



THE POLITICS OF THE LATINO CHURCH

*Understanding the Political Views
and Behaviors of Latino Congregations in Chicago*

SEPTEMBER 2012

*By Jessica Hamar Martínez, Edwin I. Hernández
Rebecca Burwell, Milagros Peña and David Sikkink*



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Latinos have been in the spotlight recently for their potential influence in politics in the U.S. The Latino community has grown rapidly in recent decades, but the rate of political participation among this growing segment of the population generally lags behind other groups.



Previous scholarly work has highlighted the role that religion can play in shaping political views and behaviors among the U.S. general public more broadly, and among Latinos in particular. In this report, we take a closer look at the politics in Latino churches in Chicago, and provide a snapshot of the relationship between religion and politics among churchgoers and church leaders in a metropolitan area with a long history of Latino immigration and political activism.

This report describes the political views and behaviors of leaders and congregants in Latino churches in Chicago. Using data from the Chicago Latino Congregations Study, conducted between 2004 and 2007, we examine the social and political views held by participants in Chicago Latino churches, the extent to which church leaders and their parishioners are involved in political activities, and whether or not church leaders influence the political participation of congregants.



Key Findings among Leaders and Congregants in Chicago Latino Churches

- Congregational leaders are united in some social and political views. For example, nearly all (98%) say either that abortion is never acceptable or that it is acceptable only under certain extreme circumstances. And an overwhelming majority (95%) would either agree or strongly agree with a proposal that would give many of the undocumented immigrants working in the U.S. a chance to obtain legal status. Nonetheless, views are somewhat more varied on other issues, such as the death penalty and the U.S. embargo against Cuba.
- Congregants fall more or less in line with their religious leaders on issues such as abortion and immigration. A majority believe abortion is either never acceptable or only acceptable under extreme circumstances (98%), and most would agree with a proposal to give undocumented immigrants a chance to obtain legal status (82%).
- While about a third of congregational leaders say they have no political affiliation (35%), nearly twice as many identify as Democrat (37%) than identify as Republican (19%).
- Congregants identify more strongly with the Democratic Party than their religious leaders; three-in-five (62%) identify as Democrats, one-in-five (23%) as Independent, and 15% as Republicans.
- Congregational leaders are fairly active politically. A large majority (87%) reported having voted in the 2000 presidential election. Three-in-five (63%) have spent time attending a meeting about a specific social, educational or political issue, two-in-five (43%) have signed a petition, and about a third (34%) have called or written a public official.
- Among Congregants, a majority of eligible voters report having voted in the 2004 election (81%). However, majorities say they have not been involved in political activities such as voter registration drives and political campaigns (87%) and have not spoken with or contacted a public official (75%).
- Congregants who hear encouragement from their religious leaders to get involved in political activities are more likely to be politically active in some ways, suggesting the potential influence of church leaders to foster political participation among their congregants.

The findings in this report begin to examine an understudied empirical question about the influence of religion, and particularly of religious leaders, on the political behavior of Latino churchgoers. The Chicago Latino Congregations Study is an ideal source of data for this question because it uniquely provides information from both the leaders and the parishioners in Chicago Latino churches. While this data can only be used to speak to the dynamics within Latino churches in Chicago, and therefore should not be used to make generalizations about the national population more broadly, the findings in this report can begin to identify ways in which religious institutions, beliefs and values intersect with political behavior among Latinos and can serve as a starting point to spur future research on this topic.



AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES



Jessica Hamar Martínez is a doctoral candidate in the department of sociology at the University of Arizona, where she also received her master's degree in sociology. Her dissertation examines religious switching among Latinos in predominantly Hispanic congregations in Chicago. Jessica received her bachelor's degree in sociology and Spanish, with minor concentrations in ethnic studies and Chicano studies, from Saint Cloud State University in Minnesota.



Edwin I. Hernández, a research fellow with the Center for the Study of Latino Religion, is senior program officer for research, education, and congregational initiatives at the DeVos Family Foundations. A sociologist of religion with a PhD from the University of Notre Dame and a master of divinity from Andrews University, his research has focused on Latino religious experience, theological education, congregational studies, and the role of religious leaders in sustaining the life and commitment of socially-engaged congregations.



Rebecca Burwell is a faculty member at Chicago Semester, an urban experiential education program in Chicago. She teaches courses on race, ethnicity, and urban issues. She received her PhD in sociology from Loyola University Chicago and has done research in the area of Latino religion, women and social policy, and urban studies. Most recently she has been doing research and writing on engaging students in justice work in the city.



Milagros Peña is associate dean in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and professor of sociology and women's studies at the University of Florida. She received her doctorate in sociology from the State University of New York at Stony Brook. She is the author of *Latina Activists across Borders: Grassroots Women's Organizing in Mexico and Texas* (2007), which was awarded the 2008 Distinguished Book Award by the Latino/a section of the American Sociological Association. She is also the recipient of a 1995 Fulbright-Hays/Garcia Robles Research Award and author or co-author of multiple books, journal articles, and reports.



David Sikkink is associate professor in the Department of Sociology at the University of Notre Dame, where he is a fellow in the Institute for Educational Initiatives and the Center for the Study of Religion and Society. He completed his doctorate in sociology at the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill, and works primarily on issues of religion, education, and politics, including studies of the influence of religious tradition on congregational overseas giving, as well as the correlates of Latino participation in immigration rights protest.



A C K N O W L E D G E M E N T S

*The authors wish to thank the **The Pew Charitable Trusts, the Louisville Institute, the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation, and the Doug and Maria DeVos Foundation** for their support of the **Chicago Latino Congregations Study**. We thank the **Institute for Latino Studies at the University of Notre Dame** for their support during the time that this study was conducted and the **Center for the Study of Religion and Society** for their sponsorship of this publication. We also thank the **Center for Social Research at Calvin College** for their data support. Finally, we thank the **religious leaders who participated in the Chicago Latino Congregations Study** for allowing us to interview and survey both them and their parishioners.*



INTRODUCTION

There has been growing attention, particularly in recent election years, to the influence of Latinos in U.S. politics. Latinos are a rapidly growing segment of the U.S. population, having grown from 21.9 million in 1990 to 50.5 million—16 percent of the population—in 2010 (Ramirez 2004, Humes, Jones, and Ramirez 2011), and projected to reach 20 to 30 percent of the total population by 2050 (Ortman and Guarneri 2009). Many have noted the growing importance of this demographic in recent elections (Lopez 2008, 2010). Nonetheless, rates of political participation are traditionally lower among Latinos than other ethnic groups in the U.S. (Verba, Scholzman, and Brady 1995, Pew Hispanic Center 2009), suggesting the potential influence of Latinos at local and national levels has not been fully realized.

Previous research has suggested several factors that contribute to differential rates of political participation among Latinos. For example, factors such as immigration status and generation, socioeconomic status, education, local and state anti-immigrant initiatives, and various attitudinal differences have all been identified as playing a role (Arvizu and Garcia 1996; Garcia 1997; Martinez 2005; Pantoja, Ramirez, and Segura 2001).

Recently, scholars have given more attention to the role of religion in shaping political views and behaviors among Latinos (Espinosa, Elizonda, and Miranda 2003, 2005, Hernandez, Davis, Peña, Schiopu, Smith, and Loveland 2007, Jones-Correa and Leal 2001, Pew Hispanic Center and Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life 2007, Verba et al. 1995). For example, religious affiliation is often correlated with political affiliation, with Latino Catholics more

likely to identify as Democrats than as Republicans, and Latino Evangelical Protestants more likely than Latino Catholics to identify as Republicans (Pew Hispanic Center and Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life 2007).

In addition to religious affiliation, religious participation can affect political views and behaviors as well. Those who attend church more frequently, for example, are often more likely to hold conservative political views and vote Republican (Pew Forum 2008, Hernandez et al. 2007, Green 2007). Research has also shown that participation in religious congregations can cultivate important civic skills that translate into political participation (Jones-Correa and Leal 2001, Verba et al. 1995). Verba and coauthors (1995) suggest that Catholics are less likely to be politically active because they are less likely to learn the necessary civic skills in their parishes, and that this accounts for lower rates of participation among Latinos



because Latinos are more likely to be Catholic (Verba et al. 1995). Participants in Protestant churches, on the other hand, are seen as having more opportunities to learn civic skills because of the relatively small size of Protestant churches compared to Catholic churches, and the less hierarchical structure of Protestant churches. However, Jones-Correa and Leal (2001) find Catholic Latinos more likely to participate in certain political activities than Protestant Latinos, suggesting the relationship between religious tradition and political participation is perhaps more complicated.

Still other research has suggested the importance of accounting for the congregational context, noting differences beyond those between religious traditions or denominations (DiSalvo 2008, Djupe and Gilbert 2009, Wald, Owen, and Hill 1988). One aspect of the congregational context is the potential political influence of religious leaders (Djupe and Gilbert 2009, Espinosa 2007, Smith 2008, Welch, Leege, Wald, and Kellstedt 1993), which has often been assumed but only recently begun to be explored. In a study of Catholic clergy, Smith (2008) found some evidence of clergy influence on parishioners' political views. Welch and coauthors (1993) found similar evidence among a national sample of churchgoers. However, few have examined the potential influence of religious leaders on the political *behaviors* of their congregants (see Djupe and Gilbert 2009 and Smith 2008 for exceptions), particularly among Latinos. Espinosa, Elizondo, and Miranda (2005) suggest that the Latino population is more willing to

engage in political action than church leaders realize, given the high amount of interest expressed in political issues among Latinos in their sample, as well as a strong desire to see church leaders be more involved in influencing political matters. However, it is unclear to what extent Latino religious leaders and their congregants are involved politically, and to what extent Latino religious leaders influence the politics of their congregants.

