Despite the pervasiveness of Catholicism among Latinos, studies reveal an increasing shift toward Protestantism. Examining the relationship between religion and ethnicity, we explore homeland language use as a core ethnic marker using a survey from the Pew Hispanic Center. Results reveal that Catholic Latinos are significantly more likely to use Spanish at home, even after controlling for other key variables. In response, we posit that Latino Catholicism and Protestantism entail significantly different religiosities in both home and host countries that impact Latino ethnic identification and its markers such as language use. Catholicism displays a higher level of inculturation in the sending country and greater overt institutional acceptance of ethnic culture in host countries. Protestantism in Latin America breaks with localized religiosity and traditions, and U.S. Protestant congregations may de-emphasize ethnic culture in their theologies and worship. Hence, Latino Catholicism acts as a bridge to homelands and reinforces ethnic salience, thereby supporting continued Spanish use at home. In contrast, Protestants embrace a reorienting religiosity that often presides over ethnic identification, decreasing the salience of homeland cultural markers.

Keywords: Latino religion, immigration, ethnicity, language, assimilation.

INTRODUCTION

Although religious affiliation among U.S. Latinos is difficult to track due in part to religious switching as well as undocumented migration (Lopez 2009; Putnam and Campbell 2010), the rise of Protestantism among Latinos has captured the attention of scholars and news outlets alike. Two key dynamics support this shift: unidirectional switching in the United States (Catholic to Protestant) (Greeley 1991; Hunt 1998), and decreasing Catholic hegemony in Latin America (Martin 1990; Stoll 1990). This shifting dynamic may be experienced within the Catholic Church as “an ecclesiastical failure of unprecedented proportions,” according to Greeley (1991:55), and/or may produce great satisfaction for Protestant leadership and flock. Beyond ecclesiastic concerns, do intraethnic religious boundaries among Latinos affect important sociological dynamics such as ethnic identity formation and its dialectic corollary, acculturation or assimilation?

Research on the relationship between religion and ethnicity figures prominently in the social sciences, much of it exploring their symbiotic nature; that is, these two social forces can be closely interwoven and generally mutually reinforcing (Hammond and Warner 1993; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Stevens-Arroyo 1994). The phenomenon of ethnic churches illustrates that relationship. Ebaugh and Chafetz explain that in immigrant contexts, “religion provides cultural capital for the reproduction and passing on of ethnic identity through its use of language, cultural symbols and practices” (2000:432). Nonetheless, the role of religious institutions as instruments of assimilation, acculturation, or Americanization is also clearly a part of U.S. religious history (Fishman 1972; Herberg 1960). Stated differently, ethnic churches are often framed by two core interpretations (Mullins 1987): they play “conservative roles” in maintaining ethnic customs, language, and group solidarity, or they play “adaptive roles,” accompanying and accommodating
ethnic populations in the arduous acculturation process toward the gradual loss of many ethnic markers. These are not mutually exclusive orientations, but emphasis in one direction or the other can affect ethnic identity trajectories.

Much of the research that explores the intersection of religion and ethnicity, especially on earlier immigrant waves, focuses on single case studies or adopts an interethnic lens (e.g., Herberg 1960; Min 2010; Yang 1999). Studies employing an intraethnic lens on religious cleavages and their relationship to ethnic dynamics are sparser, though perhaps increasing (Cavalcanti and Schleef 2005; Form 2000; Greeley 1988; Menjívar 2003; Yang and Ebaugh 2001a). This evolving research design may reflect the flourishing U.S. religious marketplace with its diversity of religious affiliations, ethnicities, and religious switching. The intraethnic site may be especially strategic for studying the association between religion and ethnicity because in part it lays bare religion controlling for ethnicity.

In this article, we explore the association between religious affiliation and ethnicity holding the latter constant—namely, the effect of being Protestant compared to Catholic on Latino ethnic identity dynamics. Stated differently, is a Protestant Latino simply a Latino who happens to be Protestant, or is the boundary between Protestant and Catholic Latinos such that it may engender diverging ethnic identity projects? We explore this question centrally through the lens of one of Latino ethnicity’s core markers, Spanish-language use (e.g., Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Stevens-Arroyo 1994). Immigrant ethnic identity trajectories regarding language use generally follow a three-generation model of Anglicization according to which English monolingualism is the end game for the children and grandchildren of immigrants (Alba et al. 2002). Importantly, studies suggest that language loss accompanies profound identity transformations due to its centrality to cultural reproduction and perhaps acts as a bellwether of the relative salience of ethnic boundaries (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Mullins 1987).

Whereas most studies using an intraethnic lens on the relationship between religion and ethnicity are qualitative (for an exception, see Hunt 1998), we complement and broaden that focus using survey methods on unique data from the Pew Hispanic Center’s (Suro et al. 2007) Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion project. We find a marked preference among Catholic when compared to Protestant Latinos for the use of Spanish at home, even after controlling for generation, English and Spanish proficiency, and frequency of church attendance, among other religious and demographic variables. We posit that this finding constitutes a “subtle manifestation of the intertwining between religion and ethnicity” (Putnam and Campbell 2010:265), providing suggestive evidence of diverging ethnic identity trajectories among Latinos via religion.

**Religion and Ethnicity**

Social science research focuses significant attention on the symbiotic or complementary relationship between religion and ethnicity among immigrant-origin populations (e.g., Menjívar 2003; Stevens-Arroyo 1994). Ethnicity is typically approached as pertaining to a social group sharing a common culture, and religion as operating in such a way as to preserve important elements of that culture. For the purposes of our exploration, expanding on the definition of ethnicity may prove helpful. In large part following Schermerhorn, ethnicity may best be understood as a multidimensional social boundary constituted by a population’s consciousness of “real or

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1See Putnam and Campbell (2010), who ask if a black Protestant is simply a Protestant who happens to be black, that is, if the ethnic effect on Protestantism is robust enough to mold significantly different religious experiences across the white/black cleavage. Hunt asks if Hispanic Protestants are a distinctive subset of the Hispanic population (1998).

