

Educational Homogamy and Income Differentiation across Europe

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ABSTRACT

This research examines cross-national variation in the potential effect of educational homogamy among married and cohabiting couples on family income inequality, using data from the 2004-08 European Union Statistics on Income and Living Conditions. We test the theoretical expectation of a positive association across contemporary Europe between the strength of the link between education and partners' individual earnings and the potential contribution of educational homogamy to educational differentials in family income. First, we confirm the existence of a strong link between education and men's and women's individual earnings in Eastern Europe, and a somewhat weaker link in Anglo-Saxon, Continental and, especially, Northern Europe. Next, we find that regional variation in the strength of the link between education and earnings is positively associated with regional variation in the potential contribution of educational homogamy to family income inequality across Europe. That is, *a general shift* towards educational homogamy would contribute most to differentials in family income by education in Eastern Europe, and least to differentials in family income by education in the Nordic countries. We relate these regional patterns to the general characteristics of welfare state regime types, focusing mainly on the degree of social stratification and the level of gender equality.