

RELIGIOUS TRADITIONALISM
AND LATINO POLITICS IN THE UNITED STATES

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how and why ethnic context conditions the link between religious traditionalism and the political attitudes and behavior of Latinos in the United States. Existing research shows that the impact of religious traditionalism on political attitudes varies by policy and religious context. Through an analysis of issue attitudes, ideology, and partisanship, we confirm this existing work and also show that religious traditionalism influences Latino political behavior differently than it influences Anglo politics. The impact of religious traditionalism is not nearly as strong among Latinos as among Anglos. To the extent that traditionalism does influence political attitudes and behavior, it generally produces greater ideological conservatism but does not translate into support for the Republican Party – the latter is quite different from its impact in the Anglo population.

Latinos are an increasingly important part of politics in the United States. The Latino population in the United States has been growing rapidly, and national-level politicians are beginning to take this segment of the electorate seriously. While still relatively small in the 2004 election, Latinos comprised a larger proportion of U.S. voters than they had in any previous presidential contest and are projected by the U.S. Census Bureau (2004) to be half as large as the Anglo population by the year 2050.¹ Given the razor-thin margin that separates winners from losers in contemporary national elections, political strategists from both parties are keenly aware that Latinos are of immense importance for electoral outcomes. It should not be surprising, then, that both parties are expending more energy and resources to attract Latino voters than ever before.

Scholars of American politics are also paying ever more attention to Latinos by examining such outcomes as Latino political participation (Diaz 1996; Garcia, J. 1997; Hero and Campbell 1996; Jones-Correa and Leal 2001; Verba, Schlozman, Brady, and Nie 1993), issue attitudes (Garcia, F. 1997; Uhlaner and Garcia 2002), partisanship (Alvarez and Bedolla 2003; Cain, Kiewiet, and Uhlaner 1991; Welch and Sigelman 1993), and political values (de la Garza, Falcon, and Garcia 1996). While this previous work has considered a variety of influences on Latino politics, one factor that has received little attention is religion.

Studies of religion and politics focus heavily on three facets of religion: beliefs, behavior, and affiliation (Kellstedt, Green, Guth, and Smidt 1996). In studies of Anglos, the political import of all three facets of religion has been deeply explored (though there is certainly still more work to be done). The same cannot be said for research on Latinos. The only aspect of religion that has received any substantial attention in studies of Latino politics is affiliation – the type of church or other religious body that one attends. The early work in this area focused on assessing

political differences between Catholics and Protestants, but recent work has begun to develop a more thorough understanding of how a wider variety of religious affiliations affect political behavior (Kelly and Kelly 2005; Leal, Barreto, Lee, and de la Garza 2005; Lee and Pachon 2007). Religious beliefs and behavior, on the other hand, have received almost no attention.² Our article fills this gap by focusing on the political impact of a concept that encompasses both beliefs and behavior – religious traditionalism.

Our goals are twofold. First, we seek to provide an initial exploration of the influence of religious traditionalism on the political attitudes and behavior of Latinos. In doing so we contribute to a second goal, which is to determine how the impact of religious traditionalism varies in different settings, in particular ethnic, policy, and denominational contexts. The remainder of the article is divided into four parts. In the first section, we discuss the literature examining religious traditionalism and politics in the United States and the role of religion in ethnic politics. This discussion serves to explain how the impact of religious traditionalism on Latino politics may vary due to ethnic context. In the second section, we describe our data and the measurement of religious traditionalism. The third part of the article describes the religious beliefs and behavior of Latinos in the U.S. and reports a multivariate analysis of the connection between religious traditionalism and Latino politics. We present a summary and discussion of our conclusions in the final section.

Context and the Impact of Religious Traditionalism in American Politics

The role of religious traditionalism on American politics has been on the scholarly agenda for many years, with the primary focus being whether or not religious traditionalism represents a rift that serves as the fundamental factor linking religious differences to political conflict in modern American politics (Fiorina 2005; Guth, Green, Kellstedt, and Smidt 1995;

Guth et al. 2006; Kohut, Green, Keeter, and Toth 2000; Layman 1997; Layman and Carmines 1997; Rozell and Wilcox 1995; Wuthnow 1988). Most recently, however, scholars interested in the impact of religious traditionalism on American politics have begun to focus on identifying *contextual variation* in its impact.

The fundamental conclusion of this recent work is that *context matters*. In certain settings religious traditionalism matters powerfully while in others it is not as important. Layman and Green (2006) focus on three forms of contextual variation that condition the impact of religious traditionalism on political attitudes and behavior – denominational context, policy context, and electoral context. They show that the political impact of religious traditionalism varies depending on what type of church one attends because “religious communities are a key social context for linking religious values to politics” (p 66). They also show that the impact of traditionalism on attitudes toward “moral” issues is stronger than its impact on attitudes toward economic issues. Finally, they demonstrate that religious traditionalism is more strongly linked to political behavior when parties and candidates seek to differentiate themselves on policy matters within the “moral” domain, such as abortion or gay marriage.

We build on this work by focusing on ethnic context as an additional factor that conditions the impact of religious traditionalism. Like Layman and Green we assess how denominational and issue contexts condition the effect of religious traditionalism. By focusing on Latinos, however, we extend this recent work to an additional context that might moderate the effect of religious traditionalism – ethnicity. The central question of this article is how religious traditionalism influences the political attitudes and behavior of Latinos as compared to Anglos.

In the Anglo population, religious traditionalism acts as a powerful social psychological force in attitude formation and enhances linkages with religious social groups. These linkages

have clear and consistent political implications even if the impact of religious traditionalism varies in strength by electoral, policy, and religious context. Religious traditionalism produces conservative attitudes and Republican partisanship (Guth et al. 2006; Guth et al. 1995; Kohut et al. 2000; Layman 1997; Layman and Carmines 1997; Rozell and Wilcox 1995).

Latino and Anglo Christians read the same Bible and pray to the same God. So it is possible that religious traditionalism will influence Latino political behavior in much the same way that it influences the Anglo population, essentially by becoming a stronger social psychological force than ethnicity in structuring political attitudes. Previous research provides some hints that this may be the case. In an examination of the connection between religious affiliation and Latino political behavior, recent work demonstrates that the type of church one attends has a similar influence among both Anglos and Latinos – evangelicals and mainline Protestants are more likely to support the Republican Party than Catholics and those with no religious affiliation (Kelly and Kelly 2005). If the impact of religious traditionalism follows a pattern similar to these findings for religious affiliation, religious traditionalism should be linked with conservative attitudes and Republican partisanship among Latinos, as it is for Anglos.

