

The Political Mobilization of Latino/a Religious Beliefs

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The religion and politics literature has unveiled a variety of different ways that religion influences Americans' political attitudes and behaviors, from institutional factors to behavioral factors that are frequently centered on the "three B's" of religious belonging, believing, and behaving (Djupe & Gilbert 2009; Guth et al. 1996; Layman 2001; Legee & Kellstedt 1993; Putnam & Campbell 2010; Wald & Calhoun-Brown 2014). In terms of religious motivations for political participation, the focus of the literature is narrower, however, often emphasizing religious affiliation and/or the civic skills that churches provide their adherents (Djupe & Gilbert 2009; Driskell et al. 2008; Smidt et al. 2008; Verba et al. 1995; Wald & Calhoun-Brown 2014). While these are no doubt important predictors of political behavior, the role of religious beliefs in motivating political engagement are often either assumed or masked in participation models that favor easier-to-measure affiliation variables. Thus, the effects of religious beliefs on participation have been largely overlooked in the political science literature, despite the fact that religious beliefs play a significant role in orienting Americans' political lives.

This oversight is particularly pronounced in scholarship on Latino political participation.¹ Indeed, to the extent that religion is recognized as a contributor to Latino engagement, it is most often via differential rates of civic skill development in Catholic or Protestant churches (DeSipio 2007; Djupe & Neiheisel 2012; Espinosa 2005; Hritzuk & Park 2000; Jones-Correa & Leal 2001; Verba et al. 1995). While the religious beliefs and politics of white Americans and African-Americans has garnered some attention (e.g. Harris 1999; Legee & Kellstedt 1993; Layman 2001; McDaniel 2008; Putnam & Campbell 2010; Wald & Calhoun-Brown 2014), we know less about the role of religious beliefs in Latino politics. Yet Latinos represent perhaps the best test case for the role of religious beliefs in mobilizing or demobilizing individuals for political action,

¹ In this paper I use the term "Latino" to refer to anyone self-identifying as having genealogical origins in Latin American or South American countries, including those who identify as Hispanic, Chicano, Mestizo, Mexican or Mexican-American (or any other country of origin identification from the aforementioned areas).

given the number of elements of popular religious beliefs that cut across religious traditions. For example, charismatic and Pentecostal beliefs, such as speaking in tongues or divine prophesy in the modern age, are held by over half of all Latinos from Catholic, Mainline, and Evangelical religious traditions, compared to a much smaller percentage of white Americans that held these beliefs, especially in non-Evangelical traditions (Espinosa 2014; Pew Research Center 2007). Importantly, these beliefs are distinct from particular religious traditions, and thus not captured in models that focus on religious affiliation. Other such syncretic beliefs - those which blend elements of many religions or traditional practices - are commonly reported in surveys of Latinos, but their influence on the political process has received minimal attention in the scholarly literature. Particularly for ethnic groups with large immigrant populations, for whom religion can serve as an agent of political socialization, or for those who have been marginalized in the political system, I argue that religious beliefs warrant greater consideration as a mobilizing (or demobilizing) force in American politics.

To examine the effect of religious beliefs on the political participation of Latinos, I employ data from the Hispanic Churches in American Public Life (HCAPL) and the Pew Forum Changing Faiths surveys of Latinos. Both include a variety of measures of religious beliefs, along with other elements of religious involvement that the previous literature has shown to influence political behavior. In particular, I examine charismatic or Pentecostal beliefs, born again religion, traditional syncretic Christianity, the Prosperity Gospel, Earthly Collective Salvation theology, and beliefs about the end times, each described in detail below. Even apart from religious tradition, civic skill development, and direct mobilization from churches, I demonstrate that many religious beliefs have a significant (albeit somewhat inconsistent) effect on a variety of political engagement activities and orientations towards the role of religion in

public life. Indeed, religious beliefs form an important framework through which Latinos (and others) view the world and their role as political actors. As the Latino and broader religious landscape continues to change, these beliefs will play a crucial role in determining who participates and who is represented in the American political system. This suggests that political scientists should take greater account of how Latinos and other groups understand and practice their religion, as well as how they apply it to political life.

Religious Beliefs and Political Participation

In addition to SES and resource models of political participation, religion is often recognized as a primary socializing agent through which individuals form their political attitudes and proclivities for political engagement. Because religion is a significant source of belief systems and values, it is natural that these values would influence political life as well.

Engagement in religious organizations is among the most common sources of civic life for many Americans, and despite the recent growth of individuals identifying as secular or nonreligious, the U.S. remains a relatively religious nation (Putnam & Campbell 2010; Smidt et al. 2008; Wald & Calhoun-Brown 2014). Religious organizations also have a history of engagement in the political system, and churches often have an interest in mobilizing their adherents around issues of importance to them (Layman 2001; Putnam & Campbell 2010; Wald & Calhoun-Brown 2014).

When it comes to the political participation of religious individuals, some scholars argue that the infrastructure of religious bodies, the groups and opportunities for leadership offered at a particular congregation, and the networks one belongs to, along with direct mobilization from churches, are the primary means through which religion influences political participation (Beyerlein & Chaves 2003; Djupe & Gilbert 2009; McDaniel 2008). This is certainly one

component of religious mobilization. In addition to these models, others have argued that churches influence individual political engagement through one's religious belonging [religious tradition)], believing [tenets of religious faith), and behaving [frequency of church attendance or private prayer] (Layman 1997; Leege & Kellstedt 1993; Putnam & Campbell 2010; Smidt et al. 2008; Wald & Calhoun-Brown 2014). Each of these components of religion have the potential to influence political behavior by orienting individuals towards participation or non-participation and structuring the manner in which they engage public life.

Of the three B's, religious belonging has gained the most traction in the literature as an explanation for one's politics. Whether one attends a Catholic or Protestant (Evangelical, Mainline, or Black Protestant) church, Christian or non-Christian, or is religiously unaffiliated is shown to have significant effects on political attitudes and action (Layman 2001; Putnam & Campbell 2010; Wald & Calhoun-Brown 2014). Indeed, religious tradition has become nearly ubiquitous in political surveys, and is the primary means through which scholars measure the role of religion in politics. While there are many significant and politically-relevant differences among religious traditions, measured only through affiliation, the mechanism by which affiliation influences one's politics is less well-defined. For instance, are political differences between Catholic and Evangelical churches due to the organizational nature of the churches, different belief systems, differences in religious commitment, or a combination of these factors?² Measures of religious affiliation alone risk treating religious traditions as monolithic bodies. However, we know that even within the Catholic Church (theoretically the most "catholic," or "universal," church), there are significant differences in terms of worship styles, congregational structure, and religious beliefs (e.g. Chaves 2004; Leege 1987; Smith 2008).

