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**Rebecca R. Winarski\*** ([rebecca.winarski@gmail.com](mailto:rebecca.winarski@gmail.com)). *Mapping class groups and simple covers.*

Let  $S \rightarrow X$  be a branched covering space of surfaces. Berstein and Edmonds show that if  $S \rightarrow X$  is a simple branched cover and  $X$  is a disk with  $n$  branch points, there is a surjective virtual homomorphism from the mapping class group of the disk with branch points (the braid group) to the mapping class group of  $X$ . We find a partial converse to their result. If there is a surjective virtual homomorphism from the mapping class group of  $X$  to the mapping class group of  $S$ , then  $X$  must be a disk or sphere and all preimages of branch points under the covering map have ramification number 1 or 2. (Received January 27, 2015)