positive or even negative in Poland (interdependence hypothesis)
Method

Methodological challenges:

1. **Selection** of divorce-prone women to employment due to unobserved time-constant characteristics (gender attitudes, family orientation):
   - multi-process hazard model of marital disruption, employment entry and employment exit

2. **Anticipation** of union breakdown may motivate taking up a job
   - conditional spline for the time since employment entry
Selection: method

Hazard of marital dissolution

$$\ln h_i^D(t) = \alpha_0 + \alpha_1 \text{DurMar}(t) + \alpha_2 \text{AgeCh}(t) + \alpha_3 X_i^D(t) + \alpha_4 X_i^D + \alpha_5 \text{Emp}(t) + \varepsilon^D$$

Hazard of employment entry

$$\ln h_j^{EN}(t) = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1 \text{DurNonE}(t) + \gamma_2 \text{AgeCh}(t) + \gamma_3 X_j^{EN}(t) + \gamma_4 X_j^{EN} + \gamma_5 \text{MarStat}(t) + \varepsilon^{EN}$$

Hazard of employment exit

$$\ln h_j^{EX}(t) = \delta_0 + \delta_1 \text{DurE}(t) + \delta_2 \text{AgeCh}(t) + \delta_3 X_i^{EX}(t) + \delta_4 X_i^{EX} + \delta_5 \text{MarStat}(t) + \varepsilon^{EX}$$

Heterogeneity components

$$\begin{pmatrix} \varepsilon^D \\ \varepsilon^{EN} \\ \varepsilon^{EX} \end{pmatrix} \sim \mathcal{N}\left( \begin{pmatrix} 0 \\ 0 \\ 0 \end{pmatrix}, \begin{pmatrix} \sigma^2_\varepsilon^D & \rho_{\varepsilon^D \varepsilon^{EN}} & \rho_{\varepsilon^D \varepsilon^{EX}} \\ \rho_{\varepsilon^{EN} \varepsilon^D} & \sigma^2_\varepsilon^{EN} & \rho_{\varepsilon^{EN} \varepsilon^{EX}} \\ \rho_{\varepsilon^{EX} \varepsilon^D} & \rho_{\varepsilon^{EX} \varepsilon^{EN}} & \sigma^2_\varepsilon^{EX} \end{pmatrix} \right)$$
Anticipation: method

Women enter employment anticipating the divorce…

a) but having a job itself does not destabilise marriage

b) and having a job itself does destabilise marriage
Data

**Data sources:**
- Italian Multipurpose Household Survey “Family and Social Subjects” 2009
- Polish Generations and Gender Survey 2010/2011

**Advantages of the two datasets:**
- full employment histories of respondents
- they cover the most recent period when marital disruption was spreading rapidly in both societies

**Advantages of the two datasets:**
- no longitudinal data on partner’s employment, gender role attitudes of partners or household division of labor

**Analytical sample:**
- **Italy:** 10586 women born 1955-1994, 6709 entered first marriage, 141 entered second marriage and 2 entered third marriage.
- **Poland:** 6352 women born 1955-1993, 4731 entered first marriage, 132 entered second marriage and 3 entered third marriage
Results (1)

The effect of women’s employment on divorce risk. Relative Risks.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Single process model (no control for unobserved time-constant characteristics)</th>
<th>Multi-process model (with control for unobserved time-constant characteristics)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>IT</td>
<td>1.47***</td>
<td>1.37***</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PL</td>
<td>1.22**</td>
<td>1.41***</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Italy:** women who are more likely to enter employment due to unmeasured reasons are also more likely to divorce (**positive selection**)

**Poland:** women who are less likely to enter employment due to unmeasured reasons are also more likely to divorce (**negative selection**)
Even after taking anticipation into account being in employment still destabilises marriages
Conclusions and outlook

- After controlling for time-constant unobserved characteristics and taking into account that women may enter employment in anticipation of divorce we find that **women’s employment destabilises marriages in both countries**

- We found support for Hypothesis 1 (**independence hypothesis in Italy**) but no support for Hypothesis 2 (**no interdependence mechanism in Poland**)

- Future research should control for other time-variant unobserved characteristics of women (e.g., men’s involvement in household and care work, satisfaction with marriage).

- **Comparative studies on a large scale are needed** to better understand the role of the country context on the effects of women’s employment on divorce and the effects of divorce on women’s employment.
Any comments and suggestions are welcomed!

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