"Religious Indifference, Political Affiliation & Young Marriage in the U.S."

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Abstract*: In light of shifting attitudes towards religion and politics amongst young adults within the United States, this study attempts to assess the relationship between religious indifference and being/leaning liberal and the marital decisions of the young. It employs data from all 50 states within the U.S. across four years (2011-2014) to conduct the analysis. Upon utilizing panel data OLS regression analysis upon manually demeaned data, the results indicate that religious apathy has no significant association with the marital decisions of the young. However, being/leaning liberal exhibited significant relationships with young marital decisions. It had a negative relationship with the marriage rate and a positive association with the divorce rate, for young adults, and the timing of first marriage. Additionally, upon constructing models that include several different religious groups to account for heterogeneity in religious identification, being liberal was found to be positively associated with divorce and religious non-affiliation (considered the most liberal group of all) was found to be negatively related with the young marriage rate. The overall findings indicate that political ideology affiliation might be playing a stronger role when it comes to marital decisions in contemporary American society, than religiosity.*

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Introduction

Over the past two decades, the religious and political attitudes of the people within the U.S. have been shifting or changing. For instance, according to yearly gallup polls, religious indifference within the United States is growing as the percentage of those without any religion grew from 8% in 2000 to 16% in 2014. ("Religion", n.d). This is particularly true for younger americans, according to Pew (2010) who, via survey data, found fewer young people (ages 18 to 29) who claimed that religion played an important role in their lives relative to their older counterparts. In addition, according to Gallup Polls from 1992-2014, the percentage of respondents who reported themselves as conservative declined from 43% to 38%, while those who self-identified as liberals increased from 17% to 24%[1] (Saad, 2015). Similar to the case of religious indifference amongst the young, being liberal is more prominent amongst younger Americans or millennials (Newport, 2009c; Kiley & Dimock, 2014). Previous literature has found religiosity to influence marital/relational decisions, and political party affiliation to be related with it. (Wilcox & Wolfinger, 2007; Jones, 2008; Mahoney et al, 2008; Cahn & Carbone, 2010; Village, et al., 2010; CNN, 2014; Riffkin, 2014). The level of religiosity and political ideology leaning (as measured by the percentage of respondents who self-identify as religiously indifferent or liberal leaning) of the population vary from one state to the other within the U.S. (Newport, 2009a, 2012 & 2014; Saad, 2013; Jones, 2012 & 2015). In light of these shifting attitudes towards religion and politics within the U.S., especially amongst the young, this paper attempts to ascertain as to whether religious indifference and being liberal play a role in three particular marital decisions by conducting panel data regression analysis on more recent data (2011-2014), on the younger population (ages 20-34), from all 50 states in the U.S. The three marital decisions that are studied are 1) the decision to marry: marriage rate; 2) the decision to divorce: divorce rate; 3) the timing of marriage: median age at first marriage. The analysis also controls for other determinants of these marital decisions, as per the literature on the topic, to isolate the effect of religious apathy and leaning/being liberal. The results indicate that religious indifference has no significant relationship with any of the aforementioned marital decisions. However, being/leaning liberal was found to have a negative relationship with the marriage rate of young adults and a positive relationship with the divorce rate and the median age at first marriage. As per Gay et. al (1996), religious denominations differ from each other and can be arranged on a continuum from liberal to conservative in terms of their beliefs towards certain pro-family attitudes (gender roles, sexuality, abortion, etc.). Hence, additional data on different religious groups is included into the analysis. These results displayed that being liberal is positively related with young divorce and being religiously unaffiliated (the most liberal group of all) is negatively related with the young marriage rate. Therefore, the results seem to imply that being liberal/leaning liberal has a stronger association with marital decisions than religiosity in today's contemporary American society. Thus, in light of the recent growth in religious indifference and preference for liberal ideology amongst the American population, especially amongst the young. It is expected that traditional marital decisions like early marriage or the taboo of divorce will decline. In terms of future research, it might be fruitful to utilize such a variable in future research in order to study recent trends in marital/sexual behavior. The following study begins with a review of the pertinent literature. Then, it explains the theory and the models that are employed, and discusses the results. Finally, it concludes with the implications of the findings and suggestions for future research.

[1] The percentage of respondents who self-identified as both conservative or moderate trended downward from 1992-2014, while only the percentage of those who reported themselves as liberal trended upward.

Literature Review

Religion and Marriage

Religiosity has been found to impact marital decisions (Lehrer, 2000; Kalmijn, 2007). Illustrating this, Wilcox and Wolfinger (2007) find that single mothers, with children out of wedlock, in urban communities are more likely to get married if they were attending church during the previous year. Several studies find religiousness to be negatively related with divorce (Booth, et al., 1995; Call & Heaton, 1997; Kunz & Albrecht, 1977; Mahoney et al., 2008). Other studies also find it to deter people from substituting marriage with cohabitation (Thorton et al., 1992; Village, et al., 2010). Finally, it plays a role in the timing of marriage (Lehrer, 2004; Xu et al., 2005). For instance, Rendon et al. (2014) find that conservative protestants marry earlier than the religiously unaffiliated. In addition, they find that regardless of denominational affiliation, increased frequency of worship service attendance has a negative impact on the age at first marriage for both genders. These findings could be due to the prescriptions that religions offer with respect to union formation and marital dissolution that influence the taste of the individual for marriage. For example, according to Gallup's 2008 Values and Beliefs survey, 91% of those who considered religion to not play an important role in their lives believed that divorce was morally acceptable whereas only 55% of their religious counterparts came to the same conclusion (Saad, 2008).

