

Latino Politics: A Closer Look at Catholic and Evangelical Voters

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As the Latino population in the United States increases, they have become an increasingly important demographic in American elections. Existing literature claims that Latino voting behavior is driven by various factors, including party identification and policy issues. What this existing literature fails to emphasize is the importance of religious groups. This thesis will examine religion as an additional factor that influences Latino voting behavior. My research question asks: Why do Evangelical Latinos vote more on the conservative end of the political spectrum than Catholic Latinos? This study takes a closer look at these two groups through a collection of surveys that focus on obtaining data regarding church participation. I argue that Evangelical Latinos vote more conservatively compared to Catholic Latinos because they present higher rates of participation within the church. This topic is worth pursuing because religion plays a prominent role in Latino political participation and identity. As a growing population, Latino voting behaviors are of great importance as they significantly impact elections.

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Introduction

As the population of Latinos in the United States increases, they have become a population of interest within political science. Despite being the largest ethnic group in the U.S, Latinos demonstrate low levels of political participation. With Latino Politics being a fairly new field of study, the purpose of my research is to examine how religion influences Latino political participation. My research question asks: Why are Evangelical Latinos more conservative on the political spectrum than Catholic Latinos? This project is worth pursuing because the Latino electorate has the potential power to create political change in the United States. Understanding what motivates Latinos to participate in politics, and how they behave when they do participate, is crucial to our understanding of American politics.

While there is limited literature comparing specific voting behaviors between Catholic and Evangelical Latinos, there are vast discussions about Latinos and religion in Politics. The three schools of thought that this project will examine are those regarding Latino political participation, voting behaviors, and the role of the church. Some scholars who research Latino political participation argue that how Latinos choose to self-identify plays a large role in the community's participation. Other scholars argue that their sense of belonging within the U.S is more important, and these scholars showcase this argument by analyzing the role of co-ethnic candidates during elections. When Latino voting behaviors are researched, scholars either study political party preferences or policy initiatives. The third school of thought refers to scholars who research the role of the church, and conduct their studies through a historical or a contemporary lens that describes the church as a civic association. Overall, Latino Politics contains diverse perspectives due to the complexity of the Latino identity.

I argue that Evangelical Latinos are more conservative compared to Catholic Latinos because they present higher rates of religious participation within the church. My hypothesis claims that higher rates of religious participation, including rates of weekly service attendance,

prayer frequency, and taking a literal view of the Bible, will lead to more conservative views about certain political issues.

My project will be utilizing a quantitative approach. I will be obtaining survey data from the Pew Research Center's 2013 National Survey of Latinos and Religion. From this data set, I will be obtaining information regarding weekly service attendance, daily prayer, and view on the Bible. These three components are what I will be using to define religious participation between both Catholic and Evangelical Latinos.

I will also be utilizing survey data from Pew Research Center's 2014 Religious Landscape Study. From this data set, I will be retrieving information regarding three political issues: (1) Government Aid for the Poor, (2) Abortion, and (3) Same-Sex Marriage. These three political issues are what I will utilize to determine if Evangelical Latinos really are more conservative than Catholic Latinos.

As the largest ethnic group, it is important for those in the field of political science to consider complexities that exist within the Latino community. I aim to contribute to the understanding of Latinos in U.S politics by shedding light on the importance and influence that religion has in the community.

To summarize, my thesis will consist of a literature review that tackles three schools of thought. These three schools of thought include literature about Latino political participation, voting behaviors, and the role of the Church. In this literature review, I will also touch on the gaps and weaknesses that exist within each school of thought. Next, I will provide information regarding my research design. Here, I will go into detail about the data I have collected, and why I find that data selection as the best option for my study. Afterwards, I will provide the results from the data I collected, and provide an analysis that supports my argument for why Evangelical Latinos tend to be more conservative than Catholic Latinos. In this analysis I will provide a greater insight to the differences that exist within the Catholic and Evangelical churches, and the role of ethnic identity salience. Lastly, I'll provide a conclusion in which I summarize my

findings and share the scope and limitations of this project and discuss where there is room for future research in Latino Politics.

Literature Review

The Latino population has grown to be the largest ethnic group in the United States. The increase in the Latino population has led political scientists to emphasize their political importance, and question what motivates Latinos to participate in politics. Much of the literature in political science, when researching Latinos, notes country of origin, generational differences, and socioeconomic status as factors that affect participation and voting behaviors. In my study, I introduce and use religion as a factor that plays a crucial role in Latino politics.

My project aims to answer why Evangelical Latinos are more on the conservative end of the political spectrum than Catholic Latinos. I argue that Evangelical Latinos are more conservative compared to Catholic Latinos because they present higher rates of participation within the church. While there is limited research comparing specific behaviors between Catholic and Evangelical Latinos, there are discussions about Latino political participation, Latino voting behavior, and the role of the church.

Research concerning Latino political participation argues that group consciousness influences Latino mobilization. While it provides a solid foundation for analyzing Latinos in politics, it fails to include religion as a factor that influences group consciousness. Studies concerning voting behavior suggest that Latinos tend to lean towards the Democratic party but emphasize that religion influences Latinos to vote conservatively on certain initiatives. This framework provides a decent inclusion of religion as a factor that influences voting behavior but fails to include multiple denominations that influence Latinos, by mainly categorizing Latinos as just Catholic or non-Catholic.

The third perspective, the role of the church, serves as the best framework for understanding my research question. With minimal theological differences, researching the roles of the Catholic and Evangelical churches will provide me with

greater insight as to why Evangelical Latinos are more conservative than Catholic Latinos. Literature concerning the role of the church suggests that participation within the church is important to Latino political behavior, as the role of the church serves as a civic association. My thesis aims to add to the literature of Latino politics by drawing an intersection between Latino identity and the role of the church.