It is also possible, however, that religious traditionalism has quite different implications among Latinos as compared to Anglos. One reason for this is that religiosity may serve to mobilize political activity, increase awareness of political issues that challenge minority empowerment, and create stronger perceptions of linked fate and group consciousness. If this is the case then religious traditionalism should serve to produce political behavior and attitudes among Latinos that are consistent with the fact that Latinos remain a disadvantaged ethnic minority with distinctive cultural characteristics. The impact of religion on black politics illustrates this idea.

For blacks, one of the dominant mechanisms through which religion influences politics is political mobilization. Churches serve as a place in which the social capital, psychological resources, and civic skills that facilitate political participation and political awareness can be developed (Cavendish 2000; Chaves and Higgins 1992; Robnett 1996; Tate 1993; Verba et al. 1993). This mobilizing impact likely means that religious blacks are more closely connected to the black community and are more likely to have knowledge of political debates with implications for blacks. This is certainly consistent with previous findings that connectedness to religion promotes group identity, group consciousness, and linked fate among blacks (Allen, Dawson, and Brown 1989; Dawson 1994; Reese and Brown 1995). Racial group identity is actively mobilized and asserted through the church, which is why religious blacks are often more liberal and Democratic than non-religious blacks (Dawson 1994; Layman and Green 2006). The question, then, is whether the church is mobilizing Latinos (as it does for blacks) or whether religion acts more as a social psychological force fostering conservatism in political attitudes (as it does for Anglos).

If religion acts as a mobilizing force among Latinos, it is also likely that religion is in fact serving to foster group identity and discourage immigrant adaptation into U.S. religious and political dynamics. Historically, Latinos in the U.S. have been predominantly Catholic in terms of religious affiliation and traditionalist in terms of their religious beliefs and behavior. In fact, Catholic religious affiliation has been cited as a key source of commonality in arguments for a Latino pan-ethnic identity (Oboler 1995). Movement away from Catholicism and religious traditionalism, then, may be an indicator of immigrant adaptation, or assimilation. With the exception of those of Cuban origin, Latinos traditionally have loyalties to the Democratic Party, hold liberal economic attitudes, and are socially conservative. Thus, as Latinos become less

religiously traditional, we would expect to see a shift away from these political attitudes and behavior (Oboler 2006; Sanchez 2006).

By examining how the impact of religious traditionalism on politics is conditioned by ethnic context, we gain insight into the extent to which religion acts as a liberal mobilizing force or serves as a more conservative social psychological influence among Latinos. If religion serves a mobilizing role and discourages immigrant adaptation, the impact of religious traditionalism should differ in the Latino ethnic context as compared to its effect among whites (Sanchez 2006; Stokes 2003). Due to the economic disadvantages faced by Latinos, religious traditionalism under this view should be less strongly linked to economic conservatism and Republican partisanship among Latinos than it is among Anglos (with the exception of Cubans noted above). On the other hand, the traditional values common in many Latino cultures may result in religious traditionalism augmenting social conservatism among Latinos just as it does among Anglos.

In sum, our goal is to examine how denominational, ethnic, and issue context condition the effect of religious traditionalism. We examine the conditioning effect of issue context by assessing the impact of traditionalism on issue attitudes within both moral and economic issue domains. We consider religious context by accounting for how the effect of religious traditionalism varies across individuals from different denominational groupings. Finally, ethnic context is considered by directly comparing the effect of religious traditionalism on Latino political behavior to its effect on Anglos.

Data Considerations and Measuring the Components of Latino Religion

To fully assess how denominational and ethnic context condition the impact of religious traditionalism, comparable data on religious beliefs, behavior, and affiliation are needed for both Latinos and Anglos. While several datasets focusing on Latino politics have recently become

available, these Latino data sources are either drastically limited in their coverage of religious items (*e.g.*, the 2004 Washington Post/ Tomás Rivera Policy Institute [TRPI] survey) or use outdated measures of religion that render them inappropriate for studying the connection between religion and politics (*e.g.*, the Latino National Political Survey). As a further problem, many of these datasets fail to include non-Latinos for the purposes of testing the contextual impact of religious traditionalism on politics (*e.g.*, the 2000 Hispanic Churches in American Public Life survey by TRPI).³ We overcome this problem by using National Election Studies (NES) data from 1990-2000. By pooling these years, we are able to examine nearly 1000 Latino respondents. With regard to religion, the NES has included a fairly comprehensive battery of religion measures since 1990. Thus, we make use of a source specifically designed to study neither Latinos nor religion, but one that provides more detailed information about both than any other current source.⁴

Conceptually, religious traditionalism is an embracing of conventional religion, and it is the key independent variable in our analysis. Given that religion itself is a multifaceted concept, it is important to account for this in measuring traditionalism. As mentioned earlier, studies of religion and politics have focused on three aspects of religion: denominational affiliation, doctrinal beliefs, and participation in religious activities (Kellstedt et al. 1996; Layman 1997). Religious traditionalism focuses on the latter two – beliefs and behavior. In the domain of doctrinal beliefs, those who reject orthodox beliefs lack traditionalism. Traditionalism also involves embracing the religious activities of public and private devotionalism.

We take advantage of multiple measures of religious activity to assess the behavioral aspect of religious traditionalism.⁵ The first two activities represent acts of private devotionalism – frequency of prayer and of Bible reading. The third is an act of public

devotionalism – regularity of attendance at religious services. Those with the highest levels of participation in religious observances and private devotionalism embrace traditional religion most strongly, while those who eschew religious activities are rejecting religion through their behavior.