Political Ideology and Marriage

Several poll & election results indicate that there might be a relationship between marital decisions and political party affiliation. They suggest that there is a growing 'marriage' gap between the preferences of the married and the unmarried with respect to political affiliation. The unmarried are more likely to be liberal, while the married are more likely to be conservative. For instance, according to a Gallup Poll that surveyed 12,000 Americans who were 18 or older, more of the married were found to be conservative than those who were unmarried (Jones, 2008). In another Gallup Poll that surveyed 29,000 Americans, the 'marriage' gap was found to be prominent across different races and age groups as well (Newport, 2009b). According to Voter Participation Center (2011), despite various differences amongst unmarried women (ethnicity, race, religion, age, and economic background), election results display that they vote as a group, and that they tend to prefer liberal policies and candidates. In addition, the report finds that this 'gap' has been growing from 2000-2008[2]. More recently, when it came to the House election in 2014, according to CNN Exit Polls, more of the unmarried voted for liberal candidates (CNN, 2014). Beyond mere marital status, party affiliation might also play a role in other marital/relational decisions. According to Gallup Polls, a higher percentage of liberals consider divorce, sex between unmarried men and women, married men and women having affairs, having children outside of marriage, abortion, viewing of pornography, sex between teenagers, and polygamy to be morally acceptable than their conservative counterparts (Caroll, 2006; Riffkin, 2014). In addition, Cahn and Carbone (2010) explain that liberal leaning states, classified as those which have a higher proportion of respondents with liberal ideologies who vote for democratic nominees in elections, have a unique cultural view of marriage where participants are encouraged to marry and have children later, after having become financially established. This is referred to as the 'blue' system. On the other hand, they refer to the 'red' system, found in conservative leaning states, as a culture that celebrates the unity of sex, marriage and

[2] In a recent report, Wilson (2016) also finds the same results from more recent polls. In addition, he finds the marriage gap to have become more pronounced from 2008-2016.

procreation, whilst discouraging premarital sex (hence, encouraging early marriage and child-bearing), and divorce. Finally, Wilcox and Zill (2015) observe such discrepancies in marital conditions across these different types of states when they control for income and education and find that it is more likely for a teen to grow up with both of his/her married birth parents in a conservative leaning state rather than a liberal leaning state.

Economic Opportunity and Marriage

Firstly, a lack of economic resources can prevent both young men and women from entering into the long-term commitment that is implied in marriage. For instance, Clarkberg (1999) studies young adults to find that both women and men who are economically unstable are more likely to cohabit rather than marry. In addition, Thornton et al. (1995) examine individuals between the ages of 15 to 23.5 to find that more educated individuals preferred marriage over cohabitation.

Second, the rise in the economic opportunity and attainment of young women have played a major role in marital decisions. Preston and Richards (1975) found that areas with relatively more attractive employment opportunities for women had higher proportions of women who were never married in the age interval 22-24. Outside the United States, in England and Wales, Ermisch (1981) found that declines in the marriage rate could mostly be attributed to greater economic opportunities for women. Similarly, a negative relationship was found between education and the marriage rate for white females by Bennet et al. (1989). Becker (1973) explained that men and women who have comparative advantages in the market and domestic spheres, can benefit from specialization in the married household. As more educated women enter into the labor market, such a circumstance may not be as relevant for the modern marriage market as indicated by the aforementioned studies. For instance, Ruggles (1997) found the rise in female labor force participation to be closely associated with the growth of divorce and separation. In addition, Goldin (2004) studied women who graduated from college between 1980 and 1990 and found that they deferred marriage unlike earlier college graduate women.

Third, the interaction between the economic characteristics of men and women can have an impact on marriage. For instance, Gould and Paserman (2003) and Loughran (2002) find areas with higher male wage inequality to have lower marriage rates for women, as they wait longer to find an ideal mate. This implies that while women are, on average, economically stronger than before, the preference for an economically durable male partner remains strong. This is, perhaps, in line with Qian and Preston (1993) who found lower declines of marriage during times where more homogamy in age and education was found between males and females, indicating that individuals had a preference for similarity in marriage.

Sex-ratio and Marriage

Higher sex ratios, which is the number of males for every 100 females, tend to have a positive impact on the marriage rate. Angrist (2002) finds this relationship and comments that such a ratio might offer women more bargaining power in the marriage market, and incentivizes men to make themselves more attractive and marry sooner. Preston and Richards (1975) and Fosset and Kiecolt (1993) also find this positive relationship. In the case of divorce, Trent and South (1989) conduct a cross society analysis to find that high sex ratios have a negative impact on the divorce rate. Guttentag and Secord (1983) explain that this might occur due to the undersupply of alternative women for men to have affairs with.