Latino Political Participation

The U.S. population grew by 23.1 million from 2010 to 2021, and Latinos accounted for 52% of this increase. The Latino population has reached 62.5 million as of 2021 (Krogstad et al.,2023). Despite being the largest growing ethnic group in the U.S., Latinos continue to demonstrate lower rates of political participation in comparison to other racial and ethnic groups. In political science, political participation is usually measured by voter registration and voter turnout. Scholars who research political participation debate over what drives political involvement in the Latino community. Much of the literature considers Latino group consciousness and scholars debate about which group identity is the most influential in mobilizing Latino participation. Other scholars claim that a sense of belonging and representation is an important concept that allows us to learn more about Latino identity. Most of this type of literature focuses on the Black community, and less on Latinos since linked fate is less prominent in the Latino community. Scholars claim that the reason linked fate is not as strong in the Latino population is because Latinos do not have a single entry point in the U.S. No single event, institution, or migration creates a shared group experience (Barreto, 2008). For Black Americans, slavery is a basis for the concept of linked fate. Instead, for Latinos, the process of becoming a minority group in the U.S., and not their point of entry, is what binds Latinos to participate in U.S. politics (Barreto, 2010). Natalie Masuoka's findings demonstrate that Latinos tend to identify most with their national groups but when it comes to political participation, and voting during elections, Latinos demonstrate higher rates of participation with racial group

consciousness as its driving force. While Masuoka has greatly contributed to the literature by analyzing different categories of group consciousness, the research fails to consider the multiple ethnic subgroups that exist within the Latino community. Stokes (2003), like Masuoka, argues that group consciousness among Latinos increases political participation. In addition, Stokes uses a multidimensional approach that investigates group consciousness in various Latino subgroups. Findings show that Polar power (people who express dissatisfaction with access to political and material resources) increases Mexican political participation, systemic blame increases participation among Puerto Ricans, and systemic blame and group identification increase political participation among Cubans (Stokes, 2003). Having this multidimensional approach is important to consider when analyzing voting behaviors in the U.S. because some states have a larger population of one subgroup, which can affect voting behaviors and party identification in said state.

While some scholars examine Latino political participation through various group-conscious identities, other scholars emphasize that belonging is what drives Latinos to participate in politics. Masuoka drew on how Latinos feel they belong to each other, but scholars like Matt Barreto focused on how Latinos feel they belong within the United States. Even in states like California and Texas, where Latinos are the largest ethnic group, Latinos are underrepresented in politics at all governmental levels. Barreto claims that Latinos become more involved in politics when a Latino candidate is involved in an election. He examines 5 cities with heavily Latino precincts and states that in every instance, those precincts witnessed a significant increase in voter turnout if a Latino candidate was involved (2007). His findings, similar to Masuoka's, demonstrate that shared ethnicity directly influences Latino vote choice. In addition, Barreto finds that when a co-ethnic candidate is present, Latinos vote at heightened rates, sometimes at rates higher than other ethnic and racial groups, including whites (2008).

Voting Behavior - Party ID and Initiatives

The literature covering Latino voting behavior can go in many directions due to the complexity of the Latino population. When voting behavior data is collected, some scholars place their focus on discovering which political party each religious group leans towards, while others draw more attention to political initiatives concerning abortion and same-sex marriage. This literature review will cover the data revolving around each topic, critique inadequate frameworks for data collection, and suggest a new method that accounts for the various aspects of Latino life. Despite what each scholar decides to specifically research, they all agree on one thing: as the U.S. Latino population increases, the political importance of Latinos increases (Kelly & Kelly, 2005; Smith & Lee, 2013). All scholars also mention the importance of recognizing a religious shift within the Latino community. The Pew Research Center's 2014 National Survey of Latinos and Religion finds that 22% of Latinos are Protestant, and 55% of Latino adults identify as Catholic, compared to 2010 when 63% identified as Catholic. This means that in 3 years, the Catholic share has dropped by 12 percentage points (Pew Research 2014). Such statistics have raised scholars to ask a few questions. They ask: Why is this shift occurring? Are Catholics converting to protestantism, another denomination, or becoming unaffiliated? And the most important question, which all scholars attempt to address in their literature: How will this shift affect voting behaviors in elections?

As mentioned previously, some scholars just research which political party Catholic and Evangelical Latinos affiliate themselves with in order to predict voting behaviors. When collecting this data, scholars usually consider ethnicity, age, and the time spent in the United States. Data illustrates that Catholics are more strongly Democratic, with 65% reporting attachments to the Democratic party, 21% claiming the Independent party, and 24% claiming to be Republican. The majority, 56% of Evangelical Latinos, are Democratic but compared to Catholic Latinos, they have less of an attachment to the Independent party (9%)

and more of an attachment to the Republican party at 34% (Kelly & Kelly, 2005). Overall, a majority of studies demonstrate that Latinos with a Protestant denominational identification are linked to greater support for the Republican party than Catholic Latinos.

As mentioned earlier, one of the common themes that scholars consider is a religious shift. The data presented by Kelly and Kelly was not able to discover what denomination Catholics shifted into, but it was able to indicate that much of the shift away from Catholicism occurred after immigration to the U.S. This is important because it indicates that as Latinos spend more time in the U.S, they are more likely to leave their Catholic roots. Not considering this religious shift has led to different opinions among scholars, regarding their future predictions of which political party Latino Catholics and Evangelicals will lean into. Some scholars argue that Latino support for the two main parties will slowly become more balanced (Kosmin & Keysar, 1995). While others argue that the religious shifts benefit the Republican party (Kelly & Kelly, 2005). The research demonstrated by Kelly and Kelly serves as an example of a more inclusive framework that considers the complexity of Latinos. There is a gap of knowledge when researching religious Latino voting behaviors because most studies create a framework where they not only disregard religious shifts but they also categorize Latinos only as Catholic or non-Catholic. By doing this, it eliminates the importance of political influence brought upon Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants, other denominations, and unaffiliated Latinos. Kelly and Kelly present a strong framework that considers the complexity of Latinos by researching more than one denomination.

When examining religious voting behaviors, some scholars like to research how Catholics and Evangelical Latinos feel about certain political issues and initiatives. Some of the major political topics considered are abortion and same-sex marriage. Regarding same-sex marriage, findings demonstrate that there is strong opposition to same-sex marriage among Latino Evangelicals compared to Catholics (Ellison et al., 2011) More

than half of Catholic (52%) and Evangelical (70%) Latinos believe abortion should be illegal (Taylor, 2012). This trend may occur because Evangelicals increasingly connect their private beliefs to taking public action. As a result of the increased importance of social and moral issues to politics, Evangelicals become more involved in the voting process, and as a result, they are a group that tends to fall on the conservative end of the voting spectrum (Smith & Walker, 2013).

Most studies that focus on specific political issues tend to only pay attention to an individual's party identification and if their opinion matches that of their political party. While this contributes great insight into religious partisanship data, it still does not explain the differences between certain religious denominations, especially Catholicism and Evangelicalism. For the most part, the religious beliefs between the two denominations are quite similar. So what is it between Catholicism and Evangelicalism that creates a difference in Latino voting behaviors? For my essay, I argue that the role of the church provides greater insight to answer this question.

Historical and Contemporary Role of the Church

All scholars agree that religion is undoubtedly influential in Latino participation and political behavior. Literature that analyzes the effects of religion on voting behavior tends to shift their attention to the role of the church. Some scholars research the church through a historical perspective, while others view it through a contemporary lens that examines the church as a civic association or views the participation rates within the church.

