

Ethnic, Religious and Educational Homogamy in Nigeria

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Abstract

The study examines the extent to which Nigerians marry within circumscribed social groups, or choose marital partners who are similar to them in status, a phenomenon termed homogamy. Ethnicity, religious affiliation and educational attainment are three important variables in mate selection in Nigeria. To what extent is Nigerian marriage ethnically, religiously and educationally homogenous? This question is addressed with the use of couples' data derived from the 2003, 2008 and 2013 Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS), from which information on marital union and patterns was analyzed. The large sample size of the NDHS data, their periodicity and national representativeness justify their appropriateness for this study. The analysis involved computation of gross measure of homogamy by ethnicity, education and religion; also the odds of homogamy were examined based on selected characteristics of husbands and wives using logistic regression. The results indicate a very high level of homogamy; about 9 of 10 couples in Nigeria are married within their ethnic and religious groups. The level of educational homogamy is much lower (about 60 percent). Factors that give rise to the different patterns evident in the study are discussed and suggestions proffered for a more exogamous spousal selection in the country.

Key words: homogamy, endogamy, exogamy, ethnicity, Nigeria

Introduction

Over time scholars have argued that marital selection is based on individual's preferences and constrained by the opportunity structure as well as interference by the society (Birkelund & Heldal, 2003; Kalmijn, 1998). In other words, the choice of who to marry depends on individual benefits that are related to family income, social status and cultural values as well as the demographic composition of the population at a certain point in time. Hence, over several decades there has been interest in the concept homogamy by scholars in family-related research. Homogamy is defined as similarity of husband and wife on a specific trait (Jones, 1929); marrying someone with similar characteristics (Burgess & Wallin, 1943); or a marriage between people, who are in some way, similar to each other (Birkelund & Heldal, 2003). A high level of homogamy in a society implies that there are intimate and profound relations among members of different social groups with a high possibility of passing the group's norms and values to offspring (Birkelund & Heldal, 2003).

Homogamy may be based on ethnicity, religious affiliation, socio-economic status, class or educational background (Birkelund & Heldal, 2003; Cohen, 2011; Fu & Heaton, 2008; Gilson, Hunt, & Rowe, 2003).
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The term, endogamy, is often used specifically when people marry within their group such as ethnic or racial groups, while homogamy is used when people marry persons close in status, such as education, or income (Kalmijn, 1998). The two terms are used interchangeably in this paper to the extent that both mean similarity of husband and wife on a specific trait; in this case, ethnicity, religious affiliation and educational attainment.

An early study by Burgess & Wallin (1943) revealed that the degree of 'like mating with like' is highest for religious affiliation and behaviour, closely followed by similarities in cultural background. Analysis of data from 1980 to 2000 in the US by Fu (2008) revealed that though racial homogamy was declining, it still had stronger tendency than educational homogamy (Fu & Heaton, 2008). Also, various studies at both macro and micro levels in different countries indicate that men and women tend to marry spouses with a level of education similar to their own. For example, marital patterns examined by Fernandez et al (2005) for 34 countries show that there is a high positive correlation for husband and wife years of education (Fernández, Guner, & Knowles, 2005). The proximity of partners'

educational institutions was also found to be significant in mate selection (Nielsen & Svarer, 2009). However, some studies observed a decline in educational homogamy over the years (Birkelund & Heldal, 2003; Michielutte, 1972). In another study in Netherlands, the level of spatial homogamy exhibits a spatial distribution and varies by demographic and socio-economic characteristics of individuals (Haandrikman, 2011).

While the social and cultural realities of Nigeria suggest that homogamy, as a form of assortative mating, should be common, there is little or no empirical evidence to support this among different social groups in the country. Nigeria is an ethnically diverse country with about 389 ethnic groups (Otite, 1990), the three major ones being the Hausa-Fulani in the north, the Yoruba in the west and the Igbo (or Ibo) in the east. Because of the spatial dominance of different ethnic groups in particular geographic areas and differences in languages, there is limited ethnic mixture in the enclaves occupied by different groups. This is however different in the urban areas which are the melting pot of the multiplicity of ethnic groups. In the urban areas people from different ethnic groups live and work side by side, and interact in intimate ways in religious worship and business relationships. This is more conducive for inter-group mate selection.