2Mullins (1987) examined how language use in ethnic churches also follows a similar three-stage model toward Anglicization.
putative common ancestry” and “memories of a shared historical past” (1970:12). The salience of an ethnic population’s boundary (i.e., that defines its “we” against others’ “they”) can vary dramatically: it may be thick or thin (Cornell and Hartmann 2006), bright or blurry (Alba 2005). Symbols associated with a population’s ancestry and historical past provide central support for ethnic boundary salience; in addition, some symbols can carry core meaning, representing the epitome of a population’s peoplehood or ethnicity. Symbols can range from phenotypical features, to language and religion, to nationality or geographic origin, or, as Schermerhorn remarks, to “any combination of these” (1970:12). A particular religious affiliation itself, then, could be emblematic of an ethnic population’s peoplehood (as has long been Judaism for Jews); or, religious practice can support the salience of other symbols of peoplehood, as in the case of U.S. Black Churches that religiously frame and recall that population’s passage through slavery, so core to African-American identity.

Ethnicity, then, has much to do with self-definition, with how a population views, remembers, and constantly recreates its real or putative bonds of common origin, and religion can play a critical role in that process. Nonetheless, ethnicity is a multidimensional construct (e.g., Roth 2010), and others can also influence a population’s consciousness of ethnic kind through external definition, as in state categorization or discriminatory practices (Jenkins 2000; Mora 2014). Hence, consciousness of a common destiny or linked fate can be important to ethnic identification as well. As detailed by social constructivist theorists (e.g., Nagel 1994; Roth 2010), the multidimensionality of ethnic boundaries in reality reflects both internal and external factors, a dialectic we return to in our “Discussion” section.3

The phenomenon of ethnic churches appears to be prima facie evidence of the complementary or symbiotic relationship between religion and ethnicity, especially in its internal dimension. According to Mullins, ethnic churches “are special-purpose organizations established to meet the needs of a particular ethnic group; they are dependent upon ethnic identification and loyalty for their continued existence” (1987:325). Ethnic churches provide immigrants and their progeny protected spaces in which to find refuge, resources, and respect (Hirschman 2004). Some immigrants may even become more religious upon immigration, perhaps strategically renewing religious ties for their nonmaterial and material benefits (Menjívar 2003). Importantly, ethnic churches also provide cultural capital to forge ethnic identities in the host country (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Min 2010). Much of that cultural capital involves the use of languages or other symbols/rituals derived directly from homelands (Orsi and Alba 2009). These emblematic elements can constantly renew a sense of common ancestry and memories of a shared past by bridging to the home country (Min 2010). That is, some religiosities may be characterized by strong retrospective elements, namely, devotions and practices that look to and call forth memories of the home country. In effect, devotions and practices that contain robust retrospective elements can support a sense of ethnic/ancestral commonality among populations, defining elements of who they are in contrast to nonethnic others, that is, the social boundary we call ethnicity.

There are, however, exceptions concerning the mutually supporting relationship between religion and ethnicity. Multiethnic, pan-ethnic, or integrated congregations may support a hypothesis that associates strong religious identities with the weakening of ethnic ones. In those religious contexts, ethnicity may be purposefully downplayed and wane as religious identity flourishes somewhat disconnected from ethnic particularism. Marti (2009) developed the concept of ethnic transcendence to elucidate some elements in this process.4 Other researchers note a

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3 Some scholars point to a distinction between ethnic versus racial dynamics as resting on the degree to which boundaries are internally and externally defined; the emphasis on external definition is more common when referring to racialized populations (Cornell and Hartmann 2006).

4 Notwithstanding, some scholars provide suggestive evidence that multiethnic churches do not necessarily play an ethnicity-waning role; instead, many may find space also for ethnic particularism and/or pan-ethnicity in multiethnic contexts (Jeung 2005).
more overt “de-ethnicizing” (Fishman 1972:57) emphasis of some contemporary ethnic churches that would seem most clearly to support a thesis of a noncomplementary relationship between religion and ethnicity (in contrast to religion’s role in ethnic preservation) (Min 2010). Kurien defines “de-ethnicization” in U.S. Protestant ethnic churches she studied as a process of “shedding ethnic languages, theologies, and worship cultures, to adopt the theology, music, and worship practices” (2012:465) of white American evangelicals. De-ethnicized ethnic churches may appear a contradiction in terms. However, cultural de-ethnicization is practiced at the same time that these congregations may remain largely homogenous along ethnic lines; membership is ethnic, worship is not.

What makes the de-ethnicizing religious context different than one that appears complementary to ethnic cultural markers? The answer is multifaceted, including, for example, organizational structures (Yang and Ebaugh 2001b) and recruitment strategies (Warner, Martel, and Dugan 2012:61–62). We focus on two additional variables that we believe deserve scholarly attention: (1) a religious affiliation’s level of incorporation of local culture into its rituals and symbols in the home country, and (2) a religious affiliation’s level of embrace of homeland culture in its practice in the host country.

Regarding the former, in Min’s (2010) study of Korean evangelicals and Indian Hindus in the United States, he turns his attention to Hinduism in India and evangelical Christianity in South Korea. He explores the status of Hinduism as the majority religion in India, compared to Korean evangelicalism’s minority status. “More significantly” though, Min explores how Hinduism “incorporated much of the local culture in its rituals in different parts of India”; in contrast, Korean evangelicalism “has not incorporated elements of Korean folk culture” in South Korea (2010:4). We view Min’s framing of Hinduism in India as akin to the concept of inculturation. Inculturation points to the intimate intertwining of religious practice and local culture, especially the altering of religious practice to inextricably reflect and value local culture through symbols and rituals (e.g., Doyle 2012; Starkloff 1994). This inculturation or tie between Indian culture and Hinduism is such that through simply practicing religious rituals at home in the United States and through moderate participation in a temple, Indian Hindus are able to preserve cultural traditions and ethnic identity. In essence, the practice of Hinduism in the United States has bridging or retrospective elements in connecting to homeland culture—providing space and materials to renew a sense of common origins and memories of a shared past. In contrast, Min highlights the lack of historical rootedness of evangelical Christianity in Korean culture, and he notes its lack of a transformative incorporation of local folk culture into its theology or worship. Due to the lower level of rootedness in Korean culture, and especially in folk culture, “Korean Protestant immigrants cannot preserve their Korean culture and identity simply by practicing Christian faith and rituals” in the United States (2010:3).

A second important element affecting ethnic identification is an affiliation’s attitudes toward ethnic culture in the host context. For example, in his study of Asian-American Christian churches, Jeung notes the rhetoric among evangelical Christians of a needed “renunciation of ones’ ancestral heritage” (2005:122). In a similar vein, Kurien notes that many U.S.-born children of Protestant Indian immigrants she studied “no longer see religious identity and ethnicity as linked. Instead, they embrace a religion that is purified of the cultural traditions and observances of their parents” (2012:448). Finally, Garces-Foley too argues that evangelical Protestantism is based on the principle that culture is a barrier to spirituality and that “the loss of distinct cultural traditions

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5 Both Yang and Ebaugh (2001b) and Min (2010) assert that an analytic focus on religion in the home country as affecting ethnic dynamics in the host country via religious practice has been overlooked in much of the research literature.