Gaston Espinosa (2007) examines Catholic and Protestant leaders Cardinal Roger Mahoney and Reverend Samuel Rodriguez that drew on religious rhetoric, symbols, and the Bible in the 2005-2007 immigration reform debate. Espinosa provides a brief background on the role of the Catholic Church after the Mexican-American war. He explains how Latino clergy got involved in support of uplifting Latinos after the broken promises of the Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo negatively affected the community. His

description of how these church leaders fought for greater tolerance and inclusion of Latinos in U.S. civil society demonstrates the deep-rooted ties that the Church has with the Latino community. While this report demonstrates the historical role and methods used by the church, I believe it fails to draw an intersection between the role of the church and Latino identity. The church is a crucial factor in Latino life, and this report failed to emphasize the differences between both churches, and the possibility of how religion may be more salient to Latino identity than race or ethnicity.

It is mutually agreed by scholars that religion undoubtedly affects Latino participation. While a historical view of the church is referred to in the literature, there are new ways of viewing the church. There are two competing theories on the role of the church and how/which affects political behavior the most. One theory claims that the church serves as a civic association, and the second claims that participation within the church matters more (Correa & Leal, 2001). One set of scholars argues that churches provide opportunities in a non-political setting to learn, maintain, and refine civic skills, making them more likely to become politically competent (Verba et al., 1995). Verba et. al claims that, unlike European and African Americans, Latinos have fewer opportunities for acquiring civic skills that enhance political participation. This may be the case because the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church does not foster the development of civic skills (Smith & Walker, 2012).

The second theory claims that participation within the church is the most important factor that influences Latino religious voting behavior. Smith and Walker (2012) argue that the effect of religious commitment on voting behavior is an important relationship. They use church attendance as their measure of religiosity, as most scholars do. While this is a solid and common measure of religiosity, Mockabee and his colleagues introduced a new approach. They claim that it is not accurate to measure all denominations on just church attendance, as it is possible that there are other traditions that might be equally or more important to

measuring religiosity (Mockabee et al., 2001). Because of this, these scholars create a unique survey question that asks respondents how important various activities are for the people of their religion. While there is a diverse discussion on how to measure religiosity and participation within the church, the majority of scholars have collected data that demonstrates that Evangelical Latinos have a higher rate of participation in their church compared to Catholic Latinos (Smith & Walker, 2012; Kelly & Kelly, 2005; Mockabee et al., 2001). My study will include more than church attendance as a measurement of religiosity. I will also be measuring daily prayer, and examining each group's literal view of the Bible. I will also be exploring three different political issues that I will explain in detail throughout my research design. These three political issues will be used to examine how Evangelical Latinos demonstrate more conservative views than Catholic Latinos.

The role of the church, specifically the theory of participation within the church, is the approach I will be following to answer: Why are Evangelical Latinos more conservative on the political spectrum than Catholic Latinos? This is the best option for my project because there are few denominational differences between Catholics and Evangelicals. For the most part, they both follow the same religious beliefs and holy texts. The major difference that exists between Catholics and Evangelicals is the church. For Latinos, the Catholic Church is part of Latino culture because of its long historical connection to the church. Evangelicalism, for the most part, is a denomination that Latinos often choose to convert to. I want to study how these different ties to the Church affect Latino identity, and as a result, affect the placement of Latinos on the political spectrum.

Research Design

There are multiple variables involved in this study. Due to the multiple ethnic groups and cultures in the Latino community, there are various ways in which people identify. Latino is a term that can be defined as a person of Latin American origin or descent. The second term, Hispanic, is also used by many and it is defined as

a person relating to Spain or to Spanish-speaking countries, especially those of Latin America. Many ethnic groups do not have a preference and are okay with both pan-ethnic terms being used to define themselves (Lopez, 2013). For this report, I will be using the term Latino to refer to people of Latin American origin or descent. In addition, my use of the term Latino also serves as a gender-inclusive term.

As for the terms conservative and progressive, in this study, I define and use the term progressive as a person who occupies a central to left position on the left-right political spectrum. I define and use the term conservative as a person who occupies a right-wing position on the political spectrum and favors socially traditional ideals.

Since my research question includes studying two religious denominations, I would like to clarify how I perceive and use religious terms in this study. Christianity is split into three main branches: Catholic, Protestant, and Orthodox. In my research, I am researching people under the Catholic and Protestant branches. The reason I decided to only draw data from Catholics and Evangelicals, is because these two branches of Christianity are what Latinos mostly identify themselves with. As of 2022, 43% of Latinos are Catholic and 15% of Latinos are Evangelical Protestant (Krogstad et al., 2023).

I use the term Catholic to describe a person who is a member of the Catholic Church, a branch that is governed by the Pope and Catholic bishops around the world (History, 2021). The Protestant branch includes various denominations, and I will be researching Evangelical Protestants. In this study, I define and use the term Evangelical as a person within Protestant Christianity emphasizing the authority of the Bible, personal conversion, and the doctrine of salvation by faith in the Atonement (reparation for sin). Throughout this study, it will be common for me to use both the words "Protestant" and "Evangelical" synonymously. I would like to emphasize that the Catholic and Protestant branches have very few theological differences and this study will only touch on theology if it plays an important role in the opinion of a political matter. Otherwise, this project aims to strictly observe the practices

and behaviors of the Catholic and Evangelical churches as a civic association. In addition, it aims to strictly view the rates of religious participation within each faith.

For this study, I will be using data extracted from the Pew Research Center. This research was conducted in 2013 and I will be examining weekly service attendance, daily prayer, and take on the literal view of the Bible for both Catholic Latinos and Evangelical Latinos. These three components are what I will be using to measure religious participation. These findings are specifically extracted from the PRC's National Survey of Latinos and Religion. The survey was conducted among a sample of over 5,000 Latino adults that are residents of the United States (Pew Research Center, 2014). These surveys were conducted by telephone in English and Spanish. It is important to note and recognize the importance of having Spanish speaking researchers involved in this study, considering that a large portion of Latinos in the U.S, either foreign-born or U.S-born, speak Spanish. The fact that these telephone surveys were conducted in both languages is why I decided to use this data selection.

For this study I also extracted data from the Pew Research Center's 2014 Religious Landscape Study (RLS). Like the PRC's 2013 study, this research was also based on telephone surveys. The key difference with this Religious Landscape Study is that it was done at a larger scale, with more than 35,000 Americans participating in the study. I decided to use data from the Religious Landscape Study because of its attention to racial and ethnic groups. Previous political science studies that I came across only categorized religious groups by geography. This study had detailed demographic information available as well as various views regarding both political and social issues.

In addition, as previously mentioned, various denominations exist within the Protestant/Evangelical branch of Christianity. The Religious Study Landscape included various denominations. The majority of Evangelical Protestants that participated were Baptist (25.4%), and the other denominations included were Methodist, Nondenominational, and

Lutherans. The inclusion and distinction between these groups were an additional reason as to why I chose to utilize the Religious Landscape Study (Pew Research, 2023). Most studies conducted are not as inclusive and detailed orientated as the data sets that were provided here.

