Reviewer’s report

Title: Weight status at age 18 influences marriage prospects. A population-based study of Swedish men.

Version: 1 Date: 4 April 2012

Reviewer: Susan Averett

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This is an interesting manuscript. The authors find that underweight, overweight and obese men are all less likely to be married and the penalty is particularly severe for obese men. They conclude that there is likely discrimination against obese men.

Major compulsory revisions:

I think the authors need to push their findings some more. I recommend they try including height as a separate covariate. This may explain the underweight finding. Furthermore, do the authors have a measure of self-esteem? It is likely that self-esteem is related to both obesity and marriage prospects in a way that biases the obesity coefficient downward. At a minimum this deserves more discussion. If there is not a self-esteem variable, I would interact the weight coefficients with some of the SES indicators--particularly parent’s education. Or, perhaps with the intelligence variable on the assumption that those with higher intelligence may have higher self-esteem and therefore this may mitigate the obesity penalty.

In general, I applaud the identification scheme. Measuring weight early and before the men are married is a good idea as is capturing marriage at age 40 when most people who are going to marry are likely to have done so.

However, it is my understanding that marriage is far less common in Sweden than in the U.S.. Are those who marry perhaps a select group? What about the role of cohabitation? Are obese men less likely to cohabit or partner in general?

There is also a literature that suggests that men gain weight upon marriage due to less exercise and more regular meals. If these are not first marriages, what about a man who has already been married or cohabiting? Might this contaminate the effects? If possible, it would be very interesting to see the contemporaneous effect of weight on marriage. It would not surprise me to find a positive coefficient in that specification.

Finally, the potential for endogeneity is not entirely mitigated in this research design. Unobservables affecting BMI at age 18 can be correlated with current marital status. Some discussion of this is warranted.
Level of interest: An article of importance in its field

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:

I declare that I have no competing interests.