6 Inculturation is originally a theological concept (e.g., Starkloff 1994) but with sociological implications (e.g., Garces-Foley 2008: Warner, Martel, and Dugan 2012). Min does not explicitly use this concept; we discuss it further in a following section on Latino Catholicism.
is . . . necessary for building Christian community” (2008:22). Hence, there may be a rejection of ethnic or homeland cultural markers in the de-ethnicizing context, or at least a view of these as not integral to its essence. The result is, as Min writes regarding Korean Protestants, that they embrace “universalistic [Christian] values over ethnic particularistic values” (2010:199). Such valuations may therefore reflect an ambiguous or negative concept of ethnic culture that evangelical Protestant congregations have in general, but also evangelical Protestantism’s lack of inculturation in sending countries. Researchers note, though, that evangelical Protestantism may be significantly more likely to view ethnic culture as negative compared to mainline Protestantism (e.g., Jeung 2005).

Thus far, we highlighted two core elements that may affect the relationship between religion and immigrant-origin ethnicity in the United States: the level of inculturation of an ethnic population’s religious affiliation in the home country and its religious affiliation’s attitudes toward ethnic culture in the host country. If strong, the continued practice of that inculturated religiosity in the host country can act as a bridge back to homeland culture; hence, its practice constantly renews a sense of rootedness in a common origin and recalls memories of a shared past, core elements of ethnic self-definition. If inculturation is low, then the bridging function supporting ethnic identification may be weakened (Min 2010). In addition, if a religious affiliation rejects ethnic culture as a hindrance or simply not integral to religious goals in the host country, then de-ethnicization would appear the more probable outcome (Garces-Foley 2008; Jeung 2005; Kurien 2012; Min 2010).

To contribute to this discussion on the dialectic role of religion in ethnic preservation versus its role in de-ethnicization, we turn to the Latino population in the United States. In contrast to the qualitative case studies and the interethnic focus of earlier work, we employ survey methods and an intraethnic lens comparing Catholic Latinos to Protestant Latinos. It is not our goal to test whether Protestants are necessarily “less Latino” than Catholics, but to provide suggestive evidence that these two communities may be on diverging paths of ethnic identity formation influenced in part by their religious affiliation. Before turning to our quantitative analysis, what is it about Catholicism and Protestantism among Latinos that may lead to diverging identity paths? In large part we believe these affiliations entail robustly differing orientations toward homeland culture in both home and host countries that deserve closer attention.

Catholic versus Protestant Connections to Homeland Culture

For centuries Catholicism has been dominant in Latin America; both the “sword” and the “cross” dramatically changed the face of the New World and its religious practices. As integral to that historical shift, Catholicism has been significantly intertwined in nation building across the region and with both secular and religious culture for 500 years. In addition and surely enhanced by this history of Catholic hegemony, Catholicism in Latin America exemplifies an inculturated religion through its intimate intertwining of religious practice and local culture. One core example is Marian devotion practiced by both folk and official Catholicism in Latin America. Each image of Mary has a story connected to its arrival or appearance in a country, region, or locale, and the image is generally ceremoniously enthroned and celebrated as “patroness” of this

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7The authors wish to thank an anonymous reviewer for this citation.

8Inculturation as a theological or ecclesiastic concept may be traced to Vatican II’s positive valuation of local culture in Catholic theology and worship, but was coined and developed as a concept in post-Vatican II Catholic thought and magisterial documents. For example, in a papal encyclical, John Paul II writes: “Through inculturation the Church makes the Gospel incarnate in different cultures and at the same time introduces peoples, together with their cultures, into her own community. She transmits to them her own values, at the same time taking the good elements that already exist in them and renewing them from within” (1990:52).
country, region, or another. Moreover, some early Marian images (as well as those of patron saints) allowed the incorporation and merging of pre-Colombian and even African symbols and meanings into Catholic worship in Latin America (Burdick 1998). These images are then utilized and celebrated in private devotion, especially through their display in homes, exemplifying an instance of inculturated domestic religiosity. They are also on display and used in public festivals and worship all over Latin America, many times officially sanctioned and promoted by the state. It is commonplace to find shrines to these local images in neighborhood plazas, in private businesses like restaurants, and even in state offices. As punctuated by Matovina: “Every country of Latin America has at least one shrine dedicated to a Marian image which is a center of national veneration and identity” (2012:31).

Baquedano-López (1997) nicely summarizes the bridging or retrospective effect of that inculturated religiosity brought by and lived by immigrant-origin populations in the host context. She writes, for example, that devotions to the Virgin of Guadalupe among Mexican Latinos “encourage identification with the place of the apparition,” that is, with a common past, a shared history (Baquedano-López 1997:32; see also Warner, Martel, and Dugan 2012:52). This is surely the case as well for devotions to Our Lady of Suyapa among many Hondurans and to Our Lady of Charity of El Cobre for many Cubans, not to mention the multiplicity of regional and local Marian and saint images. As in the home country, much of this religiosity is experienced through home altars or shrines in the United States. As a result, the continued practice of that devotionalism and inculturated religiosity in the host country remits to the homeland, constantly reconnecting Catholic Latinos to a sense of common origins and shared history, which are the crux of ethnicity (Schermerhorn 1970). In fact, Warner and colleagues found in their study of Latina Catholics that the symbiotic relationship between their religion and homeland origins was so strong that possible disengagement from Catholicism would constitute “an action of cultural abandonment” (2012:55).

The fact that Catholicism robustly inculturated in many Latin American societies, and the fact that this inculturated religiosity is then embraced and practiced in the host country as ethnic culture, has necessitated an institutional response by local priests and the Catholic Church in the United States. The acceptance of inculturated Catholic religiosity has not been historically automatic; while there are many instances of the acceptance or at least tolerance of inculturated religiosity of immigrants in the United States (Orsi and Alba 2009), there are, too, examples of its rejection (Fishman 1972:68; Warner, Martel, and Dugan 2012:62). Yet the overall institutional response in the last decades to inculturated religiosity among Catholic Latinos in the United States has been positive, in line with Vatican II’s valuation of culture, to which many documents of the U.S. Catholic Bishops Conference attest (Matovina 2012). Moreover, at the local level, many priests respond to the presence of immigrant populations by incorporating their ethnic symbols and traditions into the life of the parish. In one example provided by Putnam and Campbell, a parish priest commented: “You can’t just translate the Mass from one language to another—you have to add a cultural component. You have to include references to [homeland] traditions, symbols, beliefs, places” (2010:216). Hence, the institutional response of the U.S. Catholic Church, although inadequate (Lopez 2009), generally overtly values Latino culture and its many markers—like the use of Spanish, certain images of the Virgin and saints—as integral to the Latino Catholic experience in the United States.