I will be pulling three political issues from the Religious Landscape Study. The first political issue pertains to Government Aid to the Poor. The second political issue concerns Abortion. And the third political issue I will examine is Same-Sex Marriage. I chose these three political issues because they are the most discussed and are considered to be the most controversial topics that exist within the Catholic Church and Evangelical churches. A secondary reason as to why these political issues captured my attention compared to others provided by the Religious Landscape Study, is that 2 out of 3 issues pertain to moral and ethical values. The political issues regarding abortion and same-sex marriage are issues regarding healthcare, moral, and ethical standards but nonetheless, have become increasingly political. They have become political because political parties tend to strongly identify with one position of the issue over other positions.

I will first examine the opinions of Evangelicals across multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds. Then, I will examine the opinions of Catholics. The racial and ethnic group categories consist of White, Black, Asian, Other/Mixed, and Latino participants. The purpose of using a study that includes multiple racial and ethnic backgrounds is to compare where Latinos within the Evangelical and Catholic community stand on the political spectrum. I found it important to examine results from a diverse racial and ethnic composition among Evangelicals and Catholics to determine which political issues are of greater importance to Latinos who are either Evangelical or Catholic.

The second way I will examine the data regarding the three political issues of government aid, abortion, and same-sex marriage, is by comparing only the views of Catholic Latinos and Evangelical Latinos. This allows me to draw a side by side comparison of the two specific groups who share the same ethnicity but different

religious backgrounds. The goal with drawing data from these two specific groups is to examine if there is a correlation between where each group falls on the political spectrum, and their rates of religious participation within the church.

Lastly, I intend to compare what issues were of greater importance to both Catholic Latinos and Evangelicals. Not only will I examine which political issue drew more attention to each religious community, but I will also determine which political issue did each group have a more conservative view of. If there is a political issue in which both of the religious groups seem to have similar and aligned views, I intend to recognize the pattern.

In conclusion, I decided to view weekly service attendance, daily prayer, and the literal view of the Bible to measure religious participation. These 3 components will then be used to draw an existing pattern between religious participation and the political views of the three political issues previously mentioned. This study aims to find if any correlation exists within the higher rates of religious participation in the Evangelical Latino churches and their more conservative views, compared to their Catholic Latino partners.

Results

As mentioned previously, my central argument claims that higher rates of religious participation influence more conservative political behavior. This thesis defines religious participation through weekly service attendance, prayer frequency, and the take on the literal view of the Bible. As established, Catholic Latinos have demonstrated lower levels of religious participation compared to Evangelical Latinos. This section will provide the results of three political issues: (1) Government Aid to the Poor, (2) Abortion, and (3) Same Sex Marriage.

First, I will discuss how the Latino community views these three political issues in the general electorate, and then I will discuss how Catholics and Evangelicals view these issues in the Latino electorate.

Latinos in the General Electorate: Government Aid

The first political issue to examine is the views about government aid to the poor among Evangelicals by race/ethnicity in the United States. The racial and ethnic composition of this survey consist of White, Black, Asian, Latino, and Other/Mixed voters. In this survey, when asked about government aid among the poor, these were the rates that agreed it does more harm than good: 61% of White voters agreed, 43% of Latinos agreed, 42% of Other/Mixed agreed, 41% of Asian voters agreed, and 31% of Black voters agreed. What we see in this column of data is that Evangelical Latinos are more progressive than White Evangelical voters, but more conservative than mixed, Asian, and Black Evangelical voters. As for the voters who selected “Don’t know” as their response, Asian Evangelicals demonstrated less of an opinion (5%), while White Evangelicals and Latino Evangelicals both demonstrated to have a more concrete answer to the question, with only 2% of them selecting “Don’t know” (“Religious...”).

As for Catholic voters across racial and ethnic groups, when asked about government aid among the poor, 56% of Asian voters, 51% of white voters, 39% of Latino voters, 32% of mixed voters, and 28% of black voters agreed that it does more harm than good. This data demonstrates that Catholics who are Latino are more progressive than Asian and white voters when it comes to government aid. As for the voters who selected “don’t know” when responding to this question, Asian Catholics demonstrated less of an opinion with 5% of them selecting this option and white and Latino Catholics had more of a concrete opinion, with only 2% of them selecting “don’t know” (“Religious...”).

Latinos in the General Electorate: Abortion

The second political issue examined is racial and ethnic composition among Evangelical Protestants by views about abortion. This survey also consists of White, Black, Asian, Latino, and Other/Mixed voters. When asked about abortion, 45% of Black and mixed voters, 42% of Asian voters, 32% of Latino voters, and 31% of white Evangelical voters selected “legal in all/most cases”. 65% of white voters, 64%

of Latino voters, 56% of Asian voters, 51% of black voters, and 50% of mixed voters selected “illegal in all/most cases” when asked about abortion (“Religious...”). This demonstrates that when compared to the overall general electorate, Evangelical Latinos are more conservative than mixed, Asian, and black Evangelical voters, but more progressive than white Evangelicals.

As for Catholic voters across racial and ethnic groups, when asked about abortion, 60% of Black voters, 55% of mixed voters, 54% of Asian voters, 50% of white voters, and 43% of Latino voters, believe that abortion should be “legal in all/most cases”. 52% of Latinos, 46% of white voters, 45% of Asian voters, 36% of mixed voters, and 35% of Black voters believe that abortion should be “legal in all/most cases” (“Religious...”). The data demonstrates that when looking at the racial and ethnic composition of all Catholics, Latinos tend to be more conservative when it comes to the issue of abortion. This is important to note as we can compare it to the results of the data extracted from racial and ethnic composition among Evangelicals, where white Evangelicals were the most conservative when abortion is the political issue at hand.

Latinos in the General Electorate: Same-Sex Marriage

The third political issue to examine is the racial and ethnic composition among evangelical protestant by views about same sex marriage. Here, 42% of Asian voters, 34% of mixed voters, 32% of black voters, 29% of Latino voters, and 27% of white voters strongly favor/favor same sex marriage. 66% of white voters, 60% of Latino voters, 59% of black voters, 56% of mixed voters, and 50% of Asian voters oppose/strongly oppose same sex marriage (“Religious...”). This data demonstrates that when looking at the racial and ethnic composition of all Evangelicals, Latinos tend to be more conservative than Asian, mixed, and Black Evangelicals.

As for Catholics across racial ethnic groups when asked about same-sex marriage, 59% of Latinos, 56% of white and mixed participants, 52% of Asians participants, and 48% of Black participant, strongly favored/favor same-sex

marriage. 41% of Asian participants, 39% of black participants, 35% of white participants,, 33% of mixed participants,, and 32% of Latino participants oppose/strongly oppose same-sex marriage (“Religious...”).This data demonstrates that when looking at the racial and ethnic composition of all Catholics, Latinos tend to be more progressive when it comes to same-sex marriage than other races and ethnicities.

