

The Role of Assortative Mating in Marital Infidelity: Insights from China

Using newly available data from the Chinese Private Life Survey, we examine the association between marital infidelity and patterns of assortative mating in the context of China, where educational homogamy becomes the norm but income hypergamy still prevails. Our findings show a complex interplay of resources, status, and dependency in a highly gendered environment. We find that marriages in which the wife is more educated than the husband exhibit a higher likelihood of experiencing extramarital affairs than marriages in which the husband and wife have similar education levels. Contrary to our expectation, marriages in which the husband out-earns the wife are more likely to remain faithful than marriages where incomes are equal. Results also show that there are some trade-offs between education and income. Our study underscores the evolving and asymmetric nature of gender power dynamics in marriages in a society with a longstanding patriarchal tradition but changing gender relations.