



COLLEGE EDUCATION AND DATING/MATING

Abstract

As we can now see, social and economic status are not synonymous. They can be mutually exclusive at times. Social, economic, education, as well as culture all play a factor when it comes to dating and mating.

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College Education and Dating/Mating

Assortative mating is defined differently.^{1,2,3} According to a study performed by the Nature Research Journal, *“In human populations, assortative mating is almost universally positive, with similarities between partners for quantitative phenotypes^{1,2,3,4,5,6}, common disease risk^{1,3,7,8,9,10}, behaviour^{6,11}, social factors^{12,13,14} and personality^{4,5,11}. The causes and genetic consequences of assortative mating remain unresolved because partner similarity can arise from different mechanisms: phenotypic assortment based on mate choice^{15,16}, partner interaction and convergence in phenotype over time^{14,17}, or social homogamy where individuals pair according to social or environmental background.”* (Robinson, 2017) So, it is generally accepted wisdom that people will, *“eventual pair off and marry someone who is very similar to themselves – similar levels of education, physical attractiveness, height, weight etc.”* (CORDIS, 2017)

According to a report by the Brookings Institution, *“There is a growing trend in the United States towards assortative mating—a clunky phrase that refers to people’s tendency to choose spouses with similar educational attainment. Rising numbers of college-educated women play a key role in this change. It is much easier for college graduates to find and marry each other when there are more equal numbers of each gender within an educational bracket.”* (Reeves & Rodrigue, 2015) Some have suggested that the best time for college educated women, who desire to find a long-term mate for marriage, would be to secure that mate prior to leaving college due to the simple fact that being around as many eligible mates that are worthy of college educated women would more than likely never happen again. I would have to agree with this assessment. Once many of us get out into the working world, without good social circles that are of a similar age group with similar hobbies, it becomes quite difficult to secure a long-term mate without a significant amount of available time and developed techniques.

It is commonly known that education is a proven method of greater income potential. Naturally, if a person is college educated and they desire to secure a long-term mate, then they want a mate who makes a similar amount of money, if not more, so that they both can weather future potential economic storms together as well as secure a position where they can enjoy their lives together more from an economic standpoint to avoid financial strain that would otherwise inhibit them from doing so. In some cases when a person is not able to marry someone of similar or greater educational attainment, if they want to be married regardless then they may have to

¹ **Assortative mating**, in human genetics, a form of nonrandom mating in which pair bonds are established on the basis of phenotype (observable characteristics). For example, a person may choose a mate according to religious, cultural, or ethnic preferences, professional interests, or physical traits.

Positive assortative mating, or homogamy, exists when people choose to mate with persons similar to themselves (e.g., when a tall person mates with a tall person); this type of selection is very common. Negative assortative mating is the opposite case, when people avoid mating with persons similar to themselves.

Assortative mating also occurs in nonhuman animal populations. Indeed, phenotypic similarity is thought to underlie mate selection in a variety of species.” (Britannica, 2012)

² Assortative Mating - Denoting or involving the preferential mating of animals or marriage between people with similar characteristics. Oxford Dictionary Online.

³ **Assortative Mating** - a: mating between the more similar individuals of a population especially when regarded as a factor in evolutionary differentiation within a population.

b: selective mating between individuals whose choice of marriage partners is determined by similarity of social environment . Merriam Webster Dictionary Online.

resort to “marrying down.” It is then assumed that if a person marries down, then they are placing themselves in a future economic and even social deficit. This is not always true. While it is true that college graduates are much more likely to move higher up the economic ladder, it would seem that many, women specifically, are not considering the value of a tradesman. While it is true that *“in large part to technology-driven growth, blue-collar jobs in the traditional primary and secondary industries—such as coal mines and car factories—are gradually disappearing,”* (Graham, 2017) A detriment to the overall push for college is, *“The cost of the average college education has been rising steadily for decades.”* (Landrum, 2016) What’s even more interesting in relation to the costs of college is that, *“public colleges in the U.S. were tuition-free up until the 1970s, at which point dwindling public funding turned higher education into a for-profit enterprise.”* (Landrum, 2016) Continuing, *“A key impediment has been the exponential rise of tuition prices since the 1970s, at several times the rate of inflation, correlated with the reduction of public support, which in turn has brought the steep increase in student debt and student work hours.”* (Williams, 2016) Some trades jobs offer more pay than jobs that require college education as a prerequisite. Some companies partner with local community colleges to provide trades courses that are significantly cheaper for those considering blue collar jobs that would definitely be more attractive than racking up several thousands of dollars more in student loans. A particular program provided by NStar would place a student, *“After graduating, 90 percent of the students get jobs with the power utility NStar (which is in the process of changing its name to Eversource Energy). Starting base pay is about \$58,000 a year.”* (Arnold, 2015) The trades are cheaper for schooling and generally have a higher starting pay. That places a person starting their career with less debt, a skill that they could later utilize in starting their own business at a later time, and that person has an advantage to where they have employment for the most part regardless of relocation.

