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SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EFFECTS OF RELIGIOSITY AND RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES IN LATIN AMERICA

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ABSTRACT

This paper provides an empirical examination of the effects of religiosity and of religious identities on a broad range of attitudes in seven Latin American countries. It is based on ECosociAl, a new national survey of large urban areas. The topics covered in the paper include the extent to which these religious variables affect levels of civic participation, the propensity to vote in elections, self-placement on the left-to-right ideological scale, levels of happiness, confidence in institutions and in other people, and the degrees of tolerance or acceptance of people of different beliefs, personal attributes, or social condition.

The main finding here is that the effects of Latin American religiosity on individual attitudes and reported practices are much the same as they are in the United States, even though such religiosity is attached predominantly to a Catholic religious tradition. American "exceptionality," linked as it is to its unique Protestant founding moments, turns out to be, therefore, much less exceptional than what is usually thought. Similarly, the findings here contradict the often repeated claim that the advance of Protestantism in Latin America should contribute to foster democratic consolidation in the region by infusing it with the cultural and civic virtues long associated in the literature with this religious tradition. Our empirical results fail to detect any substantial differences in the attitudes of Latin Americans of different religious identities. The paper concludes by speculating that the US and Latin America share similarly much lower levels of secularization, and that this is what makes the new world—and not only the US—"exceptional" in comparison to Europe.

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta un análisis empírico de los efectos de la religiosidad y de las identidades religiosas de los latinoamericanos en siete países sobre un espectro amplio de sus opiniones. Se basa en ECosociAL, una nueva encuesta hecha en grandes ciudades. Los temas abordados incluyen los niveles de la participación cívica, la propensidad de votar, la auto ubicación en la escala ideológica, los niveles de felicidad, la confianza en las instituciones y las personas, y el grado de aceptación o tolerancia de otros de distintas creencias, atributos personales, o condición social.

El resultado principal de esta investigación es que los efectos de la religiosidad de los latinoamericanos sobre sus actitudes y prácticas son prácticamente los mismos que se reportan en Estados Unidos, a pesar de que provienen principalmente de una tradición religiosa católica. En consecuencia, la "excepcionalidad" estadounidense, ligada como la ha sido a sus orígenes fundacionales protestantes, resulta ser mucho menos excepcional de lo que se ha pensado. Por lo mismo, los resultados aquí contradicen la afirmación frecuentemente repetida de que el avance del protestantismo en la región facilitará la consolidación de la democracia en ella al imbuirla de los valores cívicos y culturales largamente asociados en la literatura con esta vertiente religiosa. Nuestro análisis no detecta diferencias sustanciales en lo que piensan o reportan los latinoamericanos de distintas identidades religiosas. El trabajo concluye especulando de que lo que aúna a Estados Unidos y América Latina es su grado relativamente bajo de secularización,

siendo ésto lo que hace que el nuevo mundo—y no solamente Estados Unidos—sea "excepcional" frente a Europa.

Religious beliefs have been a powerful determinant of a wide variety of social and political attitudes and behaviors. This has been demonstrated repeatedly through social science research over the last several decades in the United States and in Europe.[1] However, despite the increase in empirical research on a broad variety of questions in Latin America, there has been surprisingly little systematic research on the impact of religion on attitudes and practices that impact civic and political life in the region. Scholars working on religion have tended to focus, among other topics, on the role of the Catholic Church in politics, on changes within the Catholic Church itself since Vatican II, on the effects of Liberation Theology or its institutional expression in Basic Christian Communities (CEBS), or on the rise of what has been broadly described as the challenge to the Catholic Church's position as the dominant religion posed by the rapid spread of Pentecostalism and the resurgence of aboriginal as well as Afro-American rites.[2] As a result, comparatively little is known about how religious beliefs shape the perceptions and behaviors of Latin Americans.[3]

Moreover, as the Latin American religious landscape becomes more plural, there has been no dearth of speculation, but little actual research, on how this more diverse religious environment may change people's attitudes toward each other and towards civil and political institutions. A key question is what kind of effect, if any, the increasing numbers of Protestants will have on the resurgence of democratic regimes in the region. Drawing from the standard repertory of views on the subject that postulate that Protestantism has been more conducive to the strengthening of democratic regimes, recent analysts have predicted that the changing religious landscape will favor the consolidation and deepening of such regimes in the region. They have assumed that the apparent fragility of democracy in Latin America has been to a large degree a result of the effects of what is supposedly the more authoritarian religious culture and practices associated with Catholicism, which have permeated all levels of the area's national societies. Latin American and Iberian Catholicism has been understood to be particularly extreme in generating authoritarian political cultures. It supposedly contains an especially "conservative," "monistic," and "hierarchical-corporatist" view of society, whose effects are, in Christian Smith's words, that "the establishment of democracy is difficult if not impossible" (Smith, 1995, p. 3). For this reason, in his view, "Latin American

Protestantism will emerge as a significant positive force helping to foster genuine democratization" (Smith, 1995, p. 2). These notions, as we will note below, are closely tied with the widely accepted view that the creation of democracy in the United States benefited primarily from a culture of civic participation and engagement that drew from Protestant religious views and church governance practices.

The purpose of this paper is to provide a rigorous empirical analysis of the effects of religion (i.e., both levels of religiosity and religious identities) on the involvement and opinions of Latin Americas on their nation's civil society, public institutions, and political participation. We base our observations on a recent survey, the Encuesta de Cohesión Social en América Latina (ECosociAL), conducted in 2007. The survey covered a variety of themes, including religion, under the general rubric of exploring "social cohesion."[4] The survey questions were written with the authors' involvement; in particular we prepared the questions pertaining to religious life. The survey was carried out in seven Latin American countries: Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru.

The aforementioned trends toward greater religious pluralism are certainly visible in the results of our survey. Our first question on religion asked people to declare their religious identities, including whether they consider themselves "atheist," "agnostic," or simply "without" religion ("sin religión," or "são religião"). The responses for the seven countries are presented in Table 1. (See Appendix for all tables.)[5]

As can readily be appreciated, a considerable majority of those surveyed in major urban areas in our seven countries, ranging from 58% in Guatemala to 86% in Mexico, continue to identify themselves as Catholics. At the same time, and to a varying degree from country to country, there are important Protestant minorities, ranging from a high of 33 percent in Guatemala to a low of 3 percent in Mexico. The proportion of atheists, agnostics, or people who declare they do not have a religious identity exceeds in the two most secular countries that were sampled, namely Chile (with 18 percent) and Argentina (with 17 percent), the proportions of Protestants (15 percent in Chile and 8 percent in Argentina). Brazil, which has a relatively large Protestant population that comprises nearly a fifth of the total, is the only country to also have a significant minority of Afro-religionists, reaching nearly 9 percent.

Although Latin America is indeed more pluralistic in terms of the basic religious identities of its people than it was at the turn of the twentieth century, Catholicism is still the most important such identity. However, religious minorities generally tend to practice their religion much more frequently and actively than do religious majorities. Given that mass attendance tends to be a minority phenomenon among Latin American Catholics except in Guatemala (where it reaches 71 percent of those who say they are Catholic), the actual number of people attending weekly church services in the cities of the region is more evenly balanced among Catholic and Protestant churches than the figures on religious identity would suggest. This is particularly the case in the poorer neighborhoods. The Catholic Church faces, therefore, not only a challenge from rising proportions of Protestants and people without religion, but also from a growing relative secularization within its flock which is more extensive than the same phenomenon among Protestants.[6]

In addition to exploring changing patterns of religious identity in Latin America, our survey also allows an analysis of the way different religious groups, viewed from the perspective of the most religious among them, become engaged in civic organizations, as well as the extent to which groups with different religious identities vote, trust other people and institutions, and experience personal happiness. The survey also permits an analysis of how groups place themselves on a political-ideological scale, of the importance they assign to a candidate's belief in God, and whether they support the government or the opposition. The survey also makes it possible to examine how religious identities and levels of religiosity affect degrees of tolerance or intolerance towards various social groups such as the poor and people of different ethnic or racial identities, or different sexual orientation.

