Writing for Causal Replication

**INTRODUCTION**

As the authors state, they’re trying to answer the following question “who benefited from this change and by how much.” They explore is the causal effect of unilateral divorce laws on family violence metrics, particularly domestic violence rates and suicide rates. Stevenson and Wolfers utilize the natural experiment of differentiated timing in the rollout of unilateral divorce laws in U.S. states from the mid-1970’s to the mid-1980’s in order to exploit the following declines in divorce rates.

Data – Their data for this project comes from a few sources. Suicide data comes from the National Center for Health Statistics, a census of death certificates with codes for suicide deaths. Domestic violence data is from the Family Violence Surveys taken in 1976 and 1985, with data being collected from household interviews that asked couples how they resolve conflict. Lastly, their homicide data comes from the FBI Uniform Crime Reports (UCR). UCR data is created from a voluntary police reporting system, which collects incident-level data including information on the offender, victim, and their relationship. The authors note that these data sources are not fully reliable for two reasons: They rely on the voluntary participation of agencies, and there are coding breaks stemming from changes in the definition of the victim-perpetrator relationship.

Summarize Findings –

Stevenson and Wolfers found that unilateral divorce has statistically significant effects for women, while having no evidence of any benefit for men. They estimate that unilateral divorce laws are associated with a 10% decrease on average for the rate of intimate murders against women and 5-10% decreases on average of the suicide rate for women, with larger long-term effects. Figure 2 is Stevenson and Wolfers’ key figure, as is shows the decline in intimate homicides holds under each of the potential definitions (spouse, non-stranger, and family member). I generally find these problems convincing, but there is one potential problem that would be good to look further at. In class, we discussed that estimating (insert delta here) with differential timing and heterogeneous treatment effects over time produces biased estimates, even possibly changing the sign of the result entirely. While the intuition of the paper and results make logical sense, there is certainly justified concern that the estimates found in Stevenson and Wolfer’s paper are biased.

**BACKGROUND**

What is no fault divorce? –

Why is it relevant to suicide and homicide? –

How does this relate to Coase theorem? –

**ESTIMATION MODEL**