Theory and Model

This study attempts to analyze the relationship between the religious indifference and being/leaning liberal of a state's population, and three marital decisions amongst its young adults whilst controlling for other relevant factors via panel data analysis. The three marital decisions are 1) the decision to marry: state's young marriage rate; 2) the decision to divorce: state's young divorce rate; 3) the timing of marriage: state's median age at first marriage. It employs multivariate ordinary least squares analysis to analyze panel data from 50 states within the United States (excluding the District of Columbia due to data gaps) over the period 2011-2014. Four panels, from 2011, 2012, 2013 and 2014, are used to make this assessment. All data is gathered from the American Community Survey (ACS), a program of the U.S. Census Bureau, with the exception of data on the religious indifference and the democratic preference/leaning within a state, which is taken from Gallup polls, and data on regional price parities, which is taken from the Bureau of Economic Analysis. It must be noted that the variables of interest represent the religious indifference/liberal leaning for the entire state (regardless of age) instead of just the particular respondents that are surveyed by the ACS. While the operationalization of the variables of interest is not directly connected with the young ACS respondents, it does indicate the cultural environment during a particular year. In addition, as mentioned before, the young are more likely to be religiously indifferent and liberal and might be more impressionable to the culture surrounding them being more religiously apathetic and liberal (Newport, 2009c; Pew, 2010; Kiley & Dimock, 2014). Hence, it is reasonable to expect that the proxies for religious indifference and being/leaning liberal that are utilized in this study may have a relationship with the marital decisions of the young. The general model that is employed for the analysis is given below,

$$Y_{it} = \beta_0 + \beta_1 NRL_{it} + \beta_2 DEM_{it} + \beta_3 SXR_{it} + \beta_4 INC_{it} + \beta_5 EDR_{it} + \beta_6 FLBR_{it} + \beta_7 EDRAT_{it} + \beta_8 PVRATA_{it} + \beta_9 LRPP_{it} + \varepsilon_{it}$$

Three marital decisions are studied in this paper, and are represented by **Y** in the above model. The first dependent variable is **MR**, which represents the marriage rate amongst the young adults of a State, which is the percentage of the population between the ages of 20 to 34, that is married but not separated. The other dependent variables that are used in variations of the general model given above are **DR**, the divorce rate amongst young adults, and **AG**, the median age at first marriage for the whole population of a state. The variable of interest is **NRL** which represents the percentage of the respondents from each state who claimed to not be religious. This is gathered from Gallup Poll data. This poll has been administered annually since 2011 to a random sample of 174,000 individuals across all 50 states within the United States. Respondents in these polls classified themselves as very religious, moderately religious or not religious. The percentage of those who are non-religious is included in the models in light of the declining rate of religiosity in the country ("Religion", n.d.). It is hypothesized that religious apathy might have a negative relationship with the young marriage rate, as the view or preference for marriage changes as more individuals become willing to engage in cohabitation instead of marriage, and divorce (Mahoney et al., 2008; Thorton et al., 1992). In addition, in line with Rendon et al. (2014) and Kunz & Albrecht (1977), it is expected that it would have a positive association with the median age at first marriage and the young divorce rate.

DEM is the percentage of the respondents from each state who claim to be a democrat or at least lean towards it. This is also gathered from Gallup Poll data. This poll has been administered annually since 2008 to a random sample of 178,000 individuals across all the states. Respondents in these polls

classify themselves as either democratic/lean democratic or republican/lean republican. From 2001 to 2015, according to Gallup Polls, the percentage of democrats who identify themselves as socially liberal has been trending upward (Newport, 2015). In addition, Polls conducted by the Pew Research Center also show that the percentage of democratic voters who describe their political views as liberal has been growing from 2000 to 2015, and that within democratic voters, whites, millennials and postgrads are most likely to be liberal (Suls & Kiley, 2016). Therefore, in light of these polls, and the aim of studying these marital decisions at the state level, the percentage of respondents who self-identify as a democrat or democrat leaning is used to proxy for the percentage of those who have liberal political ideologies that could affect young marital decisions. The percentage of those who are democratic/lean democratic is controlled for in the models to account for any varying preferences towards martial decisions (Wilcox and Zill, 2015). It is expected that being/leaning liberal might be negatively related with the young marriage rate as per Newport, (2009b) and CNN (2014). In addition, it is expected that it will exhibit positive associations with the young divorce rate and the median age at first marriage (Caroll, 2006; Cahn and Carbone, 2010; Riffkin, 2014).

The other control variables that are employed in the model are discussed next,

SXR is the number of males per one hundred females, who are between the ages of 20 to 34. In line with Preston and Richards (1975) and Angrist (2002), it is expected that as the sex ratio increases, the marriage rate ought to rise as well. In addition, the model which examines the relationship between religious indifference and the median age at first marriage, includes **SSXR** as a control variable, which is the number of males per one hundred females, who are also between the ages of 20 to 34, but have never been married. As per Guttentag and Secord (1983) the sex ratio is also expected to have a negative relationship with the divorce rate.

