Why Does Getting Married Make You Fat? Incentives and Appearance Maintenance

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Abstract:

Married individuals weigh more on average than non-married individuals. We suggest that exiting the dating market decreases one's incentive to maintain their appearance and leads to an increase in body weight. We hypothesize that it is most difficult for individuals to exit a traditional marriage, and easiest for individuals to exit if the couple is cohabitating but not legally married. Using a 14-year panel data set, we test whether or not the ease of exiting a domestic relationship affects weight gain. For men, we find that the type of domestic relationship has little impact on weight gain. For women, however, marriage leads to a 2.4 kg weight gain compared to cohabitating.

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1. Introduction

Married individuals are more likely to be overweight than non-married individuals (Sobal, Rauschenbach and Frongillo, 1992; Hahn, 1993). One reason for this increase in body weight after entering into marriage: decreased incentives to maintain your appearance. Individuals engage in costly behavior to maintain their appearance such as purchasing make-up, name-brand clothes or expensive cars. In modern western societies, an important component of maintaining one's appearance includes having a healthy body weight. In order to achieve an ideal body weight, many people engage in costly time-consuming activities such as exercising and preparing healthy meals at home.

The maintaining appearances hypothesis claims that upon entering into a monogamist domestic relationship, one's incentive to maintain an attractive body weight decreases. Entering into a domestic relationship decreases the probability of being left without a mate in subsequent periods. Barriers to exit in domestic relationships include the legal costs of involved with divorce, psychic costs of separation, the cost to divide assets between two individuals, and fixed costs associated with finding and sharing a residence. These factors all contribute to the persistence of domestic relationships over time. If the probability of re-entering the dating market drops after establishing a shared-residence domestic relationship, an individual's should experience a decreased incentive to maintain their appearance and body weight. In summary, the maintaining appearances hypothesis holds that the decrease in the probability of being left without a mate after one enters a domestic relationship will lead to an increase in body weight.

In this paper we test the maintaining appearances hypothesis empirically using a 14 year panel data set from the Netherlands. We hypothesize that it is most difficult for

individuals to exit a traditional marriage or a marriage with a prenuptial agreement, and easiest for individuals to exit if the couple is cohabitating but not legally married. We exploit variation in relationship status over time in order to determine whether individuals entering domestic relationships with a higher termination probability gain less weight than those entering relationships with a lower probability of termination.

We find that cohabitators are much more likely to terminate their relationship than couples in either a "traditional" marriage or those who are married with a prenuptial agreement. We also find evidence that when individuals begin to cohabitate, they will gain less weight than if they had gotten married. For the average Dutch male men, getting married increases weight by 0.6 kg. There is no statistically significant difference in weight gain when a man enters into a cohabitating relationship compared to marriage. The probability that a man will separate from his significant other has no effect on weight gain. For Dutch women, marriage causes a significant increase in weight. Women entering into traditional marriages gain 3.0 kg while those entering into marriages with a prenuptial agreement gain 2.9 kg. For women who enter in cohabitation relationships outside of marriage, weight gain is only gain 0.6 kg. This difference in weight gain between cohabitators and women in traditional marriages ($p<.001$) as well as the difference between cohabitators and women in marriages with prenuptial agreements ($p<0.001$) is strongly statistically significant. For women, we do find evidence that getting married not only decreases separation probabilities, but also increases weight gain.

2. Background

Married individuals are more likely to be overweight than their non-married counterparts (Sobal, Rauschenbach and Frongillo, 1992; Hahn, 1993). This result persists after controlling for age and other covariates. Interpreting this empirical finding is not trivial. Cross-sectional analyses do not take into account the fact that marriage and body mass interact through two different mechanisms: marital selection and marital causation (Sobal, Rauschenbach and Frongillo, 1992). Marital selection refers to the phenomenon that overweight or obese individuals are less likely to date or marry than their healthy-weighted peers (Averett and Korenman, 1999; Gortmaker et al., 1993; Cawley, Joyner and Sobal, 2006). Marital causation claims that something about being married directly affects an individual's weight.

It has been reported in the medical literature that individuals who enter marriage gain weight and those who exit marriage lose weight.[1] These findings hold despite the fact that married individuals engage in healthier behaviors and have lower mortality rates than their non-married peers (Umberson, 1992).

