

Is homogamy good for marriage?

A longitudinal dyadic analysis of factors associated with marital instability in early twenty-first-century Australia

Rebecca Kippen

Bruce Chapman

The Australian National University

Peng Yu

**Department of Families, Housing,
Community Services and Indigenous Affairs**

Homogamy: similarity between partners

Homogamy hypothesis

Marriages of homogamous couples are more stable than those of couples with dissimilar characteristics.

Independence hypothesis

Women with higher human capital are more likely to separate.

Data and method

HILDA waves 1 to 7

2,482 couples

legally married, coresident, 58 years or less,
both partners interviewed in wave 1

These couples are traced to wave 7 to
determine which remained together, and
which separated or divorced.

$$h_i(t) = h_0(t) \exp(x_i \beta)$$

Data and method

Cox proportional hazards model

$$h_i(t) = h_0(t) \exp(x_i \beta)$$

$h_i(t)$: hazard of separation/divorce occurring at marriage duration t for the i th couple

x_i : set of covariates specific to the i th couple
(time-varying covariates—updated at each wave)

β : set of coefficients estimated to fit the Cox model

$h_0(t)$: baseline hazard function

$$h_i(t) = h_0(t) \exp(x_i \beta)$$

Data and method

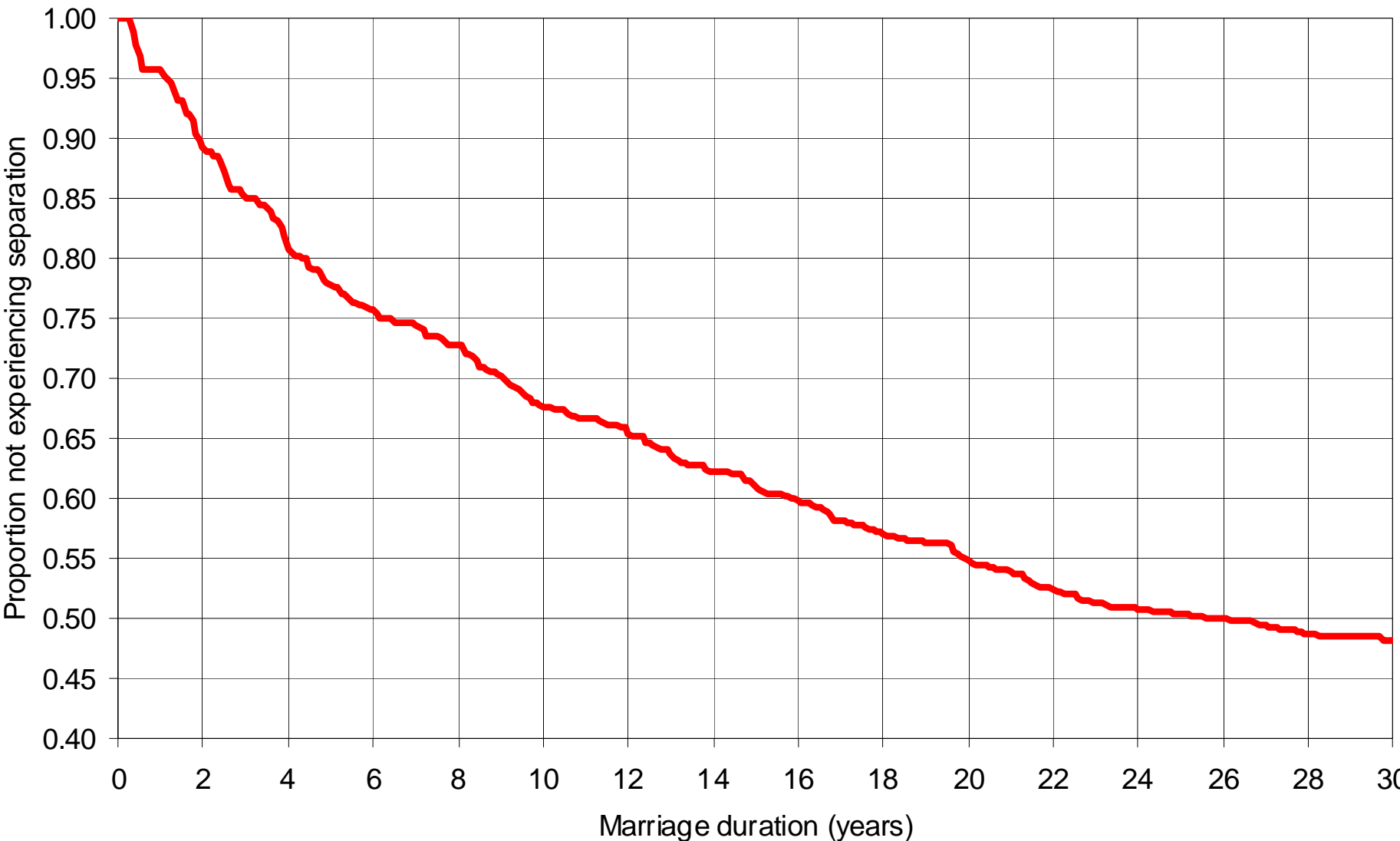
The functional form of the hazard over marriage duration t does not have to be defined:

$$\frac{h_i(t)}{h_0(t)} = \exp(x_i \beta)$$

The first term is the ratio of the separation hazard of the i th couple relative to the baseline hazard.

The hazard ratio is assumed to be constant over marital duration t . That is, any two hazards are proportional over time.

Figure 1. Kaplan-Meier survival curve, marriages not experiencing separation by time since marriage (years), Australia, 2001-2007



Homogamy hypothesis variables

Country of birth

Age difference

Preference for a(nother) child

Religiosity

Education

Drinking

Smoking

Homogamy hypothesis variables

Significant: age difference, child preference, smoking, drinking

Not significant: country of birth, religiosity, education

Age difference

Ref cat: husband 1 year younger to 3 years older

	Hazard ratio	p-value
Husband 4-8 years older	1.39	0.088
Husband 9+ years older	2.24	0.019
Husband 2+ years younger	1.53	0.045

Homogamy hypothesis variables

Preference for a(nother) child, scale from 0 to 10

Ref cat: husband and wife +/-1

	Hazard ratio	p-value
Wife 2-4 more	1.31	0.364
Wife 5-10 more	2.10	0.023
Wife 2-4 less	1.14	0.622
Wife 5-10 less	1.29	0.330

Homogamy hypothesis variables

	Hazard ratio	p-value
Smoking		
Ref cat: both do not smoke		
H does not smoke, W smokes	1.91	0.000
H smokes, W does not smoke	1.75	0.019
Both smoke	1.39	0.146
Drinking (model 2, no satisfaction variables)		
Ref cat: both 0-2		
H 0-2, W 3+	1.73	0.044
H 3+, W 0-2	1.10	0.597
Both 3+	1.43	0.074

Independence hypothesis variables

Wife's education

Wife's employment status

Wife's years in paid employment

None of these were significant

Other variables

Parents ever separated/divorced

Husband's age at marriage

1st marriage/2nd+ marriage

Cohabitation before marriage

Children before marriage

Number and age of resident children

Wife's preference for a(nother) child

Satisfaction with life, satisfaction with relationship

Equivalised household income

Husband's employment status

Husband's years in paid employment

Perceived prosperity

Other variables

	Hazard ratio	p-value
Ref cat: both sets of parents did not separate		
H's separated, W's did not	1.89	0.002
Ref cat: h's age at marriage <25 years		
25-29 years	0.51	0.001
30-34 years	0.39	0.001
35+ years	0.43	0.045
Ref cat: both 1 st marriage		
Both 2 nd + marriage	1.90	0.045
Ref cat: no children before marriage		
Children before marriage	1.64	0.015
Wife would like a(nother) child	0.94	0.045

Other variables

	Hazard ratio	p-value
Ref cat: both dissatisfied with r/ship (0-7)		
H dissatisfied, W satisfied	0.63	0.030
H satisfied, W dissatisfied	0.51	0.001
Both satisfied (8-10)	0.19	0.000
Ref cat: equivalised household income <\$20,000		
\$30,000-\$39,999	0.50	0.005
Ref cat: husband works <35 hours per week		
Husband is unemployed	3.23	0.022
Model 2 (no satisfaction variables)		
Ref cat: both comfortable to prosperous		
H very poor/just getting by, W c to p	1.68	0.016
Both very poor/just getting by	1.66	0.005

