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Religion and Attitudes Toward Same-Sex Marriage Among U.S. Latinos

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Objectives. This study examines links between multiple aspects of religious involvement and attitudes toward same-sex marriage among U.S. Latinos. The primary focus is on variations by affiliation and participation, but the possible mediating roles of biblical beliefs, clergy cues, and the role of religion in shaping political views are also considered. *Methods.* We use binary logistic regression models to analyze data from a large nationwide sample of U.S. Latinos conducted by the Pew Hispanic Forum in late 2006. *Results.* Findings highlight the strong opposition to same-sex marriage among Latino evangelical (or conservative) Protestants and members of sectarian groups (e.g., LDS), even compared with devout Catholics. Although each of the hypothesized mediators is significantly linked with attitudes toward same-sex marriage, for the most part controlling for them does not alter the massive affiliation/attendance differences in attitudes toward same-sex marriage. *Conclusions.* This study illustrates the importance of religious cleavages in public opinion on social issues within the diverse U.S. Latino population. The significance of religious variations in Hispanic civic life is likely to increase with the growth of the Latino population and the rising numbers of Protestants and sectarians among Latinos.

The campaign for equal rights for lesbian-gay-bisexual-transgendered (LGBT) persons has become one of the most powerful social movements in the contemporary United States. In contrast to earlier LGBT mobilization, which centered on nondiscrimination and civil liberties, the current focus of this movement is the struggle for legalization of same-sex marriage (SSM) (Rimmerman, Wald, and Wilcox, 2000). To date, however, success on this front has been uneven. Several states, mostly in the northeastern United States (along with Iowa), have passed legislation approving SSM, while

others have instituted provisions for “civil unions” that grant certain legal rights to same-sex partners. On the other hand, more than 40 states have explicitly prohibited SSM, in most cases amending state constitutions to define marriage as exclusively the union of a man and a woman, and denying recognition to SSM conducted in other states where the practice is legal. At this writing, the struggle continues, with activists mobilizing to overturn constitutional bans on SSM at the ballot box, while others ponder litigation at the federal level aimed at achieving recognition of SSM as a civil right (Rimmerman and Wilcox, 2007).

As these efforts move forward and conflicts intensify, it is useful for researchers, activists, and policymakers to learn more about the structure of public opinion concerning SSM. Studies to date have revealed robust differences in support by age/cohort, education, ideology, and religion (Anderson and Fetner, 2008; Brewer, 2003; Olson, Cadge, and Harrison, 2006). Younger, well-educated, liberal, and secular persons are comparatively supportive of SSM and LGBT rights, including the right to marry. Opposition to SSM is particularly fierce among highly religious persons, especially among the members of conservative Protestant and sectarian faith communities.

However, few researchers have explored the attitudes of Latino/a Americans on this issue. Such an oversight is noteworthy for several reasons. First, Hispanic Americans have overtaken African Americans as the largest U.S. minority group. Latinos currently make up at least 14 percent of the U.S. population, and their numbers continue to increase (Guzman and McConnell, 2002). Second, despite their Democratic electoral leanings, Latinos tend to be culturally conservative (Abrajano, Alvarez, and Nagler, 2008; Bolks et al., 2000), and therefore might be presumed to oppose SSM. Exit polls conducted in California following the passage of an anti-SSM constitutional amendment (known as Proposition 8) showed that Hispanic voters closely mirrored the overall state electorate in levels and patterns of support for this proposition (Haro, 2008). Further, the U.S. Hispanic population is highly diverse, in terms of nativity status, national origin, geographical distribution, and many other factors (Guzman and McConnell, 2002). Third, despite the strong Catholic bent of Latinos in general, U.S. Hispanics also comprise a significant proportion of Protestants, many of whom are evangelical or charismatic in orientation (Espinosa, Elizondo, and Miranda, 2005). Unfortunately, few studies have examined religious variations in social attitudes or public policy preferences among Hispanic Americans (for an exception, see Ellison, Echevarría, and Smith, 2005), and we are aware of no large-scale systematic study of Latino religion and support or opposition toward SSM in particular.

Our study addresses this important gap in the research literature. We begin by reviewing literature on contemporary Latino religion in the United States, and developing several hypotheses about the ways denominational affiliation and religious participation may bear on attitudes toward SSM.

We then discuss several more specific religious factors that may mediate these patterns, including: (1) scriptural beliefs; (2) clergy cues; and (3) the role of religious faith in shaping political views. These issues are then examined empirically using data on a large ($N = 4,016$) nation wide sample of U.S. Latinos collected by the Pew Hispanic Forum in 2006. After presenting the results, we discuss the implications of key findings for the ongoing debates over SSM and LGBT equality, and for our understanding of Latino religion and politics more broadly. Study limitations are noted, and several promising directions for additional inquiry are identified.

Theoretical and Empirical Background

Denominational Differences in SSM Attitudes

Although precise estimates remain elusive, one prominent survey found that approximately 70 percent of U.S. Hispanics identify with Catholicism, while 23 percent identify themselves as Protestant, with the vast majority of Latino Protestants endorsing conservative (i.e., fundamentalist, evangelical, and charismatic) variants (Espinosa, Elizondo, and Miranda, 2005). By contrast, only a small percentage of Latinos eschew identification with organized religion altogether. Thus, most Latinos have at least nominal ties with faith communities that have embraced highly traditional views on issues regarding marriage, sexual ethics, and other facets of family life. Such patterns might suggest that U.S. Latinos will tend to oppose progressive policy preferences in these areas, such as SSM.

