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TITLE: Assortative mating for educational attainment in Finnish and Dutch twins and their spouses

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ABSTRACT:

Background: We often see that people do not choose their spouse randomly, but rather choose a partner with similar traits, i.e. assortative mating. Evidence has been found for assortative mating on educational attainment. The consequences of this educational assortment are important for society, as it is one of the mechanisms that could possibly lead to increased income inequality since educational attainment predicts earnings and socio-economic status. Often data are limited to spousal correlation, making distinction between the different causal mechanisms of assortative mating impossible. However, making this distinction is possible when using data from both monozygotic (MZ) and dizygotic (DZ) twins and their spouses.

Aim: The aim of this research is to examine the effect of social homogamy and phenotypic assortment on educational attainment using two large twin cohorts with similar schooling systems, Finnish (FTC) and Dutch (NTR), that have information about the education of both twins and their spouses.

Methods: Data has been fitted to an adjusted version of the twin-spouse model by Reynolds et al. (2006). The model included sex effects and phenotypic assortment and social homogamy were modelled by delta paths.

Preliminary results: Comparable results were found in both cohorts. Dropping phenotypic assortment and/or social homogamy from the model lead to a significant decrease in model fit, indicating that both of these factors appear to be a cause of the non-random mating for educational attainment.

References

Reynolds, C.A., Barlow, T. & Pedersen, N.L.(2006) Alcohol, Tobacco and Caffeine Use: Spouse Similarity Processes. Behav Genet 36, 201.

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