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Review of Patchwork Nation, from the Jefferson Institute

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Patchwork Nation

from the Jefferson Institute 2011

Url: http://www.patchworknation.org/

[Visited Aug'11] Funded by the nonprofit Knight Foundation, this Web site is a reporting project of the Jefferson Institute, ostensibly established to cover the 2008 election. Patchwork Nation examines communities over time via demographic, voting, and cultural data. It has created 12 organizational clusters, e.g., Boom Towns, Evangelical Epicenters, Mormon Outposts, Monied "Burbs, Military Bastions, and Tractor Country. The project uses data from the 2000 US Census and 2006 estimates of common census items at the county level. Religious data come from the Glenmary Research Center's "Survey of Religious Congregations in America, 2000." Patchwork Nation makes its data and methodology available for those who wish to mine or replicate results. It explains limitations to data, e.g., measures of county size, median income averages, and inferences about behavior within places and counties.

Users enter a ZIP code to find a community's type. After a ZIP code is entered, the search returns links for users who want to learn more about the community type and about the county in which the ZIP code falls. Users may locate material such as basic demographics, education levels, recent news, the number of residents per 1,000 who identify with each religion, the county's population, a map, and a hardship index that "provides a comparative snapshot of how difficult life is for the average resident of a given county." Although the site's census-derived data are dated, up-to-date news and information for the project comes from partners including PBS NewsHour, The Christian Science Monitor, WNYC Radio, and Politico. This unique site loads quickly and offers a wealth of information for undergraduates seeking demographic information for courses in political science or business and marketing.

Summing Up: Recommended. Lower- and upper-level undergraduates.

Reviewer: R. Tolley-Stokes, East Tennessee State University
Recommendation: Recommended
Readership Level: Lower-division Undergraduates, Upper-division Undergraduates
Interdisciplinary Subjects:
Subject: Reference - Social & Behavioral Sciences
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