² For a critique of the use of religious affiliation as a politically-salient variable, see Djupe & Gilbert (2009).

Without additional measures of religion, then, one would be limited in the depth to which they could explain the role of religion in political life. To supplement religious tradition variables, surveys will also often include measures of religious commitment and church attendance to capture religious behavior. In these models, attending worship services and engagement in church activity is frequently shown to lead to greater levels of political participation (Jones-Correa & Leal 2001; Smidt et al. 2008; Verba et al. 1995; Wald et al. 1993; but see Campbell 2004). Among the reasons why church attendance is hypothesized to lead to increases in engagement include greater development of civic skills, community embeddedness, and opportunities for recruitment and obtaining political information (Jones-Correa & Leal 2001; Putnam & Campbell 2010; Smidt et al. 2008; Verba et al. 1995). While these additional measures increase the reliability of political surveys, they do not fully capture the belief systems that orient religious adherents to politics and structure how individuals participate in political life.

Despite its standing among the “three B’s” of religion and politics, religious beliefs are often excluded from analyses of political engagement, subsumed by measures of religious affiliation and attendance which presumably capture religious beliefs via tradition and orthodoxy (Driskell et al. 2008; Driskell & Lyon 2011; Kellstedt & Smidt 1993; Layman 1997, Wilcox et al. 1991). However, there is reason to believe that religious beliefs operate under a distinct mechanism when affecting political participation, especially when considering religious beliefs that cross religious denominations. Importantly, individual religious beliefs are also distinct from the religious and political messages that individuals hear in their churches: while these messages may be important for forming political beliefs, the link between what clergy preach from the pulpit and the political beliefs held by their congregants is somewhat tenuous (e.g. Djupe &

Gilbert 2009). This requires a separate analysis of the panoply of beliefs that people hold, which may differ from the tenets held by their congregation.

Early studies in the religion and politics literature included an array of beliefs that were presumed to influence political engagement. In 1991, Ted Jelen published *The Political Mobilization of Religious Beliefs*, one of the early works in religion and politics which took seriously the role of religious beliefs in political life. Some of the measures included in the analyses were: views of the Bible, the literal existence of the devil, the truth of the creation story in the Biblical book of Genesis, born again beliefs, and experience with miraculous healing, speaking in tongues, or having God answer a specific prayer request. While the discussion of these measures linked theology to support for the Christian Right and engagement in politics, the primary focus of the quantitative analyses were issues of public opinion and delineating the belief systems of particular denominations. Thus, there is a great deal of room to utilize the framework put forth by Jelen and to deepen the study of political participation.

A scattering of other studies have examined additional theological beliefs as motivations for political participation. Wilcox et al. (1991) found that beliefs about the end times and the role of the devil influenced beliefs about political participation among Christian Right activists, while others examined biblical literalism as a predictor of engagement (e.g. Kellstedt & Smidt 1993), and still others, belief about the sinful nature of humans and support for unconventional political activity, such as protests (McVeigh & Sikkink 2001). These studies drew closer to the link between beliefs and political engagement, but were often limited in the applicability of the findings to a variety of traditions, namely outside of Protestantism. Smidt et al. (1996) also developed a correlational study which suggested that spirit-filled movements (such as the

Pentecostal and Catholic Charismatic movements discussed below) caused white adherents to participate in politics at lower rates.

Recent work by Driskell and her colleagues (2008; Driskell & Lyons 2011) have reinvigorated scholarship that analyzes a multitude of religious beliefs across religious traditions. Among the beliefs found to influence political participation are: the importance of praying about general world concerns, agreement that to be a good person one must work for social and economic justice, and that God is directly involved in world affairs (Driskell et al. 2008). Later studies have added biblical literalism and belief in heaven to this list of significant religious beliefs (Driskell & Lyon 2011). Importantly, their findings remain significant after controlling for religious tradition and church attendance. However, these effects are examined predominantly among white Americans.

In applying models of religious beliefs and political participation to nonwhite populations, perhaps the most direct link between religious beliefs and engagement is among African American Protestants. Beliefs in black liberation theology and imagining a Black Christ are closely correlated with increased political participation (Harris 1999; Harris-Lacewell 2007; McDaniel 2008; Reese et al. 2007). Black churches are often recognized as one of the driving forces of the Civil Rights Movement, and the belief systems offered by churches are an important component of that mobilization. Though Latinos share many similar characteristics with Black Protestants, including an emphasis on liberation theology, the role of Latino religious beliefs and political participation has yet to be examined (Levine 2012; Smith 1991; Wilson 2008).

Latino Religion and Politics

Among Latinos, the religion and politics literature is often even narrower in its application to political participation. As with those of other racial and ethnic backgrounds, religious affiliation is regarded as particularly important, though the historic dominance of the Catholic Church in Latino culture strongly frames the literature. Indeed, the primary debate focuses on whether Catholic and Protestant churches provide different levels of civic skills to their adherents (DeSipio 2007; Djupe & Neiheisel 2012; Espinosa 2005; Hritzuk & Park 2000; Jones-Correa & Leal 2001; Verba et al. 1995). As a result of this framework, the role of religious beliefs has yet to be systematically examined within the Latino population. As DeSipio (2007) states: “Because most Latinos have always been Catholic, there has been a consistent failure to examine the religious diversity of the Latino experience and the impact that this diversity is having on [Latinos’ politics]” (p. 162). While this statement is true in regards to religious affiliation, it applies equally (if not more) to the varied religious beliefs that cross religious denominations. In practice, most surveys of Latino tend to overlook transdenominational movements and other experiences such as liberation theology, charismatic and Pentecostal beliefs, and born again beliefs (Espinosa 2006; 2014).

Latinos, on the other hand, represent a strong test case for the role of religious beliefs in American politics because Latino religion is fluid and beliefs are often not bound to the standard denominational breakdown. Popular religious beliefs are an important part of Latino culture, and are found in (and even outside of) each of the major religious traditions.³ Furthermore, to the extent that religion is a socializing force in American politics, immigrant groups with lower prior socialization into American politics may actually develop a stronger correlation between

³ As Espín (1994, p. 308) notes: “It is difficult to understand any of the Hispanic cultural communities without somehow explaining and dealing with popular beliefs and rituals.”

religious beliefs and political action. Latinos are also more likely than white Americans to report that religion is “very important” to their lives (Pew Research Center 2007). Given these dynamics, I expect religious beliefs to play a significant role in the political lives of Latinos, even when controlling for other church-related variables. In the following sections, I outline some of these important Latino religious beliefs and my hypotheses for their relationship to political engagement.

