Do Married Men Who Live with their Wives Have Higher Wages Than Married Men Who Don't?

Further Evidence Regarding the Causal Mechanisms Explaining Men's Wage Premium to Marriage

Extended Abstract

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Abstract

That married men earn more than single men is well established in the literature. What remains unclear, though, is the cause of this wage gap. The literature that does exist typically finds that selectivity into marriage only explains a small part of the wage gap, but it has been extremely difficult for researchers to unpack what it is about marriage that seems to be 'creating' higher-earning men. Whereas past work has typically assumed that married men reside with their wives, I take advantage of variations in coresidence among Mexican immigrant men living in the U.S., as well as fixed effects techniques, to evaluate the validity of the primary hypotheses regarding men's wage premium: household specialization; selectivity into marriage; a 'settlement effect' caused by marriage; and favorable treatment of married men by employers.

Results confirm that selectivity into marriage is not responsible for men's marital wage premium. Preliminary results regarding which causal mechanism does explain the wage premium associated with marriage are not wholly conclusive; though household specialization may play some role, results suggest that employer discrimination or a 'settling effect' may also be in operation.

Introduction

Past work (Livingston 2002) has revealed wage differences between married Mexican migrant men living away from their wives while in the U.S., and married Mexican men living with their wives while in the U.S. These results are robust to corrections for selectivity, as well as human capital, migration experience, social capital, and family structure controls. When combined with the literature regarding the wage premium associated with marriage for men, these findings point to an opportunity to examine the mechanisms through which marriage serves to benefit men's wages. Though the analysis will be performed on Mexican migrant men in the U.S., presumably the findings regarding the marriage wage premium will have relevance to the larger population, as well.

Theory and Past Research

There is consistent evidence that married men earn higher wages than non-married men. Though there are exceptions (Nakosteen and Zimmer 1987), the general consensus in the literature seems to be that selectivity into marriage may play some part in explaining the marriage wage premium, but the bulk of the marriage effect is most likely a *causal* one (Korenman and Neumark 1991, Chun and Lee 2001, Gray 1997, Stratton 2002, Ginther and Zavodny 2001). The relatively minor role of selectivity has been reported using a number of datasets, and has been proved most convincingly using fixed effects models which remove unchanging but unobservable respondent characteristics. Estimates suggest that selectivity, at most, explains 20 percent of the wage gap between married and unmarried men (Stratton 2002). This implies that there is some causal mechanism that can likely explain the remainder of the wage gap. What has yet to be established is, just *which* causal mechanism(s) is(are) mediating this relationship between marital status and men's wages. There are several theories which may explain the connection.

The most prevalent theory is that *household specialization* allows married men to focus their time and energy on succeeding in the workplace, so these men are able to earn higher wages (Becker 1981). This assumes that couples in households make rational decisions about how to most efficiently use their resources. By employing this approach, couples are presumably better able to capitalize on each member's strengths; typically, this translates into women/wives focusing on housework, while men/husbands spend their energies within the workplace. How might this affect men's wages? Presumably, the less time and energy that a man has to spend doing household-related chores (cooking, cleaning, etc.), the more time and energy he can devote to his labor market performance. Better labor market performance, if manifested as higher productivity, should, according to economic theory, translate into higher wages.

It's also possible that *employer discrimination* is playing a part. Employers may favor married men (as opposed to single men, and women), and provide them with better advancement opportunities and higher wages. This could be driven by an underlying normative framework that values men's 'traditional' breadwinner role. Or thinking in purely economic terms, it may be that married men in the labor force receive higher wages due to compensating differentials for the hardships associated with having a family and maintaining responsibilities in the workplace (Korenman and Neumark 1991).

Finally, a less developed theory suggests that marriage somehow *makes* men more responsible, and that this change ultimately translates into better wages. Stratton (2002) refers to this as the '*settling effect'* and describes it as a metamorphosis whereby "...married men may adopt a more serious attitude toward employment, increasing their efforts and hence productivity on the job".

It has been quite difficult to empirically determine how much explanatory power each theory has. This is due both to the fact that findings have not been consistent, and also that researchers have been limited in their ability to explore each potential theory.

