

# Red States, Blue States, and Divorce :

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## Understanding Regional Variation in Divorce Rates

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## Red States, Blue States, and Divorce – Understanding Regional Variation in Divorce Rates

The puzzling paradox of higher divorce rates in more religiously conservative states has eluded explanation in the social sciences. In the aggregate, states with larger proportions of religious conservatives have higher divorce rates than states with lower proportions of religious conservatives (Glenn and Shelton, 1985; Lesthaege and Neidert, 2006) despite the centrality of lifelong monogamous heterosexual marriage in conservative religious discourse (Gallagher, 2003; Wilcox, 2004). As Wilcox notes, the purposeful sacralization of marriage as the bedrock of both family and church imbues marital relationships with particular meaning in conservative churches. Divorce represents a failure to fulfill God's will for both church and family. For those scholars who have found that religious belief and participation strengthen marriages and improve relationship quality (Wolfinger and Wilcox, 2008; Lichter and Carmalt, 2008), the failure of population concentration in conservative denominations to deter divorce is unexpected. Actually increasing rather than decreasing aggregate divorce risk suggests that something about the cultural and organizational practices of religious conservatives works against their aspiration to promote stable lifelong marriages. Yet scholars have just begun identifying the mechanisms through which conservative religious influence might affect divorce risk (Glass and Jacobs, 2005; Regnerus, 2007; Vaaler and Ellison, 2005), and only a few empirical studies have demonstrated an independent effect of religious affiliation on divorce risk once other confounding variables are controlled (Call and Heaton, 1997; Chi and Houseknecht, 1985; Mullins, Brackett, Bogie, and Pruett, 2006).

The easy explanation of this “red state blue state paradox” is that the geographic regions rich in religious conservatives are unique on many other demographic dimensions as well. The

red states have residents with lower mean levels of education, younger ages at marriage, quicker transitions to the first birth, higher hazards for subsequent births, lower rates of maternal labor force participation, and lower family incomes (Glenn and Shelton, 1985; Simpson, 2006). Most of these traits increase divorce risk at the individual level (Call and Heaton, 1997; Martin and Bumpass, 1989; Sweezy and Tiefenthaler 1996). A second related explanation locates the origins of the paradox in the higher rates of marriage overall in red states (Lesthaege and Neidert, 2006). Unions that would have progressed to cohabitation and relatively quick dissolution, or remained nonresidential until dissolution in blue states, may end up as marriages that rapidly divorce in the red states, inflating divorce rates (Regnerus, 2007; Vaaler and Ellison, 2005).

Inherent in both the demographic and the union composition explanations, however, lies an unanswered question: Why are cohabiting unions less frequent in the red states, why are early marriages and early first births more common in the red states, and why is the transition to adulthood faster and maternal labor force participation lower in the red states? Are these characteristics exogenous to religious affiliation or at least partially endogenous with respect to religion? Why isn't the cultural support for marriage and disapproval of divorce in conservative denominations enough to overcome these heightened risk factors for divorce? The answer may lie in the unique religious culture of Christian conservatives. This religious culture both praises the sanctity of marriage while simultaneously eliciting patterns of behavior that destabilize marriage. In particular, the emphasis placed on sexual restraint until marriage and abstinence-only education, and the stigma attached to abortion and certain forms of birth control encourage early family formation and cessation of education among religious conservatives (Fitzgerald and Glass, 2008; Regnerus, 2007) This paper tests this theoretical claim by analyzing county level

data on conservative religious concentration, demographic behavior (age at first marriage, age at first birth, mean educational attainment, marriage, cohabitation and maternal labor force participation rates, etc.) and divorce.

The alternative explanation is that some unmeasured source of heterogeneity is responsible both for the concentration of religious conservatives in a county and that county's divorce rate. The primary candidates are poor local economic conditions and Southern regional location. Religious affiliation in the United States is patterned somewhat by social class, with African-American, lower income and less well educated individuals showing a stronger affinity for conservative Protestant denominations (Woodberry and Smith, 2007). Scholars have also argued that a unique Southern culture has emerged from the historical circumstances of the antebellum South that can explain the greater social disorganization of the South in general (Reed , 1982; Simpson, 2006). The Southern "culture of violence" theory has been used to explain greater crime, homicide, and suicide in Southern states (Messner, Baller, and Zevenberger, 2005), but could be fruitfully extended to divorce as well. The implication of the culture of violence thesis is that conservative Protestant denominations, with their firm behavioral guidelines and avoidance of moral relativism, are popular in the South precisely because of the unique challenges of widespread gun ownership, agricultural dependence, and rural dispersion (all of which make social control problematic). If true, the popularity of conservative Protestantism may be preventing an even stronger regional increase in divorce relative to the economically developed urban areas of the U.S.

The goal of this paper is to adjudicate between these three diverse explanations of regional variation in divorce, using county level information obtained from public data sources and appropriate statistical models. Three primary questions will be addressed:

- 1) Are county concentrations of religious conservatives and county divorce rates associated with each other, net of county race/age structure, geographic region, and local economic conditions?
- 2) Can the county concentration of religious conservatives predict any demographic risk factors for divorce, net of county age/race structure, geographic region and local economic conditions?
- 3) Can the association between county religious concentration and divorce be explained by county level demographic risk factors?

### *Background*

The rapid increase in divorce over the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and its recent stabilization at fairly high rates has attracted much attention because of the generally negative consequences of divorce for women and children's well-being (Smock, Manning, and Gupta, 1999; McLanahan and Sandefur, 1994). Concern over the destabilization of family relationships has not been confined to academics and policy-makers, however. Religious institutions have responded with a series of faith-based initiatives, including marriage encounter weekends, workshops, counseling services, and pre-nuptial courses for engaged couples. Denominations also vary in their emphasis on marital stability and treatment of divorced individuals. For instance, both Catholic and Mormon theology heavily emphasize the permanence and importance of marriage, while conservative Protestant denominations emphasize the sacred character of marriage without official censure of the divorced. However, conservative Protestant leaders have been at the forefront of the movement to strengthen marriage by restricting sexual

activity to marriage and making divorce more difficult to attain (Regnerus, 2007; Vaaler and Ellison, 2005).