In this report, we use data from the Chicago Latino Congregations Study to examine the political views and behaviors of leaders and churchgoers in Latino churches in Chicago. Our analysis focuses on the Chicago context and is not intended to be representative of all Latino religious leaders and churchgoers in the United States. Whenever possible, we draw from other data sources to compare our findings to findings from national surveys.

In the sections that follow, we describe the Chicago Latino Congregations Study in a bit more detail, then we describe the political views and practices of religious leaders, followed by the political views and practices of congregants in Latino churches in Chicago. The next section describes the political messages transmitted within congregations, first from the perspective of leaders and then from the perspective of congregants. The final section examines how multiple factors impact political participation among congregants, with a particular focus on the influence of leaders.



This report utilizes data from the Chicago Latino Congregations Study (CLCS), a multi-level, comprehensive study of Latino churches in the Chicago metropolitan area. The CLCS was conducted from 2004-2007 and involved surveys of church leaders, adult congregants, and youth congregants, as well as focus groups, interviews, and participant observation. This report will draw from the surveys of congregation leaders and adult congregants.

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The Chicago Latino Congregations Study

This report utilizes data from the Chicago Latino Congregations Study (CLCS), a multi-level, comprehensive study of Latino churches in the Chicago metropolitan area. The CLCS was conducted from 2004-2007 and involved surveys of church leaders, adult congregants, and youth congregants, as well as focus groups, interviews, and participant observation. This report will draw from the surveys of congregation leaders and adult congregants.

CLCS researchers initially compiled a comprehensive list of congregations in metropolitan Chicago with a significant Latino attendance (50 percent or more for Protestant churches, 30 percent or more for Catholic churches). A random stratified sample was then taken based on religious tradition—Catholic, Mainline Protestant, Evangelical, and Pentecostal.

Several survey instruments were used in the study. First, a shorter survey was completed by leaders in 84 churches. Second, a longer survey was completed by leaders at 82 churches (a different sample than the first, shorter survey). Then, surveys of adult congregants were completed by 2,368 adults in 74 of the congregations in which the longer leader survey was completed, and surveys of youth congregants were completed by 607 youth in a subset of 63 of these congregations¹. This report uses data from the leader surveys² and the adult congregant survey³.

The Political Views and Behaviors of Religious Leaders

A total of 166 religious leaders were surveyed, with 84 respondents to the short leader survey and 82 to the long leader survey. Among the 166 religious leaders surveyed, 85 percent are Latino and 89 percent are male. The majority (59%) are under 50 years old. The group as a whole is well-educated, with 94 percent having more than a high school education, and 46 percent holding a masters or doctoral degree. Just over half (51%) report an annual

household income of \$35,000 or more annually. Seventy-five percent are first generation immigrants to the United States, and 78 percent are U.S. citizens (by birth or naturalization). **Table 1** (below) shows how these demographics vary between the short and long leader surveys.

The surveys of religious leaders covered a wide range of topics, including religious background and background in ministry, satisfaction in ministry, involvement in the community and relationships with other organizations. Also, religious leaders were asked about their work in their congregations, their expectations of congregants, and how decisions are made in their congregation or parish. Among other topics, religious leaders were also asked about their views on various political and social issues and their involvement in political activities.

¹ Congregations were identified as Latino for inclusion in the study, in the manner described above. Most congregations, nonetheless, have participants of various racial and ethnic backgrounds. When interviewing leaders and congregants, respondents could be of any race or ethnicity. In other words, respondent participation was not limited to only Latino respondents. For leader surveys, in cases where the head clergyperson was non-Latino, researchers conducted the survey with the highest ranking Latino leader when possible. For congregant surveys, anyone in attendance at the service when surveys were conducted was invited to participate. Majorities, but not all, of both leader and congregant respondents identify as Latino or Hispanic. In this report, our analyses do not exclude non-Latino respondents.

² There were several questions on the shorter leader survey that were the same as questions on the longer leader survey, but not all questions were asked on both. Therefore, we report descriptive results from both surveys in cases where the question of interest was asked in both, and only results from the longer survey for questions that were not asked in both.

³ For more information on the research methodology, see "The Chicago Latino Congregations Study (CLCS): Methodological Considerations" (Burwell, Hernández, Peña, Smith and Sikkink 2010), available at <http://latinostudies.nd.edu/cslr/pubs.php>.

TABLE 1. Religious leader demographic information

	SHORT SURVEY	N	LONG SURVEY	N	ALL LEADERS (WEIGHTED)	N
Latino	72%	81	95%	80	85%	162
Male	94%	81	83%	80	89%	161
Under 50 years old	54%	79	63%	80	59%	159
With more than high school education	93%	81	95%	80	94%	161
With a bachelor's degree	15%	81	16%	80	17%	161
With a master's or doctoral degree	53%	81	42%	80	46%	161
With household income of \$35,000 or more	38%	74	53%	74	51%	148
First generation American	70%	81	78%	78	75%	159
U.S. citizen (by birth or naturalization)	82%	83	76%	79	78%	162

NOTE: N is the total number of cases for which valid responses were given.

SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007



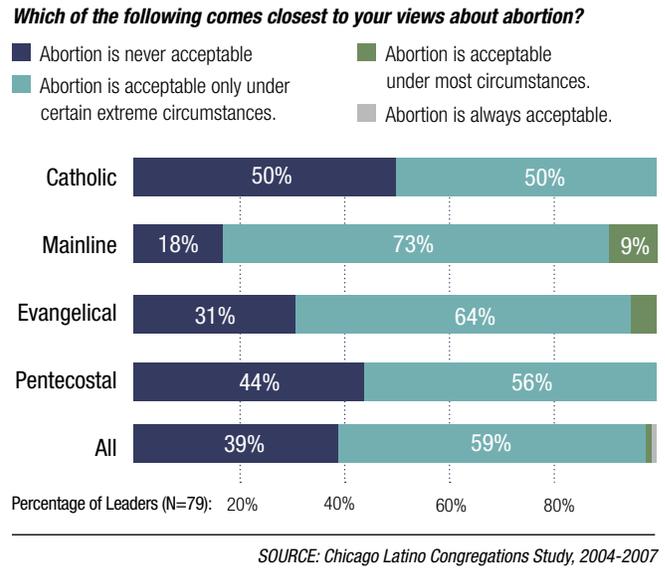
Social and Political Issues: Leader Beliefs and Attitudes

When asked about various political issues, the congregational leaders we surveyed seem to have fairly strong, conservative views regarding certain issues. For example, looking at views on abortion, religious leaders overwhelmingly say abortion is either never acceptable, or is only acceptable in certain extreme circumstances (such as threat to the mother’s life, rape, or incest) (**Figure 1**). These views are relatively consistent across denominations. When asked whether they agree or disagree with the idea of granting same-sex couples the right to marry, a majority (approximately 83%) answered either “disagree” or “strongly disagree,” (**Figure 2**). In particular, Evangelical (92%) and Pentecostal (99%) leaders were more likely than Catholic (62%) and Mainline (45%) leaders to share this view⁴.

Views are a bit more mixed regarding the death penalty. A majority (55%) say that they either disagree or strongly disagree with the death penalty for those convicted of murder. More than a quarter of religious leaders remain neutral on the subject. Breaking down responses by religious tradition, we see that Catholic leaders are the most likely to disagree or strongly disagree (82%) and Evangelical leaders are least likely (33%) to disagree with the death penalty.

We also see some mixed views on certain foreign policy issues. More than half of church leaders (57%) say they disagree or strongly disagree with the U.S. intervention in Iraq, whereas about one in five agree or strongly agree. Looking at differences by religious tradition, Catholic (92%) and Mainline (74%) leaders are more likely to disagree or strongly disagree with the U.S. intervention in Iraq than Evangelical (46%) and Pentecostal (40%) clergy. When it comes to views on the U.S. embargo against Cuba, we see a similar pattern. Just over half (52%)