What specific marriage-related factors lead to weight gain? Craig and Truswell (1988) claim that marriage may lead to higher food intake which will cause more weight gain. Marriage may alter activity levels as well. Verhoef, Love and Rose (1992) and Myers, Weigel, Holliday (1989) observe that married individuals are less likely to be active or exercise, but this finding is not universal (King et al. 1998). Marriage is correlated with a decline in smoking rates and smoking cessation can induce weight gain (Waldron and Lye, 1989; Wee et al., 2001). The closest explanation to the maintaining appearances hypothesis that we test can be found in Sobal (1984). Sobal proposes the

[1] For more information, see: Sobal, Rauschenbach and Frongillo (1992); Rissanen et al. (1991); Kahn and Williamson (1990); Kahn and Williamson (1991); Kahn, Williamson and Stevens (1991).

possibility that marriage may reduce the incentive to maintain an attractive appearance since mate attraction is not a priority.

Empirically testing this litany of theories is not trivial. When individuals wed, a variety of changes happen all at once. To solve this problem, we utilize variation in the "types" of marriages or domestic relationships. To be specific, this paper examines three different domestic relationships. Individuals can either be married under the traditional common property law, married with a prenuptial agreement, or they can live together but not be officially married (i.e., cohabitation). We hypothesize that it is most difficult for individuals to exit a traditional marriage, but easiest for individuals to exit if the couple is cohabitating but not legally married.

In order for our hypothesis to be valid, the probability of actually terminating the relationship must be correlated with our predictions. We hypothesize that individuals who enter a traditional marriage will gain the most weight after entering into a domestic relationship because there is a lower probability that their marriage will dissolve. The likelihood that those in a traditional marriage will re-enter the dating market is low and thus individuals in this type of domestic relationship have less motivation to maintain their appearance or keep a healthy body weight. Those who cohabitate but are not married will gain the least amount of because the probability that the relationship will dissolve is the highest. Thus, a higher probability that the relationship will terminate will compel individuals to maintain their appearance and body weight.

3. Data

We use the DNB Household Survey (DHS) from the CentERdata of the Netherlands. The data set is a panel with data collected between 1995 and 2008. The dependent variable of interest is an individual's body mass index (BMI). Marriage status in the DHS is defined into one of six categories: 1) married under traditional, common property law, 2) married with a prenuptial agreement, 3) cohabiting, 4) divorced, 5) widowed, or 6) never married.

The DNB Household Survey contains 70,879 observations. Constraining the sample to individuals aged between 18 and 54 years old leaves 38,151 observations. Deleting observations where height, weight, or marital status data is missing reduces the sample size to 21,184. We omit extreme value of height, weight, BMI or income reduced the sample by 132 observations. These omissions do not materially alter the results. We also drop 3231 observations in years when women were pregnant. Thus, the sample that will be used in the empirical portion of this paper has 17,821 observations for 7,027 unique individuals.

Table 1 shows the sample means for the variables used in subsequent regressions. In order to test our hypothesis we need variation in Dutch communal living arrangements. Traditional marriages make up 55.2% of the sample, marriages with prenuptial agreements make up 8.8%, while 10.5% of Dutch individuals cohabitate without being married. Legally if not culturally, cohabitation in the Netherlands is more of a substitute for marriage than would be the case in the United States. Cohabitation acquired virtually equal status with marriage under Dutch law in the 1980s. Unlike in the United States, Dutch cohabitators are able to file joint tax returns (Hantrais p. 131).

Figure 1 displays the average BMI levels across marital status. Individuals in traditional marriages have a higher BMI than individuals in marriages with a prenuptial agreement, but individuals in either type of marriage have a higher BMI than cohabitators. Single individuals have the lowest levels of BMI. Figure 1 also examines BMI by age. A clear trend emerges that BMI increases with age.