Given the already noted longstanding assumptions regarding the effects of Catholicism and Protestantism on national political and social cultures, our analysis here cannot avoid being placed in a larger comparative framework. Our results show that the effects of religiosity in Latin America—particularly among Catholics—are in general very similar in terms of enhancing key civic virtues as those that have long been associated with similarly religious people, though mainly Protestant, in the United States. This conclusion presents a challenge to longstanding claims about US "exceptionalism,"

and leads us to place in high relief a number of the ways in which the experience of Latin America offers interesting parallels to that of the United States.

A BRIEF EXPLORATION OF LONGSTANDING ASSUMPTIONS

Ever since Alexis de Tocqueville's *Democracy in America*, scholars have pointed out the importance of religion in the United States for fostering a democratic political culture, the essential ingredient of US exceptionalism. Observers have long explained the impressive levels of participation in civic associations of all kinds in American society by noting that it is largely derived from the high level of religiosity of its people and the large numbers of churches and denominations that have dotted both its urban and rural landscape. These features originated in the fact that many of the founding settlers of the colonies that became the United States were religious dissidents seeking an environment where they could practice their beliefs freely.

A number of social scientists argue that, after independence from Britain, the United States became an especially propitious terrain for the development of churches that fostered civic engagement. Unlike those in any other country, American political leaders at the time of independence chose to not sponsor an established church, and wrote the world's first constitution that called explicitly for the "non-establishment" of any religion, official or unofficial, coupled with a distinctive and inviolable "free exercise" clause. Indeed, given the plurality of denominations in the country from its beginnings, it would have been difficult to sponsor a single established church. But while insisting on non-establishment, the framers of the US Constitution were at the same time quite disposed to place no hindrance in the way of those wishing to cultivate religion, their principal concern being mostly to ensure that the state would leave religious traditions free from interference. Therefore, and unlike what occurred subsequently in many other republics, non-establishment in the United States did not result from growing secularization or from an antireligious sentiment, but largely from a desire to protect religious freedom.

As a result, Americans continued to have both a high level of religiosity and a considerable commitment to church life. Over time, this was combined with a lack of direct, official state support for the numerous tasks and costs associated with the building, maintaining, and running of places of worship and their associated educational and charitable institutions (Hamburger, 2004; McGreevy, 2003). Church life depended on the commitment and generosity of its worshippers, providing an extensive training ground for honing the necessary skills for civic participation in organizations of all kinds. Such skills—it has been argued—are easily transferable across different organizational contexts.

The positive nexus between religion and American democracy has been emphasized repeatedly in the recent social science literature. Robert Wuthnow expresses a longstanding consensus among scholars when he notes that "...civic involvement has been deeply influenced by the nation's preponderant commitment to its religious organizations" (Wuthnow, 1999, p. 331). Empirical research, he says, shows "there is a strong relationship between church attendance and volunteering for religious organizations ... and membership in civic associations" (p. 350). At least in part, this connection is due to the fact that Americans learn needed social skills for such civic engagement through their participation in church life. Wuthnow notes that Protestant churches, in particular, are likely to "generate such skills... perhaps with greater benefit to lower-income people than is often the case in other civic organizations" (p. 346). Verba et al. also emphasize that "religious institutions are the source of significant civic skills," and they add that this, "in turn, foster(s) political activity" (Verba et al., 1995, p. 282). This would explain why, as these authors note, "if we look at the American public as a whole, we find that the average citizen is three to four times as likely to be politically mobilized in a church than in a union" (p. 388), a notion that resonates with Wuthnow's comment. Rhys Williams also emphasizes the importance of religious environments on political mobilization, arguing "it is…an obvious observation to note that religion is a superb motivating force for political involvement" (Williams, 2003, p. 182). Robert Putnam agrees that religious involvement increases civic involvement, and adds that both are related as well to a greater level of trust in others. He writes, "Those who are more active in community life are less likely (even in private) to condone cheating on taxes,

insurance claims, bank loan forms and employment applications... Honesty, civic engagement, and social trust are mutually reinforcing" (Putnam, 2000, p. 137). In sum, scholars have repeatedly noted that the relatively high levels of involvement in church life by Americans helps to explain high degrees of participation in civic organizations of all kinds, and also why churchgoers tend to be more likely to trust other people as well as their government.

The United States is quite unique among highly developed countries in terms of the extent to which its people report that they believe in God and attend church services regularly, even if such attendance may not in fact be as high as survey results would lead us to believe. As a result, churches seem to be one of the sources of what Arthur Stinchcombe might call a "constant cause" of American democracy.[7] They are among the key settings where people learn leadership and public speaking skills and where they discuss local as well as national issues, all of which increase the probability that they will become involved in civic organizations, and increases their effectiveness within them. And yet, as a decline in church attendance and participation among some religious traditions has set in over the past decades, scholars who focus on this aspect of American democracy lament that institutional religion may be losing ground in terms of its ability to encourage the very civic virtues that have contributed in their view to making the United States so exceptional.[8]

But are these characteristics long associated with the religious experience of the United States really so singular? Or is this implication in the literature simply the result of the frequent tendency to compare and contrast the United States' experience almost exclusively to Western Europe? After all, many scholars often look no further than the set of "developed countries," and principally Western European ones rooted in Christian religious culture, when placing the United States in a comparative context. However, Western European countries have long been much more secular than the US, and it may simply be that it is this fundamental difference, rather than any specific association between religious life and civic virtue, that sets the two experiences apart. Surely the relationship between religious life and civic virtue and participation will tend to be less generative of its expected outcomes if the overall national environment is largely secular. It is likely, therefore, that the contemporary civic engagements in which Western

Europeans become involved largely stem from other, nonreligious, attitudinal commitments and group identities. Whether or not the United States' experience is unique in terms of the degree to which these democracy-enhancing characteristics are associated with religious life requires an exploration of national settings where levels of religiosity are also much higher than they are in Western Europe.

Latin American countries offer a useful set of national cases in which these attributes might be productively explored. They have, like the United States, Christian populations, with high percentages of people who profess belief in God and who report praying daily. The extent to which and the ways in which Latin Americans practice their religion vary from country to country. However, given their generally high degree of personal religiosity, Western European levels of secularization are generally absent.

A contrast with the Latin American experience also holds an additional advantage for understanding the possible consequences of religion on the enhancement of a democratic participatory culture. This comparison permits raising the question of whether such effects are due to levels of religiosity—regardless of religious identities—or whether they are generated only when religiosity is associated with a specific set of such identities. The literature on the United States has conflated both aspects, quite unwittingly, while implying that the operative aspect of religion's effects stems from the Protestant identities that accompanied its founding as a nation. The argument is that Protestantism enhances a democratic culture because of the greater participation of the laity in church governance as well as in leading church services. It also has a closer affinity with individual freedom, choice, and expression given that it encourages personal faith seeking through reading the Bible. These characteristics are viewed as being absent from the Catholic tradition (Weber, 1930; Verba, et al., 1995, p. 523). In particular, they are supposed to be absent from countries where Catholicism has been the majority religion as well as the one associated with the formation of national cultures, as was the case in Latin America and in Latin Europe. In particular, analysts have presented Catholicism in Latin America being especially inimical to democracy. Following Wiarda (1992), many authors have stressed what they have seen as Latin American Catholicism's overly authoritarian, hierarchical, corporatist, and monistic nature, whose supposed effects have been to stifle the development of pluralistic participatory cultures in the

region (Smith, 1995). Moreover, Latin American constitutions did not separate church and state after independence from Spain; disestablishment only began in some countries of the region much later.

It is remarkable that these facile assumptions have generally not been tested empirically in Latin America.[9] If empirical evidence were to show that religious belief and practice in Latin America, including among Catholics, were to have the same effects as it does in the United States, many of these assertions would have to be revised. And, as we shall see in what follows, this is precisely what occurs. Religiosity in the seven major Latin American countries where our survey was applied is associated with effects that are remarkably similar to a number of findings that have long been reported for Protestants in the United States. Moreover, there do not appear to be any meaningful differences between the impact of different religious traditions among Latin American countries, even in settings where religious pluralism has increased the most.

In sum, how really "exceptional" is "American exceptionalism" in terms of the widely noted relationship between religiosity and engagement and civic and political life? Our findings suggest that the widely accepted argument that these characteristics of American society stem primarily from a combination of Protestant denominational practices and the consequences of the disestablishment decision taken at the foundational moments of American public institutions needs to be rethought.

