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Couple's Status on Labour Market and their Attitudes towards Gender Roles

Malina VOICU¹, Andreea CONSTANTIN²

Abstract

This paper focuses on the effect of changes in couples' employment status on attitudes towards gender roles on the labour market, paying special attention to how interaction between the partners' status on labour market shapes attitudes towards gender roles. Using data from nine successive waves of British Household Panel we investigate how change from the traditional couple male breadwinner/woman homemaker to other types of couple influences attitude towards gender roles on the labour market of people living as a couple. The results point out that the interaction between the change of respondent's own status on labour market and the partner's one significantly influences attitudes towards gender roles on labour market. Moreover, any change from the traditional breadwinner-homemaker couple brings less support for women employment. This finding holds true no matter the respondent's gender.

Keywords: attitudes towards gender roles, labour market, panel survey, couples, employment

Introduction

Attitudes towards gender roles significantly changed during the last decades in European societies under the impact of industrialization and modernization (Inglehart & Norris, 2003; Inglehart & Welzel, 2005). Among the factors associated to modernization increasing education for both genders (Wilensky, 2002) and women's labour force participation are important factors influencing beliefs and attitudes about the roles played by women and men (Banaszak & Leichley, 1991;

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Banaszak & Plutzer, 1993; Cunningham et al., 2005; Fan & Mooney Marini, 2000).

Previous studies on the effect of employment on attitudes towards gender roles analysed the impact of individual employment status on these attitudes (Banaszak & Leichley, 1991). However, the effect of getting out of labour market on attitudes towards gender roles was not explicitly addressed in previous work. On the other hand, gender relations and gender roles are socially constructed (McInnes, 1998) and built on social interaction with others (West & Zimmerman, 1987). Therefore, one's own status in the labour market is a relevant factor in shaping attitudes towards gender roles, while the employment status of the partner is relevant too for explaining attitudes shared by people living as couples.

This paper tries to fill this gap by analysing the effect of changes in the combined labour market position of people living as couples on their attitudes towards gender roles. Since we are interested on the effect changes in the respect of being or not being in paid employment we consider employed people as being active on labour market and we oppose them to those people that are inactive on labour market including here people that are unemployed, retired, looking after family and home, in school or sick and disabled*. We test our research hypotheses using data from the only nine waves of the British Household Survey Panel collecting data on gender attitudes. We restrict our analysis to people living as a couple and we test our hypotheses using fixed effects models for panel data.

Although the current research makes use of data coming from the British Household Panel, we aim at investigating general mechanisms that are not much affected by contextual factors. Therefore, we do not focus specifically on the British context when building our theoretical explanations, considering that contextual factors are not highly relevant when describing intra-individual change. Given that panel data is needed to test our research hypotheses and panel surveys are not very rich in information regarding attitudes towards gender roles we have chosen the British Household Panel because it provides relevant data for our research inquiry.

The first section covers existing literature on the relation between gender equality and female employment as well as the factors influencing attitudes towards gender roles. The second section introduces the indicators and the strategy used for analysis, while the third section includes the data analysis. The discussion and conclusion are found in the final section.

* We do not follow here the traditional distinction between economically active versus inactive population as it is stated by International Labor Organization (<http://ilo.org/global/statistics-and-databases/statistics-overview-and-topics/lang—en/index.htm>). We strictly refer to the position on labor market and we distinguish between those that are in paid employment and those that are not.

Review of literature and hypotheses

Employment and attitudes towards gender roles

Attitudes towards gender roles are ‘normative beliefs about what gender relations in society should be like, or the extent to which a person supports the norm of gender equality’ (Bergh, 2006: 6). Traditional gender roles assign the breadwinner role to the male partner and the homemaker role to the female (Cunningham et al, 2005). In modern and post-modern societies, women and men tend to assume similar roles regarding paid employment and housework division (Breen & Cook, 2005). Consequently, favourable attitudes towards traditional gender roles assign the homemaker role to women and the breadwinner role to men, while positive attitudes towards non-traditional gender roles assign similar tasks to both genders in what concerns housework sharing and labour market participation.

Female participation in paid employment has a strong impact on attitudes towards gender roles among both women and men (Banaszak & Leichley, 1991). Several different models are used to explain this fact. Such models include interest-based explanations, exposure-based explanations (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004) and control models (Kroska & Elman, 2009).