4. Methods: Variables affecting the probability a relationship dissolves

We propose that individuals who enter into traditional marriages will gain more weight than cohabitators because the probability that married individuals will re-enter the dating market is lower than is the case for cohabitating individuals. In order to test this hypothesis, the type of domestic relationship must influence the probability a couple will dissolve their relationship. Figure 2 shows the average separation probabilities in the data set. The separation rate each year is 1.2%, but the separation rate after five years is 4.0%. Using a probit regression controlling for age, income and education, we investigate if the probability an individual will be single or divorced subsequent years is related to their current *type* of domestic relationship.[2]

$$P(Single_{i,t+1}=1 \cup Div_{i,t+1}=1|\boldsymbol{W}_{i,t}) = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Trad_{it} + \beta_2 Prenup_{it} + \beta_3 Cohab_{it} + \beta_4 homeowner_{it} + \beta_5 Kids_{it} + \boldsymbol{\beta}_6(\Delta \boldsymbol{X}_{it}) + \varepsilon_{it} \quad (1)$$

[2] In the probit regressions in Table 2, we drop observations where the individual was already widowed, because the death of a spouse is an exogenous event generally unrelated to couple choice to remain together or not. Unsurprisingly—since less than 1% of are sample is made up of widowers—including widowers in the regression does not affect the coefficients of interest significantly.

The dependent variable is whether or not the individual has become single or divorces one year in the future. The variable $\boldsymbol{W}_{it}$ is a vector of the independent variables, where *i* and *t* are indices for the individual and year respectively. $Trad_{it}$, $Prenup_{it}$ and $Cohab_{it}$ are variables dummy variables representing (Trad)itional Marriage, Marriage with a (Prenup)tial Agreement, and (Cohab)itiation respectively. $\boldsymbol{X}_{it}$ is a vector of the other explanatory variables including age, income and education.

Table 2 shows the results of these tests separately by gender. Men and women who are married are much less likely to be single or divorced after one year than all other individuals ($p<0.001$). This is true regardless of whether the individual was involved in a "traditional" marriage or a marriage with a prenuptial agreement. Individuals cohabitating are less likely to be single the next year than current singles ($p<0.001$). On the other hand, cohabitators are more likely terminate their relationship than either type of married individuals ($p<0.001$). The probability of separation for married individuals with a prenuptial agreement is not statistically different from people with a traditional marriage for both men and women. We also note that having a child decreases separation probabilities

The last two columns of Table 2 repeat the exercise above, but instead use two year lead in the dependent variable. The results are very similar to those with a one year lead. Based on this analysis, we predict that cohabitators will gain less weight after moving in together than individuals who get married with or without a prenuptial agreement, but this effect will be stronger for women then for men.

Homeownership may also serve as predictor of relationship stability. Conditional on income, couples who decide to buy a home may expect to have longer-term

relationships than others. If the act of buying a home is orthogonal to weight gain, the purchase of a home could be used as a proxy for relationship strength. We also include a homeownership variable in the probit regressions above. Table 2 shows that in fact homeownership is not related to the probability a couple separates.

We have now derived two empirically testable hypotheses:

1. Individuals who enter into a cohabitation arrangement should gain less weight than individuals who enter into a traditional marriage.
2. The weight gain differences between cohabitators and those in traditional marriage should be of larger magnitude for women than men.

The subsequent sections will test these hypotheses.

5. Results: Does the type of domestic relationship affect body weight?

In an ideal scientific experiment, the researcher would randomly assign individuals to different domestic relationship statuses. In the case of random assignment, the researcher has eliminated any sorting biases. If this were the case, we could run the following OLS regression.

$$BMI_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Trad_{it} + \beta_2 Prenup_{it} + \beta_3 Cohab_{it} + \boldsymbol{\beta_4 X}_{it} + \varepsilon_{it} \qquad (2)$$

The results from this regression are displayed in Table 3 separately for men and women. Other covariates in $\boldsymbol{X}$ include age, age-squared, age-cubed, education, income, smoking status, the whether or not the individual has a child, as well as year and region dummy variables. For men we observe a monotonic increase in weight from single individuals (the omitted variable) to cohabitators to married individuals with a prenuptial

agreement to individuals in a traditional marriage (i.e., $0<\beta_{Cohab}<\beta_{Prenup}<\beta_{Trad}$). For females, cohabitators are actually thinner than single women. As predicted, both types of married women weigh more than cohabitators. For both men and women, our hypothesis that married women will weigh more than cohabitators holds.

However, in order for OLS to be valid, an individual's choice of domestic relationship must be unrelated to their underlying BMI. OLS will overestimate weight gain from marriage if heavier people are choosing to be married, and will underestimate weight gain from marriage if thinner people are selecting into marriage. Thus, we must take advantage of the panel nature of the data in our regression specification. The Hausman test rejects ($p<0.001$) the null hypothesis that the random effects specification produces consistent coefficient estimates.