FIGURE 1. Religious leaders’ views on abortion by religious tradition

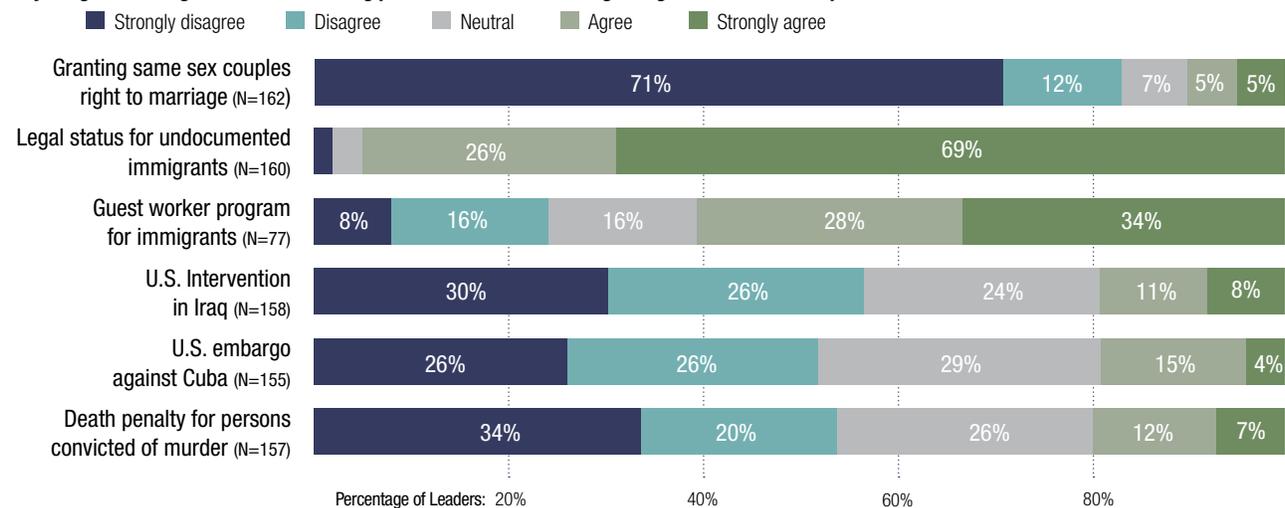


of church leaders either disagree or strongly disagree with the embargo, while about 19% agree or strongly agree. Once again, Catholic (82%) and Mainline (75%) leaders are more likely to

⁴Figures reported throughout this document are based on the total number of responses to each question. Cases with missing data are excluded. When comparisons are offered between religious tradition subgroups, differences described are statistically significant at the .05 level ($p=.050$ or lower), based on chi square tests, unless otherwise noted. When comparisons are offered between church leaders and congregants, differences described are statistically significant at the .05 level based on t-tests, unless otherwise noted.

FIGURE 2. Religious leaders’ agreement with social and political policies

Do you agree or disagree with the following policies and statements regarding current social and political issues?



NOTE: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding

SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007



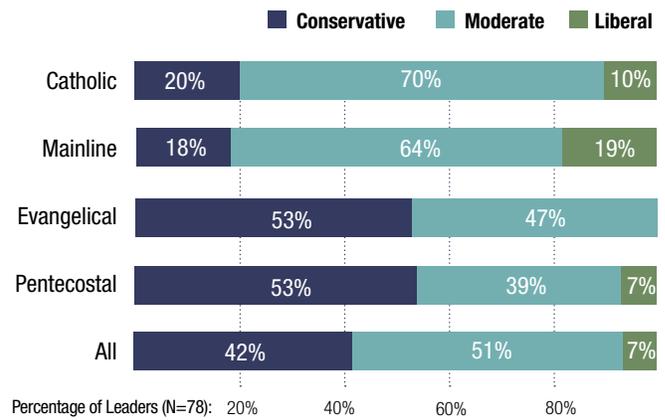
disagree or strongly disagree with the embargo than Evangelical (42%) and Pentecostal (34%) leaders.

Congregational leaders have very strong views on immigration issues. Nearly all respondents (95%) would either agree or strongly agree with a proposal that would give many of the undocumented or illegal immigrants working in the U.S. a chance to obtain legal status. More than 60 percent of congregational leaders would agree or strongly agree with a guest worker proposal that would allow Latinos to enter the country legally and work here for a limited period of time, but return home after that. About 23 percent would disagree (or strongly disagree) with such a proposal. While respondents were not asked why they would agree or disagree with such proposals, given the strong support for the proposal that would give immigrants a chance to obtain legal status, it is possible that those who disagree with the proposal offering temporary legal status do so because of the lack of a permanent option for citizenship. Our data show strong support for immigration reform. This is not only an important issue among religious leaders in Latino churches in Chicago; immigration reform has received attention from Latino religious leaders and organizations across the religious spectrum at the national level (see Sidebar on page 27).

When it comes to views on particular social and political issues, congregational leaders have somewhat conservative views on some issues and somewhat liberal views on others. When asked directly about their political leanings, half (51%) describe themselves as “moderate,” while 42 percent describe themselves as “conservative” and only seven percent as “liberal.” Evangelical (53%) and Pentecostal (53%) leaders are significantly more likely to describe themselves as conservative than Catholic (20%) and Mainline (18%) leaders (Figure 3).

Congregational leaders were reluctant to claim a political party affiliation, however, with a third (35%) claiming no political affiliation (Figure 4). Approximately 37 percent describe themselves as Democrats, 19 percent as Republicans, and nine percent as Independent. Only Evangelical leaders had a higher percentage claiming Republican affiliation (32%) than Democratic affiliation (24%).

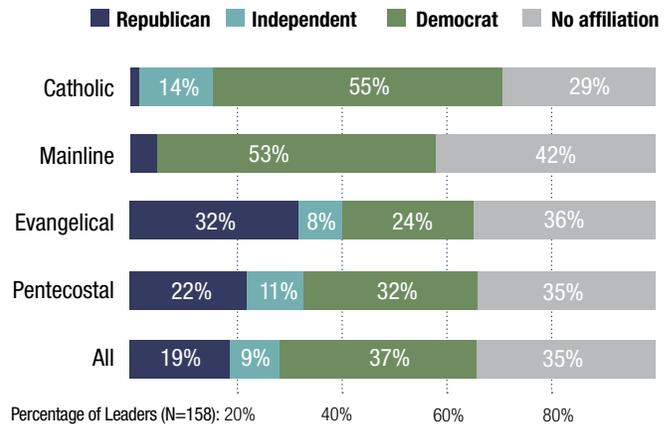
FIGURE 3. Religious leaders’ political leaning by religious tradition



NOTE: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding

SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

FIGURE 4. Religious leaders’ political affiliation by religious tradition



SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007



**Political Involvement:
Leader Behaviors and Practices**

At the time of the survey, nearly every single religious leader who had U.S. citizenship (either by birth or by naturalization) was registered to vote (all but one respondent). Respondents were also asked about whether or not they had voted in the 2000 presidential election, and for whom, as well as whether or not they planned to vote in the 2004 presidential election. In 2000, nearly 88 percent of those eligible to vote did so. Because this study concluded in 2007, we do not have data on vote choice in the 2008 presidential election. George W. Bush received a vote from 51 percent of all eligible church leaders, while Al Gore received a vote from 35 percent. Although more religious leaders in this sample identify as democrat than republican, the republican candidate received more of religious leaders' votes in 2000. Looking at voting patterns by political affiliation (Table 2), we see that all of those who identify as Republicans and who voted in 2000 voted for Bush. A majority of Democratic religious leaders voted for Gore (60%), but more than a quarter voted for Bush (29%). Independents were nearly split, while 49 percent of those with no affiliation voted for Bush.

Broken down by religious tradition (Table 3), higher percentages of Catholic (63%) and Mainline (73%) leaders voted for Gore than for Bush, while higher percentages of Evangelical (53%) and Pentecostal (73%) leaders voted for Bush than for Gore (again, among those eligible to vote). This finding is somewhat consistent with the Cooperative Clergy Research Project, a national survey of religious leaders, which found higher rates of voting for Bush among Evangelical religious leaders than among Mainline Protestants and Catholic leaders. Guth and coauthors (2003) found that Evangelical Protestant leaders voted overwhelmingly Republican in the 2000 presidential election, with 87 percent of respondents saying they had voted for Bush. Drawing on the same survey, Smidt and coauthors (2003) found that Mainline Protestant leaders were much more split on their 2000 vote, with 50 percent of respondents voting for Gore and 43 percent for Bush. Among Catholic leaders in the same survey, 59 percent reported voting for Bush and 32 percent for Gore (Jelen 2003). Comparing results from this national survey to the CLCS, religious leaders in the CLCS sample did not vote as strongly Republican as those in the national sample.

TABLE 2. Religious leaders' 2000 presidential vote by political affiliation

	VOTED FOR BUSH	VOTED FOR GORE	DID NOT VOTE
Republican	96%	0%	4%
Democrat	29%	60%	9%
Independent	41%	45%	8%
No affiliation	49%	19%	31%
Total	51%	35%	13%

SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007



TABLE 3. Religious leaders' 2000 presidential vote by religious tradition

	VOTED FOR BUSH	VOTED FOR GORE	DID NOT VOTE
Catholic	26%	63%	6%
Mainline	18%	73%	9%
Evangelical	53%	24%	24%
Pentecostal	73%	19%	8%
Total	52%	35%	12%

SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

When asked about their plans for the 2004 presidential election, one-in-five (19%) religious leaders were still unsure about who they would vote for. Two-in-five (42%) either voted for or planned to vote for Bush, and another two-in-five (39%) for Kerry⁶. Breaking it down by religious tradition, 79 percent of Catholic leaders voted or planned to vote for Kerry, along with 73 percent of Mainline leaders. Majorities of Evangelical (53%) and Pentecostal (60%) leaders voted or planned to vote for Bush.

⁵ The Cooperative Clergy Research Project is a national survey of religious leaders in selected denominations. Therefore, it is not representative of all religious leaders in the United States. However, as a large national survey of religious leaders, the Cooperative Clergy Research Project provides an opportunity to compare our CLCS respondents with a national sample. Guth et al. (2003) draw on data from surveys of clergy in five Evangelical Protestant denominations; Smidt et al. (2003) draw on data from surveys of clergy in six Mainline Protestant denominations. For more information on this study, see the December 2003 issue of the Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion (Vol. 42, No. 4), or Pulpit and Politics: Clergy in American Politics at the Advent of the Millennium edited by Corwin E. Smidt (2004, Baylor University Press).

