

## **Chapter 4: Religion and the Latin American Voter<sup>1</sup>**

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Religion – at least organized religion in the monotheistic, Judeo-Christian tradition – is deeply, inherently political. In prescribing moral tenets, precepts not only for individuals' relationship to the divine, but also for their relationships to each other and to society at large, religious traditions provide one basis for ethical discourse, ideology, and the legitimation of political organization. But religion's impact on politics is due not only to its moral precepts, as important as such teachings are. In providing a regular, organized setting for communities to gather, religious groups help to generate the social capital necessary for political action and constitute a platform for political persuasion and activism. Finally, religion can serve as an important social identity for many people, facilitating the development of political ingroups and outgroups. Religion is profoundly political despite most contemporary states' adoption of some form of secularism; in fact, secularism is a response to religion's almost inevitable encroachment on the public sphere.

Latin America's political and social development has been heavily influenced by religion, from the first days of colonialism through the development of contemporary, third

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<sup>1</sup> Thanks to Scott Desposato, Kirk Hawkins, Michael Lewis-Beck, the editors of this volume, and participants in Vanderbilt University's Latin American Voter Conference for comments on previous drafts of this chapter; to Joe Gettemy, Ryan Washburn, and Marisa Wilson for excellent research assistance; and to the Latin American Public Opinion Project for survey data.

wave democracies. At the same time, the relationship between religion and politics in the region has changed dramatically in the past three decades. Until recently, the Catholic Church—the region’s religious monopolist—faced little competition from other religious groups. The Church was far from monolithic or homogeneous; both its ideology and level of involvement in politics varied across time and space. States also varied in the strength of their support for or opposition to the Church. Still, the Catholic Church's constant presence in Latin American social life throughout much of history—and consequent lack of variation in citizens' nominal religion—would have frustrated attempts at quantitative analysis even if appropriate survey data had been available.

Much has changed in the past few decades. No longer do Latin Americans identify as Catholic "by default." On the one hand, citizens who once might have considered themselves Catholics, albeit non-practicing, now increasingly identify as having no religious affiliation at all. On the other hand, Protestant churches—especially those of the evangelical and Pentecostal variety—have made increasing inroads into the territory of the faithful (for reviews of these trends, see Chesnut 2003, 2009; Garrard-Burnett 2009). The 2012 AmericasBarometer survey indicates that while 70% of Latin Americans still consider themselves Catholic, 19% now identify with non-Catholic Christian denominations, and 9% claim no religious affiliation at all.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> These percentages weight each country’s sample by its population. Using unweighted percentages (i.e., treating each country in Latin America as having the same population), we find that 66% identify as Catholic, 22% as other Christian, and 10% as religiously unaffiliated.

What are the political implications of the increasing diversity and competitiveness of Latin America's religious marketplace? As religious affiliations and practices become more varied, do the political preferences and behaviors of the religious and nonreligious, or Catholics and Protestants, diverge? In this chapter, we seek to understand how Latin Americans' voting decisions are shaped by religion. In answering these questions, we provide what we believe to be the first systematic, survey-based examination of the role of religion across the entire region.

Our analysis pays particular attention to two increasingly salient religious cleavages in Latin America: between believers and non-believers, and between Catholics and Protestants. These cleavages often manifest themselves in voting behavior in the region, though in different ways and only under certain conditions. First, we find that the religious-secular cleavage has a clear effect on ideological voting, with non-believers supporting more left-wing candidates and more frequent churchgoers voting to the right. However, the magnitude of effects depends on the degree to which parties span the ideological spectrum and appeal to voters in programmatic terms. Second, while Catholics and Protestants do not consistently differ ideologically, this cleavage leads to identity voting when a non-Catholic candidate is among the options. That is, mainline and evangelical Protestants are more likely than Catholics to favor a Protestant for president; evangelicals even incline toward secular politicians when given the chance to vote against their religious rivals.

Like the other chapters in this section of the volume, we emphasize the conditions under which identities are activated and become salient for voting. One clear conclusion is that identity matters in part because voters seek candidates sharing those identities. Just as Latin American indigenous voters and women respond to the ethnicity and gender of

candidates in their choice set (see chapters in this volume by Moreno and by Morgan), religious minorities seek politicians sharing their background. Thus, identity should matter more in political systems offering greater candidate diversity. Like Moreno, we conclude that identity matters when politicized by candidates or other opinion leaders. At the same time, as with class (Mainwaring and Torcal, this volume) and gender, religious identity only sometimes shapes the ideological direction of the vote. Like Morgan, we find that identity translates more readily into ideological voting in party systems that offer clearer differences between parties. In highlighting one input for ideological identification and voting, we also speak to topics addressed in the second section of this volume.

### **The Religious Marketplace in Latin America**

Data from the 2004–2012 AmericasBarometer surveys underscore the changing nature of religion in Latin America. As Figure 4.1 indicates, the strength of Catholicism varies substantially across our 18 countries, with 80% or more identifying as Catholic in Ecuador, Mexico, Paraguay, and Venezuela, and as few as 36% of Uruguayans describing themselves as Catholic in 2012. Examining the AmericasBarometer since 2004 (prior years' data not shown in the figure), however, we find a clear trend: in most countries Catholicism is losing ground to secularism or to other Christian denominations. Other Christian groups have gained significant ground in every country in the region but Chile. Likewise, those claiming no religious identification have significantly encroached on Catholic territory in Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Uruguay.<sup>3</sup> At the extreme, in

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<sup>3</sup> In each of these countries, the slope coefficient for a logistic regression of the respective

Uruguay, secularism has overtaken Catholicism in recent years, with nearly half of all respondents claiming no religion in 2010 and 2012. Conversely, the Catholic Church has lost a significant share of identifiers in every country but Argentina, El Salvador, and Venezuela.

<Insert Figure 4.1 here>

Across Latin America, 8% of citizens are classified as mainline or historical Protestants, and 10% as evangelical or Pentecostal.<sup>4</sup> The latter traditions place an emphasis on conversion, missionary work, the authority of scripture, and, in the case of Pentecostalism, speaking in tongues and faith healing (Freston 2008; Pew Research Center 2006). While evangelicals in many countries were initially reluctant to engage in worldly pursuits such as politics, they have largely overcome this reluctance, and evangelicalism's proselytizing bent often makes its adherents particularly influential in electoral politics. As Figure 4.1 indicates, evangelicals and Pentecostals outnumber traditional Protestants in most countries, especially in Central America. In a few countries—Bolivia, Brazil, Colombia, and Mexico—mainline Protestants are predominant. Even so, the intensity with which evangelicals participate in politics often gives them outsized political influence, especially in Brazil.

Just as important as religious identification is religious practice. Figure 4.1 also underscores that some countries that are nominally quite Catholic, such as Chile and Argentina, have few regular churchgoers; in 2012, only 18–20% in those countries attended

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religious identification on year is statistically significant in the direction mentioned.

<sup>4</sup> Throughout most of Latin America, the Spanish and Portuguese term “*evangélico*” is applied to both mainline/historical and evangelical Protestants. Moreover, national censuses and surveys often do not distinguish between the two variants of Protestantism, and historical Protestant denominations may adopt practices typical of evangelicals.

one or more times per week. Uruguay again stands out as particularly secular, with 81% rarely or never attending church. At the other end of the spectrum, countries with high rates of evangelicalism, especially those in Central America, tend to have large numbers who attend religious services at least weekly (75% in Guatemala). As this discussion suggests, the intensity of religious practice varies across religious groups: while just 42% of Catholics say they attend church at least weekly, 75% of evangelicals and 69% of historical Protestants do so.

### **Religion and the Vote in Latin America: Who, Where, How**

Do religious differences across Latin America translate into differences in voting behavior? As Latin America's third wave democracies matured, scholars of religion and politics turned from investigating religion's role in authoritarianism and democracy (e.g., Fleet and Smith 1997; Gill 1994; Klaiber 1998; Johnston & Figa 1988) to address religion's impact on electoral and party politics. As an institution, the Catholic Church has become more politically neutral, moving away from both liberation theology and religious parties. Hagopian (2008, 2009) argues that the Church has nonetheless sought to retain the faithful by promoting either progressive economic policies (e.g., in Brazil) or conservative stances on issues such as women's reproductive rights (particularly in Argentina, Chile, and Mexico). Protestant churches' political agendas have coincided with the Catholic Church on poverty and sexuality, while contesting the Church's historical privileges (Smith 1998). On the other side of the political spectrum, leaders of many Marxist-inspired, left-wing political movements have historically been atheist, agnostic, or, at the very least, non-practicing

Catholics. The growing salience of issues such as abortion and same-sex marriage—absent from the political agenda even a decade ago, but now major topics of debate—reinforces these divides.