INC is the percentage of all men and women, between the ages of 20 to 34, whose income is twice or more than twice than that of the poverty level. In line with the results of Clarksberg (1999), it is expected that as INC increases, more people will be able to afford the infrastructure that is necessary to pursue marriage. This is also controlled for in the models that study divorce and the median age at first marriage.

EDR is the percentage of all men and women, between the ages of 18 to 34, who possess a bachelors' degree or higher. Thornton et al. (1995) found education to play a role in the preference for marriage, and hence it is controlled for in all three models.

FLBR is the percentage of all women, between the ages of 20 to 34 years of age, who are in the labor force. It is expected that as the female labor force participation rate varies from state to state so should the marital decisions of young women. As per Preston and Richards (1975) and Ruggles (1997), it is expected that as **FLBR** increases the young marriage rate ought to decline and the divorce ought to increase.

EDRAT is the ratio of the number of highly educated males to every 100 highly educated females, who are between 18 to 34 years of age and possess a bachelor's degree or higher. Conceptually, as per the findings of Qian and Preston (1993) and Loughran (2002), it is expected that as this ratio increases the marriage rate ought to increase, as females find it easier to find men that are homogeneous to themselves and attractive. It must be noted that in all states more women were highly educated than men.

PVRATA is the ratio of the number of males above the poverty line to every 100 females above the poverty line, who are between 18 to 34 years of age. In this case, in all states, more men were above the poverty line than women. Thus, as this ratio increases, it is expected that the marriage rate ought to increase as more women gain the need to enter into marital union in order to gain from specialization as per Becker (1973) due to economic dependence. Similarly, this should have a negative impact on the divorce rate due to the need to stay in marital union.

LRPP is the natural logarithm of the regional price parity of a state. Regional Price Parities measure the differences in the price levels of goods and services across states and are expressed as a percentage of the overall national price level for each year, which is equal to 100.0. High price levels can erode the consumption power of individuals and influence their marital decisions. Thus, it is controlled for in the regression analysis.

The descriptive statistics for the variables included in the analysis is given in table (1). For all variables, there were 200 observations in total.

Table (1)

Variable	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Standard Deviation
MR	32.59	49.91	22.80	4.95
DR	4.39	7.80	1.74	1.29
AG	27.80	30.55	24.40	1.23
NRL	31.48	58.00	10.00	9.77
DEM	41.73	55.50	20.00	6.76
SXR	103.55	123.41	95.35	4.62
SSXR	122.49	157.31	107.28	9.26
INC	59.55	73.40	45.60	6.57
EDR	21.78	35.99	13.92	4.55
FLBR	76.17	84.81	66.81	3.83
EDRAT	76.58	89.23	59.31	5.08
PVRATA	109.53	126.29	102.84	4.21
LRPP	97.19	117.20	85.40	7.93

Results

Manually demeaned data was used for this analysis in order to account for fixed effects across the states. Table (2) consists of the correlation coefficients between the demeaned variables. EDR and INC are problematically correlated (.42). Hence, for the analysis, two models are constructed in each case. One model omits EDR and includes INC, and the other one does the opposite. SXR and SSXR are strongly correlated; however, both of them are used in different models to answer different questions.

Table (2)

	MR	*DR*	*AG*	*NRL*	*DEM*	*SXR*	*SSXR*	*INC*	*EDR*	*FLBR*	*EDRAT*	*PVRATA*	*LRPP*
MR	1.00												
DR	0.16	1.00											
AG	-0.82	-0.38	1.00										
NRL	0.22	0.29	-0.19	1.00									
DEM	0.08	0.40	-0.10	0.16	1.00								
SXR	-0.12	-0.24	0.14	-0.21	0.02	1.00							
SSXR	0.09	0.05	-0.06	-0.06	0.22	0.46	1.00						
INC	-0.30	-0.23	0.29	-0.17	-0.19	-0.06	-0.08	1.00					
EDR	-0.42	-0.38	0.45	-0.27	-0.20	0.08	-0.24	0.42	1.00				
FLBR	-0.05	-0.05	0.05	-0.07	-0.14	-0.08	-0.09	0.14	0.22	1.00			

EDRAT	0.08	-0.01	-0.01	0.05	-0.04	0.29	0.03	-0.07	0.15	-0.08	1.00		
PVRATA	-0.11	-0.16	0.17	-0.13	0.09	0.33	0.01	0.08	0.01	-0.14	0.12	1.00	
LRPP	0.10	0.09	-0.02	0.01	0.16	0.01	0.13	0.08	-0.08	0.01	0.16	-0.02	1.00

The regression results are displayed in Table (3). M(1) and M(2) present the relationship between the religious indifference in a state and the marriage rate of its young adults, after having controlled for the effect of other variables as discussed in the Theory and Model section. Additionally, M(3) and M(4) are variations of Model (1) which estimate the relationship between the same variable of interest and the divorce rate amongst young adults. As per the descriptive statistics in Table (1), the median age at first marriage is between the ranges of 20-34. Hence, it is consistent to use data on young adults for these models as they seem to be the strongest determinant of the median age at first marriage for the state's population across the United States.

