

## **An opportunity to meet? Educational reform and marital sorting**

**Helena Holmlund**

**Abstract:** This paper provides evidence on the role of the education system for the degree of marital sorting, and specifically asks the question whether a comprehensive school reform, that broadened the opportunities to meet individuals from other social backgrounds, has affected partnership formation. In addition, acknowledging that partners might pool their resources, the paper presents a simulation exercise which quantifies the extent to which assortative mating contributes to intergenerational earnings persistence. The key finding of the paper is that the comprehensive school reform reduced marital sorting on family background characteristics, most notably because women from low-income backgrounds were more likely to marry men from high-income backgrounds. In addition to positive effects on women's long term labour market outcomes, the school reform thus seems to have given a pay-off in terms of partner quality. The reform-induced changes in sorting are not large enough to substantively impact intergenerational mobility, but the secular decline in marital sorting observed in the data implies a reduction of the intergenerational rank correlation of 10 percent.