Chun and Lee (2001) report a positive association between the amount of housework done by wives, and the marriage wage premium enjoyed by their husbands, a finding which supports the household specialization theory. Loh (1996), however, finds that men's wages increase as the amount of market work done by their wives increases. Assuming that market work is inversely related to housework, this finding contradicts those of Chun and Lee, and refutes the accuracy of the household specialization hypothesis. In a more direct test (and refutation) of the household specialization hypothesis, Hersch and Stratton (1997, 2000) find that there are only minor differences between single and married men in the amount of time actually spent doing housework,

and that controlling for the amount of time men spend doing housework has little effect on their wages.

Some research has considered household specialization by looking not only at married men, but also unmarried men who are cohabiting with their significant other. Loh (1996) finds that these cohabiting men do enjoy higher wage rates than their single, non-cohabiting counterparts. Though the premium for cohabiting is not as large as the premium for marriage, it is still significant; this certainly seems to indicate that household specialization plays some role in explaining men's wage rates. At the same time, though, there is immense variation in the characteristics of cohabiting persons and cohabiting relationships, which makes interpretation of these past findings more difficult (Cohen 2002).

In some of the only work to address the employer discrimination hypothesis, Loh (1996) finds that married self-employed men do not enjoy positive returns to their marital status, unlike their salaried counterparts. This suggests that employer discrimination may indeed play a role in the marriage wage premium, as well.

This Research

I add to the past work examining the potential causal mechanisms connecting marriage and men's wages by taking a different approach. Whereas most past work has combined married persons into one analytical group, using the assumption that married persons *live together*, I actually compare two different groups of married men: one group that does live with their wives, and another group that does not.

In particular, my analyses focus on Mexican migrant men living in the United States. It is quite common among Mexican men to migrate to the United States. There is quite a bit of variation in the likelihood that these migrant men will travel to the U.S. with their wives or other family

members (Mahler 1995, Hondagneu-Sotelo 1994), but many of the factors affecting this likelihood can be controlled for using multivariate approaches, especially fixed effects.

This allows for an analysis of the causal mechanisms contributing to the marriage wage premium which controls for selectivity not only by focusing on married men, but also by using statistical methods which control for omitted variable bias. By focusing particularly on married men, I should be better able to determine if wage premia are due to household specialization, or employer discrimination or the 'settling effect'.

In addition, this work provides the only known analysis of the marriage wage premium that focuses particularly on immigrants, and that focuses particularly on Hispanics (in this case, Mexicans).

Analytic Framework

There are a number of potential sources for men's marriage wage premium, and several different methods have been used to try to pinpoint which are the true explanatory mechanisms. Whereas most empirical work on this topic has compared wages for men based upon their marital status, or based on whether they are in a cohabiting relationship with someone other than a spouse, I offer an analysis of a unique sample of married migrant Mexican men, some of whom reside with their wives while in the U.S., and some of whom do not. I also include a sample of non-married, non-cohabiting Mexican migrant men for additional comparison.

This approach allows for a cleaner test of the household specialization hypothesis of men's marital wage premium than has been offered in past analyses. In particular, since this design controls for marital status, it should allow me to separate out the effects of household specialization from the effects of other mechanisms which may causally link marriage with men's wages. Such mechanisms may include employer discrimination in favor of married men, or a 'settling effect' (Stratton 2002) that marriage may have on men.

To some extent, focusing on married men may reduce problems related to potential selectivity into marriage, however in order to further eradicate problems related to selectivity, I also conduct multivariate analyses using first difference fixed effects models. Doing so should remove any unmeasured differences related to non-varying respondent characteristics. Because the causal arrow between men's wage and their marital/coresidence status could potentially go in either direction (with marriage/coresidence affecting wages, or wages affecting marriage/coresidence), I also conduct analyses to test for endogeneity.

Data and Sample

The analysis is based upon data obtained through the Mexican Migration Project (MMP). Between 1982 and 2002, the MMP collected interviews from randomly selected households in 93 communities concentrated in Western Mexico. Complementary interviewing of immigrant households in primary U.S. migrant destinations was also conducted, thus producing information regarding U.S. migration for persons still residing in the U.S., and for persons who have returned to Mexico. This is an important dimension of the MMP, especially as it pertains to the examination of labor force outcomes, because it reduces potential selectivity problems related to interviewing only returned migrants, or interviewing only migrants who remain in the host country[1].

The dataset includes retrospective, person-level information on migration experiences in the U.S., as well as information regarding the human capital, family structure, community characteristics, and economic profiles of all household members and immediate family members, plus lifetime labor histories of household heads and spouses. The bulk of this information is obtained via face-to-face administration of an ethnosurvey.