All three models use demeaned data to account for unobservable effects across the states and to partially address endogeneity that is associated with omitted variable bias. In addition, dummy variables are used for each period in all the models to account for unobservable effects across periods. Additionally, to account for serial correlation, [{(N*T)-K}/{N*(T-1)-K}]^(0.5), which is used to construct a correction factor, was multiplied by the initially underestimated standard errors to recalculate accurate t- statistics (Wooldridge, 2002). The regression results and a discussion of them, is given below,

Table (3): OLS Results

Variable	**M(1): MR**	**M(2): MR**	**M(3): DR**	**M(4): DR**	**M(5):AG**	**M(6): AG**
Constant	2E-13	5.63E-11	-3.06E-11	-1.96E-11	8.72E-11	5.48E-11
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.00)	(0.02)	(0.02)
NRL	-0.03	-0.03	0.02	0.01	0.01	0.01
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.02)
DEM	-0.13**	-0.12**	0.05**	0.06*	0.06***	0.05**
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.02)	(0.021)
SXR	-0.02	-0.03	-0.04*	-0.05**		
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.02)	(0.02)		
SSXR					0.003	0.004
					(0.01)	(0.01)
INC	0.12		0.03		-0.07**	
	(0.09)		(0.04)		(0.03)	
EDR		-0.01		-0.04*		0.02
		(0.13)		(0.02)		(0.05)
FLBR	-0.02	-0.003	-0.005	0.005	0.02	0.01
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.03)	(0.07)	(0.03)	(0.03)
EDRAT	0.05**	0.05**	0.01	0.01	-0.02**	-0.01*
	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.00)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.007)
PVRATA	-0.03	-0.02	-0.02	-0.02	0.02*	0.02
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
LRPP	-0.76	1.63	-1.49	-1.023	3.81	2.44
	(9.63)	(9.54)	(3.72)	(4.51)	(3.30)	(3.30)
R-Square	49.82	49.03	39.80	39.76	53.23	51.17
Ad. R-Sq.	46.88	46.05	36.28	36.23	50.49	48.31
F-Statistic	16.97	16.44	11.30	11.30	19.45	17.91

*Note: *** indicates significance at the 0.01 level, ** indicates significance at the 0.05 level, and * indicates*

significance at the 0.10 level. N = 200 observations.

All three models generate results that provide meaningful information with respect to the impact of religious indifference on marriage. The F-statistic for all models indicate overall significance beyond the one percent level. The adjusted R-squared for the models that examine the marriage rate is greater than .46 indicating that 46% of the variation in the dependent variable is explained by the included independent variables. The adjusted R-squared for the divorce and median age at first marriage models is greater than .36 and close to .49, respectively.

More specific details about the estimated parameters in the models are discussed next,

In all models, religious indifference within a state was found to be insignificant. **NRL** was not found to have any significant relationship with young marital decisions. This contradicts the hypothesis that lower rates of religiosity lead to lower marriage rates, and Wilcox and Wolfinger (2007) who found religiosity to have a positive impact on the marriage rates of single mothers. Additionally, **NRL** was found to not have a significant association with the divorce rates of young adults. This runs counter to the hypothesis that higher rates of religiosity lead to lower divorce rates as individuals are unrestrained by religious prescriptions against marital dissolution. It is also not in line with the findings of Mahoney et al. (2008) and Kunz & Albrecht (1997) where a negative relationship was seen between religion and divorce rates. Finally, **NRL** also did not exhibit a significantly relate with the median age at first marriage for the whole population. This opposes the hypothesis that higher rates of religiosity would lead to a lower median age at first marriage due to religious environments that discourage pre-marital sex (Caroll, 2006; Newport, 2014; Riffkin, 2014).

However, the liberalism of a state, **DEM**, was found to play a significant role in all the models. In M(1) and M(2), **DEM** is significant at the 5% level and has a negative relationship with the young marriage rate. In M(3) and M(4), it is significant at the 5% level and the 10% level, respectively, and it has a positive association with the divorce rate of young adults. Finally, in M(5) and M(6), it is significant at the 1% and the 5% level, respectively, and it positively associated with the median age at first marriage for the whole population. These findings are in line with the expected hypotheses that was provided under the theory and model section.

The sex ratio, **SXR,** was found to be significant at the 10% level in M(3) and at the 5% level in M(4). It has a negative association with the divorce rate. Hence, this supports Trent and South (1989) and Guttentag and Secord (1983). As the male to female ratio increases, a lack in females to have affairs with can lead to fewer divorces.

EDRAT was found to have a positive and significant impact, at the 5% level, on the marriage rate. In all states of the U.S., more young women were found to be highly educated compared to young men. Thus, within such a context, it seems reasonable that a rise in the number of educated men to women will lead to higher marriage rates, as more marriageable men enter into the marriage market that was previously lacking such males. In addition, it might offer the necessary homogeneity in quality that women were probably seeking in relationships. This finding is consistent with Qian and Preston (1993) and Loughran (2002). In addition, it also had a negative and significant relationship with the median age at first marriage. This is probably due to women not having to wait as long as before to find someone suitable for themselves.

