

CITRA Small Grant Proposal 2004 Progress Report

Trends in Relationships between Marital Status and Body Weight

Jeffery Sobal, PhD, MPH, Division of Nutritional Sciences, Cornell University

The overall goal for this project is to examine trends in relationships between marital status and body weight from 1990-2002 using annual data from the Behavioral Risk Factor Survey System (BRFSS) data collected on representative U.S. national samples from 1990-2002.

Francoise Vermeulen from the Cornell Statistical Consulting group was hired in a part-time capacity to conduct the analysis for this project. She has downloaded 1990 baseline and the most recent 2002 data and conducted preliminary analyses. We will be collaborating with John Cawley and one of his graduate students from the Department of Policy Analysis and Management to link our data into their previously merged 1990-2000 data set for further analysis during the summer.

Preliminary analysis done by Francoise Vermeulen was used as part of the justification section in submission of a USDA NRI grant proposal on "Divorce and Obesity" that was submitted on June 14, 2004. The following section was made possible by the CITRA award, and considerably strengthened the justification section of the USDA proposal:

We conducted pilot analysis funded by a small grant from the Cornell Institute for Translational Research on Aging (CITRA) using weighted data from the 1990 and 2002 Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS). This analysis revealed that separated and divorced women were more likely to be obese than those who were married, widowed, or never married, while men in those marital groups were similar to married men (Table below). These preliminary findings are similar to those of NHIS data (Schoenborn et al 2002) revealing separated and divorced women were more obese than women in other marital categories. Overall, these data suggest a need to further study separation, divorce, and obesity.

Schoenborn CA, Adams PF, Barnes PM. 2002. Body weight status of adults: United States, 1997-98. Advance Data 6(330):1-15.

	<u>Never Co-</u> <u>Married</u>	<u>Now</u> <u>Habit</u>	<u>Married</u>	<u>Separated</u>	<u>Divorced</u>	<u>Widowed</u>
<u>Obese Women</u>						
BRFSS 1990	11%	7%	15%	22%	17%	21%
BRFSS 2002	19%	19%	21%	28%	25%	23%
<u>Obese Men</u>						
BRFSS 1990	9%	10%	14%	12%	11%	13%
BRFSS 2002	18%	20%	24%	23%	22%	20%

We believe that this BRFSS data made a strong case for our argument that more extensive analysis needs to be conducted on separation, divorce, and obesity, with the CITRA funding greatly enhancing the justification in the submitted USDA NRI proposal.

Findings from further analysis funded by this CITRA proposal be used in a paper about trends in marital status and obesity to be submitted to a journal.