Yet, the influence of religious affiliation on individual probabilities of divorce has been variable and inconsistent over time, with Catholic affiliation losing its negative effect on divorce propensity over the late 20<sup>th</sup> century (Lehrer, 2004) and conservative Protestant affiliation showing mixed results but usually a slight positive effect on divorce risk, depending on the measures, control variables, sample, and analytic method used to detect influence (Barna Group, 2001; Call and Heaton, 1997; Chi and Houseknecht, 1985; Lesthaeghe and Neidert, 2006; Mullins, et.al., 2006; Sweezy and Tiefenthaler, 1996). Only Mormon affiliation has consistently shown a substantial negative effect on individual divorce risk (Lehrer and Chiswick, 1993). More consistent effects on the propensity to divorce have been found for other dimensions of religious activity, particularly religious participation and religious homogamy among spouses (Call and Heaton, 1997; Lehrer, 2004). Irrespective of denomination, spouses who attend religious services regularly and whose affiliations are similar are less likely to divorce. While the effects of some types of religious heterogamy on divorce are declining over time (Protestant-Catholic pairings, for example), one particular type stands out – the particularly high probability of divorce when conservative Protestant women are paired with spouses who do not share their faith (Lehrer and Chiswick, 1993; Vaaler and Ellison, 2005).

The body of literature on religion and individual divorce risk suggest two important complications for any aggregate analysis of regional variation in divorce – first, that religiosity may be confounded with denominational concentration and weaken denominational effects if not adequately controlled, and second, that the concentration of religious conservatives in an area

may not have a linear relationship to divorce risk (because at extremely high concentrations of religious conservatives, the possibility of religiously heterogamous unions declines).

The literature on other demographic risk factors for divorce is fairly consistent – early age at marriage (particularly the wife’s age at marriage), early age at first birth, premaritally conceived birth, premarital cohabitation, lower educational attainment, lower household income, and African-American ethnicity are all associated with an elevated risk of divorce, while Hispanic ethnicity and rural residence are associated with lower divorce propensities (Call and Heaton, 1997; Martin and Bumpass, 1989; Shelton, 1987; Trent and South, 1989; Waite and Lillard, 1991) . Many of the studies examining religious influences on divorce incorrectly “control” for these demographic characteristics without considering their endogeneity with respect to religious affiliation. Yet a growing body of literature demonstrates that childhood religious conservatism predicts several of these risks factors after other family of origin variables are controlled.

Glass and Jacobs (2005) show that, net of parental social class, region, and educational attainment, the white children of conservative Protestants have lower educational attainment, earlier ages at marriage and first birth, and more traditional divisions of labor within marriage that limit wives’ participation in paid work. Glass and Jacobs (2005) and Civettini and Glass (2008) also show that white women and men from conservative Protestant families of origin earn lower hourly wages in adulthood when employed, even after controlling for human capital and family risk factors. Darnell and Sherkat (1997) and Beyerlein (2004) show similar findings regarding educational attainment, while Pearce and Davis (2006) and Regnerus (2007) report in separate analyses that conservative Protestant affiliation among youth heightens the risk of an early premarital pregnancy, often followed by a quick marriage at a young age, which has been

shown to be a particularly strong predictor of subsequent divorce. Indeed, Bearman and Bruckner (2001) report, in their longitudinal analysis of the virginity pledges popular among conservative Protestant families, that pledgers are more likely to delay the onset of sexual intercourse in adolescence but are less likely to use contraception when they eventually engage in sex.

Regnerus (2007) calls this the “evangelical anomaly” – restrictive attitudes about sex among religiously conservative adolescents combined with relatively indistinguishable rates of sexual activity. These adolescents feel both embattled with a popular culture saturated with sexual images and unable to resist the lure of sexuality despite their desire for traditional marriages. Analyzing data from the AddHealth survey and National Survey of Youth and Religion, Regnerus finds that evangelical youth have less information about sex, are more opposed to birth control, and see less reason to delay marriage and childbearing in committed relationships. The result is seen in both elevated teen pregnancy rates and marriage rates.

The earlier ages at marriage and first birth exhibited by women raised in conservative Protestant households may also account for their pattern of higher overall fertility (Hout, Greeley, and Wilde, 2001; Lehrer, 2004). Coupled with strong religious proscriptions against abortion and birth control methods thought to be abortifacents, the pro-family ideology of conservative Protestants has resulted in above average family sizes at the same time that Catholic fertility has declined. These contemporary developments help explain religious differentials in wealth as well. The larger family sizes of conservative Protestants coupled with lower wages and stronger patterns of tithing have produced lower family accumulations of wealth while Catholic families have rapidly increased average family wealth (Keister, 2003).

Finally, both Sherkat (2000) and Ellison and Bartkowski (2002) find in cross-sectional analyses that conservative Protestant couples have more traditional divisions of labor in the home, a result echoed by Wilcox (2006?) in his analysis of housework among conservative Protestant fathers. Whether this pattern is the result of earlier family formation or a direct result of religiously based support for distinct gendered family roles, the fact that conservative Protestant couples engage in gender-specific patterns of work and family involvement may leave them with fewer financial resources and more financial obligations than other couples at similar life stages.

In an economic environment that encourages the postponement of marriage and children, dual-earner family structures, and fertility limitation, conservative Protestants exhibit an oppositional behavioral pattern (Lesthaege and Neidert, 2006) that is both true to their theological values and difficult to materially sustain. The key components of this pattern are early and more frequent childbearing (sometimes beginning premaritally), full-time domesticity with circumscribed labor force participation among mothers, and limited access to postsecondary schooling. It is this pattern of an early transition to adulthood among the children of conservative Protestants that seems to provide the strongest theoretical link between regional concentrations of conservative Protestants and higher divorce rates. Without the time or education to develop strong relationship skills or develop strong human capital with which to earn adequate incomes in an increasingly uncertain economy, religious conservatives face significant challenges in sustaining their marital relationships. As Regnerus (2007) points out, religious conservatives feel they “should” marry but also feel entitled to “good” marriages and satisfying intimate relationships with their spouses. While embeddedness in faith-based communities may help alleviate these stresses and teach coping skills, the stronger material

constraints and time pressures faced by young parents are primary mechanisms through which divorce risk may be heightened.

Yet countervailing forces may mute the impact of this rapid transition to adulthood among religious conservatives. As Sweezy and Tiefenthaler (1996) note, higher numbers of children, lower levels of maternal labor force participation, and rural residence raise the costs of single parenthood for women as well as the search costs for a new partner. The literature on the effects of children and mother's earnings on divorce risk is not unequivocal, however. Women appear to heighten their labor force activity in anticipation of divorce (Rogers, 1999). And while first births do delay the risk of divorce (Waite and Lillard, 1991), children are increasingly less likely to serve as deterrents to divorce over the long run. Thus, there is reason to believe that the material and relationship pressures of early family formation may outweigh any obstacles to dissolution of the marriage among women. If so, the accelerated transition to adulthood may be a prime factor in the regional patterning of divorce.