Catholicism is often assumed to serve as a bastion of cultural conservatism among Latinos in the United States and elsewhere. Indeed, there is some evidence that observant Latino Catholics, that is, those who attend Mass regularly, tend to oppose abortion and hew closely to other Catholic teachings, especially regarding the family and the sanctity of human life. The Vatican has made its position on SSM quite clear in a recent decree, "Considerations Regarding Proposals to Give Legal Recognition to Unions Between Homosexual Persons." Three points from the document are especially noteworthy.

(1) Homosexuality is a troubling moral and social phenomenon . . . (2) The Church's teaching on marriage and on the complementarity of the sexes reiterates a truth that is evident to right reason and recognized as such by all of the major cultures in the world. (3) No ideology can erase from the human spirit the certainty that marriage exists solely between a man and a woman, who by mutual personal gift, proper and exclusive to themselves, tend toward the communion of their persons. In this way, they mutually perfect each other, in order to cooperate with God in the procreation and upbringing of new human lives. (Vatican, 2003)

However, although official church teachings regarding homosexuality and same-sex marriage are highly conservative, several caveats are in order. First,

despite the unequivocal nature of this Vatican statement, Boswell (1980, 1994) has contended that during earlier historical periods, the church did perform ceremonies recognizing SSMs. Second, in the post Vatican II era, lay non-Hispanic white Catholics have been increasingly inclined to disregard some elements of church teaching, valorizing individual conscience as the arbiter of spiritual truth and social policy. This has led to significant liberalization on some social attitudes during the past two decades (Hoffmann and Mills, 2005), and overall Catholics tend to express greater openness to SSM than most other religious groups (Olson, Cadge, and Harrison, 2006). Progressive Catholics have tended to stress the gracious, communitarian thrust of Catholic social teaching over the focus on individual moral and sexual deportment that has been reemphasized by the Vatican in recent years (D'Antonio, 2007; Dillon, 1999).

There are also signs that for some Latinos, Catholic identity is closely linked with ethnic identity. For such persons, being Catholic is simply part of what it means to be Latino, Puerto Rican, Mexican American, or part of another Spanish-speaking, predominantly Catholic racial/ethnic group (Dolan and Deck, 1994; Maldonado, 2002; Roof and Manning, 1994). Yet many of these self-identified Catholics are not regular attendees at Mass, and may be unaware of—or uninterested in—official policies of the Catholic Church. Indeed, for many Latinos, Catholicism may be expressed through a vibrant popular devotional practice that includes combinations of folk beliefs, and spiritual cognitions and practices (e.g., veneration of saints and the Virgin of Guadalupe), rather than rigid adherence to Catholic doctrines (Dolan and Deck, 1994; Leon, 2004; Matovina, 2005). It is not clear how or whether such Catholic identity may influence individuals' views concerning same-sex marriage. Thus, it may be appropriate to distinguish between (1) devout, that is, regularly attending Catholics and (2) those who attend Mass sporadically or not at all. Previous work reveals divergent abortion attitudes between these segments of the Latino Catholic population (Ellison, Echevarría, and Smith, 2005).

As we noted, the ranks of Protestants have grown among Latinos in the United States and, indeed, throughout the Americas (Freston, 2001; Steigenga and Cleary, 2007). Although there is a dearth of reliable data on Protestant growth among U.S. Latinos, some evidence comes via the Latino National Political Survey (Diaz-Stevens and Stevens-Arroyo, 1998; Ellison, Echevarría, and Smith, 2005; Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001) and from the NORC General Social Surveys (Hunt, 1999), although the GSS typically yields only a small and unrepresentative sample of U.S. Latinos in any given year of the survey. Within the general population, conservative Protestant leaders, denominations, and parachurch ministries have been among the most visible and outspoken proponents of traditional marital and sexual norms, and have vociferously opposed same-sex marriage. For many members of these faith communities, heterosexual marriage is understood as a fundamental mechanism for procreation that is regarded as biblically

ordained (e.g., Genesis 2:23–24). These adherents often worry that marriage as a social institution faces a crisis due to secularism, liberalism, and a “gay agenda” that seeks to relativize traditional family norms and values. Conservative Protestants also distinguish sharply between appropriate versus inappropriate forms of sexual behavior, and scriptural references legitimating heterosexual marriage and disparaging homosexuality are often cited to support an anti-SSM platform (Grenz, 1997; Welch, 2000).

In addition, on average, conservative Protestants are less likely to believe that homosexuality is caused by genetic or other biological factors, and more prone to believe that it is a sinful lifestyle choice (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Whitehead, 2010). This distinction is important because such attributions are the strongest single predictor of attitudes toward gay rights, including same-sex unions, in many previous studies (Herek and Capitanio, 1995; Wood and Bartkowski, 2004). Thus, beliefs about the etiology of homosexuality may help explain denominational differences in policy preferences, although most studies find that religious factors are independent predictors of attitudes toward same-sex unions even when attributions are taken into account (Wood and Bartkowski, 2004; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Whitehead, 2010). One possible reason for this is the distinction between genetic tendencies and sexual behavior; evangelical theologians emphasize that regardless of one’s sexual orientation and its origin, one has free will to exercise moral choices when deciding whether to engage in homosexual conduct (e.g., Schmidt, 1995; Welch, 2000). From this perspective, the reason for conservative Protestant opposition to same-sex unions is more complex than simply a difference of opinion about the etiology of homosexuality.