INC was found to have a negative and significant (5%) association with the median age at first marriage. As more young men and women have the income that is necessary to pursue marriage, the age at which they get married for the first time decreases. This is in line with Clarksberg (1999) who found economic instability amongst young adults to lead them to substitute cohabitation for marriage.

EDR had a negative and significant (10%) impact on the divorce rate showing that states with higher percentages of highly educated young people have lower youth divorce rates. This implies that

educational attainment might play a role in preserving marital union.

PVRATA was found to have a positive and significant impact (10%) on the median age at first marriage for the whole population of a state in M(5). According to Schmitt et al. (2001), as per the Sexual Strategies Theory, men are generally more 'oriented' towards short-term mating than women. Thus, in an environment with a higher number of economically adept men than women, it is more likely that the males will engage in short-term mating rather than marriage, which would lead to delays in marital timing.

Models accounting for heterogeneity of religious denominations

According to Gay et al. (1996) religious denominations can be arranged on a continuum from conservative (Southern Baptist, Other Evangelical or Fundamentalist, etc.) to moderate (Catholic, Lutheran, Methodist, etc.) to liberal (Episcopal, Jewish, etc.), in terms of "pro-family" attitudes (those pertaining to gender roles, abortion, sexuality, etc.), with the religiously unaffiliated exhibiting, on average, the most liberal attitudes of all. Hence, three additional models, that are similar to the ones discussed above, are created with data on specific religious groups from the American Values Atlas, a project of the Public Religion Research Institute (PRRI), which conducts 50,000 bilingual telephone interviews over a period of one year for all the states within the United States. The PRRI gathered data from 2013-2015. For these models, data on 48 states (Hawaii and Alaska not included due to data gaps) from 2013 and 2014 is analyzed via panel data analysis. All models use manually demeaned data to account for unobservable effects across the states and to partially account for endogeneity that is associated with omitted variable bias. Once again, dummy variables are used to account for fixed effects across the included periods. Serial correlation is not dealt with as it is unlikely for it to be problem with only two years of panel data (Torres-Reyna, 2007). A brief description of the additional religion variables that are employed is given in table (4).

Table (4)

Variable	**Description**
WE_PROT	White Evangelical Protestant
WM_PROT	White Mainline Protestant
BL_PROT	Black Protestant
HIS_PROT	Hispanic Protestant
OT_PROT	Other Protestant
WHIT_CAT	White Catholic
OT_CAT	Other Catholic
UNAF	Religiously Unaffiliated
JW	Jewish

The regression results are given below in table (5). Correlation matrices and summary statistics are included in the appendix section in table (i) and table (ii), respectively. OT_CAT was found to be correlated with WE_PROT, and therefore both of these variables are controlled for in separate models. Additionally, INC (income) and EDR (education rate) was found to be correlated with some of the variables that needed to be included in the models, so **LBR**, which is the percentage of all men and women between the ages of 20-34 years of age who are in the labor force is included in the models instead. As per Clarkston (1999), as the young labor force increases, it is expected that the young marriage rate ought to increase as well, as more of these people become economically stable or at least seek it.

Table (5)

Variable	M(7): MR	M(8): MR	M(9): DR	M(10): DR	M(11): AG	M(12): AG
Constant	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00	0.00
	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
WE_PROT	0.02		0.03*		-0.02	
	(0.05)		(0.02)		(0.02)	
WM_PROT	-0.14***	-0.12***	-0.01	-0.03*	0.05**	0.05***
	(0.05)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
BL_PROT	-0.30***	-0.29***	0.002	-0.002	0.08**	0.09**
	(0.11)	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.04)
HIS_PROT	0.19	0.27**	-0.06	-0.06	-0.04	-0.04
	(0.13)	(0.13)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)	(0.05)
OT_PROT	-0.03	-0.13	0.07**	0.04	0.03	0.04
	(0.09)	(0.09)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.04)
WHIT_CAT	0.03	0.03	0.001	-0.001	-0.04	-0.03
	(0.07)	(0.06)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)
OT_CAT		-0.17**		-0.03		0.02
		(0.07)		(0.03)		(0.03)
UNAF	-0.13*	-0.08	-0.001	-0.004	0.04	0.04
	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.02)	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.03)
JW	0.09	-0.06	0.02	0.01	-0.04	-0.03
	(0.18)	(0.19)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)	(0.07)
LIB	-0.01	0.003	0.05***	0.04**	-0.01	-0.003
	(0.04)	(0.04)	(0.02)	(0.01)	(0.02)	(0.01)
SEXR	0.17*	0.20**	-0.05	-0.06*		
	(0.10)	(0.10)	(0.04)	(0.04)		
SEXR_S					-0.02	-0.02
					(0.02)	(0.02)
LBR	0.35**	0.36**	-0.14**	-0.11**	-0.10*	-0.11**
	(0.16)	(0.15)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.06)
EDRAT	0.06**	0.05*	0.03**	0.02*	-0.01	-0.01
	(0.03)	(0.03)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)	(0.01)
PVRATA	-0.14**	-0.15**	-0.002	0.004	0.08***	0.08***
	(0.06)	(0.06)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)	(0.02)
R-Squared	0.49	0.52	0.44	0.43	0.42	0.42
Adj.R-Squared	0.41	0.44	0.34	0.33	0.32	0.32
F-Statistic	5.62	6.34	4.53	4.28	4.20	4.14