Scholars have indeed found a strong religious-secular cleavage among Latin American voters. For instance, Catholics and, especially, non-Catholic Christians are substantially less tolerant than the non-religious and non-Christians towards gays seeking office (Seligson and Moreno 2010). In Costa Rica, Chile, Argentina, and Mexico, research shows that religiosity is associated with conservatism and secularism with leftist voting (Camp 2008; Patterson 2004a, 2004b; Steigenga 2003; Valenzuela et al. 2007).

A second potential cleavage relates to differences among the religious. While Catholics and Protestants often vote differently from one another, differences vary greatly across countries and over time. Many scholars emphasize that Latin American evangelicals and Pentecostals exhibit considerable ideological variety (Fonseca 2008; Ireland 1991, 1997). Sometimes evangelicals vote on the right, such as for Mexico's Calderón in 2006 (Camp 2008); or mobilize against leftist candidates, including Lula in Brazil's 1989 election and Dilma Rousseff in 2010 (Freston 1993, 2004; Smith 2013). But Brazil's evangelicals have also voted for left-of-center politicians: Garotinho in 2002 and Marina Silva in 2010, both evangelicals themselves (Bohn 2004, 2007; Smith 2013). In El Salvador, Chile, and Venezuela, there is also evidence of evangelicals voting to the left of Catholics (Aguilar et al. 1993; Smilde 2004; Valenzuela et al. 2007).<sup>5</sup> For their part, Mexico's evangelicals have

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<sup>5</sup> In Chile, however, other studies suggest little ideological difference between Catholics and Protestants (Patterson 2004b) or claim that evangelicals are disconnected from politics (Fontaine, Talavera and Beyer 1998).

historically aligned with the centrist PRI (Barraca 2008). Finally, evangelicals sometimes vote no differently from those of other religions. This was the case in Brazil's 2006 election (Bohn 2007), when no evangelical candidates were running; and in Nicaragua's 1990 and 2006 elections, when evangelicals and Catholics similarly supported Daniel Ortega (Dodson 1997; Gooren 2010; Smith and Haas 1997; Zub 1992).<sup>6</sup>

Even if Latin American Protestants do not vote in a consistent ideological direction, religious minorities—especially evangelicals—often favor fellow believers (Bastian 1999). Despite few ideological differences with Catholics, Guatemalan Protestants generally rated coreligionist politicians more favorably (Steigenga 2003). In Brazil, where many evangelical churches have adopted a “Brother votes for Brother” stance, there have been dramatic increases in the number of evangelicals (including clergy) elected to office in the past two decades (e.g., Boas 2013; Fonseca 2008; Freston 2004).<sup>7</sup> Bohn (2007) argues that evangelicals had no common ideology in Brazil's 2002 and 2006 presidential elections, but were mobilized only as an “identity group” responding to coreligionists in the candidate choice set.

Existing studies of religion and voting behavior in Latin America address important questions, but they do so in a somewhat piecemeal fashion. While some authors array the religious vote on the left-right spectrum, others focus on candidates' religious identities. Few consider both candidates' ideology and religion (for an exception, see Bohn 2007). Further,

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<sup>6</sup> Zub (1992), however, does find that evangelicals were slightly less likely to vote for the FSLN in 1990.

<sup>7</sup> In contrast, relatively few Catholic clergy have run for office in Brazil, with limited success (Oro 2006).



we lack systematic, region-wide evidence enabling broad generalization. Most work consists of single-country case studies, with cross-national comparisons usually limited to two or three countries. Though several important studies address religion and politics region-wide, these studies have not focused on voting behavior (Freston 2008; Garrard-Burnett 2009; Gill 2002; Hagopian 2009; Mainwaring & Scully 2003).

Another important question is *how* religion shapes vote choice. Studies of the Catholic-Protestant voting cleavage suggest that evangelicals favor fellow believers because of identity-based heuristics (or information shortcuts), while Catholics might vote against these same candidates because of out-group cues. Even nonbelief might come to serve as a group identity, with those who reject religion seeking secular candidates and avoiding the religious. Yet religion might also affect voting behavior through social mechanisms. Those who attend church more regularly are exposed to political information and opinions from clergy or other parishioners. While lay Catholics are often skeptical of the Church's political leadership (Amuchastegui et al. 2010; Blancarte 2009), Catholic clergy may nonetheless exercise indirect influence, in part through pastoral letters (Camp 2008; Oro 2006). And evangelical and neo-Pentecostal clergy campaign more overtly, mobilizing followers as a voting bloc (Campos 2005; Oro 2003; Smith 2010, 2013). Bohn (2004) found that Brazilian evangelicals were likely to mention church as the most important source of electoral information, and religion as a key criterion in choosing a political party.

### **Religion and the Ideology of Vote Choice**

Do religious voters seek presidential candidates who are ideologically compatible, or simply ones who share their religious identities? We begin by assessing the extent to which religion shapes ideological voting, using AmericasBarometer data from 2008-2012. We estimated a series of OLS regression models in which the dependent variable was the ideological position of the respondent's vote in the last presidential election, as described in this volume's introduction. Our key independent variables included frequency of attending religious services and indicator variables for mainline Protestants, evangelicals, and no religion (with Catholic as the reference category).<sup>8</sup> As is standard throughout the volume, the model included controls for household wealth, education, size of place of residence, age, and gender; and indicator variables for black and indigenous. In this chapter we also included indicators for Mormons/Jehovah's Witnesses and non-Christians. For a region-wide model, we pooled all countries, using fixed effects for country and for survey waves. We also estimated separate models for each country, replacing country fixed effects with those for sub-national regions. Where multiple waves of the survey covered a single election, we used all observations but applied weights so that each election counted equally.

The results are summarized in Figure 4.2. Consistent with the baseline model estimated in the introduction to this section of the volume, we find that, across all 18 Latin American countries, church attendance is associated with a more right-wing vote, while those with no religion are significantly to the left. Mainline and evangelical Protestants do not differ from Catholics. Hence, the religious-secular cleavage in Latin America is expressed in ideological voting, but inter-religious differences are not. Nonetheless, recall that Protestants

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<sup>8</sup> Frequency of religious services was recoded to run from 0 to 1, with higher numbers indicating more frequent attendance.

attend church much more frequently than Catholics; while 47% of evangelicals and 40% of historical Protestants attend more than once a week, only 12% of Catholics do. Thus, the groups differ slightly (but not significantly) in actual ideological voting due to varying religiosity.<sup>9</sup>

<Insert Figure 4.2 here>

Looking at individual countries, we find further support for these conclusions. Evangelicals or mainline Protestants vote significantly to the left of Catholics in Nicaragua, Panama, Ecuador, Bolivia, and Uruguay; evangelicals vote significantly to the right of Catholics in El Salvador and Paraguay. We can think of no obvious contextual features, such as the nature of the party system, to explain these varied effects. The effects of religiosity and secularism, however, are more consistent: the non-religious vote significantly to the left in Mexico, Chile, Uruguay, and Venezuela, while church attendance pushes voters significantly to the right in Mexico, Nicaragua, Uruguay, and Argentina.

Party system features such as polarization and programmaticness might help explain cross-national variation in religion's effects. Religious views may influence voters' personal ideology, but whether these attitudes are expressed at the polls should depend on the options presented to voters. In polarized party systems, where candidates tend to differ clearly from one another on the left-right spectrum, religious conservatism and secular leftism should be more likely to translate into voting behavior. Indeed, in those countries in Figure 4.2 where church attendance or secularism has a significant effect, recent presidential elections have tended to feature clear left- and/or right-wing options. Similarly, whether voters' issue

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<sup>9</sup> In addition, church attendance matters somewhat more for ideological voting among Catholics and evangelicals than historical Protestants.

stances matter for voting behavior should depend on programmaticness—the degree to which parties appeal to voters on the basis of issue positions rather than clientelism or charisma.