Moreover, the ethnic composition in Nigeria closely follows geopolitical and religious variations. The country is divided into six geopolitical zones. The North-East and North-West zones are mainly inhabited by the Hausa/Fulani who are predominantly Muslims; the North-Central zone comprises most of the northern minority ethnic groups with mixed religious affiliations. In the south, the South-East zone inhabited by the Igbo is predominantly Christians; the South-West zone, homeland of the Yoruba, has a fairly balanced population of Christians and Muslims, whereas the South-South, with a multiplicity of small ethnic groups, is predominantly Christian. Clearly, this kind of socio-political and religious distinctiveness has considerable influence on the nature and patterns of social interactions and inter-personal relationships, of which dating and marital choice are important elements.

The limitations of previous research in a multi-ethnic country such as Nigeria with different cultural values and norms include the non-generalizability of results from mono-ethnic studies, and examination of pattern of the nuptial union for some selected locations. A study by Ekezie and Danborn (2008) on spousal similarities and differences in physical and cultural traits among the Igbo ethnic group supports the hypothesis that westernization is expected to increase spousal concordance for physical traits. This

is due to reduction in arranged marriages, which is embedded in the culture of different ethnic groups in the traditional Nigerian societies

Ethnicity, religious affiliation and educational attainment are three important variables in mate selection in Nigeria. Although, culture and values are closely related to ethnic orientation in the society, the influx of foreign religious beliefs has also affected adherence to these norms and values. There is a need to understand the interaction effect of ascribed trait such as ethnic origin, while controlling for religious beliefs and achieved trait like education in analyzing spousal selection in a plural, traditional society such as Nigeria. While the trend and pattern of analysis of educational homogamy are important for understanding inequality (Bruze, 2010), the intervening effect of socio-cultural and religious traits as it relates to different ethnic groups will provide a better understanding of 'who marries whom' in Nigeria. To what extent is Nigerian marriage ethnically, religiously and education-ally homogenous? The study examines the degree to which Nigerians marry within their social groups, or choose marital partners who are similar or close to them.

Theorizing Homogamy

The section benefits from the postulations of Kalmijn on the causes of endogamy and homogamy. According to Kalmijn (1998:398), "marriage patterns arise from the interplay between three social forces: the preferences of individuals for certain characteristics in a spouse, the influence of the social group of which they are members, and the constraints of the marriage market in which they are searching for a spouse." Men and women searching for spouses operate within a marriage market where each individual considers a set of potential spouses, evaluated on the basis of resources they have to offer. Often the most important resources are socio-economic and cultural, and when married, spouses pool these resources to produce family goods, such as economic well-being, status, social confirmation and affection (Kalmijn, 1998). People tend to maximize their socio-economic resources by looking for a spouse with attractive resources; thus competition for socio-economic resources on the marriage market leads to an aggregate pattern of homogamy.

Consideration for cultural resources leads one to marry someone who is culturally similar. Similarity of culture or values and opinions gives rise to mutual confirmation of each other's behaviour and worldviews, similarity in taste and mutual understanding. Because of its instrumental effects, cultural or social similarity encourages people to

establish relationships; people prefer to marry someone who has similar cultural resources because this enables them to develop a common lifestyle in marriage that produces social conformation and affection (Kalmijn, 1998). Thus, homogamy is both a product of competition for socio-economically attractive spouses and preference for cultural similarity. At the same time, characteristics such as education, occupation, ethnicity and religion are also seen as badges that individuals wear to show others what kind of persons they are. In this perspective, spouse selection is regarded as a filter process (Kalmijn, 1998).

The second theory on why people marry within their group focuses on the significance of the third parties or significant others in mate selection. Because mixed marriages may threaten the internal cohesion and homogeneity of the group, third parties have an incentive to keep new generations from marrying exogamously (Kalmijn, 1998). They do this in at least two ways: by group identification and by group sanctions. Children are typically brought up with a sense of group identification by way of awareness of a common social history or the sense of being different from others. The stronger such feeling of group identification, the more people have internalized norms for endogamy. Even if people have not internalized norms of endogamy, they may still refrain from marrying exogamously because of the sanctions third parties, such as the family, the church and the state, may apply (Kalmijn, 1998). For instance, the family may set up meetings with potential spouses, play the role of matchmaker, give advice and opinions about who to marry, and may withdraw their support as they deem appropriate. Also a church denomination may denounce interfaith marriage, discourage members from intermarriages or even deny marriage blessing to members who fail to choose partners from within the particular denomination.