*Note: *** indicates significance at the 0.01 level, ** indicates significance at the 0.05 level, and * indicates significance at the 0.10 level. N = 96 observations.*

All three models have the potential to provide meaningful information by virtue of their adjusted R-square (.34-.44) and F-statistics (beyond the one percent level in all cases). The American Values Atlas also asks its respondents about their political ideology, and all the above models include **LIB,** which is the percentage of the respondents who self-identified as being liberal. Being liberal is found to be significantly positively associated with the young divorce rate in M(9) and M(10). In addition, increases in the percentage of the population who identify as religiously unaffiliated is significantly negatively related with the marriage rate of young adults in M(7). It must be noted that religious non-affiliation differs

from religious indifference as it may also include those who are religious or spiritual, but who do not subscribe to any particular religion in general. In other words, some of the unaffiliated may not be truly indifferent to religion (PewResearchCenter, 2012). However, interestingly, as mentioned before, Gay et al. (1996) explains that the religiously unaffiliated tend to exhibit the most liberal attitudes with respect to family life when compared to other religious groups. Hence, the results in table (5) are somewhat similar to that of table (3) because being liberal or at least being in a group known to be more liberal than other religious groups (religiously unaffiliated) was found to be negatively related with young marriage, and positively related with young divorce.

Some of the various religious groups were found to have different relationships with the dependent variables. Higher rates of white mainline and black protestants had a negative relationship with the young marriage rate, but a positive one with the median age at first marriage. Higher rates of Hispanic protestants was found to be positively related with the young marriage rate in M(8), while higher rates of other non-white catholics (which was mostly Hispanic in the dataset) negatively related with it in M(7), and higher rates of white evangelical and other protestants was found to be positively related with the young divorce rate in M(9), while higher rates of white mainline protestants exhibited negative associations with it in M(10). The inclusion of racial demographics into the religious variables may have played a role in the divergence of the observed results.

Finally, several of the control variables were found to be significant in table (5). In line with Angrist (2002) the sex ratio was found to be positively significantly related with the young marriage rate. In addition, as per Trent and South (1989), the sex ratio was found to exhibit an negative association with the young divorce rate in M(10). In accordance with Clarkberg (1999), increases in the young labor force was found to be positively associated with the young marriage rate, and negatively related with the young divorce rate and the median age at first marriage for a state. Similar to the results of table (3), increases in the number of educated males to females was positively related with the young marriage rate, but was also positively related with the young divorce rate. Finally, increases in the number of males living above the poverty line was found to be negatively related with the young marriage rate, and negatively associated with the median age at first marriage. In all states, there were more men living above the poverty line than women. In an environment where there are more economically adept men than women, as per Schmitt et al. (2001), men, being more 'oriented' towards short-term mating than women, are more likely to engage in short-term relationships instead of marriage, which would can lead to delays in marital timing and decreases in young marriage.

Discussion and Conclusion

In light of the shift in attitude towards religion and politics amongst young adults, this study attempted to analyze the relationship between religious indifference & political affiliation and various marital decisions for the young, after having controlled for other relevant factors. Panel data was gathered from all 50 states within the United States across four years. Religious indifference was not found to play a significant role in the marital decisions of the young. However, the results show that the liberal preference or leaning of respondents within a state did have a significant relationship with the marital decisions of the state's young adults. It was found to be negatively related with their marriage rates, and positively associated with their divorce rates, and the median age at first marriage for the whole population of a state. This supports the notion that there is a relationship between political party/ideology affiliation and marital decisions/preference, as evidenced by survey and poll findings (Caroll, 2006; Newport, 2009b; Riffkin, 2014). These findings are also in line with Cahn and Carbone (2010) who suggest there might be different approaches towards marriage and family, conditional upon the