In contrast, social scientists do not often write about folk Latin American Protestantism. With a relatively short history as a burgeoning minority religious affiliation in Latin America, Protestantism has not been closely tied to nation building or to the nation-state. Many of the

9 See list of Marian images and associated countries: http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/english.html.

10 Other examples of inculturated religious traditions that Latino Catholics practice are the Día de los Muertos, posadas, and quinceañeras.
adherents of Latin American evangelical and Pentecostal congregations are converts or children of converts. In addition and partly as a consequence of this lack of historical rootedness, Latin American Protestantism lacks the robust inculturated quality of both official and folk Catholicism. It is a sacred-text-centered religiosity that eschews many other symbolic representations of the sacred and often views local devotionalism and the use of sacramentals as contaminating superstition. Membership in Latin American Protestant Christianity, then, generally entails a rigorous breaking with previous religious and secular practices robustly salient in local cultures, such as Marian devotion and even popular music genres and dances. Latin American Protestantism, as may be Protestantism in general with its roots in the Reformation, is about breaking with tradition or perhaps more vigorously sorting the sacred from the profane.

This minority home country status and lower degree of inculturation of Latin American Protestantism reverberates in the practice of Latino Protestants in the United States. It continues centered on sacred text, avoids symbolic representations of the sacred, and is made up of a large constituency of converts. Moreover, the historic hegemony of Catholicism in Latin America and its connection to national identities may provoke a rejection on the part of Protestants of much of what may be considered symbolic of Latino ethnic identities in the United States as either nonessential to their religious goals, or as barriers (Garces-Foley 2008). For example, Vasquez notes that for some Latino Protestants, “national [-origin] identity is synonymous with the archaic, ‘corrupt’ Catholicism of feasts and processions that the believers have left behind” (1999:624). Hence, religious practice among Protestant Latinos does not generally have the same bridging or retrospective element, folk symbols, or perhaps even robust national-origin sentiments, as does Latino Catholicism (Garces-Foley 2008). Its connection to homeland origins and memories of a shared past appear clearly weaker than those of Latino Catholicism.

Moreover, Protestant Latino religiosity may be more prospective and forward-looking in the host country than Catholicism (Portes and Rumbaut 2006:325–35). Ideologically, the past is something to be reformed (Flores 2009). León (1998) writes that among the evangelicals that he studied, many of them Catholic converts, the attraction of those congregations was the notion of personal change and the possibility of individual empowerment, messages not as strongly part of, or at least not clearly articulated within, Latin American or U.S. Latino Catholicism. In contrast, Warner and his colleagues write that Latino Catholics may experience their religion more like “a fetter than a force for personal change” (Warner, Martel, and Dugan 2012:53). In fact, research often focuses on Catholicism’s orientation toward collective or social transformation rather than as a force for personal conversion (e.g., Mooney 2007). Latino Protestant churches, then, may more often convey to their members a transformed individual identity characterized by a broader Christian association, rather than one tied to homelands and, thus, past particularities (Sanchez-Walsh 2003). Being a Christian becomes a very strong “moral” identity (Kleinman 1996), and Protestants often elevate religious affiliation to the rank of master identity over and above ethnicity while for Latino Catholics, the two are essentially symbiotic or complementary (Menjívar 2003; Sanchez-Walsh 2003).

Nonetheless, ethnic practices and identification are also noticeably present among Protestant Latinos. For example, although many musical genres and worship styles employed by Latino Protestants may be modeled after U.S.-based cultural expressions (Alviso 2002), some Latino Protestant churches incorporate musical styles that mirror regional Latin American musical genres. León, for example, reports on an evangelical Protestant congregation that uses what he calls a “cultural oxymoron: Pentecostal mariachis” (1998:175). The pastor of that church views this practice as an attempt to become “culturally relevant”; León frames it as seeking to satisfy a “lust of memory.” Furthermore, at the organizational-field level, the diversification of the religious marketplace in Latin America has produced indigenous movements with transnational ties (Miller, Sargeant, and Flory 2013); one by-product of this trend is that, increasingly, Latino Protestant churches in the United States are affiliated with Protestant movements indigenous to Latin America (Martínez 2011; Robbins 2004).
These latter examples may suggest that finding spaces for homeland culture remains important for Latinos of both Catholic and Protestant affiliations. Nonetheless, some researchers suggest that these two affiliations differ markedly in how they approach ethnicity: one more retrospective (bridging to and positively valuing homeland and ethnic culture) and the other, prospective (through a break with the past, rejecting many ethnic markers, and a focus on self-transformation). Due in part to these contrasting orientations, we posit that they may set in motion somewhat different ethnic identity trajectories. How might these contrasting orientations affect ethnic markers that help constitute Latino ethnicity? We turn to our quantitative data and analysis.

**DATA AND METHODS**

This study uses data from *Changing Faiths: The Latino Transformation of American Religion*, a survey involving 4,016 Latino respondents conducted via telephone from August through October 2006 by the Pew Hispanic Center (Suro et al. 2007). Data from telephone exchange directories were used to sample Latino households from neighborhoods across the United States with varying percentages of households with Latino surnames. Special care was given that all Latino national origins would be represented in the sample. The percent distribution of national/regional origin groups was: Mexican, 37 percent; Puerto Rican, 10 percent; Cuban, 12 percent; Dominican, 10 percent; Central American, 14 percent; South American, 13 percent; European, 2 percent; Other, 1 percent; and nonresponders, 1 percent. Furthermore, though Catholicism is the most common affiliation among Latinos, the sample was stratified through oversampling non-Catholics in order to capture the nuances of minority religious experiences. Oversampling occurred through initial screening of phone interviewees, and the final sample was: Catholic (50 percent), evangelical Protestants (23), mainline Protestants (5), other Christians (4), other faiths (2), and seculars (12).  