Interest-based explanations show that individuals share egalitarian attitudes when they can benefit from gender equality (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004). These models explain why working women are in favour of female employment. Employment provides women with their own income and helps them become economically independent. A similar mechanism is used to explain why men hold non-traditional attitudes when their spouse is employed. An additional income provided by a wife’s employment makes households better off financially, and the husband benefits from this as well. For the present study, this model would imply that individuals living in couples, where the female partner is active on the labour market, should express more egalitarian gender attitudes due to the additional financial benefits.

Exposure-based models assume that changes in gender attitudes and beliefs occur when the individual is exposed to egalitarian ideas or to situations promoting increased support for gender equality (Bolzendahl & Myers, 2004). Work experience exposes women to discriminatory practices making them aware of inequality and feminist ideas due to contact with other women who share egalitarian ideas. Working also provides women with the opportunity to prove they are able to perform in the labour market (Banaszak & Plutzer, 1993) and combine work and family life. Moreover, in case of men, having women as workmates changes their attitudes towards gender roles in a non-traditional direction because they are exposed to non-traditional gender roles. In consequence, according to this model, people living in couple, where female partners are engaging in non-traditional

activities – paid work - should also express less traditional attitudes towards gender roles.

Control models show that individuals seek to maintain meanings and ‘they adjust their attitudes to match their behaviour’ (Kroska & Elman, 2009: 379). According to cognitive dissonance theory, when individual have to perform behaviours that go against their attitudes or opinions, they either change their attitudes or they give up the respective behaviour (Festinger, 1957). By instance a woman that has to take a job because of money shortage of her family will change her attitudes towards gender roles in favour of non-traditional gender division of work, because she needs to adapt her attitudes to her behaviour. This mechanism occurs for men too, when their partners get into paid employment or when they have women as workmates. In both cases an adaptation of attitudes towards gender roles takes place to reduce the cognitive dissonance.

According to these three explanations, women’s employment changes attitudes towards gender roles shared by women and their partners in a more non-traditional direction. Moreover, when the male partner is also employed, he is doubly exposed to non-traditional attitudes towards gender roles, at home and in the workplace. Consequently one can say that being employed exposes both gender to non-traditional gender roles and helps people to reshape their attitudes. Therefore, we expect that, in case of going out of the labour market, the lack of exposure to non-traditional gender roles will make people to change their attitudes towards gender roles in a more traditional direction, no matter their gender. Also, in case of women, a control mechanism can occur and reshape their attitudes into a more traditional direction when she changes her employment status.

On the other hand, gender is constituted and displayed through interaction (West & Zimmerman, 1987); consequently, gender roles and gender identities are created through social interaction. Moreover, living as a couple shapes gender roles and gender identities in different ways, thus making people behave more accordingly with traditional gender roles (Gough & Killewald, 2011; Gupta, 1999). Therefore, beginning with this approach, we expect that changes of the employment status of both partners will be an important factor in shaping attitudes towards gender roles.

Another theoretical explanation for how attitudes are shaped and reshaped is the ‘*doing gender*’ mechanism. According to the doing gender approach (West & Zimmerman, 1987), gender is also expressed in daily life because women and men behave according to socially accepted expectations regarding their gender roles. Since gender roles are embedded in social contexts and are different from one society to another (McInnes, 1998; Zvonkovic et al., 1996), doing gender can have different meanings in different societies. Male-breadwinner/female-homemaker is the most widespread model of gender relations in Western societies (Taylor, Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1999). Doing gender means performing

according to the roles set forth by this model. Therefore, we expect that even in contexts where gender roles deviate from the traditional gender division, people will 'do gender' and will behave according to the traditional expectations regarding gender roles. Due to the control mechanism (Kroska & Elman, 2009), traditional behaviour will change attitudes towards gender roles in a more traditional direction.