individual's subscription to a particular political ideology or culture (conservative or liberal). In addition, upon conducting regression analysis with the inclusion of different religious groups (that were inclusive of race in some cases), being liberal was found to be positively related with the divorce rate once again, and religious non-affiliation was found to have a negative association with the young marriage rate. Gay et al. (1996) explain that religious denominations can be arranged on a continuum from conservative to liberal, in terms of "pro-family" attitudes (those pertaining to gender roles, abortion, sexuality, etc.), with the religiously unaffiliated exhibiting, on average, the most liberal attitudes of all. Hence, in these models a relatively larger presence of the most liberal group, the religiously unaffiliated, was observed to have similar relationships as preference for liberal ideologies on the marital decisions of young adults. Therefore, the overall findings of this study seem to indicate that, 1) Such preference for or subscription towards liberal ideologies might be a stronger proxy than religious identification for marital preferences as it can include members of several liberal religious denominations/groups and the religiously unaffiliated, whilst excluding ones from more conservative religious denominations/groups. Even in the case of more conservative denominations, while a Baptist/Evangelical is more likely to engage in traditional marital practices, if the person leans/is liberal in their political ideology, it is likely that the person will engage in marital behavior that is more liberally oriented. 2) As the U.S. becomes more religiously indifferent, and less conservative in their political ideology (particularly with respect to social issues), traditional marital decisions like early marriage, and the taboo of divorce, are likely to decline. In terms of future research, it might be fruitful to utilize the variable of political ideology affiliation to study contemporary trends in romantic and/or sexual behavior.

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Appendix

Table (i): Correlation Matrix for variables employed in analysis conducted in table (5)

Variable	WE_PROT	WM_PROT	BL_PROT	HIS_PROT	OT_PROT	WHIT_CAT	OT_CAT	UNAF	JW	LIB	SEXR	SEXR_S	LBR	EDRAT	PVRATA
WE_PROT	1.00														
WM_PROT	-0.34	1.00													
BL_PROT	0.05	-0.26	1.00												
HIS_PROT	-0.05	-0.03	-0.17	1.00											
OT_PROT	-0.33	-0.13	-0.13	0.11	1.00										
WHIT_CAT	0.08	-0.02	0.11	-0.29	-0.26	1.00									
OT_CAT	-0.45	0.26	-0.08	0.17	-0.19	-0.15	1.00								
UNAF	-0.29	-0.14	-0.15	0.02	0.23	-0.22	0.25	1.00							
JW	-0.05	-0.07	0.15	-0.17	0.11	-0.14	-0.29	-0.05	1.00						
LIB	-0.28	-0.23	0.21	-0.12	-0.02	0.15	0.14	0.35	0.19	1.00					
SEXR	0.01	-0.14	0.10	-0.04	0.04	-0.09	-0.01	-0.29	0.26	-0.17	1.00				
SEXR_S	-0.09	-0.11	-0.06	-0.09	0.21	0.01	-0.11	-0.10	0.15	-0.07	0.47	1.00			
LBR	0.29	-0.23	0.22	0.21	-0.01	-0.03	-0.20	-0.25	0.12	0.08	0.27	0.00	1.00		
EDRAT	0.16	-0.12	0.08	0.11	-0.11	0.21	-0.32	-0.08	-0.04	-0.09	-0.19	-0.28	0.17	1.00	
PVRATA	0.27	-0.12	-0.30	-0.27	-0.16	0.30	-0.18	-0.25	-0.18	-0.04	0.26	0.13	-0.07	0.21	1.00

Table (ii): Descriptive Statistics for Specific Religious Groups & Additional included variables

Variable	Mean	Maximum	Minimum	Std. Dev.
Variable	19.81	43.00	3.00	10.15
WE_PROT	15.81	31.00	4.00	5.24
WM_PROT	7.11	32.00	0.25	6.90
BL_PROT	2.45	11.00	0.25	2.03
HIS_PROT	2.35	12.00	0.25	1.44
OT_PROT	13.68	34.00	3.00	8.02
WHIT_CAT	6.52	25.00	0.50	5.38
OT_CAT	21.55	37.00	9.00	5.62
UNAF	1.20	6.00	0.25	1.24
JW	25.88	39.00	10.00	5.15
LIB	79.96	86.54	71.85	3.09

Table (iii): Data Sources

Variable	Source
MR	Gathered from American Community Survey Factfinder (S1201)
DR	Gathered from American Community Survey Factfinder (S1201)
AG	Gathered from American Community Survey Factfinder (B12007)
NRL	Gathered from Gallup Polls
DEM	Gathered from Gallup Polls
SXR	Gathered from American Community Survey Factfinder (S0101)
SSXR	Gathered from American Community Survey Factfinder (S1201)
INC	Gathered from American Community Survey Factfinder (B17024)
FLBR	Gathered from American Community Survey Factfinders (S2301)
EDR	Gathered from American Community Survey Factfinder (B15001)
RPP	Gathered from Bureau of Economic Analysis
EDRAT	Gathered from American Community Survey Factfinder (B15001)
PVRATA	Gathered from American Community Survey Factfinder (B17001)
LBR	Gathered from American Community Survey Factfinders (S2301)
WE_PROT	Gathered from American Values Atlas (PRRI)
WM_PROT	Gathered from American Values Atlas (PRRI)
BL_PROT	Gathered from American Values Atlas (PRRI)
HIS_PROT	Gathered from American Values Atlas (PRRI)
OT_PROT	Gathered from American Values Atlas (PRRI)
WHIT_CAT	Gathered from American Values Atlas (PRRI)
OT_CAT	Gathered from American Values Atlas (PRRI)
UNAF	Gathered from American Values Atlas (PRRI)
JW	Gathered from American Values Atlas (PRRI)
LIB	Gathered from American Values Atlas (PRRI)