



Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Social Science Research

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/ssresearch



The relationship between societal change and rising support for gender egalitarianism among men and women: Results from counterfactual analyses in the Netherlands, 1979–2012

Paula Thijs^{*}, Manfred Te Grotenhuis, Peer Scheepers

Department of Sociology, Radboud University, P.O. Box 9104, 6500 HE Nijmegen, The Netherlands

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 24 October 2016
 Received in revised form 15 May 2017
 Accepted 28 May 2017
 Available online xxx

Keywords:

Age-period-cohort analysis
 Gender egalitarianism
 Educational expansion
 Secularization
 Female labor force participation
 Counterfactual analysis

ABSTRACT

This study examines the relationship between important social, cultural, economic, and demographic changes and the rise of support for gender egalitarianism within the Dutch population between 1979 and 2012. Cohort replacement, educational expansion, secularization, and the feminization of the labor force are important processes that have taken place in western societies in ways that may have fostered support for gender egalitarianism. Using unique data from 16 repeated cross-sectional surveys in the Netherlands, we estimate age-period-cohort regression models, and the outcomes are subsequently applied in counterfactual simulation designs. Our results show that the social, cultural, economic, and demographic changes explain only a small part of the modest rise in support for gender egalitarianism for men, while they provide a much better explanation of the stronger rise among women. Especially the replacement of older female cohorts by younger ones seems to have propelled support for gender egalitarianism among women throughout the years.

© 2017 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Many countries have witnessed over time increases in support for gender egalitarianism during the past decades (e.g., [Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004](#); [Dorius and Alwin, 2012](#); [Inglehart and Norris, 2003](#); [Lee et al., 2007](#)). As men and women differ in their support for gender egalitarianism ([Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004](#); [Ciabattari, 2001](#); [Davis and Greenstein, 2009](#); [Mason and Lu, 1988](#)), these trends may have developed differently for men and women. Some studies reported that the rise in support for gender egalitarianism has been similar among men and women ([Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004](#); [Neve, 1995](#)), others found stronger rates of change among women than among men over time ([Brewster and Padavic, 2000](#); [Lee et al., 2007](#)) and across cohorts ([Brewster and Padavic, 2000](#); [Inglehart and Norris, 2003](#); [Pampel, 2011](#); [Shorrocks, 2016](#)). Moreover, even a reversal of the gender gap regarding support for gender egalitarianism was found ([Jennings, 2006](#)).

Previously proposed explanations for the general trend towards more gender egalitarianism relate to the different historical and contemporary circumstances in which people are socialized and live, i.e., cohort and period effects ([Brewster and Padavic, 2000](#); [Inglehart and Norris, 2003](#); [Inglehart, 1997](#); [Mannheim, 1952](#)). Other researchers stress the importance of shifts in the social, cultural and economic structure of the population, such as educational expansion, secularization, and the feminization of the labor force ([Brooks and Bolzendahl, 2004](#); [Cotter et al., 2011](#); [Mason et al., 1976](#); [Pampel, 2011](#)).

^{*} Corresponding author.

E-mail address: p.thijs@maw.ru.nl (P. Thijs).

Because men and women benefit differently from supporting gender egalitarianism (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004; Ciabattari, 2001), the liberalizing processes of educational expansion, secularization and labor force participation, together with cohort replacement, may affect the trend among men less as compared to women. So far, however, there remains a lacuna in our knowledge regarding how strong these processes are related to the trend in support for gender egalitarianism among men and women. Previous studies speculated about the influence of important societal changes in the social, cultural, demographic and economic structure of a population, but the actual contribution of these changes to the trend was neither tested nor quantified. Studies on the effects of cohort and period have difficulties disentangling cohort, period and age effects due to methodological problems (Mason et al., 1973). Moreover, the conclusions drawn in these studies rely on models in which only the *effect sizes* of certain individual characteristics were estimated, while the actual strength of societal processes related to such characteristics originates from the interplay between *effect sizes* and *sizes of the changes*. As a consequence, the contribution of societal processes like cohort replacement may have been over- or underestimated, if tested at all.