Couple's status on labour market, gender identity and attitudes towards gender roles

Transition from active to inactive status on labour market has consequences on family life, on dynamic of couple relationships and may have implications on attitudes towards gender roles. Unemployment and retirement can be such cases. Unemployment produces psychological stress, challenges gender roles and affects individuals' and family's well-being (Sen, 1997). Moreover, it may weaken the harmony within families and can produce an identity crisis (Sen, 1997). In cases involving the unemployment of one or both partners, maintaining gender identities serves as a mechanism for coping with substantial economic and family change (Legerski & Cornwall, 2010: 469). Similar mechanisms were described in case of couple transiting into retirement or from retirement to additional jobs (Moen, Kim & Hofmeister, 2001). Therefore, in such cases like unemployment or retirement, partners will begin to stress traditional gender roles and gender identity to cope with the new situation.

Traditional gender roles assign the caretaker role to females, who are traditionally seen as being in charge of housework provision. In cases of unemployment or retirement, they easily adapt to the traditional gender division of labour and take over the caretaker attributions (Forret, Sullivan & Mainiero, 2010; Gerstel, 2000; Kulik, 2000). Moreover, women are more likely to base their self-identity on multiple roles, such as mother, sister, daughter or employee (Forett, Sullivan & Mainiero, 2010). Therefore, in cases of transition to an inactive role they can easily switch to a different role and rely on it as a relevant component of their identity.

Male identity is more bound with the role of breadwinner (Hoang & Yeoh, 2011). In contrast with women, the breadwinner role is the most important one for building a man's own identity (Forett, Sullivan & Mainiero, 2010). Therefore, losing the breadwinner status significantly affects men's gender identity. While unemployment or retirement is seen for women as an opportunity to spend more time with their families and return to traditional gender roles, this situation challenges men's individual identities. In general, men are more active seekers in the labour market when they are outside it than women are (Kulik, 2000; Jacob & Kleinert, 2010). Previous studies show that in their private lives, unemployed or retired men still assume a traditional gender role (Moen, Kim & Hofmeister,

2001). Therefore, they do not increase the time spent on domestic work (Brines, 1994; Gupta, 1999), and sometimes they adopt aggressive behaviours that emphasize their dominant status (Macmillan & Gartner, 1999). A disruption in traditional gender roles makes partners reinforce traditional gender ideologies and 'perform a culturally appropriate gender script' (Schmalzbauer, 2011: 442).

Therefore, we assume that the way in which each partner copes with the identity crisis produced by getting out of labour market depends on the centrality of employment for gender identity. Thus, we can assume that couples in which the woman go out of the labour market are less egalitarian and share more traditional gender attitudes. When the woman goes out of the labour market and /or the man is employed or get into the labour market, the household roles are divided in a traditional way and both partners share traditional attitudes towards gender roles, which allocate different tasks for men and women. This is the most traditional arrangement, and we expect that couples will return to it when women are even temporarily out of the labour market.

When women and men leave the labour market, they have a similar status; however, due to the identity reaction to own situation, we expect to find a change towards more traditional attitudes. We do not expect to find significant differences between the attitudes shared by couples in which both partners leave the labour market and people in couples where female partner becomes inactive and the male partner is active. In the first type of couple, the fact that the man becomes inactive strengthens gender inequality and the couple preserves the traditional gender order.

Couples with an active woman and an inactive man are characterized by 'deviant identities' (Legerski & Cornwall, 2010: 463) because the woman assumes the breadwinner role, which traditionally is a male role, while the man is outside the labour market and cannot provide for the household. Based on the interest-based and control models, one can assume that the male partner turn their attitudes into a more egalitarian direction in this context because he benefits from his partner's income and the non-traditional behaviour forces him to adapt his attitudes.

However, previous studies note that men refuse to assume the caretaker role and do not become more involved in domestic work as a result of their decreased income and increased time availability (Brines, 1994; Gupta, 1999). Gupta (1999) shows that when the husband has difficulties performing the traditional gender role, both spouses demonstrate more traditional gender roles in order to avoid violating expected gender norms. We assume that in cases of deviant gender identities, when the roles played by the two partners violate traditional gender work divisions, both partners will strengthen their gender identities and will share more non-egalitarian attitudes towards gender roles to compensate for the deviant situation.