Thus, in order to mitigate any sorting bias across the different types of domestic relationships, we utilize a fixed effects regression. The fixed effects specification isolates how entering a domestic relationship changes body weight. Identification comes from within-person changes in BMI over time.

$$\Delta BMI_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\Delta Trad_{it}) + \beta_2(\Delta Prenup_{it}) + \beta_3(\Delta Cohab_{it}) + \boldsymbol{\beta}_4(\Delta \mathbf{X}_{it}) + \Delta\varepsilon_{it} \quad (3)$$

In the equation above, $\Delta z_{it} = z_{it} - t_i^{-1}\Sigma\, z_{it}$. The fixed effects regression is valid if the change in marital status is uncorrelated with unobserved changes that also affect weight. This strong condition is unlikely to hold. Since our major research question is to test how weight changes across domestic relationships, however, we only need for unobserved changes affecting weight to be similar for cohabitators and both groups of married individuals. In other words, we assume that sharing a residence influences the

evolution of BMI levels similarly across all three types of domestic relationships. We attribute any additional differences in weight gain across the three groups to differences in the probability a relationship will dissolve.

The assumption that shared residence has a homogeneous affect on BMI level could be violated if weight gain trends differ across relationship types for reasons unrelated to the probability a relationship is terminated. For instance, a secular increase in weight over time could account for some of these differences. To control for this possibility, we include year dummy variables. Thus, the coefficients of interest represent changes in BMI above or below a secular time trend.

Columns 1 of Table 4 shows the results of our preferred fixed effects regression separately for males. Men increase their BMI when they enter into any domestic relationship but this increase is not statistically significant. Further there are negligible differences in the change in a male's weight gain across traditional marriage, marriage with a prenuptial agreement and cohabitation . A male's weight gain is 0.186 BMI in a traditional marriage and 0.267 BMI in marriages with a prenuptial agreement. These differences are not statistically different from one another ($p<.422$). For the average Dutch male,[3] this corresponds to weight increases of 0.61 kg and 0.87 kg respectively. Dutch male cohabitators gain 0.195 BMI (0.63 kg), but this gain is not statistically different from the weight gain observed in traditional marriages ($p<0.939$) or marriages with prenuptial agreements ($p<0.597$).

Column 2 of Table 4 shows the results for women. Women gain more weight after marriage than men. Females in traditional marriage gain 1.069 BMI (3.0kg) and

[3] The average Dutch male is 1.808m tall. The average Dutch female is 1.676m tall. From: *Zelfgerapporteerde medische consumptie, gezondheid en leefstijl*, Central Bureau of Statistics, March 18, 2008.

those in marriage with a prenuptial agreement gain 1.028 BMI (2.9 kg). Unlike for men, we observe significant differences between how entering into a domestic relationship affects weight. Women who begin to cohabitate gain only 0.203 BMI (0.57 kg); this is a significantly smaller weight gain than women in a traditional marriage ($p<0.001$) or married women with prenuptial agreement ($p<0.002$). Cohabitators have a significantly higher probability that their relationship will dissolve than either of the married groups. Thus, cohabitators have a strong incentive to maintain their weight because the probability they re-enter the dating market is high.

It is possible that married women are more likely to have children and thus the increased weight gain upon getting married may be caused entirely by pregnancy. To control for this, years in which a woman was pregnant were dropped from the sample. Nevertheless, giving birth could lead to a permanent increase in weight even months or years after giving birth. To control for this, we include a dummy variable indicating whether the mother had a child.[4]

The length of a relationship may also affect weight gain. To control for this, we include a variable measuring the length of a couple's relationship (not shown). The length of the couple's relationship has no effect on a male's weight.[5] For women, longer relationships tend to decrease weight (-0.42 BMI) compared to the secular trend. This finding indicates that the majority of weight gain occurs during the first few years after marriage.

[4] In other specifications, we also included the number of children the mother had had rather than whether or not they had any children. Using either variable produces very similar regression results.

[5] Although not shown, men who are in longer lasting cohabitation arrangement weight more than men in shorter-term cohbatation arrangements, but this effect is small in magnitude. As mentioned above, men who are in marriages for more years do not weigh any more or less than men married for less years after controlling for other covariates.

