

Assortative mating across generation: How do parents and in-laws affect couples divorce risks?

Sanna Kailaheimo¹, Anette Fasang^{2,3}, Emanuela Struffolino^{2,3}, Marika Jalovaara¹

¹ University of Turku, Finland; ² Humboldt University, Germany; ³ WZB, Germany

Contact: sanna.kailaheimo@utu.fi

Background

In this paper we study the role of spouse's parents on couple's divorce risk. A large literature has shown that many factors, e.g. parental divorce, increase couples' divorce risk. Thus it can be assumed that if both own parents and spouse's parents have divorced, then the divorce risk is heightened. Due to assortative mating mechanisms individuals tend to marry other individuals with similar characteristics and family background. However, not everyone marries a partner with similar characteristics. Because shared characteristics reduce divorce risk, it can be also assumed that the divorce risk is higher for couples that marry "upward" or "downward". The shared experience of upward or downward mobility would then bind the couple together in a way that increases union stability.

Objectives and research question

- 1) Concentration of divorce risks across generations: How much is divorce risk elevated if both parents and in-laws have divorced?
- 2) Shared educational mobility: Does a shared mobility history reduce divorce risks?

Data and methods

We apply event history models on high-quality Finnish Census Panel data, consisting of around 60,000 individuals born between 1969 and 1975. We run our analyses separately for men and women in order to take into account gender-specific associations. We follow individuals in their first marriage from the age of 18 to age of 35-40.

Results

According to our preliminary results, we find that those couples whose both parents have divorced have the highest divorce risk. We also find shared upward mobility history decreases divorce risk, and downward mobility increases it.

Main conclusions

Spouse's parents have also an influence of couple's divorce risk.