

# Spouses' Relative Education and Marital Stability in the Context of Changing Gender Norms

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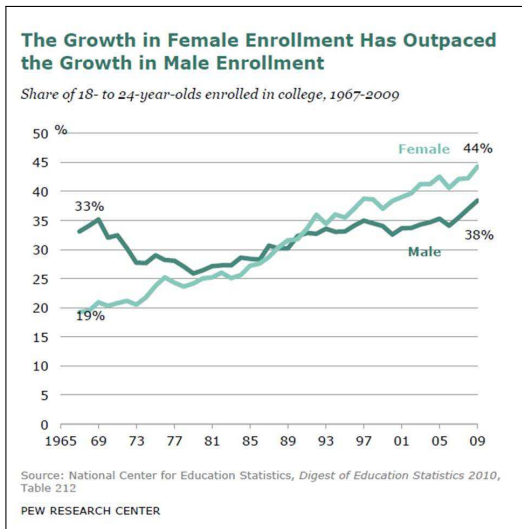
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# Motivations: Rise in women's education



From Wang and Parker (2011)

## Motivations: Rise in women's education

- Women's participation in tertiary education is one of the driving forces behind the gender revolution.
  - Women have outpaced men in terms of tertiary education enrolment and attainment.
  - Over the past decades, the relative distribution of education attainment between men and women.
- Changes in the gendered distribution of education have direct consequences on marriage markets.

# Education Heterogamy and Marital Instability

## Previous literature

- Spouses with the same education level tend to experience a lower risk of marital instability (Goldstein and Harknett, 2006; Tzeng, 1992; Schwartz, 2010).
- Educational hypogamy - when the wife has a higher educational level than her husband - is associated to a higher divorce risk.
  - and that this association has not changed over time (Heaton, 2002; Teachman, 2002).

A recent study by Schwartz and Han (2014) shows that:

- Homogamous couples are more stable than hypergamous couples in the 2000s cohort with respect to the 1950s cohort.
- The destabilizing effect of hypogamy with respect to hypergamy disappears in the 2000 marriage cohort.

# Education Heterogamy and Marital Instability

## Scope of the article

**RQ:** How does the association between spouses' relative education and divorce risk changes as gender norms become more egalitarian?

### *Normative Context*

Traditional Gender Roles

Egalitarian Gender Roles

- Wives' educational advantage is associated to higher marital instability.
- Protective effect of educational hypergamy.
- Destabilizing effect of educational hypogamy.

- Redefined gender roles at home and in the labor market.
- Stabilizing effect of educational homogamy.
- Dampened effects of both educational hypergamy and hypogamy.

# Marital Histories

## Panel Study of Income Dynamics (PSID)

- Oldest American longitudinal household survey: First interview in 1968.
- Extensive socioeconomic and demographic information.
- Annual interviews from 1968-1997 and biennial onwards.
- Retrospective information on marital and birth histories.

## Selected sample

- Waves: 1977-2011
- Marriage histories.
- Right censoring: last available interview/25 years of marriage/death of spouse.
- Sample size: 6873 women

# Gender values

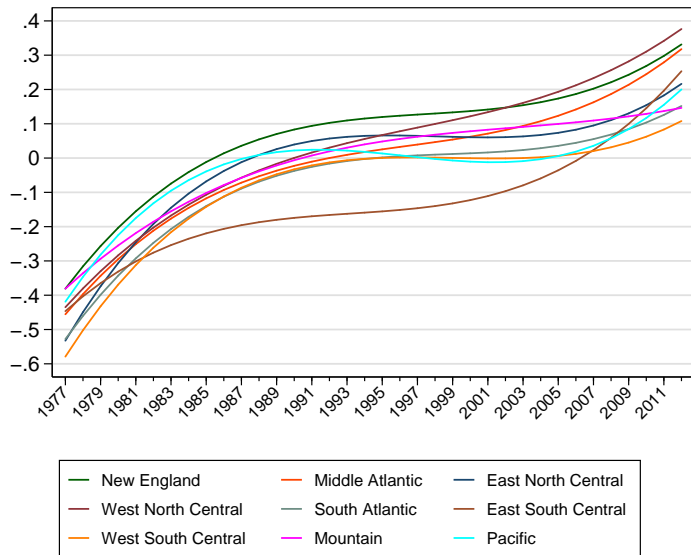
## General Social Surveys (GSS)