To examine whether religion's effect on ideological voting varies systematically with features of a country's party system, we estimated two hierarchical linear models. At the individual level, we used the same specification as in the pooled model described above, along with fixed effects for each survey wave. As before, when multiple survey waves cover an election, we applied weights to count each election equally. For the first model, we included an additional country-level variable: an index of parties' programmaticness derived from the expert surveys of the Democratic Accountability and Linkages Project (Kitschelt and Freeze 2010). For the second model, we included an election-level variable: party system polarization, constructed using data from the Parliamentary Elites in Latin America study on how elected legislators locate their own parties on the left-right spectrum.<sup>10</sup> We measure the polarization of the legislature in session at the time of each presidential election. In each case, we interacted the higher-level index with the key religious variables (mainline Protestant, evangelical Protestant, no religion, and church attendance, with Catholic again serving as the baseline).

The results of these hierarchical linear models underscore that secularism and church attendance matter for ideological voting in Latin America only where parties span the ideological spectrum or present clear programmatic options to voters. Consistent with the

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<sup>10</sup> We develop a three-level hierarchical model, with survey waves nested within countries. Weights adjust for both the survey's complex design and the use of multiple waves for some election years. The interactive effects are robust to various alternative specifications, including ones using cross-classified random effects (but without weights).

argument that inter-religious cleavages are expressed in terms of identity rather than ideological voting, we obtain null results for the evangelical and mainline Protestant dummy variables, as well as the interactions between these variables and the country-level measures. However, for church attendance and the no religion dummy variable, we find several interactions that are significant in the expected direction.

In Figures 4.3 and 4.4 we present the statistically significant interactions. In the first figure we plot the interaction between no religion and DALP's programmaticness index – that is, the marginal effect of not having a religion across countries with different levels of programmaticness.<sup>11</sup> The top horizontal axis presents the actual value of each country on the programmaticness index. In the second figure, likewise, we plot the effects of the interaction between church attendance and polarization, or the marginal effect of church attendance in elections with higher or lower levels of polarization. Since the polarization measure varies by election, the top horizontal axis in this latter figure presents the coding of different country-election years.

<Insert Figure 4.3 Here>

<Insert Figure 4.4 Here>

At the lowest levels of the programmaticness index, secularism has no significant effect on ideological voting, but at moderate and high levels—where most countries are located—it pushes voters significantly to the left. Likewise, church attendance makes no difference for ideological voting at lower levels of legislative polarization. However, in presidential elections held when legislative polarization is moderate or high, it is associated

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<sup>11</sup> Complete results can be found in the replication files.

with right-wing voting.<sup>12</sup> The more relevant ideology and issues are for elite politics, the more the secular-religious cleavage matters in Latin American electorates.

### **Religion and Identity Voting**

Religion might also affect vote choice in ways not captured on the left-right spectrum. Religious minorities, such as non-Catholic Christians or the nonreligious, might vote disproportionately for a group member when one is on the ballot, even if religious minority candidates occupy similar ideological positions as others in the race. Especially for Protestants and evangelicals, identity might trump ideology, pulling voters to the left in some elections and to the right in others. Out-group effects may also be present; Catholics might be reluctant to vote for evangelicals or mainline Protestants, and vice versa, while the religious may shy away from avowed atheists or agnostics. Effects of this sort are particularly likely in countries where competition for believers has spilled over into competition at the ballot box (Boas 2013).

To examine identity voting, we used publicly available news sources to score the professed religious beliefs of all major presidential candidates covered in the 2008-2012 AmericasBarometer.<sup>13</sup> We identified six Protestant candidates: Roberto Madrazo (Mexico

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<sup>12</sup> For the programmaticness model, the marginal effect of church attendance was insignificant across nearly the entire range of values. Likewise, in the polarization model, the marginal effect of no religion was insignificant across nearly the entire range. However, estimated marginal effects were always of the expected sign.

<sup>13</sup> In two-round voting systems, variable VB3 asks about the first-round election.

2006), Manuel Baldizón and Harold Caballeros (Guatemala 2011), Humberto Lay (Peru 2006), Nicanor Duarte (Paraguay 2003), and Marina Silva (Brazil 2010). Seven candidates were classified as secular: Carlos Gaviria Díaz (Colombia 2006), Jorge Arrate and Marco Enríquez-Ominami (Chile 2009), Michelle Bachelet (Chile 2005), José Mujica (Uruguay 2009), Tabaré Vázquez (Uruguay 2005), and Hermes Binner (Argentina 2011).<sup>14</sup> We also found a handful of candidates who were Jewish or practiced traditional religions, but not enough to warrant separate analysis. The vast majority of candidates were identified as Catholic. On the 0-19 scale for candidate ideology (rightists receive higher values), secular candidates average 4.6, adherents of traditional religions 8.4, Jews 9.7, Protestants 12.0, and Catholics 12.2.

Religion and the presence of a non-Catholic candidate were salient during at least some of these campaigns. Baldizón finished second in Guatemala's 2011 election, campaigning with phrases like "I will govern with the Bible in one hand and the Constitution in the other" (Palomares 2011). In Brazil's 2010 election, controversy surrounding Dilma Rousseff's shifting position on abortion helped draw attention to Marina Silva's status as an evangelical candidate opposing it (Smith 2013). In Chile in 2005, right-wing candidate Sebastián Piñera made a play for centrist Christian Democratic votes by criticizing the agnosticism of front-runner Michelle Bachelet (Campusano 2005).

We proceeded to estimate two logistic regressions in which the dependent variable was, alternatively, "vote for a Protestant" and "vote for a secular candidate." In each case, the baseline category was voting for any other candidate; in nearly every instance this meant

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<sup>14</sup> Candidate secularism comprises atheism, agnosticism, or public disavowal of religion.

voting for a Catholic.<sup>15</sup> We pooled all countries and survey years in which each choice was relevant, weighting the data so that elections counted equally. We used the same individual right-hand-side variables as in the models described above, along with country and year fixed effects. We then generated predicted voting probabilities, varying church attendance and religion for all observations while holding other variables at their observed values.

The results (Figure 4.5) underscore that Latin America's Catholic-Protestant cleavage, though not expressed consistently in ideological voting, shapes religious identity voting. When given the option, mainline and evangelical Protestants are substantially more likely than Catholics to support a Protestant candidate (32% versus 25%).<sup>16</sup> Non-religious demographics are poor predictors, and only education is significant; having higher education as opposed to no education is associated with a 9% drop in the probability of voting for Protestants.

<Insert Figure 4.5 here>

For evangelicals we also see evidence of out-group identity voting. When choosing between secular and Catholic candidates, evangelicals are significantly more likely than Catholics to vote for the secular competitor (43% versus 39%)—presumably not because

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<sup>15</sup> There were no cases including both secular and Protestant candidates. Tomás Hirsch, a minor candidate in Chile's 2005 election, is Jewish and is included in the baseline along with votes for Piñera and Lavín. Three percent of the 2008 sample supported Hirsch.

<sup>16</sup> The logistic regression coefficients are significant at  $p=.015$  (mainline) and  $p=.0011$  (evangelicals). However, these effects are only statistically significant among mainline and evangelical Protestants attending church at least weekly.



they favor a godless president, but because they fear that a Catholic one might endorse state prerogatives for Catholicism.<sup>17</sup>

Finally, we see evidence that the religious-secular cleavage, which matters for ideological voting, also shows up in terms of identity voting. Voters with no religion are significantly more likely than Catholics or evangelicals to vote for a secular candidate (51% probability); this effect holds up even when controlling for individual left-right identification. Secular candidate support is also significantly higher for the well-educated, for younger voters, and for those in larger urban areas.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, there is clear evidence of both religious-secular and Catholic-Protestant voting cleavages in Latin America, but these cleavages manifest themselves differently. The religious-secular cleavage shows up in ideological voting, with religiosity leading to support for candidates on the right. Yet church attendance and secularism have larger effects on ideological voting when party systems are more polarized and programmatic, and a null effect where they are least so. Finally, while inter-denominational cleavages do not consistently push voters to the left or right, they do influence identity voting in elections featuring non-Catholic candidates.

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<sup>17</sup> The logistic regression coefficient for evangelicals is significant at  $p=.039$ .

<sup>18</sup> There is little evidence that the effect of church attendance on secular voting varies across denominations.

## **Case Study: Clergy Influence in Brazil**

Our analysis of the AmericasBarometer suggests that, under some conditions, religion affects voting in Latin America. Yet causality and causal mechanisms are difficult to explore using these data. Voters might prefer a candidate of their own faith because of in-group identity, but ideology might also drive the relationship, particularly for the religious-secular cleavage. Church attendance may be associated with right-wing voting, but it remains unclear whether sitting in the pews each Sunday has a causal effect on vote choice—e.g., because of politically-tinged sermons—or whether these variables are merely correlated.