RELIGION AND PARTICIPATION IN CIVIC LIFE IN LATIN AMERICA

Table 2 contains the effects of the level of religiosity and religious identity reported by our survey respondents in seven different countries including eight key indicators of civic and political engagement.[10] The first variable we explored is the level of engagement reported by respondents in non-religious voluntary associations, one of the most commonly noted indicators of civic engagement in the literature (see "outcome 1" in Table 2). Our survey asked respondents to list all of the associations or organizations to which they currently belonged. Naturally, people who have higher levels of religiosity and actively participate in church life can be expected to be engaged more than others in

institutions, organizations, or groups that are church related or sponsored. If these church-related or sponsored activities are included in the regression models it would not be particularly surprising to find a link between religiosity and civic engagement. To avoid this problem, and to focus in the most stringent manner on the possible effects of religiosity levels on civic participation, we developed regression models for each of the countries included in the survey in which the dependent variable is the level of involvement in voluntary organizations that are *neither explicitly tied to churches nor have any direct or identifiable connection to religious life*. This results in a reduction of between 30 to 50 percent—depending on the country—in the total number of organizations to which people declare they belong. We dichotomized the dependent variable by separating those who are "involved" from those who are "not involved" in the remaining secular associations, organizations, or groups. We measured religiosity—our key independent variable—with an index we created that includes the following items: the respondents' frequency of prayer and of church attendance, their self perception of the importance of religion in their own lives, their assessment of the degree of religiosity in their families of origin, and their degree of involvement in religious groups of any kind—aside from churches themselves. (For further details regarding this index, see Appendix 1).

Despite the application of a more demanding test than that which is normally found in the literature, the results are very consistent: in all countries except Colombia, there is a clear and positive association between religiosity and participation in secular civic organizations. The association is significant at the .001 level in all countries except Mexico, where it is significant at the .01 level. The Colombian exception may be a reflection of the political violence and turbulence that has beset Colombian civic and political life over the past decades.

The effect of religious identities on participation in secular civic organizations is much weaker than that of religiosity. In no country did we find any significant differences in this measurement between Catholics and people affiliated with other religions (the great majority of whom are Protestant). In only two countries—Argentina and Peru—were those reporting "no religion" more likely to participate in secular organizations than Catholics.[11]

In addition to exploring the relationship between levels of religiosity and the level of engagement in civic organizations, we also looked at the relationship between levels of religiosity and the number of close friends that respondents reported as possessing, as well as the number of neighbors they claimed to know personally (outcomes 2 and 3, respectively). The results show that the number of close friends reported by respondents in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Peru increases significantly with levels of religiosity. Additionally, religiosity increases the number of neighbors known personally in Chile, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru. However, and perhaps understandably, the effects are not as robust as those that occur when exploring participation in voluntary organizations. Friendship and neighborly relationships are not aspects of sociability that require any particular skills beyond those that are available to people in all walks of life. And yet, active participation in church life does offer the advantage of expanding the opportunities for people to meet, which is probably what explains the association between greater religiosity and the frequency of friendships and the experience of neighborliness. Respondents with higher scores on the religiosity index also tend to attend church services more frequently. Similarly, it is likely that people with higher religiosity may be more attentive to what happens in their neighborhood and participate more readily in its organizations, and may therefore be more predisposed to become acquainted with their neighbors.

Religious identity is also associated with the intensity of friendship circles and neighborliness, yet in complex and rather unpredictable ways. For example, while in Brazil people who have non-Catholic religious identities report having more friends than Catholics, in Chile and Argentina it is the other way around, i.e., Catholics report having more friends than non-Catholics. The only country where people who declare no religious affiliation report having more friends than Catholics is Argentina, and the only country where such people report knowing personally more neighbors is Brazil. When it comes to the relationship between religious identity and measures of informal sociability, such as friendships and neighborliness, it is difficult to infer from the analysis of our survey results a clear pattern of associations.

RELIGION AND LEVELS OF TRUST

Public opinion studies suggest that Latin Americans generally express less trust in other people and in public institutions than Americans or Europeans. These differences can be appreciated in Table 3, whose figures are derived from the 2005 World Values Survey. The findings do show that Latin Americans (with the partial exception of Argentineans) have seemingly lower measures of interpersonal "trust," but that when it comes to levels of "confidence" in institutions, the results are more mixed. On average, Latin Americans seem to have a lower degree of confidence in the armed forces, labor unions, the police, and the judicial system, but higher levels when it comes to churches, government, and major companies. Notably, Latin Americans appear to join respondents in the US in evincing a higher level of confidence in churches than that expressed in any Western European country.

Our goal here is not to explain cross-regional differences in the general levels of interpersonal trust or confidence in institutions. Such differences are not as straightforward as they may seem at first glance given linguistic issues and historically fashioned cultural backgrounds. To exemplify these complexities only with their linguistic ramifications, it should be remembered that "trust" and "confidence" are both translated into a single noun—"*confianza*" or "*confiança*"—in Spanish and Portuguese. The connotations of this term, as is the case with the word "confidence," are tied more to expectations related to a person's or an institution's performance rather than to a general belief in their intrinsic or essential "goodness," as occurs with the notions of "trust" and "trustworthiness" that come from Scandinavian and Anglo-Saxon etymological roots. The assertion "I trust him completely, but I have no confidence in his ability to handle the accounts," is not an unreasonable one in English, but it would be difficult to translate literally into Latin languages in a way that does not seem contradictory.[12] The first clause in the sentence would have to rendered, instead, as "I believe in his honesty..." As a result of these linguistic complexities, survey questions in which the term "trust" was rendered as "*confianza*" do not really mean the same thing. Such questions cannot be taken, consequently, as producing clear-cut social facts upon which to build comparisons between nations or regions. By contrast, the terms "confidence" and "*confianza*" which

share a common root in Latin are indeed more similar in meaning. The English version of the 2005 World Values Survey did use the terms "trust" to capture respondents' perceptions of other people and "confidence" to register their relative faith in institutions. Table 3 shows that Latin Americans answer these latter questions in ways that are more similar to the answers given by Americans and Europeans. This may simply be a reflection of the linguistic problem noted here.

Consequently, rather than dwelling on the possible significance of the different levels of interpersonal "trust" toward other people in Latin America, the United States, and Europe, our focus here is on the specific effects of religiosity and religious identities on the levels of confidence toward a variety of institutions in the countries covered by the ECosociAL survey. Respondents were asked, "How much '*confianza*' do you have in the following institutions or groups?" Respondents could answer "a great deal," "quite a lot," "some," "little," or "none at all." Among the institutions included were the government, the Congress, political parties, local mayors, the courts, and the police. We recoded the original variables so that 0 referred to "no confidence at all," 1 corresponded to "little," 2 referred to "some," 3 to "quite a lot," and 4 referred to "a great deal." This yielded a scale ranging from 0 to 24 (there are 6 institutions, each with a maximum possible confidence score of 4.)[13] We carried out OLS regression models using this scale as the dependent variable. Since the answers to these questions may be strongly affected by political ideologies, we added a left-right political scale to the control variables mentioned above.

Just as occurs in the United States, in every country where the survey was conducted our religiosity index is consistently associated in a positive direction with greater confidence in institutions (see Table 2, outcome 4). This relationship reaches the highest level of statistical robustness ($p<0.001$) in Brazil, Chile, and Mexico. The results are weaker, but still statistically significant, in Argentina, Colombia, Guatemala, and Peru. There are no significant differences between people with different religious identities regarding confidence in institutions, except in Peru where religious non-Catholics (who are mostly Pentecostals) are more skeptical than Catholics. The irreligious in Argentina also have lower confidence in institutions than Catholics.[14]

However, the greater levels of confidence that more religious people report towards institutions do not extend to more generalized levels of interpersonal

"confianza"[15] (see Table 2, outcome 5). For example, when respondents were asked, "Generally speaking, would you say that one can have confidence in most people, or that one should be wary of them?" a logistic regression model shows that only in Chile is the level of religiosity related to an increase in such confidence in individual people. This is also the case among those who do not declare a religious identity—compared to Catholics—in Brazil. These results point in opposite directions, and it is impossible to draw more general conclusions from them.

FREQUENCY OF VOTING

Studies conducted in the United States also indicate that more religious people participate with greater frequency in elections. To test this hypothesis for our seven Latin American countries, we used logistic regression models where "always votes"=1 and "most of the time," "sometimes," and "never votes"=0. In order to minimize spurious findings, we added ideological self-placement to the usual control variables.