While the maintaining appearances hypothesis could explain the sudden weight gain for women after marriage, women dieting before their wedding day could also explain this phenomenon. Pre-wedding dieting could lead to overestimates in the impact of marriage on weight gain. The post-wedding weight gain for women may simply be a 'regression to the mean' and not a true effect from marriage market incentives. Employing 14 years of data and a fixed-effects regression framework should help to attenuate this problem. To further address this problem, we run our preferred fixed effects regression with lagged marital status. Columns 3 and 4 of Table 4 display the results of this regression.

We see that although men gain some weight after entering into any domestic relationship, there are no statistically significant differences in weight change across the three types of domestic relationships. For women, we still see significant weight gain for both types of marriage, but we actually observe a decrease in weight for cohabitating individuals. Cohabitating women gain significantly less weight than married women ($p<0.014$) or married women with a prenuptial agreement ($p<0.002$). Because the results using lagged marital status are similar to our preferred regression, it does not seem to be the case that dieting before marriage is driving these results.

Table 5 compares our results to those of other papers. Jeffrey and Rick (2002) found that males who enter into marriage gain 0.70 BMI compared to their baseline, whereas our results show that weight gain was only 0.19 BMI. The Jeffrey and Rick paper, however, does not control for income, education, or smoking status as our specification does. On the other hand, for women, Jeffrey and Rick's estimate of female weight gain from marriage is very similar to ours.

Table 5 also compares our results to those of Averett, Sikora and Argys (2008), who use *ln(BMI)* as the dependent variable. In order to make our results comparable, we conduct our preferred fixed effects regression but substitute *ln(BMI)* for *BMI* as the dependent variable. Compared to the Averett paper, our estimates of weight gain caused by marriage are of a smaller magnitude for men and of larger magnitude for women. The magnitude of the weight gain due to cohabitation is nearly identical between the Averett paper and the results presented here.

Two Stage Specification

Let us assume that type of domestic relationship an individual enters into is correlated with the probability that a relationship dissolves, but is not correlated with factors influencing weight gain outside of a shared living arrangement. If this is the case, we can use the fitted values of a probit regressions as a proxy for the strength of the marriage.

$$P(Separation_{it+1}) = \gamma_0 + \gamma_1(Trad_{it}) + \gamma_2(Prenup_{it}) + \gamma_3(Cohab_{it}) + \boldsymbol{\gamma}_4(\Delta \mathbf{X}_{it}) + \Delta u_{it} \quad (4)$$

$$\Delta BMI_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1(\Delta Dom_{it}) + \beta_2(\Delta Dom_{it})(\Delta \check{S}eparation_{it}) + \beta_3(\Delta Div_{it}) + \beta_4(\Delta Wid_{it}) + \boldsymbol{\beta}_4(\Delta \mathbf{X}_{it}) + \Delta \varepsilon_{it} \quad (5)$$

In equation 4, the variable *Separation* is equal to unity if the individual separated from their significant other one year into the future and *Dom* is a variable equal to unity if the individual is any type of domestic relationship.[6] The variable *Šeparation* represents the fitted values of the probit regression in equation 4. Thus, *Šeparation* variable is a proxy for the probability of being single or divorced one year in the future. In the data,

[6] The variable Dom_{it} is equal to unitiy if and ony if $Trad_{it}$=1, $Prenup_{it}$=1, or $Cohab_{it}$=1.

we do not observe when singled, divorced, or widowed individuals separate from the person they are dating. Because the *Separation* variable equals zero for all individuals outside of domestic relationships, we interact the *Šeparation* variable with *Dom* in the second stage.

The exclusion restriction here is that the *type* of domestic relationship and homeownership status need to be correlated with the probability of the breakup, but not correlated with the error term from (5). This means that different types of domestic relationships effect weight only through relationship termination probabilities or through factors shared across all types of domestic relationships (e.g., shared housing, more domesticated lifestyle). Table 6 shows the results from this regression.

As expected, we see that entering into a domestic relationship leads to an increase in BMI. Estimates of the direct impact of being in a domestic relationship on weight gain are similar to those found in our preferred fixed effects specification shown in Table 4.

The probability an individual will separate from their mate has a significant impact on weight gain. A 5% increase in the predicted separation probability leads to a 0.139 decrease in BMI for men and a 0.597 decrease in BMI for women. This corresponds to a 0.6% decrease in body mass for men and a 2.4% decrease in body mass for women.