We also consider three items related to religious belief. The first, one's view of the Bible, is a clear question of (Christian) religious doctrine. The historic view of the Bible in Christianity is that it is the actual word of God and it represents a direct and literal message to followers. Beliefs in line with this sentiment would evidence the most traditional beliefs about the Bible. More modern, yet still orthodox, perspectives accept the Bible as God's word but take a low view of interpreting it literally. Finally, there are those who view the Bible as a useful book filled with wisdom, but not necessarily wisdom from God. This view does not reflect traditional doctrine. In addition to one's view of the Bible, we also make use of two other variables that we loosely categorize under the domain of religious beliefs – a “born-again” experience and the importance of religion to one's life. Those who find religion important in their day-to-day lives clearly embrace religion, while viewing religion as unimportant marks a wariness about religion. The born-again experience can be viewed as a hyper-indicator of religious traditionalism. While not having a “born-again” experience is not a rejection of religion, such an experience evidences embracing Christianity of a particular, traditional brand.

In this article, of course, we are applying these indicators of religious traditionalism to Latinos, an ethnic group that remains overwhelmingly Catholic despite recent shifts toward Protestantism. This raises the concern that these standard measures of religious traditionalism have been critiqued for underestimating the traditionalism of Catholics (Leege 1996). However, Mockabee, Monson, and Grant (2001), who present the most detailed work addressing the

measurement of religious traditionalism across denominational categories, show that using the indicators of religious traditionalism discussed above is likely appropriate in our context despite the prevalence of Catholicism among Latinos. Mockabee et al. (2001) argue that the problem with combining the typical indicators of religious traditionalism across denominational categories is essentially a problem of weighting. That is, some indicators of traditional beliefs and behavior are more important in some traditions than others, but measures of religious traditionalism typically assume that all measures are equally important. To correct for this, these authors construct several different measures of religious traditionalism, many of which account for the fact that some of the beliefs and practices measured in the National Election Studies are less important among Catholics than they are for evangelical Protestants and other traditions. Their analysis shows that religious traditionalism is underestimated for Catholics. More importantly, however, they also show that the substantive size of the underestimation is small, that the rank ordering of religious traditionalism across denominational families is consistent regardless of the measure used, and that linkages between religious traditionalism and political attitudes and behavior are almost identical regardless of whether one corrects for the relevance of particular beliefs and behaviors within denominational categories. These results are reassuring in the context of our work, and lead us to believe that it is appropriate to use these measures of religious traditionalism to make comparisons of the impact of traditionalism among Latinos and Anglos.

Finally, we account for religious affiliation in our analyses in addition to measures of religious traditionalism. While we treat religious affiliation separately from religious traditionalism, affiliation is an important aspect of religion that must be considered not just as a direct determinant of political behavior but also a factor that may condition the impact of

religious traditionalism. The impact of religious traditionalism among mainline Protestants, for example, differs somewhat from its impact on evangelicals because the social psychological implications of traditionalism differ across denominational contexts. Measuring religious affiliation is straightforward. Respondents are presented with a battery of questions tapping their specific religious and denominational affiliation. Based on responses to this battery of questions, we then divide denominational affiliation into five categories – mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, Roman Catholic, other religion, and no affiliation.

Analyzing Religious Traditionalism and Latino Politics

To begin the analysis, we present a descriptive picture of religious traditionalism in the Latino population. Table 1 shows the central tendency of all six indicators of religious traditionalism among Latinos, various Latino subgroups, and the Anglo population.⁶ Along with these central tendencies, we test whether Anglos and Latino denominational subgroups differ from Latinos considered as a whole with regard to their level of traditionalism on these six indicators. When compared to the broader U.S. population, we see that Latinos appear to be somewhat more traditionalist than Anglos. Statistically significant differences between Latinos and Anglos are present for three of the six indicators of religious traditionalism. Latinos are more likely to attend church, view the Bible as God's literal word, and view religion as important to their lives. These first two differences are not surprising given the prevalence of Catholicism among Latinos. The frequency of prayer, Bible reading, and born again experiences, however, are almost identical among Latinos and whites. When religious subgroups are examined, the differences in traditionalism are in line with expectations developed from previous research on Anglos. Evangelical Latinos are by far the most accepting of traditional religion, scoring highest on every measure of religious traditionalism.

[TABLE 1 ABOUT HERE]

Traditionalism as a Unifying Dimension of Latino Religion

Having seen some differences between Anglos and Latinos in terms of religious attitudes and behavior, we now turn to the question of whether these items tapping traditional religious beliefs and behavior form a single underlying dimension for Latinos as they do for whites. In order to assess this question, we use a factor analysis of the religious belief and behavior items to see how well individual responses on measures of religious traditionalism fit together on a single underlying dimension.⁷ Parallel analyses are presented for Latinos and Anglos in Table 2.

[TABLE 2 ABOUT HERE]

The results provide two key pieces of information. First, these six measures of religious belief and behavior fit together reasonably well among Latinos. We interpret this to mean that religious traditionalism is a useful concept among Latinos. Only one underlying factor is identified in this analysis, and the factor loadings are consistently above 0.50. In fact, all items except the question regarding one's view of the Bible have a score above 0.60. The second key piece of information provided in this table relates to comparing religious traditionalism across ethnic contexts. For Anglos we see even higher levels of consistency across these six indicators of traditionalism, with no single indicator falling below a loading of 0.68. Additionally, these six indicators together explain a substantial 59 percent of the variance in the underlying factor for Anglos, but only 43 percent for Latinos. So, while these indicators of religious traditionalism fit together for both Latinos and Anglos, the fit is clearly better for Anglos. This is evidence of variation across ethnic context in the structure of religion and may result from the dominance of Catholicism among Latinos versus the prevalence of Protestantism among Anglos.

Given the degree to which these variables fit together on an underlying dimension, we combine these religious beliefs and behaviors into a single measure of religious traditionalism throughout the remainder of the analysis. We do this by capturing the factor scores generated by the factor analysis reported in Table 2. Once the dimensionality of the data is assessed through a factor analysis, each individual can be assigned a score on this dimension based on their values for each of the component items, with the contribution of each item weighted by its association with the underlying factor. Based on each individual's religious beliefs and behaviors, a numerical value is calculated on the underlying dimension identified in the factor analysis. The factor scores represent a person's level of religious traditionalism, with scores for Latinos ranging from -2.41 to 2.45 with a mean of zero and higher scores indicating higher levels of religious traditionalism. We use these factor scores in the analyses that follow to examine the implications of religious traditionalism for political attitudes and behavior.

