

A 2.9 Homogamy and Fertility - The Impact of Partnership Context on Family Formation



Director/ Marita Jacob

Researchers/: Gerrit Bauer, Marita Jacob

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Several empirical studies focus on the link between education and fertility, looking at women and men separately.

But: Fertility is a matter of *couples!*

Research Questions

- How does **educational attainment** of a couple influence child bearing?
- Is the fertility rate of **homogamous** couples different from **heterogamous** couples?

Theoretical Background

We assume the following process:

- Education influences labour market chances and participation
- Having (small) children influences labour market participation.
- Labour market participation and childbearing are both bargaining processes of couples.

Hypotheses

1. Heterogamous couples are more likely to have children than homogamous couples.
2. (Highly educated) homogamous couples are the least likely to have children.

Data

German Mikrozensus from the year 2000 (Scientific Use File) n= 98.617 couples with information on educational attainment for both partners, women age 18 - 40.

Operationalisation

Dependent variable: Number of children < 18 living in the household.

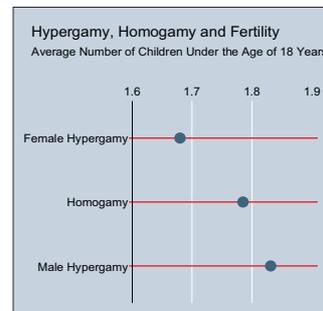
Independent variable: Educational constellation of couples, each educational attainment ranging from 0 (neither secondary education nor vocational training) to 6 (university degree).

Results

		Womens' Educational Level						
		0	1	2	3	4	5	6
Men's Educational Level	0	2.574 (1744)	1.979 (429)	1.691 (288)	1.718 (85)	1.445 (155)	1.625 (32)	1.167 (12)
	1	2.628 (733)	2.156 (5019)	1.922 (1406)	1.671 (647)	1.526 (633)	1.727 (139)	1.567 (90)
	2	2.158 (709)	1.959 (5506)	1.764 (15765)	1.910 (1407)	1.734 (11714)	1.591 (1883)	1.485 (693)
	3	2.214 (98)	1.968 (476)	1.720 (239)	1.678 (901)	1.512 (455)	1.041 (217)	1.039 (233)
	4	1.657 (172)	1.948 (1139)	1.716 (3832)	1.735 (1039)	1.684 (12094)	1.602 (2644)	1.436 (887)
	5	2.273 (22)	2.162 (154)	1.764 (551)	1.575 (334)	1.594 (2314)	1.602 (2133)	1.403 (678)
	6	1.360 (50)	2.064 (235)	1.829 (936)	1.810 (996)	1.780 (5479)	1.747 (3466)	1.626 (7754)

Note: 0: neither secondary education nor vocational training; 1: low secondary education without vocational training; 2: low secondary education and vocational training; 3: medium or high secondary education without vocational training; 4: medium secondary education and vocational training; 5: high secondary education and vocational training; 6: high tertiary education

- **Homogamous couples (yellow)** have on average 1,78 children. The number of children decreases with educational level.
- **Female education effect (green)** line: Keeping male education constant, the number of children declines with womens' education.
- **Male education effect (orange)**: The number of children slightly increases if educational difference between the two partners ascends.

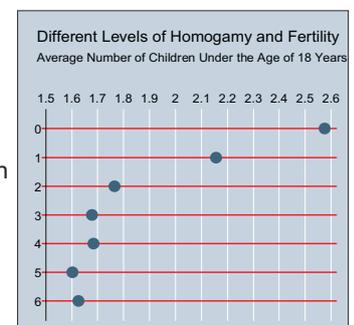


Heterogamous couples (left graph) are indeed the ones having most children, but only if the husband is higher educated (**male hypergamy**)

For **female hypergamy** we find a lower number of children.

Homogamous couples (right graph) have - on average - 1,78 children.

However, we do see considerable heterogeneity within this group: Highly educated homogamous couples have less children than two less educated spouses.



Conclusions

Fertility decisions are made by both spouses, therefore, the couple's constellational context must not be neglected.

Further research is necessary to explain trajectories of couples and fertility **over the life course** - using **longitudinal data**.

Furthermore, the fertility behaviour of hypergamous and homogamous couples might vary in different **welfare states**.