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The Divorce Revolution: The Macro and Micro-Level Factors in the Risk of Divorce

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**The Divorce Revolution: The Macro and Micro-Level Factors
in the Risk of Divorce**

By

Arielle Homer

Submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for
Honors in the Department of Sociology

UNION COLLEGE
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Abstract

Over the past fifty or so years, American society has endured overwhelming changes, affecting nearly all aspects of life. A new set of values emerged and families began adopting more liberal mindsets, leading to an increase in the divorce rate. The first aim of this study is to explain the social, macro-level causes of divorce. Literature on the 1960s identifies these influences as the importance of “the self”, feminism, birth control, no-fault divorce laws, and religious teachings. Further, I use data from the General Social Survey to determine whether micro-level factors influence an individual’s risk of divorce, both during this revolution and in the present-day. Regression models examine the impact of these variables on divorce trends, and a series of interaction tests measure whether these effects have changed over time.

Findings indicate that variables such as education and income have an effect on an individuals’ risk of divorce. Yet, many of these results become insignificant with the introduction of other controls, such as those for religion, which change once participation is controlled for. Although analyses of these variables reveals that they cannot fully explain the trend of divorce, macro-level variables set the groundwork for an ideological revolution and micro-level variables help represent the populations most affected by divorce. Since attributes and values cannot be credited with the divorce rate, future studies should attempt to identify the variables that affect the risk of divorce on a societal level.

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Chapter 1: Literature Review

The 20th century witnessed societal and ideological changes that affected all facets of life. In addition to industrialization, scientific discovery, and the start of globalization, the 20th century was a time of social change, moving away from many traditional values and towards a more independent, liberated mindset. Institutions such as marriage were impacted greatly as early as 1920, when the divorce rate nearly doubled from 4.0 divorces per every 1,000 existing marriages in 1900, to 7.7 divorces per every 1,000 existing marriages 20 years later (O’Neil 1967:20). Though surprising, these numbers failed to truly capture the imminence of the divorce revolution, both statistically and in terms of values (Riley 1991).

During the earlier years of the 20th century, the American family adhered to a very strict, stable Western ideology: a patrilineal, religious, close-knit system containing “the source of economic stability and educational, and vocational training” (O’Neil 1967:2). Men were the breadwinners and worked long, hard hours to provide for their families, while women stayed at home, raised the children and remained dependent on their husbands for support (Cherlin 2009). Marriage represented one of the most fundamental institutions of society in Western culture (Cherlin 2009). During the 1950s, American laws and social expectations had changed little since the mid 1800s (Cherlin 2009). The notion of male-dominated households was reaffirmed and reinforced through the law, such as the representation of husbands and wives composing of “a single person, represented by the husband” in legal proceedings (Schwartz and Han 2014:607). Individual freedom for women within their marriages was also not given, out of fear for damaging “domestic harmony” (Cherlin 2009:85).

Although it was indeed possible to obtain a divorce during this time, the dissolution of marriage was seen as a betrayal of one's vows. Moral and legal agendas shaped the framework for both marriage and divorce, such as legally enforced financial support intended to discourage separation. In essence, marriage provided a foundation for one's place in society and obtaining a divorce meant proving that one spouse "had committed a serious breach of marital behavior" (Cherlin 2009:85). Halem (1980) describes how clerical authorities, civil authorities and the bulk of society viewed divorce: "the fear that divorce, by dissolving the family unit, jeopardizes fundamental values essential to the well-being of individuals in society" (9). Given the importance of the roles of marriage and the traditional family unit in life, it was believed that society would be obliterated with the rejection of customary values and the rise of divorce. Therefore, the best way to protect the bond of marriage was to restrict access to its dissolution (Weitzman 1985).

By the second half of the 20th century, a new kind of American family emerged. It was more private, secular, and able to take on the changes and challenges brought on by the Industrial Revolution, WWII, and other events of that time (Halem 1980). Although it had been on the rise in past years, the divorce rate skyrocketed in the years immediately following WWII and then again in the early 1970s (Schwartz and Han 2014). A practice that received such intense rejection and societal control just a few decades earlier had become an integral part of American life. Through identifying the events that occurred during these periods of time, we may subsequently determine how the development of these ideologies altered traditional American values. One of the most significant increases in the divorce rate took place during a time of pivotal change for American

society. Herman (1992) describes the 1960s as “that period of social upheaval and national self-examination that has been made into an island of time” (87). The grueling aftermath of WWII and the Vietnam War left Americans with a need for change (Morgan 1991; Herman 1992). Post-war attitudes played a large role in explaining why the nation was so vulnerable at the time. It is my hope that analyses focusing on the ideologies of this period will provide insight into how social patterns affected the institution of marriage.

In recent years, the divorce rate has leveled off, but it is nowhere near where it was at the start of the 20th century. Conducted in 2006, one study on the role of timing in divorce found that, for those aged 20-24, the divorce rate has generally declined (Shoen and Canudas-Romo 2006:753). For those aged 25 and older during 2006, the divorce rate goes slightly upward with some fluctuations (Shoen and Canudas-Romo 2006:753). Although the divorce rate experienced an initial increase around the time of the mid-century, it had plateaued by the start of the 20th century and continues to do so today. This suggests that the values introduced during that time have not vanished, but have less dramatic (yet not negligible) effects on modern day society. The first aim of this paper is to identify the kinds of ideologies that influenced these behavioral changes, followed by an analysis of how these ideologies continue to affect divorce on the micro-level today.

Macro-Level Factors

The 1960s present a variety of ideologies that may be credited with the development of fundamental societal changes. These include: the prioritization of the individual, feminism and the entrance of women in the workforce, the increasing acceptance of birth control, legal divorce reform, religious affiliation and religious

teachings. While these are discussed separately in further detail below, it is clear that they are linked in a more complex system of interpretation.

One of the most influential ideological changes that took place during the 1960s was the emergence of humanistic psychology (Herman 1992). The consequences of the Vietnam War left Americans with a motivation to implement social change; this movement was characterized by two traits, “a growing radical awareness of society’s deeply rooted resistance to change, coupled with activists’ still confident commitment to bring about change” (Morgan 1991:21). A key component to this ideology lay in the emphasis placed on personal gain and improvement. But, this attention towards “the self” contradicted some of the main foundations of marriage: “...the traditional law embodied the partnership concept of marriage by rewarding sharing and mutual investments in the marital community” (Wheeler 1974:374). Thus, the importance placed on personal growth in the 1960s “require[d] a new kind of marriage of which each [person] feels personally fulfilled” (Cherlin 2009:90). The idea of prioritizing one’s own desires and life goals before the norm of getting married could hypothetically have had immense effects on the dissolution of marriage.

Feminism may also be credited as a cause for social change (Halem 1980). The 1960’s represented, along with many other ideologies, the second wave of feminism (Herman 1992). In relation to society, the experiences of women in America during this period highlight how women’s rights have transformed the make-up of the family. Both industrialization and World War II created a higher demand for women in the work force, introducing women to the idea of economic independence. The slow removal of men and women from their traditional roles allowed women to move away from the homemaker

stereotype and take control of their lives. “This growing economic independence of women and the demise of the self-sufficient household not only extricated women from their traditional role as homemakers but provided an incentive to renounce their marital responsibilities and to seek divorces” (Halem 1980:58). This particular section aims to identify the extent to which women’s rights in the labor force and their entrance into the educational system have affected the divorce rate.

In addition to these factors, the growing acceptance of birth control and other contraceptives has theoretically had an effect on the original incentives for marriage. These incentives depend on a division of labor that ensures interdependence (Yenor 2011). This divide is often placed along gender lines and is enforced through the ability of women to reproduce (Yenor 2011). “Having children means conforming, to a degree, to the reproductive cycle, which limits human freedom and...equality” (Yenor 2011:183). Thus, the invention of birth control introduced women to the option of controlling whether or not they become pregnant and, therefore, be forced into a particular role. This freedom allowed women a certain degree of choice in determining the path that their lives would take. However, given that these regulations previously provided couples with motivations to get and stay married, I argue that the availability of this control has eliminated the original incentives for marriage and lessened the consequences of divorce.

Placing attention towards the institution of marriage itself, one of the core driving factors involved in marriage is religion.

“Religion provides moral principles about how family life should be lived, such as the belief that adults should marry before having children. The law provides principles about what is permissible and about what rights and obligations family members have” (Cherlin 2009:33).

Yet another possibility for the dissolution of marriage could thus be a potentially decreasing religious population. With the modernization that took place in America during this time, it seems logical that people would begin to reject religion and spirituality. This was the case in Britain, when advancements in science lead to answers to the questions for which people originally turned to religion (Cherlin 2009). In the United States, modernization spurred the rejection of many religious norms, such as the ability of women to be financially independent, which went against the traditional formation that most families abided by (Cherlin 2009). Previously, religion gave families a reason to stay together through trying times and many churches even shamed those who chose to get a divorce. In the traditional Catholic view, even adultery was not justification for divorce and in the traditional Jewish view, divorce was carried out in such a way that the husband was given marital freedom while the wife was not (Cherlin 2009). Given the increasing divorce rate and the events steering people away from religion, could it be that a relationship exists between the divorce rate and American religious identity?

In addition to changing values, a number of studies have identified divorce reform as playing a key role in the divorce rate (Wright and Stetson 1978; Nakonezny, Shull, and Rodgers 1995; Vlosky and Monroe 2002). Until the 1970s, divorce laws were fault-based and were granted strictly on the grounds of a few, specified situations. In this system, spouses were labeled either “guilty” or “innocent” of committing a serious marital offense such as adultery, cruelty or desertion (Wheeler, 1974:15; Weitzman, 1985:9; Nakonezny *et al.* 1995:478). The implementation of the no-fault system began in 1970, when California passed the first law terminating the necessity of fault in divorce (Wheeler, 1974). By the late 1980’s, most states had passed some form of a no-fault

reform (Nakonezny *et al.* 1995). These new, less restrictive laws made getting a divorce much easier, yet whether they had any direct effect on the divorce rate is debatable (Nakonezny *et al.* 1995). Statistics indicate that states with more lenient divorce laws do have a higher rate of divorce than those with more restrictive laws (Nakonezny *et al.* 1995), but other factors must be taken into consideration before drawing a causal connection, such as the possibility that these states passed no-fault reforms after the divorce rate increased.

It will be the aim of this study to explain the extent to which the sudden increase in divorce can be credited to these events and ideologies. In light of the variations within the divorce rate towards the second half of the 20th century, statistics must be examined within the context of their time. Social, political and ideological transformation characterized America during both of these dramatic spikes, but this correlation does not equal causation. Perhaps, by studying the institution of marriage through the framework of macro-level influences on society, I will succeed in determining which societal trends were present, how they affected American values, and the extent to which they continue to affect society today.

Focus on “The Self”

The emergence of humanistic psychology in the social sciences represents the craving of society to understand social interaction and individual experience, both of which were previously considered to be private spheres (Herman 1992). One of the key components of this new philosophy was the shift of focus on to “the self.” At the core of these values lay the desire to separate oneself from the ills of society and focus on physical and emotional enjoyment. Herman (1992) explains humanistic psychology

within the context of the social, political and ideological upheaval taking place at the time:

[In humanistic psychology,] “the most urgent human needs were to feel good about oneself, experience one’s emotions directly, and grow emotionally, ‘the self’ was inherently healthy and contained a kind of divine spark that moved the human organism inexorably towards a process of growth and ‘becoming’; that ‘the self’s’ subjective experience was the highest authority; that scientific commitment to objectivity was bankrupt and useless; in need of an infusion of humanistic values” (Herman 1992:88).

In essence, this new ideology emphasized placing individual achievement, personal responsibility, and self-improvement above all other obligations (Herman 1992; Cherlin 2009).

Traditionally, achievement and commitment were almost completely dependent upon the family unit. Success and happiness were contingent upon the fulfillment of marital vows, which consisted of a woman’s dedication to the home and children and a man’s ability to provide a family with life’s necessities (Weitzman 1985). Since happiness and success were based on things couples jointly produced instead of individually, such as children and financial stability, Cherlin (2009) argues that it was easier to find reasons to stay together. However, this altered mindset placed a new set of goals on the horizon, none of which required the family unit to achieve.

Therefore, the question remains: does this focus on “the self” impact people’s inclinations to get a divorce? If the commitments included in maintaining a marriage are no longer in line with one’s personal goals, is that justification to end it? Marks (1986) found that, when people enter into a relationship with personal “marriage agendas” and have no motivations such as children to stay together, the force of their own concerns and desires can “stretch a marriage precariously thin” (53). Yet this finding applies primarily

to couples that enter marriage with previously conceived ideas and no children, making it unrepresentative of the American population (Marks 1986).

On the other hand, Marks (1986) believes that marriage can provide a “safe haven” where people may go to “retreat and get recharged, enabling them to return to the all-important outside struggle with replenished vigor” (70). In this theory, individuals appreciate marriage not within the context of responsibility, but as a personal refuge away from the discomforts of life (Marks 1986). Marks identifies a number of potential outcomes regarding the influence of the self on marital tendencies, many of which have to do with the individual and their person agendas.

Cherlin (2009) maintains that this “expressive individualism” is not necessarily incompatible with lifelong marriage, “but it requires a new kind of marriage in which the spouses are free to grow and change and in which each person feels personally fulfilled” (90). While preserving a relationship where both people place their personal goals ahead of marital commitment may be unrealistic, it is possible given the right mindsets and values (Cherlin 2009). What Cherlin (2009) introduces here is not a decline in the institution of marriage, but a change in its construction.

The strength of this ideological revolution may, therefore, have been enough to motivate some to accept divorce as an appropriate solution to their unhappy marriage (Halem 1980). Whereas marriages were originally held together through factors such as religious belief, public opinion, and economic dependence, the new ideas of romanticism, individualism and happiness brought on by “the self” verified divorce as an adequate option (Halem 1980).

Feminism and the Entrance of Women into the Work Force

Many have cited women's participation in the workforce as the cause for the increased levels of divorce (Halem 1980; Yenor 2011). The ability of women to become economically independent from men has eliminated one of the original and traditional reasons for marriage: economic support. Yenor (2011) reasons that, faced with the realistic option of supporting oneself and a child, women no longer feel the need to commit to a man. This implies two possibilities, first, that women may be less likely to get married in the first place, since they are free from the dependence previously imposed upon them, and second, that the economic consequences of getting a divorce have been significantly lessened, if not irrelevant, to the independent woman.

Traditional notions of marriage have depended on the separate identities of men and women as the breadwinners and homemakers, respectively (Schwartz and Han 2014). Schwartz and Han (2014) cite Becker's (1974) exchange theory and suggest that, since men have an advantage in the labor market and women in housework, "the gains to marriage are maximized when high-wage men match with low-wage women, and thus the risk of divorce is heightened when wives out earn their husbands" (607). Challenging the balance of power within the family alters the benefits associated with gendered roles, increasing the risk of divorce. This theory therefore believes that, through a woman's economic independence, gender specified roles lose their legitimacy and the rewards originally associated with these roles are eradicated (Schwartz and Han 2014).

Similar to that theory, Rogers (2004) states that, the more independent a woman becomes, the more likely she is to grow dissatisfied with her marriage. Economic independence theory suggests that, as women become involved in the work force and are

able to contribute more to the family income, they begin to perceive the division of labor in the household as unequal (Rogers 2004). This growing resistance and the desire of women to renegotiate household gender roles may be associated with marital conflict (Rogers 2004). Therefore, an increase in wives' income could not only provide them with the resources to leave their marriages, but it also confirms their overall dissatisfaction with traditional marriage arrangements (Rogers 2004).

Since about the 1980s, the divorce rate has leveled off. Given that many credit this increase to women's entrance into the work force, how can we understand this relationship in light of those statistics? Rogers (2004) and Schwartz and Han (2014) both explain the leveling out of divorce as a result of growing public acceptance. Rogers (2004) cites role collaboration theory, which suggests that the risk of divorce is highest when the wife's income is very low or very high- suggesting that marriage stability is strongest when perceptions of equality and a fair division of labor are perceived (Rogers 2004). In this theory, wives' resources are a source of marital equality and power, "increasing the likelihood that wives expect [and get] more equitable marital relationships, which influences marital quality and stability" (Rogers 2004:62). If, however, this power (or income) falls below or exceeds that of the husband's, then this balance is thrown off and the risk of divorce increases. This overall concept stems from the necessity of public acceptance, since wives, equipped with the resources to support themselves, are able to invest in and negotiate more equal and satisfying relationships (Rogers 2004). In order for this to happen, a growing number of the male population would need to accept these new gender roles and divisions of labor.

Schwartz and Han (2014) further attribute this change to diffusion theory. This theory suggests that the acceptance of a revolution begins slowly, but once a “critical mass” has been reached, acceptance speeds up and results in a reduction of social costs (Schwartz and Han 2014:610). Their study specifically focuses on the acceptance of marriages in which wives have the educational advantage and reveals that these marriages would initially be more likely than others to end in divorce (Schwartz and Han 2014). Since this theory is based upon the idea that marriages consisting of women that do not adhere to traditional roles are more likely to divorce, these conclusions may also apply to marriages in which women hold significant roles in the work force. As more women enter the work force and the prevalence of these socially unaccepted, unstable marriages increases, so does the divorce rate. However, according to diffusion theory, individuals observe others forming these relationships and acceptance begins to increase, resulting in a decline of the discomfort that initially led to divorce (Schwartz and Han 2014). Therefore, diffusion theory explains the relationship between the leveling off of the divorce rate and women’s entrance into the work force in terms of how the population has become more comfortable with a less traditional, more equal kind of relationship (Schwartz and Han 2014). As the prevalence of these marriages rise, the divorce rate levels off. This accounts for the fact that divorce saw an initial increase (when women’s entrance into the work force was a new concept and not widely accepted by their male partners, causing conflict within marriages) followed by a plateau (when the population had more widely accepted women’s participation in the work force and the conflict originally associated with it decreased).

Birth Control and Contraception

The opportunity for women to control their fertility presented a major advance in feminism during this time (Yenor 2011). Initially, the act of sex would typically have resulted in pregnancy, causing women to become dependent on men for support. Sex was used as a weapon to ensure the dependence of women and to “keep women in the posture of defeat, a symbol of male dominance and immanence” (Yenor 2011:190). The chance to avoid becoming pregnant through birth control and other forms of contraception allowed women to separate maternity and dependence. Yenor (2011) explains the female role through Marxism, comparing the male-headed households to the dominant class and the housewives to the oppressed class. By forcing women to be economically dependent on their husbands, the family enforces a system of exploitation upon women by their husbands (Yenor 2011). Thus, Yenor (2011) highlights the importance that contraception has played in women’s independence: “Women should be able to avoid pregnancy when they have sex (for this, contraception and abortion), and they should be able to become pregnant without being dependent on a man” (Yenor 2011:185). The goal to “divorce sex and reproduction” is made possible for women by the option of choosing when they get pregnant, if they get pregnant, and by whom (Yenor 2011:186).

Further, the ability of women to control their ability to reproduce has allowed sex to become more of a free, independent act, unrestrained and unconnected to other aspects of life (Yenor 2011). Yenor (2011) believes that marriage is a mundane, inconvenient institution that becomes boring for both people when their mindsets and goals change through time. Once sex was no longer associated with the commitment of a man and woman to a child, it could remain “unconnected to other endeavors, following only the

human will when and where it leads” (Yenor 2011:190). Thus, this theory holds that the availability of contraceptives and birth control has affected the institution of marriage and, now free of the obligations linked with children, the willingness to get a divorce.

Halem (1980) proposes conflict theory and suggests that the individual is in constant conflict with the norms of society. The family is an inherently unstable unit, kept together only by the “repression or sublimation of individual desires and internal conflicts” (Halem 1980:97). Faced with the option of casual sex, the need of the individual to exercise control and resist desire is eliminated, leading to the destruction of marriage. Conflict theory therefore maintains that the glue holding a family together, or the forced control of an individual to adhere to society’s notions of the family, has been destabilized with the elimination of the need to repress one’s desires (Halem 1980). Although Halem (1980) does not mention it, the idea that marriages function to control the individual and inhibit their desires could also be a functionalist argument. Once these particular and traditional notions of marriage became unnecessary, the functions of marriage in society were weakened.