Our engagement of these data includes both bivariate descriptive analyses (in graph and table forms) and logistic regression. The central outcome variable is home language use. We treat language use as a core marker or symbol of Latino ethnic identity and/or ethnic boundary salience, following Schermerhorn’s framing. A differential embrace of this marker by Catholic versus Protestant Latinos, then, may provide suggestive evidence of diverging identity trajectories. Respondents were asked: “What language do you usually speak at home?” There were five response options whose order of mention we transpose for use in both our descriptive analysis and with ordered logistic regression: 5 = “Only English,” 4 = “More English than Spanish,” 3 = “Both equally,” 2 = “More Spanish than English,” and 1 = “Only Spanish.”

This item may uniquely capture language preferences based on cultural orientations due to the private and ethnic nature of the home context (Alba et al. 2002; Rumbaut, Massey, and Bean 2006). This contrasts with other typical language use outcomes that may better capture English acquisition: language of interview, bilingualism, or monolingualism in second and third generations (e.g., Alba et al. 2002; Hunt 1998; Portes and Hao 1998). That is, the home context can be viewed as a “distinct cultural environment” (Portes and Hao 1998:279; Rumbaut, Massey, and Bean 2006) and, as such, key to the transmission of ethnic markers, whereas acculturation

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11 The Pew survey used a multistage process to determine religious affiliation. This included asking respondents to first identify their religion broadly in a closed format question that included only one Protestant category. A follow-up closed format question was asked of all non-Catholic Christians to identify their denominations. Finally, a third question asked all Christian respondents if they considered themselves “evangelical” or “born again.” As a point of comparison, estimates from the American Religious Identification Survey of the percent distribution of religious affiliation among U.S. Latinos in 2008 are: Catholics = 60 percent, Protestants = 22 percent, and Others = 18 percent (Navarro-Rivera, Kosmin, and Keysar 2010).

12 We use ordered logistic regression due to our assumption that the distances between the values of our outcome variable are not consistent.
LATINO RELIGIOUS AFFILIATION

65

dynamics may dominate in much of the public context. For example, Rumbaut and colleagues contend: “it is in the home where a non-English mother tongue is most likely to be used” (2006:454) and posit that if Latino immigrants prefer English at home, they are unlikely to prefer Spanish in other settings. Hence, home language preference may be a bellwether of the nuanced effects of the contrasting ethnic trajectories of Catholic and Protestant Latinos.

Our core independent variable is religious affiliation; it captures the intraethnic religious cleavage at the forefront of this study. The measure is based on the survey question: “What is your religion?” We operationalized religious affiliation as follows: 0 = Catholic (reference group), and 1 = Protestant. The Protestant value is formed by collapsing evangelical (77 percent) and mainline Protestant (17 percent) denominational and congregational affiliations; it also includes respondents who did not select into those affiliations, but stated that they were either evangelical or “born again” Christians (6 percent). Evangelical and born again Christians clearly make up the lion’s share of the Protestant category, at 83 percent.13

As mentioned, scholars note that in general mainline Protestantism versus evangelical and Pentecostal Protestantism can differ in terms of attitudes toward ethnic culture (e.g., Jeung 2005). Mainline Protestantism may be more accommodating to some aspects of ethnic culture in the host context, although like evangelical and Pentecostal Protestantism, it may lack the inculturated essence of Catholicism in the sending context. For the purposes of this article, though, we believe the Protestant category juxtaposed to Catholics captures a fundamental cleavage in the Latino population. For example, while there are various Protestant traditions and congregations among Latinos—mainline, evangelical, and Pentecostal—the fundamental fissure of “not being Catholic” applies to all of them; the most salient “they” that may unify a Protestant Latino “we” is Catholicism (Hunt 1998; Sanchez-Walsh 2003; Vasquez 1999). Moreover, evangelicalism and Pentecostalism dominate Protestantism in Latin America and among Latinos in the United States (Martin 1990; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Stoll 1990), as they also overwhelmingly do in our sample.14 Perhaps more important, though, is the strong influence of evangelical and Pentecostal theologies and worship styles on mainline Latino Protestant ethnic congregations in the United States (Espinosa 2004). In fact, the distinctions regarding mainline and evangelical Protestantism may be somewhat less salient among Latino Protestant ethnic churches than among white Protestantism in the United States (Martinez 2011).15

Beyond religious affiliation, we include variables to test for some general religious effects and control for several demographic variables. The first religious effect variable addresses religious switching or conversion from one faith practice to another, including to no affiliation. We operationalize the conversion experience as a dichotomous variable (1 = yes; 0 = no) for

13We exclude from our analyses those respondents who did not report their religious affiliation as Catholic, Protestant, or other born again or evangelical Christian. Those excluded categories are (with their sample percentage distribution in parentheses): Jehovah’s Witness (2), Mormon (1), Jewish (<1), Muslim (<1), Orthodox Christian (<1), other Christian (1), other non-Christian (1), no religion (8), or do not know (1).

14Ecclesial dynamics in Latin America also support the salience of the Catholic versus Protestant cleavage among Latinos. The hegemony of Catholicism in Latin American countries places most non-Catholics churches in similar positions of being minorities, a salient cleavage that may be carried over into the Protestant Latino context in the United States.

15As Martinez notes: “Because of the overlapping experiences of many Latino Protestant congregations, it is not always easy to clearly fit them into one of the categories common to U.S. Protestantism: mainline, evangelical, or Pentecostal. This can be particularly complex for many Latinos in mainline congregations. If a person doing a survey were to specifically ask them about their church’s denominational links, most would likely be able to identify their denomination. But if asked whether they are mainline Protestants, many likely would not be able to answer the question. On the other hand, if they were first asked in Spanish whether they were evangelicals, they would likely say yes even though they might know that their denomination is part of a mainline tradition. This is particularly true of Latin American-linked Protestants who probably define evangelical as close in meaning to Protestant” (2011:93).
those who at one point were of a different faith identification than what they are now.16 A second variable is level of participation in religious activities; it is measured by number of times an individual attends religious services per week, month, or year. Research views this variable as decisive, for example, for understanding the relationship between religion and socioeconomic outcomes, among others (Cadge and Ecklund 2006); it could possibly distinguish static Catholic practice from the fervor of Protestant immigrant dynamics.

In addition, we explore a variable that captures the ethnic makeup of the respondent’s church or congregation in four categories: “most are Hispanic,” “some are Hispanic/Latino,” “only a few are Hispanic/Latino,” or “none are Hispanic/Latino.” Both Protestant and Catholic Latinos may participate in integrated or nonethnic churches for any number of reasons. Hence, it may be that mere participation in a co-ethnic church affects home language use, as opposed to whether or not the ethnic church is Catholic or Protestant affiliated.