Our results show that a higher degree of religiosity is associated with higher voter participation in Chile and in Mexico, and (to a lesser degree) in Colombia. (See Table 2, outcome 6). However, rather than reflecting a propensity of religious involvement to directly increase voter participation, we suspect that these results can be explained more easily by the considerable importance of a clerical/anticlerical cleavage in the historical formation of the party systems in these three countries. By contrast, this cleavage was not as significant in the formation of parties in Argentina, Brazil, or Peru. In Guatemala, the current party divisions no longer reflect previous sharp conflicts over the place of the Catholic Church in society. Extrapolation of these results to the US would indicate that the propensity of Americans with higher levels of religiosity to vote in greater proportions may have more to do with the fact that elections have been fought over issues that concern them disproportionately, rather than this being a direct effect of religiosity itself.

In Argentina and Mexico religious non-Catholics (who are mostly Protestant) appear to have a lower propensity to vote than Catholics. The same general relationship appears to hold in the other countries that were surveyed.[16] The fact that these results

show that Protestants do not have a greater propensity to vote than Catholics runs counter to the suggestion that Protestant religious beliefs and practices will tend to encourage democratic political participation in Latin America (cf., Smith 1995).

RELIGION AND SELF-POSITIONING ON THE IDEOLOGICAL SCALE

What is the relationship among our country cases between levels of religiosity and religious identity and individual self-positioning along a left-right ideological scale? To explore this relationship, respondents were asked to place themselves along a scale ranging from 1=left to 10=right. With this scale as the dependent variable, we performed OLS analysis in each country, with religious identity and levels of religiosity as our main independent variables while also including the control variables mentioned above.

We find that levels of religiosity hold positive and significant effects over ideological self positioning (see Table 2, outcome 7). Higher levels of religiosity are associated with more rightist ideological positions in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Mexico, and Peru. These results match those that are generally obtained in the United States and Western Europe, as is well known. In the first three of these Latin American countries, levels of statistical significance are intermediate. In Mexico, the relationship is very significant, which again confirms the powerful impact of a religious cleavage in the formation of its party system—with the Partido Autónomo Nacional (PAN) clearly occupying the rightward ideological space along the spectrum. In terms of religious identities, people in Argentina and Chile who say they belong to no religious tradition, and religious non-Catholics in Mexico and Peru tend to place themselves closer to the left than Catholics in those countries. Protestants in Chile, when considered alone—without other non-Catholic religious groups—also consistently place themselves more to the left than Catholics.[17]

Our analyses further suggest that, with the important exception of Brazil, levels of religiosity generally provide a more powerful explanation for ideological self-placement than respondents' levels of socioeconomic status (SES). In Argentina, a higher level of SES (in a bivariate analysis) is positively associated with a more leftist ideological self-placement, pointing to the relative weakness of this relationship in that country.[18]

RELIGION AND PERSONAL HAPPINESS

Survey research from other countries, including the United States, suggests that personal satisfaction and happiness tend to be associated primarily with material well-being and religiosity. Our survey allows an examination of this question in the Latin American context. Respondents were asked: "In general, considering all aspects of your life, do you feel very happy, fairly happy, somewhat happy, not very happy, or not happy at all?"

We find that, other things being equal, personal satisfaction and happiness in the Latin American cases covered by ECosociAL also tend to be associated primarily with material well-being and religiosity. Socioeconomic status clearly accounts for the greatest variation, displaying highly significant effects in all seven countries. The significance levels for these observations suggest that the chance that the observed association is random is less than 1 in 1000. In Brazil SES level has the strongest impact, with a unit change in SES increasing happiness and personal satisfaction by 16.8 percent. In Colombia, where SES has the weakest impact, the increase is still 8.2 percent.[19] (Detailed results with the impact of SES are available by request.)

And yet, as reported in Table 2, outcome 8, the effects of religiosity also have a strong influence over happiness. It reaches the highest levels of significance ($p<0.001$) in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, and Peru, while in Chile and Guatemala it falls within the intermediate range ($p<0.01$). The size of the coefficients (not reported here) suggests that in Colombia levels of religiosity are a more powerful explanatory variable for personal happiness than SES. Levels of religiosity hold the strongest effects in Brazil, where it produces an increase of 14.6 percent in the happiness scale. Its effect is weaker in Chile, where it results in an increase in happiness of 6.2 percent, and in Mexico the relationship practically disappears.

Our models also explore the impact of religious identity on happiness—with Catholics being the reference category. A non-Catholic religious identity has no significant effects on respondents' reported happiness in Argentina, Chile, and Colombia. In Brazil, respondents who reported being of non-Catholic religious traditions had reduced levels of happiness by .2 on a scale from 1 to 5 as compared to those who identified as Catholic. By contrast, in Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru, being religious but

non-Catholic resulted in a positive effect, increasing happiness by .24, .2, and .15, on the same scale, respectively. These results are more significant in Guatemala than in the other two countries. Being non-religious does not appear to have an impact on happiness among our country cases except in Brazil, where it appears to reduce happiness when compared to Catholics. [20]

RELIGION AND SOCIAL ACCEPTANCE

People may have positive or negative impressions of a whole set of social categories, and these perceptions may be ultimately shaped—sometimes unconsciously—by their respective religious identities or levels of religiosity. To capture these potential effects, we carried out logistic regression models in which the dichotomous dependent variables reflect whether respondents feel very, somewhat, a little, or not uncomfortable at all with a series of hypothetical situations (assigning a value of "1" for very, somewhat, and a little uncomfortable, and "0" for not uncomfortable at all). Our models include the same control variables and reference categories included in the above analysis of happiness and personal satisfaction.

The strongest results in this series of questions are, again, just as would occur in the United States or Europe, reflected in attitudes toward homosexuals and with respect to the prospects of a son or daughter marrying someone who is not religious.

Table 2, outcome 9, registers the reactions to the first of these prospects. Asked whether or not they would be uncomfortable if "your daughter or son were to have a homosexual friend," respondents with higher levels of religiosity responded with greater discomfort. This was the case in Argentina, Chile, and Mexico with the most rigorous level of statistical significance, and in Colombia with an intermediate level. Turning to religious identities, religious non-Catholics in Brazil, and to a lesser extent, in Chile and Colombia, showed higher levels of uneasiness with the proposition than Catholics.[21]

Asked whether they would be "uncomfortable if your daughter or son were to marry someone who is not religious," in all countries with the exception of Guatemala and with the highest levels of statistical significance, people with higher levels of religiosity responded that they would (see Table 2, outcome 10). The discomfort

reactions also augmented progressively and quite sharply, with increasing levels of religiosity as registered in our religiosity index, as can be appreciated in the estimated percentages that have been calculated from the size of the respective coefficients. Religious identities—whether Catholic or other—make no difference in this respect, except that people who are not religious, for obvious reasons, report having no problem with this proposition in Argentina, Chile, and Peru, even if this result barely reaches statistical significance.

Regarding all other questions that seek to measure perceptions of social acceptance, religiosity or religious identities do not, in general, have much of an impact. When respondents were asked whether they would feel "uncomfortable" if their offspring "were to marry someone of a lower social class" (Table 2, outcome 11), higher levels of religiosity increased the chance of a positive answer only in Mexico and Colombia, and people of non-Catholic religions were more likely to feel uncomfortable than Catholics in Mexico and Peru. Similarly, in Chile (with minimal statistical robustness) and in Argentina (with intermediate statistical robustness) non-religious respondents reported being more uncomfortable than Catholics. By contrast, as could be expected, in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, and Mexico, increases in SES levels resulted in a response indicating less acceptance of this hypothetical situation. Other variables also appeared to be quite relevant.[22]

Survey participants were also asked whether or not they would feel uncomfortable if they had "a neighbor of a different race." Religiosity levels had no impact on such attitudes. The same is true for religious identities, except in Brazil, where non-Catholic religious people, in contrast to Catholics, reported with the highest level of statistical robustness that they would feel *comfortable* having a neighbor of a different race (see Table 2, outcome 12). The same preference was also reported, although the result is statistically weaker, by Brazilians who are not religious. (Again, both of these results were produced in comparison to the statistical reference category, namely, all self-identified Catholics.[23])

When asked whether or not "having an immigrant worker as neighbor" or "having a neighbor from a lower social class than yours" made respondents uncomfortable or not, religiosity was a weak predictor (see Table 2, outcomes 13 and 14). The prospect of

having an immigrant worker as a neighbor triggered discomfort only among more religious people in Brazil and Colombia, and religious non-Catholics in Brazil indicated less discomfort with the prospect of an immigrant neighbor than Catholics (who are, to repeat, the reference category in this analysis). Regarding the second proposition, respondents with higher levels of religiosity expressed greater discomfort with having a neighbor from a lower class in Mexico, while in Brazil, religious non-Catholics and the non-religious reported having no discomfort. This was also the case among non-religious Argentineans and religious non-Catholics in Peru.