From Fault-Based to No-Fault Divorce

The second sharp increase in the divorce rate remains consistent throughout the 1970s (Shoen and Canudas-Romo 2006:753). During this time, the United States was in the process of moving from a fault-based divorce system to a no-fault system. Divorce reform has commonly been cited as another potential cause of the divorce revolution (Wright and Stetson 1978; Nakonezny *et al.* 1995; Vlosky and Monroe 2002). While the direct causation is debatable, the divorce reform no doubt made the process of getting a divorce much easier and less psychologically painful to those involved (Nakonezny *et al.*

1995). In the fault-based system, divorce was granted as a reward to the innocent party and a punishment to the guilty party. Alimony, child support, and property distribution were accordingly “awarded” to the innocent person and the quantity of economic settlement was linked to the income of the guilty person (Nakonezny *et al.* 1995). Since grounds for divorce were limited, couples pursuing divorce would fabricate evidence, falsely accuse each other, and confess to things that never happened in an attempt to prove fault (Weitzman 1985). The limiting nature of this system often ruined the possibility of reconciliation and created an agenda of bitterness and conflict within the process (Nakonezny *et al.* 1995; Weitzman, 1985). Therefore, the implementation of no-fault divorce serves the purpose of “bring[ing] divorce legislation into line with the social reality of marital breakdown as a more common and more acceptable event in contemporary society” (Wheeler 1974:37).

Only a few years after California passed the first no-fault law, Wright and Stetson (1978) argued that no-fault divorce was not to blame for the sudden increase in the divorce rate. They concluded that, regardless of the effects of no-fault reforms on individuals, they have nothing to do with the divorce rate (Wright and Stetson 1978). However, this study is slightly outdated and I therefore question its validity.

On the other hand, Nakonezny *et al.* (1995) found that the switch from fault-based divorce to no-fault divorce *was* responsible for the significant increase in the divorce rate. This conclusion is supported through the use of a no-treatment group (or a control group), which revealed an increase of .80 divorces for every 1,000 individuals per year in those states that adopted no-fault divorce (Nakonezny *et al.* 1995:475). The reason for this increase was simple: “provid[ing] a divorce law that makes divorce less restrictive by

reducing the legal and the economic obstacles of divorce by abolishing the concept of fault” (Nakonezny *et al.* 1995:487).

Wheeler (1974) and Riley (1991) agree with Wright and Stetson (1978) and explain the divorce rate as a result of population growth and a heightened life expectancy following WWII. After WWII, the population did experience a sudden and intense period of growth, justifying Wheeler’s (1974) theory. Once “the ‘baby boom’ generation ha[d] reached the age of marriage and divorce”, the divorce rate inevitably rose (Wheeler 1974:28). Given the fact that this generation came of age during the 1960s, they grew up in an environment that perpetuated the new, radical ideals addressed in this paper. Riley (1991) credits the divorce rate as being a consequence of the population’s extended life expectancy, which was most likely caused by the scientific and technological advancements of that time. Before WWII, people lived relatively shorter lives and unhappy marriages would typically end with the death of one spouse (Riley 1991). However, given this extended life span, many marriages had started lasting far longer. Now faced with the option of ending their marriages all together, many Americans saw divorce as an attractive solution (Riley 1991). The combination of divorce reform and a longer life expectancy therefore work together to explain the heightened divorce rate during this period.

Transformed Religious Teachings

During the 1950’s, religion played a significant role in shaping the American family (Cherlin 2009). Church membership skyrocketed from 1850, when 34% of Americans affiliated with a church, to 1950, when this number rose to 59% (Cherlin 2009:73). Involvement within a church meant taking part in activities that were geared

towards the breadwinner/homemaker stereotypes of that time (Cherlin 2009). Many religions, such as Catholicism and most Protestant denominations, would only allow a divorce on the strict grounds of adultery or desertion and divorced church members were often shamed into leaving (Cherlin 2009). Therefore, while religion played an undeniable role in reinforcing the bond and structure of marriage before the social transformation of the 1960's, the questions of whether religion maintained this role after the 1960s, and to what extent, remains.

The divorce rate, while stable during the years when people adhered to the 1950's American family structure, began to rise again in the early 1960's, after WWII and during the Vietnam War (Cherlin 2009). Seeing that religion placed such a strong emphasis on the strength of marriage and the family, it would seem logical that, with a rise in the divorce rate, American religiosity would experience a decrease. In addition, many of the ideologies that emerged during the 1960's had to do with individualism and self-expression, concepts that went against some traditional, religious values (Cherlin 2009). Rationally, advancements in globalization, modernization and ideology would represent a decrease in religious vigor.

However, Americans have shown no such decrease in their affiliation with religion (Cherlin 2009). Even though many American institutions were secularized during this time, overall affiliation remained, as Cherlin (2009) explains, relatively unchanged. In fact, "the strength of American religion is striking. In no other Western country is religious practice so vital and so influential in shaping people's beliefs" (Cherlin 2009:33). The expectation that countries will become more secular as they modernize and especially as new ideologies are introduced has been shockingly

inaccurate when applied to the United States (Cherlin, 2009). Reasons for this religious dedication are explained by Kent (1992) through social exchange theory. Kent (1992) describes the 1960's rise in religiosity as a way to "provide resolutions to crises of meaning" and to allow a sense of order to social life (122). Faced with the fact that movements in the 1960s were not all successful in initiating change, many activists experienced a loss of hope and personal identity (Kent 1992). To deal with this disappointment, many transformed themselves from activist to dedicated churchgoer, turning to religion as a way to cut their losses, yet continue to remain within a group. But, since a decline in American religiosity is not the answer to this disconnect, we are faced with the question: how were people able to maintain their religious identities while simultaneously accepting the collapse of marital status?

The answer lies in the changes that occurred not only in the values and style characterizing religion during the mid-century, but also the ways in which religious institutions reacted to the increasing divorce rate (Cherlin 2009). Cherlin (2009) outlines how many religions transformed themselves by placing an increased emphasis on personal growth and individual happiness. In the years preceding the ideological revolution, the church discouraged divorce with a sharp rigor (Halem 1980). Efforts to limit divorce included strict guidelines regarding qualifications as well as restrictions on remarriage (Halem 1980). However, the second half of the 20th century saw many religions change their ideology to fit a more liberal and individualist standpoint. For example, American Catholics moved their emphasis away from the Church as an institution and focused more on "individual responsibility for one's faith, [through a]... shift toward[s] viewing God as loving and forgiving rather than as punitive and

judgmental, and they placed greater importance on personal exploration and discovery” (Cherlin 2009:106). This previously mentioned ideal of “the self” allowed people the option of finding happiness in relationships outside of those found through marriage (Cherlin 2009). The church began to see marriage not through rules and tradition, but through the potential growth and personal benefits that it could provide (Cherlin 2009).

The underlying explanation of how someone could maintain their religious identity while diminishing one of its core traditional values therefore lies in the responses of the church. With the divorce rate continuing to rise throughout the 1960s, 70s, 80s and 90s, many divorced individuals turned to their churches for solace and support (Cherlin 2009). In response, Mainline Protestant churches began allowing remarriage after any form of divorce (Cherlin 2009:109), while Conservative Protestants centered their divorce ideology towards helping divorced people heal (Cherlin, 2009). Catholics have responded to the divorce rate by raising the rate of annulments, which is the only form of divorce that they recognize (Cherlin 2009). On the other hand, many Evangelical Christians began to focus their attention on encouraging couples to stay together by intensifying the importance of marriage (Gushee 2008). Gushee (2008) recommends that couples that are considering divorce should be offered tax cuts as a motivation to undergo counseling. Throughout this variety of responses to the divorce rate, many religions that initially centered their teachings on control have focused more attention on the strengthening of marriage and continue this method today (Gushee 2008; Glass and Levchak 2014). Thus, even through societal and ideological changes, religious affiliation in America has remained relatively steady, a characteristic setting it apart from many other developed countries (Cherlin 2009).

In studying the relationship between divorce and religious transformation, it is important to address the question of “which came first?” Did the divorce revolution occur as a result of this alteration in religious teachings? Or did religion change its focus after the divorce revolution began, as a way to accommodate those wishing to get a divorce and maintain their religion? Questioning the direction of this relationship brings up a number of differing theories, each of which aims to further explain the prevalence of religion in America. Samenfink (1958) suggests a discrepancy between the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church and the behavior of people who would consider themselves to be “good” Roman Catholics (163). This disconnect exists specifically in teachings regarding marital relations. At the time of this study, the Roman Catholic Church maintained, first, that marriage was a sacramental act and second, that any “artificial means” of preventing contraception were “sinful” (Samenfink 1958:164). Ultimately Samenfink (1958) found “some indication that a hiatus did actually exist between what these young people subscribed to in theory and carried out in practice” (163). The fact that these “formal subscriptions” to religious teachings in marriage did exist during the time of this study, yet were not always applied, suggests that, at least in the case of Roman Catholics, certain values had yet to change (Samenfink 1958). This study proposes that people started adhering to the American secular views of marriage on their own, thus putting the divorce revolution before altered religious values (Samenfink 1958:163).

A contrasting perspective would suggest that religious transformation took place before this revolution happened. Kent (1992) describes the religious transformation as something that took place as a way for people to cope with the failure “to bring about the

revolution by radical action” (129). As previously described, individuals turned to religion partly because they needed a new technique to approach social change. This viewpoint therefore suggests that religious transformation took place not as a response to the divorce revolution, but as a new way to welcome social changes like it. “The revolution would still come, but its arrival would be heralded by a personal transformation of purified individuals” (Kent 1992:129). While this theory does not cite the divorce revolution as a specifically anticipated change, it does suggest that religious ideologies were altered as a new means to a similarly accepted goal.

Micro-Level Distribution Factors

Taking all of these factors into account helps in the understanding of how changes in values have influenced divorce. Given that most of the transformation took place around the mid 20th century, this study now aims to detect which patterns continue to affect the divorce rate today. Although the rate has leveled off in recent years, divorce has become a fairly standard occurrence. Do the ideologies and values introduced earlier in this paper continue to affect the divorce rate as they did before, or have their influences leveled off as the divorce rate has? In other words, are we still experiencing the diluted effects of the 1960s, or are there new, additional ideas that contribute to the divorce rate today? Further, how do micro-level factors play a role in divorce? Are certain demographic groups or religions at a higher risk of divorce than others? For example, during the time of the Industrial Revolution, families exposed to poverty were forced to stray away from traditional notions of the family and became susceptible to divorce as a result (O’Neil 1967). Seeing as low-income families may have been more likely to get divorced years ago, is that still the case today? Through studying the relationship between

age at first marriage, race, participation in the workforce, educational attainment, social class, religion, region and divorce, this study aims to gain insight into whether certain groups have a higher risk of divorce than others.

Age at first marriage:

Kposowa (1998) found a similar pattern to those suggested in other studies, that women who marry at a young age have a higher probability of getting divorced.

Although there are a number of factors that may contribute to this fact, it aligns with the idea that marriages, now made longer by the increased life expectancy, have less of a chance of ending from the death of one spouse. Thus, the earlier a woman gets married, the longer her marriage will be, and the more time there is for her marriage to become unhappy and result in divorce (Kposowa 1998).

Weed (1974) conducted a study over the course of ten years to measure the relationship between the risk of divorce and younger couples. First done in 1960 and then replicated in 1970, Weed (1974) found that younger marriages couldn't be credited for the divorce rate. However, this study was conducted with a consideration for a number of other variables that are irrelevant to this study, making its results complex and difficult to apply here.

Race:

Further, an individual's race can be used as a factor to determine the risk of divorce. Studying this particular variable will hopefully provide insight into how divorce, marriage, and the family are affected by discrimination, inequality, interracial marriage and other social factors. Kposowa (1998) also looked at the likelihood of same-race couples to get divorced and found that African American women have a much higher risk

than their white counterparts. The results of Kposowa's (1998) study discovered that, by the end of 5 years of marriage, 20% of African Americans are expected to get a divorce, whereas this number is only 6% for whites (537). After 25 years of marriage, 70% of African Americans are expected to get divorced, while only 33% of whites are expected to get divorced within that same period (Kposowa 1998:537). Although there are many explanations offered for these results, a particularly interesting one refers to the bitterness of African American wives towards their husbands. Since opportunities for African American men have been limited in the past, they are perceived by their wives as incapable of fulfilling the "breadwinner" role (Kposowa 1998:543). "In time, the wife may come to view the marriage more as a liability on her, rather than an asset, and thus be more predisposed to terminating the union" (Kposowa 1998:543). Given that the white male has successfully fulfilled this role throughout history, this fact may help to explain the heightened risk of African Americans to get divorced, relative to their white counterparts.

The idea that race could play a part in the divorce rate is intriguing, since the amount of interracial couples has increased over the past few years. In 1970, less than 1% of all married couples were interracial and by 2000, that number had jumped to 6% (Bratter and King 2008:161). However, studies examining these relationships have indicated that, "crossing racial lines still violates enduring norms of who should and should not marry whom" (Bratter and King 2008:160). A study by Bratter and King (2008) examining the likelihood of divorce among interracial couples versus same-race couples in the 1980s concluded that within 10 years of marriage, interracial couples were far more likely than same-race couples to get divorced (167). The biggest disparity

occurred among marriages initiated between the years 1985 and 1989, “where 55% of interracial marriages divorced by their 10th year compared to 35.6% of same-race marriages” (Bratter and King 2008:167).

Furstenberg (1994), Sweezy and Tiefenthaler (1996) and Brown, Orbuch, and Bauermeister (2008) all concluded similar results to those of Kposowa (1998), that African Americans are less likely to marry, more likely to divorce, and less likely to remarry. According to Furstenberg (1994), 10 years after marriage, 47% of blacks have separated or divorced, compared to 28% of non-Hispanic whites (32). While these statistics may be intriguing, it is unclear whether Furstenberg (1994) controlled for other variables, such as income, or simply obtained his facts from census data. Similarly, Brown *et al.* (2008) found that black Americans had about two times the odds of divorce than their white American counterparts (192). Sweezy and Tiefenthaler (1996) found that Native American women are more than twice as likely to divorce than white women, whereas Asian women are twice as likely not to experience divorce as white women (61). The explanation offered in this study was similar to the one given by Kposowa (1998), that the limited resources offered to minority groups of men in the United States make women perceive a decrease in their overall marital gain (Sweezy and Tiefenthaler 1996:61).

Although Zhang and Hook (2009) found no statistically significant relationship between interracial marriage and the risk of divorce, measuring race and ethnicity along with other factors, such as location, indicated a slight relationship, with mixed marriages that include blacks as the least stable, followed by Hispanics (Zhang and Hook 2009). Marriages including Asians were the most stable, a finding that aligns with those of past

studies, such as Sweezy and Tiefenthaler (1996) (Zhang and Hook 2009). Finally, marriages with a black husband and a white wife were found to be the least stable (Zhang and Hook 2009:104). These results suggest the persistence of racism directed towards black men, supported by the finding that white women married to black men reported more experiences with first-hand racism (Zhang and Hook 2009:104).

Participation in the Work Force:

As discussed earlier, women's entrance into the work and labor forces has been credited as one of the driving factors in the divorce revolution (O'Neil 1967; Halem 1980; Rogers 2004; Yenor 2011). While this may be the case, Raley, Mattingly, and Bianchi (2006) argue that this shift towards the female breadwinner role is disrupted by other life factors. For example, they found that, with the birth of a child, women are more likely than men to leave work and stay home, whereas husbands are more likely to increase their hours of work when they become fathers (Raley *et al.* 2006:14). This theory suggests that the birth of a child works to enhance traditional notions of marriage, further pushing women into the homemaker role and the men into the breadwinner role. As such, they reason that women's participation in the workforce does not have as strong an effect on marriage stability as previously believed (Raley *et al.* 2006).

Yenor (2011) attributes the mere ability of women to earn a living to the changing state of marriage. The division of power with a household hinges upon the dependence of women on their husbands, creating a strong patriarchal relationship within the family. The power involved in earning money thus contributes to this division. Therefore, separate from a woman's occupation or the amount of money she makes, having the option to make money is what gives women power and encourages an equal relationship

(Yenor 2011). Although it has been argued that the entrance of women into the workforce has damaged traditional notions of marriage, since it allows women the option of supporting themselves, Yenor (2011) argues that this independence is crucial in establishing the “dignity of a woman” (Yenor 2011:184). Interestingly, this was one of the few viewpoints that explained women’s entrance into the workforce through the framework of promoting feminism, instead of corrupting marriage.

Education:

Women’s participation in the work force was accompanied by a growing number of women becoming educated. Kposowa (1998) found that “women with some education (in addition to high school) were nearly 1.3 times as likely to divorce as women with only high school education” (541). Women that have completed college and obtained graduate degrees were 1.7 times more likely to divorce than women with only a high school education (Kposowa 1998:541). Clearly, this study suggests that, the higher a women’s educational attainment, the more likely she is to get divorced. This idea is explained by the potential for educated women to have more choices, be more career oriented, and be “less willing to stay in unions that act as constraints on their career advancement and personal freedom” (Kposowa 1998:543). However, analyses from this study fail to legitimately take into account the effects of husbands’ education on marriage.

In contrast to these findings, Schwartz and Han (2014) found that, while marriages where wives had more education than their husbands had an increased likelihood of divorced in the 1970s, this is no longer true (621). Their study states that, that in recent years, wives’ educational advantage has no effect on the likelihood of a divorce (Schwartz and Han 2014). This suggests a change in attitudes associated with

gender expectations in marriage and also a decline in the prominence of traditional roles (Schwartz and Han 2014). Similar to these results, yet offering a difference explanation, Brown *et al.* (2008) found that, contrary to popular belief, levels of education do not necessary lead to divorce. Instead, the more education each spouse has, the less likely they are to get a divorce (195). The contradicting results found by Kposowa (1998) and Schwartz and Han (2014) suggest the need to further study the effects of both spouse's education on the likelihood of divorce.

Sweezy and Tiefenthaler (1996) also found that more education decreases the likelihood of divorce. They suggest that their findings support Becker's idea (1981) that higher levels of educational attainment "increase marital utility from the division of labor associated with marriage" (Sweezy and Tiefenthaler 1996:60). Further, this relationship could be the result of "positive assortative mating"; here, a man's higher education allows him to offer more money and human capital, therefore increasing the woman's perception that she benefits from the marriage (Sweezy and Tiefenthaler on Becker (1981) 1996:60).

Martin and Parashar (2006) explain these results by an increase in educated women's "restrictive attitudes" towards divorce (37). Since the 1970s, educated women are more likely to both disapprove of divorce and also to get a divorce (Martin and Parashar 2006). In other words, "highly educated women's decreasing uncertainty about stable marriages *lowers* the personal salience of divorce for them" (Martin and Parashar 2006:38).

Income:

In considering the effects of income, regardless of the sex or composition of the primary breadwinner arrangement, Kposowa (1998) found that families with higher

incomes were consistently less likely to get divorced. This may be explained by the idea that the marital conflict accompanying poverty and financial burden is greatly reduced, therefore resulting in a decrease in marital breakdown (Kposowa 1998). The overall capital held by a family thus contributes to their feelings of security and lessens the effects of this factor on marital conflict.

Rogers and DeBoer (2001) found that changes in women's resources consistently reduced the risk of divorce. These changes include both increases and decreases in income (up to a certain point), and they come at little cost to husbands' happiness (Rogers and DeBoer 2001:469-470). While some believe that wives' income creates a feeling of financial stability and therefore less commitment to the family, Rogers and DeBoer (2001) suggest that increases in wives' financial resources strengthen marital happiness and stabilize the family (470). However, the study also found that reported happiness within marriages decreases when women contribute at least or more than half of the total income (Rogers and DeBoer 2001)..