As long as gender is created through interaction (West & Zimmerman, 1987), one can expect that, in case of couples, changes in labour market status of one partner impacts on gender roles attitudes towards gender roles shared by both partners. It is not only own status or the changes of the own status on the labour market that shapes attitudes towards gender roles, as it is proved by previous researches (Banaszak & Leichley, 1991; Banaszak & Plutzer, 1993; Cunningham et al., 2005), but it is also the combination between the changes of both parts that plays a role in transforming attitudes of both. Moreover, due to the strong specialization of gender roles, gender of the partner who changes their employment status has a decisive role in reshaping gender roles and attitude towards gender roles of both partners.

Therefore, one should focus on the change from one type of couple to other (by instance from the traditional male breadwinner – female homemaker to dual breadwinner couple) rather than on individual changes of individual employment status. Male breadwinner/female homemaker represents the traditional arrangement in Western Europe (Inglehart & Norris, 2003). Deviations from this type of couple involve renegotiation of gender roles, and changes in employment status of one of the partners, as compared to this baseline situation, can lead to renegotiation of gender roles inside the couple and reshaping of attitudes towards gender roles accordingly, due to one or more of the four mechanisms: interest based model, exposure model, control model and ‘doing gender’ mechanism.

Hypotheses

Based on the theoretical framework presented here, we can formulate the following hypotheses:

In case of people of living in couple, attitudes towards gender roles are shaped by the changes in labour market position of both partners. Compared to the traditional type of couple - male-breadwinner/female-inactive couples – we expect that:

(H1) Attitudes towards women’s employment become more supportive when the couple changes into a dual-earner one.

(H2) Attitudes towards women’s employment do not change when the couple changes into a dual-inactive one.

(H3) Attitudes towards women’s employment become more traditional when the female partner gets into the labour market and the male partner leaves it.

Control variables

Previous studies have used different factors to explain variations in attitudes towards gender roles. Education exerts a positive effect on gender attitudes for women and men (Banaszak & Plutzer, 1993; Brewster & Padavic, 2000; Cunningham et al., 2005). Educational institutions promote equality and gender equality (Kamlijn, 2003), while education itself shapes gender beliefs by instilling values in students such as autonomy, merit-based achievements and the desirability of similar roles for both sexes (Cunningham et al., 2005). Becoming parent makes people more inclined to share traditional gender beliefs (Baxter & Kane, 1995; Thornton & Young DeMacro, 2001) because the presence of children in the household increases domestic chores that are usually done by women. Also, getting older (age) makes people express more traditional attitudes towards gender roles.

Data and Methods

Data

The analysis makes use of British Household Panel Survey (BHPS) that is a study on British households collecting data since 1991. The current research uses data coming from the only nine waves of BHPS (1991-2009) that provide information on attitudes towards gender roles and on other time-variant relevant control variables. We have selected a sample including people living in couples during the entire period of interest. Analyses have been conducted using listwise deletion.

Method

The data modelling employed for this study has been made using the Two-way Fixed-Effects regression. Fixed Effects regression models change within individual over time by comparing the same individual with herself or himself at different points in time. The advantages of this method reside in reducing bias produced by omission of relevant control variables and by controlling correlated measurement errors across time (Andreß et al., 2013; Vespa, 2009). Due to long time span between the first data collection and the last one (18 years) controls for aging and period changes (period dummies) are needed (Brüderl & Volker, 2014). We run separate analyses segregated by sex, because sex is a time invariant within individual characteristic and its effect cannot be captured by Fixed Effects regression. In addition, we aim at capturing each gender's response to changes in own and their partner's position on the labour market.

Each model looks at the effect of the interaction between various statuses of respondent and partner on labour market and controls for the effect of other relevant variables that are not time invariant and have significant effects on the target variables according to literature. These variables are restricted to age, education and parenthood, due to the limited relevant variables available in the data set or to large number of missing values.

Dependent variables

Attitudes towards gender roles are complex and multidimensional (Larsen & Long, 1988). Multidimensionality is due to two different aspects: they are connected to the context where gender roles become manifest (private versus public area) and they refer to gender power balance (equality, inequality, and specialization) (Constantin & Voicu, 2014). Taking into account the first aspect, public dimension refers to women’s engagement in roles and activities outside the home (Wilcox & Jelen, 1991). The present study will focus only on this aspect of the attitudes towards gender roles, namely attitudes towards women employment, given that the independent variable of interest is the employment status and seeking to test how the factual position of partners in the labour market affects their attitudes towards women’s work. Three items tap this dimension: (1) Husband and wife should both contribute to the household income; (2) Full-time job makes woman independent; (3) Woman and family are happier if she works

The three items have been summarized in a single index after exploratory factor analysis and reliability analysis have indicated that they belong to the same dimension and have an desirable internal consistency (see *Table 1*).