7. Conclusion

It is documented that married individuals weigh more than their non-married peers. In this paper, we test whether the prospect of separating from your significant other and reentering the dating market can effect body mass. For men, we find little

evidence that separation probabilities affect weight gain. For women, however, separation probabilities have a large effect on weight gain. Moving from a cohabitation relationship to a married relationship leads to an increase in weight of 2.4 kg. Further, our two-stage regression also finds that predicted separation probabilities have a significant impact on weight gain.

Understanding the mechanisms through which weight gain occurs is important for policy-makers. However, one should not interpret this paper as opprobrium against marriage. First, weight gain caused specifically by the maintaining appearances hypothesis is modest for women (2.4 kg) and not statistically significant for men. In our data, marriage is also correlated with decreased rates of smoking. Marriage may have difficult to measure psychic benefits as well. Nevertheless, this paper has shown that withdrawal from the dating market does cause weight gain. Extending this paper to find practical policies that could maintain marriage stability and decrease obesity rates would be fruitful.

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TABLES

Table 1

Table of Means

	Variable	Mean	Std. Dev.	Min	Max
	BMI	24.78	3.98	10.4	59.5
Marital Status	Single	0.213		0	1
	Tradiational Marriage	0.552		0	1
	Married with a Prenutpial Agreement	0.088		0	1
	Cohabitating	0.105		0	1
	Divorced	0.038		0	1
	Widowed	0.005		0	1
	Kids	1.24	1.22	0	7
	Homeowner	0.271	0.444	0	1
	Smoker	0.338	0.473	0	1
	Gender	0.602	0.490	0	1
Education	Primary Education or lower	0.090	0.286	0	1
	Pre-vocational	0.144	0.352	0	1
	Pre-university	0.110	0.313	0	1
	Vocational	0.486	0.500	0	1
	University	0.157	0.364	0	1
	Other	0.013	0.112	0	1
Region	Three largest cities	0.163	0.369	0	1
	Other West	0.288	0.453	0	1
	North	0.110	0.313	0	1
	East	0.203	0.402	0	1
	South	0.236	0.425	0	1
	Income	57.81	50.98	0	492.8
	Year	1999.9	4.1	1995	2008
	n	*17,821*			

Table 2

Probit Regression: Probability of being without a mate

	P(No mate in 1 year)		P(No mate in 2 years)	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Married	-3.503	-3.397	-3.046	-3.069
	(0.098)***	(0.106)***	(0.099)***	(0.116)***
Prenup	-3.624	-3.829	-3.225	-2.991
	(0.212)***	(0.319)***	(0.221)***	(0.205)***
Cohab	-2.769	-2.522	-2.379	-2.103
	(0.091)***	(0.096)***	(0.099)***	(0.105)***
Div	-0.314	0.163	-0.179	0.223
	(0.115)***	(0.111)	(0.132)	(0.117)*
Homeowner	-0.003	0.034	0.026	0.166
	(0.069)	(0.075)	(0.073)	(0.080)**
Kids	-0.258	-0.057	-0.361	-0.143
	(0.078)***	(0.075)	(0.082)***	(0.082)*
Age	-0.096	0.016	0.005	-0.001
	(0.158)	(0.028)	(0.004)	(0.000)*
Age-squared	0.004	0.000	0.000	0.000
	(0.004)	(0.000)	(0.000)*	(0.000)*
Age-cubed	0.000	0.000	-0.001	-0.003
	(0.000)	(0.000)	(0.001)	(0.001)***
Income	0.000	-0.001	-0.247	0.031
	(0.001)	(0.001)*	(0.167)	(0.186)
Constant	1.557	0.297	1.572	-0.976
	(1.876)	(0.521)	(1.700)	(0.620)
P(Trad=Prenup)	0.5691	0.1768	0.4213	0.7116
P(Trad=Cohab)	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001	0.0001
P(Prenup=Cohab)	0.0001	0.0001	0.0003	0.0001

*Education level dummies included but not shown, ***: p<.01, **: p<.05, *: p<.10*