In another study conducted by Rogers (2004) three years later, he found a significant relationship between wives' income and the risk of divorce. According to this study, with each additional \$1,000 in wives' actual income, up to a certain point, the odds of divorce increase by approximately 2.5% to 3% (Rogers 2004:67). This supports the economic independence theory, stating that marital stability is enhanced by wives' economic dependence on their husbands (Rogers 2004). Rogers' (2004) study also found a curvilinear association between the percentage of wives' income and the probability of divorce. When wives' percentage of income was below 50%, any increase elevated the risk of divorce (Rogers 2004:68). When wives contributed 50% or more, the relationship

leveled off and finally, when wives contributed more than 60% of the total family income, the risk of divorce declined (Rogers 2004: 68). These findings are in direct contradiction to those in Rogers' earlier study (2001) and although he found a curvilinear association in the later one, his results still indicate a relationship between women who earn a significant amount of the total income and the risk of divorce. Sweezy and Tiefenthaler (1996) also found that women's income levels have a statistically significant and positive effect on their risk of divorce. These and Rogers' (2004) findings can be explained through the theory that women who work outside of the home "derive and provide less utility in marriage" (Sweezy and Tiefenthaler 1996:61). As their "shadow price" decreases, the probability that they will get divorced increases (Sweezy and Tiefenthaler 1996:61).

Brown *et al.* (2008) take it one step further by incorporating race and gender into the effects that income have on divorce. Their study found that greater income reported by black husbands decreased the likelihood of divorce, whereas greater income reported by white husbands increased the likelihood of divorce (Brown *et al.* 2008:195). Kposowa (1998) offers an explanation for these results earlier, in that economic inequalities work to highlight the disadvantages experienced by many black American males, while these advantages may be expected for white American males. These conclusions can be applied to the situation that is described here, simply by further highlighting the expectations of white versus black men. When black males experience financial success, it appears as though they have defeated these obstacles and leads to an increase of marital cohesion, while the white male's inability to provide financial resources is seen as a failure.

Religion/Religiosity:

Religion is also an important lens through which to view marital stability, since it provides guidelines and a framework through which spouses may shape their marriages (Brown *et al.* 2008). Cherlin (2009) maintains that whether or not individuals identify with any religion at all has an effect on divorce. After the first 15 years of marriage, it was found that an estimated 41% of religious women got divorced, compared to 56% of those with no religious affiliation at all (Cherlin 2009:112). This may be the result of religious institutions that support marriage stability, yet the vagueness of these results suggest the possibility that other factors were not seriously taken into account, such as the strength of one's religious affiliation and the years during which the study was conducted.

Mahoney (2010), Vaaler, Ellison, and Powers (2009) and a number of other studies found similar results. Mahoney (2010) discovered that, the higher the religious attendance, particularly by wives or by couples attending the same denomination together, the lower the risk of divorce. This relationship exists only if either the wife is a dedicated member of the spiritual community or the couple is equally as dedicated, and these results were found throughout a number of studies (Furstenberg 1994; Brown *et al.* 2008; Vaaler *et al.* 2009; Mahoney 2010). Brown *et al.* (2008) provides an explanation for this finding, that the risk of divorce decreases when just the wife attends more religious services, and suggests that wives' attendance in community gatherings "provides an important resource for maintaining the stability of marriage over time" (194). Through attending religious services, wives are given the tools they need to deal

with unhappy marriages, whereas husbands turn to other organizational practices to deal with these issues (Brown *et al.* 2008).

Mahoney (2010) and Vaaler *et al.* (2009) further found that a higher risk of divorce exists for couples of mixed faiths and for couples where husbands attend religious services more than their wives (814; 931). There are a number of reasons given for this discovery, most notably the one proposing that highly religious men may adhere to a patriarchal gender ideology, which may not appeal to less religious women (Vaaler *et al.* 2009:931). This idea suggests an area for potential further study, comparing spouses' religious affiliations and the degree to which their attitudes regarding gender differ. Finally, Mahoney (2010) found the risk of divorce to be heightened with mixed faith couples and when "a less religiously committed spouse resists the spiritual expectations of a spouse or spiritual community" (Mahoney 2010:814).

Vaaler *et al.* (2009) found that the risk of divorce is lowest when both husband and wife attend services, since "families that pray together, stay together" (Vaaler *et al.* 2009:930). This may be due to a shared ideology, or possibly to the fact that religious couples may face higher social costs of marital dissolution (Vaaler *et al.* 2009). Further, they found that one particular type of mixed-faith marriage appears to have the highest risk of divorce: couples in which the wives are members of an "exclusivist (i.e. fundamentalist, evangelical, or sectarian) faith are especially prone to divorce" (Vaaler *et al.* 2009:930). The study addressed this finding by explaining that women identifying with these types of religions often try to "domesticate" men, giving them more family responsibility and leadership (Vaaler *et al.* 2009:931). Women that are disappointed with

any failure in these responsibilities may also be more inclined to get a divorce (Vaaler *et al.* 2009:931).

Glass and Levchak (2014) found that conservative Protestant communities have higher levels of divorce than others. Although there may potentially be a number of factors contributing to these results, one possible explanation is that, “as conservative Protestant presence increases, elite conservative Protestant influence grows stronger, which results in policies and programs that do little to reduce divorce, but only increase early marriage” (Glass and Levchak 2014:1035). This idea suggests that, in these types of religious practices, early marriage is idealized, but the resources needed for improving marriage quality are either weak or considered unnecessary.

Region:

Studying the variations in trends between regions can reveal insight into how the features of a given geographical location can affect social behavior. Explanations regarding the divorce rate among different states often require an understanding of the relationships between factors such as race, class, religion, and history. As previously stated, Glass and Levchak (2014) concluded that communities with high amounts of conservative Protestants actually have a higher divorce rate than others. While this finding cannot explain patterns of divorce in the South, it can signify the effects of community norms and Protestant teachings on location. As previously discussed, as concentrations of Protestant people became more pronounced, their values and teachings did as well (Glass and Levchak 2014). This statistic may therefore be a function of the compositions of communities and the perpetuation of certain beliefs.

Effective dates of the no-fault divorce law reform may also have a regional effect on the divorce rate. Nakonezny *et al.* (1995) found a noticeable decrease in the divorce rate in Nevada after the adoption of no-fault divorce across the 50 states. Before no-fault divorce became an option, this study claims that Nevada “was a divorce mill where an expedient divorce was available to married couples in the United States” (Nakonezny *et al.* 1995:486). Once other states began accepting this reform, traveling to Nevada to obtain a divorce was no longer a requirement.

In another study, it was found that divorce rates generally increase in the United States going from East to West and from North to South (Fenelon 1971:326). This occurrence has been referred to as the effects of a “frontier atmosphere”, proposing that certain environments are more conducive to “individuality and freedom from traditional social restraints” (Fenelon 1971:326). Explanations for these findings are similar to those offered by Halem (1980), who suggested that certain societies and norms are more tolerant of divorce. However, given that this study took place in the early 1970s, its results may be outdated.

Sweezy and Tiefenthaler (1996) found that couples living in metropolitan areas are significantly more likely to get divorced. These results may be due to the options available to urban women versus rural women. In urban environments, women are faced with more financial options, less of a stigma around divorce, and less search costs for finding a new partner (Sweezy and Tiefenthaler 1996:61). Further, this study found that states with a higher percentage of Christian Fundamentalists have a significantly lower divorce rate (Sweezy and Tiefenthaler 1996). Their finding, that states with a higher number of Baptists, Lutherans, Methodists, and Mormons have lower divorce rates,

indicates that divorce is influenced by community norms, which was similarly concluded by Glass and Levchak (2014) (Sweezy and Tiefenthaler 1996:62). This is especially important to my study, since it examines the interaction between micro-level factors such as region and religion and how they work together to affect the divorce rate.

Conclusions:

Starting in the mid 20th century, the divorce rate increased at a shockingly fast rate, yet has leveled off in recent years. By the year 1980, one in every two marriages would end in divorce and, by the end of the century, American marriages produced a rate of over one million divorces a year, a number that can be reduced to one divorce every 13 seconds (Riley 1991:156). During the late 19th century and early 20th century, divorce was much less socially accepted, had financial repercussions, required the confirmation of fault, and was limited by the legal system (Cherlin 2009; Nakonezny *et al.* 1995; O’Neil 1967; Riley 1991; Vlosky *et al.* 2002; Weitzman 1985; Wheeler 1974; Wright and Stetson 1978 and Yenor 2011). A study of the macro-level causes for the divorce rate indicates a strong relationship between the ideological revolution during the 1960s, while the leveling out of divorce may be attributed to a period of relative social rest (Cherlin 2009; Furstenberg 1994; Halem 1980; Herman 1992; Kent 1992; Morgan 1991; Nakonezny *et al.* 1995; O’Neil 1967; Riley 1991; Shoen and Canudas-Romo 2006; Schwartz and Han 2014; Vlosky and Monroe 2002; Weitzman 1985; Wheeler 1974; Wright and Stetson 1978 and Yenor 2011). Ideological reform such as the shifted focus of society towards “the self” produced a change in life goals, potentially altering people’s motivations to get and stay married. Events such as the entrance of women into the workforce and the option of contraceptives have both provided support for some of the

ideas introduced by feminism. This increasing independence of women from their husbands may play a role in the willingness of women to get a divorce. Legal reform allowed people to get divorced without the customary necessity of finding fault, making the process of divorce much easier. Finally, a transformation in the values taught in certain religions, such as the emphasis on “the self”, occurred at around the same time that the divorce rate rapidly increased. Yet, the precise direction of this relationship is unknown.

In an attempt to identify the extent to which these ideologies affect the risk of divorce on the micro-level, I will conduct an analysis of literature and studies that have been published on these topics. The effects of social groups such as age at first marriage, race, education, income, religion, and region have revealed some intriguing patterns. However, I have found contradictory results within almost every category. Therefore, this study will aim to draw more definitive, causal connections between micro-level correlates and causes of divorce. Can features such as race and income predict divorce and to what extent do their explanations interact with one another? Are these relationships due to the ideologies that emerged during the 1960s, or are they attributable to trends within modern day society? It is my hope that this study will further define causal connections and contribute to the existing literature on the predictors of divorce.

Chapter 2: Methods

Having just explored the influences of macro-level factors on the divorce rate over the past few decades, it is now be the aim of this paper to draw more definitive conclusions regarding the effects of micro-level factors on the risk of divorce and how these factors have changed over time. My primary source for obtaining data was the General Social Survey. The GSS is a trend survey conducted by the National Opinion Research Center that measures and monitors societal change in the United States. The survey includes a “core” of demographic, behavioral and attitudinal questions, in addition to topics of special interest. Many of these measures have remained unchanged since the GSS first began in 1972, allowing time-trend studies as well as replications of other studies. The GSS is well known as “the single best source of data on societal trends” and contains 5,545 variables, time trends for 2,072 variables and 268 trends that have 20+ data points. This serves as a valuable tool for measuring variables such as demographics, opinions, and behaviors, since it covers a vast range of topics and includes consistent data for over 40 years (NORC. “The General Social Survey.”

[http://www3.norc.org/Gss+website/](http://www3.norc.umd.edu/gss/)).

Measuring Dependent Variables

To measure the rate of divorce, I used the variables “DIVORCE” and “MARITAL.” While neither of these variables solely measures the rate of marriages that end in divorce, they do measure whether respondents have ever been married and the number of respondents currently divorced or separated. “DIVORCE” is a nominal variable and asks respondents, “If currently married or widowed: Have you ever been divorced or legally separated?” “MARITAL” is also a nominal variable and asks

respondents, “Are you currently- married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?” In order to apply more directly to my study, the variables “DIVORCE” and “MARITAL” have been combined to create “Divorced.” This variable excludes respondents who are separated and includes respondents who have been divorced but are now remarried.

Measuring Independent Variables

Decades:

In order to measure changes in trends over time, I recoded the variable “decade” into four categories: 1970s, 1980s, 1990s and 2000s. The 2000s includes surveys from 2000 to 2012. Throughout each analysis, “seventies” is used as a comparison category.

Demographic Variables

Independent variables were divided into four groups: Religion, Demographics, Social Class, and Values and were chosen based on the consistency with which they were used since the start of the survey. To measure whether age at first marriage affects respondents’ risk of divorce, the variable “AGEWED” was recoded into two dummy variables, “Less than 21” (including respondents who got married when they were 21 or younger) and “Over 21” (including respondents who got married at age 22 or above). Less than 21 was used as the reference category throughout the study. To determine whether race has any effect on the risk of divorce, the variable “RACE” was recoded into three dummy variables, including “White”, “Black” and “Other.” White was used as the reference category, allowing me to measure the risk of divorce for participants in the “Black” and “Other” categories relative to white respondents. To measure educational attainment, the variable DEGREE was recoded into three groups, each representing

higher levels of education. “Less than High School”, “High School” and “Some College” permitted me to determine whether educational attainment has any effect on respondents’ risk of divorce, relative to those who have a high school degree, which was used as the reference category in this group. The variable REGION was recoded into nine dummy variables, each representing a different category. These dummy variables were then grouped into “North” and “South.” The Northern regions included New England, Middle Atlantic, East North Central, West North Central, Mountain and Pacific. The Southern regions included West South Central, East South Central, and South Atlantic. The Southern regions were used as the reference category, which allowed me to measure the risk of divorce for respondents in the Northern regions relative to those in the South.

Religious Affiliation

Religious affiliation was measured by recoding the variables RELIG and DENOM into “Reltrad” (Steensland *et al* 2000). This variable included the categories: Evangelical Protestant, Mainline Protestant, Black Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, Other Religion and None. Each category was recoded into its own dummy variable and respondents with no religion were used as the reference category. Further, the variable ATTEND measured respondents’ religious activity by asking, “How often do you attend religious services?” and it was used to determine whether the amount of religious participation respondents took part in had an effect on the risk of divorce. Unlike many of the other variables, ATTEND is an ordinal level of measurement, so results were based on each additional level of reported religious attendance, with higher scores representing more frequent attendance. Frequencies tables for each of these variables are available in Table 2.1.

Social Class Variables

To determine whether respondents' income affected their risk of divorce, I used the variable CONINC. Since the dollar has experienced so much inflation over the course of the past few decades, I chose CONINC because it is asked fairly consistently and because it controls inflation by measuring income in constant 2000 dollars. Given the fact that respondents have the option of choosing between almost thousands of categories for this variable, I recoded it into three separate groups, beginning with the minimum option, 60384 in constant 2000 dollars and below (Low Income). The next group took that number and doubled it, making a Middle Income group (60384 to 120385). The final group consisted of respondents with High Incomes of 120386 and up. The group with the lowest income was used as the reference category in the regression model. CLASS, a variable that asks respondents their subjective class position, was recoded to include respondents who perceived themselves to be in the lower or working classes in one dummy variable and those who perceived themselves to be in the middle and upper classes as another dummy variable. Although the distribution was fairly split, I decided to use the lower/working class variable as the reference category.

Values

Finally, one of the key points explored in the literature review was how traditional gender roles have changed over time. Thus, two variables that measure respondents' views towards gender roles were used to determine whether these attitudes have an effect on divorce. FEFAM is an ordinal-level of measurement that asks respondents to state how strongly they agree with the following statement, "It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the

home and family”, with 1 being “strongly agree” and 4 being “strongly disagree.” This same scale is used to measure respondents’ views towards women’s entrance into the workforce with the variable FECHLD, which states, “A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.” The literature review also discussed the acceptance of birth control and contraception in great detail. The variable PREMARSX asks respondents, “If a man and woman have sex relations before marriage, do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?” Since each of these variables is an ordinal-level of measurement, the risk of divorce was determined based on each additional level that respondents reported.

Analytic Strategy

Trend Analysis

In order to get a sense of the trends and patterns that characterize America’s attitudes and actions towards divorce, the next chapter begins with the results of tests conducted on variables that measure changes in the marriage and divorce rates. Using cross tabulations, these variables include “MARITAL”, “DIVORCE”, and “Divorced.” Next, I used three variables that reflect changes in respondents’ attitudes regarding when they believe divorce is acceptable, how easy they believe it is to get a divorce, and whether obtaining a divorce should be more or less difficult. These variables include “DIVBEST”, “DIVNOW”, and “DIVLAW.” Finally, I used the independent variables included in the religion, demographics, social class, and values groups for the remainder of the study. Table 2.1 displays the general distribution of each of these variables.

Table 2.1: Descriptive Statistics for Correlates of Divorce

Variables	Mean	St. Deviation	Mode	Text
Demographics				
Age at first marriage				
AGEWED	22.15	4.89	21	If ever married: How old were you when you first married?
Less than 21	0.54	0.5	1	Less than 21 Agewed dummy (yes=1, no=0)
Over 21	0.46	0.5	0	Over 21 Agewed dummy (yes=1, no=0)
Race				
RACE				What race do you consider yourself?
White	0.81	0.39	1	White race dummy (yes=1, other=0)
Black	0.14	0.35	0	Black race dummy (yes=1, other=0)
Other	0.05	0.22	0	Other race dummy (yes=1, other=0)
Education				
DEGREE	1.32	1.16	1	Respondent's highest degree
Less than High School	0.66	0.47	1	Degree less than high school dummy (yes=1, no=0)
High School	0.07	0.25	0	Degree high school dummy (yes=1, no=0)
Some College	0.27	0.44	0	Degree some college dummy (yes=1, no=0)
Region				
REGION				Region of interview
New England	0.05	0.21	0	Region New England dummy (yes=1, other=0)
Middle Atlantic	0.15	0.36	0	Region Middle Atlantic dummy (yes=1, other=0)
E. N. Central	0.19	0.39	0	Region E. N. Central dummy (yes=1, other=0)
W. N. Central	0.07	0.26	0	Region W. N. Central dummy (yes=1, other=0)
S. Atlantic	0.19	0.39	0	Region S. Atlantic dummy (yes=1, other=0)
E. S. Central	0.07	0.25	0	Region E. S. Central dummy (yes=1, other=0)
W. S. Central	0.09	0.29	0	Region W. S. Central dummy (yes=1, other=0)
Mountain	0.06	0.24	0	Region Mountain dummy (yes=1, other=0)
Pacific	0.13	0.34	0	Region Pacific dummy (yes=1, other=0)
North	0.65	0.48	1	North region dummy (yes=1, no=0)
South	0.35	0.48	0	South region dummy (yes=1, no=0)
Income				
CONINC	44503.04	35936.01	39695	Family income in constant dollars
Low Income	0.76	0.43	1	Family income less than 60384 in constant 2000 dollars (yes=1, no=0)
Middle Income	0.19	0.39	0	Family income from 60385 to 120385 in constant 2000 dollars (yes=1, no=0)
High Income	0.05	0.22	0	Family income 120386 and up in constant 2000 dollars (yes=1, no=0)
Class	2.46	0.66	2	Subjective class identification

Lower/Working class	0.51	0.5	1	Class lower or working dummy (yes=1, no=0)
Middle/Upper class	0.49	0.5	0	Class middle or upper dummy (yes=1, no=0)
Religion				
RELIG				Respondent's religious identity
DENOM				Specific denomination
Evangelical Protestant	0.19	0.4	0	RELIG and DENOM Evangelical dummy (yes=1, other=0)
Mainline Protestant	0.24	0.42	0	RELIG and DENOM Mainline dummy (yes=1, other=0)
Black Protestant	0.09	0.3	0	RELIG and DENOM Black Protestant dummy (yes=1, other=0)
Catholic	0.29	0.45	0	RELIG and DENOM Catholic dummy (yes=1, other=0)
Jewish	0.02	0.15	0	RELIG and DENOM Jewish dummy (yes=1, other=0)
Other Religion	0.03	0.17	0	RELIG and DENOM Other Faith dummy (yes=1, other=0)
None	0.13	0.33	0	RELIG and DENOM non affiliated dummy (yes=1, other=0)
ATTEND	3.83	2.71	7	How often respondent attends religious services
Values				
Gender roles				
FEFAM	2.67	0.86	3	Better for man to work, women to stay home and take care of home and family
FECHLD	2.56	0.81	3	Mother working doesn't hurt child
Premarital Sex				
PREMARSEX	2.77	1.25	4	Sex before marriage

Notes: General Social Survey for years 1972-2012. AGEWED, RACE, DEGREE, REGION, CONINC, CLASS, RELIG, DENOM, ATTEND, FEFAM, FECHLD, PREMARSEX.

Regressions

Next, regression models were used to measure the variable “divorced” with each group of independent variables. Given the fact that events such as the passing of no-fault divorce laws took place mostly in the 1970s, the variable “seventies” was used as the reference category. Each model features the slope (B), the standard deviation, and the odds ratio. Without the addition of any control variables, Model A (Table 3.1) displays the rate of divorce throughout each decade, relative to the 1970s, and was used as the baseline model throughout most of the study.