Catholic Latinos v. Evangelical Latinos: Government Aid, Abortion, and Same-Sex Marriage

This next section of this thesis will be Comparing data strictly extracted from Catholic Latinos and Evangelical Latinos. I will once again examine the same three political issues: (1) Government Aid to the Poor, (2) Abortion, and (3) Same Sex Marriage. When asked about government aid, 39% of Catholic Latinos, compared to a 43% of Evangelical Latinos, believe that government aid does more harm than good. 55% of Catholic Latinos and 50% of Evangelical Latinos believe that government aid does more good than harm. And 2% of both Catholic Latinos and Evangelical Latinos selected “don’t know” when asked about government aid to the poor (“Religious...”).

When asked about the second political issue, abortion, 43% of Catholic Latinos voted that abortion should be legal in all/most cases. This can be compared to the 32% of Evangelical Latinos who believe that abortion should be legal in all/most cases. 52% of Catholic Latinos reported that abortion should be illegal in all/most cases, while 64% of Evangelical Latinos voted that abortion should be illegal in all/most cases. 5% of Catholic Latinos selected “don’t know” as their answer but only 4% of Evangelical Latinos selected “don’t know” when asked (“Religious...”).

When asked about same-sex marriage, 59% of Catholic Latinos strongly favor/favor the issue at hand. While 29% of Evangelical Latinos reported that they strongly favor/favor same-sex marriage. 32% of Catholic Latinos oppose/strongly oppose same sex marriage, while 60% of evangelical Latinos strongly oppose same sex

marriage. And 9% of Catholic Latinos selected “don’t know” as their answer while 10% of evangelical Latinos selected “don’t know” as their answer to this issue (“Religious...”).

When comparing the data extracted from Catholic Latinos and Evangelical Latinos, we can see that Catholic Latinos are more progressive the Evangelical Latinos on all three political issues. The data shows that when it comes to government aid, Catholic and Evangelical Latinos have a more aligned political opinion about this issue than the other two. When we view the second political issue, abortion, we see that Catholic Latinos have a more conservative view about abortion than government aid and same sex marriage. Where Catholic and Evangelical Latinos differ the most and political opinion is on the issue regarding same-sex marriage. The data demonstrates that Evangelical Latinos have a more conservative view about this issue than they do about abortion and government aid to the poor.

Now that the data regarding the three political issues at hand, we can dive into a deeper analysis as to why Evangelical Latinos demonstrate more conservative political views than Catholic Latinos.

The Core values of the Church and their Hierarchical Structures

This thesis will first analyze the split of Christianity throughout history. The first major split, which is often referred to as the “Great Schism” in 1054 CE. Patriarch of Constantinople Michael Cerularious was excommunicated, and it led to a split in Christianity which created the two largest denominations: the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox faiths (“Great Schism”). The Great Schism demonstrates that divisions between christians have existed since early christianity. Not only do christians from different denominations show a difference of political opinions now, but they have since The Great Schism. Political disagreements regarding the power of Rome was the issue at hand in 1054. Rome supported the belief that the pope, the leader of the western church (Roman Catholic), should also have authority over the eastern church (Orthodox church). Constantinople

disagreed as he believed that each church should recognize their own leaders (“Great Schism”). As for religious differences, they disagreed over minor issues. The Catholic church believed that it was acceptable to use unleavened bread for the sacrament of communion, while the Orthodox church did not. They also disputed regarding the wording and translation of the Nicene Creed and celibacy of clerics (“Great Schism”). Despite these religious and political differences, it is important to emphasize that these two branches of Christianity may carry out slightly different traditions in their churches, but still remain to have a similar faith and belief in Christ. The core theological beliefs between the two branches remain the same.

A second split in Christianity that is crucial to the Christian faith today, and for this thesis, is the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant Reformation was a religious movement that swept through Europe in the 1500s. Martin Luther, a German scholar, published Disputation on the Power of Indulgences, also known as 95 Theses (“The Protestant...”). This publication challenged the Catholic Church and contradicted its teachings. One of the main issues that Luther combated was the Indulgence system, created by the Catholic Church under Pope Urban II. This system allowed Catholics to either purchase a certificate of pardon for their sins, or to enact enough good deeds to earn their forgiveness (“The Protestant...”). The sale of indulgence was eventually abolished, but the common belief that good deeds are important for forgiveness and salvation, is still present in the Catholic Church. Today, Catholics and Protestants still have disagreements regarding salvation in Christianity. Protestants are strong believers in salvation through faith alone, with no specific good deeds needed. They also believe that believers in Christ should be less dependent on the Catholic Church and its clergy for spiritual guidance. Protestants believe in having a personal relationship with God. Evangelicals specifically believe that this personal relationship can be created through closely living and abiding by the Bible.

As seen in the results from PEW Research Center’s 2013 National Survey, Evangelicals have

demonstrated higher rates of taking a literal view of the Bible compared to Catholics. This survey was conducted among a representative sample of 5,103 Latino Adults in the U.S. The results demonstrated that 45% of Catholic Latinos take a literal view of the Bible, compared to 63% of Evangelical Latinos who have a literal view of the Bible. Research fails to understand why Evangelicals have a greater literal view of the Bible than Catholics. For that reason, it is crucial to understand the brief history of the Great Schism and especially the Protestant Reformation. The Protestant Reformation emphasized what many Evangelicals today repeatedly preach - “saved through faith alone”. As mentioned earlier, their perspective of salvation requires a strong and personal relationship with God. This serves as an explanation for a more literal view in not only the Bible, but also in more frequent prayer, and attendance of weekly church services.

The Protestant Reformation influenced other objections of the Catholic faith, resulting in numerous denominations that exist within Protestantism. To name a few, such denominations include Baptist, Pentecostal, and Lutheran. One common and core value that exists within these Protestants individuals is Evangelism. Evangelism refers to the spread of the Christian gospel by public preaching or personal witness. Evangelism serves as an explanation as to why Latinos who are Evangelical are more conservative than Latinos who are Catholic. Evangelism is conducted in various ways. It can be conducted through natural conversations with friends and family, by inviting someone to church, or through ministries, where individuals work together to strengthen their spirituality. Evangelism can also be conducted through public action, oftentimes that results in political participation. Today, a lot of the political issues that are deemed most controversial refer to social and moral issues. Such issues include those of abortion and homosexuality. This has led Evangelicals to be more concerned with politics because they connect their religious beliefs in these matters to taking public action on them (Smith & Walker, 2012). They view political participation as a way to protect their beliefs and values. Since this perspective of the

importance of political participation becomes a custom of the group, voting also becomes a part of Evangelical culture. This habit of political participation is the result of the cohesiveness and frequent public action taken by Evangelicals (Smith & Walker, 2012). Because Evangelicals emphasize Evangelism more than Catholics, they have the opportunity to build civic skills that translate from the church into politics.