Multivariate Analysis of Political Attitudes, Ideology, and Partisanship

One challenge raised in our analysis of Latinos is produced by the relatively small number of respondents combined with a moderate degree of missing data. Even with six NES datasets, we are left with only about 1000 Latino respondents. Like data gathered in any survey, our data are incomplete in the sense that not every person responds to every question. This is particularly problematic when conducting multivariate analysis with several control variables. If one respondent has missing data on any variable, that respondent is dropped from the analysis. Among Latinos, some of whom are recent immigrants with little experience in the American political culture, missing cases can be particularly prevalent on questions such as ideology. The problem with analyzing variables with missing data is that it can produce unreliable results.

Given the small sample and the importance of each and every case, we use the AMELIA multiple imputation procedure developed by King et al. (2001) to deal with this issue.⁸

We are interested in building on recent work assessing how the impact of religious traditionalism on political attitudes and behavior varies across contexts (Layman and Green 2006), specifically in different denominational, policy, and especially ethnic circumstances. To assess this question, we focus on six dependent variables that capture different aspects of political attitudes and behavior – attitudes toward abortion, attitudes about women’s role in society, attitudes about food stamps, and attitudes toward the environment, as well as ideology and partisanship. We include ideology and partisanship because they are two of the most ubiquitous variables in studies of politics. Understanding the formation and implications of ideology and partisanship has been one of the most important contributions of the political behavior literature, and these variables have also been central in previous studies of religion and politics (Layman 1997; Layman and Green 2006).

The selection of the specific issue attitudes to incorporate into the analysis required more careful consideration. One of the limiting factors of our reliance on pooled NES data is that we are constrained to analyzing variables that are available consistently from 1990-2000. In terms of issues, this greatly constrains the possibilities. We want to capture attitudes falling under both cultural and economic domains since earlier work on the contextual influence of religious traditionalism has found differences across these areas. We selected attitudes toward abortion and women’s role in society because they are central to cultural divisions that drive the impact of religious traditionalism on politics. Attitudes toward spending on the environment are included because the impact of religion on environmental attitudes has played prominently in earlier

studies of religion and politics (Guth et al. 1995). We examine attitudes toward food stamps because this is a classic redistributive program, squarely in the economic domain.

In Table 3 we assess the impact of religious traditionalism on issue attitudes. The focus here is on how the impact of religious traditionalism varies across policy context. Each of the dependent variables is coded such that higher values are associated with more conservative positions, but there are important differences in the number of response categories for each variable. The women's role item has seven response categories and is modeled using standard OLS techniques.⁹ The abortion variable has only four categories, and the items measuring attitudes toward spending on the environment and food stamps have only three categories. Thus, these variables are modeled using ordered probit to account appropriately for the nature of the dependent variable. In addition to the religious traditionalism measure and indicator variables for religious affiliation (Catholic is the reference category), we include measures of country of origin (reference category is Mexican) because numerous studies point out important political differences between Latinos with different backgrounds. Time spent in the United States (reference category is born *or* raised abroad) is included because it is likely a correlate of immigrant adaptation. We also include a range of demographic control variables. Finally, we include interaction terms between religious affiliation and religious traditionalism to assess how the impact of religious traditionalism varies by denominational context.

[TABLE 3 ABOUT HERE]

These interaction terms will become of more central relevance later in Table 5, but their presence here throws a few wrinkles into the interpretation of the impact of religious traditionalism and affiliation in the context of Tables 3 and 4. In a multiplicative model, of course, the impact of the constituent parts of the interaction terms will vary depending on the

value of the other variable. The coefficient estimated for the “main effect” refers to the impact of each variable while the value of the other variable is zero. The coefficients for religious traditionalism in Tables 3 and 4, then, refer to the effect of traditionalism among Catholics because a score of zero on all the religious affiliation indicator variables refers to a Catholic respondent due to the fact that Catholic is the reference category for religious affiliation. Likewise, coefficients for each religious affiliation refer to the effect for respondents with a score of zero on the religious traditionalism index, which is the mean score on the index. So the effect of each denominational affiliation refers to its effect for a respondent with an average level of religious traditionalism. In Table 5 we examine the marginal effects of traditionalism across different denominations in detail, but we focus first on the main effects presented in Table 3.

The connection between religious traditionalism and issue attitudes among Latinos is in some cases consistent with expectations generated by previous studies of Anglo religion and politics. Links between religious traditionalism and issue attitudes, where they exist, are generally in the form of higher levels of religiosity producing more conservative attitudes. As evidenced by the statistically significant coefficient estimates for religious traditionalism in the first two columns, for Catholic respondents traditionalism is associated with more restrictive attitudes toward abortion and an increased belief that women should not have an active role in society. The coefficient estimates for religious traditionalism in the last two columns of the table show that religious traditionalism plays a much weaker role in the formation of attitudes related to the economic domain. This result is completely consistent with previous studies of Anglos (see Layman and Green 2006). Religious beliefs and behaviors captured in the religious traditionalism index are not the only religious variables that help to determine issue attitudes. In the final column, we see that evangelicals are more likely than Catholics to oppose

environmental spending, and in the first and third columns it is evident that mainline Protestants are less supportive of abortion and food stamp spending than are Catholic Latinos, which should not be surprising given the strong anti-abortion and social justice message of the Catholic church, particularly in Latin America.

The results are not particularly strong or consistent for country of origin or time spent in the United States. Latinos from Puerto Rico are more liberal (than those from Mexico) on attitudes toward abortion and food stamps, but country of origin has no other statistically significant effects. Being born and raised in the United States is associated with more conservative attitudes toward women, but more liberal attitudes toward the environment. While there is no consistent pattern in the results for these ethnic variables, including them in the model certainly increases confidence in the conclusion that religious traditionalism has an independent impact on cultural issue attitudes. While it is possible that a lack of religious traditionalism and immigrant adaptation are linked among Latinos, the evidence here suggests that the effect of religious traditionalism is not *just* a by-product of any connection it may have with assimilation. In addition to the variable measuring time spent in the U.S., high levels of income and education are also likely associated with immigrant adaptation. Including these variables, then, while not directly measuring assimilation, at least partially isolates the impact of religious traditionalism from the impact of immigrant adaptation.