Beyond specifically religious participation variables, we explore an item that asks respondents to name their most salient identity based on five categories: national origin, religion, Hispanic or Latino, American, or all four labels equally. As scholarship notes, evangelical Protestants may privilege their religious identity over their ethnic one (Jeung, Chen, and Park 2012; Min 2010). In addition, general assimilation processes may operate equally across religious affiliation where the increased salience of an American identity over an ethnic or religious one may correlate with language use in the home (e.g., Alba et al. 2002).

Although restricted to our descriptive analysis, we also explore a survey item on whether or not respondents display “crucifixes or other religious objects” in the home (as a dichotomous “yes” or “no” variable). Because only half of the survey’s sample was asked this question, we do not include it in our regression model. This variable may capture the special inculturated and ethnic dimension in the practice of home-based Catholic religiosity (Orsi and Alba 2009). The use of religious shrines and altars in the home, and the display of inculturated images of the Virgin and various patron saints, appear connected to elements of homeland culture as a result of prior inculturation processes (Baquedano-López 1997). Hence, differences on this item could further suggest the bridging connection to the homeland of Catholicism versus Protestantism.

Regarding demographic control variables, we include the following in our regression model: sex, income, age, percentage of Latinos in neighborhood of residence (based on telephone exchange data, approximating an ethnic niche effect), and education. The (logged) income variable captures yearly household income based on 18 categories. We calculated and assigned midpoint values for each income interval. In order to maintain a higher percentage of cases, we replaced missing income values with the sample mean.17 The variable denoting residential neighborhood’s percentage of Latino residents is ordered from high concentration of Latino neighbors to low concentration.18 We create a variable for education in four categories.19

Finally, we include a measure of generation since it is arguably the most influential variable affecting language loss, as Portes and Hao note clearly: “The negative influence of American acculturation on the retention of parents’ foreign languages is evident in the consistent effect of length of US residence” (1998:288). Respondents who indicated that they were born in a country

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16 The survey item did not distinguish between conversions in home or host country.
17 We imputed mean values to 912 cases. We also explored multiple imputation, but that different method did not significantly affect our results.
18 The variable is ordered into the following five categories denoting the percentage of Latino residents in respondents’ residential area: 75–100 percent, 50–74 percent, 30–49 percent, 15–29 percent, and 0–14 percent.
19 The original education variable did not specify actual years of schooling. We collapsed into four categories following the eight from the survey to create a categorical variable: “none, grades one through eight” and “some high school” (as low); “GED” and “high school completion” (as medium); “business, technical, or vocational school” and “some college” (medium high); and “college graduate” and “postgraduate training” (as high).
other than the United States and who immigrated after the age of 15 were coded “first generation.” Those respondents who indicated a country other than the United States as their place of birth, but who immigrated before the age of 15, were coded “1.5 generation.” Respondents who were born in the United States but whose parents were born in another country were coded “second generation.” Finally, those respondents who indicated that both they and their parents were born in the United States were coded as “third generation,” though a more accurate designation would be “third generation and beyond.”

**Findings**

We begin with a descriptive graph on the effect of religious affiliation on home language use. The simple bivariate presentation in Figure 1 suggests that the three religious affiliation categories are similar in their relationship to home language use: a large portion of our sample speaks only Spanish at home, and a much smaller proportion prefers “English only” in that context. The shape of this graph is largely due to the high concentration of first-generation immigrants among Latinos and in our sample. Nonetheless, the graph does reveal some differences between religious affiliation categories. Two particular points of interest are the divergences at the two poles of the home language measure. Nearly 12 percent more of Catholic respondents stated that they only spoke Spanish at home when compared to Protestants. Conversely, the percentage of Protestants who spoke only English at home (14.7 percent) was nearly three times as high as the percentage of Catholics who gave the same response (5.7 percent). At the center of the measure, we note that almost identical percentages of Catholics and Protestants (about 17 percent of the samples) speak both English and Spanish.

Next, we present in Table 1 the mean values of the pertinent religious effect and demographic variables in our study by religious affiliation. The noted levels of significance are Protestants
### Table 1: Survey items by religious affiliation, mean values

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Catholic (63.2%)</th>
<th>Protestant (36.8%)</th>
<th>Scale</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>English proficiency</td>
<td>1.47</td>
<td>1.96***</td>
<td>0–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spanish proficiency</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>2.96***</td>
<td>0–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>.57</td>
<td>.59</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighborhood integration</td>
<td>2.63</td>
<td>2.70</td>
<td>1–5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>11.9</td>
<td>12.3**</td>
<td>8–18^a</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Income</td>
<td>$35,646</td>
<td>$37,992</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>44</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation^b</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st</td>
<td>.72</td>
<td>.60***</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.5</td>
<td>.09</td>
<td>.10</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd</td>
<td>.11</td>
<td>.16***</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.13***</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Most salient identity^b</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>National origin</td>
<td>.40</td>
<td>.35***</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Latino/Hispanic</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>.15***</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.22***</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>.12</td>
<td>.19***</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All four equally</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>.06</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>.04</td>
<td>.04</td>
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<tr>
<td>Religious conversion</td>
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<td>.45***</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Church attendance</td>
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<td>4.67***</td>
<td>1–6</td>
</tr>
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<td>Ethnic church</td>
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<td>3.59***</td>
<td>1–4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious objects</td>
<td>.86</td>
<td>.33***</td>
<td>0–1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

^a*p < .05 (two-tailed t-test); **p < .01; ***p < .001.

Values displayed represent maximum years of education possible within educational categories reported by respondents.

Values may not add up to 1 due to rounding.

...

When asked about their most salient identity, results in Table 1 show that Catholics and Protestants differ. Catholics are significantly more likely on average than Protestants to name national origin (40 percent compared to 35 percent) or pan-ethnic identity (23 percent compared to 15 percent).
to 15 percent) as their most salient identities; in contrast, Protestants are significantly more likely than Catholics to name their religious identity or being American as most salient. These findings too suggest support for a thesis of diverging identity trajectories. Finally, the difference between the use of religious objects in the home is extreme and we believe telling: 86 percent of Catholics compared to 33 percent of Protestants display religious objects at home. Catholicism is an inculturated religiosity involving localized symbols that appear transferable and accepted in the U.S. context. Although the question did not clarify exactly what objects are in the home, research suggests localized images of the Virgin may predominate. Regardless of their nature, the fact that many more Catholics than Protestants display these objects in the home suggests the home as a distinct religious environment for the two populations. More importantly, though, we believe it plausible to suggest that perhaps the Catholic home with its religious objects may more clearly renew memories of common origins and hence provide some contextualizing support for ethnic identity and perhaps continued Spanish use.