Moreover, many conservative Protestants embrace a vision of U.S. “civil religion” that calls them to translate their moral values into public policy (Wilcox and Larson, 2006; Wuthnow, 1988). Briefly, influenced by America’s early Puritan heritage, they see the United States as an exceptional nation that—from its very inception—was founded on ideals of religious freedom, and has enjoyed a special covenantal relationship with God. They argue that God has blessed the United States with unprecedented power, prosperity, and liberty, but that the failure to enact divinely ordained principles in our social order and legal system places America’s special bond with God in jeopardy. Thus, viewed from this perspective, laws that support biblical principles, including those that preserve the primacy of traditional heterosexual family forms and ideals, are essential for the well-being of the entire nation, lest God’s blessings be threatened (Burdette, Ellison, and Hill, 2005; Sherkat and Ellison, 1997).

Although many prominent opponents of same-sex marriage are drawn from the ranks of non-Hispanic white conservative Protestant leaders, they are increasingly joined by minority evangelicals. The 2008 California campaign over Proposition 8 revealed a deep reservoir of opposition toward SSM among African Americans, who voted overwhelmingly in favor of

Proposition 8. Recent research confirms this sentiment, and suggests that at least part of this pattern can be due to the strength of conservative Protestant values within the black community (Sherkat, de Vries, and Creek, 2010). During the past year, some Latino evangelicals have joined them, an effort that has been spearheaded by the National Hispanic Leadership Conference, under the direction of Reverend Samuel Rodriguez. Interestingly, the rationale for Latino Protestant mobilization against SSM has struck a somewhat different tone than the campaigns led by many predominantly white groups (NHCLC, 2006). According to the NHCLC, this is “not about being anti-gay or discriminating against anyone . . . The primary deterrent in the Latino community to drug abuse, gang violence, teenage pregnancy, and other social ills is faith in God and a family with both a mother and a father.” NHCLC materials also pointedly note that some members of their coalition marched with Dr. Martin Luther King and have participated in other progressive social causes (NHCLC, 2007). In this way, Latino evangelicals interpret anti-SSM policies as an extension of their progressive, community-oriented agenda. These patterns align closely with other recent studies illustrating the strong socially conservative leanings of Latino evangelicals (Ellison, Echevarría, and Smith, 2005).

To date, rather little is known about other faith communities among Latino Americans. First, a small percentage of Hispanics report ties to mainline Protestant bodies, such as the Methodist, Presbyterian, and Episcopal churches. However, in the general population, the members of mainline denominations are much more progressive on many social issues than other religious Americans, including Catholics (Hoffmann and Mills, 2005; Reimer and Park, 2001). Some, but not all, of this pattern reflects the comparatively high SES, urban and northeastern residence, and other demographic characteristics of mainline Protestants (Reimer and Park, 2001); however, studies of electoral trends show that mainline Protestants have been moving in a more liberal political direction—in individual attitudes and voting behavior, and in terms of institutional policy orientations—since the 1960s (Manza and Brooks, 1999). Mainline Protestant discourse has generally reflected greater openness toward same-sex marriage than the discourse found in other denominations (Cadge, 2002; Olson and Cadge, 2002). Second, a very modest percentage of Latinos belong to sectarian, neo-Protestant groups such as the Jehovah’s Witnesses and the Mormons (or Latter Day Saints), among others. Although these groups endorse some doctrines that are not accepted by mainstream conservative Protestant churches, their views on many social issues are staunchly conservative, and this is certainly the case with regard to SSM. Indeed, the LDS Church devoted considerable financial and organizational resources to groups backing California’s Proposition 8, which is consistent with official church doctrine, and with a long tradition of supporting traditional marital and family arrangements (LDS, 2008). Finally, in the general population, secularists (i.e., persons with no religious preference at all) are the most supportive of

SSM (Olson, Cadge, and Harrison, 2006). Although this segment of the Latino population is quite limited—smaller than in the overall U.S. population (Cavalcanti and Schleef, 2005)—they tend to be more supportive of abortion rights than most other Hispanics (Ellison, Echevarría, and Smith, 2005). We anticipate a similar pattern with respect to SSM.

Bible Beliefs, Clergy Cues, and Religious Politicization

Although it is not possible to adjudicate among all the potential explanations for religious groups' varying attitudes toward SSM, our study takes a significant step in this direction by focusing on three promising candidates: (1) scriptural interpretations; (2) clergy political cues; and (3) the politicization of religious faith. First, it is possible that conservative Protestant tendencies to reject SSM may be partly bound up with distinctive approaches to the interpretation of biblical scriptures. Briefly, in the general population, fundamentalists and evangelicals are disproportionately likely to endorse the view that the Bible is the Word of God, inerrant and authoritative over all spheres of human activity (Boone, 1989; Hempel and Bartkowski, 2008). Significant percentages go a step further, claiming that the Bible should be interpreted literally, word for word. In practice, the meanings of labels like "inerrantist" and "literalist" are not always clear. Many observers believe that they are "markers" of identification with specific religious and political communities, rather than actual interpretive postures; individuals may adopt the label first, based on the teachings of church leaders and lay elites, and subsequently apply the label to concrete problems and issues based on meanings disseminated among local clergy and congregations (Malley, 2004).