Pentecostal/Charismatic Beliefs

Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs emphasize one’s relationship to God through the Holy Spirit and include such practices as glossolalia (speaking in tongues), prophecy, faith healings, and high-energy, enthusiastic worship styles. Pentecostalism developed as a distinct religious tradition in the United States in the early 20th century, breaking away from non-Pentecostal Evangelicalism, and the practices spread to the Roman Catholic and Mainline churches later in the mid-20th century. Charismatic beliefs (a terminology more frequently applied to non-Pentecostal “spirit-filled” denominations) thus represent a syncretic, or blended, religious practice, whereby traditional Catholic or Mainline practices incorporate elements of Pentecostalism. While viewed with suspicion by certain leaders across the religious spectrum, Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs have been largely permitted (or at least tolerated) by a range of denominational leaders.⁴

One of the most significant changes in Latino and Latin American religion has been the recent explosion in the number of individuals reporting Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs (Espinosa 2014; Levine 2012; Martínez 2011). Pentecostalism has emerged as the primary competitor to Catholicism in Latin America, where the Catholic Church has historically maintained supermajorities of the population’s religious adherents (Levine 2012). In the United

⁴ Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs are sometimes collectively referred to as “renewal” or “renewalist” beliefs.

States too, Pentecostalism is the most popular denominational alternative to Catholicism for Latinos (Espinosa 2014; Martínez 2011). However, Pentecostal beliefs are not held to denominational boundaries, and vast numbers of Latino Catholics and Mainline Protestants also subscribe to charismatic beliefs (Pew Research Center 2007). Yet despite near majorities of Latinos holding renewalist beliefs, there have been few systematic studies of how these practices influence political engagement.

Early studies of whites in the renewalist movement emphasized the fact that Pentecostals and charismatics did not have a single distinct political persuasion or reaction: some supported complete political disengagement, while others were more amenable to engagement with society (Poloma 1982; Smidt et al. 1996). Many scholars emphasize the sect-like qualities of Pentecostalism, suggesting that its insularity from the modern world and focus on individualism and personal relationships with God led to lower engagement outside of the community (e.g. Fichter 1975; Neitz 1987; Ramírez 2005). Particularly in Protestant Pentecostalism, pacifism and explicit teachings against political engagement took root (Martínez 2011; but see Stewart-Gambino & Wilson 1997). However, following the sexual revolution of the 1960's and the rise of the Religious Right, white Pentecostals became more involved in trying to shape American politics (Layman 2001; Smidt et al. 1996; Wilcox & Robinson 2011). While Latino renewalists remained non-political throughout much of the 20th century, there is reason to believe they could follow white renewalists towards greater engagement in politics.

Recent qualitative studies of Latino Pentecostals and the Catholic charismatic movement have suggested just this: that Pentecostal beliefs include a “calling” from God to get involved in improving the moral and social climate of the U.S. (Espinosa 2014; Martínez 2011; Mora 2012). Furthermore, because renewalist practices are often carried out in small group settings, Mora

(2012) argues that renewalists have greater opportunities to develop civic skills and will thus participate at higher rates than those who are not involved in spirit-filled religion. Latin American Pentecostals have also taken a more visible role in the political realm in recent years, which may set the standard for how Latino immigrants choose to engage in politics in the United States (Levine 2012; Ramírez 2005). However, years of disengagement and a theology which promotes complete reliance on God rather than government are difficult barriers to overcome when attempting to politically mobilize adherents at a widespread level. Given these orientations towards non-engagement, I expect Latinos who hold Pentecostal or charismatic beliefs to participate at lower levels than non-renewalists, with the caveat that these trends may be changing over time.

Born Again Experiences

Among the religious beliefs more commonly associated with political participation, generally due to the role of religious conservatives in the Republican Party, is having a born again experience: repenting of sin and accepting Jesus as one's personal savior. Political science research has often reported on the role born again Christians play in politics, and occasionally uses it as a divider between Evangelical and Mainline Protestants (with Evangelicals being more likely to report a born again experience) or as a proxy for religious commitment (Layman 2001; Wilcox & Robinson 2011). Some political scientists have also extended this research to the born again phenomenon among "evangelically-oriented" Catholics, who also report having born again or personal conversion experiences (Higgins 2014; Welch & Leege 1991). However, few examine born again experiences across religious traditions and apart from other religio-political measures.

In the case of Latinos, reporting born again experiences is common across religious traditions; aside from Evangelical Protestants, a substantial number of Catholics and Mainline Protestants also report being born again (Pew Research Center 2007). When controlled for outside of religious tradition, how might this religious belief affect participation rates? On one hand, born again theology is similar to that of Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs, which emphasize a personal relationship with God and a rejection of the sinful world. This would suggest that born again beliefs would *decrease* engagement. However, being born again also opens new avenues for mobilizing these political beliefs. For instance, scholars have noted that political candidates employ a different type of rhetoric on the campaign trail to cue born again Christians, and a political infrastructure of committed Christians exists to mobilize born again adherents into public life (Chapp 2012; Layman 2001; Wilcox & Robinson 2011). For these reasons, I predict that born again beliefs will lead to higher rates of participation among Latinos, although the effect of these experiences is perhaps not as strong independent of religious commitment and affiliation.

Magical/Popular Beliefs

Another type of syncretic religious tradition that exists among Latinos blends elements of Christianity with magical indigenous practices. These beliefs are a form of popular or folk Christianity – that is, beliefs and practices that originate from the masses and outside of established religious norms (Espín 1994). Unlike Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs, which have faced relative acceptance among religious authorities, Latino popular Christianity is often disavowed and suppressed by church leaders. In practice, however, this does not stop the spread of these beliefs, and indeed, some Catholic and Protestant clergy and congregations are more open to such magical beliefs. Among the most well-known practices of Latino folk religion is

Santería, which blends the traditions of Catholic saints with Afro-Caribbean beliefs. In this paper, I focus on belief in three folk religious beliefs: *Espiritismo*, *Curanderismo*, and *Brujería* (which together I refer to as *ECB*).