Once the initial model was conducted, each dummy variable for religious identification was added as a covariate in the regression model. Since the category “No Religion” was left out, the regression analysis helped me determine what the risk of divorce was for each religious category, compared to respondents with no religion. For the first religion regression model, I left out the variable ATTEND in order to determine whether religious participation plays a role in the risk of divorce and whether this role varies between religious groups. The next model (Model C) includes ATTEND and an analysis of the results between Models B and C determined whether participation matters for different religions in the overall risk of divorce. The purpose of introducing these control variables was to determine whether the slopes, odds ratios and significance numbers for the decades change. If they have, then I may conclude that respondents’ religious identification had an influence on the risk of divorce.

The same process was applied to the group “demographic variables” to determine whether certain demographic attributes have an effect on the risk of divorce. Unlike the religious affiliation group, this group includes a number of comparison categories. Age at first marriage was measured by comparing the risk of divorce for respondents that got married at age 22 and older, relative to those who got married at age 21 and under. The risk of divorce for categories “Black” and “Other” were measured against the category “White”, while differing levels of educational attainment were measured against the recoded middle group, respondents who have a high school degree. The effect of location on the risk of divorce was measured by using the southern regions as a comparison category. Social class variables represent the third group, and consist of income and perception of social class. The regression model with divorced, decades, and values did

not have any reference categories, since each variable is an ordinal-level of measurement. Thus, I was able to determine whether the risk of divorce increases or decreases with the strength of respondents' reported opinions regarding gender roles and premarital sex.

Once the effects of each independent variable had been assessed, all four groups were combined in a full regression model. The purpose of adding every control variable was to identify how much each one contributed to the overall trend of divorce, once other factors had been accounted for. By comparing the slopes and odds ratios of these results to those of previous models, I was able to determine how each independent variable affected the risk of divorce, without worrying about spurious results. Results were significant if they differed from those in previous models, since this would have indicated a partial explanation of this variable from another control. Comparing the slopes, odds ratios and sigs for the decades in Models A and G (Table 3.6) helped to understand how these variables all work together to explain the trend of divorce. If the application of these controlled variables worked, then the slope of each decade will have approached zero and the Exp(B) will have approached one.

For this section, I used the equation:

$$100 \times \left(\frac{(B1 - B2)}{B1} \right)$$

This equation helped to determine how well the control variables explained the rate of divorce by measuring the change of the decade coefficient slopes both before and after the controls have been applied.

Interaction Tests

The final analysis combined the variables in “decade” with each religion dummy and each value variable. The purpose of this was to determine whether the effects that

religion and values have on the risk of divorce have changed over time. Each dummy variable included in this interaction test was coded separately with each decade variable. Therefore, recoded variables included “eighties” and “Evangelical”, “nineties” and “Evangelical”, “twothousands” and “Evangelical”, etc. When conducting this interaction analysis, each main effect as well as the interaction effects were included. Variables prior to recoding served as the main effects, which were then compared to the recoded variables. Unlike with previous analyses, interaction results were analyzed based on associations only within that model. If a comparison between the main effect and the three recoded variables for that category displayed results that were statistically significant yet unchanged, then it can be said that this variable has continued to affect divorce in the same way through each decade. If interaction term results were statistically significant and yielded differing results across each variable, then I could conclude that the effects of this variable on the risk of divorce have changed over time. Finally, if results were statistically non-significant, then the effects of that variable on the risk of divorce have continued to be ineffective. This final analysis explored the main effects of religious affiliation and value on the risk of divorce, as well as how their effects have changed over time.

Chapter 3: Results

The events and ideologies discussed earlier present a period of pivotal change for American society. As values began to change, the divorce rate increased rapidly. This chapter begins with an examination of the changes in marriage and divorce patterns, using six measures from the General Social Survey that have been asked between the years 1972-2012. Although these variables were not asked frequently enough to be included in the final analysis, they provide helpful insight into the American population's attitudes regarding divorce, right at the most crucial periods of time. Results support the idea that ideological and societal changes have had effects on the institutions of marriage and divorce, both in terms of the divorce rates and on attitudes regarding divorce.

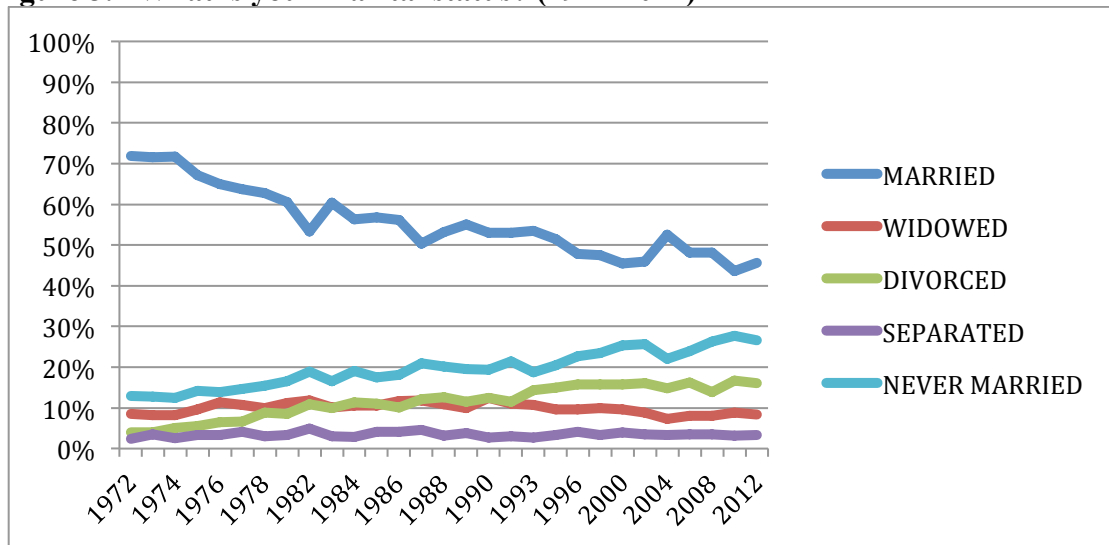
The second part of this chapter attempts to assess the effects of independent variables on the risk of divorce. These variables have been organized into two groups: attributes, which includes categories for religion, demographics, and social class, and values, which includes variables that measure respondents' attitudes regarding gender roles and premarital sex. First, I conducted regression models for each group of independent variables against both the divorce rate and also the decades. By analyzing the slope, sig, and odds ratio of each variable against the reference category, I was able to determine whether certain variables increase, decrease, or do not affect respondents' risk of divorce, relative to that category. In the final model, each group of variables was combined in order to avoid spurious results. Finally, I computed a series of interaction variables by combining the categories for decades and religion and for decades and values, a total of 30 new variables. The purpose of this analysis was to determine the

ways that the effects of religion and values on the risk of divorce have changed over time, or if their effects have remained the same.

Dependent Variables

Divorce Variables

Figure 3.1 What is your marital status? (1972-2012)

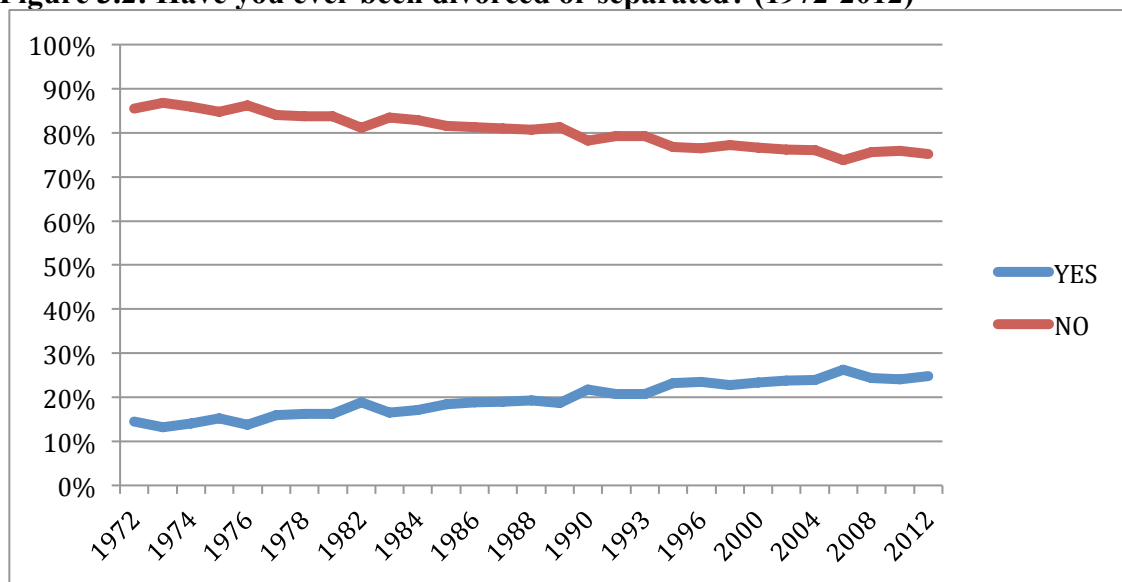


Notes: General Social Survey for years 1972-2012. MARITAL, “4. Are you currently- married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?”

To begin, Figure 3.1 displays the overall pattern of American marriages from 1972 to 2012. The typical American’s marital status has shifted substantially over the course of these forty years. Only two categories remain steady throughout the graph, “Widowed” and “Separated.” However, “Married”, “Divorced”, and “Never Married” all display substantial changes from the years 1972-2012. The most significant trend change is within the “Married” category. In 1972, 71.9% of respondents reported being married, yet that percentage drops to 53.9%, only slightly more than half of respondents, in 2012. This category also experiences the most sudden change, decreasing a total of 18.4% between the years 1974 and 1982. With only a few instances of variation, the “married” category continues to decrease after 2004, raising only 2% between the years 2010 and 2012. The

percent of respondents who reported never having been married jumped from 13% in 1972 to 20.5% in 2012, with slight dips in 1983, 1993, and 2008; otherwise, this upward trend is fairly consistent. Respondents who reported being divorced also show an upward trend, having gone from only 4% in 1972 to 12.4% in 2012, with one significant dip in 2008. These figures, however, may mask the prevalence of marital dissolution because they only show *current* marital status.

Figure 3.2: Have you ever been divorced or separated? (1972-2012)



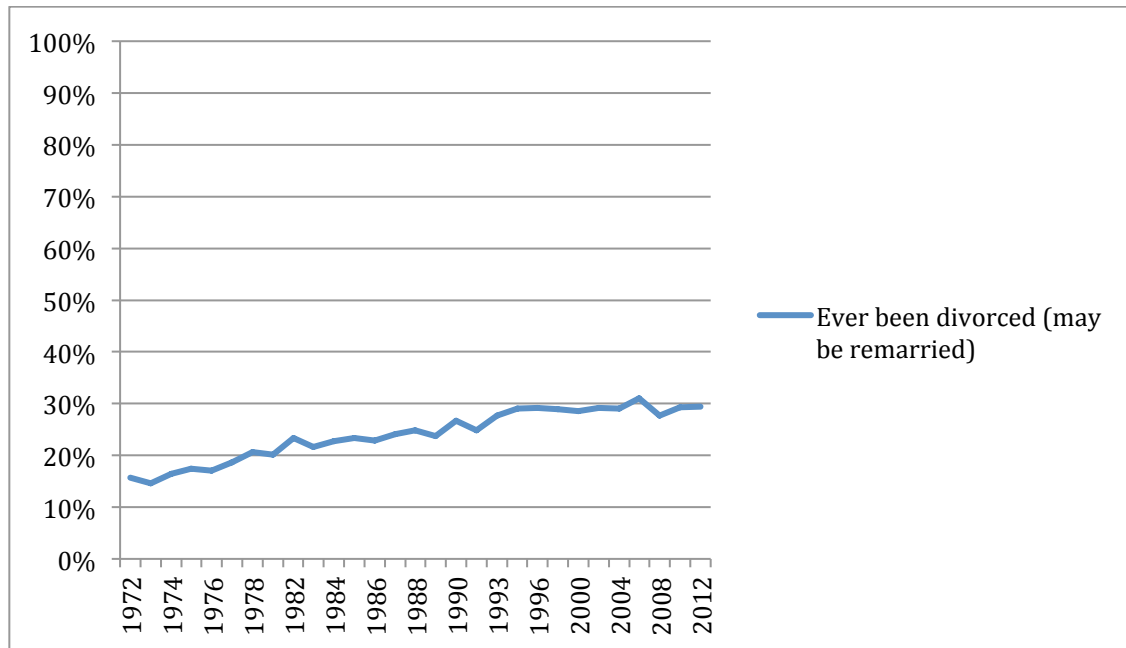
Notes: General Social Survey for years 1972-2012. DIVORCE, “4b. If currently married or widowed: Have you ever been divorced or legally separated?”

To assess the rate of divorce and remarriage, I examine the question of whether respondents have been divorced or separated in the past. As predicted, the rate of divorce has experienced a noticeable change. Both responses indicate similar trends, suggesting a slight increase in divorce or legal separation between the years 1972 to 2012.

Respondents who reported having never been divorced or separated went from 85.5% in 1972 to 75.2% in 2012, indicating a decrease of slightly lower than 10%. Similar findings are found with respondents who reported having been divorced or separated, going from 14.5% in 1972 to 24.8% in 2012, an increase of slightly over 10%. These results

demonstrate a trend that, in terms of respondents who have been married, the number that get divorced or legally separated has increased while the number that do not has decreased. Although these results do support the original notion that the rate of divorce has gone up, they do not indicate quite as dramatic an increase as expected.

Figure 3.3: Ever been divorced (may be remarried)? (1972-2012)



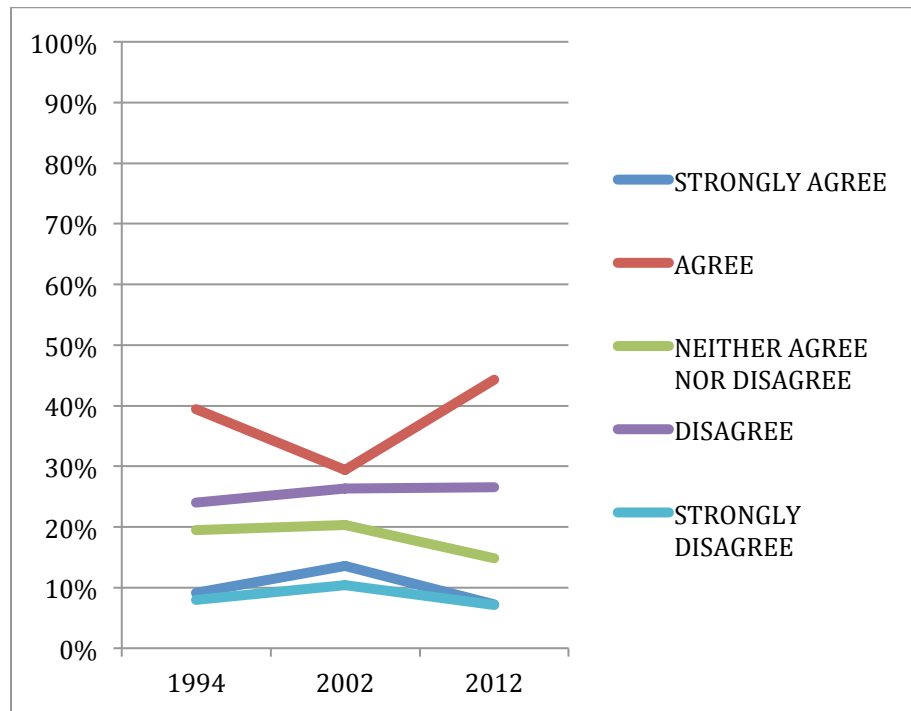
Notes: General Social Survey for years 1972-2012. DIVORCED, “Ever been divorced (may be remarried)?” Recoded from MARITAL and DIVORCE.

Although the previous variables measured divorce and marriage in the United States, the purpose of this study is to measure the rate of divorce for those respondents who have been legally divorced, not separated. The variable “Divorced” was recoded from the GSS variables “MARITAL” and “DIVORCE” for the purpose of identifying only the respondents whose marriages have ended due to divorce, including those who have gotten remarried. This graph indicates a fairly significant change in the rate of divorce between the years 1972 and 2012. Respondents who report having been divorced at one point goes from 15.7% in 1972 to 29.4% in 2012, an increase of 87%. At it’s maximum,

the rate of respondents who reported having had a divorce was 31% in 2006. The rate of divorce experiences minor decreases during the years 1974, 1989, 1992, and 2008, yet none represents a reversal of the trend. It does appear, however, that the rate has stabilized at around 30% from 1996 forward.

Attitudes

Figure 3.4: Divorce as best solution to marital problems (1994-2012)

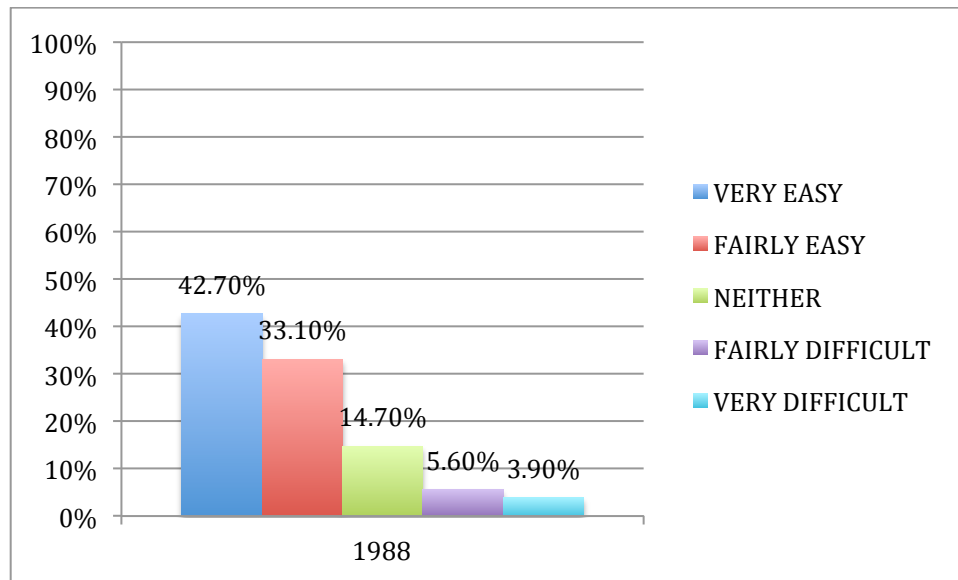


Notes: General Social Survey for years 1972-2012. DIVBEST, “1299. Do you agree or disagree...Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can’t seem to work out their marriage problems.”

Much of the societal change that occurred in America had to do with ideology. Thus, it is important to measure not only the divorce rate, but also the degree to which people’s opinions towards divorce have changed over the years. As indicated in the graph above, each response shows at least a slight change over the course of the 28 years and 3 times the question was asked. The first option, “Strongly Agree”, went from 9.1% in 1994 to

13.6% in 2002 and then suddenly decreases to 7.2% in 2012. Respondents in the “Agree” category went from 39.4% in 1994, then decreased to 29.4% in 2002 and then 44.8% in 2012, suggesting that respondents’ opinions rapidly changed. Also notable were the respondents that chose “Neither Agree Nor Disagree”, which went from 19.5% in 1994, to 20.3% in 2002 and 14.8% in 2012, suggesting that more respondents developed opinions on the matter. Significantly, opinions seem to level out between the years 1994 and 2002, with the less popular options showing an increase and the most popular options showing a decrease. However, in 2012, each option appears farther apart than it was in 1994.