Although regional variations in divorce have been observed for some time (Glenn and Shelton, 1985), the mechanisms driving such variation have been elusive and difficult to isolate. Both Western states (with the exception of Utah with its high concentration of Mormons) and Southern states seem to have high incidences of divorce relative to the Northeastern states in particular. Again, analyses have noted compositional differences across states that may account for some of the regional dispersion, especially race, educational attainment and household income (Glenn and Shelton, 1985; Simpson, 2006). The idea that geographic regions share characteristics that may strengthen marriage remains plausible; for example, Northeastern states traditionally have contained more extended families, fewer internal migrants from other parts of the country, and hence may have more stable communities and more informal social support for

married couples. Yet measures of anomie or social embeddedness have not been effectively used to explain regional variations in divorce. In the search for state-level policies that might explain divorce propensities, such as AFDC eligibility or generosity, no-fault divorce statutes, property division laws, etc., scholars have generally concluded that few effects of any significant magnitude can be found (Peters, 1986; Sweezy and Tiefenthaler, 1996).

However, two studies have specifically looked at conservative religious context as risk factors for divorce. Sweezy and Tiefenthaler (1996) merged state-level concentrations of religious fundamentalists to their individual-level analysis of divorce using the 1990 CPS marital history supplement. Conceptualizing religious context as a protective factor where normative disapproval of divorce is strong, and reasoning that states with high proportions of religious conservatives make the search costs for another marital partner high, Sweezy and Tiefenthaler (1996) found that respondents residing in states with higher concentrations of religious fundamentalists were *ceteris paribus* less likely to be divorced. However, Sweezy and Tiefenthaler used cross-sectional data on marital history rather than longitudinal data, meaning that their method of analysis ignored cohort and period differences in divorce, as well as geographic mobility following divorce. Mullin, et.al. (2006) used county-level data rather than state-level data on the concentration of religious conservatives and found exactly the opposite – that counties with higher concentrations of mainline Protestants and fewer conservative Protestants had lower concentrations of divorced individuals in 1990. The divorce differential in counties with high proportions of religious conservatives was robust with the inclusion of control variables for divorce propensity, including county unemployment rate, median household income, and ethnic composition. Again, the Mullins, et.al. analysis utilized cross-sectional data

on the proportion divorced in the county population, ignoring cohort and period differences as well as geographic mobility following divorce.

These two studies illustrate the difficulty of explaining regional variation in divorce without accurate divorce rates and limited measures of demographic covariates. They also illustrate the paucity of theoretical constructs used to link regional religious practices and divorce. Both studies conceptualize religious affiliation as socially integrative, and emphasize the normative constraints of religious participation. Being affiliated with a faith-based organization or local congregation is expected to increase the social costs of divorce, perhaps moreso in strong religions with more closed network structures. Yet these are “soft” constraints relative to the material deprivation and relational difficulties of married life that normally precipitate divorce.

A more convincing rationale is developed by Lesthaege and Neidert (2006) who use the degree of secularization and postindustrial modernity in family patterns to rank order states. In their schema, American states vary dramatically in their progression through the “second demographic transition,” characterized by the postponement of marriage, reduced fertility, high levels of education and labor force participation among women, and high rates of nonmarriage among adults (proportions single or cohabiting). This second demographic transition has been the response of individuals and families to the changing economic and political reality wrought by corporate capitalism, the weakening of unionized industrial employment, and the rising value of formal education in new knowledge sectors of advanced industrial societies. The more sparsely populated areas of the American West and Great Plains, along with the Southern states, are far less likely to exhibit these characteristics of the second demographic transition, and are far more likely to be both politically and socially conservative in their voting patterns and

ideological beliefs. Conservative religious groups flourish in these areas, especially the “Bible Belt” of the American South, and undergird the persistence of premodern family forms and socially conservative attitudes towards gender relations. Yet the changing economic base of American society affects these regions as well, putting family patterns and economic realities in dramatic tension with one another. While some scholars focus on the pragmatic accommodation of conservative Protestants to this new economic reality (Gallagher, 2003; Demmit; 1992), others may find that adherence to the family values espoused by their faith contributes to the kind of economic stress and relational difficulties that tests the limits of marital partnership.

A different theoretical interpretation of Southern exceptionalism comes from the social disorganization literature. Proponents of the “culture of violence” thesis in the South emphasize not the unique religious culture and early family formation of the Southern states, but the traditions of self-reliance, distrust of strangers, and general acceptability of violence to settle interpersonal disputes (Messner et.al., 2006). The historical roots of this unique constellation of traits come from the collective grievances of occupation and defeat following the Civil War, and the failure of industrial development to take root in this predominantly rural region. It is easy to see how these characteristics could increase relationship violence and family stress as well, leading to higher divorce rates. Combined with reluctance to seek help and generalized distrust in social institutions (Simpson, 2006), couples with relationship difficulties may perceive few alternatives to divorce. Yet these same dense, closed social networks have been viewed as protective factors for couples in other ways; for instance, couples embedded in tight kin and community networks have been theorized as having greater social support for their relationship, fewer plausible alternative partners, and higher normative costs for divorce (Sweezy and Tiefenthaler, 1996). Thus, the net impact of any unique regional cultural factors is unknown.

The impact of local economic hardship on divorce is better known. Such conditions are related to higher divorce rates regionally (Glenn and Shelton, 1985), just as income troubles heighten the risk of divorce at the individual level, and suggest that economic underdevelopment must be controlled in any analysis of the impact religious concentration on divorce.

The review of previous work suggests that while regional variations in divorce may theoretically be traced to the concentration of religious conservatives, religious affiliation works mostly through indirect mechanisms rather than direct. That is, the paradox of high divorce occurs because of the unintended consequences of attempts to restrict sexual activity and childbearing to marriage, promote childbearing over fertility restriction, and create gender differentiated family obligations. In fact, the direct effect of conservative religious affiliation could well be positive once the indirect negative effects through early family formation and individual economic stress are controlled. This suppressed positive effect of religious conservatism may be due to 1) greater religiosity among religious conservatives, 2) lower rates of cohabitation before marriage, or 3) the social integration and normative constraints created by high concentrations of religious conservatives in a geographic area. While data limitations preclude a definitive test of the origins of any suppressed positive effects of religious conservatism, our analyses discern whether such suppressor effects exist, and at what point as demographic characteristics are added to models of divorce.

