

Women's Economic Activity and the Marital Stability in Poland

Marta Styrc & Anna Matysiak

mstyrc@o2.pl amatys@sggw.waw.pl

Institute of Statistics and Demography, Warsaw School of Economics

Background

- Role specialisation model: men's employment stabilises marriage, women's employment destabilises marriage (lost gains from specialisation & independence effect) (Becker et al. 1977)
- Role specialisation model increasingly questioned:
 - Rising women's labour force participation
 - Changing gender roles (Sigle-Rushton 2010, Jalovaara 2003)
 - Household organisation has been shifting from production to consumption (satisfaction and quality of union decisive for durability of union - similarity of economic activities and interests may improve understanding between spouses) (Ross & Sawhill 1975, Stevenson & Wolfers 2007, Raz-Yurovich 2012)
 - Additional income provided by a woman reduces marital strain – income effect (Oppenheimer 1997, Cherlin 2000)

Aim of the study: to contribute to the discussion on the association between women's and men's economic activity and marital stability through investigating the case of Poland before and after the onset of the economic transition

Previous studies

- Usually negative association between women's employment and marital stability:
 - Salvini & Vignoli (2011) for Italy
 - Kalmijn & Portman (2006) for the Netherlands
 - Bukodi & Roberts (2003) for Hungary
- Some exceptions:
 - Muszyńska (2008) – no impact of employment status in Russia
 - Bernardi & Martinez-Pastor 2011 – mixed evidence for Spain
- Some recent studies show this effect to weaken or disappear if other factors are accounted for:
 - Level of satisfaction with marriage (Schoen et al., 2002)
 - Commitment of spouses to each other and acknowledged gender ideology (Sayer & Bianchi 2000)
 - Men's involvement in housework (Sigle-Rushton 2010)
- Cross-country differences by the traditionalism of gender roles (Cook 2005, 2011)

Institutional Context

Pre-transition settings	Post-transition settings
Labour market	
obligation / right to work	risk of job loss & unemployment
Social policy model	
basic universal social security	individual responsibility
Family policy	
subsidised basic consumption goods, child-related goods and services	increased costs of raising children
	reduction in the direct financial support for families with children, including support for single parent families

Hypotheses

- After 1989 double income became an important tool of risk diversification and protection against material deprivation
- Material aspirations of the society increased



Hypothesis 1: income effect

Following the system transformation the association between both men's and women's employment and risk of marital disruption should become (more) negative compared to pre-1989 period

- After 1989 full and guaranteed employment ceased
- Family policy became less supportive for families and the decision to become a single mother became more difficult from the material perspective



Hypothesis 2: dependence on the labour market

In the market economy women's employment might have become a precondition for a woman to leave the unsatisfactory marriage – the correlation between risk of marital disruption and women's employment should become (more) positive compared to pre-1989 period

Method

- Hazard regression of marital disruption for first marriages
- Proportional piecewise constant exponential model

$$h(t) = h_0(t) \cdot \exp(\beta_1 x_1 + \beta_2 x_2(t))$$

$h(t)$ - hazard of marital disruption at time point t
 $h_0(t)$ - baseline hazard split after 2nd, 4th, 6th, and 10th year
 x_1 - time-constant characteristics of marriage
 $x_2(t)$ - time-varying characteristics of marriage

- Separate models for men and women
- Main independent variable: employment status interacted with calendar period
- Control covariates:
 - Time-constant: place of residence during childhood (urban big, urban small, rural), parental divorce, age at marriage, premarital conception or birth, premarital cohabitation
 - Time-varying: education (tertiary, secondary, vocational, basic, in education and younger than 28 years, in education and aged 28+), parity, age of the youngest child

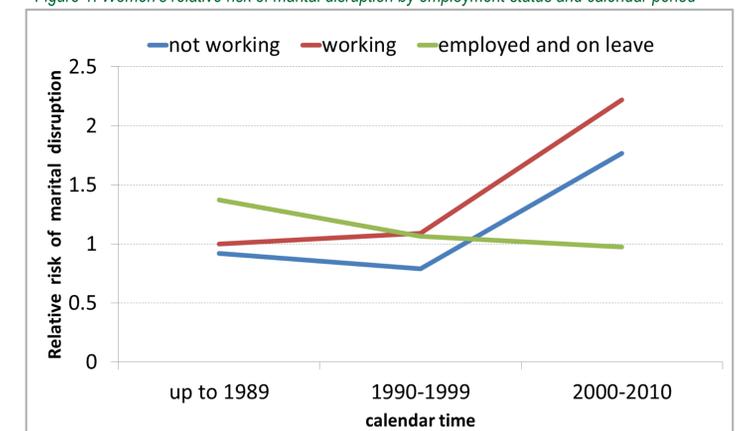
Data

- Source:
 - Polish Generation and Gender Survey (GGG) 2011
 - contains retrospective fertility, partnership and employment histories
- Analytical sample:
 - 4842 ever married women born 1955-1993 (546 disruptions)
 - 3300 ever married men born 1955-1993 (299 disruptions)
 - aged 18-56 at the time of interview
- Marital disruption
 - Duration from legal marriage till union disruption (either declaration of the respondent on the date when the union ended or divorce – what comes first)

Results

- Changing relationship between women's employment and marital stability**
 - up to 1989 no difference between working and not working women
 - since the 1990s the working and not working women diverged and working women had higher risk of marital disruption → employment has become a precondition for dissolving a marriage
 - Women on leave (mostly maternal and parental leave) during socialist time had higher risk of marital disruption than the other two groups. In the 2000s the relation changed drastically. This reversal may indicate that under socialist welfare state women with small children were much more capable of leaving the unsatisfactory marriage than under market economy. This tendency might be attributed to deteriorating public support for families with children

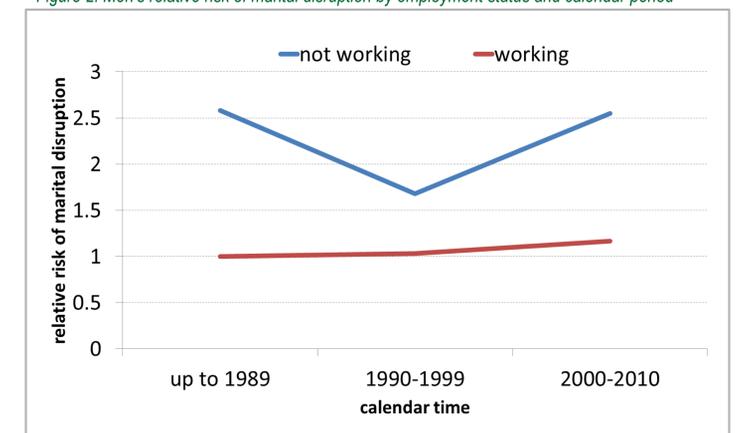
Figure 1. Women's relative risk of marital disruption by employment status and calendar period



- Stable relationship between men's employment and marital stability**

- Not working men had higher risk of marital disruption throughout the observation period

Figure 2. Men's relative risk of marital disruption by employment status and calendar period



Conclusions

- Emergence of the positive correlation between women's employment and risk of marital disruption after 1989-transformation – in favour of Hypothesis 2
- Possible factors in force:
 - labour market changes (increase in unemployment and employment instability)
 - decline in public support for the families
 - increased individual responsibility for own maintenance
- Stable negative correlation between men's employment and risk of marital dissolution