The Geography of Religious Diversity in Florida

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Geographers have a long-standing engagement with the spatiality of religion. Cultural geographers, of course, have focused on this issue for some time (Zelinksy 1961; Sopher 1981; Levine 1986; Wilson 1993; Park 1994). More recently, the discipline has explored religion as a social and political force deeply intertwined with relations of class, gender, ethnicity, and place (Kong 1990, 2001; Kiong and Kong 2000; Valins 2000; Zelinsky 2001; Vincent and Warf 2002; Hervieu-Léger 2002; Proctor 2006). Globally, this issue has been given additional impetus by the upsurge in religious fundamentalism that arose following the end of the cold war (Stump 2000).

Religion in the U.S. is a particularly pertinent force given the relatively high levels of religiosity found there (compared to secular Europe) and the power role of conservative evangelicals in political circles (Hackett 2003). Various denominations of Christians comprise 84 percent of the total population, but the steady growth of non-Christian faiths, particularly in larger cities, has added to the country's diversity. Indeed, the U.S. today is perhaps the world's most religiously diverse country (Eck 2001). The separation of church and state in the U.S., enshrined in the Constitution, generates an unfettered arena in which different faiths compete freely with one another for adherents. Immigration, differential rates of natural growth and decline, conversion from one faith to another, and spatial mobility have conspired to generate an enormously diverse religious landscape (Zelinsky 2001).

This diversity is reflected in the religious geography of the South in general (Vincent, Winsberg and Warf 2006) and in Florida in particular, whose religious landscape is the product of a long and convoluted history. The historical development of religion in Florida is a topic worthy of more consideration and cannot be addressed in depth here (see Gannon 1996), but its major highlights include: the

Spanish introduction of Christianity in the 16th century; the rise of Protestantism during the English occupation, which continued after it became a U.S. territory in 1821; the post-Civil War emergence of Baptists, both white and black (Joiner 1972; Howard and Howard 1994); the influx of various groups of Europeans, mostly Catholic (McNally 1982) such as Italians but also Orthodox Greeks; the rise of fundamentalist Protestants in the 1920s; the post-World War II growth of Jews in the greater Miami region; and the influx of Catholic Latinos since the 1960s, including Cubans and Nicaraguans in Miami and Puerto Ricans in Orlando (Winsberg 1993). Other studies have indicated the significance of religion in Florida to presidential politics (Kane, Craig, and Wald 2004). Winsberg's (2006) cultural atlas of the state points to the prevalence of Catholicism in southern Florida and of Baptists in northern Florida (p. 60), offers numerous maps of various denominations, and culminates in the observation that "A high degree of religious diversity within Florida's counties is rare" (p. 62).

This paper builds upon previous research by addressing the Florida's religious diversity quantitatively. It begins with a brief synopsis of the nature of religious competition and its relations to religiosity. Second, it describes the data and quantitative methods utilized to measure religious diversity. The third section analyzes these patterns cartographically, including the distributions of adherents and four major faiths. The conclusion summarizes the principal themes and findings.

Conceptualizing Religious Diversity

Two major schools of thought characterize sociological theory regarding the consequences of religious diversity. The dominant perspective among sociologists of religion approaches denominations as similar to "firms" competing in a market (Finke and Stark 1988; Roof 1999). Thus, denominations are held to "compete" with one another for adherents much as firms compete for customers, often by offering charismatic leaders or educational and recreational services such as Sunday schools (Bruce 2002; Stark and Finke 2000). One extension

of this approach is rational choice models based on utility-maximizing individuals making clear choices (Montgomery 1996, 2003). However, this perspective suffers from several disadvantages. Religions are not, except perhaps under the crassest terms, profit-maximizing institutions and thus cannot be expected to behave in the same way. Further, the religious economies view utterly ignores the profound emotional and occasionally irrational dimensions that underlie people's choices of faith, including their socialization into families, traditions, and communities.

A second approach views religious diversity through the conceptual lens of social ecology (McPherson 1983). This approach focuses on the local social and spatial context of different faiths, their modes of organization, ability to appeal to different constituencies, and denominations' abilities to mobilize resources in the pursuit of new members or attempts to prevent current ones from dropping out. This approach lacks the elegance of neoclassical models but comes to terms with the complex, frequently messy world of everyday life, the psychology of religious belief, and their embeddedness in social relations. As Chaves and Giesel (2000, p. 4) contrast the two schools of thought, "In the economic approach, the basic image is one of organizations as firms trying to sell products to individuals who are customers. In the ecological approach, the basic image is one of organizations as organisms trying to maintain themselves by using individuals as resources."