Apart from the two theories, that is, individual factors and group-level factors, endogamy or homogamy is also governed by structural arrangements. For instance, the chances of marrying endogamously are higher the more often one meets people within the group and the more often one interacts with group members on a day-to-day basis (Kalmijn, 1998). When interaction occurs randomly, the chance that a woman in a certain group marries someone in her own group equals the proportion of men in that group. As a result, members of a small group will have lower chances of marrying endogamously than members of a larger group. Also, groups that are concentrated in specific regions of the country generally have more opportunity to marry endogamously than groups that are not. The

local marriage markets are also very important, such as the neighbourhood, the school, the church and the workplace. While the neighbourhood is homogeneous with respect to ethnicity, religion and family background, schools and work places are less homogeneous. The extent to which the local marriage markets influence the individual therefore determines whether or not the individual marries homogamously or otherwise. These postulations are clearly applicable to mate selection among different ethnic groups in Nigeria, and the extent to which they affect homogamy is the subject matter of this paper.

Methods and Data

This study used retrospective data from Nigeria Demographic and Health Survey (NDHS) for 2003, 2008 and 2013. These are national sample surveys that provide demographic and health indicators on children age 0-5; women age 15-49 and men age 15-59 years in randomly selected households across Nigeria (NPC and ICF Macro 2009). Information on marital union and pattern was analysed using the NDHS couples' dataset recode file. The couple recode file 'contains data for married or living together men and women who both declared to be married (living together) to each other and with completed individual interviews (NPC and ICF Macro 2009).

Pooled couple dataset for the three survey periods gave a total of 7,548 couples. However, for the study, two selection criteria were used for analytical sample: (1) marital duration is not more than five years preceding the survey to ensure that characteristics are similar to current situation at the time of the survey, and (2) completeness of information on ethnic groups, highest education level and religion affiliation of both husband and wife. Husband sampling weight was applied to correct for oversampling or under sampling since men's response behaviour has a dominating role in demographic and health surveys.

Ethnic homogamy in this study implies that a man and his wife are from the same ethnic group. The ethnic group variable is classified into the conventional three major ethnic groupings in Nigeria: Hausa-Fulani, Igbo and Yoruba; other ethnic groups are broadly classified into Southern minorities and Northern minorities. A cross tabulation of the ethnic homogamy variable by the ethnic groupings was examined to explore the depth and variation of this issue in Nigeria. Educational homogamy implies that a husband and his wife have the same level of education. Religious homogamy also implies that husband and wife belong to the same religion. The odds of homogamy in Nigeria based on selected

characteristics of husbands and wives were examined using logistic regression. The odds were estimated for each of the three homogamy variables as well as the overall odds combining the three variables.

Results

The gross measure of homogamy by ethnicity, education and religion between 2003 and 2013 in Nigeria is shown in Table 1. Close to one-half of the couples in Nigeria (about 47 percent) belong to the same ethnic group, have the same level of educational attainment, and are of the same religious

affiliation. Taking the variables in the table singly, the level of religious homogamy is highest (about 92 percent), with ethnic homogamy a very close second (about 87 percent). About nine of ten couples in Nigeria are married within their ethnic and religious groups. This indeed is a very high level of religious and ethnic homogamy. The level of educational homogamy is much lower (about 60 percent); the patriarchal nature of Nigerian society is evident in the low proportion of men who married women with higher level of education.

Table 1: Gross measure of homogamy by ethnicity, education and religion in Nigeria

Couples' characteristics	NIGERIA	Hausa-Fulani	Igbo	Yoruba	Northern Minorities	Southern Minorities
Ethnicity						
Ethnic homogamy	86.8	89.3	94.1	95.8	78.7	77.0
Inter-ethnic marriage	13.2	10.7	5.9	4.2	21.3	23.0
Educational level						
Educational homogamy	59.5	60.0	60.3	64.3	53.9	62.4
Husband's education higher than wife's	28.6	33.1	9.8	20.3	38.0	23.0
Wife's education higher than husbands	11.9	6.9	29.9	15.4	8.1	14.6
Religion						
Religious homogamy	92.0	98.8	82.6	88.2	89.5	87.2
Inter religion marriage	8.0	1.2	17.4	11.8	10.5	12.8
Ethnic, educational, and religious homogamy	47.6	53.0	46.8	54.5	38.0	41.4

Table 1 shows that interethnic marriage (that is, less ethnic homogamy) is more common among the minority ethnic groups, both in the north (21 percent) and south (23 percent). This is an indication that the minority ethnic groups share some affinity due in part to proximity, and as such mix and inter-relate better than larger ethnic groups. Also smallness of a group gives rise to choosing marital partners with desired resources or characteristics outside the group. Among the major ethnic groups, the Yoruba have the lowest ethnic mixture in marital partner selection, a finding that may be related to the more sedentary nature of the Yoruba compared to other ethnic groups that are more migratory within the Nigerian geo-political space. There may also be some elements of ethnic pride or prejudice against the culture of other ethnic groups, especially with respect to marriage.