In this section, we delve deeper into religion's effect on voting in Brazil, drawing on two survey experiments. We argue that religion matters for vote choice directly, through identity voting, and indirectly, via clergy endorsement of candidates and voters' positions on issues such as gay rights.

Brazilian legislative elections present a context in which we would expect religion to shape voting behavior. The combination of open-list proportional representation, high district magnitude, and a highly fragmented party system means that there are hundreds of candidates for most legislative offices. This system gives citizens the freedom to vote their preferences, rather than encouraging them to vote strategically. The difficulty of gathering information about so many contenders also boosts the influence of shortcuts like clergy voting recommendations or a candidate's religion. Furthermore, low levels of mass partisanship (Samuels 2006) and frequent party switching among legislators (Desposato 2006) mean that a candidate's party affiliation is less useful for reaching a decision, leaving room for religion to matter more.

Brazilian politicians also span a wide range of religious affiliations and ideological positions, giving voters who are motivated by faith or ideology the chance to choose candidates with similar characteristics. Brazil ranks 13<sup>th</sup> out of 18 countries in the ideological distance between its leftmost and rightmost political parties, ahead of Bolivia and Venezuela. Moreover, open list proportional representation gives party leaders strong incentives to diversify candidate lists by including representatives of particular identity groups, like evangelical Christians.

Finally, both religious-secular and Catholic-Protestant cleavages have been salient during recent Brazilian campaigns. Controversy surrounding abortion saw many Catholics and evangelicals campaigning side-by-side against Dilma Rousseff in the 2010 presidential election, while secular activists rushed to her defense. Yet evangelicals' political ambitions have also led to conflict with Catholics. In São Paulo's 2012 mayoral election, the Catholic hierarchy mobilized against frontrunner Celso Russomanno, who, though not evangelical himself, had strong ties to the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God. The Archbishop of São Paulo released a letter calling Russomanno a "threat to democracy" and instructed priests to read it during mass, arguably helping to derail Russomanno's candidacy (Lima 2012; Gama and Roncaglia 2012).

To test the effect of religious cues on voting in low-information elections, we conducted a survey experiment during the two and a half weeks before Brazil's October 7, 2012 municipal election.<sup>19</sup> Advertising on Facebook, we recruited 1820 registered voters age 18 or older for an online survey. Though selection was non-random, we ended up with a

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<sup>19</sup> The survey was conducted jointly with F. Daniel Hidalgo; approval was obtained from the institutional review boards of each of our institutions.

strikingly representative sample on variables such as region, race, party identification, and 2010 presidential vote. The sample over-represents the young, wealthy, males, and residents of larger cities, though we still have decent variation here. We also obtained disproportionately large subsamples of Protestants/evangelicals (30%), atheists/agnostics (4%), and those who believe in God but subscribe to no organized religion (14%), allowing us to examine the effect of religious cues among these minority groups.

Our first experiment examined the effect of clergy candidates using their official electoral names to signal religious leadership (Boas 2013). Brazilian electoral law gives candidates broad leeway to use nicknames or professional titles, and many take advantage of this opportunity; an evangelical minister named Paulo Rodrigues de Souza might present himself as “Pastor Paulo.”<sup>20</sup> To test this cue's effect, we provided a brief description of a city council candidate, including party, age, marital status, and education. Respondents in the treatment condition were given the candidate’s electoral name with religious title; those in the control condition received the candidate’s full legal name.<sup>21</sup> We then asked respondents

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<sup>20</sup> About three-quarters of clergy city council candidates use a religious title. “Pastor,” denoting a Protestant minister, is the most common. Catholic priests, who rarely run for office, would use the title “Padre” (Father).

<sup>21</sup> This treatment is stronger than simply mentioning a candidate’s religion, but is externally valid in a way that religion is not; candidate names routinely include professional titles, but rarely other religious cues. To further enhance external validity, respondents from a municipality with real “pastor” ballot name candidates were randomly given either one of these candidates (37%) or the fictional candidate Paulo Rodrigues de Souza/Pastor Paulo (37%). We pool these groups since effects were statistically indistinguishable.

how likely they would be to vote “for a person like this,” on a scale of 1 to 7.<sup>22</sup>

The top half of Figure 4.6 summarizes the “pastor” treatment effect on vote intention. On average, receiving a candidate’s religious title has a significant *negative* effect on vote intention. However, the effect is positive among evangelicals, and even larger (and significant) among the subset who identify with Pentecostalism. This positive effect is offset by a negative one among every other religious category, reaching statistical significance for atheists/agnostics, all Catholics, and Charismatic Catholics. The findings for the latter group are particularly striking. The Charismatic movement, Catholicism’s answer to Pentecostalism, involves a similar worship style and draws from a similar social base. However, our survey provides clear evidence of divergent identity voting for these two groups. Charismatic Catholics are turned off from voting for an evangelical pastor, despite seemingly aligned stances on important issues—just as evangelicals across numerous Latin American countries favor secular candidates over Catholic opponents.

<Insert Figure 4.6 Here>

Our second survey experiment sought to test the effect of clergy voting recommendations as a mechanism by which church attendance might affect voting (Smith

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<sup>22</sup> Respondents were asked to evaluate a single candidate rather than choose among several.

This question format has several methodological advantages, such as allowing for more reliable seven-point scales. It deviates from actual voting practice (entering the chosen candidate’s number into the electronic voting machine), but prompting voters to choose among named alternatives would do so as well. Moreover, voters arguably do evaluate candidates in isolation during the campaign, as they are presented with numerous individual self-promotion efforts.

2013). In the real world, it is difficult to disentangle the impact of clergy recommendations from that of other political information, as well as the weight of the issues clergy and the media address. We sought to separate these potential influences experimentally. All respondents read the following message: “Suppose that José Vargas dos Santos is a candidate for city council from [PARTY]. He has been working in the community for more than 20 years.”<sup>23</sup> The control condition received just this message, but three treatment conditions received the following additional information:

Treatment 1: “He participates actively in the gay movement.”

Treatment 2: “Various evangelical pastors have spoken out against his political positions.”

Treatment 3: “He participates actively in the gay movement. Various evangelical pastors have spoken out against his political positions.”

Once again, respondents reported their likelihood of supporting “a person like this.”

The bottom half of Figure 4.6 summarizes each treatment's effect among evangelicals, vis-à-vis the control condition.<sup>24</sup> Voters are clearly swayed by both issues and clergy endorsements. While simple clergy opposition lowers responses by 1.1 points on the 7-point scale, information about the candidate's activism for gay rights pushes down responses by 1.7 points. When both messages combine, the effect is 1.6 points. Thus, religious Protestants take into account *both* issues and clergy preferences, though clergy

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<sup>23</sup> Party was randomly assigned from among the PT, the PSDB, and the PMDB.

<sup>24</sup> Elsewhere (Smith 2013) we present the coefficients for evangelicals, Catholics and the non-religious. Here we present coefficients only for evangelicals, since cues from evangelical pastors should have the greatest impact precisely among evangelicals.

endorsements matter less than do issues.

Though both scenarios were described as fictitious, they approximate conditions under which religion matters for voting in the real world: the presence of religious minority candidates, and the politicization of religion during the campaign. Religion's effect is enhanced by the broader electoral context—Brazil's fragmented party system, low party identification, and electoral system with numerous candidates for legislative office. These results underscore that religion exerts both direct and indirect effects on voting. Consistent with our region-wide analysis, we find in-group and out-group identity heuristics when an evangelical pastor runs for office. In such cases, identity may trump issue voting; charismatic Catholics were turned off by "Pastor Paulo" even though he would probably agree with their stance on abortion or same-sex marriage. Yet in other contexts, religion influences voting behavior indirectly, via issue positions and clergy endorsements. We find evidence of both in the decision to vote for the gay rights activist.