RELIGION AND SOCIAL DISCRIMINATION

The survey also attempted to capture degrees of social distance by asking respondents whether or not they had personally experienced discrimination. These questions open a Pandora's box of results that are difficult to interpret. In terms of respondents perceiving discrimination against them given their own religiosity and/or religious identity, the most notable result (see Table 2, outcome 15) was that people who have higher levels of religiosity tended to report feeling discriminated against for this very reason in all countries. This effect was particularly robust in terms of statistical significance in Argentina and Chile, the two countries that are also the most secular ones in the region. Believers with non-Catholic religious identities also reported being affected by discrimination in all countries except in Guatemala. Surprisingly, non-religious people report this same effect as well with the exceptions of those in Guatemala and Brazil. These latter two results occur at the highest level of statistical robustness. The fact that there would appear to be more tolerance in Guatemala of people with non-Catholic identities may be quite understandable given their much greater proportion in that country's population.

In terms of other possible attributes leading to discrimination, it appeared from the survey that religion or religious identities had a spotty record of contributing influences. Regarding the possibility of having been discriminated against for "the color of their skin, race, or ethnicity" (see Table 2, outcome 16) the religiosity index only

played a role in this outcome in Chile ($p<0.01$). People of non-Catholic religious identities also tended to register this type of discrimination in Brazil ($p<0.05$), as well as people who declared no religious identities in Chile and Mexico ($p<0.01$). Feelings of discrimination based on city, region, or place of origin (Table 2, outcome 17) were intertwined with religiosity only in Argentina ($p<0.05$), while religious non-Catholics perceived this problem in Brazil ($p<0.01$) and Colombia ($p<0.05$), and non-religious people felt it in Mexico ($p<0.01$). Turning to discrimination for being "poor" (Table 2, outcome 18), Brazilians of higher religiosity ($p<0.05$) as well as of non-Catholic religious identities ($p<0.001$) reported having suffered from this problem. The same occurs with religious but non-Catholic people in Chile, Guatemala, and Peru ($p<0.05$), and among non-religious people in Mexico (<p0.001).[24] Perceptions of discrimination for holding certain "political preferences" affect mainly non-religious respondents in Brazil, Chile, and Mexico (see Table 2, outcome 19). The most robust results in terms of both coefficient size and significance level (with a "z" value five times that of the standard error) occurs among non-religious respondents in Mexico. In Brazil and Chile the coefficients are about half those of Mexicans. In Brazil, and to a lesser extent Colombia, religious non-Catholics also report feeling discriminated against for their political preferences.[25]

CONCLUSION

In this paper we have examined the impact of religious identities and levels of religiosity in seven Latin American countries on a wide array of social and political issues. To conclude, let us reassert the essential kernel of our most significant finding. With the exception of Colombia (where ongoing conflicts and banditry have caused a temporary disruption of the normal patterns of its national society), the ECosociAL survey shows that there is a clear and positive association in all countries between levels of religiosity and participation in civic organizations. We even measured the relationship with civic participation in the most stringent of terms, by considering only participation in the secular—not religiously affiliated—circuits of organized civil societies. This observation applies principally and notably to people of Catholic religious identity, a finding that runs

counter to the expectations of much of the literature that associates this result primarily with Protestantism. Our regression models fail to note that there is any greater civic participation by Protestants in Latin America. The effects of religion on higher levels of on civic participation are, then, a function of religiosity and not of religious identities or traditions.

We obtained parallel results in other aspects as well. Higher levels of religiosity, regardless of religious identity, are also positively related to higher levels of happiness and greater confidence in public institutions. Higher levels of religiosity also strengthen voter turnout in the Latin American countries where the party systems have most reflected a historic cleavage between clerical and anticlerical opinions (Mexico, Chile, and to a lesser extent Colombia). The fact that this relationship does not appear in the other countries where the survey was applied may be an indication that—as has long been suspected to be the case in the United States—levels of voter turnout are not necessarily impacted by levels of religiosity, as this effect is more a function of the specific issues that are at stake.

The ECosociAL survey also shows that levels of religiosity have a greater impact than levels of SES in determining ideological self-placement on a left-right political scale. These effects appear to be stronger in countries where party systems have also been shaped historically by the clerical/anticlerical division. In addition, people who report higher levels of religiosity in these countries provide more support to governments linked to parties with a Catholic religious identity, as occurs most notably in Mexico.

In many ways the various countries included in our survey show considerable variation. Latin America is a region with a multiplicity of national experiences rather than a single homogenous reality. However, looking at the broad forest rather than the trees, our results show that, much like what occurs in the United States, levels of religiosity appear to play a positive role in contributing to civic and political life in Latin America and thus to the micro-social foundations of democracy. This occurs despite the fact that the historical origins of the dominant religious identities in the post-independence experiences of the two portions of the New World differ. One was characterized by a plurality of non-established Protestant denominations, and the other by nationally established Catholic churches.

As a result, our findings in the broadest sense challenge those who have construed Latin American Catholicism as being deleterious for democracy. It is simply not the case that Catholicism has generated a passive public following given what has been viewed as the greater "authoritarianism" that the Church imbues in national political cultures. Moreover, our empirical findings contradict the notion—repeated often in the recent literature on religion in Latin America as a result of its intrinsic misperception of the effects of Catholicism—that the growth of Protestantism will buttress Latin American democratization.

Our empirical analysis also calls into question central tenets of what has been long viewed as the "exceptionalism" of the United States. If we see the same effects of religiosity in Latin America that have long been noted to constitute part of the uniqueness of the American experience, then this means that in this aspect that experience is not so exceptional as the literature has claimed it to be. Moreover, we can also call into question the long-assumed historical origins that have supposedly explained this feature of American exceptionalism. The notion has been that the unusual effects of American religiosity stem from its also quite unique Protestant experience: its civil-society-centered vitality has been seen as going hand in hand with its greater pluralism and non-established nature. These features have been presented as standing in sharp contrast with the history of established religions in Catholic as well as Protestant lands in Western Europe. And yet, if Latin American Catholics appear to share much more in common with religious people in the United States in terms of the way in which they engage in, and perceive, their civil and political institutions, but the historical origins of Catholicism in the Latin American countries after independence is more akin to that of Western Europe, then this means that this stark contrast between the United States and Western Europe cannot be assumed to be at the basis of American exceptionality. Instead, we would suggest with our findings that the key differences between these three regions lie in the extent of secularization. In this dimension the United States and Latin America are similar, and for this reason religiosity plays a larger role in their civil and political society experiences. In sum, the United States is not "exceptional," and the key difference with Western Europe lies much more in the greater and historically deeper levels of

secularization that have long characterized the old continent than in any primordial features of the religious experiences on both sides of the Atlantic.

APPENDIX 1: THE RELIGIOSITY SCALE

The religiosity scale adds the numeric scores of five variables about religious beliefs and practices, which were treated as follows:

- Attendance at religious services: weekly or more than weekly=3; a few times monthly =2; a few times yearly =1; never or almost never=0.
- Frequency of prayer: daily or more than daily=3; several times a week=2; from time to time=1; never or almost never=0.
- Assessment of one's religiosity: a very religious person=3; quite religious=2; somewhat religious=1; barely or not religious at all=0.
- Perception of the importance of religion in the household of origin: very important=2; quite important=1; somewhat, barely, or not important at all=0.
- Membership in religious groups: belongs to and participates actively in them=2; belongs but does not participate actively=1; does not belong nor participate=0.