In Table 4 we shift focus from specific issue attitudes to more general orientations. The first column examines ideology measured on a seven-point scale ranging from extremely liberal to extremely conservative as the dependent variable. In the second column the dependent variable is partisanship measured on a seven-point scale ranging from strong Democrat to strong

Republican. Both models include the same control variables and interaction terms utilized in the previous analysis of issue attitudes and are estimated using OLS regression.

[TABLE 4 ABOUT HERE]

Again, we begin by focusing on the coefficient for religious traditionalism, which provides an estimate of the impact of religious traditionalism among Catholics. The significant and positive coefficient in the model of ideological conservatism indicates that religious traditionalism among Latinos, as in the Anglo population, leads to a more conservative ideological orientation. The same cannot be said for the effect of religious traditionalism on partisanship, however. The coefficient estimated for the effect of traditionalism on partisanship is statistically insignificant. Nonetheless, it would be incorrect to conclude that religion has no impact on Latino partisanship. The impact of evangelical and mainline Protestantism on Republican partisanship (as opposed to Catholic affiliation) is strong and positive. Latinos who shift away from Catholicism are much less likely to be strong Democrats.

As in the models for issue attitudes, the ethnic and demographic variables enhance the validity of our results but present no major surprises. Cubans, as is well known, are more likely to identify as Republicans. We also see that Latinos with higher education are less conservative, older Latinos are more Democratic, and those with higher income are more Republican.

Thus far the focus has been on identifying the general impact of religious traditionalism on Latino political attitudes and behavior. Recall, however, that our major goal in this article is to test how the impact of religious traditionalism varies by policy, denominational, and ethnic context. To this point, we have only explicitly discussed the impact of religious traditionalism across issue contexts, concluding that religious traditionalism produces conservative attitudes on cultural issues but has no impact on issues more closely related to the economic domain. We

have not yet directly compared the impact of religious traditionalism among Latinos to its impact among Anglos, nor have we discussed how the impact of religious traditionalism varies across denominational context. The models estimated in Tables 3 and 4 provide us with the ability to assess denominational context due to the inclusion of interaction terms between denominational affiliation and religious traditionalism. In the discussion so far, however, we have not discussed these interaction terms extensively because their interpretation is not as straightforward as simply asking whether the interaction term is statistically significant. Understanding the impact of the interaction terms actually requires calculating the impact of religious traditionalism within each denomination and then calculating the statistical significance of this impact for the respective denominations (Friedrich 1982).

We accomplish two goals in Table 5. In Part A we examine how the impact of religious traditionalism varies across Latinos with different denominational affiliations. The numbers reported in this table are calculated directly from the models presented in Tables 3 and 4. In those models, interaction terms between religious traditionalism and religious affiliation were included, and this allows us to compute the effects of religious traditionalism in denominational subgroups. We have elected to summarize the subgroup results in a separate table in order to facilitate comprehension of the results. In Part B we also present parallel results for Anglos in order to make direct comparisons of the impact of traditionalism across ethnic contexts.

In order to understand what the numbers in Table 5 mean and how they are calculated, it is useful to turn to a specific example. In the column labeled “Restrict Abortion” we report the probit coefficient estimates of the impact of religious traditionalism for five denominational categories. The coefficient for religious traditionalism among Catholics is reported as .50. This is the same as the main effect reported in Table 3 because, as discussed above, the coefficient

estimated for religious traditionalism refers to its impact among Roman Catholics. When we turn to calculating the impact of traditionalism in other denominational categories, information about the coefficient estimated for the interaction between traditionalism and affiliation must be incorporated.

If X_1 and X_2 are two interacting variables (traditionalism and evangelical, respectively), β_1 is the estimated coefficient for X_1 , and β_3 is the estimated coefficient for the interaction term, the linear effect of X_1 is:

$$\beta_1 + \beta_3 X_2 \tag{1}$$

The standard error is computed by:

$$\sqrt{\text{var}(\beta_1) + X_2^2 \text{var}(\beta_3) + 2X_2 \text{cov}(\beta_1, \beta_3)} \tag{2}$$

Given an interaction term of -.18 and a value of evangelicalism of one when a respondent is an evangelical, the impact of religious traditionalism for evangelicals is .32. For evangelicals, the impact of traditionalism on abortion attitudes is smaller than it is among Catholics.

To compute the values reported in Part B, we began by re-estimating the models reported in Tables 3 and 4 for Anglo respondents. Of course the variables relating to country of origin and place of birth and childhood are not as relevant in the Anglo population, so these variables were not included. After estimating these models in the Anglo population, we calculated the subgroup effects using the techniques discussed above.

The clear message from this table is that the political import of religious traditionalism varies across both religious and ethnic contexts. Focusing our attention first on the results in Part A of the table, we see that the impact of traditionalism is most consistent among Catholic Latinos, with every statistically significant effect producing conservative attitudes. We also see strong conservative effects of traditionalism among Evangelicals on attitudes toward abortion

and ideological self-identification and a more moderate impact on attitudes toward women. The only area in which traditionalism is important for mainline Protestants is abortion, where it also makes them more conservative. And for Latinos with no religious affiliation, religious traditionalism actually produces less identification with the Republican Party. The impact of religious traditionalism is clearly not identical for Latinos affiliated with different denominational categories. While traditionalism has a conservative influence on all denominational groups except those with no religious affiliation, the exact issues and attitudes that are affected vary from group to group.

Comparing Part A to Part B of the table, the first and most notable difference between Anglos and Latinos is in the breadth of the impact of traditionalism. For nearly every religious affiliation and every dependent variable, the impact of religious traditionalism is much stronger among Anglos than Latinos. Simply stated, the political import of religious traditionalism appears to be less pervasive among Latinos than among Anglos. Additionally, while the impact of traditionalism is conditioned by religious affiliation for both Latinos and Anglos, the nature of the differences across religious traditions varies. Traditionalism is consistent in predicting conservative attitudes and behavior among Anglos, but its effect on partisanship among Latinos with no affiliation is opposite its effect in the Anglo population, predicting Democratic rather than Republican identification among Latinos. Together these findings suggest that not only do issue and denominational context condition the effect of religious traditionalism, but that one's ethnic background is also extremely significant in understanding the mechanism linking religious beliefs and behavior with political positions.