## **Conclusion**

Across 18 countries and a decade's worth of presidential elections, two religious cleavages have mattered for the Latin American voter: between the religious and nonreligious, and between Catholics and Protestants. The religious-secular cleavage manifests itself in ideological voting, with the nonreligious voting to the left and more frequent churchgoers to the right. Protestants and Catholics tend to vote similarly in ideological terms, but this inter-religious cleavage shows up in identity voting; each group prefers candidates of the same faith. Our first survey experiment confirms the importance of

both in-group and out-group identity: evangelical clergy candidates appeal to evangelical voters, though they also generate rejection from both Catholic and secular voters. Yet the second survey experiment suggests that religion also shapes the vote through mechanisms other than identity. Religious congregations and clergy channel key information to the faithful on issues such as sexual politics, and they also shape voting by directly endorsing or explicitly rejecting candidates, regardless of religious affiliations. These social and informational mechanisms may contribute to inter-religious differences in the ideology of vote choice.

Yet both identity-based and ideological effects depend on the characteristics of elections or of countries' political systems. Religiously motivated ideological voting requires that party systems be at least somewhat polarized and that parties appeal to voters on at least moderately programmatic terms. When parties fail to differentiate themselves on the policy issues that most distinguish religious voters from the non-religious – in particular, issues of sexual politics and the family – there is little room for religion to affect the ideological direction of the vote. By contrast, as party polarization grows and left and right increasingly take distinct positions on issues such as abortion and homosexuality, religion exerts greater effects.

For its part, identity-driven voting for religious minorities (either Protestant or secular) requires that one be included among the ranks of candidates—something that still happens only infrequently in presidential elections across Latin America.<sup>25</sup> Non-Catholics are more likely to run at lower levels of office, particularly in legislative elections with a large

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<sup>25</sup> Though in the more secular countries of the Southern Cone, the presence of secular candidates appears to have become something of a new norm.



number of candidates. In such cases, religious heuristics and socially supplied cues may have particularly strong effects on vote choice, as we find in Brazil.

Our findings provide interesting parallels and contrasts with gender and ethnicity, the other two identity group categories examined in this volume. All three chapters uncover important identity voting effects. Just as religious minorities seek coreligionist candidates, Morgan shows that women voters are more likely to vote for women candidates, and Moreno finds strong links between indigenous voters and candidates. Moreover, just as Morgan finds that Latin American women often vote to the right of men, and that the strength of the gender-ideology association is stronger in countries with more polarized party systems, we find that religion and religiosity push voters to the right, but only in more polarized and programmatic party systems.

Nonetheless, we suspect that in other ways the electoral impact of religion is different from that of gender or ethnicity. Though Morgan does not find evidence of countries with significant modern gender gaps (women to the left of men) in present-day Latin America, scholars argue that socioeconomic development leads gender gaps to close and then to reverse. By contrast, it is hard to imagine a long-term social process that would cause Latin America's "religion gap"—the ideological divide between the religious and nonreligious—to reverse in direction. While the political meaning of any group identity is socially constructed by its members, the political implications of religion are constrained to a much greater degree by authoritative texts and traditions, as well as by the overlapping and mutually reinforcing influences of local, national, and transnational religious institutions.

Proponents of an assertive vision of state secularism are often uncomfortable with the normative ramifications of religious voting, since religious beliefs can be contentious and can

make it difficult to negotiate a consensus regarding the common good. Regardless of any normative qualms one might hold, our analysis suggests that religious voting is likely to be a continuing feature of the Latin American political landscape. Religion's impact on electoral outcomes might actually increase over time as greater percentages of citizens identify as non-religious, on the one hand, and evangelical, on the other. If the maturation of party systems leads to greater polarization and programmaticness, religion's influence on ideological voting should grow even further.

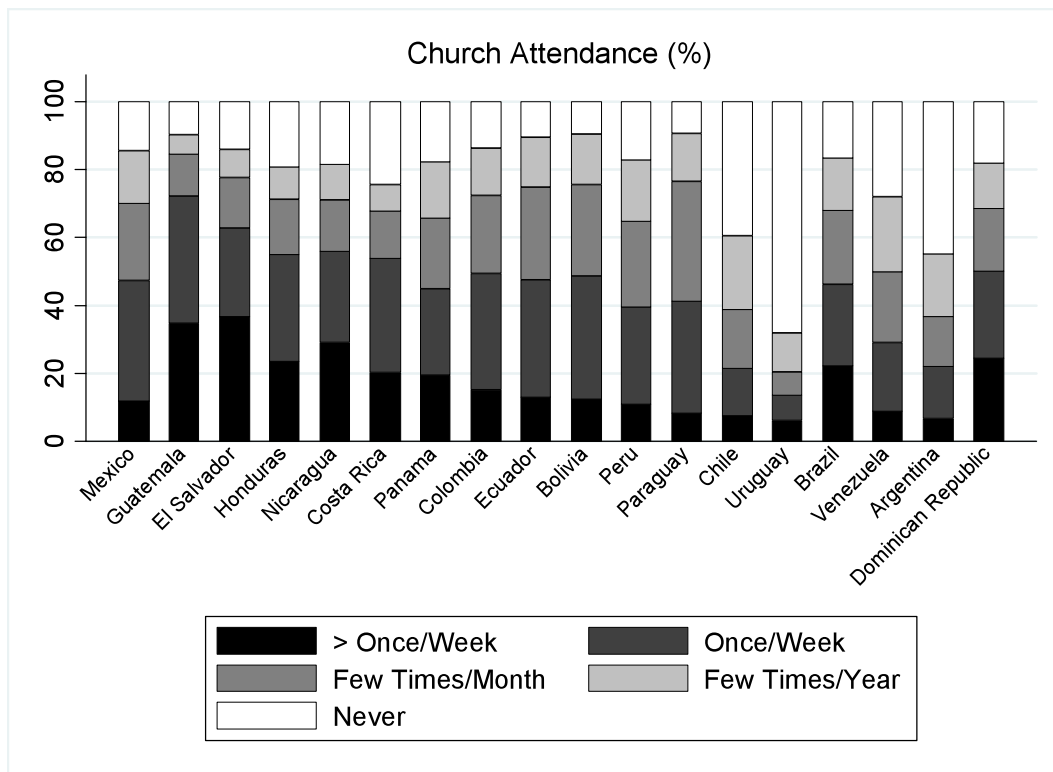
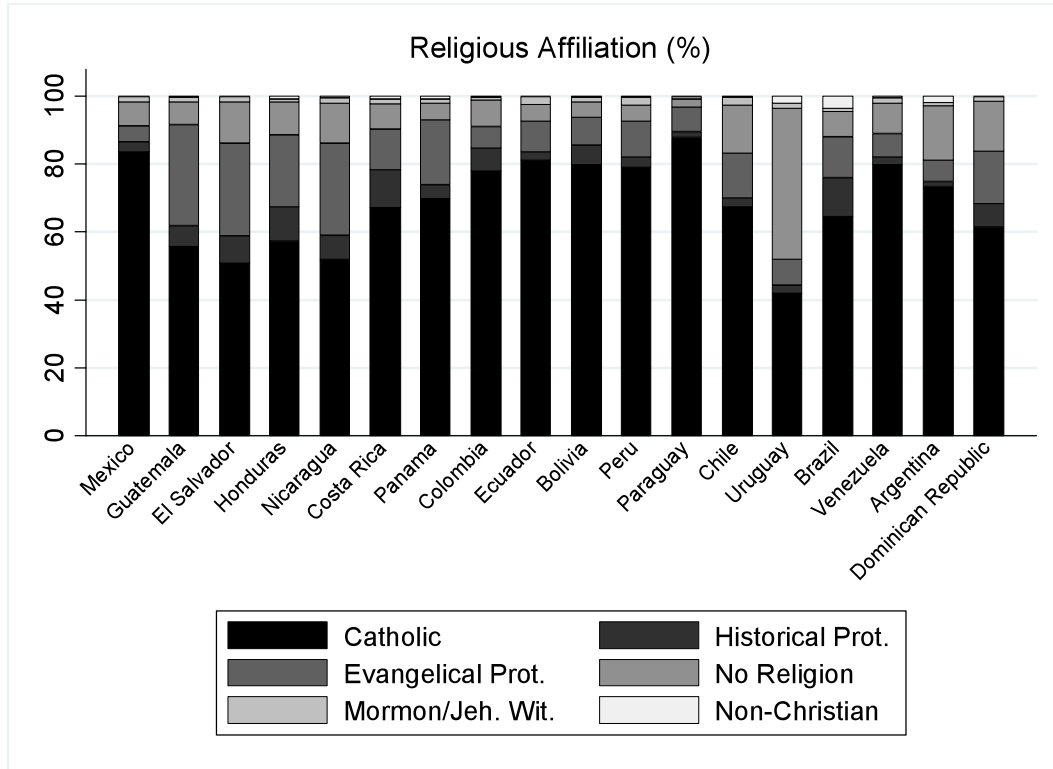
From a normative standpoint, we suggest that the growing role of religion in Latin American elections is actually a positive development. Historically, having viable and competitive parties on the left and right has strengthened the prospects of Latin American democracy by reducing the likelihood of either insurgencies or coups. Though the threat of an armed secular or evangelical movement sounds remote, incorporating a diverse set of interests and identities into the electoral process is no less important to regime legitimacy and to citizens' satisfaction with democracy. As secular and Protestant Latin Americans grow in number, their presence at the ballot box contributes to a more diverse and vital democracy.