The scale goes from 0 (minimum religiosity) to 13 (maximum religiosity). Cronbach's Alphas are high in each country, suggesting that it is reasonable to build an additive scale. Alphas are .78 for Argentina, .67 for Brazil, .75 for Chile, .63 for Colombia, .67 for Guatemala, .68 for Mexico, and.71 for Peru. In no country does the value of the Alpha substantially increase after any of the variables are separately dropped from the scale.

APPENDIX 2: TABLES

TABLE 1

Religious Identities in Urban Areas of Latin American Countries Surveyed by ECosociAL 2007 (in percentages)

	Argentina	*Brazil*	*Chile*	*Colombia*	*Guatemala*	*Mexico*	*Peru*
Catholic	71.21	60.88	62.86	77.43	58.0	85.87	77.86
Protestant	8.21	19.41	15.07	9.50	32.75	3.33	12.29
Jewish	0.79	0.06	0.07	-	0.42	-	0.07
Afro-religious	0.36	8.94	0.07	-	0.08	0.2	-
Other	2.50	2.47	4.00	4.64	1.92	3.93	4.00
Atheist or agnostic	3.07	1.35	2.21	0.57	0.75	1.40	1.21
Without religion	13.64	6.29	15.71	7.50	6.0	5.13	4.29
Does not know/no answer	0.21	0.59	0.0	0.36	0.08	0.13	0.29
N=	1,400	1,700	1,400	1,400	1,200	1,500	1,400
Totals	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

ECosociAL, 2007 [Urban sample]

TABLE 2

Effects of Religious Variables on Civic Participation, Political Engagement, and Various Attitudinal Outcomes

Outcome 1	*Involvement in non-religious voluntary organizations (estimated percentage involved)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	13.7	***	19.5	***	29.2	***	17.4		24.1	***	15.3	**	31.1	***
Medium religiosity (50th)	17.6	***	24.2	***	33	***	18		27.8	***	17.4	**	36.2	***
High religiosity (75th)	22.5	***	29.5	***	39.2	***	18.3		29.8	***	19.6	**	44.6	***
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	16.5		23.1		34.4		16.7		25.8		16.3		36.7	
Other religions	19.1		25.1		28.5		21.9		27.4		23.3		32.9	
No religion	26.6	**	30		37.8		22.1		30.7		23.7		55.2	**

Outcome 2	*Number of close friends*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	3.9	**	5.8		3.2	***	4.4		5.7		4.1	*	5	*
Medium religiosity (50th)	4.2	**	5.9		3.5	***	4.4		5.7		4.3	*	5.1	*
High religiosity (75th)	4.5	**	6		3.9	***	4.5		5.7		4.4	*	5.4	*
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	4.2		5.7		3.6		4.5		5.6		4.3		5.2	
Other religions	3.6	*	6.3	**	3	**	4.3		5.9		4.4		5.4	
No religion	4.8	*	5.8		3.8		4		5.2		4.1		5.2	

Table 2 (cont.)

Outcome 3	*Number of neighbors known by name*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	8		14.8		7.5	*	6.5		8.5	**	6.7	*	9.3	**
Medium religiosity (50th)	8.3		14.9		7.9	*	6.6		9	**	7	*	9.8	**
High religiosity (75th)	8.7		15		8.4	*	6.7		9.3	**	7.4	*	10.6	**
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	8.7		14.8		8.2		6.7		8.7		7.1		9.8	
Other religions	7.5		14.6		7.1		6.7		9		6.3		9.5	
No religion	7.8		17.7	**	8		5.9		9.2		7.2		11.1	

Outcome 4	*Confidence in institutions (estimated score on scale)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	6.5	*	7.1	***	7.7	***	7.1	*	5.7	*	6.1	***	6.2	*
Medium religiosity (50th)	6.8	*	7.6	***	8.1	***	7.4	*	6	*	6.5	***	6.4	*
High religiosity (75th)	7.1	*	8	***	8.7	***	7.6	*	6.1	*	7	***	6.7	*
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	6.9		7.6		8.3		7.5		5.9		6.5		6.5	
Other religions	7		7.5		7.7		6.8		6		6.3		5.8	*
No religion	6	*	6.8		8.1		6.4		5.9		7.2		6.5	

Table 2 (cont.)

Outcome 5	*Generalized trust (estimated percentages with "confianza" in others)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala	Mexico		Peru
Religiosity level												
Low religiosity (25th)	21.6		3.3		6.6	**	11.6		14.5	18.8		5.7
Medium religiosity (50th)	21.7		3.8		7.9	**	11.3		14.1	19.2		6.1
High religiosity (75th)	21.8		4.3		10.3	**	11.1		13.8	19.6		6.7
Religious identity												
(Catholics)	21.4		3.6		8.3		11.8		14.8	18.8		6.2
Other religions	17.8		3.4		5.4		9.6		13.9	19.1		5.3
No religion	26.5		10.1	**	12		10.6		11.5	25.9		7.6

Outcome 6	*Always vote (estimated percentage)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala	Mexico		Peru
Religiosity level												
Low religiosity (25th)	84.4		90.7		71.1	**	45.1	*	57.3	61.8	**	93.5
Medium religiosity (50th)	85.6		91.7		75.4	**	48	*	58.7	66.5	**	94.8
High religiosity (75th)	86.9		92.4		79.3	**	50.8	*	60.2	69.5	**	95.5
Religious identity												
(Catholics)	86.6		92.6		76.5		48.1		60.6	67.3		95.2
Other religions	77.2	*	90.5		68.8		45		57.8	56.9	*	91.8
No religion	88.3		87.3		79.1		56.9		52.5	62.5		95.6

Table 2 (cont.)

Outcome 7	*Political self-identification (estimated score on left-right scale)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	5.2	**	4.8		4.9	**	5.3	**	5.1		5	***	5.1	*
Medium religiosity (50th)	5.4	**	4.8		5	**	5.4	**	5		5.2	***	5.2	*
High religiosity (75th)	5.6	**	4.8		5.3	**	5.4	**	4.9		5.5	***	5.4	*
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	5.5		4.9		5.2		5.4		5		5.3		5.3	
Other religions	5.5		4.6		5.1		5.1		4.9		4.6	**	4.9	*
No religion	4.9	**	4.9		4.6	**	5.2		5		5.4		4.9	

Outcome 8	*Happiness (estimated score on scale)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	3.8	***	4	***	3.7	**	3.9	***	4.2	**	3.9		3.5	***
Medium religiosity (50th)	3.9	***	4.2	***	3.8	**	4.1	***	4.3	**	3.9		3.6	***
High religiosity (75th)	4	***	4.3	***	3.9	**	4.1	***	4.3	**	3.9		3.7	***
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	3.9		4.2		3.8		4		4.2		3.9		3.6	
Other religions	3.9		4	***	3.8		4		4.4	***	4.1	*	3.7	*
No religion	3.8		4	*	3.8		4		4.2		3.8		3.6	

Table 2 (cont.)

Outcome 9 *Uncomfortable if offspring has a homosexual friend (estimated percentage)*

	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala	Mexico		Peru
Religiosity level												
Low religiosity (25th)	15.7	***	28.4		35.6	***	47	**	50.2	27.9	***	49.5
Medium religiosity (50th)	20.7	***	27.2		39.1	***	50.4	**	50.1	32.4	***	51.3
High religiosity (75th)	26.9	***	26		44.4	***	52.3	**	50	37.2	***	54
Religious identity												
(Catholics)	22.9		25.6		38.6		48.2		48.8	31.2		51.3
Other religions	22.1		33	**	46.9	*	59	*	51.7	36.9		53.9
No religion	15.5		16.7		36.1		41.7		52.9	37.6		46.9

Outcome 10 *Uncomfortable if offspring marries somebody without religion (estimated percentage)*

	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala	Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level													
Low religiosity (25th)	5.8	***	28.7	***	24	***	44	***	40.7	25.1	***	42	***
Medium religiosity (50th)	11	***	33.1	***	32.6	***	52.3	***	40.4	34.1	***	47.6	***
High religiosity (75th)	20	***	37.7	***	48	***	56.5	***	40.3	44.5	***	56	***
Religious identity													
(Catholics)	14.8		33.1		35.4		49.4		39.9	33.6		49.3	
Other religions	11.9		34.4		39.7		55.2		43.6	40.3		48.8	
No religion: *"comfortable"*	8.3	*	26.1		25.8	*	38.4		29.6	25.2		31.4	*

Table 2 (cont.)