The Table 1 further shows that a substantial proportion of Igbo men married below their educational level; in 30 percent of their marriages, wives' educational level is higher than husbands'. The Igbo are alone in this. This may be a function of the high bridewealth culture among the Igbo whereby a wealthy Igbo man can marry any woman he desires

regardless of her educational attainment. There is also the tendency for Igbo business men and traders with little or no education to send their wives to higher institutions to obtain degrees in nursing, education or other professional courses (Isiugo-Abanihe, 1994; 1995). In other words, marriage may precede higher educational attainment. In fact, it is a status symbol of sorts for an Igboman with little or no schooling to have a wife with one or two university degrees. This is accentuated by the general lukewarmness among Igbo males to remain in school after high school, or the first degree, in preference for the business of buying and selling which is believed to yield faster, larger and more assured returns than the pursuit of higher education. Such men generally marry women who are better educated or send their wives to acquire higher education after marriage. It is also believed that women who get their education in their husbands' home are more submissive than those who had high education prior to marriage.

It is clearly evident from Table 1 that Nigerian marriages are primarily religiously homogamous irrespective of ethnicity; with more than 8 out of 10 marriages taking place within same religion among all

the ethnic groups. The Igbo appear more liberal in marrying across religion than other ethnic groups. The Igbo are the most migratory group in Nigeria (NISER, 1997; Okoronkwo, 2015); they also tend to integrate well in their host communities and actively participate in church activities wherever they find themselves. Because they are predominantly Christians, it is also easier for them to marry across the Christian denominations, especially given the ubiquity of Pentecostal churches in all nooks and crannies of Nigeria.

Ethnic Homogamy

Table 2 displays matrix of ‘who marries whom’ by ethnic origin. There is a significant association between husbands’ and wives’ ethnic origin ($p=0.000$). The diagonal which is generally more than 90 percent confirms the high level of intra-ethnic marriage or ethnic homogamy in Nigeria. This implies that just 1 out of 10 marriages are inter-ethnic in Nigeria.

Table 2: Matrix of ‘who marries whom’ by ethnic origin

Husband’s ethnic origin	Wife’s ethnic origin (%)					
	Hausa-Fulani	Igbo	Yoruba	Northern minorities	Southern minorities	Foreigners
Hausa-Fulani	97.8	0.1	0.1	1.9	-	0.2
Igbo	0.4	95.5	1.1	0.5	2.5	-
Yoruba	0.3	1.3	95.5	0.3	1.5	1.0
Northern minorities	5.1	0.3	0.8	93.1	0.5	0.2
Southern minorities	-	2.8	0.9	1.3	95.1	-
Foreigners	12.5	-	50.0	37.5	-	-

Among the small number of men that chose wives from outside their ethnic group, Hausa-Fulani men are more likely to choose wives from the northern minorities, whereas Igbo men marry women from the southern minorities and the Yoruba ethnic group. Yoruba men are more likely to marry women from the southern minorities and the Igbo ethnic origin, whereas the men of northern minority and southern minority origin are more likely to choose wives of Hausa-Fulani and Igbo origins respectively. These patterns show that spatial propinquity somewhat influences inter-ethnic mate selection in Nigeria.

Education Homogamy

Table 3 shows the matrix of ‘who marries whom’ by educational attainment. There is a significant association between husbands’ and wives’ educational attainment ($p=0.000$). Education homogamy diagonal shows that apart from couple with no formal education, husbands usually do not marry wives with the same educational qualification. Seventy percent of husbands with primary education married wives with no formal schooling or only primary education.

Table 3: Matrix of ‘who marries whom’ by educational attainment

Husband’s highest educational level	Wife’s highest educational level (%)			
	None	Primary	Secondary	Tertiary
None	88.6	8.1	3.3	-
Primary	41.2	29.4	27.7	1.7
Secondary	16.6	18.5	57.6	7.3
Tertiary	7.5	6.4	40.7	45.5

A few husbands with secondary education (7%) married wives with higher educational qualification. Husbands with tertiary education are more likely to marry wives of the same qualification or secondary education; just 1 out of 10 of them married a wife

with primary or no formal education. These patterns indicate that education homogamy is less prevalent in Nigeria and husbands prefer to marry wives with lower education.