Table 3

OLS : Dependent Variable: BMI

	Male	Female
Trad	0.738***	0.140
	(0.109)	(0.196)
Div	0.631***	-0.133
	(0.205)	(0.290)
Wid	0.158	-0.138
	(0.491)	(0.766)
Prenup	0.462***	0.131
	(0.145)	(0.250)
Cohab	0.365***	-0.245
	(0.121)	(0.219)
Smoker	-0.466***	-1.037***
	(0.066)	(0.116)
Age	1.360***	1.360***
	(0.149)	(0.251)
Age-squared	-0.032***	-0.032***
	(0.004)	(0.007)
Age-cubed	0.00026***	0.00025***
	(0.00004)	(0.0001)
Income	0.0009	-0.0057***
	(0.0007)	(0.0012)
Kids	-0.117	-0.181
	(0.080)	(0.133)
Constant	4.919**	6.382***
	(1.711)	(2.860)
P(Trad=Prenup)	0.016	0.965
P(Trad=Cohab)	0.002	0.066
P(Prenup=Cohab)	0.520	0.149

*Education dummies included but not shown, ***: p<.01, **: p<.05, *: p<.10*

Table 4

Fixed Effects : Dependent Variable: BMI

	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
	Male	Female	Male	Female
Trad. Marr	0.186	1.077***	0.127	0.162
	(0.147)	(0.287)	(0.079)	(0.143)
Div	-0.377*	-0.729*	0.272	-0.058
	(0.209)	(0.394)	(0.201)	(0.351)
Wid	0.952	1.979***	0.546	-0.199
	(0.599)	(0.756)	(0.806)	(0.852)
Prenup	0.267	1.028***	0.091	0.497**
	(0.165)	(0.317)	(0.122)	(0.234)
Cohab	0.195	0.203	0.186*	-0.381*
	(0.128)	(0.214)	(0.107)	(0.203)
Kids	-0.182*	-0.296*	-0.158	-0.418*
	(0.096)	(0.175)	(0.111)	(0.222)
Smoker	-	-	-	-
	0.335***	0.782***	0.320***	0.734***
	(0.075)	(0.132)	(0.088)	(0.177)
Income	0.001	-0.001	0.000	0.000
	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)	(0.001)
Trad=Prenup	0.4219	0.7761	0.7478	0.1308
Trad=Commonlaw	0.9393	0.0001	0.6092	0.0144
Prenup=Commonlaw	0.5972	0.0015	0.5075	0.0021

*Year dummies included but not shown, ***: p<.01, **: p<.05, *: p<.10*

Table 5

Comparing Results versus the Literature

	Dependent Variable: BMI				Dependent Variable: Log(BMI)			
	Gneezy & Shafrin		**Jeffrey & Rick (2002)**		**Gneezy & Shafrin**		**Averett et al. (2008)**	
	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women	Men	Women
Trad	0.19	1.08***	0.70***	0.96***	0.008	0.034***	0.015***	0.017***
Prenup	0.27	1.03***			0.011*	0.035***		
Cohab	0.19	0.20			0.009*	0.006	0.010***	0.006**
Div	-0.38*	-0.73*	-0.27	-0.63***	-0.013*	-0.029**	-0.001	-0.007***
Wid	0.95	1.98***			0.030	0.069***		

Table 6

Two Stage Regression: Dep Variable BMI

	Males	Females
Dom	0.323	1.064
	(0.151)**	(0.295)***
Šeparation	-2.77	-11.94
	(2.01)	(3.31)***
Div	-0.335	-0.693
	(0.208)	(0.398)*
Wid	1.010	1.976
	(0.598)*	(0.758)***
Kids	-0.207	-0.287
	(0.097)**	(0.175)
Smoker	-0.352	-0.761
	(0.075)***	(0.133)***
Income	0.000	-0.002
	(0.001)	(0.001)*
Constant	24.240	23.765
	(0.124)***	(0.244)***