College seems more about social status and class rather than just placing one in a higher economic position. *“... since around 1980, college has actually calcified class in America.”* (Williams, 2016)⁴ Though things are not perfect for college graduates, *“those without degrees have experienced a more severe pinch, with proportionately shrinking wages, degraded conditions, few job protections and general insecurity.”* College has also, *“become a gated toll road primarily available to those from middle-class and upper-class families. Those who have gone to college beget those who go to college: if your parents didn’t go to college, you are much more likely to work at or near minimum wage. Only about 9 percent of those from the lowest quartile of wealth complete college degrees, whereas about three-quarters from the top quartile do.”* (Williams, 2016) As we can now see, social and economic status are not synonymous. They can be mutually exclusive at times. Social, economic, education, as well as culture all play a factor when it comes to dating and mating. As Williams recounts from others’ works, *“When once a steelworker and an accountant could live on the same block, drive the same car, vacation at the same place and eat at the same restaurants, over the course of the 1980s, 1990s and the first decade of the 2000s” those from higher classes have little substantive contact with those from the working class except when they ring up their groceries or take care of their elderly relatives.”* Overtime, things change which makes it difficult for those who are comparing today to yesterday while they are in the market for a mate.

Furthering the discussion on college and non-college related employment, depending upon where one lives within the country, there are 30 million non-BA (bachelor’s degrees), jobs that have a median salary of \$55,000.00 annually. (Anthony P. Carnevale, 2017, p. 2) BA holders

⁴ Calcified - 2: to make inflexible or unchangeable. Merriam Webster Dictionary Online.

now hold 55% of all good jobs. Those with at least an Associate degree will fare well in this economy, even more so than those with a high school diploma or less. (Anthony P. Carnevale, 2017, p. 11) While Wyoming, New Jersey, and Maryland hold a much larger share of the non-BA related jobs, the largest number of those same jobs are within the states of California, Texas, and Florida. At the end of the day, while there are good non BA related jobs, due to the coming “Fourth Industrial Revolution”, (Forum, 2018) it would still be far more advantageous to attain some level of postsecondary education if not for the sole purposes of being a viable candidate for marriage via assortative mating, but in general even if one decides to remain unmarried.

A final discussion on this section will focus on the issue of race and marital attainment. According to the Brookings Institute, *“Marriage rates among the non-college educated population have fallen sharply in the last few decades, and sharpest of all in the black population.”* (Reeves & Rodrigue, 2015) They go on further by stating, *“Young white women—aged between 25 and 35—are the most likely to have at least a BA (37%), followed by white men (29%), black women (23%) and black men (16%), according to our analysis of the ACS.”*⁵ In the Brookings Institute’s assessment, *“The chance for a college graduate to marry another college graduate is likely to be greater if there are more marriages across race lines, since this will expand the pool of potential mates.”* While there is evidence for a rise in inter-racial marriages, *“... black Americans are still the minority group least likely to marry across race lines.”* What is interesting about all of this discussion concerning college education is that while black women are majority degree holders amongst African Americans, three quarters of black-white marriages involve a black man instead of a black women. The suggestion is that due to the lack of black women to attain marriage via assortative mating, they are instead marrying down when they marry.