For persons who regard the Bible as the yardstick for determining truth in all human affairs, especially those involving faith, morality, and family life, this may be quite important. Although scriptural treatments of these issues are highly contested (Helminiak, 2000), anti-SSM forces have emphasized a handful of scriptural passages that seem to disparage homosexuality (e.g., Leviticus 18:22, 20:13; Romans 1:26–27), in order to justify their view that LGBT lifestyles are immoral and that redefining marriage to accommodate SSM is biblically and socially unsound. Scripture is also used to support the view that the origin of homosexuality is internal and spiritual, the result of sinful tendencies (Mark 7:21–23), rather than due to genetics, social environment, or other factors. Although recent studies show that links between religious beliefs and social and political attitudes are moderated by race and ethnicity (Cohen et al., 2009; McDaniel and Ellison, 2008), in the general U.S. population, biblical inerrancy and/or literalism helps explain part of the link between conservative Protestant affiliation and support for traditional "pro-family" values (Burdette, Ellison, and Hill, 2005; Sherkat and Ellison, 1997). Given the centrality of biblical arguments in the rhetoric of Latino

evangelical opponents of SSM, it is reasonable to expect a similar pattern among U.S. Hispanics.¹

After a long period of neglect, researchers are once again showing interest in the role of clergy in shaping the political orientations of parishioners (Smidt, 2004). Priests and pastors influence politics in a number of different ways that may include determining congregational policies; political outreach strategies and programs, as well as providing political information, framing public issues, and spurring mobilization among their flocks. To date, only a few studies have examined these issues among Latinos, and they confirm that clergy are as active in these ways as other Latino community leaders, such as media or business elites, and that Catholic priests and evangelical Protestant pastors are both engaged in encouraging political engagement among laypersons (Espinosa, Elizondo, and Miranda, 2005). Studies conducted in the general U.S. Catholic population show that priests tend to be more politically knowledgeable and sophisticated than their parishioners and they suggest that clergy cues can have an impact on lay decision making (Smith, 2005). Among conservative Protestants, and to a certain extent other traditions, pastors hold positions of honor and status, and devout members are likely to respect their efforts to (1) relate scripture to personal and civic life and (2) apply biblical principles to political debates. Thus, sermons or other pastoral communication on key public policy issues may trigger significant mobilization among active members. Further, we anticipate that most clergy who articulate positions on SSM—especially among Catholic and conservative Protestant clergy members, and perhaps less so among mainline Protestant ministers—will express opposition rather than support. Such clergy cues may help explain any observed effects of denomination and/or participation levels on attitudes concerning SSM.

Finally, individuals may also vary in the extent to which they integrate religion and politics, that is, the degree to which their political views are influenced by their faith commitments. This issue has been woefully understudied with respect to U.S. Latinos. Within the general population, however, some observers have called attention to two important points: (1) religious traditions have long differed in the extent to which they have favored a public role for religious leaders and discourse; and (2) there has been a pronounced shift in these patterns over the past 20–30 years. Although mainline Protestants have long claimed a more visible presence in the public sphere, Regnerus and Smith (1998) have shown that evangelical

¹On June 15, 2008, the popular Univision television show *Al Punto* (hosted by Jorge Ramos) hosted a debate between Reverend Sam Rodriguez, a prominent Latino evangelical opponent of SSM, and Reverend Ignacio Castuera, a Latino Methodist (mainline Protestant) who supports the rights of LGBT persons to marry. Consistent with the arguments articulated here, Rodriguez contended: “the scripture presents us with the model of what is a family and God’s plan—man and woman.” By contrast, Castuera countered: “The Bible has many different models of sexuality and many different models of family . . . [and in any case] we cannot impose the Bible as the right belief onto a population with people who are multicultural and religiously diverse.”

Protestants are now much more likely to agree that religion should have a place in public debates about education, politics, and other public matters, while mainline Protestants—along with nominal Catholics and secularists—have become ardent advocates of privatism. In light of this “selective deprivatization,” we expect that conservative Protestants may be especially prone to integrate religion into their political thinking, a tendency that may help explain their disproportionate opposition to SSM.

Data and Measures

Data

To explore these issues, we analyze data from a nation wide probability sample of Latinos, that is, persons of Latino background or descent, 18 years of age or older residing in the United States. This CATI-assisted telephone survey was executed by ICR, Inc. of Media, PA on behalf of the Pew Hispanic Center and the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life. Interviews were conducted in English or Spanish, according to the preference of the respondent, between August 10 and October 4, 2006 (for an extensive description of sampling and weighting procedures, see Survey Methodology, 2009). These procedures yielded a total sample of 4,016 Latino respondents, with a margin of error of 2.5 percent with a 95 percent confidence interval. This data set is uniquely appropriate for our study due to (1) the large *N*, (2) the substantial diversity of national-origin groups and presence of large numbers of immigrants, and (3) the rich and detailed array of items tapping religious affiliation, practice, and belief, as well as (4) a range of items gauging attitudes on important contemporary public policy issues.

Dependent Variable

Support for same-sex marriage was measured via responses to the following question: “All in all, do you favor or oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?” Answers were coded 1 = favor, 0 = oppose. Approximately 65 percent of these respondents expressed opposition to same-sex marriage.

Religious Variables

Respondents were queried about their religious affiliation via the following item: “What is your religion—Catholic, Evangelical or Protestant Christian, Jehovah’s Witness, Mormon, Jewish, Muslim, or orthodox church such as the Greek or Russian Orthodox Church?” Those indicating

Protestant affiliation were then asked to specify their church from a list of 22 Protestant denominations, and were also given an opportunity to specify a different Protestant church. Responses to these items were then recoded into the following categories, based on the RELTRAD classification scheme proposed by Steensland et al. (2000): Catholic, evangelical, mainline Protestant, other Christian, non-Christian religion, and no religion. Individuals who declined to answer the item(s) on affiliation ($n = 173$) and those affiliated with non-Christian faiths ($n = 76$) were too few in number to permit meaningful analyses and thus were dropped from the subsequent analyses.