My focus is on Mexican men's U.S. labor force outcomes, and how these outcomes differ by marital and coresidential status (i.e., whether men are actually residing with their wives). I limit my

[1] In the sample of 71 communities, 45 percent of respondents included in this analysis were interviewed in Mexico, and 55 percent were interviewed in the U.S.

sample to men with adult migration experience in the U.S., who also participated in the U.S. labor force during their migration trips. Because one of the methods of analysis I use, fixed effects, requires data for two timepoints for each respondent, I further limit my sample to men with at least two U.S. trips[2]. I omit the small number (about 3% of the sample) of non-married respondents who were cohabiting from the sample. This reduces potential problems in interpretation (Cohen 2003), since I am primarily interested in examining how living with a spouse is associated with married men's wages. In order to reduce problems associated with recall bias, I also limit the sample to respondents who were surveyed within 25 years of their U.S. trips.

The MMP presently contains data on 93 sending communities. However, several communities lack key data which I need for my analysis, and thus are excluded here. I am left with data from 60 Mexican sending communities, as well as the corresponding U.S. samples. Data from these communities elicits information on both the first U.S. trip and the last U.S. trip for 1418 male household heads with migration experience.

Variables

I am interested in particular in the wages each respondent earned *while working in the United States*. As such, the key dependent variable is the natural log of hourly U.S. wage during the respondent's (first and last) U.S. trips, converted to 1998 dollars using CPI adjustments.

The key independent variables of interest relate to 1) the respondent's marital status while in the U.S., and 2) whether each married respondent resided with their wife while in the U.S. The initial models will include three dummy indicators of each respondent's characteristics while living in the U.S.:

1) single,

2) married, not living with wife, or

[2] The likelihood of embarking upon multiple trips to the U.S. is quite high among this sample; 64 percent of respondents took at least two trips, with the average respondent reporting four U.S. trips.

3) married, living with wife.

In order to control for wage inflation, as well as other period effects, year of migration for both the first and last trips is included as a dummy in all models. Since they may affect wage, both respondent age at migration and years of formal education are controlled for. Respondent's documentation status at the beginning of each U.S. trip is included as a dichotomous variable. Persons who reported working in the U.S. with no documents, or with a tourist visa, are classified as 'undocumented', while all others are classified as legal. Typically, undocumented migrants are especially vulnerable within the labor market, and thus are expected to have lower wages than their documented counterparts. A number of variables will be included to control for the amount of U.S. migration experience each respondent has. This is important, because it captures additional types of migration-specific human capital which a respondent likely accumulates over time within the U.S.[3] Variables regarding migration experience will include the number of prior U.S. trips each respondent reports, and the total number of months the respondent has spent in the U.S. prior to the U.S. trip under study. Since evidence indicates that children are associated with higher wages for men, I will also include controls for the number of young children (under age 18) in each respondent's immediate family.

Methods and Analyses

The analyses start with basic t-tests of means to determine the gap in U.S. wages between single migrant men, married migrant men who do not live with their wives in the U.S., and married migrant men who do live with their wives in the U.S. I also determine what, if any, other characteristics differ between these three groups of migrant men. I then move on to multivariate analyses. In these analyses, each respondent in the sample has two records: one record regarding their first U.S. trip, and one record regarding their last trip. The analyses focus on whether the

[3] These variables can also be used to identify and control for respondents who appear to be long-term 'settlers' as opposed to 'sojourners' who take multiple, temporary excursions to the U.S.

respondent was married and lived with his wife during each U.S. trip, and how his marriage/coresidence history in the U.S. relates to the wage that the respondent earns during his U.S. trip.

In the OLS regressions, the dependent variable is the log wage that each respondent earned during his U.S. trip, and the key independent variables relate to that respondent's marriage/coresidence history during that U.S. trip. I correct for the non-independence caused by including two records per each individual in these models via the use of generalized estimating equations (GEE). These models should provide insight into the association between marriage/coresidence and wage, but they may provide for limited causal interpretations, given that any association that emerges may be the result of omitted variable bias.

