



ELSEVIER

Contents lists available at [ScienceDirect](#)

Social Science Research

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

Income inequality and educational assortative mating: Evidence from the Luxembourg Income Study [☆]

David Monaghan ^{*}*The Graduate Center, CUNY, United States*

ARTICLE INFO

Article history:

Received 23 July 2014

Revised 18 December 2014

Accepted 1 February 2015

Available online 11 February 2015

Keywords:

Assortative mating

Inequality

Returns to education

Cross-national research

ABSTRACT

Though extensive research has explored the prevalence of educational assortative mating, what causes its variation across countries and over time is not well understood. Using data from the Luxembourg Income Study Database, I investigate the hypothesis that assortative mating by income is influenced by income inequality between educational strata. I find that in countries with greater returns to education, the odds of any sort of union that crosses educational boundaries is substantially reduced. However, I do not find substantial evidence of an effect of changes in returns to education on marital sorting within countries. Educational and labor market parity between males and females appear to be negatively related to marital sorting.

© 2015 Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

1. Introduction

Social scientists long ago poured cold water on the notion that love, or at least union formation, occurs randomly within society. People tend to choose partners who are similar to them in terms of socially relevant characteristics such as race, ethnicity, caste, religion, family socioeconomic status, or occupation, a tendency termed “homogamy” or “assortative mating” (Kalmijn, 1998). The dimensions according to which homogamy is most pronounced vary over time and place, and indicate which social boundaries are most salient and consequential (Blau and Duncan, 1967; Lipset and Bendix, 1959; Mare, 1991; Ultee and Luijkx, 1990). Researchers have noted, for example, that religious homogamy has declined sharply in the United States (Kalmijn, 1991; Lehrer, 1998; Sherkat, 2004), while racial homogamy has been relatively persistent (Rosenfeld, 2008). That Catholics and Protestants have become substantially more likely to form unions with each other over time, while marriage between Blacks and Whites has become only slightly more common, is testament to the decline of discrimination among Christian sects and to the stubborn resilience of racial division in American society.

In recent years, researchers have become increasingly interested in the role played by educational attainment in partner choice for two reasons. First, scholars suspect that barriers between educational strata are becoming increasingly strong, replacing or complicating older barriers such as those between racial groups or social class backgrounds. Indeed, it has been shown that, at least in the United States, interracial unions tend to be educationally homogamous, as well as far more common among those with college degrees (Fu and Heaton, 2008; Qian, 1997). Secondly, there is a concern that educational homogamy exacerbates inequality among households, especially during an era of rising returns to education (Blossfeld and Buchholz, 2009; Eika et al., 2014), and could even reduce intergenerational social mobility by concentrating cultural (as well as economic) capital (Fernandez and Rogerson, 2001; Haller, 1981; Katrnák et al., 2012; Mare, 1991).

[☆] I would like to thank Stephanie Moller and the reviewers at Social Science Research for their helpful comments and suggestions. The staff at LIS provided crucial assistance, and I received helpful advice from Paul Attewell, Neil Bennett, Ruoding Tan, and Julieta Perez-Amador. And I would in particular like to thank Janet Gornick, who was instrumental in bringing this project to fruition.

^{*} Address: 365 5th Ave., Room 6112.04, New York, NY 10016, United States. Fax: +1 (212)817 1536.

E-mail address: dmonaghan@gc.cuny.edu

Educational homogamy has been found to be the norm nearly everywhere it has been studied (Blackwell, 1998; Blossfeld, 2009), but its prevalence varies both across countries (Domański and Przybysz, 2007; Smits et al., 1998) and within countries over time (e.g. Mare, 1991; Smits, 2003). What leads to more or less educational resemblance within couples is, at this point, not well established. Some have claimed that increased economic development leads to greater “societal openness” and thus to a lower prevalence of educationally assortative mating (Smits, 2003; Smits and Park, 2009; Smits et al., 1998). Others have suggested that women’s increased educational attainment and economic power has fundamentally shifted the dynamics of coupling in advanced societies such that unions among the educationally equal are gaining at the expense of those in which the woman marries “up” (Esteve et al., 2012).

Recently, researchers have suggested that inequality, and in particular inequality between educational strata, can reduce the likelihood of partnerships forming across educational lines (Fernandez et al., 2005; Torche, 2010). By increasing the social distance between groups (Blau, 1977), inequality can reduce both opportunities for group members to encounter each other as equals as well as the inclination to consider each other to be eligible or desirable life partners.