⁶ Surveys were completed throughout 2004-2007, so some surveys of leaders were completed before the 2004 presidential election and some after, while surveys of congregants were completed after 2004. Respondents who were surveyed before the 2004 presidential election were asked for whom they planned to vote. Those surveyed after were asked for whom they actually voted.



When it comes to political activities other than voting, religious leaders are more active in some ways than others (Figure 5). More than two out of five (43%) congregational leaders have signed a petition at some point in the last three years, while just over one third (34%) have called or written to a public official. Nearly two thirds (63%) have attended a meeting about a specific social, educational or political issue, and more than a quarter (28%) have participated in direct action, such as protests or rallies. Factoring in religious tradition, Catholic religious leaders are most likely to say they have participated in direct action (53%).

Religious leaders seem to be least likely to say they have given money to a political candidate or party, engaged in nonviolent civil disobedience, or that they regularly participate in a political group or groups. Looking at differences by religious tradition, Mainline religious leaders are more likely than those of other traditions to say they have engaged in nonviolent civil disobedience (28%). While only a small percentage of religious leaders participate in political groups (7%), just over 38 percent say they have regularly participated in an advocacy group or community organization.

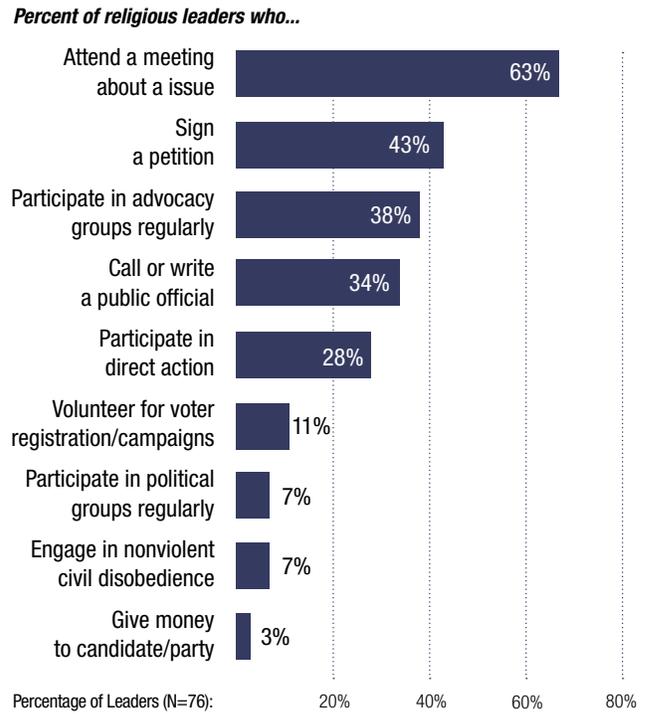
The Political Views and Behaviors of Congregants

In addition to surveying religious leaders at Latino churches in the Chicago metropolitan area, CLCS researchers also surveyed adult congregants at 74 of the congregations. (Table 4) Of the 2,368 respondents, three-in-five (61%) are female, and a majority (88%) are Latino. Three quarters of the sample (75%) are under the age of 50. Congregant respondents are less likely than leaders in these churches to have an education past the high school level (39%, compared to 94% of leaders). About two thirds (68%) earn less than \$35,000 a year. A high proportion (78%) are first generation immigrants to the United States, and approximately 58% are U.S. citizens.

Surveys of congregants covered a wide range of topics, including congregants' involvement, experiences, and satisfaction with their congregations. Congregants were also asked about various religious views and practices, as well as civic and political involvement, and social and political views. We turn next to these social and political views.



FIGURE 5. Religious leaders' participation in political activities



SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

TABLE 4. Congregant demographic information

	PERCENT	N
Latino	88%	2,382
Male	39%	2,112
Under 50 years old	75%	1,954
With more than high school education	39%	2,059
With a bachelor's degree	10%	2,059
With a master's or doctoral degree	3%	2,059
With household income of \$35,000 or more	32%	1,738
First generation American	78%	2,011
U.S. citizen (by birth or naturalization)	58%	2,061

NOTE: N is the total number of cases for which valid responses were given.

SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

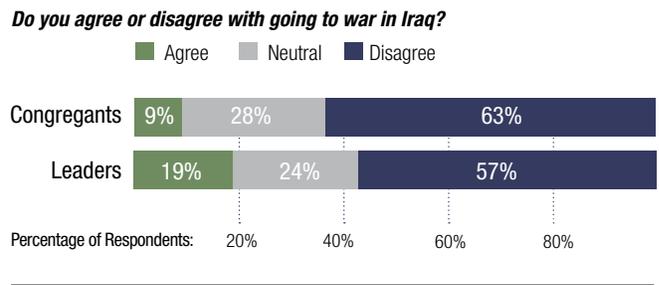


Social and Political Issues: Congregant Beliefs and Attitudes

Similar to the congregational leaders, congregants surveyed were largely in favor of a proposal that would give many of the undocumented or illegal immigrants working in the U.S. a chance to obtain legal status, with 82% saying they agreed with the idea, and only 4% disagreeing. Responses were consistent across religious tradition.

We see a bit less agreement with the war in Iraq among congregants than we did among leaders, with 63% saying they disagree and only 9% saying they agree (Figure 6)⁷. By comparison, in a national survey by the Pew Hispanic Center and Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, “Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion,”⁸ 31 percent of Hispanic respondents said using force in Iraq was the right choice (2007).

FIGURE 6. Religious leaders’ and congregants’ views on the Iraq war



SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

⁷ One factor that likely contributes to this difference between leaders and congregants is gender. Overall, women (congregants and leaders) are more likely to disagree with the war in Iraq than men (statistically significant at $p < .05$ using chi square testing). However, only 12 percent of leader respondents are women, compared with 60 percent of congregant respondents. When comparisons are limited by gender, there are no significant differences between male leaders and male congregants, or between female leaders and female congregants, when it comes to views of the war.

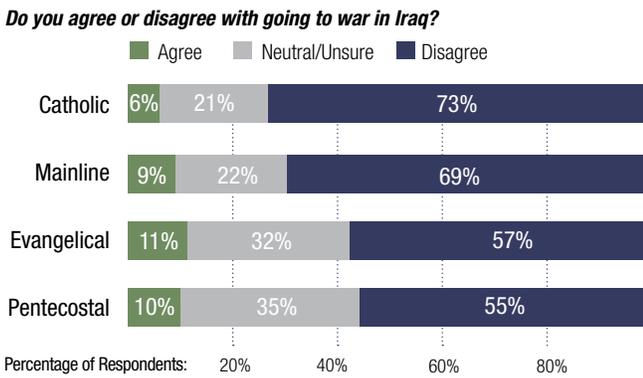
⁸ To make comparisons between our data and national-level data on Latinos, we use data from a national survey of Latinos conducted by the Pew Hispanic Center and Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life in 2006, as reported in “Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion” (2007). Throughout the remainder of the report, all national comparisons come from this data source (unless otherwise cited), referred to as “Changing Faiths” for brevity. Note that question wording varied between the two surveys, so comparisons are meant to be general and to give some broader context to the Chicago data. Exact comparisons with a national sample are not possible. Also, in the CLCS, religious tradition is defined by the type of church the respondent was surveyed in, while in the “Changing Faiths” study religious tradition is defined by a respondent’s self identification (see full report for details). Additionally, all respondents in “Changing Faiths” identified as Latino or Hispanic, while not all of CLCS respondents identified as such. The Pew Hispanic Center and Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life bear no responsibility for the interpretations offered, or conclusions made based on analysis of the Pew Hispanic Center/ Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life survey “Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion.”



Looking at differences by religious tradition among CLCS respondents (Figure 7), Catholic (73%) and Mainline (69%) congregants were more likely to disagree with going to war in Iraq than Evangelical (57%) and Pentecostal (55%) respondents, although the majority of congregants in all congregations took the position. Meanwhile, Evangelical (32%) and Pentecostal (35%) respondents were more likely to be either neutral or unsure about their view of the Iraq War than Catholic (21%) and Mainline (22%) respondents. Nationally, a higher percentage of Hispanic Evangelical respondents in “Changing Faiths” were favorable toward the war (49%) than Hispanic Catholic respondents (27%).