Religious Homogamy

Table 4 displays the matrix of 'who marries whom' by religious affiliation. There is a significant association between husbands' and wives' religious affiliation ($p=0.000$). Religion is a high priority in

mate selection in Nigeria, with at least 7 out of 10 husbands marrying wives of the same religious affiliation. Evidently, the highest occurrence of religious homogamy is among other Christians (97.3%).

Table 4: Matrix of 'who marries whom' by religious affiliation

Husband's religion	Wife's religion (%)			
	Catholics	Protestants	Other Christians	Islam
Catholics	70.6	27.2	1.3	0.9
Protestants	6.1	90.9	2.8	0.2
Other Christians	0.3	2.0	97.3	0.4
Islam	2.5	7.4	1.2	88.8

Overall, less than one percent of husbands who are Christians (Catholics, Protestant and other Christians) married a wife who was a Muslim. On the contrary, more than 11 per cent of Muslim men are married to Christian women, a fairly common observation in south-west Nigeria where there is relative harmony and tolerance between Yoruba Christians and Muslim. There is more religious mixing in the West, with some families or communities nearly evenly split between the two major religions. This tends to enhance mixed marriages.

Odds of marital homogamy in Nigeria

To estimate the odds of marital homogamy in Nigeria, some selected characteristic of husband and wife were examined using logistic regression, as shown in Table 5. The odds are estimated for each of

the three homogamy variables, ethnicity, education and religion, as well as the overall odds combining the three variables. The results are presented in Table 5.

The result shows that ethnic homogamy or intra-ethnic marriage (col.1) is significantly predicted by ethnic origin, religion, place of residence, educational level and wealth index. Odds of ethnic homogamy are significantly higher among the Yoruba than other ethnic groups in Nigeria. Religious affiliation indicates that odds of ethnic homogamy are significantly high among Christians relative to Muslims; and rural dwellers are also significantly more likely to practice ethnic homogamy than those in the urban areas. The odds of ethnic homogamy do not seem to vary much by educational attainment.

Table 5: Odds of marital homogamy among couples in Nigeria

Couples' characteristics	Odds of Ethnic homogamy	Odds of Educational homogamy	Odds of Religious homogamy	Overall Odds of Homogamy
Sex				
Male (ref.)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Female	1.020	0.817*	0.966	0.856*
Ethnicity				
Hausa-Fulani (ref.)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Igbo	2.877*	2.037*	0.070*	1.517*
Yoruba	4.817*	2.639*	0.124*	2.372*
Northern minorities	0.461*	1.095	0.127*	0.707*
Southern minorities	0.537*	2.573*	0.099*	1.404*
Religion				
Christian (ref.)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Islam	0.702*	0.830	0.418	0.617*

Place of residence				
Urban	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Rural	1.321*	1.100	1.078	1.176*
Educational level				
No education (ref.)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Primary	1.289*	0.142*	0.502*	0.195*
Secondary	1.584*	0.375*	0.579*	0.493*
Tertiary	1.086	0.247*	0.697*	0.318*
Wealth Index				
Poorest (ref.)	1.000	1.000	1.000	1.000
Poorer	0.764*	0.596*	1.177	0.612*
Middle	0.981	0.466*	1.692*	0.527*
Richer	0.570*	0.424*	1.722*	0.473*
Richest	0.448*	0.802*	1.324	0.686*

*p-value significant at 0.05%

Educational homogamy (col.2) is significantly predicted by ethnicity, while education and wealth index reduce the odds of educational homogamy. Education exposes men and women to a larger marriage market given that they are more likely to be urban based and working in the formal sector where they come in contact with other social groups. The result indicates that men have significantly higher odds of marrying spouse with the same educational qualification than women. Likewise, ethnic groups in the southern part of the country (Yoruba, Igbo and Southern minorities) are more likely to be involved in marriage with spouses who have the same educational qualification. Within the educational groups, couples with no formal education are significantly more likely to marry themselves relative to other educational groups.

The odds of religious homogamy (col. 3) are affected by ethnic groups, education and wealth index. Relative to the odds of ethnic homogamy (col. 1) and odds of educational homogamy (col. 2), the odds for religious homogamy are inverse for all ethnic groups and positive for all wealth index groups. This is an indication that ethnicity, as well as education tend to reduce degree of religious homogamy, while wealth index tends to increase it.

