The Shifting Geography of Divorce: Divorce Rates Across Counties and States 2000-2010

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Introduction

- Limited data on divorce at the county level in the United States
- NVSS data are incomplete
- ACS county-level data span 3-5 years and not made available for all counties
- 2007-12—a time span with an immense economic crisis. Potentially grave consequences for marriage and divorce

Rationale

- Contrast NVSS state-level and ACS state-level divorce rates
- No national collection of county marriage or divorce statistics
- Local level analysis provides new insights into marriage and divorce

Research Goals

EXAMINE
- Changing geography of county-level divorce
- Associations between divorce rates and unemployment rate as well as the employment to population ratio

DEMONSTRATE
- Value of county-level data: which geographic unit best captures variation in divorce rates, the state or county?

Data

- NCFMR Data Compass – County-level indicator database
  - County-level counts of divorces occurring in 2010 (numerator), Amassed by NCFMR
  - ACS 1-3-5 yr. est. of marital status (denominator)
  - Unemployment rate and Employment to population ratio, LAUS, BLS data
- Analytic Sample includes counties with consistent geographical boundaries and valid data in 2010 (n=3,077)

Discussion

- Geographic variation in divorce rates. Ranges from 0.27 (Manassas, VA) to 624.9 (Cameron, PA) per 1,000 married
- County-level estimates are limited and inaccurate using ACS data
- More variation in divorce rate within states than between states
- County-level unemp. rate and divorce provides a better model fit than state-level and accounts for most of the within state variation (M3)