Figure 3.5: How easy is it to get a divorce today? (1988)



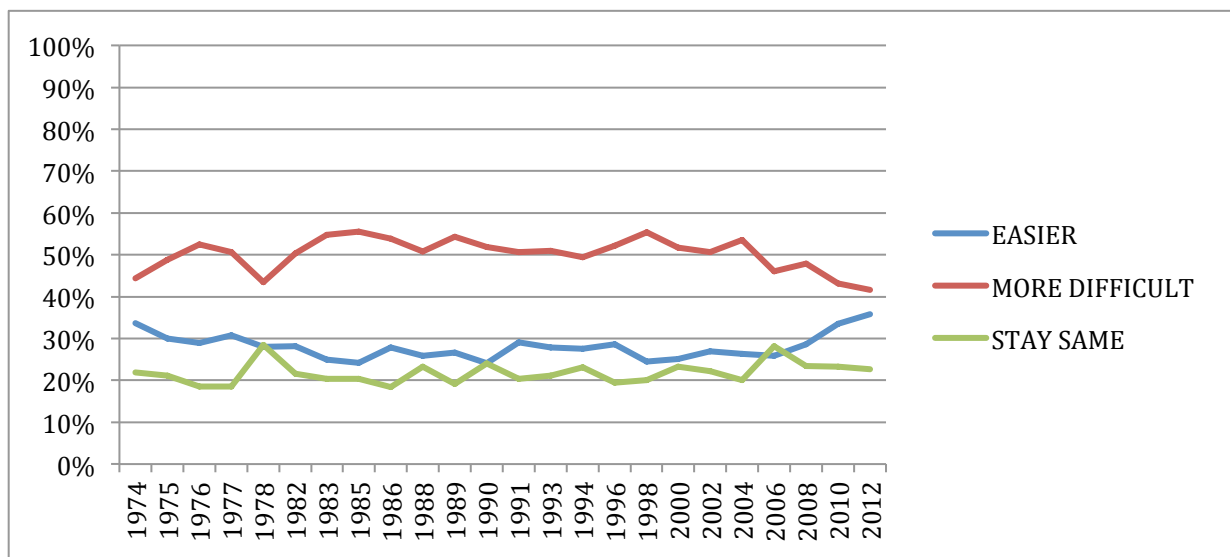
Notes: General Social Survey for years 1972-2012. DIVNOW, “In general, would you say that the law makes is easy or difficult for people who want to get divorced?”

Before the 1970s, obtaining a divorce in any state required the finding of fault, making the process a difficult one. By the 1980s, nearly every state had adopted more relaxed divorce laws. The typical American’s opinion on divorce laws, as indicated in Figure 3.5, demonstrates the belief that divorce has become legally much easier to obtain. Nearly

half of respondents believe that the law makes divorce very easy at 42.7%, whereas only 3.9% of respondents believe that the law makes getting a divorce very difficult.

Responses in between “Very Easy” and “Very Difficult” decrease at a steady rate, with the largest difference occurring between the options “Fairly Easy”, at 33.1%, and “Neither”, at 14.7%.

Figure 3.6: Should divorce in this country be easier or more difficult to obtain than it is now?



Notes: General Social Survey for years 1972-2012. DIVLAW, “Should divorce in this country be easier or more difficult to obtain than it is now?”

Changing the norms and laws that govern a society first requires a change in the attitudes of the people affected by these laws. Since the early 1970s, when the first no-fault divorce laws had been implemented in a few states, opinions regarding how easy it *should be* to obtain a divorce have remained relatively unchanged. The most dramatic change occurs in the “More Difficult” category, when results went from 50.7% in 1977 down to 43.5% in 1978 and then back up to 50.3% in 1982. Further, the “More Difficult”

and “Easier” categories begin to merge, with a difference of 20.1% in 2006, and then a difference of only 5.8% in the year 2012.

Independent Variables: The Macro and Micro-Level Correlates of Divorce

The graphs above display trends of changing attitudes and actions regarding divorce. In order to identify the ways in which micro-level factors interact to produce changes in divorce, I have used a number of independent variables that can be categorized into two groups: attributes and values. Attributes are further separated into religion, demographics, and social class. Religion includes each of the dummy variables recoded from the variable “Reltrad.” Demographics include age at first marriage, race, education, and region. Social class categories include CONINC and CLASS, a variable that asks respondents for their subjective social class position. These groups served the purpose of controls in the final model and to determine whether particular religions, demographics, social class variables, or values are more prone to divorce than others. A series of regression models were computed, beginning with a baseline model displaying the interaction between the divorce rate and decades. Then, each group of variables was separately added to Model A in order to determine how each one separately affects the overall risk of divorce. Next, each group of variables was combined into the same model to see how they interact to effect the divorce rate together, as well as how well this particular set of variables explain the trend of divorce. Finally, I created interaction terms that combine the variables “decade” and religion categories, then “decade” and values, for the purpose of determining how the effects of religion and traditional values have changed over time.

Decade

After conducting a series of logistic regression models, I am able to identify how the risk of divorce is influenced by different variables. Table 3.1 displays the risk of divorce throughout each decade, without controlling for other variables. The odds ratio (Exp(B)) for the Constant in this model explains how high a risk of divorce people were at during the 1970s, which is used as the comparison category throughout the model. For this model, all variables are statistically significant. Staring at 0.207, results indicate that in the 1970s, individuals faced a 20.7% risk of getting divorced. In subsequent decades, relative to the 1970s, people were 1.44 times or 44% more likely to get divorced in the 1980s, 1.89 times (89%) more likely to get divorced in the 1990s, and 2 times or 100% more likely to get divorced in the 2000s. These findings indicate a rather large increase from the 1970s to the 1980s, and a steadily decreasing, yet positive nonetheless, increase in subsequent decades.

Table 3.1: Regression Model for Decades

Model A			
	B	SE	Exp(B)
Constant	-1.574***	0.026	0.207
Eighties	0.365***	0.033	1.44
Nineties	0.638***	0.032	1.892
Two Thousands	0.697***	0.03	2.007

Note: GSS for 1972-2012. Dependent variable: If ever been married: every been legally divorced? Control variable: decade 1970s. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Religion

Table 3.2 explores the risk of getting divorced for various religions, in comparison to those with no religion. Model B shows that, relative to those identifying with no religion, Evangelical Protestants are 1.35 times or 35% more likely to get

divorced, and Mainline Protestants are 1.127 or 12% more likely to get divorced. The results of Black Protestantism and Other Religion are statistically non-significant, meaning that they have the same risk of getting divorced as those with no religion. Both Catholics and Jews produce statistically significant results for these categories. Relative to those with no religion, Catholics have a 25.8% decreased risk and Jews have a 25.7% decreased risk of divorce.

Once the effects of religion have been controlled for, we can compare the slopes and odds ratios for the decades between Models A and B. Although all of the results are statistically significant, there is very little change between those in Model A and those in Model B. Thus, controlling for religious groups in this model explains very little of the trend of divorce throughout the 1970s, 1980s, 1990s, and 2000s.

Model C shows the risk of divorce through these religious categories, yet with the addition of the variable ATTEND, which measures the level of respondents' religious participation. Out of the six categories in this model, the first three indicate statistically significant increases in the risk of divorce. Similarly with the results of Model B, Evangelical Protestants are 1.89 times or 89% more likely to get divorced than those with no religion and Mainline Protestants are 1.46 times or 46% more likely to get divorced than those with no religion. The results of these categories in both Model B and Model C are statistically significant, yet the risk of divorce associated with these religious groups become stronger and the group gets bigger, even once participation has been controlled for. Although Black Protestantism does not produce statistically significant results in Model B, Model C shows that they are 1.49 times or 49% more likely to get divorced than those identifying with no religion. With the application of the variable ATTEND,

and categories “Jewish” and “Catholic” produce statistically non-significant results.

Further, with a slope of -0.098 and an Exp(B) of -0.907, religious attendance (ATTEND) is negatively associated with the risk of getting divorced. With each additional level of religious participation that respondents report (or each additional day per week that they attend services), they are 9.3% less likely to get divorced than those that have no religious affiliation at all.

In order to determine whether controlling for ATTEND affects the risk of divorce, I compare the results of the decades in Model A to Model B and then Model A to Model C. As I mentioned before, the results of the first comparison suggest that controlling for religion has had very little effect in explaining the overall risk of divorce. Results for the second comparison, though increased in size, are fairly similar to those of the first. Thus, although ATTEND does not fully explain the trend of divorce throughout the decades, it does seem to have an effect on the risk of divorce among different religions.

Table 3.2: Regression Model for Decades and Religious Affiliation

	Model A			Model B			Model C		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
Constant	-1.574	0.026	0.207	-1.632***	0.041	0.196	(-1.54)***	0.041	0.214
Eighties	0.365***	0.033	1.44	0.382***	0.036	1.465	0.377***	0.036	1.458
Nineties	0.638***	0.032	1.892	0.671***	0.036	1.955	0.658***	0.036	1.931
Two Thousands	0.697***	0.03	2.007	0.727***	0.034	2.068	0.718***	0.034	2.05
Religion Variables									
Evangelical Protestant				0.303***	0.037	1.354	0.641***	0.041	1.898
Mainline Protestant				0.12**	0.037	1.127	0.382***	0.039	1.465
Black Protestant				0.045	0.045	1.046	0.402***	0.048	1.494
Catholic				-0.299***	0.037	0.742	0.011	0.039	1.011
Jewish				-0.296***	0.081	0.743	-0.128	0.082	0.88
Other Religion				-0.077	0.068	0.925	0.152*	0.069	1.164
ATTEND							-0.098***	0.005	0.907

Note: GSS for 1972-2012. Dependent variable: If ever been married: every been legally divorced? Control variable: decade 1970s, No religion. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Demographics

Table 3.3 shows the risk of divorce associated with demographic variables such as age at first marriage, race, education and region. The first variable, recoded to represent respondents who got married at the age of 22 or above, shows strong, statistically significant, negative results. With a slope of -0.715 and an odds ratio of 0.489, I can say that respondents who got married at age 22 or above are 51% less likely to get divorced, relative to the respondents who got married at age 21 or below. The next category, race, displays statistically significant results for black respondents, but not for respondents of another race. Thus, relative to white respondents, the comparison category for this variable, black respondents are 1.28 times or 28% more likely to get divorced. Since the results in the category “Other Race” are not statistically significant, they have the same risk as white respondents to get divorced. Levels of educational attainment shows statistically significant results for respondents who have at least some college, yet statistically non-significant results for those who have less than high school. Therefore, relative to those who have a high school degree (the reference group for this variable), respondents who have at least some college are 21% less likely to get divorced. Finally, the category “region”, separating respondents into the north and south regions, yielded statistically non-significant results.

With these demographic variables controlled for, I can compare the slopes and odds ratios of the decades in Model A and Model D. In Model A, the odds ratio of the Constant was 0.207. The application of control variables such as age at first marriage, race, education, and region in Model D changes the likelihood of divorce to 0.337 in the 1970s, a decrease of almost 13 percentage points. In the decades following, respondents

were 1.74 times or 74% more likely to get divorced in the 1980s, an increase of 30 percentage points from Model A. These findings indicate that changes in population characteristics in the 1980s resulted in a lower divorce rate than would have been observed if the population had retained the same demographic profile as was observed in the 1970s. In the 1990s, respondents were 2.43 times (or 143%) more likely to get divorced than in the 1970s, an increase of 54%. Finally, respondents were 3.50 times or 250% more likely to get divorced in the 2000s than in the 1970s, an increase of 161%. These results show how the risk of divorce has changed throughout the decades, once demographic variables have been introduced.

Table 3.3: Regression Model for Decades and Demographic Variables

	Model A			Model D		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
Constant	-1.574***	0.026	0.207	-1.087***	0.085	0.337
Eighties	0.365***	0.033	1.44	0.555***	0.043	1.743
Nineties	0.638***	0.032	1.892	0.891***	0.050	2.437
Two Thousands	0.697***	0.03	2.007	1.254***	0.076	3.503
Demographic Variables						
Married 21+				-0.715***	0.036	0.489
Black				0.249***	0.055	1.283
Other				-0.23	0.12	0.795
Less Than HS Degree				-0.067	0.074	0.935
Some College				-0.24**	0.081	0.787
North				-0.039	0.037	0.961

Note: GSS for 1972-2012. Dependent variable: If ever been married: every been legally divorced? Control variable: decade 1970s, No religion. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Social Class

Table 3.4 assesses the risk of divorce by using social class variables as the control. As we can see with the slope, each variable has produced statistically significant results. Income variables were computed using the GSS variable CONINC, first by

dividing the range into three separate groups, each increasing by the same amount. The reference category for this group is Lower Income, which includes respondents with an income of less than 60384 in inflation-adjusted constant 2000 dollars. Model E shows that, relative to that group, respondents with an income from 60385 to 120385 have 25% less of a risk of divorce. Further, respondents with an income of 120385 or above have 28% less of a risk of getting divorced compared to those with the lowest income. Finally, a variable that represents respondents who perceive themselves as being in the middle and upper classes indicates 29% less of a chance of getting divorced, relative to those in the lower and working classes.

After income and social class variables have been controlled for, we may refer to the slopes and odds ratios of the decades in Model E. Similarly with the results of Model C, controlling for financial variables has very little effect on the risk of divorce throughout the decades. However, results for the 1970s, 80s, 90s, and 2000s all remain statistically significant and substantially similar to those before controls.

Table 3.4: Regression Model for Decades and Social Class

	Model A			Model E		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
Constant	-1.574***	0.026	0.207	-1.432***	0.029	0.239
Eighties	0.365***	0.033	1.44	0.374***	0.035	1.453
Nineties	0.638***	0.032	1.892	0.652***	0.034	1.918
Two Thousands	0.697***	0.03	2.007	0.704***	0.033	2.021
Financial Variables						
Middle Income				-0.157***	0.029	0.855
Higher Income				-0.188***	0.05	0.829
Middle/Upper class				-0.175***	0.022	0.839

Note: GSS for 1972-2012. Dependent variable: If ever been married: every been legally divorced? Control variable: decade 1970s, Income from 60384 and under in constant 2000 dollars, Lower/Working Class. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Values

Finally, respondents' attitudes regarding gender roles and premarital sex are applied in Model F. Since each of these variables is an ordinal-level of measurement, results increase or decrease with each additional level reported by respondents. The variable FEFAM, asking whether respondents agree that men should be the achiever outside of the home and women should take care of the home and children, produces statistically significant results. According to these outcomes, each additional level reported on FEFAM causes an 8.6% decrease in the risk of divorce. FECHLD, a variable that asks respondents whether they believe that children are negatively affected when mothers work outside of the home, does not result in statistically significant results. The variable PREMARSX, measuring the degree to which respondents believe that sex before marriage is wrong, has statistically significant, positive results. This means that, with each additional level reported on PREMARSX, from thinking that premarital sex is "Always Wrong" to "Almost Always Wrong" to "Sometimes Wrong" to "Not Wrong at All", respondents are 1.175 times, or have a 17.5% higher risk of getting divorced.

Once these attitudinal measures have been controlled for, I can analyze the slopes and odds ratios between the decades in Models A and F. In Model F, each variable endures some change, most notably the one in the 2000s, having gone from a 100% increase in the risk of getting divorced in Model A to a 72% risk of getting divorced in Model F. Thus, some part of the overall rise in divorce may be attributable to shifts in respondents' values.

Table 3.5: Regression Model for Decades and Values

	Model A			Model F		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
Constant	-1.574***	0.026	.207	-1.598***	.105	.202
Eighties	0.365***	0.033	1.44	.253**	.076	1.288
Nineties	0.638***	0.032	1.892	.506***	.072	1.658
Two Thousands	0.697***	0.03	2.007	.544***	.072	1.723
Traditional Values						
FEFAM				-.090***	.020	.914
FECHLD				-.028	.019	.973
PREMARX				.161***	.013	1.175

Note: GSS for 1972-2012. Dependent variable: If ever been married: ever been legally divorced?
Control variable: decade 1970s, Income from 60384 and under in constant 2000 dollars,
Lower/Working Class. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Full Model

Finally, Model G shows the effects of each control applied to the risk of divorce. This first allows me to identify how these variables interact in respondents' risk of getting divorced. In some cases, the application of a control may change the results of another variable, meaning that the control has accounted for some of the risk previously found for that variable. Second, this allows me to determine how well the combination of these variables explains the overall trend of divorce that is found throughout the decades. Results indicate that, once every variable has been controlled for, respondents' religious affiliation continues to have statistically significant effects. Relative to respondents with no religion, Evangelical Protestants have 1.763 times (or 76.3%) higher a risk of divorce than those with no religion, a decrease of 5% when compared to the risk of Evangelicals without the application of these variables (Model C). Mainline Protestants have 1.516 times (or 51.6%) higher a risk than those with no religion, which is actually an increase from the results found in Model C. Although not as statistically significant as Evangelicals and Mainline Protestants, Black Protestants have 1.513 times (or 51.3%) an

increased risk of getting divorced than those with no religion. Respondents identifying with Catholicism, Judaism, and other religions produce statistically non-significant results, meaning that the significant results found in Model B have been controlled for, similarly with those in Model C. The variable ATTEND produces statistically significant results, with each additional level of religious attendance, respondents are about 7% less likely to get divorced than those with less religious attendance.

The next group shows the effects of demographic variables on divorce and with the application of control variables. Relative to white respondents, black respondents have 24.6% *decreased* risk of getting divorced after other variables have been controlled for. In Model D, before other variables are controlled for, black respondents have 1.283 times (or 28.3%) *increased* risk of getting divorced compared to white respondents, indicating a significant change from the results of Model D to Model G. The category “Other” in Model G shows a change of about 15% and, unlike in Model D, statistically significant results. Compared to Model D, respondents with less than a high school degree have a statistically non-significant risk of getting divorced, yet the variable “Some College” continued to produce statistically significant results and thus implies a relationship with divorce. Most notably, respondents living in the North region produced statistically significant results, unlike those in Model D. Compared to respondents living in the South region of the United States, respondents living in the North have a 17% decreased risk of getting divorced.

Variables measuring respondents’ social class show statistically non-significant results for both groups of income. Thus, the introduction of other controls reveals that income does not have a strong effect on respondents’ risk of divorce. Results of

respondents perceiving themselves to be in the middle or upper classes continue to be statistically significant and maintain the same odds ratio value, indicating a robust relationship.

Finally, variables measuring respondents' attitudes on gender roles and premarital sex indicate some minor changes when introduced to other controls. FEFAM produces statistically significant results, and they remain relatively unaffected by the addition of other controls. The variable FECHLD produces statistically significant results, unlike in Model E, yet only changes by about 2%. Finally, the variable PREMARSX produces statistically significant results and is not affected by the introduction of other controls. Since the variables FEFAM and PREMARSX yield statistically significant results both before and after the introduction of controls, their relationship with divorce is not spurious.

To examine how the risk of divorce has changed throughout the course of the past four decades, I compare the slopes and odds ratios of the decades in Models A and G. With the introduction of these controls, the risk of divorce goes from 97% decreased to 73.7% decreased, both of which are statistically significant. Compared to the 1970s, the 1980s show an unaltered risk of divorce, meaning that the introduction of these variables has done little to explain the trend of divorce in this decade. In the 1990s, respondents had a 99% increased chance of getting divorced relative to the 1970s, a slight increase with the addition of the control variables. Finally, in the 2000s, respondents had 2.139 times (or 113.9%) higher a risk of divorced than in the 1970s, another modest increase with the application of these variables. Thus, in terms of explaining why America's divorce rate has risen since the 1970s, the combination of demographics, religion,

economic and attitudinal variables examined here suggest that the rise is due to some other, unstudied variable. Although these variables cannot explain the trend of divorce on the societal level, macro-level variables set the groundwork for an ideological revolution and micro-level variables help represent the populations that are most affected by divorce.

