THE UNIVERSITY OF
CHICAGO

THE SOCIOLOGY DEPARTMENT COLLOQUIUM PRESENTS:

The Implications of Educational Assortative Mating for Family Change, Development, and Inequality in sub-Saharan Africa

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Monday, November 1st from 12:30-1:50pm CT
SSRB Tea Room/SSRB 201
and via Zoom: https://bit.ly/30KOUbj

Sub-Saharan Africa is undergoing rapid transformations in the realm of union formation in tandem with significant educational expansion. Concurrently, the region remains the least developed and most unequal along multiple dimensions of human and social development. In spite of this unique scenario, little evidence exists on how educational expansion shapes patterns of educational assortative mating (EAM) – partners’ similarity in terms of educational attainment – and whether changing patterns of EAM can explain changes in wealth inequality in sub-Saharan Africa. Using 126 Demographic and Health Surveys from 39 countries between 1986 and 2016, this study documents changing patterns of educational assortative mating by marriage cohort, subregion, and household location of residence and relates them to prevailing sociological theories on mating and development. Results show that net of shifts in educational distributions, mating has increased over marriage cohorts in all subregions except for Southern Africa, with increases driven mostly by rural areas. Trends in rural areas align with the status attainment hypothesis, whereas trends in urban areas are consistent with the inverted U-curve framework. The inequality analysis conducted through a combination of variance decomposition and counterfactual scenarios reveals that EAM accounts for a non-negligible share (5% to 12%) of the cohort-specific inequality in household wealth, yet changes in EAM over time hardly move time trends in wealth inequality. The talk concludes with a discussion and outline of a new research agenda focused on the intergenerational implications of parental educational assortative mating for children’s health, wellbeing, and educational trajectories from birth to early adolescence.

In-person attendance is available on a first-come, first-served basis. Please email Meredith Clason if you would like to attend the talk in the Tea Room (SSRB 201). Once the available seats are taken, the event will be available only by Zoom.