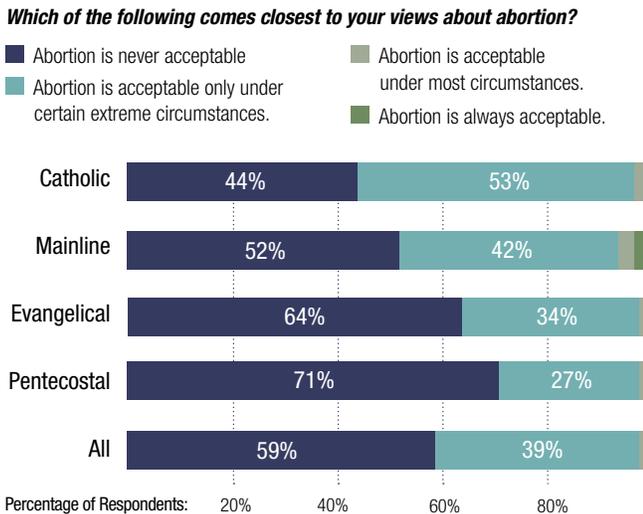
As a whole, congregants were more strongly opposed to abortion than religious leaders (see Figure 8 and Figure 9). Nearly three-in-five (59%) congregants said abortion is never acceptable, while about two-in-five (39%) said it is acceptable in extreme

FIGURE 7. Congregant views on the Iraq war by religious tradition



SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

FIGURE 8. Congregants' views on abortion by religious tradition



SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

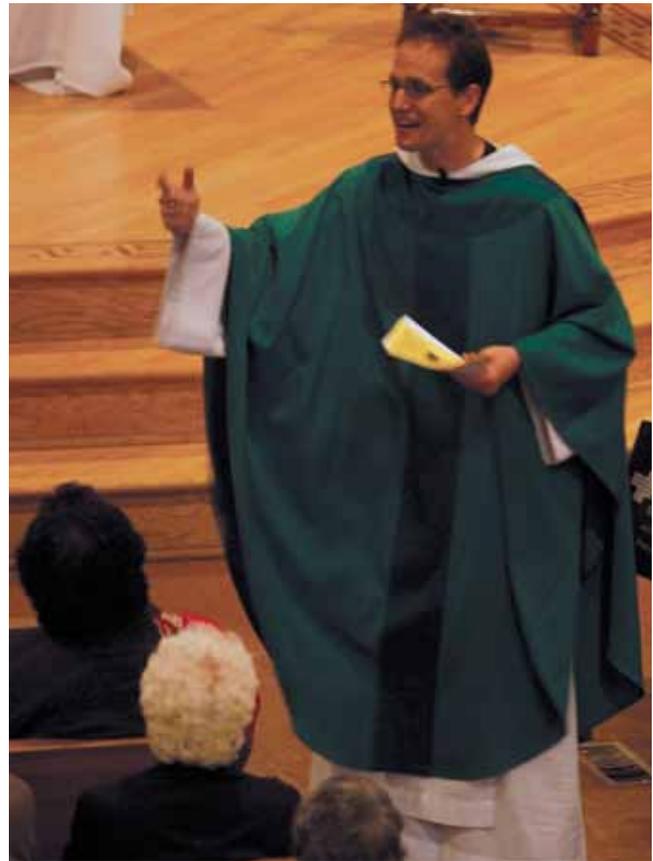
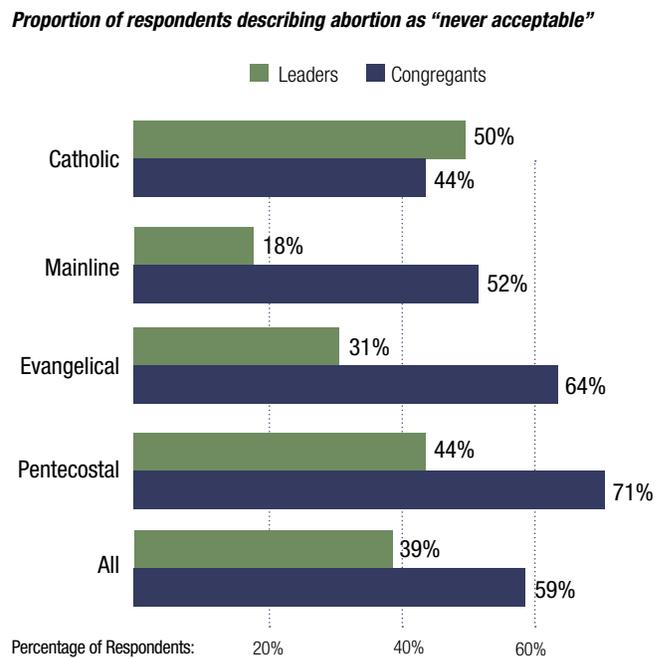


FIGURE 9. Leaders' and congregants' views on abortion by religious tradition



SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007



circumstances only. Catholic congregants, however, were more likely to say abortion is acceptable under extreme circumstances (53%) than congregants in other religious traditions. Among Pentecostal congregants, seven-in-ten (71%) said abortion is never acceptable, making this group more likely to hold the view than congregants of any other religious tradition. This strong opposition to abortion is seen at the national level as well, with 77 percent of Evangelical Latinos and 54 percent of Catholic Latinos in “Changing Faiths” saying abortion should be illegal in all or most cases.

When asked about their political party affiliation (Figure 10), the majority of congregants (62%) identified as Democrat, at least to some degree (responded either “lean democrat” (16%), “democrat” (36%), or “strong democrat” (10%)). While higher percentages of Evangelical (24%) and Pentecostal (19%) congregants identified as Republican than Catholic (7%) and Mainline (7%) congregants, the majority still identified as Democrats, reflecting the trend observed among religious leaders (Table 5). Nationally, about half of “Changing Faiths” respondents (49%) either identified as Democrat or leaned towards the Democratic Party, and a quarter (25%) identified as Republican or lean toward the Republican party. While Catholics in “Changing Faiths” were about twice as likely to identify as or lean toward Democrat (50%) than Republican (23%), Evangelical respondents were more evenly split (41% Democrat, 41% Republican).

Political Involvement: Congregant Behaviors and Practices

Among congregants who are also U.S. citizens, a very high 90 percent said they were registered to vote, compared with 77 percent of respondents in “Changing Faiths.” Eighty-one percent said they voted in the 2004 presidential election, with 38 percent voting for John Kerry and 36 percent for George W. Bush (Figure 11)⁹. When we break down 2004 vote choice by religious tradition, we see that Catholic and Mainline respondents were more likely to vote for Kerry (60% and 55% respectively), and Evangelical and Pentecostal respondents were more likely to vote for Bush (50% and 42% respectively). This reflects similar findings among religious leaders, with Catholic and Mainline respondents more likely to vote for the Democratic candidate, and Evangelical and Pentecostal respondents more likely to vote for the Republican candidate. Additionally, comparing our results to results from a national survey conducted after the 2004 election, we see the same general pattern, although the differences between Catholics and Protestants are more pronounced at the national level (Green, Smith, Guth, and Kellstedt 2005). For example, 69 percent of Latino Catholics in the national sample said they voted for Kerry, while 63 percent of Latino Protestants voted for Bush.

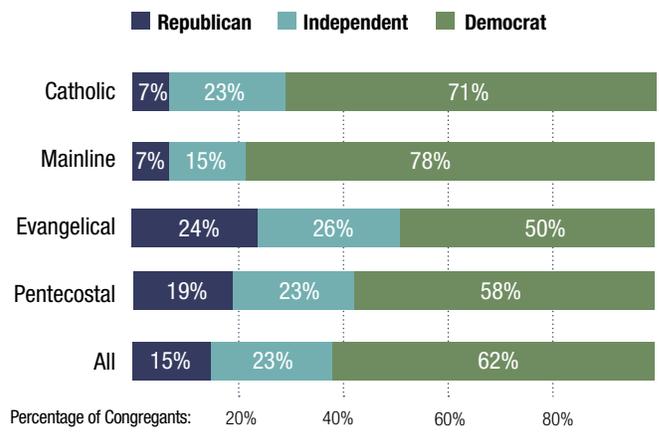
⁹ We restrict our analyses of voting behavior to U.S. citizens only, since non-citizens cannot vote in a presidential election. Analyses of other political behaviors, however, include both citizens and non-citizens.

TABLE 5. Political affiliation among respondents in CLCS and “Changing Faiths”

POLITICAL AFFILIATION	CLCS	CHANGING FAITHS
Democrat/Lean Democrat	62%	49%
Independent/Don't lean	23%	26%
Republican/Lean Republican	15%	25%

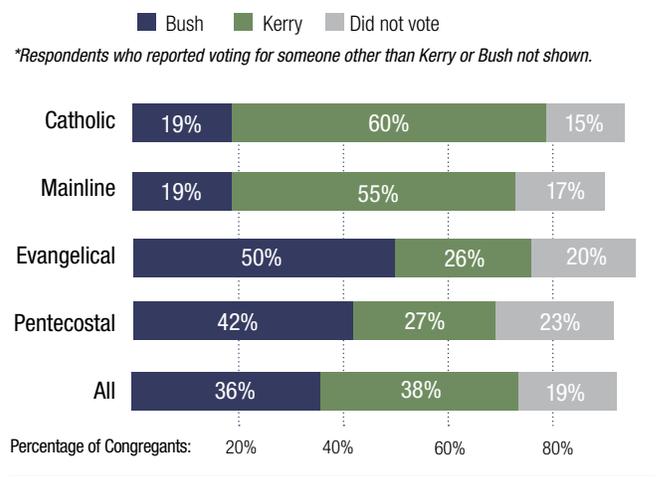
SOURCES: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007 and Pew Hispanic Center and Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life's report, "Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion," 2007

FIGURE 10. Congregants' political affiliation by religious tradition



SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

FIGURE 11. Congregants' 2004 presidential voting by religious tradition



*Respondents who reported voting for someone other than Kerry or Bush not shown.

SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007



As mentioned above, because this study concluded in 2007, we do not have data on the vote choice of our respondents in 2008. However, at the national level, Latinos overwhelmingly voted for Obama over McCain. According to national exit poll results, 67 percent of Latinos voted for Obama and 31 percent voted for McCain (see <http://www.cnn.com/ELECTION/2008/results/polls/#USP00p1> for exit poll details).

While a rather high percentage of congregants take part in voting, they were less likely to take part in other sorts of political activities. When asked how often they had spoken with or contacted a public official in the past 12 months (Figure 12), one-in-four (25%) said either “sometimes” or “often.” Congregants who are U.S. citizens are more likely to say that they have contacted a public official than those who are not (30% of citizens versus 18% of non-citizens). While only one quarter of congregants said they had contacted a public official in the past 12 months, just over one third of religious leaders said they had done so in the past three years.