The Brookings Institute report observes that *“Most black children born into families in the middle quintile will fall into one of the two income quintiles below as adults, for example, according to recent work by Scott Winship.”* With marriage rates in the black community being low and falling, it has been observed that black women find it much more difficult to find a black man that can match them in education. While black women do attain more college degrees than black men, the fields in which they attain the degrees are of a different concern and can lock them out of further participating in assortative mating. In another study, one performed by the Center on Education and the Workforce (CEW) of Georgetown University, *“African Americans represent 12 percent of the US population, but are under-represented in the number of degree holders in college majors associated with the fastest-growing, highest-paying occupations - STEM, health, and business.”* (Carnevale, Fasules, Porter, & Landis-Santos, 2016, p. 2) Though African Americans in general represent *“8 percent of general engineering majors, 7 percent of mathematics majors, and only 5 percent of computer engineering majors,”* which pay a range of median salary from \$65,000 annually to \$73,000 annually, they only represent *“6 percent in the higher-earning detailed major of pharmacy, pharmaceutical sciences, and administration,”* which pays a median of \$84,000. The remainder of the degree focuses are only jobs that will more than likely cause many African Americans to reach a much earlier salary cap or ceiling and lock them out of moving further up the middle class.

⁵ ACS – American Community Survey, a service of the U.S. Census Bureau.

The top ten highest-earnings majors for African Americans are:

Occupation	(%) of African Americans	Median Income
Health and Medical Administration Services	21	\$46,000
Human Services and Community Organization	20	\$39,000
Social Work	19	\$41,000
Public Administration	17	\$52,000
Criminal Justice and Fire Protection	15	\$48,000
Sociology	14	\$44,000
Computer and Information Systems	14	\$63,000
Human Resources and Personnel Management	14	\$51,000
Interdisciplinary Social Sciences	13	\$44,000
Pre-Law and Legal Studies	13	\$46,000

The top ten lowest-earning majors for African Americans are:

Occupation	(%) of African Americans	Median Income
Early Childhood Education	10	\$38,000
Human Services and Community Organization	20	\$39,000
Area, Ethnic, and Civilization Studies	9	\$39,000
Family Consumer Sciences	8	\$40,000
Drama and Theater Arts	5	\$40,000
Miscellaneous Industrial Arts and Consumer Services	7	\$40,000
Social Work	19	\$41,000
Physical Fitness, Parks, Recreation, and Leisure	8	\$41,000
Theology and Religious Vocations	11	\$41,000
Philosophy and Religious Studies	6	\$42,000

(Carnevale, Fasules, Porter, & Landis-Santos, 2016, pp. 6-9)

It would appear that African Americans in general should attend college to attain education that will place them in the position to reach the highest level of earnings whether they marry amongst themselves, marry inter-racially, or decide to not marry at all. For those who want to marry inter-racially, perhaps this is a factor that is lessening their attraction to other races.

To conclude this section, we will discuss the non-BA related jobs by specific field and median salaries for those who are interested in pursuing this route, and those who may decide that marrying those that choose this route as not a non-viable option for doing so. The top five industries for non-BA related jobs nationally are:

Industry	Number of non-BA good jobs	Share of non-BA good jobs	Share of non-BA workers with good jobs	Median earnings
Manufacturing	4,686,000	16%	58%	\$58,000
Financial activities, real estate, professional, and management services	3,775,000	13%	29%	\$58,000
Transportation, communications, and utilities	3,697,000	12%	61%	\$60,000
Wholesale and retail trade	3,644,000	12%	57%	\$55,000
Construction	3,477,000	12%	79%	\$59,000

(Anthony P. Carnevale, 2017, pp. 21-22)

The top five occupations within the above industries includes:

1. Sales and office related with median earnings of \$53,000
2. Management and business and financial operations with median earnings of \$63,000
3. STEM and healthcare practitioners with median earnings of \$60,000
4. Natural resources, construction, and extraction with median earnings of \$58,000
5. Transportation and material moving with median earnings of \$54,002

(Anthony P. Carnevale, 2017, p. 22)

From these non-BA related jobs, their earnings are on average more than many college related jobs in general, and specifically, the types of jobs that many African Americans attend college for. Regarding the non-BA related job breakdown, any one of the above referenced states of California, Florida, Maryland, New Jersey, Texas, or Wyoming would all be great candidate states for college and non-BA related work as for places to settle and find a long-term mate.

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