

# Separation, Divorce and Union Dissolution

Counting Couples, Counting Families

Bethesda, MD

July 19, 2011

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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

# Current Issues in Dissolution Measurement



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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