Deeply entwined with discussions of religious diversity is its relation to religiosity, or intensity of belief and participation in denominational activities. The long-standing view first articulated by Max Weber maintains that over time, the culture of capitalism tends gradually to be come more secular (Berger 1967). However, a counterargument articulated by Finke and Stark (1988, 1998) holds that rising religious pluralism in fact stimulates competition among faiths and leads directly to greater religious participation and religiosity. In this view, descularization should accompany religious diversity, not the decline of faith. This line of thought was opposed by numerous authors, such as Breault (1989a,b), Olson (1998), Chaves and

Gorski (2001), and Voas, Olson and Crockett (2002), and Olson and Hadaway (1999), who typically argue that enhanced religious diversity erodes the dense social ties and the tight fabric of communities that are often maintained via a dominant faith. Religion acts as a social as well as ideological phenomenon, and the rising individualism and celebration of the commodity that permeate American society have done little to enhance religiosity. The debate about religiosity continues.

Data and Methodology

Because there are no census data on religion, this paper used data published by the Glenmary Research Center (2002) on Florida's religious denominations in 2000, which lists numbers of adherents by denomination for each county. While widely used, the Glenmary data do suffer flaws, such as omitting some faiths (e.g., Jehovah's Witnesses) and the inability to identify adherents who live in one county and worship in another.

Measuring diversity is not easy. Simple measures may not do justice to the complexity of distributions, including the relative abundance of different faiths. For example, is a county with 10 faiths each of which has 10 percent of adherents more or less diversity than a county with 15 faiths but in which 80 percent of adherents belong to only one? In biogeography, these issues are widely recognized as different measures of species richness (Magurran 2004). This paper employed four empirical measures of religious diversity:

1. The simple number of denominations present in each county, n, which summarizes the suite of options available to individuals in given areas.
2. The proportion of total adherents who belong to the county's largest denomination, i.e., n_{max}/ N, where N = total number of adherents.
3. Shannon's index (H), derived from entropy maximization, which quantifies the diversity of religions based on two components: the number of denominations and their proportional distribution. The Shannon index is calculated by summing the proportion of adher-

ents per denomination multiplied by the natural logarithm of that proportion, that is,

$$H = -\Sigma(p_i * \ln p_i) \quad (1)$$

in which p is the proportion of a county's adherents found in denomination i (Magurran 2004). The maximum value is reached when all denominations have the same distribution.

4. Simpson's index (D), invented by Simpson (1949), is based on probability theory, specifically, the likelihood of two individuals drawn at random from a county will be in the same denomination. It is defined as

$$D = \Sigma p_i^2 \quad (2)$$

in which p is the proportion of a county's adherents found in denomination i. It ranges from zero to one.

To the extent that these measures capture the complexity of religious diversity across the state, their spatial distributions should resemble one another.

Results

In 2001, about 10.3 million people, or 65 percent of the state's population, belonged to one of 17 major faiths (Table 1). Notably, the state also had 5.6 million non-adherents, including atheists, agnostics, or people who belonged to no formal denomination. Christians of various sorts accounted for 95 percent of all adherents, whereas only five percent (771,000 people) were non-Christian, including Jews, Muslims, and a variety of faiths that Glenmary lumps under the unfortunate label of "Eastern Religions." The largest denominations included Catholics (16 percent), Baptists (8.5 percent), Historically African-American Protestant denominations (seven percent), and several smaller faiths grouped together as "Other Christian" (18 percent).

Figure 1 portrays religious adherents as a proportion of the total population of each Florida county. Ranging from 24 to 84 percent, it reflects the wide variation within the state of the degree to which residents hold to one faith or another, and thus serves as a rough index of the geography of religiosity. Areas with the highest

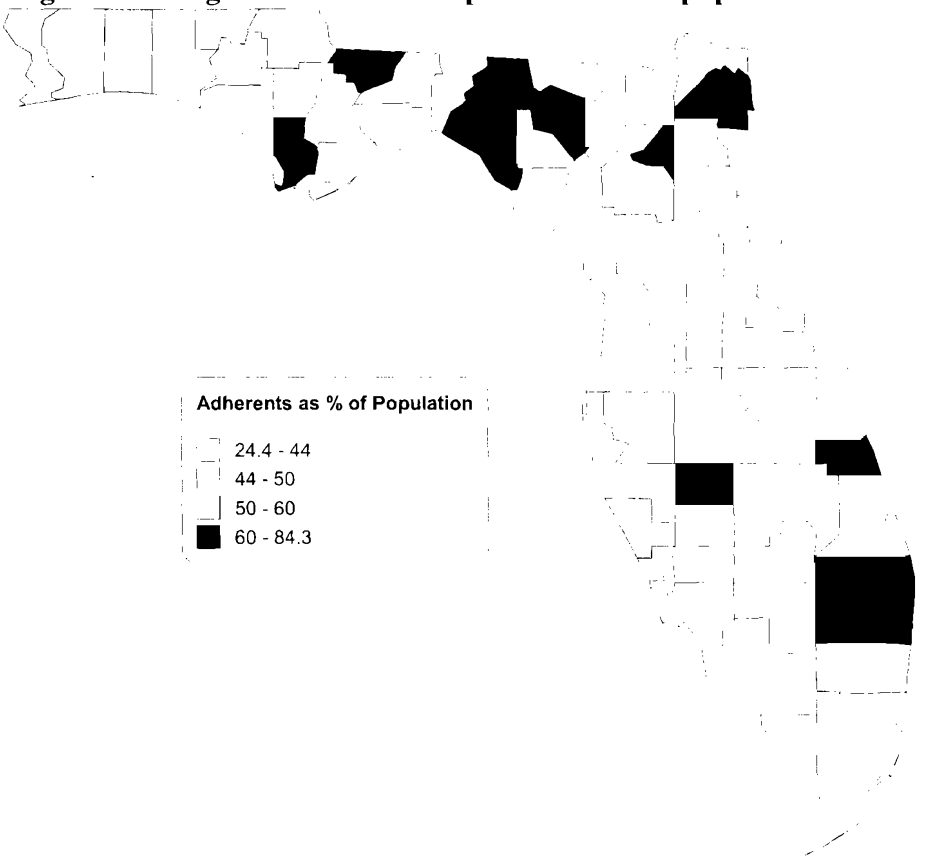
Table 1. Distribution of major religious denominations in Florida, 2002.