## Appendix: Question Wording

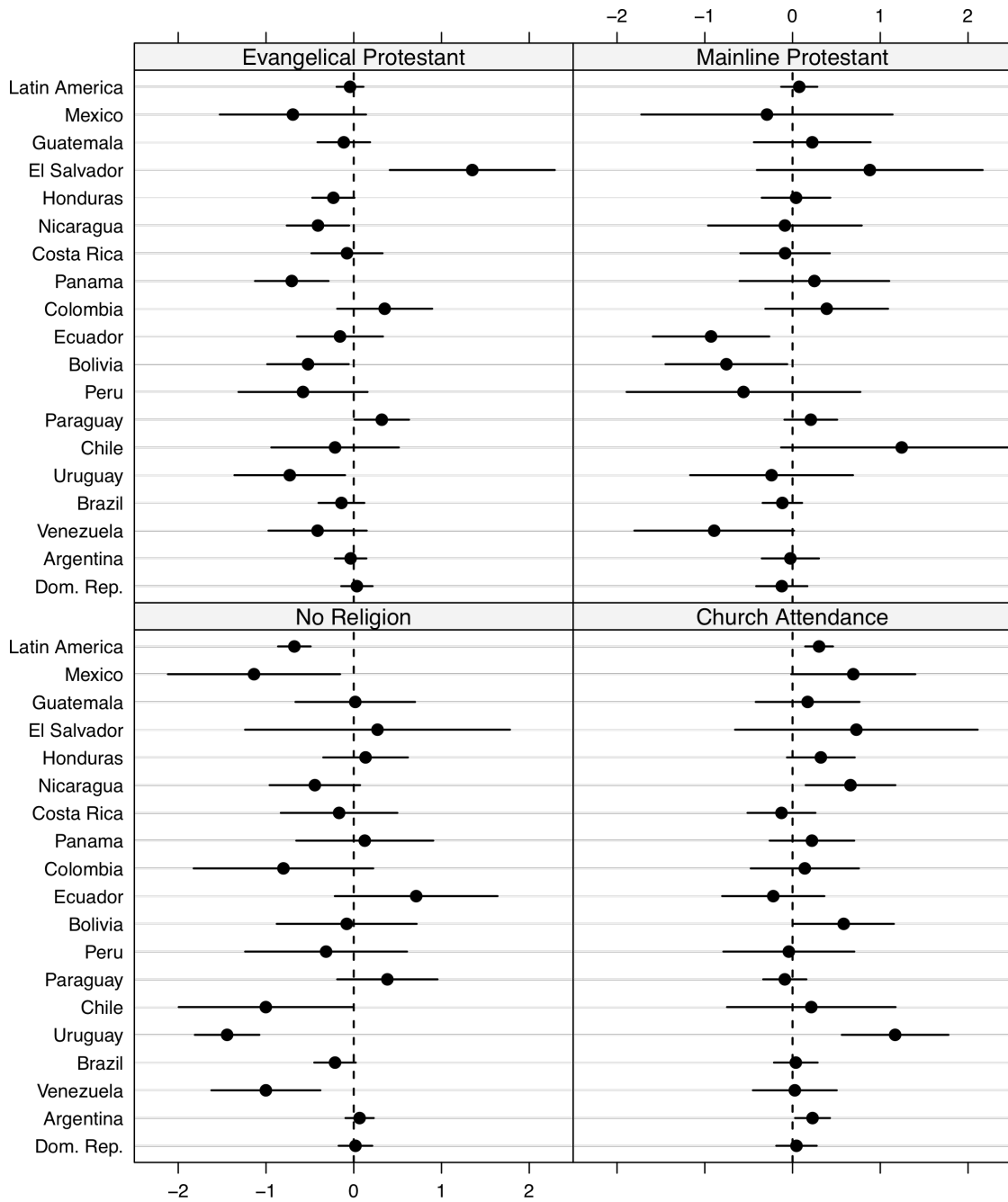
	Religious Affiliation	Religious Attendance
AmericasBarometer 2010-2012 Surveys (all countries)	<p><b>Q3C.</b> What is your religion, if any? [Do not read options. If the respondent says that he/she has no religion, probe to see if he/she should be located in option 4 or 11]</p> <p>(1) Catholic</p> <p>(2) Protestant, Mainline Protestant or Protestant non-Evangelical (Christian; Calvinist; Lutheran; Methodist; Presbyterian; Disciple of Christ; Anglican; Episcopalian; Moravian).</p> <p>(3) Non-Christian Eastern Religions (Islam; Buddhist; Hinduism; Taoist; Confucianism; Baha'i).</p> <p>(4) None (Believes in a Supreme Entity but does not belong to any religion)</p> <p>(5) Evangelical and Pentecostal (Evangelical; Pentecostals; Church of God; Assemblies of God; Universal Church of the Kingdom of God; International Church of the Foursquare Gospel; Christ Pentecostal Church; Christian Congregation; Mennonite; Brethren; Christian Reformed Church; Charismatic non-Catholic; Light of World; Baptist; Nazarene; Salvation Army; Adventist; Seventh-Day Adventist; Sara Nossa Terra).</p> <p>(6) LDS (Mormon).</p> <p>(7) Traditional Religions or Native Religions (Candomblé, Voodoo, Rastafarian, Mayan Traditional Religion; Umbanda; Maria Lonza; Inti; Kardecista, Santo Daime, Esoterica).</p> <p>(10) Jewish (Orthodox; Conservative; Reform).</p> <p>(11) Agnostic, atheist (Does not believe in God).</p> <p>(12) Jehovah's Witness.</p> <p>(88) DK (98) DA</p>	<p><b>Q5A.</b> How often do you attend religious services? [Read options]</p> <p>(1) More than once per week</p> <p>(2) Once per week</p> <p>(3) Once a month</p> <p>(4) Once or twice a year</p> <p>(5) Never or almost never</p>
AmericasBarometer 2008 Surveys (all countries)	<p><b>Q3.</b> What is your religion? [Do not read options]</p> <p>(1) Catholic</p> <p>(2) Mainline Protestant or Protestant non-Evangelical (Adventist, Baptist, Calvinist, The Salvation Army, Lutheran, Methodist, Nazarene, Presbyterian).</p> <p>(3) Non-Christian Religions (Jewish, Muslims, Buddhists, Hinduisms, Taoists).</p> <p>(5) Evangelical and Pentecostal (Pentecostals, Charismatic non-Catholics, Light of World)</p>	Same as 2010-2012

	<b>Religious Affiliation</b>	<b>Religious Attendance</b>
	(6) Mormons, Jehovah's Witness, Spiritualists and Seventh-Day Adventists. (7) Traditional Religions or Native Religions (Candomble, Voodoo, Rastafarian, Mayan Traditional Religion). (4) None, secularist or atheist (Do not believe in God)	
Coding in Analysis	For all three survey waves, separate variables are coded "1" for respondents of each of the following religious affiliations, "0" for respondents who listed other religious affiliations, and missing for those who did not respond: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Catholic (Q3C and Q3 option 1)</li> <li>• Historical/Mainline Protestant(Q3C and Q3 option 2)</li> <li>• Evangelical Protestant (Q3C and Q3 option 5)</li> <li>• Mormon (LDS)/Jehovah's Witness (Q3C options 6 and 12; Q3 option 6)</li> <li>• No religion (Q3C options 4 and 11; Q3 option 4)</li> <li>• Non-Christian (Q3C options 3, 7, and 10; Q3 options 3 and 7)</li> </ul>	Recoded on a scale from 0 to 1, with higher values representing more frequent church attendance: 1 = attends church more than once a week 0 = never or almost never attends church