Not only does Evangelism strengthen the civic skills of Evangelicals, but the hierarchy that exists within the Evangelical churches and the Catholic church also play a role in why Evangelicals are more politically involved and conservative than Catholics. As previously mentioned, the Catholic Church is directed by the pope. Under the pope exist other clergy members such as bishops and priests. These clergy members are traditionally required to go through a formal process to obtain their positions in the church. They must attend meetings, interviews, and study theology at a seminary. The Protestant Branch requires less formal requirements. Instead, individuals become church leaders or pastors through community engagement. They must interact with people during weekly services, create relationships with ministries, and effectively evangelize to not only their own church community, but also to those outside of it. These civic skills of public speaking, community involvement and influence, all translate from their church into their political behaviors.

In conclusion, the historical reasons for the Great Schism and the Protestant Revolution still reflect the differences that exist within the Catholic and Protestant branches of Christianity. The emphasis of Evangelism in Protestant churches has encouraged Evangelicals to be more politically involved than their Catholic partners. In addition, the informal process of becoming a church leader in a Protestant church requires individuals to practice their civic skills, compared to Catholic leaders who are required to go through a formal process. The civic skills that Protestant leaders practice reflect the group behaviors of Evangelicals, who are ultimately more involved in their churches and politics. Now that there is a greater understanding between

the differences that exist within the Catholic church and Evangelical churches, and how those differences affect church participation, the importance of ethnic salience can be discussed.

Ethnic Identity Salience

Ethnic salience is crucial to Latino Politics, and especially to this thesis which is observing how Latinos within a religious group behave. The individual beliefs and hierarchy of the Catholic and Evangelical churches provide insight to church and political participation, and ethnic salience provides a deepened understanding of why Evangelicals hold more conservative views compared to members of the Catholic Church. In this section, I will provide the results of three political issues: (1) Government Aid to the Poor, (2) Abortion, and (3) Same Sex Marriage.

As previously stated, my hypothesis stated that higher rates of church participation would result in more conservative views of the political issues listed. While the last section focused on the differences between the Catholic and Evangelical participation rates, let's examine the importance of Ethnicity in Latino Politics. Once ethnicity is established as a salient issue, we can move forward to examine the three political issues I had previously mentioned.

Shared ethnicity is important to Latino Politics because it has influenced Latino political incorporation for five reasons. The first reason is that Latinos share a Latin American heritage and culture, including the prevalence of the Spanish language. The second reason holds that Latinos draw on a similar immigrant experience. The third reason is that continued discrimination against Latinos highlights their commonality and the fourth reason is that ethnic candidates focus on co-ethnics as their base, reinforcing the bond. The last reason is that a co-ethnic candidate's Spanish surname on a ballot will cue known traits (Baretto, 2010).

Ethnicity is an important factor that is relevant to Latino political participation, but in general, group identification of any sort is important to our political and social culture. Ethnicity has become a highlight in social groups in the United States, with the media platforms, institutions,

and even public companies highlighting the ethnic demographics that exist within their communities. Ethnic diversity is a key topic which dominates the current conversations in both the political and social sphere. The theory of self-identification states that “unless one can locate themselves, one cannot tell themselves, or others who and what they are: they will remain a nobody - which is intolerable. To live, they must “belong”; to “belong,” he must be able to locate himself in the larger social whole” (Herberg, 1955). In general, and not just in Latino Politics, is identification important.

For Latinos specifically, their ethnic identification is highly important to their lives and political participation. To revert back to the five reasons of why ethnicity is important to Latino political participation, for the sake of the thesis topic at hand, let’s expand on reason one and reason two. Again, the first reason explained that Latinos share a Latin American heritage and culture, including the prevalence of the Spanish language. Currently, 43% of Latinos identify as Catholic, while 15% of Latinos identify as Evangelical (Krogstad et al., 2022). With the larger portion of Latinos being Catholic, the religion of Catholicism has merged its way into the shared Latin American heritage and culture. Much of the Latino culture is based on Catholicism. Latino art, music, film, and traditions are heavily influenced by Catholicism. Everyday Spanish includes common phrases such as “Si Dios quiere”, which translates to “God willing”, rosaries become a staple in many households, and even Latin celebrations such as quinceaneras are partially celebrated in the Catholic church.

The second reason holds that Latinos draw on a similar immigrant experience. Immigration within the Latino community is a more complex topic to cover. Since there are multiple sub-ethnic groups in the Latino community, that means that there is no shared single point of entry to the United States. While the experiences may be similar, it is important that multiple cultural backgrounds exist within the Latino community. With that being said, immigration is still a topic that interests all Latinos. As previously mentioned in the literature review, the Catholic Church

has always been heavily involved in political issues regarding immigration. More so than the Evangelical churches because the Catholic Church has a higher ethnic composition of Latinos in their church, compared to Evangelical churches. The higher ethnic composition of Latinos in the Catholic church helps explain why they are more involved in immigration issues, and why they have more of a progressive view towards Government aid to the Poor than Evangelical Latinos.

Latinos drawing on a similar immigrant experience and sharing a Latin American heritage and culture, including the prevalence of the Spanish language, serve as examples of ethnic salience that exist not only in the Latino community, but also in the Catholic Community. With many Latinos being Catholic, it is easy to see how ethnicity can become more salient to Latinos than their religion. To many Latinos, there is not a separation between their ethnicity and their catholicism.

Evangelical Latinos have a different experience, as only 15% of Latinos are Evangelical. Their religious identification is not as widely represented or integrated in the Latino identity. The Latino identity is also not as significant in the Evangelical church as it is in the Catholic church. Only 11% of the Evangelical church is Latino, compared to the 34% of Catholic Church which is Latino (Pew Research Center 2014).

Overall, Latinos continue to be Catholic. But the Catholic share of the Latino population is declining as many Latinos are becoming unaffiliated or converting to become Protestant. This interesting shift is important to note as we discuss ethnic salience in the Latino Catholic and Evangelical communities because it provides deeper insight to the experience of Evangelical Latinos. Most of the Latinos who are Evangelical, have converted into the religion. This means that these individuals have made the conscious decision to make that conversion. This serves as an explanation for Evangelical Latinos increased conservatism. Evangelicalism is already a faith that has very high levels of religious commitment, as we’ve discussed earlier. I argue that the pre-existing religious commitment

within the Evangelical church, plus the conscious decision to convert, leads these Latinos to claim their religious identity as more salient than their ethnic identity.