In this study, we aim to shed light on the extent to which the processes of cohort replacement, educational expansion, secularization, and labor force participation have affected the trend in support for gender egalitarianism among men and women. We analyze to what extent cohort, education, church attendance and labor participation are related to support for gender egalitarianism and whether the estimated effect sizes differ for men and women. We advance upon previous research by taking into account both the effect sizes of the individual characteristics, and – importantly – their distributional shifts in the structure of the population as observed in our samples. For this purpose, we employ a counterfactual simulation analysis (Te Grotenhuis et al., 2004), allowing to examine to what extent the observed trend is still present if the aforementioned shifts in distributions would *not* have taken place, given the estimated effect sizes. By analyzing the combination of effect sizes of individual characteristics *and* the sizes of shifts in the distribution of these characteristics, we are, to our knowledge, the first to quantify the actual contribution of societal changes in the social, cultural, demographic and economic structure of a population to the trend in support for gender egalitarianism.

We investigate trends in support for gender egalitarianism for men and women in the Netherlands between 1979 and 2012. We focus on one specific aspect of gender egalitarianism related to the private dimension (Wilcox and Jelen, 1991), i.e., whether a woman is more suited to raise little children than a man. This measure is an important indicator of support for gender egalitarianism because it captures a notion of gendered separate spheres rooted in a distinct male and female “nature” that goes beyond the mere division of roles (Davis and Greenstein, 2009), which may have substantial consequences for gender equality (Charles, 2011; England, 2010). As such, low levels of support for this item may imply persistent gender inequality in societies with relatively widespread norms of gender egalitarianism, such as the Netherlands.

The Netherlands provides an interesting case to study the liberalizing influence of societal processes to the trend in gender egalitarianism, because the average educational level of the Dutch population has increased substantially since the 1950s (Bar Haim and Shavit, 2013; Tolsma and Wolbers, 2014), while church attendance has dropped considerably (De Graaf and Te Grotenhuis, 2008). Moreover, increasing numbers of Dutch women have entered the labor force over the last decades (OECD, 2016; Van der Lippe and Van Dijk, 2002). As similar social, cultural, economic, and demographic changes have occurred in many other western countries, the results may be generalizable to and tested in other regions in which comparable increases in support for gender egalitarianism have been observed.

In sum, the following research questions are addressed: *How has support for gender egalitarianism developed among men and women in the Netherlands between 1979 and 2012? And to what extent are these trends due to important societal changes in the Dutch population, i.e., a) cohort replacement, b) educational expansion, c) secularization, and d) rising labor force participation?*

2. Theory and hypotheses

2.1. Demographic change: cohort replacement

According to theories of social change, demographic shifts are a driving force behind changes in public opinions in society (Firebaugh, 1992; Ryder, 1965). The composition of the population partly changes due to the gradual replacement of older cohorts by younger cohorts. Each birth cohort consists of individuals with similar formative experiences, socialized in specific historical and cultural circumstances which, according to Mannheim (1952) and Inglehart (1997), crystallize into normative orientations and values that are largely stable over the life course. These historical and cultural circumstances include normative conceptions of appropriate behavior and activities for women and men. Due to societal modernization, younger cohorts are generally socialized in times in which more liberal gender norms prevail (Brewster and Padavic, 2000; Brooks and Bolzendahl, 2004; Inglehart and Norris, 2003; Inglehart, 1997). Consequently, we expect each new cohort to support gender egalitarianism more than the previous.

The adoption of more liberal gender norms among subsequent cohorts may, however, differ between men and women. According to an interest-based perspective, individuals adopt and maintain attitudes that are in line with their interests (Bolzendahl and Myers, 2004; Kroska and Elman, 2009). Bolzendahl and Myers (2004) argued that women have stronger interests in gender egalitarianism than men because they benefit more from gender equality. In addition, girls' socialization into gendered behaviors and activities has likely changed more strongly than boys'. Changes in the historical and cultural context towards more liberal gender norms mainly concerned the emancipation of women. Women's movements were first and foremost aimed at improving women's position in society. Welfare reforms have been aimed at encouraging women's

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/7338960>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/7338960>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)