Outcome 11	*Uncomfortable if offspring marries someone from a lower class (estimated percentage)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	26.3		32.1		52.9		50.6	*	33.4		31.4	***	52	
Medium religiosity (50th)	25		32.4		52.3		53.2	*	33.1		34.9	***	52	
High religiosity (75th)	23.8		32.8		51.4		54.5	*	33		38.6	***	52.1	
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	26.2		32.9		54		53.2		35.7		35.4		53.3	
Other religions	31.1		33		53.5		50.5		29.5		25.7	*	43.3	*
No religion	16.2	**	24.9		43.8	*	46.7		32.1		36.7		63.2	

Outcome 12	*Uncomfortable if a neighbor is of a different race (estimated percentage)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	5.4		16.5		12.3		13.9		18.6		10.8		12.9	
Medium religiosity (50th)	5.2		15.4		12		15.1		18		11.9		13.3	
High religiosity (75th)	5		14.4		11.5		15.7		17.7		13		14	
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	6.5		19.1		12.5		15.1		20.3		12.1		14	
Other religions: *"comfortable"*	2.8		11.1	***	12.2		11.1		15.6		7.3		10	
No religion: *"comfortable"*	3		8	*	9.9		17.8		15.8		14		16.4	

Table 2 (cont.)

Outcome 13	*Uncomfortable having neighbors of a lower class than respondent's (estimated percentage)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	6.1		13.6	**	15.3		20	*	20.4		10.3		14.8	
Medium religiosity (50th)	6.3		15.4	**	15.4		22.2	*	21.6		11.4		16.1	
High religiosity (75th)	6.6		17.4	**	15.6		23.4	*	22.2		12.6		18.2	
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	6.7		19.2		16.1		21.9		20.7		11.4		16.1	
Other religions	6.3		(-)10.5	***	18.4		20.5		22		12		16.9	
No religion	5		10.3		10.6		18.4		22.1		9.3		17.3	

Outcome 14	*Uncomfortable having neighbors of a lower class than respondent's (estimated percentage)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	5.4		14.3		14.9		16.1		17.3		9.5	***	12.5	
Medium religiosity (50th)	5.5		14.6		14.7		17.5		16.3		11.5	***	12.7	
High religiosity (75th)	5.5		15		14.4		18.1		15.9		13.9	***	13	
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	6.6		17.6	**	15.6		17.3		17.5		11.9		14	*
Other religions	5.2		11.9		16		14.7		16		8.4		8.5	
No religion	2.4	*	5.6	**	10.4		18		12.7		8.8		10.2	

Table 2 (cont.)

Outcome 15	*Felt discriminated against for his/her religion (estimated percentage)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	1.2	***	11.8	**	3.1	***	5.7	*	10.9	*	2.7	*	5.8	**
Medium religiosity (50th)	2.1	***	13.6	**	4.1	***	6.9	*	12.5	*	3.3	*	7.9	**
High religiosity (75th)	3.9	***	15.6	**	6.1	***	7.5	*	13.4	*	4.2	*	9.3	**
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	1.3		10		2.3		4.3		10.9		2.3		5	
Other religions	15.6	***	23.7	***	16.4	***	26.7	***	14.3		24.8	***	26.8	***
No religion	6.6	***	14.4		8.2	***	21.2	***	9.7		24.7	***	20.1	***

Outcome 16	*Felt discriminated against for their skin color, race or ethnicity (estimated percentage)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	3.9		16.9		3.6	**	3.5		8.1		5.8		17	
Medium religiosity (50th)	3.9		15.9		4.4	**	3.2		8.9		6.2		18.2	
High religiosity (75th)	3.5		15		6.1	**	3.1		9.5		6.8		20.2	
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	3.5		14.5		3.7		3.2		8.5		5.9		18.6	
Other religions	4.5		19.5	*	5.3		3.1		9.4		4.9		15.7	
No religion	6.2		13.8		8.7	**	5		6.5		15.4	**	24.4	

Table 2 (cont.)

Outcome 17	*Felt discriminated against for the city, region, or place of origin (estimated percentage)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	3.3	*	16.8		7		4.7		9.8		9.4		13.4	
Medium religiosity (50th)	4.3	*	17		6.6		5.1		9.8		9.4		14.8	
High religiosity (75th)	5.6	*	17.1		6.2		5.3		9.9		9.3		17.1	
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	4.2		14.7		5.8		4.3		8.3		5.8		14.5	
Other religions	4.2		21.3	**	8.5		7.8	*	12		8.6		15.1	
No religion	5.8		21.1		7.9		9.2		13		15	**	24.3	

Outcome 18	*Felt discriminated against for his/her religion (estimated percentage)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	5.7		27.2	*	10.6		12.1		11.8		10.4		15.9	
Medium religiosity (50th)	6.6		25.1	*	11		11.7		11.4		11.2		16.2	
High religiosity (75th)	7.5		23.1	*	11.7		11.5		11.2		12.1		16.8	
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	6.2		22.1		10		11		10		10.4		15	
Other religions	7		33.2	***	14.5	*	16.1		14.2	*	11.5		21.6	*
No religion	9.3		19.6		12		14		11.7		27.1	***	21.7	

Table 2 (cont.)

Outcome 19	*Felt discriminated against for his/her political preferences (estimated percentage)*													
	Argentina		Brazil		Chile		Colombia		Guatemala		Mexico		Peru	
Religiosity level														
Low religiosity (25th)	3.7		17.2		13.6		7.1		6.1		7.1		15.5	
Medium religiosity (50th)	4.6		17.9		13.7		7.7		6.7		6.8		16.2	
High religiosity (75th)	5.7		18.6		13.7		8		7.1		6.5		17.3	
Religious identity														
(Catholics)	4.5		15.2		11.9		6.4		6.4		6		15.9	
Other religions	3.5		21.7	**	12.5		12.8	**	6.1		9.4		17.7	
No religion	6.4		33.3	***	23.9	***	12.4		11.4		23.4	***	18.7	

TABLE 3

Interpersonal Trust and Confidence in Institutions for Some Latin American and Northwestern European Countries and USA

	Interpersonal Trust			Confidence in Institutions[4]						
	Most people[1]	Personal acquaintances[2]	First time[3]	Churches	Armed forces	Labor unions	Police	Justice system	Government	Major companies
Argentina	16.9%	35.9%	30.1%	50.8%	30.0%	6.7%	19.9%	19.5%	36.4%	24.2%
Brazil	9.2%	14.2%	16.7%	77.8%	69.4%	45.9%	44.9%	49.6%	46.3%	57.6%
Chile	12.4%	15.1%	12.6%	67.9%	57.7%	37.1%	58.0%	30.0%	48.2%	39.0%
Colombia	14.5%	17.2%	13.6%	80.4%	61.1%	27.9%	49.8%	36.9%	51.0%	46.8%
Mexico	15.6%	25.7%	15.7%	70.3%	63.7%	30.8%	33.6%	37.7%	44.7%	46.5%
Peru	6.4%	10.0%	8.9%	52.2%	22.5%	13.4%	15.7%	8.2%	11.6%	19.8%
Average Latin America	***12.5%***	***19.7%***	***16.3%***	***66.6%***	***50.7%***	***27.0%***	***37.0%***	***30.3%***	***39.7%***	***39.0%***
Britain	30.4%	52.3%	47.9%	45.3%	78.9%	30.4%	73.2%	60.6%	34.3%	36.3%
France	18.7%	67.7%	45.2%	46.8%	68.0%	38.8%	71.2%	40.2%	29.0%	39.4%
Sweden	68.0%	49.4%	68.9%	56.3%	47.1%	51.9%	77.4%	74.2%	42.3%	50.6%
USA	39.6%	31.5%	43.6%	66.7%	83.8%	29.2%	73.3%	58.2%	38.6%	26.7%
West Germany	40.8%	24.3%	30.2%	48.3%	56.4%	34.8%	77.6%	60.7%	29.4%	25.5%
Average non-Latin America	***35.0%***	***40.8%***	***42.0%***	***55.0%***	***64.1%***	***35.3%***	***68.3%***	***54.0%***	***35.6%***	***36.2%***
Ratio (non-LA / LA)	***2.8***	***2.1***	***2.6***	***0.8***	***1.3***	***1.3***	***1.8***	***1.8***	***0.9***	***0.9***