**Figure 4.1: Religious Affiliation and Church Attendance, 2012**

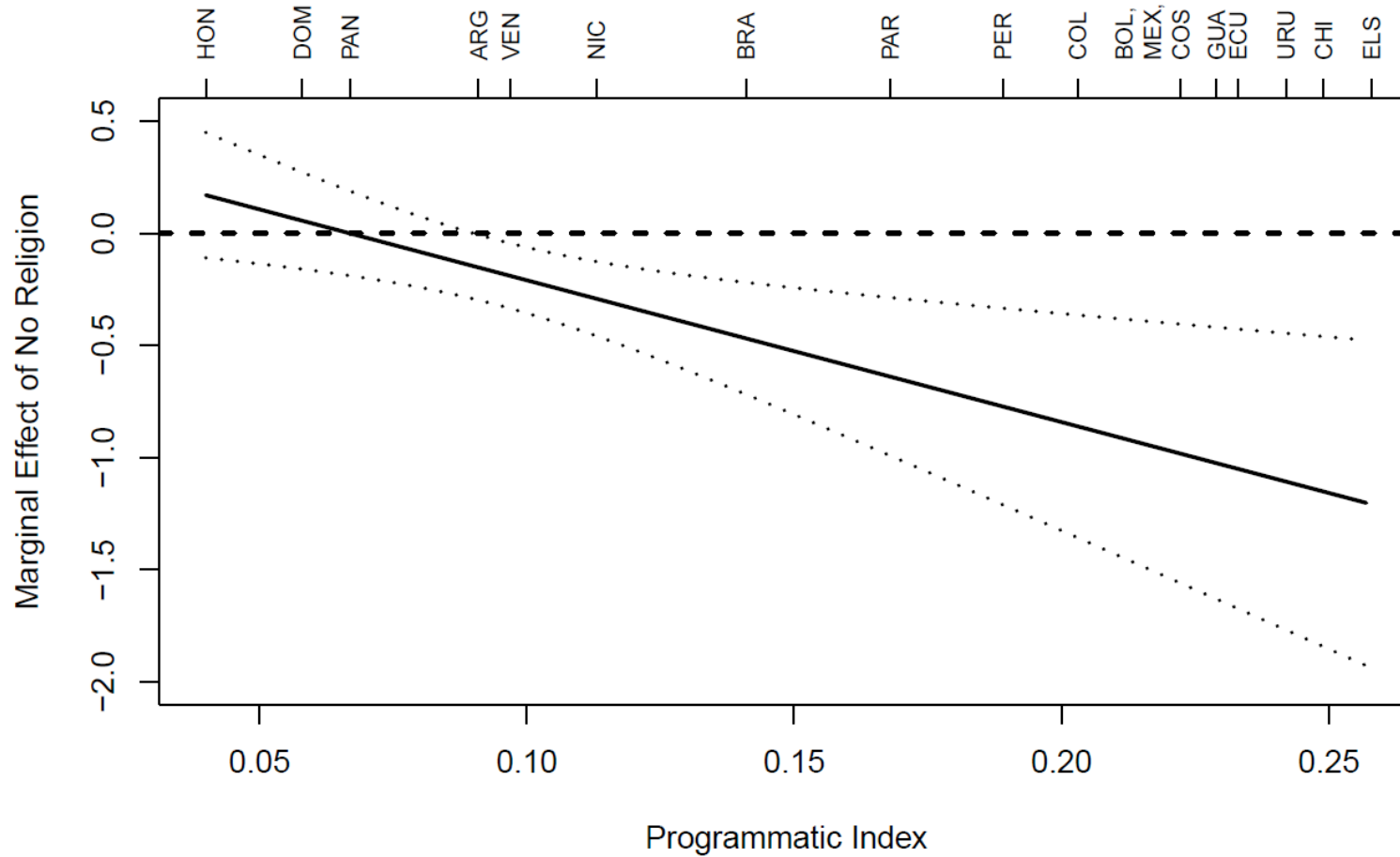


**Figure 4.2: The Association Between Religion and the Ideology of Vote Choice (OLS Regression Coefficients)**



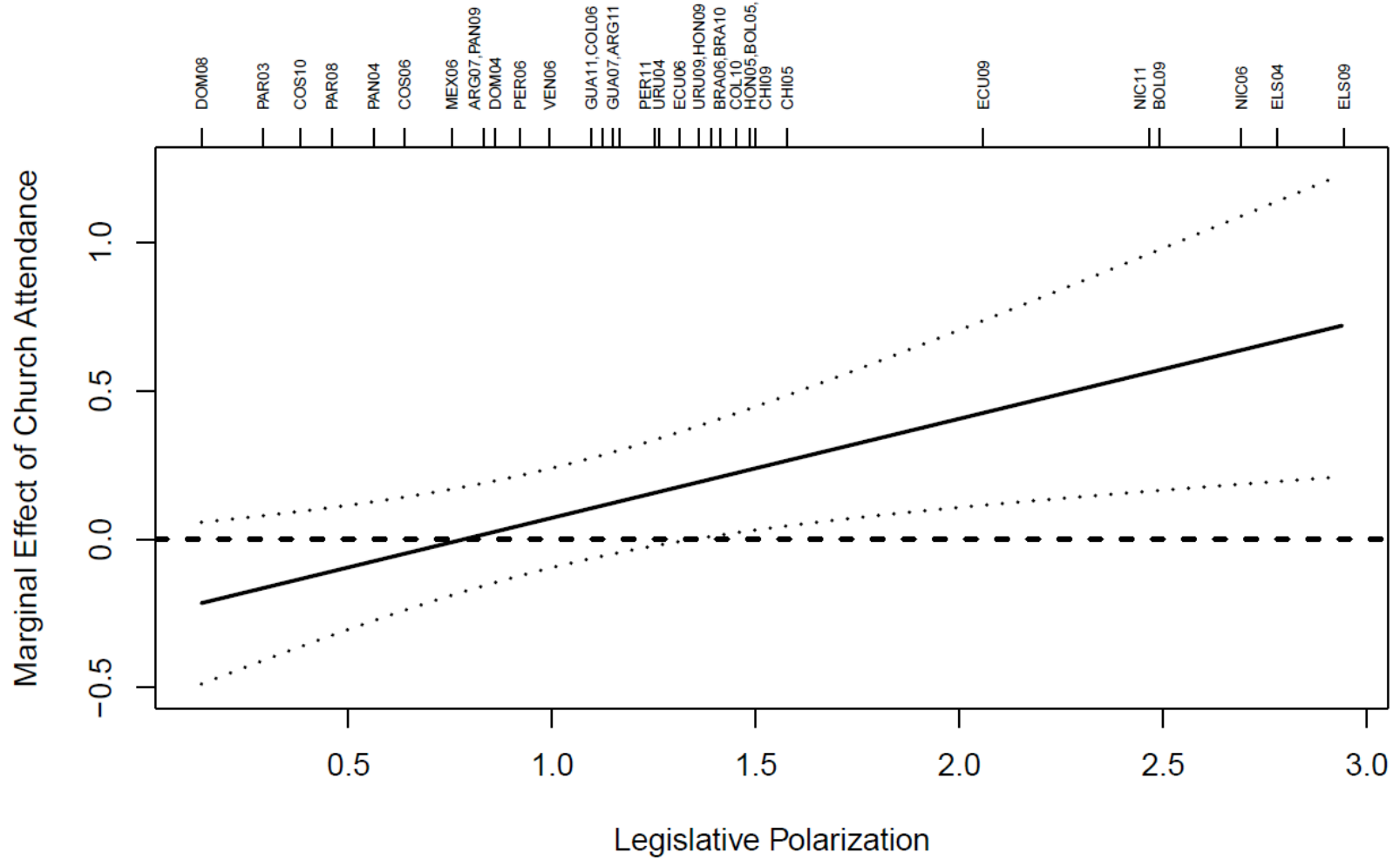
Dots represent OLS multiple regression coefficients; dependent variable is ideology of vote choice (0–20 scale, higher numbers are Right). Catholic is the reference category for religion dummy variables. Lines give 95% confidence intervals (design–effect based). Church attendance runs from 0 (never) to 1 (more than weekly). Models include additional controls for non–Christians, Mormons/Jehovah’s Witnesses, household wealth, education, town size, age, gender, race, and country/region/year fixed effects.

**Figure 4.3: Marginal Effect of No Religion on Ideology of Vote Choice, 2008-2012**



Dotted lines give 95% confidence interval (design-effect based). See text for details of model specification.