We turn now to our regression analysis that incorporates several control and religious effect variables to better understand the relationship between religious affiliation and home language use. Table 2 presents the results of that analysis as odds ratio through additive models to test some of the differing mechanisms that may affect home language preferences. The regression models reveal several significant relationships. Perhaps most importantly, our basic Model 1 (the first row and first column of the table) shows that indeed Protestants are significantly more likely than Catholics (the reference category) to prefer English-language use in the home, holding all else constant.\(^{20}\) For Protestants, the odds of speaking “English only” at home compared to all other levels of our outcome variable are 1.6 times greater than for Catholics. This significant association is all the more noteworthy because our model controls for both English and Spanish proficiency. This suggests that the relationship between religious affiliation and home language use is not a matter of language skills, but language preference, which in turn points toward a cultural orientation.\(^{21}\) Of course, the results in Table 2 show that both English and Spanish proficiency are highly significant as well, and in opposite directions, as would be expected.

Our basic model results confirm the decisive relationship between generation and home language use. For example, the odds are 2.4 times greater that a member of the third generation compared to the first will prefer “English only” at home versus all the other levels of our outcome variable. These results support the established relationship in the literature between immigration, generation, and Anglicization (Alba et al. 2002; Rumbaut, Massey, and Bean 2006). Contemporary ethnic Latinos appear to demonstrate in general the common experience of earlier waves of European immigrants with regards to homeland languages, although some research suggests that Latinos may retain Spanish use longer than other immigrant populations’ use of their native languages (Portes and Hao 1998:274).\(^{22}\)

A few other relationships are notable. Higher levels of neighborhood integration are positively associated with the use of English at home; this suggests that ethnic enclaves, as would be expected, are fertile grounds for homeland language maintenance (Suro and Tafoya 2004). Higher levels of education are positively related to English usage at home, suggesting some support for

\(^{20}\) We tested the proportional odds assumption using gologit2 in STATA and found that in relation to our core independent variable, religion affiliation, that assumption is not violated.

\(^{21}\) We tested other configurations of the Protestant category. For example, in one model (not shown), we excluded all mainline Protestants, comparing only evangelical Protestants to Catholics. Nonetheless, our significant relationship between the two religious affiliation categories held firm. These additional tests suggest the validity of our original religious affiliation operationalization for capturing the consequential Catholic versus Protestant divide. In addition, these tests may suggest that the mainline versus evangelical Protestant divide among Latinos may be less a marker of dissimilar orientations toward ethnic culture than may be the case for other Protestants in the United States (see Jueng 2005).

\(^{22}\) We tested the interaction of religious affiliation and generation, and it was not significant, and hence we exclude it from our model.
Table 2: Ordered logistic regression predicating home language preferences, odds ratio (with z-scores)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Model 1</th>
<th>Model 2</th>
<th>Model 3</th>
<th>Model 4</th>
<th>Model 5</th>
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</thead>
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<tr>
<td>Protestant</td>
<td>1.68**</td>
<td>1.59**</td>
<td>1.54**</td>
<td>1.64**</td>
<td>1.57**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4.36)</td>
<td>(3.77)</td>
<td>(2.79)</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(2.82)</td>
</tr>
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<td>English proficiency</td>
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<td>2.04***</td>
<td>2.04***</td>
<td>2.02***</td>
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<td>(12.50)</td>
<td>(12.47)</td>
<td>(12.41)</td>
<td>(12.25)</td>
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<td>.52</td>
<td>.53</td>
<td>.53</td>
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<td>(−9.27)</td>
<td>(−8.80)</td>
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<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.18</td>
<td>1.17</td>
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<td>(1.29)</td>
<td>(1.28)</td>
<td>(1.37)</td>
<td>(1.31)</td>
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<td>Neighborhood integration</td>
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<td>1.30***</td>
<td>1.30***</td>
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<td>Education (low)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium</td>
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<td>1.50*</td>
<td>1.52**</td>
<td>1.47*</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(2.43)</td>
<td>(2.43)</td>
<td>(2.49)</td>
<td>(2.31)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Medium high</td>
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<td>2.05***</td>
<td>2.06***</td>
<td>2.09***</td>
<td>2.06***</td>
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<td>(3.86)</td>
<td>(3.72)</td>
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<tr>
<td>High</td>
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<td>2.13***</td>
<td>2.13***</td>
<td>2.15***</td>
<td>2.04***</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
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<td>(3.89)</td>
<td>(3.89)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Income (logged)</td>
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<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.17</td>
<td>1.16</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1.97)</td>
<td>(1.85)</td>
<td>(1.86)</td>
<td>(1.76)</td>
<td>(1.61)</td>
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<td>Age</td>
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<td>(.56)</td>
<td>(0.89)</td>
<td>(.73)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Generation (first)</td>
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<tr>
<td>1.5 generation</td>
<td>1.97**</td>
<td>1.96**</td>
<td>1.96**</td>
<td>1.92**</td>
<td>1.94***</td>
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<td></td>
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<td>(3.22)</td>
<td>(3.22)</td>
<td>(3.12)</td>
<td>(3.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second generation</td>
<td>1.78**</td>
<td>1.61*</td>
<td>1.61*</td>
<td>1.63*</td>
<td>1.65*</td>
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<td>(2.17)</td>
<td>(2.17)</td>
<td>(2.19)</td>
<td>(2.25)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Third generation</td>
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<td>1.74*</td>
<td>1.74*</td>
<td>1.8*</td>
<td>1.84*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2.73)</td>
<td>(2.04)</td>
<td>(2.05)</td>
<td>(2.13)</td>
<td>(2.12)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Identity (national origin)</td>
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<td>1.12</td>
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<td>(.69)</td>
<td>(.7)</td>
<td>(.61)</td>
<td>(.66)</td>
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<td>Religious</td>
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<td>1.43*</td>
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<td>(1.91)</td>
<td>(2.11)</td>
<td>(2.05)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>American</td>
<td>2.34***</td>
<td>2.34***</td>
<td>2.33***</td>
<td>2.18***</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>(4.65)</td>
<td>(4.64)</td>
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<td>All four equally</td>
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<td>1.21</td>
<td>1.25</td>
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<td>(.86)</td>
<td>(.98)</td>
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<td>(.87)</td>
<td>(.87)</td>
<td>(.88)</td>
<td>(.85)</td>
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</tr>
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<td>Religious conversion</td>
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<td>1.07</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(.36)</td>
<td>(.47)</td>
<td>(.37)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
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<td>Church attendance</td>
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<tr>
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<td>(−2.15)</td>
<td>(−1.84)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnic church</td>
<td>.73**</td>
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<td></td>
<td>(−2.74)</td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

N = 2,809

*p < .05; **p < .01; ***p < .001.
the literature that posits the important relationship between linguistic acculturation and social mobility, as well as the effect of school attendance on language use among immigrant Latinos (Bean and Tienda 1987).