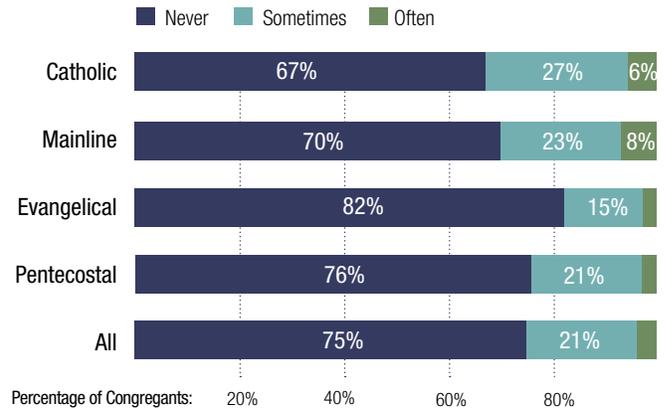
When asked how often they participated in political activities (Figure 13), such as a voter registration drive, being involved in a campaign, or giving money to a party, ten percent of respondents said “sometimes,” while only three percent said “often.” Nearly 93 percent of Evangelical congregants said that they never participated in such activities, a higher percentage than any other religious tradition. Again, those who are U.S. citizens are more likely to say they have participated in such activities (16%) than non-citizens (9%). The percentage of congregants saying they had participated in these types of political activities in the past year (13%) is similar to percentages seen among religious leaders, with 14 percent of religious leaders saying they had either volunteered time for a voter registration drive or political campaign (11%) or had given money to a political candidate or party (3%).

In the Congregation

When it comes to politics in the church, scholars have noted the potential influence of religious leaders on the politics of

FIGURE 12. Congregants’ contact with public officials by religious tradition

How often have you spoken with or contacted a public official in the past 12 months?

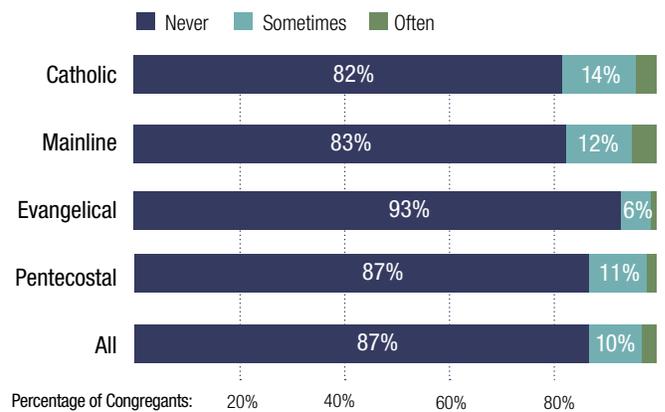


NOTE: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding

SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

FIGURE 13. Congregants’ political activities by religious tradition

How often have you participated in political activities (e.g. voter registration drive, involved with campaign, gave money to a party)?



SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

congregants (Djupe and Gilbert 2009, Espinosa 2007, Smith 2008, Welch et al. 1993). Some have examined the prevalence of political cues delivered by religious leaders, as well as congregants’ perceptions of these cues and potential influence on congregants’ political attitudes (Djupe and Gilbert 2009, Smith 2008, Welch et al. 1993). Fewer studies have examined the influence of religious leaders on the political behaviors of congregants. In a study of Catholic parishes, Smith (2008) finds no influence of clergy political speech on congregant presidential vote choice. In a study of clergy in ELCA and Episcopal churches, Djupe and Gilbert (2009) find little evidence of clergy influence on



As a whole, congregants were more strongly opposed to abortion than religious leaders. Nearly three-in-five congregants said abortion is never acceptable, while about two-in-five said it is acceptable in extreme circumstances only. Catholic congregants, however, were more likely to say abortion is acceptable under extreme circumstances than congregants in other religious traditions. Among Pentecostal congregants, seven-in-ten said abortion is never acceptable, making this group more likely to hold the view than congregants of any other religious tradition.



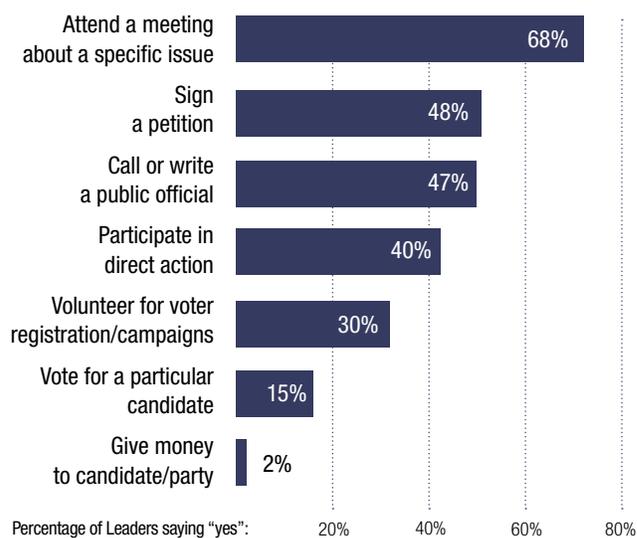
church members' political behavior. However, both analyses focused on the potential effects of general political cues from clergy (e.g. speaking about various political topics in church) on political behavior. Here, we explore the possible effects of direct calls for political participation from clergy. In CLCS surveys, religious leaders were asked if they had encouraged their congregations' members to be involved in various political activities. Additionally, congregants were asked if they had heard sermons or homilies encouraging particular political behaviors. Here, we turn to a description of some of the political messages being delivered and received in Chicago Latino congregations.

Congregational leaders were asked if, during the last three years, they had asked members of their congregations to participate in various political activities (**Figure 14**). Nearly half of the leaders (48%) said that they had asked their congregation to sign a petition. Somewhat higher percentages of Catholic (60%) and Mainline (58%) leaders asked members to sign a petition than Evangelical (42%) or Pentecostal (40%) leaders. Almost half (47%) of religious leaders had asked members of their congregations to call or write a public official, and more than two-thirds asked members to attend a meeting about a specific social, educational, or political issue.

Just under a third of religious leaders (30%) asked members of their congregations to volunteer time for a voter registration drive or political campaign. However, breaking it down by religious tradition, only five percent of Evangelical leaders had done so, compared to 40 percent of Catholic leaders, 58 percent of Mainline leaders, and 27 percent of Pentecostal leaders. Only two percent of religious leaders asked members of their congregations to give money to a political candidate or party, while 15 percent

FIGURE 14. Religious leaders' overall rates of encouraging political activities

During the past three years, have you ever asked any of your congregations' members to engage in the following activities?



SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

asked members to vote for a particular political candidate, and 40 percent asked members to participate in direct action, such as protests or rallies.



Religious leaders were also asked how frequently they speak to their congregation about the importance of political participation (Figure 15). While speaking about the importance of political participation may not necessarily be an explicit call to become involved in politics, it is possible that such an expression would at least call congregants' attention to opportunities for political participation. Almost half (48%) said either "rarely" or "never," while 39 percent said "sometimes" and 13 percent said "very often." Catholic leaders were most likely to say that they spoke about the importance of political participation, with three quarters (74%) saying either "sometimes" or "very often," compared to 60 percent of Mainline leaders, 32 percent of Evangelical leaders, and 48 percent of Pentecostal leaders.

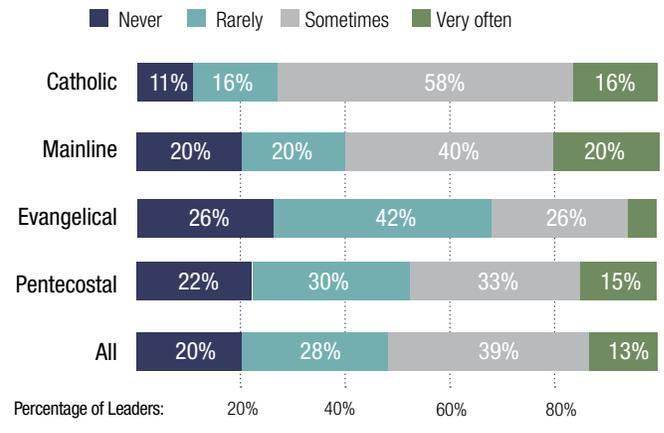
Religious leaders were asked whether they favor or oppose their congregations participating in various political activities (Figure 16). A majority of religious leaders (83%) are in favor of their congregation contacting public officials on topics of community concern. Views are more divided when it comes to engaging in direct action or protests, with about 17 percent of religious leaders strongly in favor of their congregation doing so and about 14 percent strongly opposed. Religious leaders express the most opposition at their congregations engaging in nonviolent civil disobedience, with 29 percent strongly opposed. Nonetheless, two out of five (41%) take no stand on the issue.

CLCS researchers also asked congregant respondents what kinds of political messages they were receiving in their congregations (Figure 17). Congregants were asked how often, in the past year, they had heard sermons or homilies by the pastor or priest that spoke against the war in Iraq, spoke against same-sex marriages, urged them to register to vote, or encouraged them to get involved in a local or national political cause or issue. More than half of congregants (58%) heard sermons or homilies that spoke against the war in Iraq in the previous year (either "often" or "sometimes"), and Catholic (71%) and Mainline (60%) congregants were more likely to hear such sermons than Evangelical (53%) and Pentecostal (49%) congregants.