Table 3.6: Regression Model for Decades, Religious Affiliation, Demographic Variables, Social Class, and Values

	Model A			Model G		
	B	SE	Exp(B)	B	SE	Exp(B)
Constant	-1.5740***	0.026	0.207	-1.334***	0.182	0.263
Eighties	0.365***	0.033	1.44	0.377**	0.110	1.457
Nineties	0.638***	0.032	1.892	0.692***	0.105	1.997
Two Thousands	0.697***	0.03	2.007	0.761***	0.104	2.139
Religious Identification						
Evangelical Protestant				0.567***	0.073	1.763
Mainline Protestant				0.416***	0.067	1.516
Black Protestant				0.414**	0.124	1.513
Catholic				0.049	0.067	1.050
Jewish				0.042	0.134	1.043
Other Religion				0.148	0.116	1.159
ATTEND				-0.066***	0.009	0.936
Demographic Variables						
Black				-0.282**	0.098	0.754
Other				-0.477***	0.096	0.621
Less Than High School				-0.133	0.069	0.875
Some College				-0.340***	0.076	0.712
North				-0.186***	0.042	0.830
Financial Variables						
Middle Income				-0.057	0.049	0.944
Higher Income				-0.066	0.077	0.936
Middle/Upper class				-0.149***	0.042	0.862
Traditional Values						
FEFAM				-0.049***	0.025	0.952
FECHLD				-0.098*	0.027	0.907
PREMARX				0.168***	0.020	1.183

Note: GSS for 1972-2012. Dependent variable: If ever been married: every been legally divorced? Control variable: decade 1970s, no religion, white race, high school degree, south region, Income from 60384 and under in constant 2000 dollars, Lower/Working Class. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Interaction Variables

Decades and Religion

In order to further understand the relationship between these variables and the risk of divorce in America, I create interaction terms for each group of attributes and values with the decades. Out of each group of interaction term combinations, the results for religion and decades and for values and decades are the most significant. Thus, it can be said that the effects of demographics and social class variables on the risk of divorce have remained largely unchanged over the years. Model H displays the interaction effects between religion and decades and Model I includes the interaction effects of the variable ATTEND. Next, Model J displays the interaction effects between values and decades. In order to better understand the effects of the ideological revolution and provide a more thorough analysis of the interaction term results in Model J, Figures 3.7, 3.8, and 3.9 feature cross-tabulations of FEFAM, FECHLD, and PREMARSX. I will first discuss interaction term results between religion and decades without ATTEND.

In the 1970s, the risk of divorce without the effects of religion or values put respondents at a 21.9% risk of divorce. In subsequent years, the risk of divorce increases, with 1.517 (or 51.7%) higher a risk of divorce in the 1980s. The risk increases in the 1990s, with a 1.86 (or 86%) risk compared to the 1970s. Finally, the risk decreases significantly, with 1.685 times (or 68.5%) the risk of divorce in the 2000s.

According to the main effects in this model, only respondents in the Catholic and Jewish categories produce statistically significant results. Therefore, relative to those with no religion, Catholics and Jews have an overall decreased risk of divorce and all other categories have about the same risk of divorce. The interaction variables in Model H

indicate statistically non-significant results for each category in the 1980s, meaning that the effects of religion remained completely unchanged during this decade. The same is true for the interaction variables combined with the 1990s, with the exception of Black Protestants. Although it is statistically non-significant in the main effect, the effects of Black Protestantism increase the risk of divorce for participants by nearly 1.5 times. Relative to the 1970s, the effects of Black Protestantism in the 1980s not only diminish the risk of divorce but actually reverse it, suggesting that the protective effects of Black Protestantism gain strength from one decade to the next. Finally, the interaction results between the variables Evangelical Protestant and two thousands, Mainline Protestant and two thousands, Catholic and two thousands, and Jewish and two thousands produce statistically significant results. First, this means that the effects of each religion on divorce, while remaining unchanged in prior decades, do change in the 2000s. Relative to the 1970s, the protective effects of Evangelical Protestantism have lessened and the risk of divorce increases slightly. Further, respondents identifying with Mainline Protestantism, while they previously had a significantly reduced risk of divorce relative to those with no religion, actually have an increased risk of divorce in the 2000s. Thus, the effects of Mainline Protestantism have been greatly reduced and the risk of divorce is increased. Both the Catholic and Jewish categories have statistically significant results for the main effect, yet, as previously mentioned, only produce significant results when combined with the two thousands. Similarly with Mainline Protestants, the protective features of Catholicism and Judaism that initially prevented these religions from getting divorced is demolished and, relative to those with no religion, Catholics and Jews actually have greatly increased risk of getting divorced in the 2000s. The interaction

terms between other religions and decade produce no statistically significant results. Thus, the effects of other religions on the risk of divorce have remained completely unchanged in subsequent decades.

Model I displays the results of these same interaction terms, with the addition of the variable ATTEND, which measures respondents' religious activity. In other words, adding this variable takes out the effect of participation and focuses primarily on the effects of affiliation. Although very few of these results are statistically significant, controlling for religious participation changes the direction of the interaction term results in nearly every case besides Jewish, making the protective effects of affiliation with these religions groups continue (unchanged, since they are statistically non-significant) to reduce the risk of divorce. This finding suggests that the sole effect of affiliation for Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants, Black Protestants, Catholics, and other religions has caused respondents a reduced risk of divorce in the past and that this relationship remains unchanged. However, the interaction term results for Judaism produce quite different results once religious participation has been controlled for. Relative to those with no religion, Judaism's main effect appears to reduce respondents' risk of divorce by about half. But, once religious participation is controlled for, the direction of the relationship changes. Therefore, I can conclude that, even when religious participation is controlled for, the protective effects of Judaism in the 1970s have been greatly reduced in subsequent years.

The pattern that was initially found in the combination of religious categories and the two thousands disappears when religious participation is controlled for, suggesting that the relationship between divorce and religion is due to respondents' religious

activity. However, the results for Black Protestant and Jewish stand out in Model I. Since both sets of results are negative for Black Protestants, I conclude that the effects of affiliation and participation both reduce the risk of divorce. However, results become increasingly significant for Black Protestants in Model I, implying that, relative to those with no religion, the effects of affiliation with Black Protestantism on the risk of divorce have gotten increasingly strong over time. Further, in each other case, controlling for participation in Model I caused the direction of the relationship between divorce and religion to become negative. This is not the case for the Jewish category, which maintains nearly the exact positive correlation as was found before this control, suggesting that these results are legitimate.

To determine whether the addition of ATTEND has significant effects on respondents' risk of divorce, I examine the results of Model H and Model I. First, a comparison between the decade coefficients shows that, while only slight, the addition of ATTEND has explained the divorce rate to some degree. The slope of each decade in Model H slightly decreases in Model I, while the $\text{Exp}(B)$ gets slightly closer to a value of 1 in Model I. Further, the addition of ATTEND significantly changes the results found across most religious groups, suggesting that religious participation plays a role in the risk of divorce.

Table 3.7: Interaction Regression Model Between Decades and Religious Affiliation

	Model H			Model I		
	B	Sig	Exp(B)	B	Sig	Exp(B)
Main Effect						
Decades						
Constant	-1.52***	0.000	0.219	-1.420***	0.000	0.242
Eighties	0.417**	0.001	1.517	0.402***	0.001	1.495
Nineties	0.621***	0.00	1.86	0.601***	0.000	1.824
Two Thousands	0.522***	0.00	1.685	0.499***	0.000	1.647
Religious Variables						
Evangelical Protestant	0.135	0.246	1.144	0.594***	0.000	1.811
Mainline Protestant	-0.023	0.832	0.977	0.362**	0.002	1.436
Black Protestant	0.232	0.068	1.261	0.738***	0.000	2.091
Catholic	-0.491***	0.00	0.612	0.004	0.971	1.004
Jewish	-0.81**	0.001	0.445	-0.595*	0.015	0.551
Other Religion	0.161	0.495	1.175	0.497*	0.039	1.644
ATTEND				-0.136***	0.000	0.873
Interaction Variables						
EightiesXEvanglical Protestant	0.002	0.986	1.002	-0.091	0.556	0.913
NinetiesXEvanglical Protestant	0.071	0.606	1.073	-0.094	0.525	0.910
TwothousandsXEvanglical Protestant	0.324*	0.012	1.383	0.173	0.212	1.189
EightiesXMainline Protestant	-0.125	0.366	0.882	-0.217	0.137	0.805
NinetiesXMainline Protestant	0.118	0.372	1.125	-0.044	0.756	0.957
TwothousandsXMainline Protestant	0.315*	0.01	1.37	0.160	0.219	1.173
EightiesXBlack Protestant	-0.259	0.103	0.772	-0.378*	0.026	0.685
NinetiesXBlack Protestant	-0.335*	0.033	0.715	-0.524**	0.002	0.592
TwothousandsXBlack Protestant	-0.249	0.09	0.78	-0.437**	0.005	0.646
EightiesXCatholic	0.08	0.572	1.084	-0.038	0.803	0.963
NinetiesXCatholic	0.14	0.303	1.15	-0.083	0.572	0.921
TwothousandsXCatholic	0.284*	0.025	1.329	0.031	0.818	1.032
EightiesXJewish	0.378	0.205	1.459	0.372	0.215	1.451
NinetiesXJewish	0.503	0.082	1.654	0.458	0.117	1.581
TwothousandsXJewish	0.709*	0.01	2.032	0.626*	0.025	1.871
EightiesXOther Religion	-0.255	0.374	0.775	-0.292	0.317	0.746
NinetiesXOther Religion	-0.395	0.141	0.674	-0.517	0.059	0.596
TwothousandsXOther Religion	-0.189	0.463	0.828	-0.349	0.184	0.706
EightiesXATTEND				0.029	0.060	1.029
NinetiesXATTEND				0.048***	0.001	1.049
TwothousandsXATTEND				0.052***	0.000	1.053

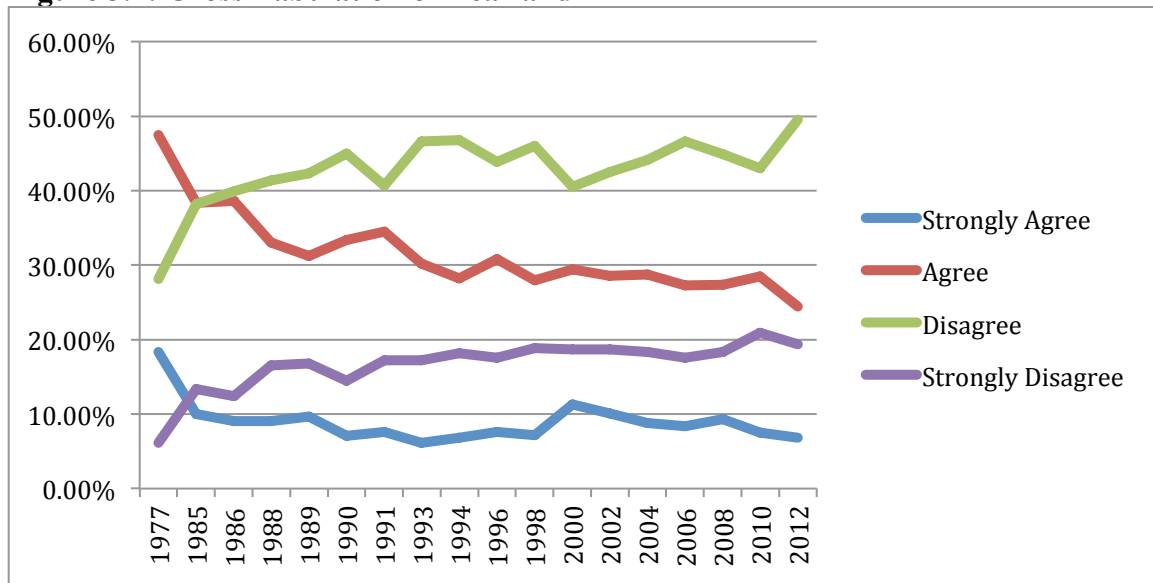
Note: GSS for 1972-2012. Dependent variable: If ever been married: ever been legally divorced?

Excluded category/comparison group: decade 1970s, no religion. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Decades and Values

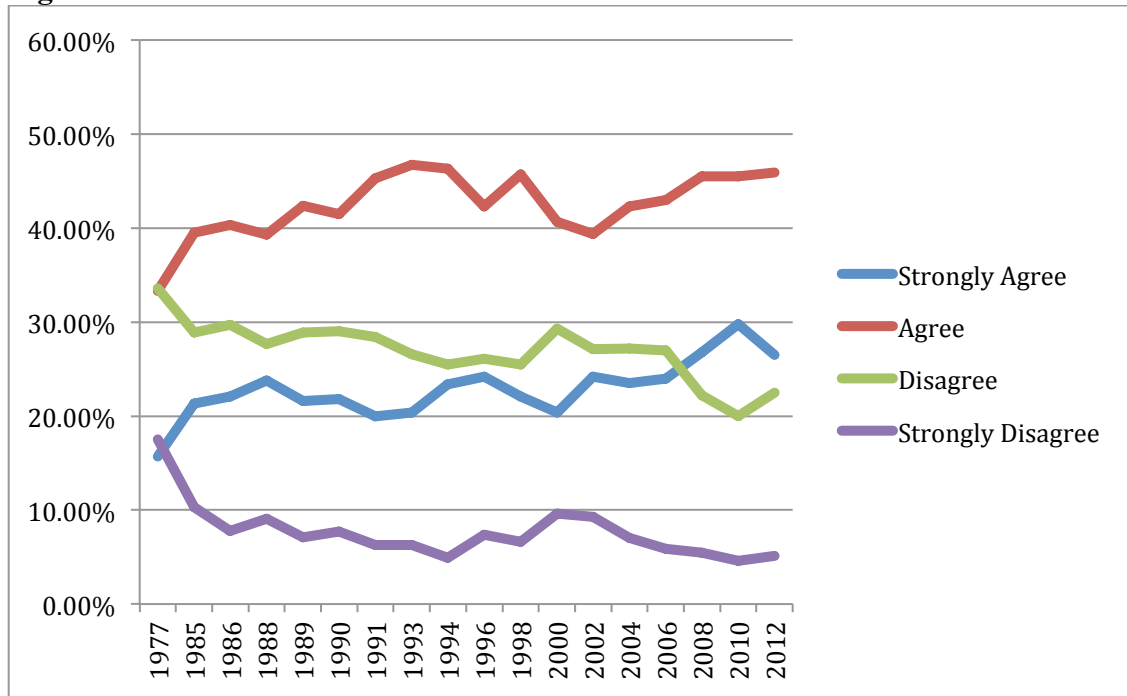
In order to fully express the strength of this ideological revolution, I conduct cross-tabulations between the years and FEFAM, FECHLD, and PREMARSX. Figures 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9 display the results of these cross-tabulations. To summarize, in 1972, 65.8% of respondents agreed that it was better for men to work and women to stay at home. Forty years later, only 40.5% of respondents agreed with this statement. Similarly, 49% of respondents agreed that working mothers do not hurt children in 1972, whereas 65.5% agreed with this statement in 2012. Finally, in 1972, 48.4% of respondents believed that sex before marriage was either “Always Wrong” or “Almost Always Wrong”, while only 27.5% of respondents reported this in 2012. Clearly, the distributions of results for these three variables have been greatly changed over the years.

Figure 3.7: Cross Tabulation of Year and FEFAM



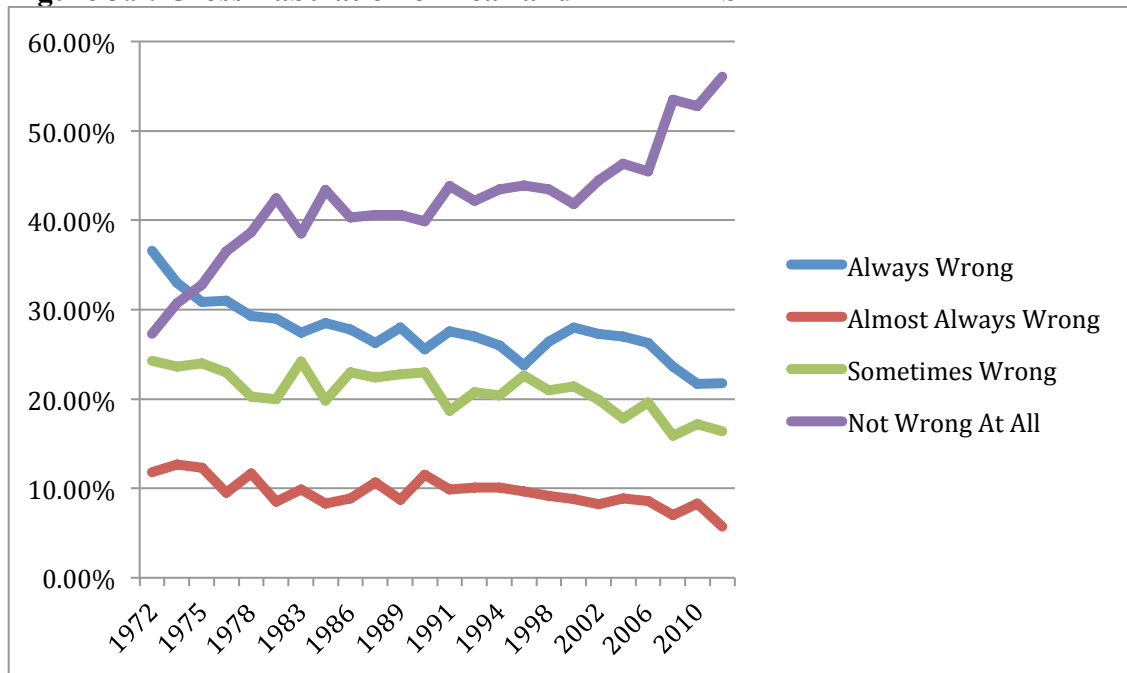
Notes: General Social Survey for years 1972-2012. FEFAM, “It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.”

Figure 3.8: Cross Tabulation of Year and FECHLD



Notes: General Social Survey for years 1972-2012. FECHLD, “A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.”

Figure 3.9: Cross Tabulation of Year and PREMARSX



Notes: General Social Survey for years 1972-2012. PREMARSX, “If a man and woman have sex relations before marriage, do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?”

Since the 1970s, the distributions of respondents' attitudes regarding gender roles and premarital sex have changed immensely (Figures 3.7, 3.8 and 3.9). Table 3.8 displays the effects of these views on the risk of divorce over the years. In the sig column, it is clear that, although there may have been some sort of ideological revolution over the course of the past forty years, the effects that respondents' attitudes have on the risk of divorce has remained completely unchanged.

Table 3.8: Interaction Regression Model Between Decades and FEFAM, FECHLD, and PREMARSX

Model J			
	B	Sig.	Exp(B)
Main Effects			
Decade			
Constant	-1.594***	0.00	0.203
Eighties	0.243	0.563	1.276
Nineties	0.44	0.271	1.552
Two Thousands	0.604	0.124	1.829
Views			
FEFAM	-0.081	0.393	0.922
FECHLD	-0.094	0.233	0.91
PREMARSX	0.211	0.00	1.235
View Interactions			
EightiesXFEFAM	0.021	0.846	1.021
NinetiesXFEFAM	-0.037	0.716	0.964
TwothousandsXFEFAM	-0.004	0.971	0.996
EightiesXFECHLD	0.001	0.991	1.001
NinetiesXFECHLD	0.074	0.382	1.077
TwothousandsXFECHLD	0.1	0.232	1.106
EightiesXPREMARSX	-0.025	0.698	0.975
NinetiesXPREMARSX	-0.009	0.885	0.991
TwothousandsXPREMARSX	-0.101	0.1	0.904

Note: GSS for 1972-2012. Dependent variable: If ever been married: ever been legally divorced? Excluded category/comparison group: decade 1970s. *p<.05. **p<.01. ***p<.001.

Chapter 4: Discussion and Conclusions

The purpose of this study has first been to identify the social influences present during this ideological revolution, and further, whether they contributed to the rise in the divorce rate. Second, the study has attempted to draw more definitive conclusions regarding the role of micro-level factors in the risk of divorce. Using a number of variables from the GSS, a trend survey that measures and monitors societal change in the United States, I studied the effects of micro-level factors such as age at first marriage, race, education and region on the risk of divorce, both at the time of the revolution and present-day.

My research focused on social trends that took place from about the 1960s to present day. The effects that ideological changes had on behavior and values opposed traditional notions of the family, and ultimately lead to an increase in the divorce rate. Influences such as the growing emphasis on “the self”, the entrance of women into the workforce, the availability of birth control and contraception, transformed religious teachings, and the option of no-fault divorce laws have all theoretically played a part in the acceptance of divorce in America.

After conducting a number of tests on the effects of micro-level variables on the risk of divorce, I found that, when applied separately, factors such as religion, age at first marriage, race, education, social class, region, and values influence the individual’s risk of divorce. However, many of these correlations became non-significant once other controls were applied. To get a sense of how these effects have changed over time, I created interaction variables that combine decades with religion and with values. Results indicated that the effects of religion variables such as Black Protestantism, Judaism, and

the level of religious participation on the risk of divorce have changed over the course of the past few decades. Further, while respondents' attitudes regarding gender roles and premarital sex have had effects on the risk of divorce, their influences have remained relatively unchanged over time. Analyses revealed that, while these variables produce intriguing results and suggest areas for future study, they are unable to fully explain the trend of divorce.