- Repeated gender items:
  - ✓ “It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family” (FEFAM).
  - ✓ “A working mother can establish as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work” (FECHLD).
  - ✓ “A preschool child is likely to suffer if his or her mother works” (FEPRESC).
  - ✓ Available in 18 surveys for the years 1977, 1985-1986, 1988-1991, 1993 and every two years from 1994 to 2012.

## Gender Ideology Index

- Principal-factor analysis (One factor; Cronbach's alpha: 0.73).
- Average predicted values for each year (1977-2012) and region of interview.

# Gender Ideology Index





# Discrete event-history analysis

**Method:** Logistic regression with a random effect at the woman-level.

**Dependent variable:** Marital separation.

**Key variables of interest:** Spouses' relative education x Gender ideology index

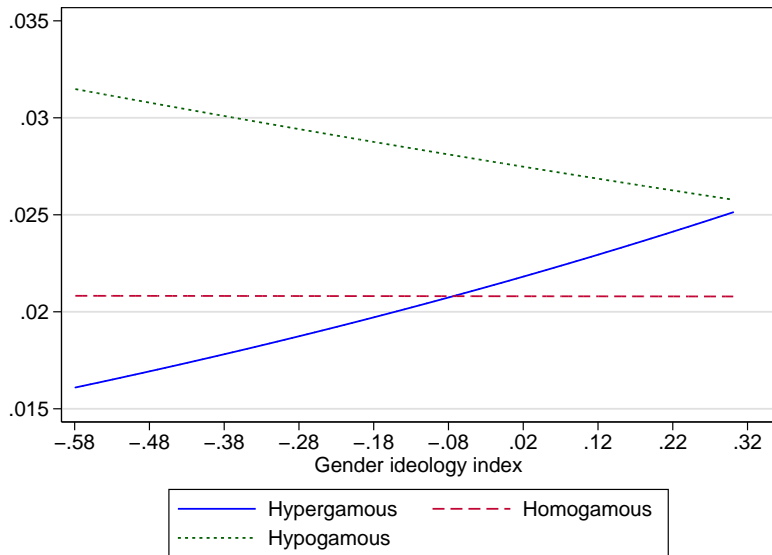
- ✓ Spouses' relative education
  - Educational hypergamy: Husband has a higher level of education than his wife.
  - Educational homogamy: Spouses have the same level of education.
  - Educational hypogamy: Husband has a lower level of education than his wife.
- ✓ Gender ideology index (by year and region)
  - Low levels: Normative context where traditional gender roles are dominant.
  - High levels: Normative context where egalitarian gender roles prevail.