Discussion and Conclusion

The results reported above are particularly interesting in light of the competing theories of the impact of religious traditionalism in ethnic minorities outlined at the beginning of the article. One possibility is that religious traditionalism serves as a stronger social psychological mechanism than ethnicity in terms of structuring political attitudes. In this case we would expect to see very similar patterns in the impact of religious traditionalism among Latinos and Anglos. A second possibility we discussed is that religious traditionalism serves as a mobilizing factor that helps to enhance feelings of linked fate and connections within a minority community. Under this scenario we would expect connections between religious traditionalism and political attitudes to diverge dramatically according to the respondent's ethnic background.

Our analysis finds some support for both scenarios, but overall there appears to be stronger evidence that the effect of religious traditionalism on political attitudes and behavior varies based on ethnicity. On one hand, the direction of traditionalism's impact is somewhat similar to that of Anglos, tending to be in the conservative direction for both groups. On the other hand, the magnitude of the impact of traditionalism on Latino political attitudes and behavior is much smaller than its effect among Anglos. In addition, it is clear that traditionalism is an important determinant of political attitudes and behavior in a much wider set of contexts for Anglos as compared to Latinos. As evidence for these points, one need look no further than the fact that of the thirty coefficients estimated for the impact of religious traditionalism in Table 5, the absolute value of the coefficient is larger among Latinos in only five cases. Of these, the estimated impact is significant in only three cases – the impact on attitudes toward women among Catholics, evangelicals, and those of an “other” religious tradition. In addition, nineteen of the thirty coefficients reported in Table 5 for Anglos are significant, while just eleven are significant for Latinos.

These results are more in line with predictions generated by a theory of Latino religion that views religious traditionalism as a factor that mobilizes group identity and discourages immigrant adaptation rather than as a strong social psychological force that produces conservative sentiment and support for Republicans across a range of political attitudes. Religious traditionalism encourages conservative attitudes only in the domain of moral issues and general ideological orientations. This is exactly what we would expect to see if religious traditionalism fosters Latino identity, which translates into social attitudes that are consistent with traditional Latino culture.

Among Latinos we have found that the impact of religious traditionalism is moderate. This is not to say, however, that religion is not important for Latino politics. As we have shown here and elsewhere, specific denominational affiliation of Latinos is a powerful predictor of partisanship (Kelly and Kelly 2005). The research presented in this article also suggests that religion matters for Latinos, but in a slightly different way than it does for the Anglo population. The results also show that Republicans have not yet been successful in translating religious traditionalism and the conservative ideological leanings that it creates into support for their party. Among Anglos, the impact of religious traditionalism is fairly consistent. From moral issues to partisanship and even in the realm of support for redistributive programs like food stamps, religious traditionalism pushes Anglos toward the right. This is not so widely the case among Latinos. Traditionalism is simply not the boon to Republicans among Latinos that it is among Anglos. To the extent that traditionalism does influence partisanship, in fact, it supports Democratic identification despite promoting conservative attitudes among most Latinos.

In sum, we have clearly demonstrated that the impact of religious traditionalism varies not only by denominational and issue context, but also by ethnic context. The political impact of

religious traditionalism on politics is not nearly as pervasive among Latinos as it is among Anglos. While our study of religious traditionalism in Latino politics has provided new insights regarding the Latino population and the impact of religion on American political life, our analysis also leaves many questions unanswered. For example, the impact of religious traditionalism on Latino political attitudes occurs primarily in the areas of ideology and cultural issues, and in these areas traditionalism leads to conservative attitudes as it does among Anglos. This is consistent with the view that religion can play a role in discouraging immigrant adaptation, but based on our analysis we cannot say precisely how religion and immigrant adaptation are interconnected. Sorting out these questions will require much more detailed data on immigration, assimilation, identity, and Latino religion, and we hope to shed more light on this question in future work as appropriate data become available.

Additionally, more work remains to be done to identify the conditions under which Latino religion is most likely to serve as a mobilizing factor in a manner that reflects the operation of religion among blacks, as opposed to the conditions under which religion serves as a social psychological force that supplants ethnic identity in the formation of political attitudes as it often does among whites. The role of religious traditionalism, for example, may be different for those who Logan (2003) refers to as “Hispanic Hispanics,” reporting Hispanic ethnicity and other race, than for those who identify ethnically as Hispanic but racially as white. These questions too will require a more detailed focus on assimilation, ethnic identity, and Latino religion and politics. It seems that while religious tradition has the theoretical potential to supplant ethnicity as a key social psychological force in the formation of political attitudes, this has not happened for all Latinos. At the same time, religion certainly does not appear to act as a

mobilizing force to the extent that it does for blacks. Focusing on such issues in the future will no doubt lead to theoretical gains in our understanding of religion, ethnicity, and politics.

APPENDIX: VARIABLES

Variable numbers refer to NES Cumulative File. Variables not available in the cumulative file were merged with the cumulative file from individual NES studies. **Religious Tradition:** Based on VCF0152. Our categorization of denominations is borrowed largely from Kellstedt et al. (1996). The details are available from the authors upon request. **Church Attendance:** VCF0130 0 = Never, 4 = Every week. Mean = 1.90, N = 951 **Prayer:** Available in individual NES surveys 0 = Never 4 = Several times each day. Mean = 1.90, N = 951. **Bible Reading:** Available in individual NES surveys. 0 = Never, 4 = Several times per day. Mean = .98, N = 951. **Importance of Religion:** VCF0847 0 = Not important, 3 = Great deal of guidance. Mean = 1.86, N = 911. **View of Bible:** VCF0850 0 = Not God, worth little, 1 = Not literal, some errors, 2 = Literal, God's true word. Mean = 1.42, N = 880. **Ethnicity:** Based on VCF0109 (Ethnicity) and VCF0142 (Birthplace). **Time in U.S.:** Combination of respondent's place of birth (VCF0142) and where the respondent grew up (VCF0132). Three categories: 1) Born and grew up outside the United States (Puerto Rico not part of the U.S. for this purpose), 2) Either born or brought up in the U.S., 3) Both born and grew up in the U.S. **Ideology:** VCF0803. 1 = extremely liberal, 7 = extremely conservative. Mean = 4.24, N = 583. **Partisanship:** VCF0301. 1=Strong Democrat, 7=Strong Republican. Mean = 3.28, N = 943. **Female:** VCF0104. 0 = Male, 1 = Female. Mean = .56, N = 951. **Age:** VCF0101. Mean = 40, N = 941. **Income:** VCF0114. Income quintile. Mean = 2.58, N = 876 Recoded to approximate income percentile. **Education:** VCF0140. Ranges from less than 8 grades to advanced degrees. Recoded to approximate years in school. Mean = 12.8, N = 942. **Abortion:** VCF0838. 1 = Always allowed as matter of choice, 2 = Need clearly established in addition to rape, incest, mother's life, 3 = Rape, incest, mother's life, 4 = Never Permitted . Mean = 2.36, N = 927. **Women's Role:** VCF0834. 1 = Men and women should have