The Start of an Ideological Revolution

Over the course of the past few centuries, the world has experienced many changes within the social sphere, including those of ideologies, values, and norms. Accompanying these changes was the emergence of an entirely new mindset, one that embodied the values of individualism and modernization. Yet these advancements also brought developments such as a rise in the divorce rate and a change in the institution of marriage all together. In a time of complete social upheaval, the 1960s brought about a new way of thinking that emphasized the importance of the individual, placing personal importance over that of the family (Cherlin 2009). Events and ideas such as women's entrance into the workforce, the growing acceptance of birth control and contraception, the adoption of no-fault divorce laws, and the transformation of religious teachings can be credited for having some degree of influence in the rate of divorce (O'Neil 1967; Wheeler 1974; Wright and Stetson 1978; Halem 1980; Weitzman 1985; Riley 1991; Morgan 1991; Herman 1992; Kent 1992; Furstenberg 1994; Nakonezny *et al.* 1995; Vlosky and Monroe 2002; Shoen and Canudas-Romo 2006; Cherlin 2009; Yenor 2011; Schwartz and Han 2014). The institution of marriage began to shift from the strict, traditional American ideal that it had embodied for generations, into a less restrictive,

accepting ideology that rejected divorce far less than before. Yet, these macro-level factors cannot take full credit for the rate of divorce; in order to fully understand the divorce revolution on both a societal and an individual level, we must identify how micro-level factors such as religion, age at first marriage, race, education, region, social class, and values affected the risk of divorce, both at that time and also today. Previous literature on the relationships between these variables and divorce has been inconclusive.

Data Gathering/Analysis

By conducting frequencies, cross tabulations, regression models, and interaction terms on variables from the General Social Survey that measure the micro-level factors mentioned earlier, I attempted to measure the degree to which each variable helps explain the risk of divorce since the 1970s. After the initial analysis of decades and the rate of divorce, a number of control groups were added in. First, they were applied separately for the purpose of examining how variables affect divorce independently. Then, they were combined into the same model in order to regulate spurious results and to determine how each variable interacts with controls to explain the overall trend of divorce. Finally, each religion category and each value variable were combined with the decades, allowing me to identify how the overall effects of these variables on the risk of divorce have changed over time.

Micro-Level Effects on an Individual's Risk of Divorce

The Rise of Divorce Across the Decades

Having just identified some of the main events and ideas that influenced the initial rise in the divorce rate, I categorize variables that I believe represent these changes on a social level, such as respondents' opinions on whether obtaining a divorce should be

easier, more difficult or stay the same as it is now (DIVLAW). Figures 3.1 through 3.6 display the patterns associated with divorce, including variables that measure both the divorce rate and also certain attitudes regarding divorce. Although many of these variables are not asked consistently enough to be included in the final analysis, they reflect changes in respondents' opinions towards divorce throughout different, key points in time. In general, they reveal respondents' increasingly relaxed attitudes towards the institution of marriage. The variable MARITAL indicates an increase in the overall number of respondents who choose not to get married, while the variable "divorced" shows, among respondents that have been married at one point, a steady increase in the rate of divorce. Attitudinal measures indicate that respondents generally see divorce as the best, easiest solution to solve marital problems.

Further, I identified twelve independent variables that are later measured against "divorced" and the decades, first separately and then all together. Used as the baseline model throughout most of the study, Table 3.1 includes only the recoded variable "decades" and displays the risk of divorce from one decade to the next. As has been commented on in numerous studies about marriage patterns, the rate of divorce increased by nearly 50% from the 1970s to the 1980s, 89% from the 1970s to the 1990s, and 100% into the 2000s. This sharp increase into the 1980s may be due, as the historical overview in Chapter 1 indicates, to the implementation of no-fault divorce laws in most states (Wright and Stetson 1978; Nakonezny *et al.* 1995; Vlosky and Monroe 2002). Although it is commonly believed that the divorce rate continues to increase, it has actually leveled off in recent years (Shoen and Canudas-Romo 2006:753). This fact can be explained through Schwartz and Han's (2014) diffusion theory. While the rate of divorce was

relatively steady up until about mid-century, the ideological and social changes previously mentioned caused acceptance to increase, eventually reaching a “critical mass” (Schwartz and Han 2014:62). Once this mass had been reached, the acceptance of divorce sped up and the divorce rate skyrocketed. However, once the ideas that had initially caused people to get divorced became more widely accepted, such as women’s entrance into the workforce, the conflict that originally led to divorce lessened and thus, the divorce rate did as well.

The Ideological Revolution’s Effects on Individual-Level Attributes

The Effects of Religion on Divorce

In order to measure the risk of divorce on the individual level, variables were analyzed throughout five different models, the first four measuring the effects of religion, demographics, finances and values on divorce separately, and the fifth combining each variable together. Table 3.2 includes “divorced”, the decades, respondents’ religious identification, and participation. Model A displays the results of the baseline model and includes only the decades; Model B shows the results of the decades with each of the six categories for religion, leaving out “None” for the purpose of using it as the reference category; Model C shows the results of the decades, each category for religion, and the variable ATTEND, which measures the level of respondents’ religious activity.

Model B shows that, compared to those with no religion, respondents identifying with Evangelical Protestantism, Mainline Protestantism, Catholicism, and Judaism all produce statistically significant results, whereas respondents identifying with Black Protestantism and other religions do not. Since the results of the first two categories, Evangelical and Mainline, have positive slopes, they contradict what many may believe,

that more religious people are less likely to get divorced. Although a definitive analysis cannot yet be made, these results fall into line with the ideas introduced by Cherlin (2009), that many churches transformed their conservative teachings in order to accommodate the rising number of members seeking a divorce. In addition, respondents affiliating with more fundamentalist religious groups may get married earlier, a factor that has been associated with a higher risk of divorce (Kposowa 1998; Glass and Levchak 2014). Glass and Levchak (2014) found that highly conservative Protestant communities have an increased risk of divorce. Potential explanations include the fact that they get married at younger ages and are given fewer resources to improve marriage quality later in life.

In order to determine whether the variable ATTEND plays a significant role in the risk of divorce, I added it as an additional coefficient in Model C. Controlling for religious participation causes the results to be largely based on affiliation alone. With the application of ATTEND, Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants and Black Protestants all produce statistically significant results. The effect that the participation control has on Evangelical Protestants and Mainline Protestants is the same, yet the size of the group becomes bigger. In other words, the effect of religion on the risk of divorce is stronger once I account for levels of participation. Since Black Protestantism had statistically non-significant results in Model B, this change suggests that their increased risk of divorce is due to the higher amount of religious involvement that they have, relative to the non-religious people that they are being compared to. Although they yield opposite results than those of Black Protestants, similar conclusions can be drawn for the categories Catholic and Jewish. Since their results become statistically non-significant

with the application of ATTEND, it is possible that the risk of divorce for these two groups is not due to their actual religion, but instead to religious activity. Before the variable ATTEND is introduced, both Catholics and Jews have statistically significant, negative results, meaning that they have a decreased chance of getting divorced. However, since Model C shows statistically non-significant results for these categories, I can say that controlling for religious activity explains much of the relationship found in Model B.

The Effects of Demographic Variables on Divorce

When controls for age at first marriage are introduced in Table 3.3, the results indicate a strong negative relationship between respondents who get married after the age of 21 and the risk of divorce, results which support Glass and Levchak's (2014) recently discussed theory. Although this variable was not asked consistently enough to be included in the full model described later on, these results not only contribute significantly to the limited body of research previously done on this topic but they also agree with the results found in other studies, that younger couples have a higher risk of divorce. Although each control variable does not yield statistically significant results, a comparison of the odds ratios between each decade coefficient in Models A and D show that, if the distribution of these attributes had remained the same in the 1980s, 1990s and 2000s as they were in the 1970s, then the divorce rate *would* have risen even more substantially. As displayed in Table 3.3, the application of these controls causes the likelihood of divorce to increase by as much as 161% in 2000. This therefore suggests that changes in population characteristics from the 1970s into subsequent decades have resulted in a muted increase in the divorce rate.

The Effects of Social Class Variables on Divorce

The next group of independent variables is social class, which is represented with three recoded levels of income and with respondents' perceptions of their own social class position. Relative to respondents in the lowest group of income, those in the middle and upper groups both have at least a 25% reduced risk of divorce. This supports the hypothesis that Kposowa (1998) gives, that the reduction of financial stress in a family lessens conflict and marital breakdown. The perception of higher class also has an effect on the risk of divorce, as can be seen in Table 3.4. Although this finding was not specifically addressed in Kposowa's study, the fact that respondents perceive themselves as being in a higher class may have an effect on their risk of divorce. This suggests that income may in fact be related to divorce, but a definitive conclusion cannot yet be made.

The Continued Alignment of Traditional Values

Although variables measuring respondents' attitudes on the topics mentioned in the literature review were limited, the available ones reveal significant trends (Table 3.5). As expected, FEFAM, the variable asking respondents whether they agree that women should leave controlling the country up to men, is highly correlated with a decrease in the risk of divorce. Traditional values like FEFAM maintain that woman should stay in the house and that men are responsible for providing for the family, a scenario that, once again, places women as the vulnerable, dependent party. However, definitive conclusions about this variable's relationship with divorce cannot yet be made until it is added to the full model.

As I noted in the literature review, birth control and contraception have had significant effects on the ability of women to separate the act of sex from the

commitments of children and marriage (Yenor 2011). What had once been used by men as a weapon to secure the dependence of women is now seen as something far less obliging (Yenor 2011). The ability of women to control their reproduction has eliminated the binding nature of sex, and has become far more acceptable in recent decades. This liberated mindset does seem to have an effect on the risk of divorce, as seen with the variable PREMARSX in Table 3.5. With each additional level that respondents report on this variable, they face a 17.5% increased risk of getting divorced. Yet, similarly with the results of FEFAM, I cannot draw definitive conclusions until other variables have been controlled for.

Explaining the Trend of Divorce In a Full Model

Factors Associated With the Risk of Divorce

On an individual level, these micro-level results help me understand which attributes place people at a higher risk of divorce. Getting married before the age of 21 may, as hypothesized in other works (Kposowa 1998; Glass and Levchak 2014), contribute to people's risk of getting divorced, while Sweezy and Tiefenthaler (1996) hypothesized that higher educational attainment decreases the risk of divorce. However, a definitive analysis must include the application of each control group to avoid spurious results. Table 3.6 displays the results of how these variables interact to affect the overall risk of divorce. Once variables are introduced to other controls, much of the data previously found to be statistically significant becomes non-significant.

With the introduction of other control variables, the results of religion remain the same. This suggests that the relationship previously discovered is not due to some third variable, and that Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants and Black Protestants are

actually at an overall increased risk of divorce, while respondents who attend religious activities more often are at a lower risk. These results support those found by Vaaler *et al.* (2009), that wives identifying with evangelical and fundamentalist groups are more willing to get divorced if their husbands disappoint them. The results of ATTEND also agree with what Mahoney (2010) and Vaaler *et al.* (2009) found, that, the more frequently people attend religious services or activities, the lower their overall risk of divorce. Among each of the religious groups mentioned earlier, Conservative Protestants have among the highest risk of divorce, relative to people with no religion. This finding coincides exactly with those of Glass and Levchak (2014), who found that Conservative Protestant communities have a higher risk than others to get divorced. This study later explained that this relationship may be due to other factors, yet since the results of my study control for other variables, we may conclude that this relationship may, in fact, be legitimate. This relationship may also help to explain the higher divorce rates found in Southern regions, since, as Glass and Levchak (2014) further suggest, the South contains a higher concentration of Protestants.

Unlike in Table 3.4, the results of income have no effect on the risk of divorce once all of the other controls are added to the equation. However, Kposowa's theory (1998), that reduced financial stress results in less familial conflict, is not entirely discredited, since the results of respondents who perceived themselves to be in the middle or upper classes remain statistically significant. Although this variable is based on where respondents choose to place themselves, it potentially suggests the power of perception in influencing one's wellbeing and calls for further research.

As before, the results of FEFAM and PREMARSX continue to produce statistically significant results even when other variables are controlled for. Thus, it is possible that a relationship between attitudes regarding gender roles and premarital sex and divorce may exist. According to Table 3.6, for each additional reported level for the variable FEFAM, the risk of divorce decreases by 4.8%. The extremely traditional nature of the gender roles that are associated with this variable would logically reject the option of divorce, since it fails to fit into the image of a happy, functional family. This traditional mindset is consistent with Schwartz and Han's (2014) application of Becker's exchange theory (1974), that the gains of marriage are maximized when benefits associated with gender roles are utilized, and the risk of divorce is therefore heightened when this balance of power is challenged. Respondents who agree that men should provide and women should stay in the home clearly adhere to these traditional gender roles. The fact that they have lower divorce rates implies that they have avoided challenging the balance of power. Although the values and formation of the typical American family may have changed over the past few decades, the ideals held by the older, more traditional family remain the same.

The variable PREMARSX also continues to produce significant results, implying a strong relationship between opinions on premarital sex and the risk of divorce. With each additional level reported by respondents, the risk of divorce increases by 18.3%. Halem (1980) applies conflict theory, arguing that human beings are constantly at battle with society and the only thing keeping the family together is the necessity of humans to control their sexual desires. Starting with the end of the need for people to control themselves, the dissolution of marriage began. These results can also be seen through a

functionalist perspective, which stems from Halem's conflict theory. One of the traditional functions of marriage is in the rearing of children, accomplished through the act of sex. This role allotted marriage a considerable degree of purpose, yet this purpose hinged upon that particular function. Once birth control and contraception deemphasized this notion, the functions originally associated with this purpose declined, simultaneously weakening the function of marriage in society.

One of the topics discussed in the literature review had to do with the effects of women's entrance into the labor force. Unfortunately, there was a very limited range of options to measure this trend. The variable FECHLD asks respondents whether they believe that women working outside of the home are able to develop relationships with their children. Although this variable did not produce significant results in Table 3.5, it does in Table 3.6 with the application of other controls. This finding suggests that respondents who disagree that working women are able to create relationships with their children are at a decreased risk of divorce. This supports Rogers's (2004) economical independence theory, which maintains that women begin to perceive divisions within the family as unequal once they begin contributing to the overall income. In other words, families who are against the participation of women in the workforce are able to preserve these divisions of power without question, since women are unable to contribute financially.

Applied separately, these variables offer some significant insight into which attributes contribute to the risk of divorce. However, many of these results become non-significant when applied together. By using the equation mentioned in the Methods section, I can determine how well these controls explain the divorce rate by measuring

the change in decade coefficients once the controls have been applied (see page 44). These controls explain the Constant by 15.25%, thus only accounting for about one-fifth of the overall divorce rate in the 1970s. For the 1980s, this equation results with -3.29%, which means that the correlates used in this study have changed in such a way from the 1970s to the 1980s that the divorce rate would have been 3.29% higher if the population in the 1980s had the same characteristics as in the 1970s. Using this explanation and the results of the 1990s and 2000s (-8.464% and -9.182%, respectively), I can say that, if these variables had not changed in subsequent decades, then the divorce rate would be this percent higher than in the 1970s. However, these percentages are not high enough to conclude that the variables fully explain the rise in divorce.

The Effects of the Protective “Umbrella” of Religion

In order to study how the effects of particular variables on the divorce rate have changed over time, I create interaction terms combining “decades” and a number of attributes. Similarly with the regression models, I conduct interaction tests for religion both with and also without the variable ATTEND, for the purpose of determining how religious participation affects the risk of divorce in different religions and also whether these effects have changed over time. Without controlling for participation, a pattern among the interaction between religion and the decade “Two Thousands” appears. Since this pattern disappears in the next model, I can attribute it to ATTEND. In other words, the fact that the combination of most religions and the decade two thousands produced positive, statistically significant results that later disappear implies that respondents’ level of religious participation accounts for the risk of divorce. This finding supports results discussed earlier in this section, as well as the idea presented by Cherlin (2009), that

churches changed their ideologies to accommodate to the rising divorce rate. Once the effects of these church ideologies have been controlled for with the application of ATTEND, these results are no longer statistically significant and have thus been explained. The disappearance of statistically significant results among the majority of these categories in Model I suggests that the effects of religious affiliation alone on divorce have remained unchanged over the years.

The combinations of decades with the variable ATTEND, which measures the frequency of respondents' religious participation, seals the relevance of Cherlin's idea (2009) to this study. Relative to the 1970s, the effects of religious participation on the risk of divorce remain unchanged in the 1980s. However, the 1990s and 2000s both produce highly statistically significant results. Thus, the protective effects of attending religious services on the risk of divorce have, with some suddenness, been greatly reduced prior to the 1970s. As Cherlin (2009) explains, faced with the growing divorce rate, many churches were forced to change their policies and teachings (Cherlin 2009). Thus, as these results indicate, church membership during the earlier half of the twentieth century reinforced the traditional, stereotypical American family; yet as churches altered their ideologies, the option of divorce became less unwarranted, explaining the decreasing effects that church attendance has had on the risk of divorce. This original family notion supported by the church supports the initially negative effects of ATTEND that are displayed in Model C in Table 3.2 and as the main effect in Table 3.7. Compared to respondents with no religion, those attending religious services have a decreased risk of divorce in the 1970s, yet the effects of this variable are diminished in subsequent decades.

The two categories whose results continue to stand out in Model I are those of Black Protestantism and Judaism. Relative to the 1970s, when Black Protestantism increased the risk of divorce by two times relative to those with no religion, subsequent decades indicate that the effects of Black Protestantism diminish the risk of divorce. The results from the combination of the decades and Black Protestantism not only produce statistically significant results for all three recoded variables, but they also get progressively significant as the decades increase. As explained earlier in the regression analysis (Table 3.2), the effect of Black Protestantism on the risk of divorce becomes significant with the addition of ATTEND. Similarly with Table 3.2, the slope of the main effect of Black Protestantism in Table 3.7 is positive. Yet, the results of interaction terms suggest that the effects of Black Protestantism have become stronger and prevent the risk of divorce in subsequent decades. This finding can be explained by a more recent analysis of the results found by Peck (1982). This study suggests that, upon gaining their freedom, Protestantism offered Blacks a sense of community in a group that would not reject them, like white Christianity did. However, the Black Protestant church is weaker now than it was in the 1970s, making this explanation slightly outdated. These findings can thus be explained through the secularization of America. After the Civil Rights movement, the emphasis originally placed on the importance of being an active member of the black church was reduced. Once it became acceptable to be black and not part of a church, members who belonged but did not believe or behave accordingly fell away, leaving only those who continued to faithfully follow the church's teachings. Through their dedication to church values, these individuals may gain certain benefits, such as support, that make them less prone to divorce. People who remain as members of the

back church may well be distinct both from other African Americans and also from other Christians, since their continued participation requires dedication to certain ideologies. Thus, although church participation has been controlled for in this analysis, I believe it is possible that affiliation alone could lead to a strengthening of the values taught by the church, since members would need to have a strong commitment to it already. Although there is limited research on this topic, Peck (1982) suggests that the dedication of members to the Black Protestant church provides couples with the resources they need to decrease their risk of divorce.

Since the results of the interaction terms for decade and Jewish produced the same results, even with the addition of ATTEND, we must assume that the positive relationship between the risk of divorce and Judaism is real and due to something besides participation. Although the results found in Table 3.2 imply that the risk of divorce among Jewish respondents is due to participation, the fact that the results of Models H and I are so similar suggests a need for some other explanation. In the 1970s, Judaism reduced the risk of divorce by about half. However, the results of this interaction indicate that in subsequent decades, the preventative characteristics associated with Judaism have not only been greatly reduced, but have in fact been reversed. As of the 2000s, Judaism's influence actually increases the risk of divorce. This difference presents the most drastic change among all of the variables. Unlike many of the other religions mentioned, Judaism has never considered divorce to be a sin; on the contrary, "at times divorce is appropriate and possibly even a Jewish and moral good" (Broyde and Ausubel 2005:229). The switch from Judaism's preventing divorce to making it more likely is not entirely unfounded. As explained through an analysis of a survey conducted in 1990, the

percent of college graduates among the Jewish population was 55%, compared to 24% of the non-Jewish population and this number goes up in subsequent decades. This growth in the percentage of the Jewish population attending college may have resulted in a heightened amount of women entering the workforce, which has previously been cited as a cause of the increased divorce rate (Rogers 2004; Schwartz and Han 2014). Further, in a study conducted by Broyde and Ausubel (2005) from the 1970s, it was found that Jews tend to be more liberal than non-Jews on topics such as premarital sex, which could potentially contribute to the acceptance of divorce by the Jewish population. If the Jewish mindset was liberal in the 1970s, then their heightened risk of divorce may be due to an increase in this liberated mentality. Thus, unlike many other religions, participation and church teachings cannot be credited with the divorce rate but instead, a change in the Jewish mindset.