*Year dummies included but not shown, ***: p<.01, **: p<.05, *: p<.10*

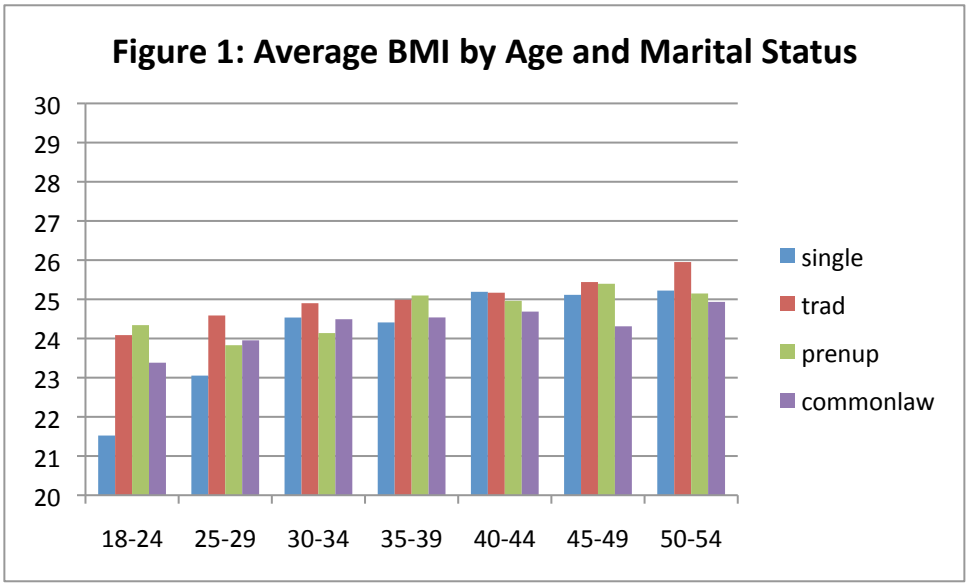
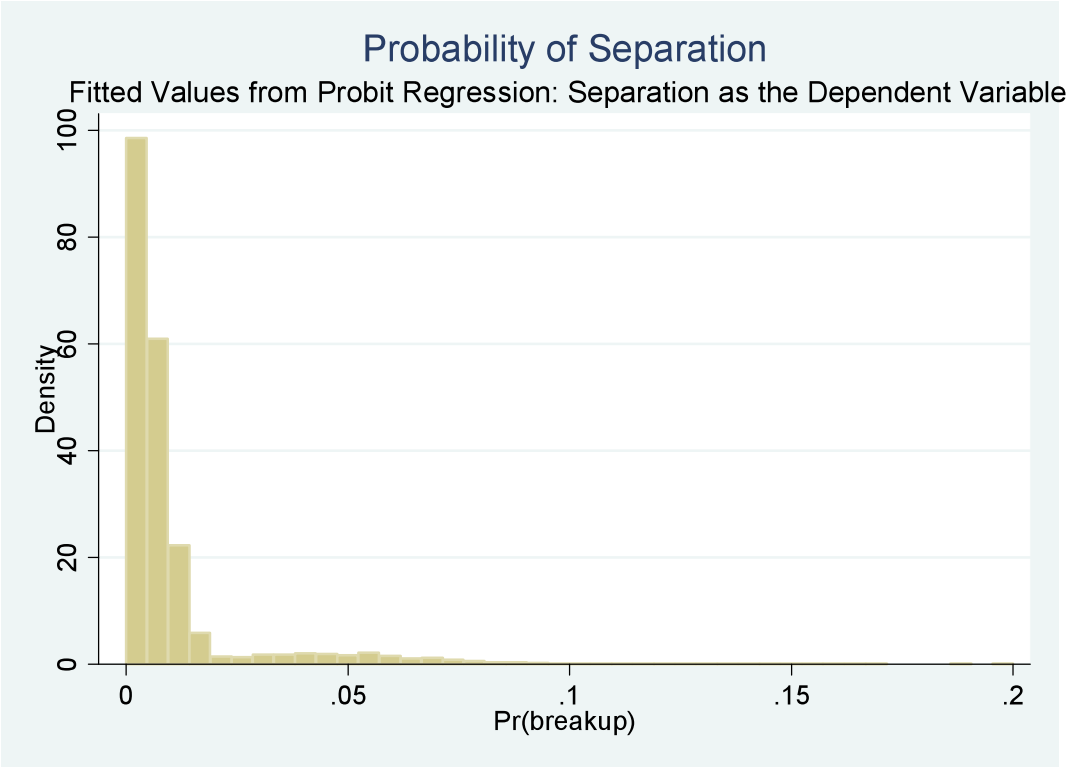


Figure 1: Average BMI by Age and Marital Status
30
29
28
27
26
25
24
23
22
21
20
18-24
25-29
30-34
35-39
40-44
45-49
50-54
single
trad
prenup
commonlaw


Probability of Separation
Fitted Values from Probit Regression: Separation as the Dependent Variable
Density
0
20
40
60
80
100
0
.05
.1
.15
.2
Pr(breakup)