Respondents were also asked: "Aside from weddings and funerals how often do you attend religious services . . . more than once a week, once a week, once or twice a month, a few times a year, seldom, or never?" In our analyses, we distinguished between regularly attending versus other members of each of the major denominational categories, yielding the following dummy variables: evangelical, regularly attending ($= 1$); evangelical, not regularly attending ($= 1$); mainline Protestant, regularly attending ($= 1$); mainline Protestant, not regularly attending ($= 1$); Catholic, not regularly attending ($= 1$); other Christian ($= 1$); and no religion ($= 1$). In our multivariate models, each of these categories was compared with the reference group, regularly attending Catholics ($= 0$). Note that we were unable to distinguish among attendance groups for the other Christian (mainly sectarian) category because (1) the base category is small and (2) most of these persons attend services at least once per week.

Several additional religious variables were also incorporated into our analyses. First, respondents were asked about the role of religion in shaping their political orientations: "Generally speaking, how important are your religious beliefs in influencing your political thinking?" Using responses to this item, we created dummy variables for the following responses: very important ($= 1$); somewhat important ($= 1$); and not too important ($= 1$). In addition, based on the results of preliminary analyses, we included a dummy variable to identify those respondents who do not know or refused ($= 1$). Persons in each of these categories were compared with respondents who indicated that religion is not at all important ($= 0$) in shaping their political views. Second, the Pew survey contains a single question asking respondents to indicate which of three statements about the Bible comes closest to describing their views. The wording of this item is similar to the wording of a popular item in the NORC General Social Surveys. In light of numerous studies linking biblical literalism with conservative political views and activities, we created a dummy variable to identify those individuals who indicated: "The Bible is the actual word of God and is to be taken literally, word for word." Finally, respondents who reported attending religious services were asked: "On another subject, does the clergy at your place of worship ever speak out about . . . laws regarding homosexuality?" Persons answering affirmatively were identified with a dummy variable (1 = yes, 0 = no).

Control Variables

Our multivariate models also controlled for a number of potentially confounding factors that may be linked with both religion and attitudes concerning same-sex marriage. Thus, we incorporate statistical adjustments for gender (1 = female, 0 = male); age/cohort (1 = under 30 years old, 1 = 60 or older vs. 0 = ages 30–59); specific Hispanic background (1 = Puerto Rican vs. 0 = all others);² marital status (1 = never married, 1 = divorced or separated vs. 0 = married or widowed); educational attainment (1 = less than high school diploma, 1 = some college, 1 = college degree, 1 = graduate school vs. 0 = high school diploma or some vocational training); family income (1 = under 15K, 1 = 15K–29.99K vs. 0 = all others); nativity status/time in the United States (1 = immigrant, 15 years or more vs. 0 = all others);³ community type (1 = rural, 0 = all others). Finally, we controlled for self-described political ideology (1 = conservative or very conservative vs. 0 = moderate, liberal, or very liberal). Based on the results of preliminary analyses, we also included a dummy variable for persons who did not know or refused to answer this item (= 1).

Results

We estimate a series of logistic regression models, gauging the net effects of religious variables and other predictors on the odds of supporting same-sex marriage. Findings from these models, which are based on weighted data, are displayed in Table 1. We begin with a baseline model, which includes only the nonreligious predictors of attitudes regarding same-sex marriage. Next we add dummy variables tapping affiliation/attendance groupings in Model 2. Given the prevalence of Catholicism within most Latino subgroups, these analyses treat devout or regularly attending Catholics as the reference category, with which all other affiliation/attendance groupings are compared. Then we estimate a full model (Model 3), adding potential mediating variables, such as the importance of religion in shaping

²The Pew Hispanic sample is quite diverse in terms of specific national-origin groups, with unweighted percentages as follows: Puerto Rican, 8.8 percent; Cuban, 4.4 percent; Dominican, 2.3 percent; Central American, 9.5 percent; South American, 7.7 percent; other Hispanic, 2.5 percent; Mexican, 64.7 percent. In our preliminary analyses (not shown), only Puerto Ricans held distinctive attitudes concerning SSM; they were much more open to SSM than the remaining Latino national-origin groups. Therefore, we retain a single dummy variable identifying Puerto Ricans in the subsequent analyses.

³In preliminary analyses (not shown), we gave careful attention to the associations involving (1) nativity status and (2) length of time in the United States for immigrants. However, the only clear pattern that surfaced in the data involved the tendency of immigrants with 15+ years' residence in the United States; respondents in this category were notably less supportive of SSM than all other Latinos. Therefore, our analyses retain a single dummy variable identifying these persons.

TABLE 1

Estimated Net Effects of Religious Variables and Covariates on Support for Same-Sex Marriage, Logistic Regression Odds Ratios, $N = 3,255$ (2007 Hispanic Religion Survey)

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Evangelical Protestant</i>			
Regularly attending	—	0.16***	0.20***
Not regularly attending	—	0.29***	0.32***
<i>Mainline Protestant</i>			
Regularly attending	—	0.49+	0.47*
Not regularly attending	—	2.10**	1.79*
<i>Catholic</i>			
Regularly attending (ref. cat.)	—	1.00	1.00
Not regularly attending	—	1.33**	1.11
<i>Other Christian</i>	—	0.21***	0.18***
<i>No Religion</i>	—	2.67***	1.88***
<i>Religion Shaping Political Views</i>			
Very important	—	—	0.47***
Somewhat important	—	—	0.55***
Not too important	—	—	0.71*
Not important at all (ref. cat.)	—	—	1.00
Don't know/refused	—	—	0.26***
<i>Clergy Speak Out on Homosexuality</i>			
Yes	—	—	0.69***
No (ref. cat.)	—	—	1.00
<i>Biblical Literalist</i>			
Yes	—	—	0.68***
No (ref. cat.)	—	—	1.00
<i>Gender</i>			
Female	1.35***	1.57***	1.64***
Male (ref. cat.)	1.00	1.00	1.00
<i>Age</i>			
Under 30	1.47***	1.49***	1.40***
60 years or older	0.35***	0.35***	0.31***
30–59 (ref. cat.)	1.00	1.00	1.00
<i>Puerto Rican</i>			
Yes	1.66***	2.14***	2.10***
No (ref. cat.)	1.00	1.00	1.00
<i>Marital Status</i>			
Never married	1.53***	1.33**	1.31*
Divorced/separated	1.36***	1.28*	1.24+
All others (ref. cat.)	1.00	1.00	1.00
<i>Education</i>			
Less than high school	0.82*	0.76**	0.76**
High school or vocational (ref. cat.)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Some college	1.36**	1.39**	1.20
College degree	1.62**	1.53**	1.28
Graduate school	2.24**	1.91*	1.56

