Marriage patterns in historical perspective: What can we learn from three centuries of marriages in Quebec?

Marianne Caron, Département de démographie – Université de Montréal

17th Century

18th Century

19th Century

20th Century

Results

Introduction

Do I want to marry? When should I marry?
Who should I marry?
The answers can be influenced by three levels of consideration:

- Preferences of individuals
- Social pressure
- Marriage market

Descriptive analysis:

- Timing of first marriage
- Probability of marriage

Data

Preindustrial Europe

- High age at first marriage
- High % of never-married individuals
- Neolocal tradition

Preindustrial Asia

- Early age at first marriage
- Universal marriage
- Complex household system

What about preindustrial North America?

- Earlier age at first marriage & lower proportion of never-married individuals than in Europe BUT same neolocal tradition.
- Could the parents and siblings influence the probability and timing of marriages in a context of large families?
- Could higher availability of land resources have facilitated marriage?

Methods

(1) Descriptive analysis: trends over time

(2) Logistic regression

(a) Probability of marriage before age 21

(b) Probability of marriage of never-married individuals

(3) Survival analysis:

(a) Kaplan-Meier survival estimates

Timing of first marriage

(4) Multilevel analysis: Work in progress...

Main results

- Through time, consistently fewer women married under age 21.
- Also the proportion of men marrying under age 21 always remained lower than women’s (Figure 2).
- Having many married siblings was associated with a higher probability of marrying, but with a lower probability of marrying before age 21 (Figure 3).
- Conversely, having no married sibling was associated with a lower probability of marrying, but with a higher probability of marrying before age 21 (Figure 3).
- For women, living in an urban parish was associated with a lower risk of marrying before age 21. The likelihood of doing so also decreased through the 19th century (Figure 4).
- With few exceptions, younger parishes were associated with a higher risk of marrying before age 21 and also of marrying to a lesser extent. Conversely, parishes founded more than 60 years before were associated with a lower risk of marrying and of marrying before age 21. This applied to men and women without major distinctions (Figures 5 & 6).

Conclusions

- As expected from the European marriage pattern, the proportion of never-married individuals was low and age at first marriages early, especially for women.
- The social environment of a family impacts both the probability and the timing of marriage.
- The urbanisation delayed marriage for women in the 19th century. A bigger marriage market like the one found in cities did not facilitate marriages.
- We suppose that the high availability of land found in younger parishes influenced the probability and the timing of marriages. This assumption has often been put forward to explain early marriages in North America. Likewise, delayed marriages were found in older parishes in which it may be harder to establish sons.

Acknowledgements

Correspondence

marianne.caron@umontreal.ca

References