Espiritismo, or spiritualism, is a practice that combines mysticism and contact with the spirit world with Christian morality and traditions, and is often associated with progressive and individualist politics (de la Torre 2009; Olmos & Paravisini-Gerbert 2007).⁵ Many *Espiritismo* believers hold that there are good and evil spirits that influence one's personal life and fortune. Mediums (those who contact the spirits) are consulted for physical and mental healing, as well as contacting one's ancestors, who may be influencing one's current life state. Similarly, *Curanderismo* is a tradition most popular among those of indigenous and mestizo ancestry that emphasizes faith healing and is often associated with shamanism (Ortiz & Davis 2009; Trotter II & Chavira 1997). *Curanderos*, or practitioners of these natural faith healings, often operate out of their homes and use a variety of supernatural cures developed from both Christian and indigenous traditions. Cures are offered predominantly for subjective medical syndromes, such as fright, suspicion of hexes, or experiencing the "evil eye" (Ortiz & Davis 2009). *Curanderismo* is sometimes practiced alongside *Brujería* and occasionally charismatic and Pentecostal healing systems. *Brujería* translates roughly to witchcraft, and relies on the energy of the universe to generate neo-pagan rituals, spells, potions, and healing. In all three cases, magical and faith healings drive significant portions of the belief systems.

In their study of Latino Catholics, Pantoja et al. (2008, p. 119) suggest that *ECB*-oriented individuals have "a more mystical sense of religiosity and [are] perhaps less likely to embrace the convergence of religion with politics." Like Pentecostalism and charismaticism, *ECB*

⁵ Mexican spiritualism (often known as *Espiritualismo*) is closely associated with a more institutionalized version of *Curanderismo* and with Holiness theologies of Christianity that promote moral purity and upright living.

promotes outer-worldly solutions to societal problems; rather than relying on government to improve the social situation of believers, *ECB*-oriented individuals prefer to rely on magic and the spirit world. This is not to suggest that *ECB* beliefs always translate to lower rates of political participation, though I do expect these individuals to be less engaged in formal politics. I also hypothesize that popular Christianity, due to its emphasis on restoring and maintaining traditional beliefs and relation to one's ancestors, can be made salient when Latino culture faces challenges in American politics. Thus, participation through unconventional political activities, such as attending a protest or demonstration, may result from the need to protect one's culture and *ECB* beliefs and practices.

Prosperity Gospel

A growing phenomenon in both the United States and Latin America is prosperity theology or the Prosperity Gospel, which holds that faith, positive thinking, and financial donations lead God to bless one with increased financial security and well-being (Harris-Lacewell 2007; Jenkins 2011; Levine 2012; Martínez 2011; McDaniel 2008). This is perhaps best exemplified by televangelist Creflo Dollar, who suggests that tithing and giving money to his church will miraculously lead to financial gain. Dollar is African American, and black churches have increasingly become associated with the Prosperity Gospel (Harris 2010; Harris-Lacewell 2007; McDaniel 2008). While black churches are often credited with increasing the political participation of African Americans, Harris-Lacewell (2007, p. 149) suggests that Prosperity Gospel beliefs provide “no moral imperative for social action” and lead to lower participation rates (see also Harris 2010). The Prosperity Gospel instead promotes individualism and material or supernatural fixes to societal problem.

The role of Prosperity Gospel beliefs in Latino religion and politics has not been empirically addressed in the literature, despite the fact that both Catholics and Protestants hold prosperity beliefs. Traditional Pentecostal churches and the Catholic Church have both denounced the Prosperity Gospel, but it has not stemmed the tide of adherents holding principles related to prosperity theology (Martínez 2011). While initially an upper-class movement, the Prosperity Gospel has spread to low-income and immigrant Latinos, who look to God to achieve the American Dream in a system in which they are marginalized. Much like the effect for African Americans, I hypothesize that Prosperity Gospel beliefs will generate lower rates of participation, particularly in labor-intensive political acts which require more than a minimal investment from believers.

Earthly Collective Salvation

While the Prosperity Gospel proposes individual rewards for Christian believers, others have applied similar principles of religious conversion as a solution to collective social problems. Under this belief system, bringing people to Christ will resolve the ills plaguing society by re-instilling Biblical morality and Christian values (thus offering “salvation” on earth). Therefore, proselytizing to and converting non-Christians is of the utmost importance, while political action may be less important unless it serves as a means of conversion. These beliefs are occasionally (though by no means exclusively) tied to postmillennialist theology, as contrasted with premillennialism described in the next section. If Christians establish an age of social justice and peace, according to these beliefs, it will facilitate the end times and the return of Jesus to save all of humanity. In other instances, belief in Earthly Collective Salvation is simply tied with the social mission of churches, such as those associated with the Social Gospel (applying Christian ethics to social problems, particularly in Progressive Mainline or Catholic churches) or Holiness

theology (moral upright living, such as avoiding alcohol, gambling, dancing; typically associated with the thought of John Wesley and certain Pentecostal churches). Despite its different manifestations, I hypothesize that belief in Earthly Collective Salvation will decrease political engagement among believers.

Eschatology

Finally, I examine the role that eschatology (or beliefs about the end times) plays in political participation. One's view of what happens at the end of times can influence what one does during their lifetime, particularly if a respondent views politics as being more or less moral. If the end is near, politics may also become more or less important, depending on how the end is supposed to play out. For many religious persons around the world, the end involves individual reward or punishment upon death. However, a growing number of Christians, particularly in Evangelical Protestantism or sect religions, believe the end of the world is imminent and that Christians must prepare for Jesus' return to earth. Often termed premillennialism (that is, Jesus' return before a 1000 year [Millennial] age of peace), this belief has grown rapidly among Latino Protestants and even Catholics and other Christians (Pew Research Center 2007). Importantly, the most prominent Latino eschatological beliefs are intricately intertwined with sociopolitical attitudes, and in fact, some reject any Latino eschatology that avoids social and political concerns (for an overview, see Benavides 2009). Beliefs about the end times are often related to struggles for social justice or to a rejection of these struggles in favor of the world to come. When it comes to premillennial theology, I hypothesize that it is the latter: struggles for political goods are deemed inconsequential in comparison to the impending salvation of one's eternal soul.

Pre-millennial beliefs have been shown to correlate with specific policy positions related to the supposed deterioration of the world and return of Christ. For example, these beliefs lead to

lower support for environmentalism, as it is believed to be futile to care for the environment if the world will end soon (Barker & Bearce 2013; Guth et al. 1995). It is also related to support for the state of Israel in preparation for a cataclysmic battle between good and evil, triggered by a restoration of the state of Israel as interpreted in the Bible (Barker et al. 2008; Guth et al. 1996). Some who hold these beliefs even propose that sin and lawlessness must increase in order to bring about the Second Coming. While these issues can mobilize those preparing for an imminent return of Jesus, in terms of political participation, I posit that these beliefs will significantly lower rates of engagement. Presumably, politics and worldly affairs are fleeting goods, while preparing one's soul for salvation and proselytizing to non-believers are given precedence in terms of worldly action.