It can be argued, for instance, that certain characteristics (e.g., a man's marriageability, motivation, and/or perceived lifetime wage trajectory) could independently affect both his wage and the likelihood that he is married (see Figure 1). If this is, indeed, the case, then any significant relationship between marriage and wage that is revealed via cross-sectional regression could actually result from these unmeasured characteristics. In order to limit such problems, I conduct multivariate analyses using first difference fixed effects models. As with the cross-sectional OLS models, the fixed effects models include wage and marriage/coresidence information from two time points for each respondent. However, instead of independently processing information from each U.S. trip, the fixed effects method essentially combines information for the two trips of each respondent, and analyzes the association of the cross-time *changes* in each variable for each individual (see Figure 2). The advantage of using this methodology in assessing causal effects is that all non-varying characteristics are controlled for, because each person is essentially used as their own control. As such, any relationship between marriage/coresidence and wage that persists in the fixed

effects models can more safely be interpreted as a *causal* one, controlling for additional independent variables included in the model.

Preliminary Results

Table 1 reveals significant differences between the three classes of respondents in terms of wage and most other relevant characteristics, as well. Differences exist, generally, not only between married and unmarried men, but also between married coresiders and married men not living with their wives.

Men who are married and live with their wives in the U.S. have the highest wages, earning an average of over $9.00 an hour. Given past work regarding the wages of married versus unmarried men, it is somewhat surprising to find that unmarried men in this sample actually earn wages higher than migrant men who are married but not living with their wives. This is especially surprising, given that unmarried men are quite a bit younger than both classes of married men. The relatively low wages of married men not living with their wives is likely driven by the fact that this group has significantly lower levels of education than other migrant men in the sample; they have five years of education on average, while men in the other classes have about six years of education. There are statistically significant differences in migration-related variables across all three groups, with married/coresiders having the most migration-specific human capital, followed by married men not living with their wives. One quarter of married men with no coresident wife were documented on their U.S. trip, as were 45 percent of married men coresiding with their wives, while only sixteen percent of unmarried men had legal documentation. Unmarried men are also relatively disadvantaged in regards to migration and U.S. experience. While each class of married men averages three to four prior U.S. trips, the average unmarried man reports only .32 prior trips to the U.S. Related to this is the fact that unmarried men average about sixteen months of prior experience in the U.S., compared to 43 months for married men not residing with their spouse, and

almost nine years for married men coresiding with their wives in the U.S. Given the differences in age and marital status, it's not surprising to find that unmarried men have very few children on average—far less than one—while both classes of married men have two to three kids on average.

Table 2 shows the results of both reduced form and full regression models, using OLS techniques and fixed effects techniques which control for omitted variable bias. The dependent variable in these models is log wage, so each coefficient can be interpreted roughly as a percent change in wage. For instance, in the Model 1 OLS regression, the coefficient on 'unmarried' is -.17, meaning that in the presence of basic controls for community of origin and trip year, unmarried men earn wages seventeen percent lower than married men coresiding with their wives in the U.S. Married men not coresiding with their wives earn wages about twenty percent lower than their married counterparts who do live with wives. The next column shows results for the reduced form model controlling for any unchanging omitted variables. There is minimal decrease in the relative wage disadvantage of men not married and living with their wives, which suggests that the overall wage differences across the three groups are not being driven by some sort of positive selectivity of married men living with their wives.

Model 2 includes the basic coefficients for marriage and coresidence, but also adds in all other control variables. Comparing the coefficients in Model 2 with those in Model 1 provides additional explanatory information about what's driving wage differences across groups. The OLS model coefficients on marriage/coresidence show that the overall differences across the three groups are much smaller once controls are added. Given that men who are married and coresiding with their wives had human capital and migration-related characteristics which are more conducive to high wages, the reduction in marriage/coresidence differences is no surprise. Finally, the last column of the table shows results for the fixed effects model including all controls. As in Model 1, controlling for omitted variables again leads to an increase in cross-group differences here.

Unmarried men in this model have wages twenty percent lower than the omitted category, and men who are married and not living with their wife have wages eleven percent lower than married men living with their wives, which is marginally significantly lower than the wages of the omitted category.

Interpretation

Married men living with their wives have wages significantly higher than unmarried men, as has been the case in past research. Interestingly, though, men living with their wives also have wages that are higher than those earned by married men living away from their wives. The fact that differences in coresidence create significant wage differences among married men, and the fact that controlling for omitted variable bias does not reduce differences across marriage/coresidence groups, both confirm yet again that selectivity is not a major factor explaining wage differences by marital status.

