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Oral Presentation 2.5

PREDICTING THE PROBABILITY OF DIVORCE AMONG YOUNG
MARRIED WOMEN

Angela Smith and Michael Seeborg*, Department of Economics

Over recent decades, we have witnessed drastic changes in American family structure. This has been due in large part to the rapid rise in divorce rates. Previous studies, such as those performed by Gary Becker (1991) and Manser and Brown (1980) have applied economic models to divorce and other family structure decisions. Building on the utility maximization analysis of Manser and Brown, as adapted by John Ermisch (1993), this study uses a logit regression model to predict divorce decisions for an all female sample of respondents, ages 28 to 36. Data are extracted from the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth for the purposes of this study. Economic theory predicts that the probability of divorce is directly related to one's opportunity cost of being married. Using a woman's potential wage rate as a proxy for the economic portion of this opportunity cost, the author of the present study hypothesizes that the probability of a woman seeking divorce will increase with increases in her potential wage rate, holding actual wages and other income constant.