The Traditional Mindset

In order to determine the degree to which respondents' traditional values have changed over the years, I conduct a cross-tabulation of year and FEFAM, FECHLD and PREMARSX (Tables 3.8, 3.9, 3.10). From the year 1972 to 2012, the number of respondents agreeing that it was better for men to work and for women to stay at home is nearly cut in half. Respondents that believe working mothers have no negative impact on their relationship with their child also increased almost 20 percentage points over the course of forty years. Finally, respondents that believe sex before marriage is "Always Wrong" or "Almost Always Wrong" dropped by 20 percentage points as well. Clearly, some sort of significant change has occurred over the course of the past forty years. However, results in Table 3.8 show that, relative to the main effect, each of the

interaction terms produced statistically non-significant results. This means that, while changes in people's attitudes may have resulted in an ideological revolution, the effects that these traditional mindsets have had on the risk of divorce has remained unchanged over the years. Given that respondents feeling strongly about FEFAM, FECHLD, and PREMARSX seem to fall on the highly conservative and highly liberal ends of the spectrum, these findings suggest that those who continue to have traditional mindsets over the years maintain their marital status and vice versa, or that the divorce rate is due to other, less extreme variables.

Shortcomings in This Study

Although the General Social Survey provided me with convenient, accessible data, it also caused a number of obstacles. The process of choosing my variables revolved almost entirely around the consistency with which they were asked since the start of survey. Many of the variables that encompassed what I wanted to measure were either not asked with enough consistency or were not representative of the entire population. This is especially true with the attitude and opinion-based questions, most of which were only used a handful of times. Variables such as "MARFREE", which asks respondents whether they agree or disagree with the statement, "Personal freedom is more important than the companionship of marriage", would have been useful in the discussion of Americans' emphasis on personal freedom. "DECCHURH", which asks respondents to state how important they think the "Teachings of your church or synagogue" are in making decisions about everyday life, would have been useful in discussing the importance of religious teachings in the decision to get divorced.

Most of the variables that have been asked since the 1970s have also been changed or reworded, skewing their distributions. For example, the variable RACE, which is the most consistently used race variable available, only has the options “White”, “Black” and “Other” until fairly recently, categories which clearly do not capture the diversity that is America. Similarly with religion, a more inclusive array of categories is not even offered until the year 1998.

Finally, and most fundamentally, the General Social Survey presents a challenge for my dependent variable measure. Since these measures cannot follow the same people or monitor the changes that take place in their lives, I cannot be sure that the event of their divorce is preceded by the measures of current statuses such as income, education, religion, etc. In other words, respondents may have divorced in the past, yet since then, have changed religions, attained a higher religious degree, and have a higher income. Since these measures would have come after the event of their divorce, I cannot say with any certainty that the cause of their divorce is attributable to their most recent demographic statuses.

Recommendations for Future Research

Future studies could attempt to identify the variables that I did not study, and further help explain the divorce rate. For example, I did not include variables having to do with children, which may have a significant effect on the leveling out of the divorce rate. This study was further limited by the fact that some people may have had numerous divorces, yet present GSS variables are unable to measure that. If possible, having a variable that measures the amount of divorces per individual may help to explain patterns in the divorce rate and in the risk of certain individuals to get divorced repeatedly. Using

GSS as my primary source of information created some obstacles, since many variables were not asked consistently enough to be included in the final analysis. Although I was able to find demographic variables that are used consistently enough, many of the attitudinal variables would have been helpful for providing insight into the importance of religious teachings, traditional family values, the degree to which respondents value their personal freedom more than their family, opinions regarding the difficulty of obtaining a divorce, etc. Future studies could find other, more commonly used variables to measure how attitudes and opinions affect an individuals' risk of getting divorced, and also that better explain the trend of divorce, something that has become a regular occurrence and a characteristic of the American mindset (Cherlin 2009).

Appendix

General Social Survey variables

AGEWED- independent variable

4a. If every married: How old were you when you first married?

12-90

1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 2006

ATTEND- independent variable

105. How often do you attend religious services?

0=NEVER, 1=LT ONCE A YEAR, 2=ONCE A YEAR, 3=SEVRL TIMES A YR,

4=ONCE A MONTH, 5=2-3X A MONTH, 6=NRLY EVERY WEEK, 7=EVERY

WEEK, 8=MORE THAN ONCE A WK, 9=DK, NA

1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

BlackProt- independent variable

Recoded from Reltrad, "Black Protestant."

Yes=1, no=0.

Blackrace- independent variable

Recoded from RACE, "Black."

Yes=1, no=0.

CatholicTrad- independent variable

Recoded from Reltrad, "Catholic."

Yes=1, no=0.

CLASS- independent variable

185a. If you were asked to use one of four names for your social class, which would you say you belong in: the lower class, the working class, the middle class, or the upper class?

1= LOWER CLASS, 2=WORKING CLASS, 3=MIDDLE CLASS, 4=UPPER CLASS,

5=NO CLASS, 0=IAP, 8=DK, 9=NA

1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

CONINC- independent variable

1657. Inflation-adjusted family income- standardized at 2000 constant dollars

DEGREE- independent variable

19. If finished 9th-12th grade: Did you ever get a high school diploma or a GED certificate?

0=LT HIGH SCHOOL, 1=HIGH SCHOOL, 2=JUNIOR COLLEGE, 3=BACHELOR, 4=GRADUATE, 8=DK, 9=NA

1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

DENOM- independent variable

104a. If Protestant: What specific denomination is that, if any?

10=AM BAPTIST ASSO, 11=AM BAPT CH IN USA, 12=NAT BAPT CONV OF AM
13=NAT BAPT CONV USA, 14=SOUTHERN BAPTIST, 15=OTHER BAPTIST,
18=BAPTIST-DK WHICH, 20=AFR METH EPISCOPAL, 21=AFR METH EP ZION,
22=UNITED METHODIST, 23=OTHER METHODIST, 28=METHODIST-DK
WHICH, 30=AM LUTHERAN, 31=LUTH CH IN AMERICA, 32=LUTHERAN-MO
SYNOD, 33=WI EVAN LUTH SYNOD, 34=OTHER LUTERHAN,
35=EVANGELICAL LUTH, 38=LUTHERAN-DKWHICH, 40=PRESBYTERIAN C IN
US, 41=UNITED PRES CH IN UA, 42=OTHER PRESBYTERIAN,
43=PRESBYTERIAN, MERGED, 48=PRESBYTERIAN-DK WHICH,
50=EPISCOPAL, 60=OTHER, 70=NO DEMONINATION, 0=IAP, 98=DK, 99=NA
1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987,
1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010,
2012

DIVBEST- dependent variable

1299. Do you agree or disagree...Divorce is usually the best solution when a couple can't seem to work out their marriage problems.

1= STRONGLY AGREE, 2= AGREE, 3=NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE, 4=
DISAGREE, 5= STRONGLY DISAGREE, 0= IAP, 8= CAN'T CHOOSE, 9=NA
1994, 2002, 2012

DIVLAW- dependent variable

215a. Should divorce in this country be easier or more difficult to obtain than it is now?

1=EASIER, 2=MORE DIFFICULT, 3=STAY SAME, 0=IAP, 8=DK, 9=NA
1974, 1975, 1976, 1977 1978, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993,
1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

DIVNOW- dependent variable

1284. In general, would you say that the law now makes it easy or difficult for people who want to get divorced?

1=VERY EASY, 2=FARILY EASY, 3=NEITHER, 4=FAIRLY DIFFICULT, 5=VERY
DIFFICULT, 0=IAP, 8=CANT CHOOSE, 9=NA
1988

DIVORCE- dependent variable

4b. If currently married or widowed: Have you ever been divorced or legally separated?

1=YES, 2=NO, 0=IAP, 8=DK, 9=NA

1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

Divorced- dependent variable

Divorced currently or ever divorced? Recoded from MARITAL and DIVORCE

0=NO, 2=EVER BEEN DIVORCED (MAY BE REMARRIED)

1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

Eighties- independent variable

Recoded from Decade, "Eighties."

Responses from the years 1980-1989.

EightiesXATTEND- independent variable

Recoded from combination of "eighties" and "ATTEND."

Responses from the years 1980-1989 and religious participation.

EightiesXBlackProt- independent variable

Recoded from combination of "eighties" and "Black Protestant."

Responses from the years 1980-1989 of respondents identifying with Black Protestantism.

EightiesXCatholicTrad- independent variable

Recoded from combination of "eighties" and "Catholic."

Responses from the years 1980-1989 of respondents identifying with Catholicism.

EightiesXEvanglical- independent variable

Recoded from combination of "eighties" and "Evangelical Protestant."

Responses from the years 1980-1989 of respondents identifying with Evangelical Protestantism.

EightiesXJewishTrad- independent variable

Recoded from combination of "eighties" and "Jewish."

Responses from the years 1980-1989 of respondents identifying with Judaism.

EightiesXOtherTrad- independent variable

Recoded from combination of "eighties" and "Other Religion."

Responses from the years 1980-1989 of respondents identifying with other traditions.

EightiesXlthighschool- independent variable

Recoded from combination of "eighties" and "Less Than High School."

Responses from the years 1980-1989 of respondents with less than a high school degree.

EightiesXMainlineProt- independent variable

Recoded from combination of “eighties” and “Mainline Protestant.”
Responses from the years 1980-1989 of respondents identifying with Mainline Protestantism.

ENCentral- independent variable
Recoded from REGION, “East North Central.”
Yes=1, no=0.

ESCentral- independent variable
Recoded from REGION, “East South Central.”
Yes=1, no=0.

Evangelical- independent variable
Recoded from Reltrad, “Evangelical Protestant.”
Yes=1, no=0.

EVDIV- dependent variable
1291. Were you ever divorced?
1=YES, 2=NO, 3=NEVER MARRIED, 0=IAP, 9=NA
1988, 1994

FECHLD- independent variable
252. Now I’m going to read several more statements. As I read each one, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it. a. A working mother can establish just as warm and secure a relationship with her children as a mother who does not work.
1=STRONGLY AGREE, 2=AGREE, 3=DISAGREE, 4=STRONGLY DISAGREE,
0=IAP, 8=DK, 9=NA
1977, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

FEFAM- independent variable
252. Now I’m going to read several more statements. As I read each one, please tell me whether you strongly agree, agree, disagree, or strongly disagree with it. d. It is much better for everyone involved if the man is the achiever outside the home and the woman takes care of the home and family.
1=STRONGLY AGREE, 2=AGREE, 3=DISAGREE, 4=STRONGLY DISAGREE,
0=IAP, 8=DK, 9=NA
1977, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

Highschool- independent variable
Recoded from DEGREE, “High school.”
Yes=1, no=0.

INCLT60384- independent variable

Recoded from CONINC, "Income less than 60384" in in constant 2000 dollars.
Yes=1, no=0.

INC60385to120385- independent variable
Recoded from CONINC, "Income from 60385 to 120385" in constant 2000 dollars.
Yes=1, no=0.

INC120386andup- independent variable
Recoded from CONINC, "Income from 120386 and up" in constant 2000 dollars.
Yes=1, no=0.

JewishTrad- independent variable
Recoded from Reltrad, "Jewish."
Yes=1, no=0.

LessthanHS- independent variable
Recode from DEGREE, "Less Than High School."
Yes=1, no=0.

Lowerworkingclass- independent variable
Recoded from CLASS, "Lower and working classes."
Yes=1, no=0.

LT21Agewed- independent variable
Recoded from AGEWED, "Less than 21."
Yes=1, no=0.

MainlineProt- independent variable
Recoded from Reltrad, "Mainline Protestant."
Yes=1, n=0.

MARCOHRT- independent variable
1652. Marriage cohort of the respondent.
1900-1994
1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987,
1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994

MARDIV- dependent variable
1280. Do you agree or disagree? i. Couples don't take marriage seriously enough when
divorce is easily available.
1= STRONGLY AGREE, 2= AGREE, 3=NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE, 4=
DISAGREE, 5= STRONGLY DISAGREE, 0= IAP, 8= CAN'T CHOOSE, 9=NA
1988

MARFREE- independent variable

1280. Do you agree or disagree? b. Personal freedom is more important than the companionship of marriage
1= STRONGLY AGREE, 2= AGREE, 3=NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE, 4= DISAGREE, 5= STRONGLY DISAGREE, 0= IAP, 8= CAN'T CHOOSE, 9=NA
1988, 1996

MARITAL- dependent variable

4. Are you currently—married, widowed, divorced, separated, or have you never been married?

1=MARRIED, 2=WIDOWED, 3=DIVORCED, 4=SEPARATED, 5=NEVER MARRIED, 9=NA

1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

MARNOMAR- independent variable

1280. Do you agree or disagree? e. It is better to have a bad marriage than no marriage at all.

1= STRONGLY AGREE, 2= AGREE, 3=NEITHER AGREE NOR DISAGREE, 4= DISAGREE, 5= STRONGLY DISAGREE, 0= IAP, 8= CAN'T CHOOSE, 9=NA
1988, 1994, 2002

MiddleAtlantic- independent variable

Recoded from REGION, "Middle Atlantic."

Yes=1, no=0.

Middleupperclass- independent variable

Recoded from CLASS, "Middle and upper classes."

Yes=1, no=0.

Mountain- independent variable

Recoded from REGION, "Mountain."

Yes=1, no=0.

NewEngland- independent variable

Recoded from REGION, "New England."

Yes=1, no=0.

Nineties- independent variable

Recoded from Decade, "Nineties."

Responses from the years 1990-1999.

NinetiesXATTEND- independent variable

Recoded from combination of "nineties" and "ATTEND."

Responses from the years 1990-1999 and religious participation.

NinetiesXBlackProt- independent variable

Recoded from combination of “nineties” and “Black Protestant.”

Responses from the years 1990-1999 of respondents identifying with Black Protestantism.

NinetiesXCatholicTrad- independent variable

Recoded from combination of “nineties” and “Catholic.”

Responses from the years 1990-1999 of respondents identifying with Catholicism.

NinetiesXEvanglical- independent variable

Recoded from combination of “nineties” and “Evangelical Protestant.”

Responses from the years 1990-1999 of respondents identifying with Evangelical Protestantism.

NinetiesXJewishTrad- independent variable

Recoded from combination of “nineties” and “Jewish.”

Responses from the years 1990-1999 of respondents identifying with Judaism.

NinetiesXOverTrad- independent variable

Recoded from combination of “nineties” and “Other Religion.”

Responses from the years 1990-1999 of respondents identifying with other traditions.

NinetiesXlthighschool- independent variable

Recoded from combination of “nineties” and “Less Than High School.”

Responses from the years 1990-1999 of respondents with less than a high school degree.

NinetiesXMainlineProt- independent variable

Recoded from combination of “nineties” and “Mainline Protestant.”

Responses from the years 1990-1999 of respondents identifying with Mainline Protestantism.

Northregion- independent variable

Recoded from Region, “North region” includes NewEngland, MiddleAtlantic, ENCentral, WNCentral, Mountain, Pacific.

Yes=1, no=0.

NoTrad- independent variable

Recoded from Reltrad, “None.”

Yes=1, no=0.

Otherrace- independent variable

Recoded from RACE, “Other race.”

Yes=1, no=0

OtherTrad- independent variable

Recoded from Reltrad, “Other Religion.”

Yes=1, no=0.

Over21Agewed- independent variable

Recoded from AGEWED, "Over 21."

Yes=1, no=0.

Pacific- independent variable

Recoded from REGION, "Pacific."

Yes=1, no=0.

PREMARSX- independent variable

217. There's been a lot of discussion about the way morals and attitudes about sex are changing in this country. If a man and woman have sex relations before marriage, do you think it is always wrong, almost always wrong, wrong only sometimes, or not wrong at all?

1=ALWAYS WRONG, 2=ALMST ALWAYS WRONG, 3=SOMETIMES WRONG, 4=NOT WRONG AT ALL, 5=OTHER, 0=IAP, 8=DK, 9=NA

1972, 1974, 1975, 1977, 1978, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

RACE- independent variable

24. What race do you consider yourself?

1=WHITE, 2=BLACK, 3=OTHER

1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

REGION- independent variable

Region of interview

1=NEW ENGLAND, 2=MIDDLE ATLANTIC, 3=E. NOR. CENTRAL, 4=W. NOR. CENTRAL, 5=SOUTH ATLANTIC, 6=E. SOU. CENTRAL, 7=W. SOU. CENTRAL, 8=MOUNTAIN, 9=PACIFIC

1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

RELIG- independent variable

104. What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion?

1=PROTESTANT, 2=CATHOLIC, 3=JEWISH, 4=NONE, 5=OTHER, 6=BUDDHISM, 7=HINDUISM, 8=OTHER EASTERN, 9=MOSLEM/ISLAM, 10=ORTHODOX-CHRISTIAN, 11=CHRISTIAN, 12=NATIVE AMERICAN, 13=INTER-NINDENOMINATIONAL, 98=DK, 99=NA

1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

Reltrad- independent variable

Recoded from DENOM and RELIG, “Religious tradition.”

Evangelical=1, MainlineProt=2, BlackProt=3, CatholicTrad=4, JewishTrad=5, OtherTrad=6, NoTrad=7.

SAtlantic- independent variable

Recoded from REGION, “South Atlantic.”

Yes=1, no=0.

Seventies- independent variable

Recoded from Decade, “Seventies.”

Responses from the years 1972-1979.

SEX- independent variable

23. Code respondent’s sex

1=MALE, 2=FEMALE

1972, 1973, 1974, 1975, 1976, 1977, 1978, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1984, 1985, 1986, 1987, 1988, 1989, 1990, 1991, 1993, 1994, 1996, 1998, 2000, 2002, 2004, 2006, 2008, 2010, 2012

SomeCollege- independent variable

Recoded from DEGREE, “Some college.”

Yes=1, no=0.

Southregion- independent variable

Recoded from REGION, “South region” includes WSCentral, ESCentral, SAtlantic.

Yes=1, no=0.

Twothousands- independent variable

Recoded from Decade, “Two thousands.”

Responses from the years 2000-2012.

TwothousandsXATTEND- independent variable

Recoded from combination of “twothousands” and “ATTEND.”

Responses from the years 2000-2012 of respondents identifying with Evangelical Protestantism.

TwothousandsXBlackProt- independent variable

Recoded from combination of “twothousands” and “Black Protestant.”

Responses from the years 2000-2012 of respondents identifying with Black Protestantism.

TwothousandsXCatholicTrad- independent variable

Recoded from combination of “twothousands” and “Catholic.”

Responses from the years 2000-2012 of respondents identifying with Catholicism.

TwothousandsXEvangeliCal- independent variable
Recoded from combination of “twothousands” and “Evangelical Protestant.”
Responses from the years 2000-2012 of respondents identifying with Evangelical Protestantism.

TwothousandsXJewishTrad- independent variable
Recoded from combination of “twothousands” and “Jewish.”
Responses from the years 2000-2012 of respondents identifying with Judaism.

TwothousandsXOverTrad- independent variable
Recoded from combination of “twothousands” and “Other Religion.”
Responses from the years 2000-2012 of respondents identifying with other traditions.

TwothousandsXlthighschool- independent variable
Recoded from combination of “twothousands” and “Less Than High School.”
Responses from the years 2000-2012 of respondents with less than a high school degree.

TwothousandsXMainlineProt- independent variable
Recoded from combination of “twothousands” and “Mainline Protestant.”
Responses from the years 2000-2012 of respondents identifying with Mainline Protestantism.

Whiterace- independent variable
Recoded from RACE, “White.”
Yes=1, no=0.

WNCentral- independent variable
Recoded from REGION, “West North Central.”
Yes=1, no=0.

WSCentral- independent variable
Recoded from REGION, “West South Central.”
Yes=1, no=0.

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