Thus, the goal of this paper is to ascertain

a) whether higher concentrations of religious conservatives (relative to mainline denominations or unaffiliated individuals) can explain county variations in divorce net of the age and race distribution of counties

- b) whether the proportion of religious conservatives retains its effect after county level macroeconomic conditions and larger regional location are controlled
- c) whether the proportion of religious conservatives retains its effect after county level rates of marriage and cohabitation are controlled
- d) whether the proportion of religious conservatives retains its effect after county level patterns of marriage and family formation are controlled, as opposed to either losing significance or changing sign to a positive suppressed effect.

### *Data and Methods*

Data. The data used for this analysis comes from the concatenation of published public-use data from the Glenmary Institute for Religious Research, the U.S. Census Bureau, and county court records for all 50 states on marital dissolutions. The Glenmary Institute has calculated denominational membership for over 300 denominations in every county in every state in the U.S. circa 2003. Using their conventional definition of “conservative Protestant” denominations, we aggregated denominations into three membership categories: a) CP denominations, b) all other mainline denominations/religious groups, and c) those individuals with no religious affiliation to form county level religious concentration expressed as percentages. From the U.S. Census Bureau (using data from both the 2000 Census and the CPS), we obtained county level aggregate measures of mean educational attainment for adults, age distribution of the county population, proportion living in rural areas, proportion of nonmarital first births, proportion of married individuals in the adult population, proportion currently cohabiting, proportion black and Hispanic, mean family income for married couple households, proportion of married mothers employed, county unemployment rates, and proportion of residents incarcerated. Using county

geocodes (FIPS) as identifiers across data sources, records for each county in the United States were constructed and merged into a county level data file for use in all analyses. The only major demographic characteristics unavailable at the county level were mean age at first marriage and mean age at first birth. The Census provides such information at the state level for the year 2000, which was added to county level records for the analyses here. The public use data source for each variable already obtained and entered into the county data set are attached as Appendix 1.

### Dependent Variable

The dependent variable in the analysis is the divorce rate in the 3119 counties of the U.S. available for analysis. The rate is literally the proportion of divorces occurring annually among the population of married couples in each county, benchmarked in the year 2000. It is equal to the number of divorces that occurred in a county divided by the quantity of the number of currently married individuals in a county divided by two. This quantity creates a divorce rate per currently married couples as opposed to married individuals.

Data on the number of divorces per county was obtained from a variety of sources. Many states release this information in annual 'Vital Statistics Reports' through either their Department of Health or Department of Vital Statistics. These reports can be accessed via the internet and were the source for the majority of divorce data used in these analyses. Some states, however, do not publically release this information online, remove the information after several years, or do not collect the data. Where any of these was the case, every effort to make direct, personal contact with state employees and officials in order to obtain the necessary information was made. States for which data were not available online or came from different sources include: Alaska, Colorado, California, Georgia, Indiana, New Mexico, South Dakota, and Texas (see Appendix 2 for details on data construction for counties in these states).

The number of currently married individuals used in the denominator of the dependent variable was obtained from Summary File 3 of the 2000 U.S. Census. This was divided by two to reflect the number of currently married couples. Data on the number of divorces was obtained for the year 2000 with the following exceptions: Connecticut (1995), Massachusetts (2003), and Pennsylvania (2002).

### Religious Adherence Rates

Three measures describing the county denomination affiliation are included as independent variables – proportion of the county population in evangelical denominations, all other denominations, and religiously unaffiliated. The mainline<sup>1</sup> denomination percentage is excluded as the reference category. Coding of specific denominations into these categories is described in Appendix 3. The data for the evangelical, mainline, and other denomination variables were obtained from the Glenmary Research Center’s 2000 Religious Congregations Membership Study (RCMS) and were provided as a county level adherence rate per 1000 individuals. The data for the unaffiliated rate were obtained from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life’s 2008 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey. While the RCMS provides valuable insight on the state of religious affiliation in the U.S., it has several shortcomings. First, there were some denominations and religious groups that chose to not participate in the study. This led to undercounts of adherents and, subsequently, adherence rates for those denominations. The mean total rate of adherence – for all denominations and religious groups – obtained by the RCMS was 529.7; far short of the 1000 that would come from complete coverage of all

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<sup>1</sup> Mormons and Catholics were coded as mainline denominations for all analyses. In separate analyses, the Catholic adherence rate was found to have no effect on the divorce rate. The Mormon adherence rate exhibited a small, positive effect on the divorce rate that was infrequently significant..

denominations, religious groups, non-religious, and unaffiliated individuals. Second, in some counties, there were many individuals who attended religious services in neighboring counties. These individuals were counted as adherents within the county in which they attended services – not the county in which they resided. This led some counties to have rates of adherence (per 1000) greater than 1000 (Finke and Scheitle 2005). For these reasons, the adherence rate for all counties was adjusted to simulate complete coverage – that is, a rate of 1000 per 1000 individuals.<sup>2</sup> After adjusting the denominational adherence rates, they were scaled to range from 0 to 1.

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<sup>2</sup> The adjustment procedure operated as follows: First, data were obtained from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life's 2008 U.S. Religious Landscape Survey on the percentage of individuals within each state that were unaffiliated. These individuals identified as atheist, agnostic, or "nothing in particular" and were not included in the RCMS. While the RCMS provided data at the county level, the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life only had rates of adherence (per 1000) at the state level. Each county was therefore assigned its state rate.

The evangelical denomination rate, mainline denomination rate, Catholic denomination rate, Mormon denomination rate, other denomination rate, and the unaffiliated rate were used to adjust the adherence rate. The evangelical, mainline, and Catholic adherence rates were summed to create an initial adherence rate. The evangelical, mainline, and Catholic rates were then divided by the sum of the three adherence rates. Next, the sum of the Mormon, other denomination, and unaffiliated adherence rates was subtracted from 1000. None of these three rates were adjusted; this ensured that rates expected to be low were not overinflated. The difference represented the sum of the adjusted rates of evangelical, mainline, and Catholic denominational adherence. To obtain the adjusted evangelical adherence rate, the difference was multiplied by the original evangelical rate divided by the sum of the original evangelical, mainline, and Catholic rates. To obtain the adjusted mainline adherence rate, the difference was multiplied by the original mainline rate divided by the sum of the original evangelical, mainline, and Catholic rates. To obtain the adjusted Catholic adherence rate, the difference was multiplied by the original Catholic rate divided by the sum of the original evangelical, mainline, and Catholic rates. The subsequent sum of the new evangelical, new