Table 1. Reliability Statistics for the dependent variable: attitudes towards women’s employment

Wave	Cronbach's Alpha for Women	Cronbach's Alpha for Men
1	0.61	0.59
2	0.59	0.60
3	0.62	0.59
4	0.63	0.62
5	0.63	0.62
6	0.62	0.59
7	0.63	0.66
8	0.64	0.64
9	0.64	0.63
Overall	0.62	0.61

Independent variables

The independent variables of interest for this study are four dummy variables, measuring the labour market status of partners in a couple. More exactly, we have built dummy variables which define the four possible types of couples according to their status on the labour market:

- *Both active* - a dummy variable with value 1 for couples where both female and male partners are active on labor market;
- *Both inactive* - dummy variable with value 1 for couples where both partners are not active on labor market;
- *Woman active* - dummy variable with value 1 for couples where the woman is active in the labor market while the man is not;
- *Man active* - dummy variable with value 1 for couples where the man is active in the labour market and the woman is not.

All the analysis have been done using as reference category the traditional type of couple – male breadwinner – women homemaker (here *man active*).

Control variables

As part of the fixed-effects type of modelling, all the analyses include eight dummy variables, one for each time point/wave of the survey (first wave is the reference category). Education is measured as the highest educational qualification, where the higher the value, the more educated is the respondent. Parenthood is measured as the number of own children living in the household. Age is measured in years. Descriptive statistics for dependent and independent variables are provided in *Table 2*.

Table 2. Descriptive statistics for dependent and independent variables

Men Sample	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Attitudes towards women employment	19446	8.651	1.969	3	15
Both active	19716	0.542	0.498	0	1
Both inactive	20193	0.213	0.409	0	1
Man active	19718	0.139	0.346	0	1
Woman active	20191	0.075	0.264	0	1
Education	19631	6.655	3.563	1	12
Age	20664	50.088	15.163	17	94
Parenthood	20664	0.663	1.019	0	8

Women Sample	Observations	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
Attitudes towards women employment	21215	8.664	1.985	3	15
Both active	20210	0.498	0.5	0	1
Both inactive	21075	0.197	0.398	0	1
Man active	21072	0.177	0.381	0	1
Woman active	20213	0.047	0.212	0	1
Education	21424	7.154	3.468	1	12
Age	22392	47.765	14.483	17	98
Parenthood	22392	0.682	1.019	0	9

Results

According to the results in *Table 3*, the attitudes towards women’s employment expressed by people living in couples are significantly influenced by the change in the couple’s status on the labour market. Looking at the two different samples for women and men, data show similar patterns of response to change for both genders. These attitudes refer to people’s views on the idea of both partners contributing to the household income and to a woman being more independent and making her family happier by working.

When both partners are active in the labour market, results show that their attitudes become less supportive towards women’s employment as compared to the traditional male-breadwinner situation. According to *Table 3 Model 1*, men found in the situation of sharing the labour market with their partner do not develop more egalitarian views as the exposure-based theory would indicate, but instead become less egalitarian compared to the reference scenario, reinforcing the traditional idea of women as mothers and housewives. Moreover, the same happens in the women’s case (*Table 3 Model 2*). Although found in the situation described by the interest-based and control theories, women do not perceive their participation on the labour market as an advantage, but on the contrary express less favourable attitudes towards their employment as compared to the traditional scenario. This could be explained through the ‘doing gender’ mechanism, which states that even in contexts where gender roles deviate from the male-breadwinner/female-homemaker model, people will reinforce traditional views in order to cope with their new or deviant circumstances. In this case, although apparently beneficial, this type of couple could face time and childcare related challenges, overwhelming and making women and men unable to perceive the possible advantages of their circumstances.

