

## **Conference topic: Family and Households**

### **Title: Trends in Assortative Mating**

**Authors: M. Francesconi (University of Essex), A. George\* (Institute of Education), K. Hansen (Institute of Education)**

**\*Centre for Longitudinal Studies,  
Institute of Education, University of London,  
20 Bedford Way, London WC1V 0AL.**

**Tel: 020 7947 9566**

**Email: a.george@ioe.ac.uk**

### **Research Issue:**

Despite the relative decline in marriage, it is still the most common form of partnership in the UK. The degree to which males marry females with similar characteristics to themselves, the strength of assortative mating, has important implications on when and how many children they have, the distribution of family income and family labour supply decisions.

The increasing levels of female participation in the labour market and their higher education attainment will be a significant factor not only in men's choice of the future partner but also in the interaction between other characteristics such as class and ethnicity. This will ultimately impact on the financial and cultural resources available to the family.

### **Methodology and Data:**

This research will use the three British birth cohorts: the National Child Development Study (1958), the British Cohort Study (1970) and the Millennium Cohort Study (2000/2001) as well as the British Household Panel Survey to construct marriage cohorts (groups of men getting married at certain time periods). In addition to the long time period these data provide, they also offer a rich source of information about the characteristics of these married individuals as well as the subsequent family they have.

### **Envisaged Outcomes:**

This research will use data from the three British cohort studies and the British Household Panel Survey to examine trends in assortative mating over time and discuss the implications of these trends.

Among others this research will address the following questions:

- Are individuals are more likely to marry similar people now than in the past?

- What is the basis for this selection process - class, education, income, ethnicity, religion?
- Are trends in assortative mating related to differences in the timing of fertility across different married groups?
- What are the implications of changes in assortative mating on the distribution of family income and intergenerational transmission of advantage and disadvantage?