The overall odds of homogamy (last col. of Table 5) shows that females are less likely than males to be married homogamously, a finding that is in agreement with patriarchal nature of the society. The odds of ethnic homogamy are higher among the Yoruba and Igbo, and lowest among the northern and southern minority ethnic groups. Religious homogamy is highest among Christians than Muslims. As expected, rural areas exhibit higher level of homogamy than urban areas, as does having no education over primary education or higher. Wealth index, which is a measure of social class, also shows lower incidence of homogamy as wealth index increases.

Discussion and Conclusion

The study examines the extent to which Nigerians marry within social groups, or choose marital partners who are similar to them. Ethnicity, religion and educational attainment, three important variables in mate selection in Nigeria, constitute the focus. Using data from the Nigeria Demographic and Health Surveys of 2003, 2008 and 2013, information on marital homogamy was analyzed. Less than half of the couples in this study have the same level of educational attainment, same religious affiliation and of the same ethnic group. The diagonal of the matrix which is generally more than 90 percent confirms the high level of intra-ethnic marriage or ethnic homogamy, more so among the Hausa-Fulani in the north and the Yoruba in the west. The odds of inter-ethnic marriage do not seem to vary by educational attainment, except among wives for whom those with tertiary education are significantly more likely to be in inter-ethnic marriage.

The study shows that Nigerians have a tendency to marry within their social groups (ethnicity and religion) or choose partners who are close to them in status. Of the three variables examined in this study, the degree of marital homogamy is higher for religion and ethnicity. This corroborates early findings by Burgess & Wallin (1943) that the degree of like mating with like is highest for religious affiliation and behaviour, closely followed by similarities in cultural background.

The findings of this study run in the face of the much anticipated ethnic integration taunted around since the establishment of the National Youth Service Corps, the unity schools system and other programmes initiated by various Nigerian governments since the 1970s to build a more cohesive Nigeria. Among the expected outcomes of these programmes is more understanding of other cultures, more tolerance and, consequently, intermarriages which is expedient for an ethnically

divisive country such as Nigeria. Inter-marriage decreases the salience of cultural distinctions in future generations because the children of mixed marriages are less likely to identify themselves with a single group (Kamijn, 1998). Also by intermarrying, individuals may lose the negative attitudes they have toward other groups; the opportunity of more intimate relationships with spouse's social or ethnic group weakens prejudices and stereotypes. Because inter-marriage often connects the social networks of the two spouses, this applies to a range of out-group members and not just cultural background. Relative to religion and ethnicity, educational homogamy is less common in Nigeria partly because educational attainment tends to change drastically within marriage, especially among women who are more likely to acquire higher education in marriage. It is evident from this study that education and urbanization tend to enhance inter-ethnic and inter-religious marriages.

Education broadens an individual's perspectives, understanding and tolerance of people of other cultures, a common phenomenon of the urban area and the work place. Indeed the urban areas in Nigeria constitute a melting-pot of diverse cultures in contrast to the rural areas which are predominantly inhabited by single ethnic groups. Given the pervasive influence of education in Nigeria, educational homogamy is expected to continue to decline more significantly over time (Birkelund & Haldal, 2003; Michielutte, 1972). In general, westernization is expected to increase spousal concordance for physical traits resulting from reduction in arranged marriages embedded in the culture of different ethnic groups in the traditional societies. The inherent dynamic of intermarriage is that it bears the potential of cultural, ethnic and socio-economic change and engenders an open society; members of different social groups accept and treat each other as social equals. Sociologically, these are essential ingredients for a more egalitarian Nigeria rather than the perpetuation of marital homogamy.

The study suggests that there are a lot government and the civil society in Nigeria can do to build a more cohesive social order, which, among other advantages, engenders cultural mixing and exogamous marriages. The primary and secondary school curricula should include formal instruction on peoples and cultures of Nigeria. Political leaders should build bridges across ethnic and cultural groups through marriages and associations. Civil society organizations should promote the virtue of social mixing and promote inter-ethnic marriages. Religious bodies should encourage inter-faith marriages and teach individual love as the basis of mate selection rather than arranged marriage or selection by

significant others. The National Youth Service Corps should be revamped and made more attractive to participants. As originally designed, corps members should serve in states other than theirs, and ideally in ethnic areas other than theirs. This important aspect of the one-year compulsory service has been watered down recently with most corps members opting to serve in their states or nearby states. By serving in different cultural areas, members will have the opportunity of mixing and interacting with other ethnic groups. Mass education remains an important end in itself, which should be prioritized by governments at all levels; ultimately, this is the most important factor that will alter the lifestyles of Nigerians, including where Nigerians live and who they choose to marry.

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