Data & Methods

To examine the effect of religious beliefs on political participation, I utilize two surveys of Latinos that allow me to both measure a variety of religious beliefs and to control for other methods by which churches facilitate political participation, such as civic skill development or direct mobilization. First, I turn to the 2000 HCAPL survey, a national telephone survey of Latinos conducted in Los Angeles, San Antonio, Houston, Chicago, Miami, New York City, rural Colorado, rural Iowa, and San Juan, Puerto Rico (Espinosa et al. 2003). Respondents were identified using random digit dialing in high-density Latino areas and from directory-listed households with Spanish surnames in low-density Latino areas. The data also include an oversample of 351 Latino Protestants. The HCAPL survey was conducted in both Spanish and English.

The survey instrument contains a variety of religious measures, including beliefs in *ECB*, Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs, and born again identity. Importantly, these beliefs are held

across religious traditions: *ECB* beliefs are held by 18% of Catholics, 13% of Evangelicals, and 22% of Mainline Protestants; Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs are held by 86% of Catholics, 80% of Evangelicals, and 53% of Mainline Protestants; and 28% of Catholics, 88% of Evangelicals, and 33% of Mainline Protestants identify as born again.⁶ Given the cross-traditional nature of these beliefs, they are less likely to be captured by traditional measures of religious affiliation. To separate the effect of beliefs on political participation from that of other aspects of religion, I also control for religious tradition, church attendance, whether the respondent holds a leadership position in the church⁷, whether the respondent is part of a small group at church (such as a prayer group, Bible study, or faith sharing group), and whether the church asked adherents to contact public officials, sign a petition, or come to a meeting about specific social, educational, or political issues. These variables capture the organizational features of religious traditions (such as whether they are more or less hierarchical in nature), religious involvement, the likelihood of developing civic skills in church groups or in a leadership position, and direct mobilization by the congregation.

I use these elements of religion to explain a variety of political participation acts, including one's likelihood of voting in the 1996 election, of contacting public officials by phone or in writing, and taking part in a protest, march, or demonstration (other than a strike against the respondent's employer). These participatory acts cover a range of ways that individuals can make their voices heard, and include actions that can be taken by both citizens and non-citizens and persons from a variety of different social backgrounds. Additionally, because I hypothesize

⁶ The figure of 86% of Catholics identifying as Pentecostal, charismatic, or spirit-filled likely over-represents the actual numbers of Charismatic Catholics in the U.S., but demonstrates the significant influence that Pentecostal beliefs have in Latino Catholicism. The Pew Forum Changing Faiths survey report of 58% is closer to figures more frequently reported in the media.

⁷ Leadership positions are measured as participating in at least one of the following: leading a Bible study, serving on a board or committee in the church, helping organize church meetings, or holding an official position as a leader in the church.

that religious beliefs form a framework for how those in the U.S. approach public life, I also examine the effect of religious beliefs on two political attitudes: that religious leaders should try to influence public affairs and that the respondent's church should become more involved in politics.

Given that I employ categorical outcome variables, I utilize a series of multivariate [ordered] logistic regression models to test the effect of religious beliefs on Latino political participation. Of course, religion is not the only explanation for why Latinos participate at different rates. In addition to the religious controls, I also control for a variety of sociodemographic variables that influence political participation, such as education, income, gender, age, and marital status. I also control for whether the respondent completed the survey in English or Spanish (the reference category), was born in the United States, and comes from Mexican heritage, the largest ancestral country of origin among Latinos (and the most represented in the HCAPL survey). As others have shown, these factors are highly influential in one's ability and decision to participate in politics (e.g. Fraga et al. 2012). I also control for whether the respondent identifies with a political party and feels that someone like them can influence government decisions, two other important barriers to participation (e.g. Hajnal & Lee 2011; Rosenstone & Hansen 2003). Given this range of data, we can be relatively confident that the effect of religious beliefs is not caused by another latent predictor of political engagement.

While the HCAPL survey offers a strong test of the role of religious beliefs in Latino politics, it does not capture the range of beliefs that are prevalent in Latino religious traditions. Furthermore, the survey was conducted before the major immigrant rights protests of the mid-2000's, which significantly altered the manner in which churches and religion influenced the political lives of Latinos. Given these limitations, I next turn to the 2006 Pew Forum Changing

Faiths survey, a nationally representative bilingual telephone sample of Latinos conducted in the fall of 2006 at the height of the immigrant rights protests (Pew Research Center 2007). The survey included an oversample of over 2,000 non-Catholics, as well as a recontact survey with 650 Catholics to further explore their religious beliefs and practices. The data are weighted along relevant characteristics. Furthermore, while the measures of political engagement are more limited, it includes a broader range of religious beliefs that influence the Latino religious experience.

Among the measures of religious beliefs I utilize in the survey are: whether the respondent identifies as charismatic or Pentecostal, whether they identify as born again, belief in the Prosperity Gospel (*“God will grant financial success and good health to all believers who have enough faith”*), Earthly Collective Salvation (*“If enough people were brought to Christ, social ills would take care of themselves”*), and end times beliefs (*“Jesus will return to earth in my lifetime”*). As before, these beliefs cross the traditional boundaries of religious denomination: Charismatic and Pentecostal beliefs are held by 58% of Catholics, 67% of Evangelicals, and 42% of Mainline Protestants; 30% of Catholics are born again, along with all Evangelicals; 78% of Catholics believe in the aforementioned tenet of the Prosperity Gospel, as with 79% of Evangelicals and 70% of Mainline Protestants; 51% of Catholics, 66% of Evangelicals, and 56% of Mainline Protestants believe that Christ would heal social ills; and belief in Jesus’ imminent return is shared by 62% of Catholics, 75% of Evangelicals, and 55% of Mainline Protestants. At first glance these numbers may be somewhat surprising, given their typical association with certain (especially Evangelical) traditions. However, a strong evangelical and popular religion undercurrent exists in Latino religion and culture, which demonstrates the importance of

religious beliefs in establishing the lens through which religious Latinos view the world and approach political life (Espín 1994).

