**Birds of a feather flock together?**

**Effects of partnership homogamy on relationship quality and stability**

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Few events in life have such negative consequences as a breakup. Yet, there is no agreement as to which factors most strongly influence the quality or stability of a relationship. Psychologists largely focus on the role of preferences and personality traits (e.g. Buss and Barnes 1986), suggesting that similar couples lead a more successful relationship. Furthermore, sociologists find that homogamy – i.e. having similar backgrounds – regarding education, religion, social status and ethnicity is important when it comes to the selection of a partner. The number of studies that attempt to combine aspects of both approaches is limited. Thus, it seems worthwhile to explore whether various forms of homogamy also affect relationship quality and stability. Are relationships based on the principle of homogamy of a higher quality (or more stable) than heterogamous ones?

Educational homogamy has been studied extensively and a positive influence on relationship stability and quality has been reported (e.g. Garfinkel, Glei & McLanahan 2002; Goldstein & Harknett 2006). However, education is often used as proxy for preferences and attitudes instead of measuring these aspects separately. The extent of education a person achieved influences their norms, values and preferences. But socialization, which comprises a number of elements besides education, has a tremendous impact on the formation and internalization of these constructs as well. Therefore, it can be expected that the effect of homogamous norms and values differs from that of educational homogamy.

Based on data from the German multidisciplinary longitudinal study “pairfam” (Panel Analysis of Intimate Relationships and Family Dynamics), preliminary analyses indicate that educational homogamy has a positive effect on relationship quality, whereas normative homogamy influences the subjective relationship stability. In a next step, we will estimate structural equation models to investigate causal pathways linking relationship quality and stability.

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