## Other Independent and Control Variables

To control for the age and race structure of each county, the following variables were included in the analysis: the percentage of individuals aged 25 to 44, the percentage of individuals aged 45 to 64, the percentage of individuals aged 65 and over, the percentage of the population that is African American, and the percentage of the population that is Hispanic. To measure the impact of early transitions to adulthood, the following variables were created: percentage of individuals aged 18 to 24 who are enrolled in college, the percentage of individuals aged 25 and over who have graduated from high school, the percentage of individuals aged 25 and over with a bachelor's degree or higher, the percentage of mothers in the labor force with children under the age of six, family income, and the average number of children per married couple family. These variables were obtained from Summary Files 1 and 3 of the 2000 U.S. Census. The percentages were scaled to range from 0 to 1 and income was scaled to 1000's of dollars. The average number of children under 18 per married couple family was constructed

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mainline, new Catholic, Mormon, other, and unaffiliated rates equaled 1000 for all counties. The adjustment equations are listed below.

$$E_{\text{new}} = (1000 - M - O - U) \times [(E_{\text{old}} / (E_{\text{old}} + M_{\text{old}} + C_{\text{old}}))]$$

$$M_{\text{new}} = (1000 - M - O - U) \times [(M_{\text{old}} / (E_{\text{old}} + M_{\text{old}} + C_{\text{old}}))]$$

$$C_{\text{new}} = (1000 - M - O - U) \times [(C_{\text{old}} / (E_{\text{old}} + M_{\text{old}} + C_{\text{old}}))]$$

$$E_{\text{new}} + M_{\text{new}} + C_{\text{new}} + M + O + U = 1000$$

from Summary File 1 of the 2000 U.S Census. To create this variable, the average number of adults per county was estimated by multiplying the number of married couple families by two and adding the result to the number of single parent families. This quantity was then subtracted from the average family size in each county.

Finally, median age at first marriage and average age at first birth were also included as direct indicators of the early transitions to adulthood since these are strongly associated with increased risk of divorce at the individual level. Because both are available only at the state level, each county within a state was assigned its state's values. Median age at first marriage was measured as a four year average (2000-2003) and was obtained from the American Community Service 2002-2003 and the Census Supplementary Survey 2000-2001. Age at first birth was measured for the year 2000 and was obtained from the National Center for Health Statistics (National Vital Statistics Reports: Volume 51, Number 1).

To control for marriage risk, the percentage of individuals presently married and the percentage of cohabiting households – as a percentage of total households – were included as independent variables in the analyses. The number of currently married individuals was drawn from Summary File 3 of the 2000 U.S. Census and transformed into a percentage ranging from 0 to 1. The number of cohabiting households per county comes from Summary File 1 of the U.S. Census and was also transformed into a percentage ranging from 0 to 1.

To control for Southern exceptionalism/regionalism and social disorganization, the percent of individuals residing in rural areas, the unemployment rate, and the aggravated assault rate were included in analyses. Dummy variables for the South, Midwest, and West were also created; the Northeast was omitted as the reference category. The percentage of the population residing in rural areas was obtained from Summary File 1 of the 2000 U.S. Census and was

scaled to range from 0 to 1. The unemployment rate is measured as the number of unemployed individuals divided by the total labor force. It was obtained from the Bureau of Labor Statistics (2000) and was scaled to range from 0 to 1. The number of aggravated assaults per county for the year 2000 was drawn from the Federal Bureau of Investigation's Uniform Crime Report (Crime in the United States - 2000). The number of assaults was transformed into a rate per 1000 individuals and logged to reduce skewness. To prevent undefined values from occurring, counties with zero incidences of assault were recoded as having 0.01 aggravated assaults.

Means and standard deviations for all variables used in the analyses are presented in Table 1.

[Table 1 about here]

Analytic Strategy. Ordinary least squares (OLS) regression was used to analyze the county level data. In the first model the county divorce rate was regressed on the set of religious adherence variables. This baseline model shows whether religious conservatism has any initial effect on the divorce rate. The second model adds dummy variables indicating region and items measuring economic marginality and Southern exceptionalism. This model will show whether the effect of conservative religious concentration decreases because of its association with disadvantaged populations or Southern regionalism.

The third model adds both marriage prevalence and divorce risk factors stemming from early transitions to adulthood to test whether the effect of conservative religious concentration on divorce can be explained by its association with pervasive patterns of early marriage and childbearing among county residents.

Finally, each demographic risk factor for divorce was regressed on the set of religious adherence variables, controlling for region, economic marginality, and the age/race structure of

each county. The results of these analyses determine where indirect effects of religious adherence through demographic risk factors (e.g. early marriage) are likely to be significant.

### *Results.*

Table 2 displays the results of multivariate models of county divorce rates. Model 1 displays the baseline coefficients, revealing a significant positive impact of conservative religious concentration on county divorce rates. With controls for only the age and race structure of the county population, a one percentage increase in the county's share of conservative Protestants relative to mainline Protestants yields an increase in the divorce rate of .02 percent. The average county would almost double its divorce rate as its proportion CP moved from 0 to 100 percent. However, this effect is still much smaller than the unaffiliated effect, which is almost 3 times as large and indicates how strongly any religious identification reduces divorce overall.

[Table 2 about here]

Model 2 adds the block of variables measuring Southern exceptionalism and social disorganization. While virtually all the coefficients in this block are statistically significant and operate in the expected direction, their inclusion does not reduce the coefficient for conservative religious concentration at all. Thus, the impact of conservative religious identification on divorce does not seem reducible to the popularity of conservative religious denominations among Southerners and disadvantaged populations.

Model 3 introduces the large block of variables representing the marital status distribution of the county population and early transitions to adulthood/early family formation within the county. The addition of the full block of variables reduces the impact of conservative Protestant

concentration by about one-third (from a coefficient of .018 to .012). Stepwise regressions (not shown) indicate that the biggest reduction in the coefficient size for conservative Protestant concentration comes from the addition of two variables in this block – median family income and mean age at first birth. And while both the proportion of married individuals in each county and the proportion cohabiting are statistically associated with divorce rates, the pattern indicates that increases in the proportion married in a county do not appear to result in a larger proportion of high risk matches. Rather, increases in the proportion married lower divorce rates while increases in the proportion cohabiting raise divorce rates.

[Table 3 about here]

Table 3 displays the results of regressions of religious concentration variables on the early transition to adulthood/risk factor for divorce, ranging from educational attainment to age at first marriage. Across the board, the concentration of religious conservatives in a county is associated with known risk factors for divorce – lower educational attainment, earlier ages at first marriage and first birth, lower family income, and lower likelihood of maternal employment. However, high proportions of religious conservatives in a county also increase the number of married individuals and decrease the number of cohabitators, suggesting that conservative religious institutions can indirectly lower divorce risk by reducing cohabitation in favor of legal marriage. At the same time, of course, they appear to indirectly increase divorce risk by promoting earlier transitions to adulthood and early family formation, with resulting economic hardships that threaten family stability.