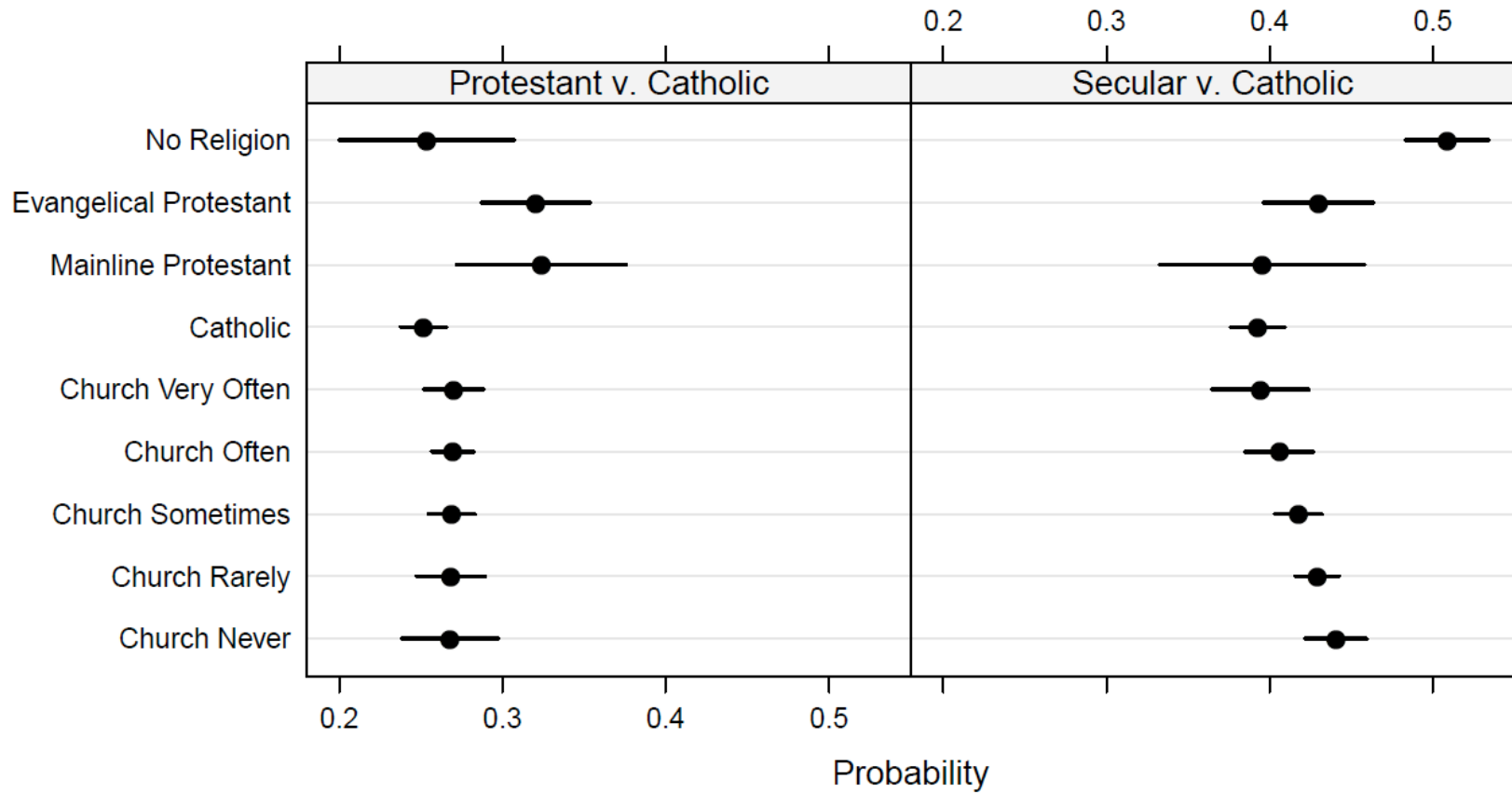
**Figure 4.4: Marginal Effect of Church Attendance on Ideology of Vote Choice, 2008-2012**



Dotted lines give 95% confidence interval (design-effect based). See text for details of model specification.

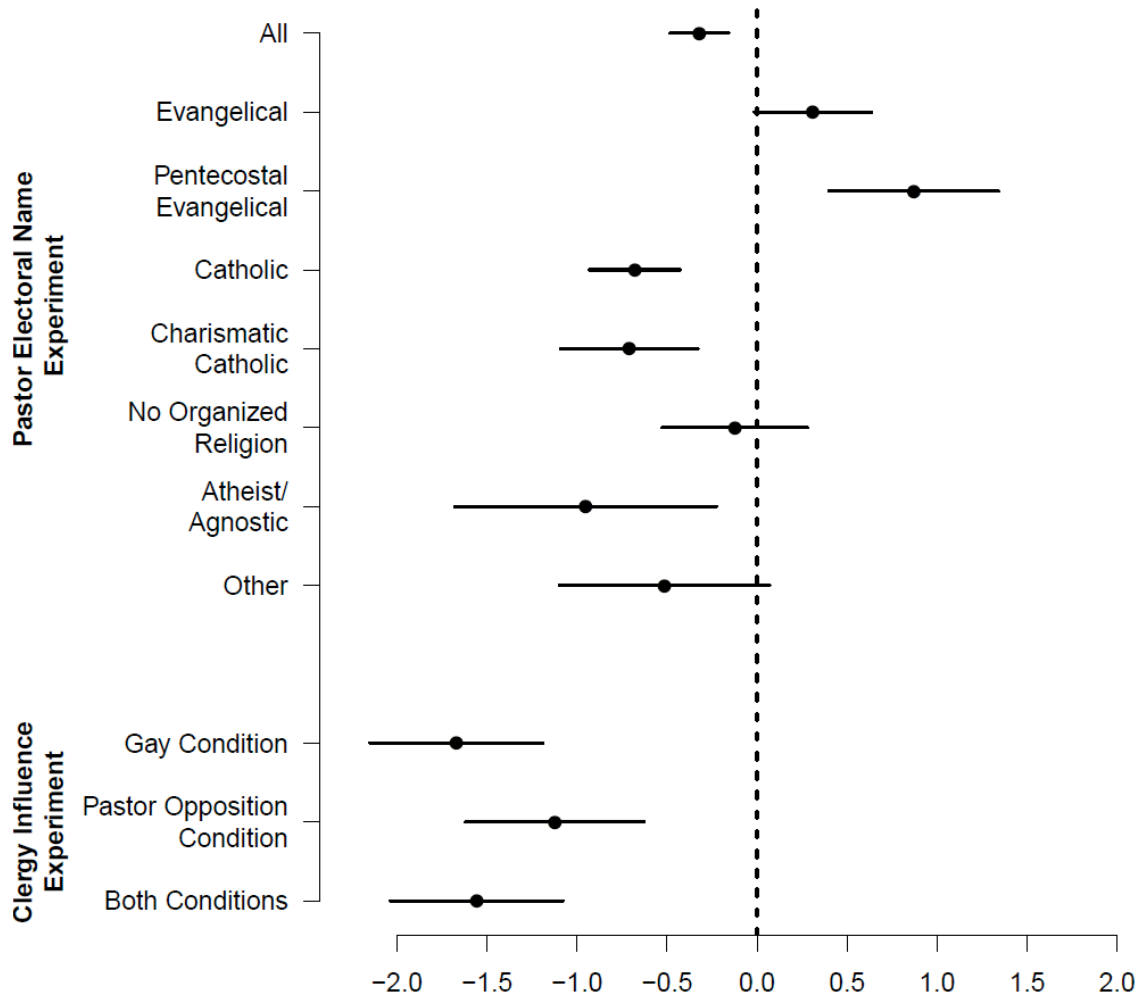


**Figure 4.5: Voting for Religious Minority Candidates, 2008-2012**



Lines give 95% confidence interval (design-effect based). Models include controls for wealth, education, town size, age, gender, and race; dummies for non-Christian and Mormon/Jehovah's Witness; and country-year fixed effects. Probabilities are estimated setting all observations to the value of interest, and leaving all other variables at their observed values.

**Figure 4.6: Treatment Effects on Vote Intention, Brazil 2012**



Dots give point estimates; lines represent 95% confidence intervals. Results of the clergy influence experiment are for the evangelical subsample.