To examine the effect of these beliefs, I utilize three measures of political and civic engagement: being registered to vote (U.S. citizens only), participating in an immigration rights protest or demonstration, and volunteering for a neighborhood, business, or youth group. As before, I include a range of religious variables in the model to parse out the discrete effect of religious beliefs, as opposed to that of religious affiliation, church attendance, participating in a church or religious group, or being directly mobilized by the church.⁸ In addition to the control variables employed in the HCAPL models, I also include a measure for how much guidance religion provides in influencing the respondent’s political thinking, the respondent’s abilities in reading and speaking English, and whether the respondent is located in a Western state. As before, I employ a series of logistic regression analyses to test the effect of religious beliefs on Latino participation. It is to these analyses that I now turn.

Results

Table I: Latino/a Religious Beliefs and Political Participation			
	Vote (1996)	Contact Official	Protest
<i>Espiritismo</i>	0.25 (0.25)	0.24 (0.19)	0.43* (0.26)
Pentecostal/Charismatic	-0.43* (0.26)	-0.23 (0.20)	-0.43* (0.27)
Born Again	0.51** (0.26)	0.13 (0.19)	0.16 (0.27)
Catholic ^a	2.30** (0.74)	-0.12 (0.50)	-0.09 (0.63)
Evangelical	1.19 (0.74)	-0.46 (0.51)	-0.58 (0.66)
Mainline	2.39** (0.68)	0.32 (0.48)	0.83 (0.64)

⁸ Church mobilization is measured in different ways for registering to vote and participating in a protest. For voter registration, I include a variable of whether the clergy spoke out about the importance of voting. For protesting, I include a variable of whether the church, as a group, participated in an immigration rights protest or boycott in the past 12 months.

Church Attendance	0.03 (0.08)	-0.11* (0.06)	-0.11 (0.09)
Church Leadership	0.25 (0.22)	0.55** (0.17)	0.48* (0.25)
Church Small Group	0.26 (0.24)	0.01 (0.18)	0.30 (0.26)
Church Mobilization	-0.00 (0.24)	0.48** (0.17)	0.48** (0.23)
Mexican	-0.16 (0.20)	-0.16 (0.15)	-0.68** (0.23)
Born in the U.S.	0.48** (0.24)	0.02 (0.18)	-0.36 (0.25)
English Language	0.71** (0.33)	0.31 (0.22)	0.28 (0.32)
Education	0.64** (0.24)	0.43** (0.20)	0.54* (0.31)
Income	0.23** (0.06)	0.17** (0.04)	0.12** (0.06)
Female	0.25 (0.19)	0.07 (0.15)	-0.23 (0.22)
Age	0.16** (0.04)	0.02 (0.03)	-0.02 (0.04)
Age ²	-0.00** (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Married	-0.07 (0.20)	-0.04 (0.16)	0.07 (0.23)
Have Party ID	0.82** (0.20)	-0.13 (0.16)	0.78** (0.26)
Efficacy	0.23** (0.10)	0.39** (0.08)	0.34** (0.11)
Constant	-9.03 (1.18)	-3.06** (0.77)	-3.08** (1.07)
Pseudo-R ²	0.25	0.10	0.13
N	709	1,196	1,196
<i>Source: Hispanic Churches in American Public Life Survey</i>			
Logistic Regression Coefficients (Robust Standard Errors)			
*p<0.10, **p<0.05			
^a Reference group is the nonreligious. Smaller traditions are omitted from this table.			

Table I displays the results of the HCAPL models measuring voting, contacting a public official, and participating in a protest. First, I examine the effect of having an *Espiritismo* orientation (that is, believing in *Espiritismo*, *Curanderismo*, or *Brujería*). As discussed above,

some have hypothesized that *ECB* beliefs generate an appreciation for the mystical rather than the worldly, such as politics. Indeed, we see no correlation between *ECB* beliefs and voting or contacting an elected official. However, those with an *ECB* persuasion are *more* likely to participate in a protest (about 4% in comparison to those without *ECB* beliefs), especially if they are immigrants. Given that Latino protests are often in response to cultural attack (e.g. Barreto et al. 2009; Zepeda-Millán 2014), this may be a way for those who believe in and practice *ECB* to support and maintain their cultural heritage. *ECB* practices are closely intertwined with traditional native spiritualist beliefs and honoring one's ancestors. Thus, attacks upon Latino culture may lead to the political mobilization of those who practice *ECB*, at least to engage in protest activity. These results are also consistent across religious tradition, meaning that these beliefs are not mobilized specifically by Catholic, Evangelical, or Mainline Protestant churches; indeed, they are more likely to be rebuked for their practices rather than tied to the political mobilizing arm of a particular religious denomination (Espín 1994).

Next, I examine those Latinos who identify as charismatic or Pentecostal and find that they are consistently less likely to participate in politics than non-renewalists, significantly so in regards to voting (7% less) or participating in a protest (4% less). This is likely driven by the historical origins of Pentecostalism, which emphasized disengagement from worldly concerns and reliance on God as the means to living a holy Christian lifestyle (Martínez 2011, Smidt et al. 1996). However, as I show below, these results are based on beliefs about the corruptibility of politics, which do not preclude supporting what Pentecostals and charismatics might view as a more moral political system. Furthermore, there may be evidence that these beliefs are changing among Latino Pentecostals as they did with white Pentecostals; that is, charismatic belief

systems are becoming more amenable to engagement with the world to promote morality and Christian perspectives on politics.

The third row of Table I reports the effect of having a born again experience on political engagement. As the results above show, born again Christians vote at higher rates (about 8%) than those who have not had such an experience. When interacted with religious tradition, born again beliefs still have a positive effect on voting, but the rate is less significant for Catholics than for Evangelicals ($p < 0.09$), unsurprising given that born again beliefs are most often associated with conservative Protestantism. Much like effects for white Americans, however, born again beliefs are associated with greater engagement in electoral politics (Wilcox & Robinson 2011).

Importantly, the effects of the three religious beliefs examined here occur above and beyond those of other religious influences on politics. For instance, we see the highly significant impact that leadership in church has on political engagement; the civic skills gained in leadership positions make one nearly 9% more likely to contact an elected official and nearly 4% more likely to engage in protest activity. This confirms the importance of civic skills in explaining Latino political participation (DeSipio 2007; Djupe & Neiheisel 2012; Jones-Correa & Leal 2001; Verba et al. 1995). Moreover, direct mobilization from the church raises the likelihood of contacting an elected official by 8% and of protesting by another 4%. In tandem with education, income, and political efficacy, which are common predictors of political engagement, churches play a strong role in influencing Latinos' decision to engage in politics. That religious beliefs affect political participation on top of these religious and sociodemographic controls demonstrates their relevance to public life.