equal role, 7 = Women's role is in home. Mean = 2.21, N = 752. **Food Stamps:** VCF9046. 1 = Spend more, 2 = Same, 3 = Spend less. Mean = 2.13, N = 790. **Environment:** VCF9047. 1 = Spend more, 2 = Same, 3 = Spend less. Mean = 1.47, N = 789.

NOTES

¹ We use the term Latino to refer to people who are immigrants or descendants of immigrants from Spain or the former Spanish colonies in Central and South America and the Caribbean, as well as people who are descendants of residents of the parts of former Spanish colonies that are now part of the United States. In our analysis, we classify a respondent as Latino if the respondent categorizes themselves as Hispanic on the NES race question (where Hispanic is a racial option along with white, black, Asian, etc.), or the respondent was born in a place fitting the definition of Hispanic origin outlined above, or the respondent's parents were born in a place fitting our definition of Hispanic origin. We utilize this strategy to overcome some of the ambiguity that arises when solely relying on respondents to self-identify as an ethnic minority. However, we do not wish to imply that there is a bright line distinguishing Latinos from non-Latinos. Some ambiguity is unavoidable when making ethnic categorizations.

² Though see Guth, Kellstedt, Smidt, and Green (2006) and other recent work by these authors for basic descriptive data on Latino beliefs and behavior.

³ The Latino surveys of which we are aware typically do not include sufficient measures of religious beliefs and behaviors to measure traditionalism, and the few that do fail to provide accurate measures of denominational affiliation. This is an important problem since one of our tasks is understanding how the impact of religious traditionalism varies across denominational families. In sum, existing Latino-specific surveys are inappropriate for use in our analysis.

⁴ The NES has a variety of well-known problems for analyzing Latinos. Interviews are only offered in English (except in 1992). Thus, throughout the analysis the results are, strictly speaking, only generalized to the English-speaking portion of the Latino population even though

this caveat is not repeatedly offered in the article. In addition, the proportion of Latinos that come from each state can vary across surveys due to the sampling frame. Despite the flaws with the NES, however, something can be learned about ethnic context and religious traditionalism using these data, whereas using a Latino-specific dataset would provide absolutely no information relevant to our central research questions. Some limitations on the breadth of our conclusions given reliance on the NES are discussed throughout the article.

⁵ See the appendix for a detailed listing of the variables used in our analysis.

⁶ Data for Anglos are from 2000 only. The 2000 study was chosen simply out of convenience. Not pooling across years in the full population simplified the analysis greatly by eliminating the need for tedious procedures to combine across years, which is unnecessary given the number of Anglo respondents in each NES dataset.

⁷ Specifically, we utilize a principal components factor analysis estimated in Stata 9.0.

⁸ Our measures of religion have only a few missing cases. The worst case is ideology. In order to retain cases in a manner that allows for correct parameter estimates, we have utilized the AMELIA (Honaker et al. 2000) software to perform a multiple imputation procedure. This procedure makes use of information from all the variables in our analysis plus a few variables not included in the model to create five data sets with missing values imputed. The reported parameter estimates are averaged across the five imputed data sets. Further details of this type of imputation can be found in King, et al. (2001).

⁹ Ordered probit could also be used but does not change the substantive results reported below and would only add substantially to the length of the tables due to the large number of categories.

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Table 1
Religious Beliefs, Behavior, and Affiliation in the United States

Variable	Anglos	Latinos	Catholic Latinos	Evangelical Latinos	Mainline Latinos	Other Latinos	Unaffiliated Latinos
<u>Church Attendance</u>							
Mean	1.79*	1.90	1.95	2.55***	1.56*	2.33*	.07***
N	1506	951	536	221	62	42	90
<u>Prayer</u>							
Mean	2.40	2.45	2.45	2.80***	2.53	2.67	1.48***
N	1457	951	536	221	62	42	90
<u>Bible Reading</u>							
Mean	.97	.98	.82***	1.52***	.95	1.40**	.42***
N	1448	951	536	221	62	42	90
<u>Authority of Bible</u>							
Mean	1.15***	1.42	1.40	1.70***	1.17**	1.32	1.04***
N	1432	880	500	206	58	37	79
<u>Importance of Religion</u>							
Mean	1.63***	1.86	1.83	2.26***	1.81	2.21	.92***
N	1506	911	510	213	62	39	87
<u>Born Again Experience</u>							
Mean	.30	.33	.23***	.64***	.28	.29	.00***
N	1506	716	438	177	50	24	27

Note: All variables coded so that higher values indicate traditional beliefs and behavior. Asterisks indicate the mean reported in a cell is significantly different from the mean reported in the same row under the column "Latinos." The significance is computed from a difference of means test with Latinos as the reference category. Data for Anglos is from 2000 NES.

* $p \leq .10$, ** $p \leq .05$, *** $p \leq .01$

Table 2
Principal Component Factors Analysis of Religious
Traditionalism

Variable	Latinos	Anglos
Church Attendance	.66	.76
Prayer	.72	.82
Bible Reading	.73	.81
View of Bible	.51	.68
Importance of Religion	.70	.82
Born Again	.60	.69
N	660	1369
% Variance Explained	43	59
Cronbach's Alpa	.73	.83

Note: Results of a principal component factor analysis retaining components with eigenvalues greater than 1.0. Eigenvalue for retained factor is 2.60. Eigenvalue for first unretained factor is .91. Data for Anglos is from 2000 NES.

