

Summary

Ferdinand Andreas Mohn (2016). *Marital Fault Lines. Spouse Selection and Socioeconomic Assimilation Among the Immigrant Population in Norway*

“A cardinal principle of every stratified social order is that the majority of those marrying shall marry equals”, wrote Kingsley Davis. Marriages across group and status divides are often seen as a barometer of integration and a measure of social boundaries. This thesis is about the boundaries between immigrants and natives. The advent of increased population heterogeneity have raised concerns about both the social cohesion and economic productivity of future Europe. At the same time, recent years have brought attention to the spouse selection patterns of immigrant populations, on account of e.g. low rates of intermarriage as well as high rates of spouse import. Nevertheless, little is known about the relationship between spouse selection and socioeconomic assimilation for the immigrant population. In this thesis, I use longitudinal population data from Norwegian administrative registries to assess different aspects of this relationship, through three empirical studies.

The theory of status exchange has received considerable attention in the context of racial intermarriages in the U.S. Nevertheless, few studies have tested the theory in other contexts, for other groups. *The first article* is a comprehensive investigation of educational heterogamy in native-immigrant intermarriages, across male and female immigrants from both Western and non-Western backgrounds. The results suggest that nativity in itself is not a clear demarcation for marriage formation and status boundaries. Analyses indicate that immigrants’ status is highly variable, in that members of some groups more often marry down and members of other groups more often marry up, when they intermarry with native Norwegians. However, an appropriation of more recently developed analytical models show that evidence of status exchange is closely tied to marriage market barriers that disfavor individuals with low education or certain minority backgrounds in the competition for desirable spouses. The tendency is particularly strong in intermarriages between native men and minority migrant women.

A recent literature has focused on whether the economic gap between intermarried and endogamous immigrants is explained by a marital “spillover” of linguistic skills, knowledge, customs, contacts and connections – or selection processes where some traits and events increase both chances of intermarriage and chances of labor market success. To assess these explanations, *the second article* is an examination and comparison of changes in employment and earnings for male minority migrants who marry immigrants and natives. Generally, marriage premiums are to a large extent earned in years prior to the marital union regardless of spouse background. While I find stronger earnings development after native intermarriage for those who immigrate as adults, few other results follow a pattern we would expect if spillovers caused the premium. Immigrant-immigrant intermarriage and native-immigrant intermarriage display remarkably similar patterns, native intermarriage does not seem more beneficial for culturally more distant groups, and the time selection into marriage varies between the marriage categories. The results challenge an inherent relationship between native intermarriage and economic assimilation, and suggest that there may be more to learn from studying the post-marital labor market behavior of endogamous immigrants.

The practice of spouse import – when an immigrant or a child of immigrants marries a person residing in the country of origin – is an important route of migration to Western Europe. Yet, we know very little about its consequences. *The third article* is an evaluation of the hypotheses that spouse import is associated with less labor market integration and higher levels of gender inequalities in labor market outcomes for immigrants and their children. The results suggest that spouse importers experience disproportionately negative employment and earnings trajectories after marriage, particularly for women who import a husband. I also show that these patterns are partly attributable to lower educational attainment and stronger motherhood penalties.