Source: World Values Survey 2005 Wave

[1] Percent reporting that 'most people can be trusted'

[2] Percent reporting to trust 'completely' in the people they know personally

[3] Percent reporting to trust 'completely' or 'somewhat' in the people they meet for the first time

[4] Percent reporting to have 'a great deal' or 'quite a lot' of confidence

ENDNOTES

[1] There exists a rich and growing body of research in this field. Some of the most relevant for this paper include sources that treat the relationship between religion and political participation in general, e.g., Brooks and Manza (2004); Campbell, Converse, Miller, and Stokes (1960); Djupe and Grant (2001); Fitzgerald and Spohn (2005); Harris (1994); and Manza and Brooks (1997); Putnam (2000); Verba, Scholzman, and Brady (1995); religion and happiness, e.g., Ellison, Gay, and Glass (1989); religion and volunteering and organizational membership, e.g., Beyerlein and Hipp (2006); Beyerlein and Sikkink (2008); Driskell, Lyon, and Embry (2008); Jones-Correa and Leal (2001); Lam (2002 and 2006); Park and Smith (2000); Regnerus, Smith, and Sikkink (1998); Ruiter and De Graaf (2006); Schwadel (2005); religion and political attitudes, e.g., Wilcox and Gomez (1990); religion, and friendship and informal networks, e.g., Beyerlein and Hipp (2005 and 2006); Ellison (1992); Ellison and George (1994); Smith (2003); Wolfinger and Wilcox (2008); Wuthnow (2000 and 2002).

[2] For a useful bibliography, see Peterson and Vásquez (2008).

[3] For new research that covers partially these topics see Hagopian (2009).

[4] For a general discussion of the evolution and utility of the concept of "social cohesion," see Noah Friedkin (2004). For a very useful treatment of the concept as it relates to Latin America, and in particular to this project, see Eugenio Tironi (2008).

[5] Tables 1 and 2 in this chapter are based on the survey ECosociAL 2007, available at www.ecosocialsurvey.org/inicio/novedades_detalle.php?id_=1.

[6] For figures on church service attendance by religious identity and for a development of the concept of "relative secularization" (defined as a decline in the intensity of religiosity) see Valenzuela, Scully, and Somma (2008, table II–1 and pp. 124–28).

[7] Stinchombe contrasts historical causes to "constant causes." A constant cause is one that operates year after year, with the result that the outcome produced by this cause is relatively unchanging (Stinchcombe, 1968, pp. 101–29, example on p. 102).

[8] See Robert Putnam's now-classic work, *Bowling Alone* (2000).

[9] Jones-Correa and Leal (2001) show that the Catholicism of American Hispanics is unrelated to their lower rates of political and civic participation, thereby rebutting Verba et al. (1995).

[10] The model included the following control variables: gender, age, racial/ethnic identity ("mestizos" and "blacks and non-mestizo mixed races" are entered as dummy variables with "whites" as the reference category), socioeconomic status (SES), a religiosity index, and religious

identity (with non-Catholic religious and non-religious as dummy variables with Catholics as the reference category).

[11] The effects of the religious identity variable are of course independent of the level of religiosity, given that both these variables are part of the independent variable set in the regression model.

[12] This would still occur if the translation resorted to the verb "*fiar*" so as to not repeat "*confianza*" or its derivatives twice. "*Fiar*" does not express the same meaning as "trust," and is used most often in transactions involving informal promises of future payment.

[13] The Cronbach's alpha is higher than .78 in all countries, suggesting that it is reasonable to combine all the measures of trust in institutions in a single scale.

[14] Our results also indicate two additional noteworthy relationships between these variables and = levels of "*confianza*." First, in Chile, Mexico, Peru, and Colombia, respondents with higher SES levels also tend to report greater confidence in the above-mentioned institutions. Secondly, people in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru who identify themselves as being more to the right also tend to have more confidence in these institutions. Only in Chile do leftists indicate greater trust in institutions. This result probably reflects the support of Chilean leftists for the center-left Concertation governments, which have held power in that country for the last four presidential terms.

Some of our results are difficult to explain. For instance, younger people in Peru report higher levels of trust in institutions than older people, while the opposite occurs in Brazil. And, again in Brazil, those who identified themselves as blacks or "mulattoes" also report lower levels of trust in institutions, an effect that holds true even after controlling for all other variables, including SES levels.

[15] The dissociation between these two dimensions also occurs in the United States, where the term "trust" can be used of course in questions referring to both people and institutions. According to Putnam it is not clear whether generalized trust in people increases trust in institutions, if the relationship is the other way around, or if there is no relationship between the two dimensions (Putnam, 2000, p. 137).

[16] These results are derived from the same logistic regression model described in the previous reference. Not surprisingly, our data point to a strong association between voter turnout and the age of the respondents. An increase in age is associated with higher voter turnout in Chile, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and Peru. In addition, and also not surprisingly, higher SES levels

are associated with higher turnout in Brazil, Colombia, Guatemala, Mexico, and (to a lesser extent) in Chile. These findings are consistent with results reported in other democracies as well.

[17] This issue is explored in depth in Chile using a different survey in Valenzuela, Scully, and Somma (2007).

[18] An increase in respondents' age leads to more rightist positions in Argentina, Brazil, and Colombia, while in Chile older respondents tend to place themselves more to the left. People of black or mixed race in Chile place themselves more to the left than those who identify themselves as white; a similar phenomenon occurs in Peru, Brazil, and Mexico.

[19] These and the remaining percentages in the paragraph are computed on the basis of the beta coefficients as a proportion of the maximum range of the dependent variable. They are not the result of cross-tabulations between variables and express the net effect of the independent variable examined, controlling for all the other variables in the models.

[20] In Brazil, women report that they are less happy than men, and people with African descent report that they are less happy than whites. In Mexico, mestizos report that they are less happy than whites. The other countries in our survey did not reflect similar results. Except for Brazil and Colombia, increases in age resulted in relatively minor but measurable decreases in perceived happiness in Mexico and (with less significance) in Peru, Guatemala, Chile, and Argentina. In Mexico, where this relationship displayed the highest level of significance, an increase in each additional decade in age resulted in a decrease in happiness of 1.4 percent.

[21] Reactions to this proposition are affected by other variables as well. For example, older respondents in all countries surveyed evinced a greater degree of discomfort than younger people in every country. This is also true in Guatemala among mestizos and people of black and non-mestizo mixed races. However, women in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia and Peru, people from black and non-mestizo mixed racial groups in Brazil, Chile and Mexico, and mestizos in Chile and Mexico reported little or no discomfort with the prospect of their children befriending homosexuals.

[22] Older respondents in Brazil, Chile, and Peru are also more likely to evince less tolerance, as are mestizos in Colombia and Peru. In Guatemala, mestizos expressed considerable intolerance with this hypothetical situation.

[23] In Brazil, those with a higher SES level are more likely to feel uncomfortable with neighbors of a different race, whereas mestizos, respondents who are black or non-mestizo racial mixes, were also more likely to report that they would feel more comfortable with a neighbor of a different race. This latter result may reflect the fact that Brazil has a higher proportion of non-whites

among religious minorities. Mestizos in Mexico and people of other races in Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico also report feeling more comfortable with non-white neighbors.

[24] Variables other than religion appear to be important in relation to perceptions of class discrimination. For example, mestizos in Argentina, Colombia, and Mexico, but especially in Chile, are more likely than whites to report having been discriminated against for being poor. This is also the case among people from other racial mixes in Argentina and (to a lesser extent) Chile. Brazilian women report perceptions of discrimination more frequently than men. By contrast, in Mexico and (to a lesser extent) Peru, men report the experience of discrimination more frequently. Not surprisingly, except for Brazil, respondents with higher levels of SES are much less likely to report having felt discriminated against for being poor. It is important to keep in mind that the effects of the religious variables noted above occur after controlling for the impact of socioeconomic status.

[25] The same occurs among mestizos in Argentina and (to a lesser extent) Guatemala. Respondents from other racial mixes in Brazil are more likely than whites to report that they never suffer from discrimination due to political preferences. Respondents from higher SES levels in Argentina, Chile, Colombia, and Guatemala are more likely to report experiencing discrimination due to political preferences.

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