Two-thirds (67%) of congregants heard sermons or homilies that spoke against same-sex marriage either sometimes or often in the previous year. Congregants in Evangelical (75%) and Pentecostal (78%) churches were more likely to hear such sermons than

FIGURE 15. Frequency of speaking about importance of political participation

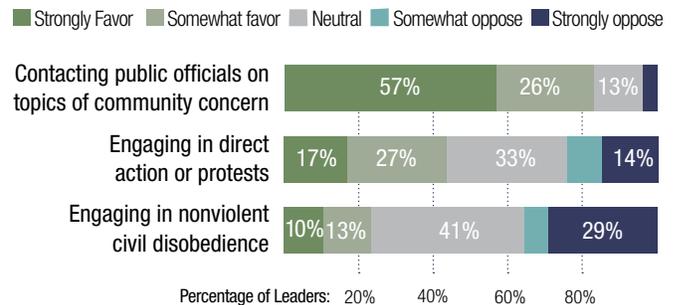
When speaking or preaching to your congregation or parish, how frequently do you speak about the importance of political participation?



NOTE: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding
SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

FIGURE 16. Religious leaders' support for political activities

To what extent do you favor or oppose your congregation or parish doing each of the following activities?



NOTE: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding
SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

congregants in Catholic (47%) and Mainline (54%) churches. This suggests that leaders in conservative Protestant churches are more likely to take a stand against same-sex marriage, or at least more likely to speak out against it in the congregation.

About three quarters (76%) of congregants have heard sermons or homilies urging them to register to vote (sometimes or often). Pentecostal respondents (52%) were more likely to hear such sermons "often" than respondents in other religious traditions. Congregants were less likely to hear a sermon or homily encouraging them to get involved in a political issue or cause, with 59 percent saying they had never heard such a sermon. Evangelical congregants were the least likely to hear such a sermon, with 75 percent saying they had never heard one.



Influence of Religious Leaders on Congregant Political Participation

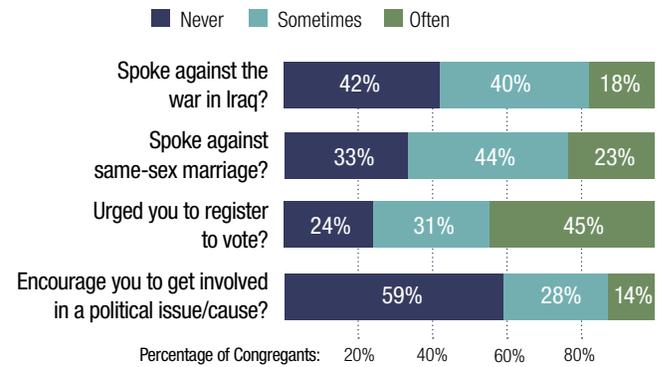
It is clear that religious leaders are addressing political issues and encouraging political participation, at least to some degree, in Latino congregations in Chicago, and that many congregants say they are hearing these messages. The question that follows, then, is: are congregants influenced by the messages they are hearing from their pastors and priests? In this section, we begin to address this question by examining whether or not individuals who are in churches that encourage political participation are, in fact, more likely to participate in political activities.

By conducting logistic regression analyses, we are able to examine the impact that different variables have on a particular outcome, such as the likelihood of contacting a public official. Such an analysis will enable us to see whether a leader's public call for political engagement is actually associated with parishioners getting involved, even after controlling for other factors such as religious tradition, political affiliation, and socioeconomic status. If we find that a religious leader's call for political engagement is a statistically significant predictor of a particular outcome after controlling for other related factors, we have evidence that a leader's pulpit political cues are indeed associated with congregants' behaviors.

In our analysis, we examine three outcome variables. The first is whether or not congregants voted in the 2004 election. The model that includes this variable as the outcome will be restricted to only those respondents who are U.S. citizens, and therefore, eligible to vote in a national election. The second outcome is whether or not congregants have spoken with or contacted a

FIGURE 17. Political messages being received by congregants

In the past year, how often have you heard sermons or homilies by the pastor/priest here that...



NOTE: Figures may not add to 100% due to rounding

SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

public official (e.g. police, councilman, senator, mayor) in the past 12 months. The third outcome is whether or not congregants have participated in political activities (e.g. voter registration drive, involved in a campaign, gave money to a party) in the past 12 months. For models two and three, both citizens and non-citizens are included in the analyses, with a variable for citizenship included as a control.





TABLE 6. Logistic regression results

Variable	MODEL 1: VOTED IN 2004 ELECTION	MODEL 2: CONTACTED OFFICIAL	MODEL 3: PARTICIPATED IN POLITICAL ACTIVITIES
<i>Odds Ratio</i>			
Congregant heard sermon urging to register to vote	4.03***	1.55 [^]	1.20
Congregant heard sermon encouraging involvement in a political cause/issue	0.77	1.93***	3.25***
Congregant is in a church where leader asked members to participate in at least one political activity	3.53***	0.94	0.74
Congregant is in a church where leader speaks about importance of political participation “very often” (vs. sometimes, rarely, or never)	1.09	1.69*	0.75
RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION AND INVOLVEMENT			
Congregant attends worship at least once a week	0.92	0.80	0.67
Congregant is involved in congregational activities “often” (vs. sometimes or never)	0.93	1.91***	2.52***
Congregant is in a Mainline Protestant congregation (relative to Catholic)	0.37	0.31*	0.50
Congregant is in an Evangelical Protestant congregation (relative to Catholic)	0.45*	0.53**	0.35**
Congregant is in a Pentecostal Protestant congregation (relative to Catholic)	0.38*	0.44***	0.54**
Congregation size (regular attenders)	1.00	1.00 [^]	1.00
N	570	941	939
Pseudo R2	0.13	0.09	0.13

*** p<=0.001, ** p<=0.010, * p<=0.050, ^ p<=0.100

Note: Models also control for political affiliation (republican, democrat, independent), income, employment, education, gender, having at least one child, Latino or not, generation, and citizenship.

SOURCE: Chicago Latino Congregations Study, 2004-2007

In our multivariate models, the results of which are displayed in Table 6, we can see the relative influence of various independent variables on the three outcome variables described above.¹⁰ Controlling for various demographic variables (e.g. income, employment, education, etc.), we can see that some of the “leader influence” variables have statistically significant effects on the outcomes while others do not. Additionally, religious affiliation and religious involvement play a role.

Model 1 examines the outcome of voting in the 2004 election. Looking at the “leader influence” variables, we see that congregants who have heard a sermon or homily from their religious leader urging them to register to vote are about four times more likely to have voted in the 2004 election than those who have not heard such a sermon or homily, when controlling for all other factors. Additionally, congregants who are in a church in which the religious leader has asked members to participate in some sort of political activity¹¹ are more than three times more likely to have

voted. Congregants in Evangelical and Pentecostal churches are less likely to have voted than Catholic congregants (the referent group in the model).

Model 2 examines the outcome of contacting or speaking with a public official. Congregants who have heard their pastor or priest

¹⁰ Results shown in table 6 are odds ratios. Odds ratios larger than one are interpreted as “more likely than” and odds ratios smaller than one are interpreted as “less likely than.” For example, in model one shown in table 6, a congregant who has heard a sermon urging them to register to vote is *more likely* to have voted than a congregant who has not heard such a sermon. And a congregant in a Pentecostal Protestant church is *less likely* than a congregant in a Catholic church to have voted.

¹¹ This variable combines the variables shown in Figure 14: During the past three years, have you ever asked any of your congregation’s members to engage in the following activities? A “yes” on any of these variables means a value of one for this variable.



encourage them to get involved in a political cause or issue are nearly twice as likely as those who did not to say they have contacted or spoken with a public official, and those who have heard their pastor or priest urge them to register to vote are somewhat more likely to have contacted a public official as well. Additionally, congregants who are in a church in which the leader said they often speak about the importance of political participation were more likely to have contacted a public official. However, being in a church in which the leader said they have asked members to participate in political activities is not a significant predictor of contacting a public official. It might be the case that the variable based on the survey item which asks congregants directly whether or not they have heard a message gets more at potential influence of religious leaders than the variable based on the survey item asking religious leaders directly whether or not they had delivered a message. As Djupé and Gilbert (2009) have noted, while religious leaders may report delivering messages about particular political issues, congregants do not always perceive all of these messages. In order for political cues from leaders to have any effect on the political behaviors of congregants, congregants must receive those cues.

Additionally, when controlling for attending church at least once a week, those who are involved in a church activity other than the worship service are nearly twice as likely to say they have contacted a public official. This finding lends some support to the idea that involvement in church activities can lead to the development of civic skills that transfer to political participation (Jones-Correa and Leal 2001, Verba et al. 1995). Congregants in Mainline churches are about a third as likely, and congregants in Evangelical and Pentecostal churches are about half as likely, as congregants in Catholic churches to say they have contacted a public official.

Model 3 examines the outcome of participating in political activities, such as volunteering for a campaign or to register voters. Congregants that heard their religious leader encourage involvement in a political cause or issue were three times more likely to say they had participated in a political activity than those who had not. Neither of the leader influence variables based on self-reports from the leaders were significant in this model. When controlling for weekly attendance, those who are involved in at least one church activity other than worship services are more than twice as likely to say they have participated in a political activity than those who are not. Congregants in Evangelical churches are about a third as likely to say they have participated in political activities than congregants in Catholic congregations, and Pentecostal congregants are about half as likely.