Looking at the second type of couple, results show that when both partners are inactive in the labour market, both women and men express more traditional attitudes towards woman’s employment as compared to when in a male-breadwinner situation. Control mechanisms indicate that people in this situation should

adapt their attitudes to their new circumstances. Hence, we would expect little if any change in women's attitudes and rather a positive change in men's attitudes towards women's employment. BHPS data pictures a totally different change in people's attitudes. While women keep their traditional roles, men refuse to identify themselves with a home-maker role. In consequence, here again, although found in a difficult situation, both women and men *do gender* and deny women's employment as beneficial for themselves and their family, reinforcing the traditional roles and becoming even less supportive towards the idea of women participating on the labour market.

When the female partner is the single breadwinner, people also tend to express less support for women's employment as compared to the traditional male-breadwinner scenario. This type of couple is the classical situation described by the *doing gender* mechanism. Although control and interest models could predict a more egalitarian attitude towards women's employment, who in this case are the only breadwinner, partners find themselves in a deviant type of interaction and they react in consequence. In these circumstances, women become less supportive towards their employment trying to bring comfort to their couple by reinforcing more traditional gender views. Simultaneously, men emphasize their traditional role and deny the benefits of their partner being active on the labour market as a mean of facing their unusual situation. People finding themselves in this scenario could also react to the idea of competition on the labour market, thinking that the traditional model of the male-breadwinner / female-homemaker is preferable compared to this deviant one, ephasizing the idea that a woman's place is at home, while men's is on the labour market.

Overall, these findings reveal a reluctance of both men and women in accepting women as alternative breadwinners and equal partners on the labour market. Results emphasize the strong role played by the *doing gender* mechanism in shaping couples' attitudes towards women's employment and show that women's participation on the labour market, even when it is at the couple's financial best interest, does not always come along with more egalitarian attitudes.

Looking to the effect of control variables, this is generally in line with the results produced by previous researches. Increasing in education, although not statistically significant, indicates more egalitarian attitudes. Age has a negative impact on attitudes, while parenthood has a positive effect on attitudes towards women employment. This finding is already documented in the British case by Alwin, Braun & Scott (1992). The period effects are positive and mostly significant for both men and women in the case of attitudes towards women employment showing that later in their life people tend to be more positive towards women employment, supporting findings of previous research carried on the British case (Alwin, Braun & Scott, 1992; Crompton, Brockmann & Lyonette, 2005). This could be due to various factors like less childcare responsibilities once their children are older. This also supports the already documented tendency

for a greater support for gender equality during the last decades among general public in Western Europe (Inglehart & Norris, 2003).

Table 3. Two Way Fixed Effects Regression – unstandardized regression coefficients for attitudes towards gender roles on the labour market

	Men	Women
	Model 1	Model 2
Both active	-0.476***	-0.391***
Woman active	-0.354***	-0.230**
Both inactive	-0.187**	-0.175**
Education	0.021	0.010
Parenthood	0.170***	0.196***
Age	-0.086	-0.116*
t2	0.219	0.304**
t3	0.545*	0.694**
t4	0.760*	0.983**
t5	0.919*	1.223**
t6	1.098	1.452**
t7	1.260	1.696*
t8	1.452	2.003**
t9	1.617	2.212*
Intercept	12.533***	13.405***
ICC	0.70	0.75
R ² within	0.02	0.02
R ² between	0.02	0.03
sigma_u	2.083	2.33
sigma_e	1.351	1.354
N	18539	18544
No. of groups	3510	3521
Average observations/group	5.3	5.3

*** $p < .001$; ** $p < .01$; * $p < .05$

Conclusion

This paper focuses on the effect of changes in couples' employment status on attitudes towards gender roles on the labour market, paying special attention to how interaction between the partners' status on labour market shapes attitudes towards gender roles. Using data from nine successive waves of British Household Panel we investigate how change from the traditional couple male breadwinner/

woman homemaker to other types of couple influences attitude towards gender roles on the labour market of people living in a couple. Some significant conclusions arise from our analysis.

Our results point out that the interaction between the change of respondent's own status on labour market and the partner's one significantly influences attitudes towards gender roles on labour market. The empirical data partially support our hypotheses. Any change from the traditional breadwinner-homemaker couple brings less support for women employment. This finding holds true no matter the respondent's gender.