TABLE 1—continued

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3
<i>Family Income</i>			
Under 15K	1.12	1.14	1.24+
15K–29.99K	1.17	1.17	1.31*
All others (ref. cat.)	1.00	1.00	1.00
<i>Nativity/Time in U.S.</i>			
Migrated, 15 or more years ago	0.70***	0.68***	0.68***
All others	1.00	1.00	1.00
<i>Rural Residence</i>			
Yes	0.38***	0.36***	0.38***
No (ref. cat.)	1.00	1.00	1.00
<i>Political Ideology</i>			
Conservative	0.46***	0.54***	0.57***
Don't know/refused	1.23	1.37*	1.49**
Moderate or liberal (ref. cat.)	1.00	1.00	1.00
Model \times 2 (Wald)	336.87	494.29	547.20
df	16	23	29
– 2 log likelihood	3866.16	3567.39	3471.15

*** $p < 0.001$; ** $p < 0.01$; * $p < 0.05$.

NOTE: Reference category is marked (ref. cat.).

political views, biblical literalism, and clergy outspokenness on laws concerning homosexuality. Cell entries displayed in Table 1 are odds ratios.

Several sets of findings are particularly noteworthy. The multivariate findings confirm that evangelical Protestant Latinos are much more resistant to same-sex marriage than their Catholic counterparts. According to the estimates in Model 2, the odds of approving of same-sex marriage are 84 percent lower among evangelicals who attend services regularly (OR = 0.16, $p < 0.001$), and 71 percent lower for evangelicals who attend less often (OR = 0.29, $p < 0.001$), compared to devout Catholics from otherwise similar backgrounds. The odds of supporting same-sex marriage are nearly 80 percent lower (OR = 0.21, $p < 0.001$) for the members of other, mostly sectarian Christian groups compared to regularly attending Catholics. Mainline Protestants who attend services regularly are much less likely (OR = 0.49, $p < 0.10$) than their devout Catholic counterparts to endorse same-sex marriage. On the other hand, several segments of the Latino religious population are significantly more supportive of same-sex marriage, as compared with Catholics who attend Mass on a regular basis. These specific groups include: secular Latinos (OR = 2.67, $p < 0.001$) and mainline Protestants who are not weekly church attenders (OR = 2.10, $p < 0.01$), as well as less-devout Catholics (OR = 1.33, $p < 0.01$).

As expected, other religious factors are robust independent predictors of attitudes toward marriage rights for gays and lesbians. First, Latinos for whom religion is very important or somewhat important in shaping political

thinking are much less likely ($OR = 0.47$, $p < 0.001$ and $OR = 0.55$, $p < 0.001$, respectively) to favor same-sex marriage as compared with those for whom religious influence on political views is not important at all. Even those persons for whom religion is not too important are somewhat less supportive ($OR = 0.71$, $p < 0.05$). Further, the small group of respondents who were unable or unwilling to respond to this question about the role of religion in their political judgments express the strongest opposition to same-sex marriage ($OR = 0.26$, $p < 0.001$). Second, the odds of endorsing same-sex marriage are roughly 30 percent lower ($OR = 0.69$, $p < 0.001$) among respondents who attend congregations in which the clergy member has spoken out about laws governing homosexuality than among other persons. Third, the odds of approving of same-sex marriage are also approximately one-third lower ($OR = 0.68$, $p < 0.001$) for Latinos who embrace the view that the Bible is the literal Word of God, as compared with those who hold less conservative interpretive postures regarding scripture.

Although it is reasonable to anticipate that controlling for these additional religious variables would mediate or reduce the estimated net gaps among the affiliation/attendance groupings reported in Model 2 of Table 1, for the most part these differences persisted despite these controls. Indeed, the patterns involving evangelical Protestants and sectarian Christians changed only trivially in Model 3. The net difference between secular Latinos and devout Catholics was reduced by roughly one-third in Model 3, but the odds of approving same-sex marriage were still nearly twice as high among secular Latinos ($OR = 1.88$, $p < 0.001$). The only meaningful change in affiliation/attendance effects involved the estimated net difference between devout Catholics and other Catholics, which was reduced to statistical insignificance ($OR = 1.11$, ns) with controls for the additional religious variables.