Previous studies of this relationship have tended to investigate either change within one or two countries over time (Hou and Myles, 2008; Schwartz and Mare, 2005) or to study cross-sectional patterns among a larger set of countries while ignoring within-country change (Fernandez et al., 2005; Torche, 2010). Studying both within-country change and between-country variance simultaneously is essential given that we would suspect that between-country differences in assortative mating arise through countries taking disparate trajectories over time. This study will address this gap in the literature. I draw upon a rich data source which allows the investigation of union formation patterns among a large set of higher-income countries over a twenty-five year period, and I utilize a statistical technique which permits the simultaneous modeling of between- and within-country differences.

The paper is organized as follows. First, I develop a theoretical argument for a causal relationship between inequality and assortative mating and review the relevant literature. Next, after introducing the data, specifying the universe of countries and couples included, and defining my independent variables, I employ loglinear modeling to explore union formation patterns across and within countries. Loglinear analysis also generates my dependent variables: estimates of the odds of educational intermarriage¹ for each country-year. Finally I present results of regression models and discuss the implications of my findings.

2. Theoretical background and prior research

2.1. Educational homogamy and theories of partner choice

Partner choice in modern societies, broadly freed from traditionalistic control of families and clans, is a process conducted simultaneously and symmetrically by free, formally equal individuals. As such it has certain similarities to market transactions which have led it to largely be analyzed through the lens of economic exchange. Indeed, the metaphor of the “marriage market” is the dominant organizing theoretical framework for understanding processes of partner choice in modern societies (Blossfeld and Timm, 2003; Rosenfeld, 2005).

Gary Becker (1973, 1981) provided the canonical statement of the economic, rational-actor view of union formation. In his framework, individuals attempt through their choice of partners to maximize their “returns to marriage”. Since individuals themselves vary in terms of “quality”, they are of differing value to potential mates, and individuals of the highest “quality” will be able to command the best “price” (for themselves) on the market. In effect, this means that the high-quality individuals of either gender are able to snare their high-quality opposites, and as a result completely free and transparent marriage markets would result in perfect “quality homogamy”.

A countervailing perspective on partner choice argues that individuals tend to pair off with those who are similar to themselves (DiMaggio and Mohr, 1985; Kalmijn, 1994, 1998). Similarity, especially with regard to interaction styles, values, and cultural preferences, lends an ease to communication, enabling connectedness and intimacy (Byrne, 1971; McPherson et al., 2001). Moreover, substantial agreement in worldview facilitates the negotiation of difficult cooperative endeavors, such as childrearing, with a minimum of acrimony. Thus, as homophily-driven coupling combines with selective relationship dissolution, a “winnowing” takes place which results in greater resemblance among couples at stages of more pronounced intimacy and commitment (Blackwell and Lichter, 2004). Partner choice is from this perspective less a competition and more a process of “cultural matching”.

Both rational-actor and cultural matching theories of partner choice imply that most unions will be educationally homogamous. Rational choice models suppose partnering to be a competition resulting in status homogamy; to the extent that educational attainment is an important component of status as well as a determinant of other components (e.g. earnings), rational choice models predict educational homogamy as well. From a cultural matching perspective, tastes and worldviews are the basis for partner choice. Researchers have suggested that members of educational strata are differentiated in precisely these terms for two reasons: First, educational institutions are said to differentially promote students on the basis of pre-existing class-derived cultural differences (Bernstein, 1971; Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977; DiMaggio, 1982; Sullivan,

¹ Though I include both married and cohabiting couples in my analysis (see “Study Universe” below), I occasionally refer to coupling between educational strata with the shorthand “educational intermarriage”.

متن کامل مقاله

دریافت فوری ←

ISIArticles

مرجع مقالات تخصصی ایران

- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه تمام متن مقالات انگلیسی
- ✓ امکان دانلود نسخه ترجمه شده مقالات
- ✓ پذیرش سفارش ترجمه تخصصی
- ✓ امکان جستجو در آرشیو جامعی از صدها موضوع و هزاران مقاله
- ✓ امکان دانلود رایگان ۲ صفحه اول هر مقاله
- ✓ امکان پرداخت اینترنتی با کلیه کارت های عضو شتاب
- ✓ دانلود فوری مقاله پس از پرداخت آنلاین
- ✓ پشتیبانی کامل خرید با بهره مندی از سیستم هوشمند رهگیری سفارشات