'Good' marriages

Both sets of parents did not separate

H's age at marriage is 30-34 years

H is 1 year younger to 3 years older than W

1st marriage for both, no children born before the marriage

W "8" on would like another child, H similar preference

Equiv. household income is \$30,000-\$39,999

H is employed full time

Both comfortable to prosperous

Both 0-2 standard drinks

Both do not smoke

Figure 2. Survival curve, 'good' marriages, Australia, 2001-2007

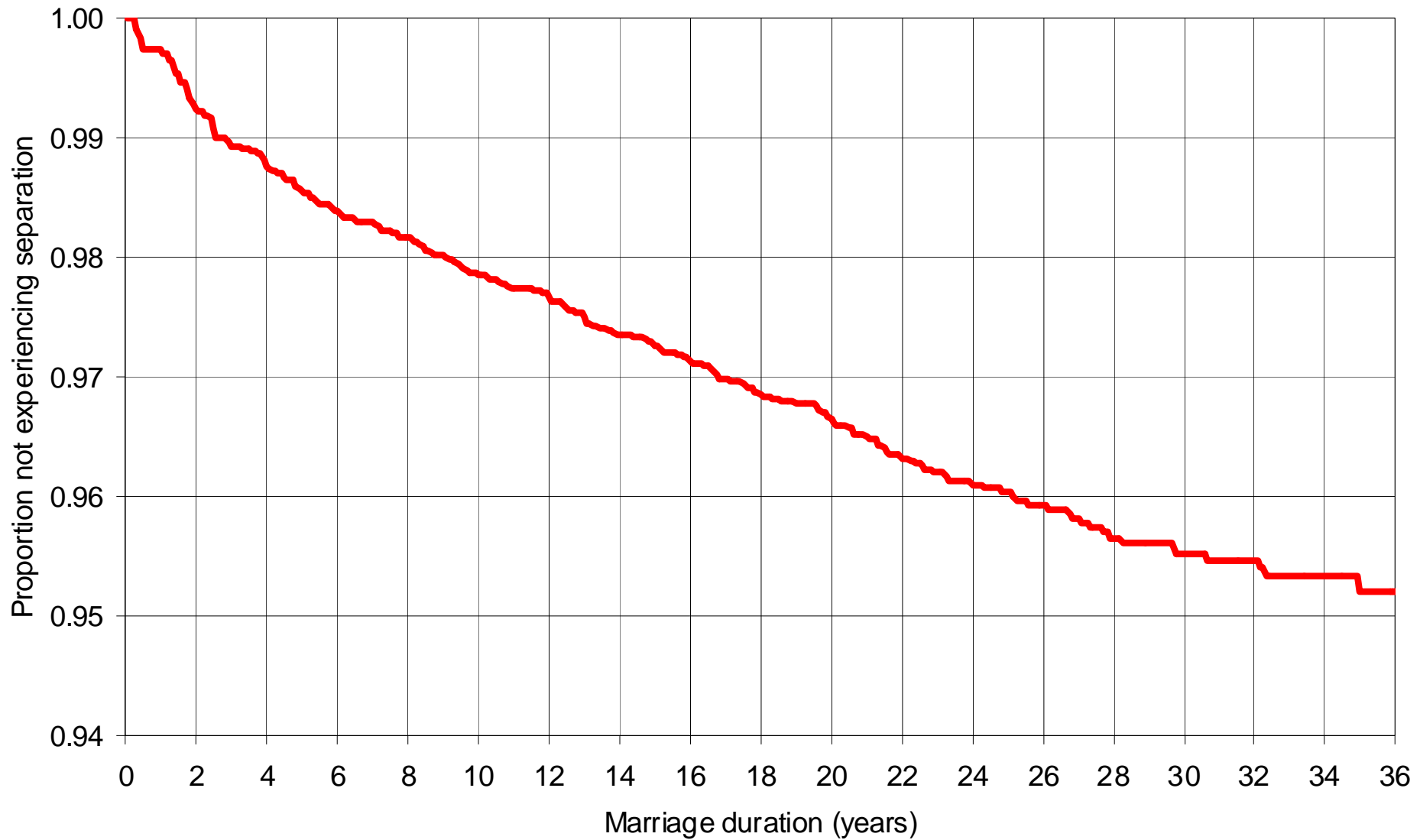
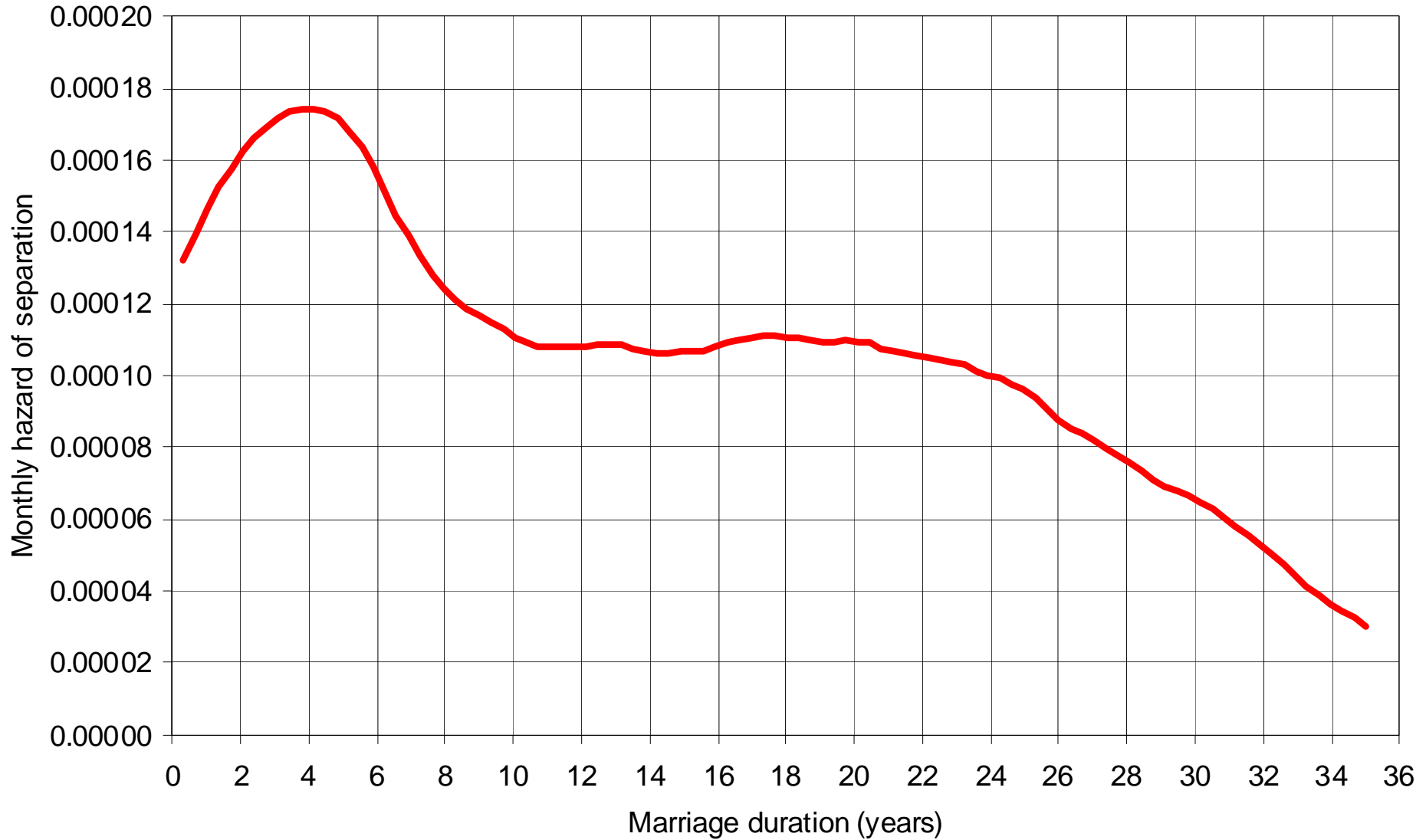