Of most importance for this paper, though, are the results regarding what causal mechanisms may explain differences in wage. Once all controls are included, there is a marginally significant difference between the two groups of married men. Married men not living with their wives make eleven percent lower wages than married men residing with their wives. The fact that this difference is marginally significant makes a definitive interpretation somewhat difficult. That some differences, though small, persist between the two groups of married men suggests that it is not simply marriage in and of itself that matters to wages; actually living with one's wife is somewhat important as well. In other words, it appears as though household specialization is playing some role in explaining men's wage returns to marriage. However, that the wage difference between the two classes of married men is so small implies that specialization is not the only mechanism in operation; employer discrimination and/or 'the settling effect' is/are playing a role, as well.

Next Steps

This research is still in its early stages. The results shown here are suggestive, but I plan to refine these analyses (e.g., by adding additional controls for spouse characteristics), and conduct several additional analyses in order to better pinpoint what is driving the cross-group wage differences.

- In order to determine if there is a cumulative wage effect related to being married and *not* living with one's spouse, versus being married and living with one's spouse, I will test independent variables representing the amount of time (in months) that the respondent spends in each of the three marriage/coresidence statuses. This will allow me to consider the potential cumulative effects of both marriage, and of marriage while residing with one's wife. For instance, if the coefficient on the variable indicating 'married, living with wife' is significantly larger than the coefficient on 'married, not living with wife', this would lend credence to the idea that it is actually *living with one's wife* that leads men to earn higher wages; if this is the case, it supports the household specialization hypothesis, while disputing the employer discrimination hypothesis,
- I will also add several job-related characteristics to the equations, to help pinpoint what, if any, aspect of job performance can account for wage differences for the three categories of male respondents. In particular, I will test the importance of job stability by looking at job tenure and the number of job changes during each U.S. trip. I will also consider broad industry and occupational categories, to test whether job-type is responsible for the wage gaps by marital and coresidence status.
- Work in the non-migrant population (Ginther and Zavodny 2001) has provided evidence suggesting that that men's wages may actually affect their marital status. Presumably, it could be that that men's U.S. wages could also be affecting the likelihood that men in my

sample marry and bring their wives with them to the U.S. Therefore, I also plan to conduct a multinomial regression examining the association between men's log U.S. wage during their first U.S. trip, and the likelihood that these men are single, married and living with their wife, or married and not living with their wife, on subsequent U.S. trips. If I find that there is an association between wage on first trip, and subsequent marital/coresidence status, it may be the case that the causal arrow is not flowing in the hypothesized direction.

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Figure 1. Omitted Variable Bias

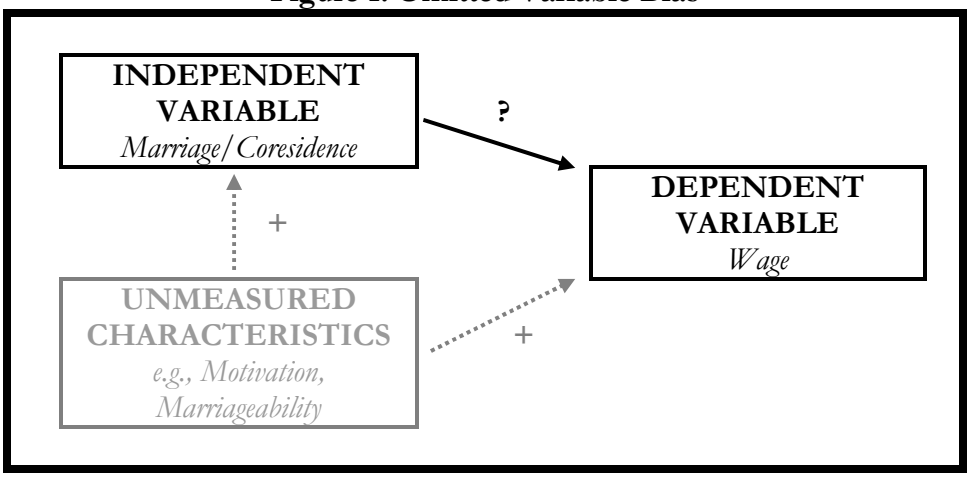

Figure 2. Cross-Sectional OLS Modeling vs. First Difference Fixed Effects OLS Modeling

Cross-Sectional OLS Regression:

$$WAGE_{1ST} = \beta_1 MAR_{1ST} + \beta_2 CONTROLS_{1ST}$$
$$WAGE_{LAST} = \beta_1 MAR_{LAST} + \beta_2 CONTROLS_{LAST}$$