### *Discussion*

While the risk of divorce in the United States has stabilized over the past decade at a level slightly below its historic high in the 1980's, that level is still much higher than other

European countries and represents a significant cost to America's children and families. Prior research has indicated that conservative Protestants in the U.S. are at minimum no less likely to divorce than others. The results here show that communities with large concentrations of religious conservatives actually produce higher divorce rates than others. Uncovering the mechanisms through which religious rhetoric and practices directly and indirectly influence marital stability helps reveal both the strengths and the weaknesses of a religiously based marriage system. The results of this county level analysis highlight the pathways through which conservative religious beliefs erode marital stability but also enhance marital stability as well.

The concentration of religious conservatives in the South and in disadvantaged communities cannot explain the association of religious conservatism and elevated divorce rates. Nor can the association between high levels of religious conservatism and high levels of marriage within counties, which might indicate a preference for marriage over cohabitation in high risk relationships and subsequent higher formal rates of marital dissolution. While counties with more religious conservatives do have higher proportions of married couples, this actually reduces overall divorce rates rather than increasing them (thus serving as a pathway to lower divorce rates, not higher).

The major pathway linking religious conservatism and divorce seems to be the tendency of conservative Protestantism to encourage the early cessation of education in favor of marriage and childbearing. Early childbearing among couples with relatively low levels of education, coupled with low rates of maternal employment, lead to financial difficulties that can seriously strain marital relationships. The inclusion of family formation behaviors to the model reduced the impact of conservative Protestant concentration on divorce rates by over one-third.

While the results here show conclusively that early transitions to adulthood and early family formation can indeed help explain why regions with more religious conservatives have higher divorce rates, the bulk of the original effect still remains after these early transitions have been accounted for. This residual impact of religious conservatism on divorce may be the result of a number of factors. First, the accuracy and validity of the variables used to measure accelerated transitions to adulthood may be weak enough to attenuate their relationship with county level divorce rates. In particular, the imprecision of the measures of age at first marriage and first birth (measured only at the state level) may have mitigated the ability of the model to assess the role of religious conservatism in increasing divorce by promoting early family formation. Second, the indicators of social disorganization and marital status structures in larger geographic units (SMSA's, etc.) may not be exhaustive or age appropriate for all respondents, again lowering the effect size for these indicators and possibly introducing omitted variable bias to the conservative Protestant concentration effect.

This research also contributes to our understanding of the unintended consequences of strong normative prescriptive standards of behavior. Because the sacred character and permanence of heterosexual marriage are flash points in America's current "culture wars", and the regulation of sexual conduct, fertility, and marriage according to religiously based morality has become a matter of contested public policy, it is especially important to delineate the paradoxical effects of religious affiliation on marital stability. The straightforward and expected outcomes of strong religious prohibitions against nonmarital sexuality and divorce turn out to be relatively weak protections against actual divorce, while the hidden potential for destabilizing marriage by encouraging marriage between partners with few material and relationship skills is

revealed. By attending to both these contradictory effects, the construction of sound, faith-based policy interventions to promote and sustain marriage would be enhanced.

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**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for Variables in the Analysis, U.S. Counties, 2000**

Variables	Mean	Std. Deviation	Minimum	Maximum
Divorce rate	.02	.01	0	.12
% Aged 25 to 44, 2000	.28	.03	.15	.48
% Aged 45 to 64, 2000	.23	.03	.06	.46
% Aged over 65, 2000	.15	.04	.02	.35
% African American, 2000	.09	.15	0	.87
% Hispanic, 2000	.06	.12	0	.98
Conserv. Protestant rate	.34	.26	0	.88
Other denomination rate	.01	.02	0	.33
Unaffiliated rate	.15	.04	.06	.28
South	.45	.50	0	1
Midwest	.34	.47	0	1
West	.14	.35	0	1
% Rural, 2000	.60	.31	0	1
% Unemployed, 2000	.04	.02	.01	.17
Logged aggravated assault rate	-.63	2.74	-11.07	6.29
% Enrolled in college, aged 18-24	.23	.15	0	.94
% Graduated high school, 25 and over	.77	.09	.35	.97
% With bachelor's degree or higher, 25 and over	.17	.08	.05	.64
Family income	42.13	9.89	14.17	97.23
% Mothers in labor force with children under 6	.65	.09	.27	.92
Median age 1 <sup>st</sup> marriage	24.49	.98	21.9	29.9
Average age at 1 <sup>st</sup> birth	24.34	.98	22.5	27.8
% Cohabiting	.05	.01	0	.16
% Currently married	.48	.05	.20	.67
Average number of children	1.24	.22	.41	3.36

**TABLE 2. OLS Regression Models Predicting Divorce Rate, U.S. Counties, 2000**

Variables	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
% Aged 25 to 44, 2000	.037*** (.006)	.034*** (.007)	.031*** (.008)
% Aged 45 to 64, 2000	-.047*** (.007)	-.027*** (.007)	.006 (.009)
% Aged over 65, 2000	.029*** (.005)	.029*** (.005)	-.023*** (.007)
% African American, 2000	-.003** (.001)	-.005*** (.001)	-.008*** (.002)
% Hispanic, 2000	-.001 (.001)	-.003** (.001)	.005** (.002)
Conserv. Protestant rate	.018*** (.000)	.018*** (.000)	.012*** (.001)
Other denomination rate	.013*** (.004)	.022*** (.004)	.050*** (.004)
Unaffiliated rate	.050*** (.003)	.035*** (.004)	.012* (.004)
South		.002*** (.000)	.001† (.001)
Midwest		.004*** (.000)	.002*** (.000)
West		.004*** (.001)	.004*** (.001)
% Rural, 2000		-.003*** (.001)	-.004*** (.001)
% Unemployed, 2000		.021† (.011)	-.013 (.012)
Logged aggravated assault rate, 2000		.000** (.000)	-.000 (.000)
% Enrolled in college, aged 18 to 24			-.001 (.001)
% Graduated high school, aged 25 and over			.004 (.004)
% With bachelor's degree or higher, aged 25 and over			-.018*** (.003)
Family income			-.000* (.000)
% Mothers in labor force with children under 6			-.002 (.003)
Median age at 1 <sup>st</sup> marriage			-.001* (.000)
Average age at 1 <sup>st</sup> birth			-.000* (.000)
% Cohabiting			.057*** (.018)
% Currently married			-.049*** (.007)
Average number of children			-.015*** (.002)
Constant	.002 (.003)	-.001 (.003)	.076*** (.008)
R <sup>2</sup>	.193	.226	.347
N	3119	3119	3119

