Educational Heterogamy and Relationship Quality: A Couple-Level Analysis

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Background

Women’s Education
- 1982 crossover: first time more women than men received bachelor’s degrees
- 2012 crossover: of all married couples, more wives have higher education than their husbands
- 2014 newlyweds: 27% of women married men with less education, while only 15% of men married women with less education

Relationship Quality
- Perceived relationship inequity or unfairness is associated with more instability, less satisfaction and happiness in relationship

Data

- 2010 Married and Cohabiting Couples Survey
  - Nationally representative
  - 2150 individuals aged 18-64
  - 752 married couples
  - 323 cohabiting couples
  - Individual- and couple-level data

Analytic Sample
- Couples in which woman is aged 25-52
- 510 married couples (1020 individuals)

Measures and Analysis

Dependent Variable: Relationship Quality
- Relationship happiness (“How would you rate your relationship with your current spouse/partner?”)
- Relationship disillusionment (11-item scale)

Independent Variable: Educational Heterogamy

Controls
- Individual-level
- Couple-level

Seemingly Unrelated Regression

Research Questions

1. Does relationship quality differ between marriages in which only the woman has a college degree and marriages in which only the man has a college degree?
2. At which category of educational heterogamy do couples have the highest relationship quality?
3. Does relationship quality differ by gender at different categories of educational heterogamy?

Results

Figure 1. Distribution of Educational Heterogamy Categories in Sample

Figure 2. Relationship Happiness by Educational Heterogamy Categories and Gender

Figure 3. Relationship Disillusionment by Educational Heterogamy Categories and Gender

Conclusions and Future Directions

- Among married women in this sample, educational heterogamy is not associated with relationship quality.
- Husbands are happier and less disillusioned in their relationship when their wife has a college degree.
- Future: analyze possible confounding variables more closely (e.g. income), examine by race/ethnicity, social class