Any change from a traditional couple to any other type of couple has a significant and negative effect on attitudes towards women employment for both genders. The data shows that 'doing gender' mechanism is in place every time when a couple experiences a change from the traditional male breadwinner-female homemaker couple to any other type of couple. In such cases the centrality of breadwinner role for male identity plays a key role. Couples are not willing to give up the idea that man should be the main breadwinner in the household due to the fact that male identity is built around this role, as we pointed out in the theoretical section. Consequently, every time when they have to adapt to a new situation that violates the traditional division of tasks inside couple, they will strengthen the traditional gender division regarding labour market to avoid an identity crisis.

Two main conclusions can be drawn from the current work. In case of people living in a couple, the combination between partners' status on labour market is important in shaping attitudes towards gender roles on the labour market. People 'do gender' and emphasize the attitudes towards traditional gender division on the labour market to avoid an identity crisis.

Although this paper uses data provided by British Household Panel, our main focus is not on explaining changes in gender attitudes in Great Britain. We aim at explaining general mechanisms not connected with one particular context. However, our results cannot be completely disconnected from the British context. Our main explanation builds on the idea that the traditional family model is male breadwinner – woman homemaker one and this assumption is supported in the British case by previous work (Crompton, Bochmann & Lyonette, 2005; Crompton & Lyonette, 2005). Moreover, this model was constantly challenged during last decades by the new societal trends such as increasing in female labour force participation and changes in family structure (Pascal & Lewis, 2004). The outcome was a significant change in attitudes, more and more individuals rejecting the traditional model in favour of the dual breadwinner one (Aboim, 2010; Alwin, Braun & Scott, 1992; Crompton & Lyonette, 2005). This trend is more pronounced in case of women (Alwin, Braun & Scott, 1992; Crompton, Bochmann & Lyonette, 2005). Our results are in line with trends and confirm the findings of other empirical studies.

Even though the British case provides the appropriate background for testing our hypotheses, there are some contextual factors that might interfere with the nexus between attitudes towards women employment and changes in partners' position on the labour market. Welfare regimes and especially unemployment policies can interfere with this connection shaping it in a different way, because of the significant impact of these policies on attitudes towards gender roles (Pascal & Lewis, 2004). However, due to the scarcity of the panel data needed to test our research hypotheses we cannot extend our analysis to other countries. Further research should take into account contextual factors and replicate the analysis on panel data collected in various countries practicing different types of unemployment policies.

Other limitations derived from the data used for testing current hypotheses. Some recommendations for further researches can be derived from these limitations. The causality direction between changes in behaviour and in attitudes is an issue under debate. People of both genders can choose to change their position on labour market because they change their attitudes. The endogeneity problem cannot be solved by our fixed effects regression models and, consequently, the current results should be considered with caution. Further research should approach the topic by using instrumental variable regression.

The current study does not distinguish between full time and part time employment and the changes occurring from the transition inside and outside such positions. Working part time does not reduce the amount of housework performed by woman (Lachance-Grzela & Bouchard, 2010) and most likely has a lower impact on the renegotiation of the labour division inside couple, as compared to the full time employment. This can have consequences on the re-shaping of the attitudes towards gender roles on the labour market once the women get into a part time job. Moreover, we could not disentangle the effect of labour market position and of change of it on the target variable. Getting a higher position on the labour market (e.g. a managerial position) may cause a change in gender balance inside couple and may lead to a transformation of attitudes towards gender roles on labour market. Women getting into a higher position will earn more and have less time for chores and this can lead to a renegotiation of gender roles and to a change in attitudes. Unfortunately the available data does not allow running separate analyses depending on the type of employment or for changes with respect to labour market position. Further research should take into account these two aspects and to documents that changes inside labour market can shape attitudes towards gender roles.

Current research investigates people living in a couple, but not couples themselves and how changes in attitudes shared by one partner influences the attitudes of the other one. Future researches may analyse couples and how transition and interaction reshapes their attitudes. On the other hand, the current research does

not distinguish between unemployed, retired, housewifery and people still in education. This is due to the limited number of cases in some of these categories like unemployed or people in education. Since each of this situation involve a different type of transition in and outside labour market, forthcoming studies should consider them as different categories and analyse their effects in distinct way.

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