Note: Unstandardized coefficients, standard errors in parentheses

† p<.10; \* p<.05; \*\* p<.01; \*\*\* p<.001 (two-tailed tests)

**TABLE 3. OLS Regression Models Predicting Intervening Variables**

Variables	% Enrolled in college, aged 18 to 24	% Graduated high school, aged 25 and over	% With a Bachelor's degree or higher, aged 25 and over	Family income	% Mothers in labor force with children under the age of 6	Median age at 1 <sup>st</sup> marriage	Average age at 1 <sup>st</sup> birth	% Cohabiting	% Currently Married	Average number of children
% Aged 25 to 44, 2000	-203.08*** (10.33)	-18.77*** (3.79)	37.42*** (5.69)	60296.78*** (6533.90)	7.85† (4.48)	5.06*** (0.66)	6.34*** (0.65)	5.76*** (0.36)	3.79 (2.44)	-0.83*** (0.10)
% Aged 45 to 64, 2000	-130.78*** (11.75)	48.45*** (4.31)	70.75*** (6.48)	202747.7*** (7433.91)	-10.61* (5.10)	5.24*** (0.75)	2.42*** (0.74)	-0.85* (0.41)	65.28*** (2.78)	-1.71*** (0.11)
% Aged over 65, 2000	-127.29*** (8.60)	-47.14*** (3.14)	-68.22*** (4.74)	-118365.1*** (5442.99)	37.00*** (3.73)	3.93*** (0.55)	2.94*** (0.54)	4.57*** (0.30)	8.48*** (2.04)	-2.46*** (0.08)
% African American, 2000	-10.18*** (1.90)	-14.15*** (0.70)	-8.42*** (1.04)	-20077.49*** (1199.21)	10.77*** (0.82)	1.71*** (0.12)	0.55*** (0.12)	0.69*** (0.07)	-19.68*** (0.45)	0.54*** (0.02)
% Hispanic, 2000	-21.70*** (1.89)	-29.46*** (0.69)	-11.90*** (1.04)	-16052.04*** (1192.60)	-13.74*** (0.82)	-0.12 (0.12)	-0.03 (0.12)	-0.53*** (0.07)	-0.60 (0.45)	0.68*** (0.02)
Conserv. Protestant Rate	-7.36*** (1.56)	-11.12*** (0.57)	-11.79*** (0.86)	-17768.59*** (984.30)	-7.89*** (0.67)	-1.21*** (0.10)	-1.47*** (0.10)	-0.40*** (0.05)	1.81*** (0.37)	-0.18*** (0.01)
Other denomination rate	65.54*** (6.37)	-7.83*** (2.33)	65.46*** (3.51)	39229.58*** (4027.46)	-55.82*** (2.76)	2.55*** (0.41)	0.97* (0.40)	-2.75*** (0.22)	-8.78*** (1.51)	0.76*** (0.06)
Unaffiliated rate	6.74 (6.83)	-1.85 (2.50)	-13.86*** (3.76)	-37951.37*** (4321.72)	15.30*** (2.96)	5.61*** (0.44)	9.11*** (0.43)	5.48*** (0.24)	-12.83*** (1.62)	-0.81*** (0.06)
South	-3.28*** (0.78)	2.67*** (0.29)	4.34*** (0.43)	1880.24*** (493.05)	1.32*** (0.34)	-1.53*** (0.05)	-1.43*** (0.05)	0.01 (0.03)	1.79*** (0.18)	-0.08*** (0.01)
Midwest	-6.15*** (0.61)	1.66*** (0.22)	0.00 (0.34)	82.05 (387.53)	2.89*** (0.27)	-1.04*** (0.04)	-1.46*** (0.04)	-0.00 (0.02)	-0.29* (0.14)	-0.02*** (0.01)
West	-4.16*** (0.81)	3.70*** (0.30)	4.66*** (0.45)	4161.00*** (511.82)	-1.45*** (0.35)	-1.61*** (0.05)	-1.73*** (0.05)	-0.10*** (0.03)	-0.08 (0.19)	0.08*** (0.01)
% Rural, 2000	-15.41*** (1.06)	-11.44*** (0.39)	-13.26*** (0.58)	-16802.06*** (670.00)	2.99*** (0.46)	0.06 (0.07)	0.02 (0.07)	-0.00 (0.04)	1.87*** (0.25)	0.02* (0.01)
% Unemployed, 2000	-177.11*** (16.89)	-170.77*** (6.19)	-203.89*** (9.31)	-266797.7*** (10687.45)	-102.17*** (7.33)	4.70*** (1.08)	-2.51* (1.07)	2.72*** (0.60)	-24.01*** (4.00)	2.00*** (0.16)
Logged aggravated assault rate, 2000	0.01 (0.10)	-0.09* (0.04)	-0.21*** (0.06)	-577.28*** (63.59)	-0.06 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.01)	-0.02*** (0.01)	0.03*** (0.00)	-0.19*** (0.02)	-0.00 (0.00)
Constant	154.42*** (4.43)	96.95*** (1.62)	20.24*** (2.44)	29824.67*** (2803.67)	61.67*** (1.92)	21.92*** (0.28)	22.19*** (0.28)	-1.02*** (0.16)	32.38*** (1.05)	2.25*** (0.04)
R <sup>2</sup>	0.35	0.76	0.67	0.74	0.56	0.68	0.70	0.36	0.74	0.85
N	3130	3131	3131	3131	3129	3131	3131	3131	3131	3131

Note: Unstandardized coefficients, standard errors in parentheses

† p<.10; \* p<.05; \*\* p<.01; \*\*\* p<.001 (two-tailed tests)

APPENDIX 2. *Estimates of divorce rate by county in selected states w/out county vital statistics*

Divorce data for Colorado was obtained through personal contact with the Vital Statistics Unit of the Colorado Department of Public Health and Environment; for Georgia, it was obtained through personal contact – by the National Center for Family and Marriage Research (NCFMR) – with the Department of Community Health Vital Statistics Division; for South Dakota, it came through personal contact with the Department of Health; and, for Texas it was obtained from the *Texas Vital Statistics Report, 2000*. Divorce data for California and Indiana were obtained via the internet through each state’s Judicial Branch. Divorce data for Maine was acquired through personal contact with the Judicial Branch, and divorce data for New Mexico came through personal contact with the Judicial Information Division.