Figure 3. Hazard function, 'good' marriages, Australia, 2001-2007



'Good' and 'bad' marriages: homogamy

Good:

Husband 1 year younger to 3 years older

Same preferences for a(nother) child

Both do not smoke, both 0-2 standard drinks

Bad:

Husband 9+ years older

Wife wants a(nother) child much more

Husband does not smoke, wife smokes

Husband 0-2 std drinks, wife 3+ std drinks

15 to 21 times more likely to separate

'Good' and 'bad' marriages: economic status

Good:

Equivalised household income is \$30,000-\$39,999

Husband is employed full time

Both comfortable to prosperous

Bad:

Equivalised household income is <\$20,000

Husband is unemployed

Both very poor to just getting by

7 to 9 times more likely to separate

'Good' and 'bad': marriage & children

Good:

Both sets of parents did not separate

Both 1st marriage

No children before marriage

Bad:

Husband's parents separated

Both 2nd+ marriage

Children before marriage

5 to 6 times more likely to separate

To do

1. Add predicted incomes for husband and wife
2. Add variable/s on gender-role attitudes (e.g. 'Whatever career a woman may have, her most important role in life is still that of being a mother')
3. Separate children born before marriage into:
 - (a) children born to previous relationships and
 - (b) children born to couple before marriage
4. 1st/2nd+ marriages: try number of divorces (0/1+) instead

'Good' and 'bad' marriages

GOOD: Both sets of parents did not separate

H's age at marriage is 30-34 years, wife similar in age

First marriage for both, no children born before the marriage

W "8" on would like a(nother) child, H similar preference

Eq. hh income \$30,000-\$39,999, H works 35+ hours per week

Both comfortable to prosperous

Both drink 0-2 drinks, both do not smoke

Yrs	Sep%	Both satisfied with r/ship	Both dissatisfied with r/ship
		Sep%	Sep%
5	1.4	0.8	4.3
10	2.2	1.2	6.3
15	2.7	1.6	8.0
20	3.4	1.9	9.7
25	4.0	2.3	11.5
30	4.5	2.6	12.9

GOOD: Both sets of parents did not separate
H's age at marriage is 30-34 years, wife similar in age
First marriage for both, no children born before the marriage
W "8" on would like a(nother) child, H similar preference
Eq. hh income \$30,000-\$39,999, H works 35+ hours per week
Both comfortable to prosperous
Both drink 0-2 drinks, both do not smoke

BAD: As above, but H is 2+ years younger than W;
H is 5-10 lower on "would like a(nother) child" scale;
H drinks 0-2, W drinks 3+; H does not smoke, W smokes

Yrs	'Good' sep%	'Bad' sep%
5	1.4	13.8
10	2.2	20.0
15	2.7	24.8
20	3.4	29.5
25	4.0	34.0
30	4.5	37.5

GOOD: Both sets of parents did not separate
H's age at marriage is 30-34 years, wife similar in age
First marriage for both, no children born before the marriage
W "8" on would like a(nother) child, H similar preference
Eq. hh income \$30,000-\$39,999, H works 35+ hours per week
Both comfortable to prosperous
Both drink 0-2 drinks, both do not smoke

BAD: As above, but eq. hh income < \$20,000, H unemployed,
both very poor to just getting by

Yrs	'Good' sep%	'Bad' sep%
5	1.4	10.3
10	2.2	15.0
15	2.7	18.7
20	3.4	22.4
25	4.0	26.1
30	4.5	28.9

GOOD: Both sets of parents did not separate

H's age at marriage is 30-34 years, wife similar in age

First marriage for both, no children born before the marriage

W "8" on would like a(nother) child, H similar preference

Eq. hh income \$30,000-\$39,999, H works 35+ hours per week

Both comfortable to prosperous

Both drink 0-2 drinks, both do not smoke

BAD: As above, but H's parents separated, both 2nd marriage,
child born before marriage

Yrs	'Good' sep%	'Bad' sep%
5	1.4	8.2
10	2.2	12.0
15	2.7	15.1
20	3.4	18.2
25	4.0	21.2
30	4.5	23.7