In ancillary analyses (not shown), we explored which of the possible mediators is most clearly responsible for attenuating the estimated net difference between devout and nondevout Catholics. The results indicated that Catholics who do not attend Mass regularly are significantly less inclined to integrate religion into their political thinking, and that controls for this variable alone nearly eliminated the estimated net difference in SSM attitudes versus their devout counterparts. Comparable models involving biblical literalism and exposure to clergy political cues did not show this mediating effect.⁴

⁴Unfortunately, the Pew item on clergy political cues does not specifically indicate whether the respondent's clergy tend to favor or oppose SSM. However, it seems unlikely that very many Latino clergy are outspoken advocates of SSM for two reasons. (1) Given the strong opposition in the Latino population, which is greater than in the overall U.S. population, clergy could risk significant backlash from congregants. (2) Even Latino clergy from mainline Protestant denominations—typically the most sympathetic segment of the religious spectrum (Cadge, 2002; Olson and Cadge, 2002)—have expressed opposition. In one example, as ELCA Lutherans geared up to debate liberalizing their official position on SSM in 2009, a group of Hispanic Lutheran clergy issued a strongly worded letter urging rejection of these proposals (Kwon, 2009). In ancillary analyses (not shown), we also added cross-product

Estimated Net Effects of Control Variables

Given the dearth of information about the social patterning of Latino opinion on same-sex marriage, we also note several findings involving covariates. Among Hispanics in the United States, women are more sympathetic toward this issue than are men, and this gap widens when gender differences in religious involvement are controlled. Age/cohort differences are quite large; Latinos under age 30 are relatively supportive of same-sex marriage as compared with their counterparts aged 30–59, while Latino seniors express strong opposition to this practice. Puerto Ricans are markedly more tolerant of same-sex marriage than members of other Latino nationality groups, and this Puerto Rican distinctiveness is strengthened with controls for religiousness. We also find a moderate association between marital status and attitudes on this issue, with never-married Latinos reporting greater approval. Initial models revealed a sharp educational gradient in opinion on same-sex marriage, but most education differences disappeared with controls for religious variables, although persons with less than a high school diploma remain less supportive of same-sex marriage than their counterparts with high school or vocational credentials. There is little variation in opinion toward this issue by family income. Latino immigrants with at least 15 years' residence in the United States appear notably more reluctant to support same-sex marriage than either native-born Latinos or more recent immigrants. Finally, approval of marriage rights for gays and lesbians is much lower among rural Latinos than among their urban or suburban counterparts, and among self-described conservatives as compared with politically moderate or liberal Latinos. In an interesting twist, with the introduction of controls for indicators of religious involvement, Latinos who were unable or unwilling to characterize their political views along a conservative-liberal continuum were actually more tolerant of same-sex marriage than their moderate or liberal counterparts.

Discussion

One aim of this study has been to augment the limited body of research on religion and Latino public opinion. Although numerous studies have linked religious affiliation, practice, and belief with policy-related attitudes and practices in the general population, the literature on these issues among Hispanics is remarkably thin. Our work focuses on attitudes toward same-

interaction terms to Model 3 of Table 1 to investigate: (1) whether the estimated net effects of clergy cues on SSM attitudes are stronger among the more frequent church attenders, and (2) whether they vary across denominational lines. No evidence of such contingent relationships surfaced, save a marginally significant finding that regularly attending evangelicals are somewhat more opposed to SSM ($b = -0.764, p = 0.066$) if their pastor has spoken out on issues relating to homosexuality.

sex marriage (SSM), using data from a large nation wide probability sample of U.S. Latinos conducted by the Pew Hispanic Forum. We also go beyond the standard religious predictors of social attitudes, examining the possible roles of religious (de)privatization, clergy political cues, and other potential mediators of group differentials in SSM attitudes. Several sets of findings deserve emphasis.

First, despite lingering popular images of Latinos as monolithically Catholic, Protestants now make up roughly one-fourth of the U.S. Hispanic population, and the vast majority of these Protestants are conservative, that is, fundamentalist, evangelical, or charismatic. This heterogeneity has given rise to substantial religious divisions in attitudes toward same-sex marriage, and these religious cleavages are at least as large in magnitude as those in the overall U.S. population. Specifically, members of conservative Protestant denominations and sectarian (i.e., neo-Protestant) groups such as the Mormons are almost uniformly opposed to SSM. Interestingly, the distinctive patterns of conservative Protestants are not contingent on the frequency of attendance at services; that is, sporadic attenders are almost as likely to oppose SSM as regular attenders. Second, despite common assumptions that Latino Catholics embrace conservative social values, and that Catholicism influences (or at least reflects) traditional Latino “family values,” Catholics—Latino and otherwise—tend to hold more moderate views of SSM than conservative Protestants. We find that this is true even of devout Latino Catholics. Third, opinions of SSM vary widely among mainline Protestants; among Latinos, as in the general population, sporadic attenders are inclined to favor SSM, but regularly attending mainline Latinos tend to resist this idea. Nevertheless, this finding is consistent with the observation of Olson, Cadge, and Harrison (2006), who remind us that not all religious communities remain implacably opposed to SSM, although within religious circles opponents outnumber supporters by a wide margin. Indeed, as in their study, we find that secular Latinos are much more favorable toward SSM than others. Over and above denominational differences, we find that biblical literalists, those who attend congregations in which clergy have been outspoken about homosexuality, and those who integrate religion into their political thinking are much more inclined to oppose SSM than are other respondents. However, although we initially conceived of these factors as potential mediators of denominational differences, this was largely not the case. Instead, our measures of Bible beliefs, clergy cues, and religious (de)privatization accounted for additional shares of variance in SSM attitudes but, with few exceptions, did not “explain away” the observed denominational differentials described above.

Taken together, these findings raise a number of broader interpretive issues that warrant reflection. First, our results suggest that Latino conservative Protestants and sectarians belong to potent subculture(s), the social and political significance of which remain poorly understood. It is remarkable that for conservative Protestants, especially, there is little variation in the

strength of anti-SSM sentiment according to the frequency of church attendance. Further, contrary to the thrust of many public opinion studies conducted within the general (i.e., predominantly non-Hispanic white) population, these findings are not explained by the disproportionate endorsement of biblical literalism or, for that matter, by clergy cues regarding family or LGBT issues, or even by the selective deprivatization observed by Regnerus and Smith (1998). Given the adamant views and strong tendencies, and the apparent growth of this population, as well as its conservatism on other social issues (e.g., abortion), much more sustained attention from researchers in multiple disciplines is needed to understand the origins, dynamics, and social composition of Latino evangelicalism.

