

MARRIAGE MOBILITY AND PERCEIVED STATUS OF U.S. PRESIDENTS

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Intraclass courtship and marriage is prevalent in the United States. When marriage mobility occurs, the pattern is generally for a woman to marry a man of higher status (i.e., hypergamy) rather than a man of lower status (i.e., hypogamy). This reflects a sexist tradition in which women are evaluated according to their husband's social status rather than their lineage or accomplishments (Leslie, 1982; Whyte, 1990).

In contrast, men do not lose status by marrying from a lower social class. In the marriage market, men may exchange their status for other highly valued qualities such as youth and physical attractiveness (Elder, 1969).

Given this, one might hypothesize that U.S. presidents who married down in social class ($N = 4$) should not differ significantly in their historical rankings from those who married up in social class ($N = 8$). To test this, King and Ragsdale (1988) provided information on the marriage mobility of U.S. presidents. The 1982 Murray-Blessing Poll, which is based on a survey of historians (see Stanley & Niemi, 1992), reported the following ranks for U.S. Presidents who married down in social class: Pierce (32), B. Harrison (26), McKinley (18), and Eisenhower (11). For those who married up in social class, the historical rankings were: Jackson (7), Taylor (27), Lincoln (1), Grant (36), Hayes (22), Arthur (23), Harding (37), and Hoover (21).

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Wilcoxon's rank-sum test yielded no significant difference between the two groups, supporting the hypothesis ($W_s = 21$, $W_s = 31$, one-tailed $p > .05$). This finding is consistent with previous findings showing that men in the U.S. do not lose status from downward marriage mobility.

Keywords: U.S. presidents, marriage mobility, perceived status.

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