Based on the three models presented, it appears that religious leaders do influence the political behavior of their congregations' members in a few ways. While there are a few differences in political participation by religious tradition, with Evangelical and Pentecostal congregants less likely than Catholics to participate in all three ways examined, there are still differences based on clergy influence even when controlling for religious tradition. Congregants who have heard a sermon or homily from religious leaders urging them to register to vote are four times more likely to have actually voted in the 2004 election, and those who were in a church in which the religious leader



said they had asked members to participate in a political activity were three times more likely to have voted. Congregants who have heard a sermon or homily in which their religious leader encouraged them to get involved in a political cause or issue are almost twice as likely to say they have contacted a public official, and three times more likely to say they have participated in political activities than congregants who have not heard such a sermon or homily.

Involvement in church activities outside of worship services had a significant effect on contacting a public official and on participation in political activities. These findings lend some support to the idea that civic skills learned in church may contribute to some forms of political participation. For example, some scholars have demonstrated the importance of church involvement for developing skills such as public speaking, leading a group, running a meeting, etc., skills which are often acquired through participation in small groups or lay leadership roles (Djupé and Gilbert 2009, Verba et al. 1995). Verba et al. (1995) proposed that Latinos are less likely to be politically involved than other racial or ethnic groups in the United States because they are more likely to be Catholic, and therefore less likely to learn the civic skills that contribute to political participation because Catholic parishes are often large and hierarchical in nature, providing fewer opportunities for the kinds of participation that will lead to the acquisition of civic skills. However, in Chicago Latino churches this does not seem to be the case.¹² Catholic congregants are more likely than Evangelical and Pentecostal congregants to say they voted in 2004, are more likely than all Protestant congregants to say they have contacted a public official, and are more likely than Evangelical and Pentecostal congregants to say they have participated in political activities.

¹² It is important to note that Chicago may present a unique case when it comes to the political influence of Latino churches, and of Catholic churches in particular. There may be something about the urban context, the history of the Catholic church's relationship to immigrant groups and ethnic succession in Chicago, and/or the way that Chicago churches engage in local politics that contributes to our finding that people in Chicago Catholic Latino churches are particularly engaged in political activities. For example, Chicago played a central role in the 2006 immigration marches, and Catholic parishes as well as Chicago and Illinois based congressional delegates such as Representative Gutierrez and Senator Durbin have been at the forefront of mobilizing churches and other groups in the immigrant rights movement. In her work examining Latino faith based organizations in urban communities, political scientist Catherine E. Wilson (2008) notes that the "definition of religious identity politics suggests that it is both the context and the content of religious beliefs, values, and culture that inform social and political action," (63) highlighting the importance of accounting for the local context when trying to explain the relationship between religious institutions and civic engagement.



Congregants who have heard a sermon or homily from religious leaders urging them to register to vote are four times more likely to have actually voted in the 2004 election, and those who were in a church in which the religious leader said they had asked members to participate in a political activity were three times more likely to have voted. Congregants who have heard a sermon or homily in which their religious leader encouraged them to get involved in a political cause or issue are almost twice as likely to say they have contacted a public official, and three times more likely to say they have participated in political activities than congregants who have not heard such a sermon or homily.

THE POLITICS OF THE LATINO CHURCH

*Understanding the Political Views
and Behaviors of Latino Congregations in Chicago*



CONCLUSION

In this report, we provide an overview of the various political attitudes and behaviors of religious leaders and congregants in Chicago Latino churches. When it comes to political attitudes, leaders and congregants in Chicago Latino churches cannot be categorized as entirely conservative or liberal. For example, both leaders and congregants hold conservative views when it comes to an issue such as abortion, but somewhat liberal views when it comes to an issue such as immigration.

Regarding political party affiliation, although many religious leaders are reluctant to claim any affiliation at all, both leaders and congregants are more likely to identify as Democrats than Republicans. This is not surprising given the tendency of Latinos at the national level to identify as Democrats at larger numbers than as Republicans (Pew Hispanic Center and Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life 2007).

Rather high percentages of both religious leaders and congregants in this study were registered to vote, and had voted in the most recent presidential election. While a higher percentage of leaders voted Republican than Democrat in the 2000 election, a higher percentage of congregants voted Democrat than Republican in the 2004 election. Regarding political activities other than voting, religious leaders show high levels of participation in activities such as signing a petition, contacting a public official, or attending a meeting about a specific issue, but show

lower levels of activities such as giving money to a political candidate or campaign or participating in nonviolent civil disobedience. Overall, congregants participate in such political activities other than voting at much lower rates than their church leaders.

When examining political attitudes and behaviors by religious tradition, we see a general pattern emerge in which Catholic and Mainline identification has a liberalizing effect when compared with Evangelical and Pentecostal identification. For example, respondents in Catholic and Mainline churches were more likely to vote for Democratic presidential candidates than respondents in Evangelical and Pentecostal churches, and were more likely to disagree with the U.S. intervention in Iraq. Note that the divide is not between Catholics and Protestants more broadly, highlighting the importance of distinguishing between Mainline Protestant and Conservative Protestant groups.



While congregants participate in various political activities at somewhat lower rates than their church leaders, we find some evidence that leaders successfully encourage their congregants to participate politically. Controlling for various factors that have previously been shown to affect political participation, such as socioeconomic status and involvement in the congregation, we see a positive relationship between hearing encouragement from the pastor or priest and congregant political involvement. This suggests an important avenue for increasing political participation among Latino churchgoers.

The findings throughout this report underscore the importance of understanding how religion influences engagement in public life. Among Latinos, religion plays an important role in guiding political thinking (Pew Hispanic Center and Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life 2007). Our analysis suggests that religious leaders help guide political behavior among Latinos as well. Given the demographic growth of the Latino population, further research is essential for understanding the important relationship between religion and politics for this group, and for understanding how this relationship may affect the political landscape of the United States in years to come. Based on our findings here, we anticipate that religious institutions will continue to shape attitudes and behaviors into the foreseeable future. The limited amount of research exploring the linkages between Latino religion and political behaviors suggests that this area is ripe for further investigation.





S I D E B A R

Issues surrounding immigration enforcement and reform have been prominent in the media and in the minds of many Americans recently. While there are many disparate views on how these issues should be addressed, most of those involved in the debate express a desire for changes to the current immigration system in the United States. Many Latino religious leaders, across the country and across the religious spectrum, have emerged as activists for comprehensive immigration reform.

The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has provided an active voice in the call for comprehensive immigration reform in the U.S. In a letter from the Catholic Bishops of the United States and Mexico, called *Strangers No Longer: Together on the Journey of Hope*, the bishops call for a more just immigration system in the U.S., suggesting reform that would focus on reunifying families, providing more avenues for legalization for those that demonstrate good moral character, and establishing a temporary worker program, among other recommendations. The Most Reverend José H. Gomez, Archbishop of Los Angeles and Chair of the USCCB Committee on Migration, has offered testimony to Congress in support of humane immigration reform, and Cardinal Roger Mahoney, Archbishop Emeritus of Los Angeles, has been a prominent leader on the issue as well. More recently, Catholic Bishops across the country have come out in support of the DREAM Act, which would provide a path to legal citizenship for many undocumented youth. For more information on the views and actions of Catholic Bishops in support of immigration reform, see <http://www.justiceforimmigrants.org>.

Esperanza, a Philadelphia-based national coalition of 12,000 faith and community based agencies established to strengthen the Hispanic community, has also been a prominent voice calling for immigration reform in the U.S. Esperanza spearheads a national grassroots campaign, called Esperanza For America, encouraging the passage of comprehensive immigration reform. Among their suggestions for reform are expanded visa categories, including visas for temporary workers, provisional visas for undocumented workers who

register and begin taking steps toward legal status, and enforcement of immigration law at the federal level rather than by state or local law enforcement agencies. Reverend Luis Cortés, Jr., president of Esperanza, has been visible through media outlets such as NPR and Time Magazine, in which he was named one of the 25 most influential evangelicals in America in 2005, and hosts the annual National Hispanic Prayer Breakfast attended by prominent politicians. For more information on the work of Esperanza, see <http://www.esperanza.us>.¹³

Another organization active in politically mobilizing the Latino evangelical church is The National Hispanic Christian Leadership Conference (NHCLC). As one of the largest Hispanic Evangelical Christian associations in the U.S., made up of more than 25,000 Evangelical congregations, NHCLC has also taken a stand in favor of immigration reform and the DREAM Act. Reverend Samuel Rodriguez, president of the NHCLC, has been visible in the media speaking out for immigration reform and against legislation that unfairly targets the Latino community. Rev. Rodriguez regularly writes for the Washington Post's "On Faith" feature, addressing issues such as the spiritual and moral obligation of Christians to help immigrants. For more information about NHCLC, see <http://www.nhclc.org>.

These efforts among Catholic, Evangelical and Pentecostal national organizations suggest that the Latino religious community is increasing its public presence and influence with the potential of significantly impacting the political behavior of thousands and even millions of adherents.

¹³ For a more in-depth description and analysis of Esperanza, as well as other Latino faith based organizations, see Catherine E. Wilson. 2008. *The Politics of Latino Faith: Religion Identity, and Urban Community*. New York University Press: New York and London.



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