First Difference Fixed Effects:

$$(WAGE_{LAST} - WAGE_{1ST}) = \beta_1 (MAR_{LAST} - MAR_{1ST}) + \beta_2 (CONTROLS_{LAST} - CONTROLS_{1ST})$$

Table 1. Descriptive Analysis by Marriage/Coresidential Status, Unweighted, Full Sample

	Unmarried	Married, No Coresidence	Married, Coresidence
Wage (1998$)	8.29 [NC]	7.65 [UC]	9.37 [UN]
	(4.89)	(4.29)	(5.75)
Age	21.81 [NC]	35.29 [UC]	38.08 [UN]
	(6.21)	(10.20)	(12.99)
Education	5.92 [N]	4.99 [UC]	6.15 [N]
	(3.48)	(3.44)	(3.80)
Documented	.16 [NC]	.26 [UC]	.45 [UN]
Past U.S. Trips	.32 [NC]	2.95 [UC]	3.73 [UN]
	(1.41)	(4.91)	(5.37)
U.S. Experience (months)	16.11 [NC]	43.13 [UC]	106.57 [UN]
	(26.78)	(61.70)	(94.18)
#Kids	.08 [NC]	2.76 [UC]	1.94 [UN]
	(.45)	(2.09)	(1.74)
N	463	819	136

U: significantly different from unmarried, $p<.05$
N: significantly different from married/no coresidence, $p<.05$
C: significantly different from married/coresiding, $p<.05$

Table 2. Regressions on lnWage (1998$)

	Model 1		Model 2	
	OLS	**Fixed Effects**	**OLS**	**Fixed Effects**
Unmarried	***-.17******	***-.27******	***-.11****	***-.20****
	(.04)	***(.06)***	***(.05)***	***(.07)***
Married, No Coresidence	***-.20******	***-.17****	***-.09****	***-.11+***
	(.04)	***(.06)***	***(.04)***	***(.06)***
Married, Coresiding	***---***	***---***	***---***	***---***
Age			-.004** (.002)	---
Education			.02*** (.004)	.07 (.09)
Documented			.12** (.04)	.13* (.05)
Past U.S. Trips			-.005 (.004)	-.01** (.005)
U.S. Experience			.003*** (.0006)	.003** (.001)
U.S. Experience Squared			-.0000** (.0000)	-.000+ (.000)
#Kids			-.004 (.006)	-.008 (.01)
N=2836 person-trips				

Controls for community of origin and trip year also included.
***p<.0001 **p<.01 *p<.05 +p<.10

PROPOSED ADDITIONAL ANALYSES

Table X4. Regressions on Length of Time Spent in Each Marital/Coresidence Status During U.S. Trip, on log U.S. Wage

	OLS	Fixed Effects
Not Married During U.S. Trip		
Married, Not Residing with Wife During U.S. Trip		
Married and Residing with Wife During U.S. Trip		
log[(months not married)+ 1] During U.S. Trip		
log[(months married but not residing with wife)+1] During U.S. Trip		
Log[(months married and residing with wife)+1] During U.S. Trip		
Controls for:		
Respondent Human Capital and Number Children		
Respondent Migration-Specific Human Capital and Settlement		
Trip Characteristics		

Table X5. Regressions of Marital and Coresidence Status During U.S. Trip on log U.S. Wage, Adding Job-Related Variables

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3	
	OLS	Fixed Effects	OLS	Fixed Effects	OLS	Fixed Effects
Not Married During U.S. Trip						
Married, Not Residing with Wife During U.S. Trip						
Married and Residing with Wife During U.S. Trip						
Stability of Employment			---	---	---	---
Industry	---	---			---	---
Occupation	---	---	---	---		
Controls for:						
Respondent Human Capital and Number Children						
Respondent Migration-Specific Human Capital and Settlement						
Trip Characteristics						

Table X6. Multinomial Logistic Regression of log U.S. Wage on First U.S. Trip on Marital/Coresidence Status Changes Between First and Last U.S. Trips

	Probability of Getting Married & Not Residing with Wife During U.S. Trip	**Probability of Getting Married and Residing with Wife During U.S. Trip**	**Probability of Not Being Married During U.S. Trip**
logWage During First U.S. Trip			
Controls for: Respondent Human Capital and Number Children Respondent Migration-Specific Human Capital and Settlement Trip Characteristics			