

## **Trends in Assortative Mating, by Ethnicity in Ghana**

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### **BACKGROUND**

Patterns of assortative mating can be informative because they reflect changes in family and household characteristics while measuring the strength of social boundaries. As Schwartz and Mare (2005) summarize, homogamy contributes to widening economic and educational inequality across groups while influencing marriage markets and intergenerational social mobility. Also, because children inherit parental traits and resources, differences between groups will be reproduced and widened in subsequent generations. Homogamy in developing countries has even greater demographic implications especially for children because outcomes such as fertility, child mortality and educational attainment are strongly influenced by parental characteristics. Using data from Ghana, this paper will examine trends in ethnic homogamy and the influence of individual and geographic factors on intermarriage.

Typically studies of homogamy focus on class or education but in Ghana ethnicity would be an appropriate measure of stratification. Ethnicity is a good measure of social openness because ethnic identity is a pervasive part of the culture and ethnic boundaries can be divisive. In addition, ethnicity in sub-Saharan Africa is associated with a variety of demographic outcomes such as total fertility (Benefo, Tsui and Johnson 1994; Addai 1999), infant mortality (Hadley 2005), marriage (Carlos 2004) and educational attainment (Caldwell, Caldwell and Orubuloye 1992). As such, ethnicity remains a strong proxy for socioeconomic status because of such differences in education, income and urbanization. Ghana provides an interesting context to study whether ethnic groups are integrating or merely coexisting because the country is ethnically diverse. There are also striking geographic differences in ethnic composition and minority groups are not minorities in the conventional but rather the dominant ethnic group changes by location.

### **HYPOTHESES**

An interethnic marriage could signal that a couple is less tied to traditional ethnocentric beliefs and belong to social networks where the other members are less likely to censure them when they decide to marry into other ethnic groups. The

progressive idea that ethnic homogamy is not as important will likely start with the more educated and the younger groups so that likelihood of being in an interethnic marriage should be positively correlated with education and negatively correlated with age. Interethnic marriages could alternately be a response to supply constraints in the marriage market since an ethnic minority should adapt and become more flexible towards interethnic marriage if they want to find a spouse. Ethnic homogamy should thus be weaker for regional minorities. Within ethnic groups, there should be a higher propensity for intermarriage for members who live in areas where they are ethnic minorities.

## **DATA AND METHODS**

The primary dataset will be a 10% sample from the 2000 Ghana census. Supplementary data will come from a pooled sample from the 1988, 1993, 1998 and 2002 rounds of the Ghana Demographic and Health Surveys (DHS). The first part of the analysis will provide the descriptive component using log-linear models to look at overall trends in educational homogamy and within the largest ethnic groups. The DHS sample, which contains information on marital duration, will allow couples to be classified by marriage cohort while couples in the census will be divided by birth cohort. In this way, it may be possible to identify differences in cohort and period trends although there should be some overlap between marriage and birth cohorts. The log-linear models will look at the ethnic homogamy at the national level then for the North and the South because there are striking differences in the ethnic composition in the two halves of the country. The second half of the analysis will use logistic regression to introduce other correlates of ethnic homogamy. Explanatory variable of interest will include the local ethnic and education composition of the population, region of residence, educational attainment and age. The logistic regression will focus on the five largest ethnic groups (Akan, Mole-Dagbani, Ga-Dangbe, Ewe and Guan) and I will run separate models for each group by gender.

## **EXPECTED CONCLUSIONS**

I would expect to see a rise in the level of ethnic homogamy over time especially as overall educational attainment rises. I expect to see greater ethnic homogamy in older couples because of this predicted time trend. Educational attainment is correlated with ethnicity so it is likely that partners from the same ethnic group have similar education

but I would expect that ethnically homogamous couples would be less educated than those in interethnic marriages would. From the logistic regression, we would expect to see a positive association between interethnic marriage and education, urban residence and the ethnic diversity of local population.

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