With Catholic Latinos experiencing the blend of their ethnicity and religion, the two components have merged into their lives as one. As for Evangelical Latinos, their ethnicity and religious beliefs are two separate components of their lives, with their religious beliefs being more salient to their identity because of the conscious decision to convert into a religion that has demonstrated higher rates of religiosity.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the examination of religious groups that exist within Latino Politics is important to the field of study because religion plays a large role in the lives of Latino individuals. As mentioned in the literature review, there is a vast amount of knowledge regarding Latino political participation, Latino voting behaviors, and the role of the Church in the Latino community.

The Pew Research Center aided this project with the use of its 2013 research that documented the factors which were used to define religious participation. In this study, religious participation was defined by weekly service attendance, daily prayer, and the literal view of the Bible. In addition, the research design of this thesis included inclusive information regarding multiple racial and ethnic groups that exist within the Catholic and Evangelical communities, which was extracted from the Pew Research Center's 2014 Religious Landscape Study. Not only did it provide that, but it also provided this project with the three political issues that were used to examine how progressive or conservative each religious group presented themselves. The three political issues examined were government aid to the poor, abortion, and same-sex marriage.

The analysis of these results provided were supported through an explanation of values and hierarchy that exist within the Catholic and Evangelical churches. In addition, the discussion of ethnic identity salience within the Latino community was also used to explain

why Evangelical Latinos report to be more conservative than Catholic Latinos.

The findings of this thesis conclude that higher rates of religious participation do result in more conservative political views. In this study, it was found that Evangelical Latinos had higher rates of religious participation. They attended more weekly services, prayed more frequently, and had a more literal view of the Bible than Catholic Latinos. In result, Evangelical Latinos demonstrated a more conservative view than Catholic Latinos with political issues concerning government aid to the poor, abortion, and same-sex marriage. Out of the three political issues mentioned, it was found that Catholic Latinos had a more conservative view concerning abortion than they did to the issues regarding government aid and same-sex marriage. As for Evangelical Latinos, they had a more conservative view regarding same-sex marriage than they did to the issues regarding to abortion and government aid.

Like all research studies, this thesis contains a few limitations. The first is that although the Pew Research Center's religious Landscape draws from thousands of Americans, only a few hundred Latinos participated in the surveys regarding the three political issues that were examined. 718 participants made up the Latino sample size of Evangelical Protestants that participated, and 1,783 participants made up the Latino sample size of the Catholics that participated.

The second limitation to this study was the lack of analysis that could explain why Catholic Latinos have a more conservative view of abortion than same-sex marriage and government aid to the poor. It also fails to answer why Evangelical Latinos have a more conservative view regarding same-sex marriage than they did to the issues regarding to abortion and government aid.

This study also measured only religious participation, not religious commitment. Religious commitment is more difficult to measure because each religious group has certain beliefs, traditions, and practices that they may find more important to their faith than others do. For example, a Catholic may find weekly attendance to mass as more important to their spiritual faith than they do to daily scripture reading. The opposite

belief can exist within Evangelicals, where they find scripture to be more important than attending weekly services. Religious commitment is important to study because it can provide us with a greater understanding of one's religious identity. By having a deeper understanding of religious identity, we can compare it to ethnic identity, and weight which one may hold greater importance in certain groups.

A more minor weakness to this thesis is that the data provided by the Religious Landscape Study is from 2014. It is not too outdated but I believe that an updated collection of surveys would be beneficial to this field of study. Since 2014, there has been a rise of Christian nationalist, a decline in Catholic Church members, and tense political and social circumstances that have affected society's relationship with religion.

With that being said, there is much room for future research. As previously mentioned in the literature review, much of the research surrounding religious Latinos categorizes Latinos only as Catholic or non-catholic. The Latino community is too complex and diverse for such limited categorizations. While the largest religious group within Latinos are Catholics, there is an increasing number of Latinos who are becoming Protestant or unaffiliated. This religious shift within the Latino community is a great topic of interest that can be further researched in order to predict how this may affect the future of the Latino electorate. The increasing number of unaffiliated Latinos is specifically interesting because religion is a crucial factor that contributes to Latino culture and identity.

Future research and the creation of interviews and surveys that analyze if ethnic identity or religious identity is more salient to the Latino electorate would also provide political scientists with more information regarding Latino political participation and voting behaviors. I would find it most interesting to focus this type of research on first-generation Latino Americans. First-generation Latino Americans are special because their ethnic identity may be more complex due to the immersion of two cultures and experiences. This unique ethnic identity may result in certain political and voting behaviors.

Future research concerning religious groups may also benefit from research concerning the theory that is known as the "economy of time". The "economy of time" refers to individuals that "may experience a motivational trade-off between participating in church and participating in secular matters at the highest level of attendance" (Smith & Walker, 2013). Understanding these individuals who may view political participation as a secular matter that they are not interested in would be a good topic to research. Out of all the religions practiced in the United States, I wonder which religious groups show a higher number of its members that would fall under the "economy of time" theory. With multiple religions viewing politics as a medium to express and sometimes protect their religious beliefs, scholars would benefit from finding which religious groups have less of a relationship with political participation.

In conclusion, Latino Politics is still a fairly new subfield within political science. While there is a solid understanding of Latino political participation, voting behaviors, and the role of the church in Latino communities, there is still a lot of work to be done. The Latino electorate is the largest ethnic population in the United States, yet still has low rates of political participation. Researching what drives the Latino community to become active members of the political system is crucial as the Latino population continues to increase in numbers and influence. Understanding what shapes and motivates Latinos is important and positively contributes to the study of American Politics.