Table 3
Religious Traditionalism and Affiliation, as an Explanation Issue Attitudes

Independent Variable	Restrict Abortion	Women's Role is Home	Cut Food Stamps	Cut Environment
<i>Religious Variables</i>				
Traditionalism	.50*** (.06)	.17** (.09)	.02 (.06)	.06 (.07)
Evangelical	.08 (.10)	.19 (.17)	.06 (.12)	.18 (.12)
Mainline	-.37** (.16)	-.20 (.26)	.50*** (.17)	.19 (.17)
Other Tradition	-.25 (.21)	-.02 (.29)	-.28 (.21)	-.19 (.27)
No Affiliation	-.10 (.21)	-.18 (.34)	-.09 (.26)	.11 (.23)
Evangelical x Traditionalism	-.18* (.10)	.04 (.16)	.04 (.11)	-.00 (.11)
Mainline x Traditionalism	-.21 (.17)	.00 (.30)	-.28 (.19)	-.14 (.17)
Other x Traditionalism	.26 (.18)	.37 (.28)	.06 (.17)	.09 (.26)
Unaffiliated x Traditionalism	-.31* (.17)	-.05 (.30)	-.04 (.22)	.15 (.20)
<i>Ethnic Variables</i>				
Puerto Rican	-.27** (.13)	-.18 (.20)	-.24* (.14)	-.16 (.15)
South American	-.08 (.08)	-.07 (.14)	.12 (.09)	.03 (.09)
Cuban	-.22 (.28)	.14 (.36)	-.22 (.22)	-.17 (.27)
Born and Raised Abroad	-.03 (.10)	-.02 (.16)	-.07 (.14)	.08 (.17)
Born and Raised in U.S.	-.03 (.09)	.42** (.16)	-.13 (.09)	-.20** (.10)
<i>Demographic Variables</i>				
Age	.00 (.00)	.01*** (.00)	.00 (.00)	.00 (.00)
Female	.14* (.08)	-.15 (.13)	-.04 (.09)	.18** (.08)
Income	-.00 (.00)	-.00 (.00)	.02*** (.00)	.00 (.00)
Education	-.10*** (.02)	-.05* (.03)	-.02 (.02)	-.03 (.02)
Constant	-.21 (.27)	2.47*** (.42)	1.00*** (.33)	1.44*** (.37)
Constant 2	-1.27*** (.28)		-.49 (.33)	.10 (.34)
Constant 3	-1.69*** (.28)			
(Pseudo) R ²	.10	.10	.04	.02
N	951	951	951	951

Note: Coefficients for abortion, food stamps, and environment are ordered probit with pseudo R² reported at the bottom of the table. Women's role coefficients are OLS regression. Standard errors are in parentheses. Results are averaged across five datasets generated via multiple imputation. The reference category for religious tradition is Catholic, the reference category for national origin is Mexico, and reference category for place of birth is born or raised in U.S.

* p ≤ .10, ** p ≤ .05, *** p ≤ .01, two-tailed

Table 4.
Religious Traditionalism and Affiliation as an Explanation of Political Orientation

Independent Variable	Conservative Ideology	Republican Party ID
<i>Religious Variables</i>		
Traditionalism	.29*** (.09)	-.10 (.10)
Evangelical	.11 (.16)	.39** (.18)
Mainline	.09 (.24)	.90*** (.25)
Other Tradition	-.40 (.26)	.09 (.30)
No Affiliation	.07 (.37)	-.20 (.34)
Evangelical x Traditionalism	.05 (.17)	.19 (.17)
Mainline x Traditionalism	.01 (.20)	.00 (.26)
Other x Traditionalism	.10 (.21)	.42 (.27)
Unaffiliated x Traditionalism	-.14 (.23)	-.43* (.26)
<i>Ethnic Variables</i>		
Puerto Rican	-.06 (.15)	-.22 (.20)
South American	.24** (.10)	.26** (.13)
Cuban	.29 (.30)	1.67*** (.35)
Born and Raised Abroad	.03 (.13)	.10 (.16)
Born and Raised in U.S.	.09 (.13)	-.12 (.14)
<i>Demographic Variables</i>		
Age	.00 (.00)	-.02*** (.00)
Female	-.01 (.13)	.09 (.12)
Income	.00 (.00)	.006* (.004)
Education	-.05** (.02)	-.02 (.03)
Constant	4.46*** (.43)	3.66*** (.44)
R ²	.08	.09
N	951	951

Note: Results for party identification and ideology are OLS regression coefficients. Standard errors are in parentheses. Results are averaged across five datasets generated via multiple imputation. The reference category for religious tradition is Catholic, the reference category for national origin is Mexico, and reference category for place of birth is born or raised in U.S.

* $p \leq .10$, ** $p \leq .05$, *** $p \leq .01$, two-tailed

Table 5
Comparing the Marginal Effects of Religious Traditionalism by
Denomination for Latinos and Whites

Effect of Traditionalism within Subgroup	Part A: Latinos					
	Dependent Variable					
	Restrict Abortion	Women's Role is Home	Cut Food Stamps	Cut Environment	Conservative Ideology	Republican PID
Catholic	.50***	.17**	.02	.06	.29***	-.10
Evangelical	.32***	.21*	.06	.06	.34***	.09
Mainline	.29*	.17	-.26	-.08	.30	-.10
Other Affiliation	.76***	.54**	.08	.15	.39**	.32
No Affiliation	.19	.12	-.02	.21	.15	-.53**
	Part B: Anglos					
Catholic	.75***	.05	.05	.02	.36***	.38**
Evangelical	.52***	.18**	.27***	.12	.68***	.43***
Mainline	.59***	.18**	-.08	.16**	.49***	.51***
Other Affiliation	.88***	.31**	.38**	.26**	.96***	.92***
No Affiliation	.51	.29	.22	-.36	.76	1.07

Note: Effects are calculated for Latinos from the coefficients in Tables 3 and 4. Effects for Anglos calculated from a similar analysis excluding ethnic background and immigration variables using 2000 NES data. Marginal effect within religious subgroups calculated with traditionalism fixed at its mean value.

* $p \leq .10$, ** $p \leq .05$, *** $p \leq .01$, two-tailed