Table II: Latino/a Religious Beliefs and the Role of Religion in Politics		
	Influence Public Affairs	Church More Involved
<i>Espiritismo</i>	0.21 (0.14)	-0.20 (0.18)
Pentecostal/Charismatic	0.33** (0.15)	0.65** (0.18)
Born Again	0.33** (0.13)	0.27 (0.18)
Catholic ^a	0.82** (0.42)	1.22** (0.49)
Evangelical	1.29** (0.43)	1.03** (0.51)
Mainline	0.72* (0.38)	1.35** (0.47)
Church Attendance	0.09** (0.05)	0.07 (0.06)
Church Leadership	0.13 (0.13)	0.34** (0.16)
Church Small Group	0.18 (0.13)	-0.01 (0.17)
Church Mobilization	0.35** (0.14)	0.86** (0.18)
Mexican	-0.09 (0.11)	0.05 (0.14)
Born in the U.S.	0.35** (0.14)	-0.06 (0.17)
English Language	-0.26* (0.15)	-0.78** (0.20)
Education	-0.18 (0.13)	-0.36** (0.17)
Income	0.00 (0.03)	-0.12** (0.04)
Female	0.10 (0.11)	-0.12 (0.14)
Age	-0.03 (0.02)	-0.05** (0.02)
Age ²	0.00 (0.00)	0.00* (0.00)
Married	0.13 (0.11)	0.03 (0.14)
Have Party ID	0.12 (0.12)	0.13 (0.15)
Efficacy	0.09* (0.05)	0.18** (0.07)
Constant		0.22 (0.72)

Pseudo-R ²	0.04	0.11
N	1,195	1,101
<i>Source: Hispanic Churches in American Public Life Survey</i> [Ordered] Logistic Regression Coefficients (Robust Standard Errors) *p<0.10, **p<0.05 ^a Reference group is the nonreligious. Smaller traditions are omitted from this table.		

One mechanism by which religious beliefs impact political participation is by orienting believers towards their role in public life. This framework influences not only how religious persons should act in a society, but also opinions on the proper role for religion in public affairs. Attitudes about the role of the church in politics offer insights into the conditions upon which religious people engage in politics and the manners deemed suitable for public engagement. Following this line of inquiry, I next assess two models addressing respondents' views on religious officials attempting to influence public affairs and the involvement of their own church in politics. These results are shown in Table II.

In this case, *ECB* beliefs have only a marginal positive impact on thinking that religious leaders should be active in influencing politics ($p<0.14$). Born again Christians are also more likely to believe that religious leadership should attempt to influence political life. However, unlike the political disengagement of Pentecostals and charismatics in Table I, these results show that renewalist Christians strongly want *more* influence of religious leaders (4% greater on “agree” and “strongly agree”) and of the church they attend (by nearly 14%) in politics, when compared to non-renewalists. How should we reconcile the individual disengagement of Pentecostals and charismatics with their preference for more religious influence in politics? I argue that these individuals may see politics as corrupt and perhaps even un-Christian, while these latter positions represent a broader worldview by which Pentecostals and charismatics desire a stronger role for moralism and religion in public life. Thus, the route to a stronger

society does come through religious involvement in politics, but not necessarily through the engagement of everyday (renewalist) Christians.

Interestingly, church leadership and mobilization also play a strong role in respondents' beliefs about the role of religion in politics. Those who attend a church that mobilized their adherents for political participation are 4-6% more likely to agree that religious leaders should attempt to influence political life. They are also nearly 17% more likely than those in non-politically active churches to want their church to be even more involved. This offers some evidence that those who attend political churches actually desire more politics in the pews (Audette & Weaver n.d.). Those in leadership positions are also 7% more likely to want greater involvement of their church in politics.

While these results offer preliminary confirmation about the importance of religious beliefs in influencing political behavior, they are limited in the number and type of religious beliefs I am able to test. To offer a more recent and nuanced view of Latino religious beliefs, I next turn to the Pew Forum Changing Faiths survey, the results of which are found in Table III.

	Registered to Vote	Protest	Volunteered for a Civic Group
Pentecostal/Charismatic	-0.20 (0.35)	0.55** (0.23)	0.23 (0.20)
Born Again	-0.46 (0.43)	0.20 (0.26)	0.21 (0.24)
Prosperity Gospel	-0.10 (0.43)	-0.09 (0.26)	-0.46** (0.23)
Christ Heals Social Ills	0.58* (0.33)	-0.33* (0.20)	0.21 (0.19)
Jesus' Imminent Return	-0.73* (0.39)	-0.47** (0.23)	0.03 (0.20)
Catholic ^a	1.63** (0.82)	-0.07 (0.53)	-0.49 (0.42)
Evangelical	1.52* (0.89)	0.13 (0.57)	-0.58 (0.44)
Mainline	0.64	0.58	-0.35

	(0.90)	(0.72)	(0.52)
Church Attendance	-0.11 (0.12)	0.07 (0.08)	-0.01 (0.07)
Church Participation	0.75** (0.32)	0.84** (0.22)	1.58** (0.20)
Church Mobilization	0.82** (0.33)	1.71** (0.23)	
Religious Guidance for Politics	0.27* (0.15)	0.23** (0.11)	0.04 (0.09)
Mexican	-0.97** (0.31)	0.31 (0.20)	0.03 (0.18)
Born in the U.S.	0.64* (0.36)	-1.10** (0.30)	-0.05 (0.22)
English Abilities	0.45** (0.12)	-0.01 (0.07)	0.18** (0.06)
Education	0.09 (0.39)	-0.34 (0.24)	0.04 (0.23)
Income	-0.48** (0.22)	-0.06 (0.16)	0.16 (0.14)
Female	0.11 (0.29)	-0.44** (0.21)	-0.28 (0.20)
Age	0.07 (0.05)	0.02 (0.04)	-0.00 (0.04)
Age ²	-0.00 (0.00)	-0.00 (0.00)	0.00 (0.00)
Married	1.10** (0.34)	-0.30 (0.23)	-0.06 (0.20)
Have Party ID	1.23** (0.48)	-0.23 (0.34)	-0.12 (0.36)
West	0.65* (0.39)	0.98** (0.21)	-0.02 (0.20)
Constant	-5.90** (1.82)	-2.08* (1.21)	-1.84* (1.10)
Pseudo-R ²	0.27	0.25	0.14
N	894	1,376	1,635
<i>Source: Pew Forum Changing Faiths Survey</i>			
Logistic Regression Coefficients (Robust Standard Errors)			
*p<0.10, **p<0.05			
^a Reference group is the nonreligious. Smaller traditions are omitted from this table.			

