
Assortative mating and earnings inequality in France

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Abstract

This paper analyzes economic assortative mating in France. We first provide descriptive evidence on the statistical association in various economic attributes of spouses (education, earnings, market wage rate) among French couples. Second, we assess the contribution of assortative mating to earnings inequality between couples. Our estimates account for possible biases in the estimation of assortative mating arising from sample-selection into the labor force. We also develop a new methodology for assessing the disequalizing impact of marital choice when labor force participation is endogenous with respect to match characteristics. Our results indicate a strong degree of assortative mating in France. The correlation coefficient for education is above .5. The correlation in earnings is lower but sizable : around .2 for annual earnings and .35 for full-time equivalent earnings. Assortative mating tends to increase inequality among couples. The effect on the distribution of annual incomes remains moderate and explains 3 to 10

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