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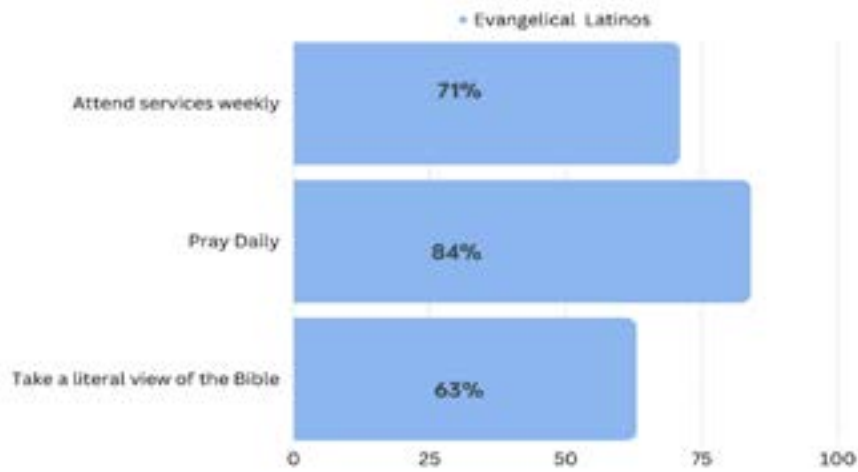
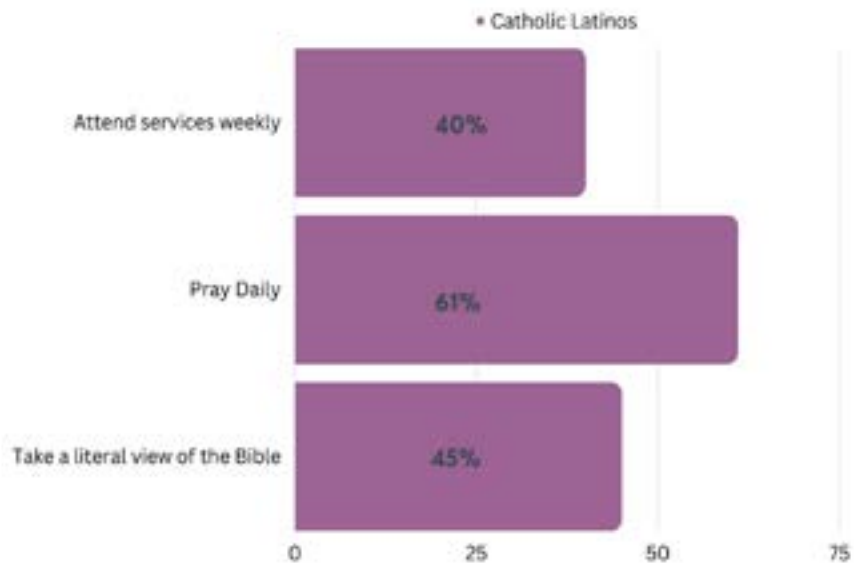
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Appendix



ISSUE #1 - GOVERNMENT AID

Views about government aid to the poor among **Evangelicals** by race/ethnicity

Racial and ethnic composition	Does more harm than good	Does more good than harm	Neither/both equally	Don't know	Sample size
White	61%	33%	4%	2%	6,633
Black	31%	63%	3%	3%	495
Asian	41%	53%	< 1%	5%	115
Latino	43%	50%	5%	2%	718
Other/Mixed	42%	48%	7%	4%	518

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ISSUE #1 - GOVERNMENT AID

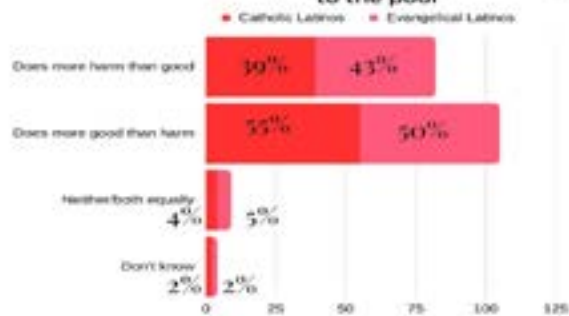
Views about government aid to the poor among **Catholics** by race/ethnicity

Racial and ethnic composition	Does more harm than good	Does more good than harm	Neither/both equally	Don't know	Sample size
White	51%	44%	5%	2%	4,827
Black	28%	66%	4%	2%	192
Asian	56%	40%	4%	< 1%	147
Latino	39%	55%	4%	2%	1,783
Other/Mixed	32%	60%	5%	3%	164

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ISSUE #1 - GOVERNMENT AID

Catholic Latino v Evangelical Latino views about government aid to the poor



ISSUE #2 - ABORTION

Racial and ethnic composition among Evangelical Protestants by views about abortion

Racial and ethnic composition	Legal in all/most cases	Illegal in all/most cases	Don't know	Sample size
White	51%	65%	3%	6,633
Black	45%	51%	4%	495
Asian	42%	56%	2%	115
Latino	32%	64%	4%	718
Other/Mixed	45%	50%	5%	518

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ISSUE #2 - ABORTION

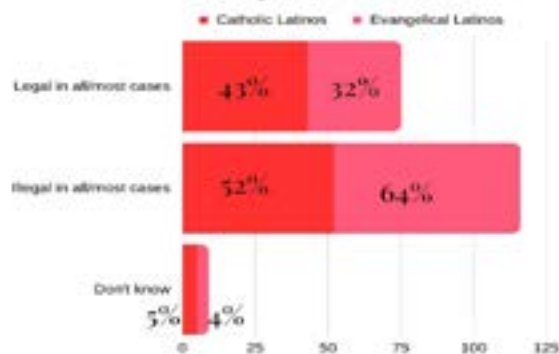
Racial and ethnic composition among Catholics by views about abortion

Racial and ethnic composition	Legal in all/most cases	Illegal in all/most cases	Don't know	Sample size
White	50%	46%	4%	4,827
Black	60%	35%	5%	192
Asian	54%	45%	1%	147
Latino	43%	52%	5%	1,783
Other/Mixed	55%	36%	9%	164

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ISSUE #2 - ABORTION

Catholic Latinos v Evangelical Latino views on Abortion



ISSUE #3 - SAME SEX MARRIAGE

Racial and ethnic composition among **Evangelical Protestants** by views about same-sex marriage

Racial and ethnic composition	Strongly favor/favor	Oppose/strongly oppose	Don't know	Sample size
White	27%	66%	7%	6,633
Black	32%	59%	9%	495
Asian	44%	50%	6%	85
Latino	29%	60%	10%	718
Other/Mixed	34%	56%	10%	518

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ISSUE #3 - SAME SEX MARRIAGE

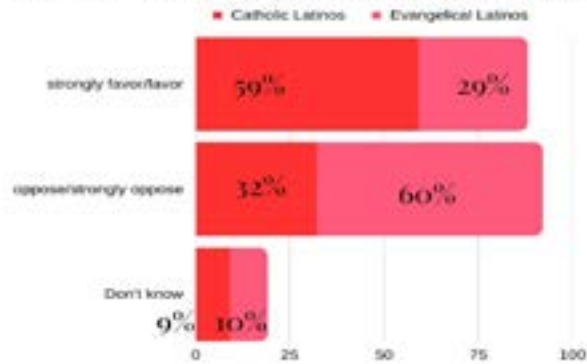
Racial and ethnic composition among **Catholics** by views about same-sex marriage

Racial and ethnic composition	Strongly favor/favor	Oppose/strongly oppose	Don't know	Sample size
White	56%	33%	9%	4,827
Black	48%	39%	13%	192
Asian	52%	41%	7%	147
Latino	39%	32%	9%	1,785
Other/Mixed	56%	33%	11%	164

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ISSUE #3 - SAME SEX MARRIAGE

Catholic Latino v Evangelical Latino views on Same Sex Marriage



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ANALYSIS

