Educational Assortative Mating and Gendered Time Allocation in Sweden and the U.S.

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Theoretical background

Comparative advantages between partners

GS Becker: Specialization determines the gain to marriage

VK Oppenheimer: Status consistency supports women’s labor market participation

Bargaining theory: The allocation of time and resources depends on partners’ bargaining power

Household division of labor
Theoretical background

Focus on individual and, more recent, partner effects

What about couple effects?
- Importance of the educational composition of partners
- Surprising discrepancy given more equal opportunities in education and employment

Gender equality at different stages across countries

Is there gender-neutral specialization in Sweden?
- Pattern in which partner with highest/lowest earnings potential takes up more paid labor/housework, irrespective of gender
Hypotheses

• Higher education → more paid work and less home production and leisure (opportunity costs), with the exception of childcare
• Higher education → more gender-neutral parenthood
• EAM affecting household division of labor in line with specialization
  – Man-higher heterogamy → most traditional div of L
  – Woman-higher → less traditional div of L or gender-neutral specialization in SWE
• Weekends less restricted, so less specialization
This paper

What is the role of the couple’s educational composition for household division of labor across Sweden and the U.S.? 

- Heterogamy vs homogamy 
- Testing the specialization hypothesis
This paper

SWE = U.S.:
- Highly educated population with similar educ attainment for ♂ and ♀
- High FLFP, narrowing gender wage gap, but still lower opportunity costs for women’s time

SWE ≠ U.S.:
- SWE: Extensive public support to all working parents, active family policies (incl childcare), high income tax
- U.S.: Market-oriented model – differentiation across groups, childcare expensive, outsourcing re HW less so
Data

• SWETUS 2000/01 & 2010/11
• ATUS 2003 & 2010
• Partnered (married and cohabiting) ♂ and ♀, 20-54 years, in two-adult household w child under 18
• Excluding: retired, students, disabled
• N = 1,099 SWETUS 2000/01 (478 fathers, 621 mothers)
  219 SWETUS 2010/11 (108 fathers, 111 mothers)
• N = 2,231 ATUS 2003 (1,061 fathers, 1,165 mothers)
  1,364 ATUS 2010 (648 fathers, 716 mothers)
Variables

• Dependent variables:
  – Daily minutes of paid work (PW), routine housework (HW), childcare (CC)

• Independent variables:
  – own education (primary & HS vs college/university)
  – educational homogamy vs heterogamy (spouse equal vs spouse higher or lower educational attainment)

• Control variables: age, presence of pre-schooler in hh, own and spousal employment status
Analysis

Descriptive analysis: time use patterns
• Gender and time use in SWE and the U.S. with respect to PW, HW, and CC

Multivariate analysis
• OLS regression models (weighted) estimated separately by gender, day of the week, survey year, and country
  1) Baseline model + controls (ref.cat. = < college)
  2) Educational heterogamy (ref.cat. = individuals in homogamous relationships)
Results I

• General gendered time use pattern across SWE and the U.S.:
  – PW: ♂ > ♀
  – HW: ♂ < ♀
  – CC: ♂ < ♀

• Gender gaps larger in the U.S. than in SWE
• Gaps are closing due to ♀ increasing PW and ♂ increasing CC
• Education less influential in predicting time use in SWE than in the U.S.
Results II

- Overall, limited support of the specialization hypothesis in Sweden and the U.S. 2003-2010
- Homogamy the most egalitarian division of labor
- Persistent impact of own education net of EAM and controls
Impact of EAM on time use for fathers and mothers 25-54, Sweden, weekdays 2000/01

**Fathers**

- PW
- HW
- CC

- **Homogamy**
- Spouse lower
- Spouse higher

**Mothers**

- PW
- HW
- CC

- **Homogamy**
- Spouse lower
- Spouse higher
Impact of EAM on time use for fathers and mothers 25-54, Sweden, weekdays 2010/11
Impact of EAM on time use for fathers and mothers 25-54, U.S., weekdays 2003

**Fathers**

- **Homogamy**
- **Spouse lower**
- **Spouse higher**

**Mothers**

- **Homogamy**
- **Spouse lower**
- **Spouse higher**
Impact of EAM on time use for fathers and mothers 25-54, U.S., weekdays 2010
Results II

• Overall, limited support of the specialization hypothesis in Sweden and the U.S. 2003-2010
• Homogamy the most egalitarian division of labor
• Persistent impact of own education net of EAM and controls
• Women (with college education) important actors in heterogamous relationships, promoting change
Results III: Sweden

• Fathers’ time use more affected by EAM than mothers’
• EAM influences fathers’ HW more, but has no impact on CC
• Evidence of gender-neutral specialization emerging in SWE
  – Fathers with spouse with higher education works more than homogamous ♂ in SWE 2010/11, and is different compared to 2000/01 in that it increases PW
  – For mothers, having a spouse with lower education implies more PW than homogamous ♀ in SWE 2010/11, and is different compared to 2000/01 in that it increases mothers’ PW
  – EAM (spouse lower) makes ♀ do less HW in 2010/11 compared to 2000/01, and less CC
• Results not driven by economic resources
  – Instead related to cultural beliefs and values associated with education
Results III: United States

• Mothers’ time use more affected by EAM than fathers’ time use
• EAM influences fathers’ CC more, but has no impact on HW
• Evidence of gender-neutral specialization emerging in U.S.
  – For mothers, having a spouse with lower education implies more PW than homogamous ♀ in US 2003 & 2010
  – EAM (spouse lower) makes ♂ & ♀ do less CC on weekends in 2010 (fathers also 2003)
• More influence of economic resources in U.S. (wage inequality, robust outsourcing market)
  – But also related to cultural values of intensive parenting as means of intergenerational transmission of status
Conclusion

What is the role of the couple’s educational composition for household division of labor across Sweden and the U.S.?
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- Small impact of educational heterogamy overall (!)
- Homogamy more gender equal, in both Sweden and the U.S.
- Stronger impact of own education (potential earnings) on time allocation than of heterogamy
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What is the role of the couple’s educational composition for household division of labor across Europe?

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Is there gender-neutral specialization in Sweden?

- Yes, indication of this in 2010/11
- More gender equality in SWE than in the U.S.
- Results show couple education matters more for HW in SWE and more for CC in the U.S.
- This is in line with the countries’ different orientation when it comes to outsourcing opportunities and state support for working parents