Denomination	Adherents	%
Other Christian	2,911,408	18.2
Catholic	2,596,148	16.2
Baptist	1,352,470	8.5
Historically African-American Protestant	1,125,530	7.0
Jewish	628,485	3.9
Pentecostal	467,290	2.9
Methodist	458,623	2.9
Presbyterian	157,751	1.0
Episcopal	152,526	1.0
Confessional	140,788	0.9
Eastern Religions	111,030	0.7
Orthodox	108,189	0.7
Latter-day Saints (Mormons)	75,620	0.5
Muslim	31,661	0.2
Pietists	11,586	0.1
Non-adherents	5,653,273	35.4
Total	15,982,378	100.0

Source: calculated by author from Glenmary data.

proportions of adherents (above 60 percent) include Palm Beach county, Duval county and Jacksonville, and several counties in the Panhandle, such as Taylor, Madison, Suwannee, and Gadsden. Conversely, regions with relatively low proportions of adherents (less than 44 percent) include much of the state's Gulf coast, such as the Everglades region of Monroe, Hendry, Charlottte, and Lee counties as well as the region north of Tampa (Levy, Marion, and Citrus counties). This pattern may reflect, among other things, the differential streams of migrants to the state from varying parts of the U.S. and abroad.

Figure 1. Religious adherents as percent of total population.



Source: calculated by author.

Florida exhibits significant variations in the distributions of several of its largest and best known denominations (Figure 2). Catholics and Jews, for example, are heavily concentrated in the greater Miami/Dade county-Ft. Lauderdale region, which undoubtedly reflects the large numbers of Latinos and elderly in-migrants from the Northeast, respectively. Conversely, northern Florida, particularly the Panhandle, is dominated by Baptists and, to a lesser extent, Methodists.

Finally, the four measures of diversity deployed here yield a

Figure 2. Catholics, Baptists, Methodists, and Jews as percentages of county populations.

Source: calculated by author.

complex image of the state's religious diversity (Figure 3), testimony to the degree to which this phenomenon is multifaceted and not easily represented. Thus, the number of denominations present in each county tends to be highest in Duval, Hillsborough and Pinellas counties as well as conurbation consisting of Palm Beach, Broward, and Dade counties. This pattern reflects the common tendency of large, densely populated metropolitan areas to exhibit significantly higher degrees of ethnic and cultural diversity than rural areas. The largest

denomination in each county similarly indicates that dominant faiths tend to be most heavily represented in relatively rural areas (e.g., Dixie, Levy, Lafayette, Gilchrist counties at the base of the Panhandle, or Calhoun and Holmes counties farther west) and comprise a much smaller proportion of residents in large cities. The Shannon and Simpson diversity indices lend further weight to these observations by including the relative distribution of faiths within each county: the Shannon index is highest in Pinellas, Leon, Alachua, and Orange counties, whereas the Simpson index reaches its maximum levels in these as well as Duval, Hillsborough, Polk, and Highlands.

Concluding Thoughts

Religion has become too important a force in American public and private life for geographers to ignore. The sheer size and complexity of the U.S., with streams of immigrants from around the world as well as home-grown faiths (e.g., the Latter-day Saints, or Mormons) makes understanding the religious landscape a daunting task.

Two-thirds of Floridians belong to an organized religious denomination. Florida remains an overwhelmingly Christian state, in which 95 percent of adherents belong to one Christian denomination or another. Of Christians, Protestants comprise 72 percent, Catholics and additional 16, and Orthodox Christians less than one. Spatially, the state exhibits profound contrasts between northern Florida, in which Baptists and Methodists dominate, and southern Florida, characterized by large numbers of Jews and Catholics. As measured by the four indices employed here, religious diversity in Florida is closely associated with city size: invariably, large metropolitan counties (the Miami region, Tampa-St. Petersburg, Jacksonville) exhibit a broader array of faiths than do small, rural ones. Thus, in addition to the long-standing north-south dichotomy, a rural-urban one is significant. Because religion is deeply intertwined with political behavior, social mores, and everyday life, these patterns are important in deciphering other vital aspects of Florida's evolving social geography.

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