\* *Education: Less than High-school, High-school, Some college, College.*

**Control variables:** Log duration, marriage year, wife's race, husband's race, wife's age at marriage, first marriage.

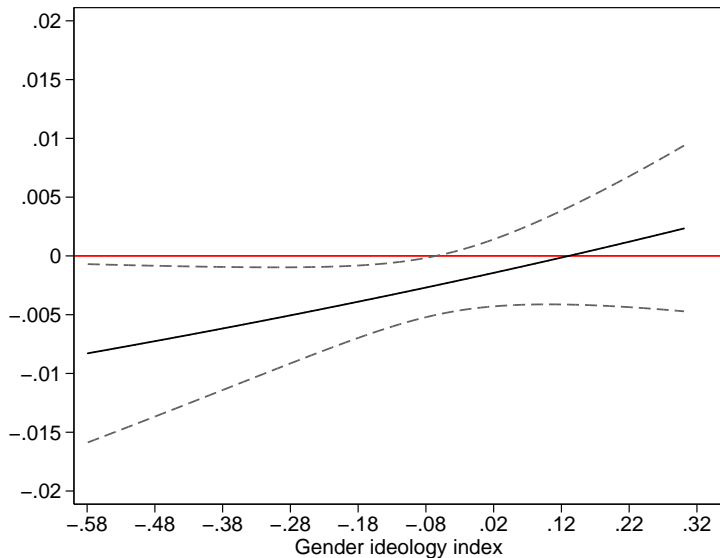
# Educational Differentials

Average Predicted Probabilities



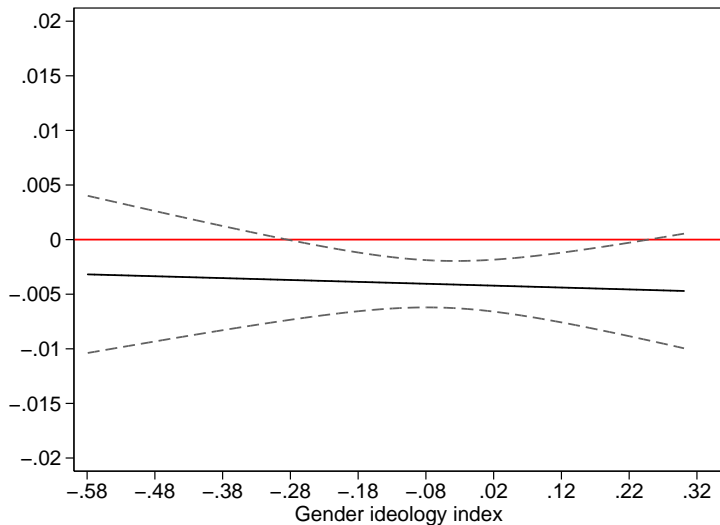
# Educational Hypergamy

Average Marginal Effects with 95% C.I.



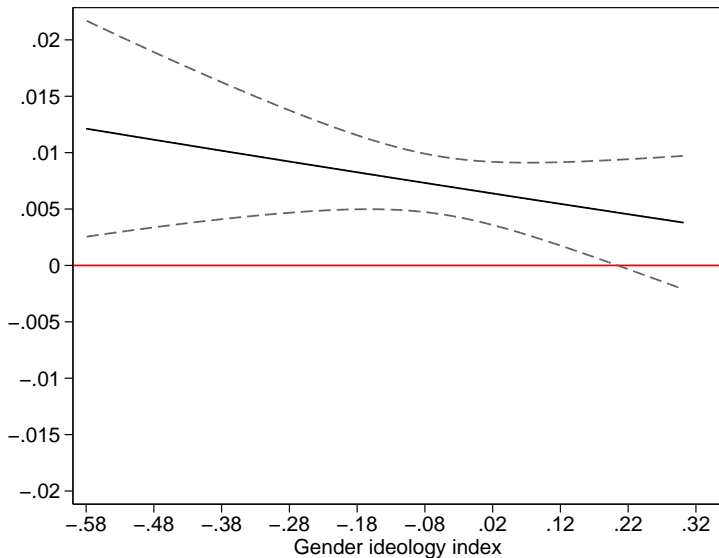
# Educational Homogamy

Average Marginal Effects with 95% C.I.



# Educational Hypogamy

Average Marginal Effects with 95% C.I.



# Conclusion

## Preliminary findings

- The destabilizing effect of educational hypogamy dampens as the normative context tends towards gender equality.
- The stabilizing effect of education hypergamy decreases at high levels of gender equality.
- No empirical support for the hypothesis that education homogamy is increasingly stabilizing when egalitarian gender norms prevail.

## Next steps

- Refine empirical models and carry out further robustness checks.
- Explore the role played by selection on unobservables.
  - Overestimate the destabilizing role of educational hypogamy at low levels of the gender ideology index.
  - Overestimate the stabilizing role of educational hypergamy at high levels of the gender ideology index.

# Acknowledgment

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