First, I return to the importance of Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs in influencing the political behaviors of Latinos. As the table shows, renewalists are no different from non-renewalists in terms of registering to vote or volunteering for civic groups; however, Pentecostals

and charismatics are actually more likely to have participated in an immigration protest, particularly at the height of the immigrants' rights protests of the mid-2000's.⁹ As we saw above, Pentecostals and charismatics engage not in electoral politics, but do see a role for religio-political action, particularly to increase the moral foundation of society. During the exogenous shock of the immigrants' rights protests, Pentecostal churches and charismatic Catholic groups responded to legislation that was hostile to immigrants as a moral issue, mobilizing adherents for some of the largest protests in American history (Barreto et al. 2009; Zepeda-Millán 2014). By engaging in politics through unconventional participation outside of the electoral system, these groups largely maintained their independence from what they may view as the corrupt nature of American politics. However, this entrance onto the political stage follows an increased openness to public engagement and may offer some evidence that Pentecostal and charismatic Latino groups are following the path of white renewalists in becoming more politically active.

Outside of Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs, I now turn to a variety of other religious beliefs commonly held by Latinos that have the potential to influence political life. In this instance, I find no significant difference in terms of Latinos reporting a born again experience, both for Catholics and Protestants. I also examine belief in the Prosperity Gospel, which has received significant attention as a growing phenomenon among religious Latinos (Espinosa 2014; Martínez 2011). Beliefs that living a Christian life will lead to wealth and prosperity, I hypothesize, lead individuals to devalue political and social participation as unnecessary forms of trying to improve one's own or others' social standing. Indeed, those Latinos that hold Prosperity Gospel beliefs are about 8% less likely to volunteer their time for civic organizations, perhaps out of belief that reliance on God is a more effective means for people to achieve

⁹ Pentecostals and charismatics that immigrated to the U.S., however, are approximately 4% less likely to vote than non-renewalists ($p=0.05$).

success. While this holds for many religious traditions, Evangelical Protestants that hold Prosperity Gospel tenets are even less likely (about 10%) to volunteer their time. In terms of other political actions, Mainline Protestants that subscribe to the Prosperity Gospel are about 2% less likely to participate in an immigrants' rights protest ($p < 0.001$). While not consistent across all political issues, these findings offer initial evidence that the Prosperity Gospel dampens the political participation of Latinos, and warrants additional research.

Next I examine belief in Earthly Collective Salvation (measured here as whether drawing people to Christ will heal society's ills) and Jesus' imminent return to earth. Similar to other belief systems, I hypothesized that these beliefs would lower participation rates due to adherents' preference for supernatural solutions to problems in the world. With the exception that those who support the notion of Earthly Collective Salvation are more likely to have registered to vote, this hypothesis is largely borne out. Those who believe that Christ will heal social ills are approximately 5% less likely to have participated in protest activity, while those who believe Jesus will return in their lifetime are 7.5% less likely to have registered to vote, as well as over 6% less likely to report participating in a protest or rally (or 8% if one immigrated to the United States). Thus, these social beliefs about religion have a strong effect on one's likelihood of engaging in political activity.

As with the HCAPL survey, these results stand even when controlling for a range of sociodemographic variables and other ways in which churches mobilize or demobilize their members. In the Changing Faiths survey, we again see the very strong importance of participating in church activities: those who do are 7% more likely to register to vote, 12% more likely to protest, and a very substantial 32% more likely to volunteer for a civic organization. Moreover, churches that directly mobilize their members for political action increase the

likelihood of voter registration by 9% and participating in a protest by 28%. Clearly, civic skills and mobilization via churches have a strongly significant impact on the political participation rates of Latinos, and a stronger impact than religious beliefs. Nevertheless, the 2-9% increases and decreases in participation rates that are driven by particular religious beliefs can certainly alter the American political landscape; for example, a 7.5% decrease in voter registration among those who believe in Jesus' imminent return to earth could swing close election results. An 8% point drop in volunteer time for civic organizations, driven by Prosperity Gospel theology, is the difference between an organization thriving or struggling to keep its doors open. Furthermore, beliefs are not often held in isolation, but rather as a package, and thus the effects of religious beliefs can compound and add up to have quite substantial effects on the political incorporation and representation of Latinos. This offers mounting evidence that religious beliefs should be taken seriously as a motivation for and (de)mobilizer of political activity.

Conclusion

Equal opportunities for political participation are fundamental to a representative American democracy. While Latinos participate in religion at higher rates than white Americans, they tend to participate and be represented in politics at lower rates than other racial and ethnic groups (e.g. Verba et al. 1995). Beyond religious affiliation, church attendance, and civic skill acquisition, all of which the literature suggests are correlated with participation rates, I show here that religious beliefs also have a significant (though somewhat inconsistent) effect on the political engagement of Latinos. Notably, many of the beliefs examined here actually have a *demobilizing* effect for a wide swath of Latinos, perhaps contributing to the inequality of opportunity highlighted by Verba et al. (1995) and others (DeSipio 2007; Espinosa 2005; Hritzuk & Park 2000). However, certain religious beliefs can also be mobilized for political action under

the right circumstances, such as Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs on protesting or born again beliefs for electoral politics. This suggests that scholars of Latino politics and religion and politics take religious beliefs into greater account when analyzing political participation.

Importantly, this study provides a first look at the role of religious beliefs in Latino political participation, but is not meant to provide authoritative coverage of each belief system. Indeed, each type of belief should be explored with greater depth and additional nuance. As Espinosa (2006, p. 39) notes, “not all Pentecostals are alike,” and this study confirms that the politicization of Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs is contingent upon other mobilizing factors. Furthermore, there are a number of other beliefs that characterize Latino religions that I do not measure here due to data availability, most notably liberation theology (Smith 1991; Wilson 2008). These warrant additional research and greater consideration in surveys of Latino religion and politics.

I posit here that Latinos offer a strong and unique test case for transdenominational religious beliefs, given the syncretism and cultural traditions through which Latino religions are interpreted and experienced. However, other ethnic groups likewise report beliefs across traditions. Pentecostal and charismatic beliefs are seeing increasing growth among Asian Americans (Wong et al. 2008), and remain, to a lesser extent, a point of distinction among white Americans. The cross-traditional nature of Prosperity Gospel or certain end times beliefs are also not limited to Latinos, and offer an avenue for further research. Ultimately, I demonstrate here that religion matters for political participation – and not just religious affiliation, church attendance, or civic skill development. Rather, these findings suggest that political scientists should take a more holistic approach to measuring religion and not discount the role of religious beliefs in influencing the participation rates of Latinos and other social groups.

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