Due to data limitations, we are unable to examine the role of beliefs about the causes of homosexuality, which may account for at least part of the conservative Protestant “effect” on SSM attitudes. In the general population, conservative Protestants and frequent attenders are more likely than others to believe that homosexuality is a product of human choice rather than due to genetic or biological influences (Wood and Bartkowski, 2004; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2008; Whitehead, 2010). Another significant interpretive issue worth considering is the causal ordering of the patterns observed here. Although religious influences on social attitudes are likely to be potent, it is also the case that individuals who embrace conservative moral and family orientations may be especially drawn to join evangelical religious communities. Thus, it would be helpful to examine the interplay of socialization (i.e., internal mechanisms of spiritual formation and value transmission) and selection (i.e., tendencies and circumstances of conversion) as contributors to the patterns observed here.

Among Latinos, regularly attending Catholics do tend to oppose SSM, by a margin of roughly two to one, a pattern that is very close to the mean figure for the overall U.S. Hispanic population. Less-devout Catholics are somewhat more amenable to the idea of same-sex marriage, a difference that is largely due to the greater tendency of their devout counterparts to integrate faith into their political thinking. Thus, it is worth knowing more about why significant numbers of Catholics engage in this form of privatization, and who these persons are. For example, are they disaffected due to church teachings on social issues, do they engage in popular spirituality rather than formal organizational practices, or do they maintain Catholic identity mainly as an expression or extension of their Latino ethnicity? The answers to these questions may have important implications for the future of Catholicism among the growing U.S. Hispanic population.

As in the study by Olson, Cadge, and Harrison (2006), we find that as predictors of SSM attitudes, religious variables perform better than socio-demographic variables. The comparison of religious versus educational effects is especially remarkable. Education is usually one of the strongest and most reliable predictors of social policy liberalism in studies of the general population, yet the inclusion of denominational effects virtually eliminated a

pronounced educational gradient in approval of SSM. Moreover, the inclusion of religious variables in Models 2 and 3 of Table 1 increased the overall predictive power of the (baseline) model by roughly 65 percent, obviously a major increment. When political scientists and others conduct studies of social and political attitudes among U.S. Latinos in the future, religious factors—including (but ideally not restricted to) denominational differences—should almost certainly be part of the equation.

Our findings may also have significant political implications for Latinos and broader U.S. society. Although the role of religion in shaping Latino political attitudes and behavior has received only limited attention from researchers (Ellison, Echevarría, and Smith, 2005; Jones-Correa and Leal, 2001), there are welcome signs of ferment and change in this area, and it is hoped that this study will add momentum to this emerging line of inquiry. The impetus for such work is also fueled by recent findings that relationships between religion and politics differ across racial/ethnic lines (Cohen et al., 2009). One recent study using data from replicated cross-sectional surveys conducted in the Houston area demonstrates that political implications of biblical literalism—often a key indicator of conservative Protestant belief—vary sharply by race and ethnicity. Although non-Hispanic white biblical literalists moved steadily into the Republican Party during the 1982–2004 period, African-American biblical literalists exhibited little if any shift in party identification. Importantly, however, while biblical literalist Latinos did move away from their historic allegiance to the Democratic Party over this period, they are increasingly likely to self-identify as Independents; despite their shared cultural values, to date most have not found a natural home in the GOP (McDaniel and Ellison, 2008). Understanding the political cross-pressures facing Latinos, especially conservative Protestants, due to the combination of conservative social values and more progressive views on immigration and pocketbook issues, may shed valuable light on the future electoral leanings of this important and growing population.

Like all studies, our work is characterized by several limitations in addition to those noted above. First, the Pew survey contained only a single item on same-sex marriage, which is dichotomously coded (yes/no). Work by Olson, Cadge, and Harrison (2006) using data on a general population sample has shown that individual responses, as well as the relative importance of religious factors, may depend on the specific wording of the survey item tapping attitudes regarding SSM, for example, whether the item taps normative views or support for a constitutional amendment. Thus, we cannot be certain that our findings would be similar across items that were differently worded. Given the coding of the Pew measure, we also cannot gauge the strength of opposition or support among key subgroups, including segments of the religious public. It would also be useful to know about support for (or at least acquiescence to) civil unions, as opposed to the use of the term “marriage” to confer recognition on same-sex unions. Further, although we have made a contribution to the literature by exploring several variables that might be

expected to mediate the powerful denominational effects observed here, more could be done. For example, Olson, Cadge, and Harrison (2006) found that the number of close friendships within the congregation predicted attitudes on this issue—a notable pattern in light of recent studies indicating that Catholics are less prone to form friendships at church than are others. It could also help to know whether respondents are personally acquainted with any LGBT persons, particularly those in durable unions. One suspects that the potential for such meaningful interpersonal contact could be especially low within some conservative religious communities.

Despite its limitations, this study has contributed to the literature in several ways. We have used large-scale survey data to document major religious gaps in approval of same-sex marriage within the U.S. Latino population. We have explored and reflected on a number of possible explanations for these sizeable religious differentials, and we have identified several promising directions for further investigation and clarification. Clearly, the U.S. Latino population is becoming larger and more heterogeneous, and one notable expression of this internal diversity involves its religious composition, which is in considerable ferment. The growth of Protestantism, particularly the conservative variants, may have significant import for the social organization and political life of U.S. Hispanics. Further analyses along the lines sketched above, and others as well, by social scientists can cast fresh light on these developments and their implications.

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