The state of Alaska reported only the number of resident females and resident males from each county that were granted a divorce; they did not supply the total number of divorces per county. It was therefore possible for the number of divorces listed for resident females and males to be different. Additionally, the state of Alaska had a number of marriages that occurred where the residency of the divorcees was unknown or occurred outside of the state.

Because females are more likely to file for divorce, each county was initially assigned the value for the number of resident females divorced per county. The number of divorces in which residency was unknown (N=77) and the number of resident divorces that occurred outside of Alaska (N=254) were then accounted for. These divorces (N=331) were distributed proportionately to county population.

Each county population ( $C_{pop}$ ) was divided by the state population ( $S_{pop}$ ). This was then multiplied by the number of divorces needed to be distributed ( $N=331$ ). The distributed divorces ( $D_{dist}$ ) were then added to the number of resident females divorced per county ( $F_{div}$ ).

$$((C_{pop}/ S_{pop})*331) + F_{div}$$

Once calculated:

$$\sum ((C_{pop}/ S_{pop})*331) + F_{div} = 2800$$

This is equal to the total number of divorces (2800) recorded by the Alaska Bureau of Vital Statistics for the year 2000.

### APPENDIX 3. *Coding Schema for Religious Denominations and Regions*

#### **DENOMINATION CODING**

##### **Evangelical**

Evangelical Covenant Church, The  
Evangelical Free Church of America  
Evangelical Mennonite Church  
Fellowship of Evangelical Bible Churches  
General Association of Regular Baptist Churches  
General Six Principle Baptists  
Hutterian Brethren  
Independent Free Will Baptists Associations  
Independent, Charismatic Churches  
Independent, Non-Charismatic Churches  
International Church of the Foursquare Gospel  
International Churches of Christ  
International Pentecostal Church of Christ  
International Pentecostal Holiness Church  
Interstate and Foreign Landmark Missionary Baptist Association  
Jasper Baptist and Pleasant Valley Baptist Association  
Landmark Missionary Baptist, Independent Associations and Unaffiliated Churches  
Midwest Congregational Christian Fellowship

Missionary Church  
National Association of Free Will Baptists  
National Primitive Baptist Convention, USA  
New Hope Baptist Association  
New Testament Association Independent Baptist Churches/Other Fundamental Baptists  
Old Missionary Baptists Associations  
Old Order River Brethren  
Original Free Will Baptists  
Pentecostal Church of God  
Primitive Baptist Church, The  
Primitive Baptist, East District Association of  
Progressive Primitive Baptists  
Protestant Reformed Churches in America  
Reformed Church in the United States  
Salvation Army  
Separate Baptists in Christ  
Seventh-Day Adventist Church  
Southern Baptist Convention  
Southwide Baptist Fellowship  
Strict Baptists  
Two-Seed-in-the-Spirit Predestinarian Baptists  
United Reformed Churches in North America  
Vineyard USA  
Wayne Trail Missionary Baptist Association  
Wesleyan Church, The

**Mainline**

Albanian Orthodox Diocese of America  
American Baptist Association  
American Baptist Churches in the USA  
American Carpatho-Russian Orthodox Greek Catholic Church  
Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America  
Apostolic Catholic Assyrian Church of the East, North America  
Armenian Apostolic Church/Catholicossate of Cilicia  
Armenian Apostolic Church/Catholicossate Etchmiadzin  
Association Reformed Presbyterian Church  
Association of Free Lutheran Congregations  
Bulgarian Orthodox Diocese of the USA  
Catholic Church  
Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints

Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)  
Christian Reformed Church in North America  
Congregational Christian Churches, Additional (Not in any CCC Body)  
Coptic Orthodox Church  
Cumberland Presbyterian Church  
Episcopal Church  
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America  
Evangelical Presbyterian Church  
Free Methodist Church of North America  
Friends (Quakers)  
Fundamental Methodist Conference, Inc.  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of America  
Greek Orthodox Archdiocese of Vasiloupulis  
Holy Orthodox Church in North America  
International Council of Community Churches  
Lutheran Church--Missouri Synod  
Macedonian Orthodox Church: American Diocese  
Malankara Archdiocese, Syrian Orthodox Church in North America  
Malankara Orthodox Syrian Church, American Diocese  
Mennonite Brethren Churches, U.S. Conference of  
Mennonite Church USA  
Mennonite; Other Groups  
Moravian Church in America--Alaska Province  
Moravian Church in America--Northern Province  
Moravian Church in America--Southern Province  
National Association of Congregational Christian Churches  
Netherlands Reformed Congregations  
North American Baptist Conference  
Orthodox Church in America: Albanian Orthodox Archdiocese  
Orthodox Church in America: Bulgarian Diocese  
Orthodox Church in America: Romanian Orthodox Episcopate of America  
Orthodox Church in America: Territorial Dioceses  
Orthodox Presbyterian Church  
Patriarchal Parishes of the Russian Orthodox Church in the USA  
Presbyterian Church (USA)  
Presbyterian Church in America  
Primitive Methodist Church in the USA  
Reformed Baptist Churches  
Reformed Church in America  
Reformed Mennonite Church

Romanian Orthodox Archdiocese in America and Canada  
Russian Orthodox Church Outside of Russia  
Serbian Orthodox Church USA (New Gračanica Metropolitanate)  
Serbian Orthodox Church in the USA  
Syrian Orthodox Church of Antioch  
Ukrainian Orthodox Church of the USA  
Unitarian Universalist Association  
United Church of Christ  
United Methodist Church  
Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches  
Wisconsin Evangelical Lutheran Synod

**Other**

Amish; Other Groups  
Baha'i  
Bechy Amish Mennonite Churches  
Bruderhof Communities, Inc.  
Buddhists  
Conservative Mennonite Conference  
Eastern Pennsylvanian Mennonite Church  
Hindus  
Jains  
Jewish Estimate  
Muslim Estimate  
Old Order Amish  
Old Order Mennonite  
Sikhs  
Taoists  
Zoroastrians

**REGION CODING**

**Northeast**

Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Rhode Island Vermont

**Midwest**

Illinois, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, Ohio, South Dakota, Wisconsin

**South**

Alabama, Arkansas, Delaware, District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Kentucky, Louisiana, Maryland, Mississippi, North Carolina, Oklahoma, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, Virginia, West Virginia

**West**

Alaska, Arizona, California, Colorado, Hawaii, Idaho, Montana, Nevada, New Mexico, Oregon, Utah, Washington, Wyoming