Separation, Divorce and Union Dissolution

Counting Couples, Counting Families
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These comments are released to inform interested parties of ongoing research and to encourage discussion of work in progress. The views expressed on statistical and methodological issues are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the U.S. Census Bureau.
Current Issues in Dissolution Measurement

- Retaining items in surveys as budgets tighten
- Dissolution of cohabitation
- Measuring the number of transitions children experience
- Lack of monthly dissolution date
Retaining items in surveys as budgets tighten
Support from users for survey data is key (e.g., SIPP)
We need to identify the bare minimum
We need to be ready to defend the need for particular data—links to specific programs, laws, or governments that require the information
Make use of links to administrative data, or other efficiencies
Current Issues in Dissolution Measurement

Dissolution of cohabitation
Need further work to better understand the murky edges of cohabitation spells
What are the salient features of the end of a cohabitation in relation to the outcomes we care about?
   Well-being of the children involved
   Well-being of the partners
   Transition to marriage
   Other outcomes we can measure in federal surveys?
Current Issues in Dissolution Measurement

Measuring the number of transitions children experience

As Raley notes, this requires more than dissolution dates/types.

- Parent’s fertility history
- Parent’s relationship history
  - (marriage & cohabitation & dating)
- Child’s residential history
Current Issues in Dissolution Measurement

- Lack of monthly dissolution date
- Discontinued due to disclosure issues
- Mitchell 2010 points to noise in reporting of divorce dates
What do we need to move forward?

- Exploit the new ACS marital events data
  Cohen’s paper is one example
  Forthcoming US Census Bureau report
- Difference between permanent separation and divorce
- Fuzzy dissolution of cohabitations—what is the crucial information
- Dissolution for same sex couples
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