In Model 2, we add our “most salient identity” variable, and indeed the results show its importance. Although individuals who say that their religious identity is most salient compared to those claiming their national-origin identity are not significantly more likely to embrace English in the home in this model, the same is not true for those who embrace an American identity as most salient. The latter are much more likely to prefer English at home compared to those who name their national-origin identity as most salient. This surely suggests the importance of assimilation dynamics on homeland language death (Rumbaut, Massey, and Bean 2006); it appears that feeling robustly American and English monolingualism are strongly correlated among Latinos. Nonetheless, our regression model shows that the relationship between religious affiliation and home language use holds controlling for most salient identity. That is, the Protestant category is still significantly more likely to prefer English at home than Catholics. Nonetheless, the odds ratio for that variable is somewhat reduced (from 1.61 to 1.54), suggesting a limited mediating role of the most salient identity variable in the relationship of religious affiliation to language preference.

Next, we look at a series of additive models that incorporate our religious effects variables. The first of these, religious conversion, is not significant in any of our models. Our measure of level of attendance at religious services, though, proves significant: the more often an individual attends services, the less likely he or she is to prefer English at home. Importantly, this finding may suggest that higher levels of church attendance may strengthen ethnic solidarity and a sense of ethnic identity that supports homeland language use. This effect, however, is true for both Catholics and Protestants, although our descriptive analysis showed that Protestants on average more often attend religious services. Nonetheless, it does appear to mediate to a certain extent the relationship between religious affiliation and language preference, making even clearer the affiliation effect as suggested by the jump in the Protestant odds ratio from Model 3 to Model 4 with its inclusion (from 1.52 to 1.64).23 Finally, regarding Model 4, the most salient identity variable becomes significant, and remains so in remaining models. This finding is important in that it suggests that giving primacy to religious identity over ethnic identity makes movement toward English monolingualism in the home significantly more likely. Although this holds true for both religious affiliations, means tests in Table 1 show Protestants to be more likely to embrace their religious identity as most salient.

We now turn to our final religious effect variable that we label “ethnic church” in Model 5. This item captures the level of co-ethnic participation in each respondent’s church. Results show that there is indeed a significant relationship between attending an ethnic church and retaining some level of Spanish-language use at home. These results suggest that ethnic church participation in itself has a preservation effect on homeland language use. That is, beyond religious affiliation that may be tied to ethnicizing or de-ethnicizing orientations, attending religious services with co-ethnics mitigates the march toward English monolingualism in the home. This finding speaks to that literature on the effects of participating in multiethnic churches on ethnic identity (Jeung 2005; Marti 2008): it suggests that, controlling for all other co-variants, ethnically integrated congregations produce a de-ethnicizing effect.24 A final angle to sum up the findings of our full model (number 7) on the relationship between home language use and religious affiliation is illustrated in Figures 2 and 3. These are graphs

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23 We explored the intersection of religious affiliation and attendance (model not shown) and found it was not significant.

24 In an analysis not shown, we tested models that included two other religious participation variables: access to Spanish-speaking clergy and access to Spanish-language services. These items would also appear to capture elements connected to participation in ethnic churches. However, neither of the variables was significant.
of the mean predicted probabilities of Catholic Latinos and Protestant Latinos’ home language preferences by generation controlling for all other predictors in our models. Our first illustration, Figure 2, graphs those two predictor variables on preferences for the Spanish only outcome, including confidence intervals. It illustrates the clear and significantly different relationships of these two affiliations across generations. For example, in the first generation, the mean predicted probability that a Catholic would prefer Spanish only at home is 62 percent, whereas for a Protestant, that probability is only 54 percent. The differences between these two are clearly significant as indicated by the shaded areas not overlapping. There is a large overall drop in the second generation for those using Spanish only at home: the mean predicted probability for Catholics is 14 percent and for Protestants, only 6 percent; these are again highly significant differences. only in the third generation do Catholic and Protestant differences lose significance. However, this is not surprising due to the very low number of individuals who in the third generation prefer Spanish only at home.

Figure 3 is a graph of the relationship of the same two predictors on the English only value of our outcome variable (in contrast to Spanish only in Figure 2). Its slopes, of course, are very different than those of the mean predicted probabilities for the Spanish only outcome. The graph again illustrates the clear and significantly different relationships of these two affiliations across generations for this outcome. For example, in the first generation, the mean predicted probabilities of Catholics and Protestants preferring English only at home are close to zero and not statistically different. This is to be expected due to the likelihood that for first-generation immigrants, language preferences probably take a back seat to language proficiency. However, beginning at the 1.5 generation, Catholic and Protestant Latinos begin to significantly diverge in terms of preference for English monolingualism at home. That is, language skills begin to matter less, and other factors such as language preferences begin to matter more. The largest
Figure 3
Predicted probabilities of English only home language use by generation

The gap between Catholic and Protestant Latinos is at the third generation. The mean predicted probability that a third-generation Latino Protestant uses English only at home is 52 percent; for third-generation Catholic Latinos, that value is only 32 percent. If we consider an expressed preference for English monolingualism in the home a bellwether for Spanish-language death, as Rumbaut and his colleagues intimate (Rumbaut, Massey, and Bean 2006:454), then clearly the three-generation model of Anglicization that applies so strongly to immigrant-origin populations in the United States finds somewhat of a foil in Catholicism as concerns the Latino population.

DISCUSSION

We began this article noting the changing religious marketplace in the United States regarding immigrants from Latin America and their descendants. Once a rather homogeneous population in terms of religious affiliation, today it is in the throes of a significant reorganization of religious boundaries. We asked whether the religious affiliation cleavage between Catholic and Protestant Latinos has significance outside ecclesiastic concerns. Specifically, we explored its association with linguistic acculturation as a marker of ethnic identity trajectories. Through both descriptive statistics and logistic regression analysis, our findings show that the boundary between Catholic and Protestant Latinos is associated with home language preferences. Even after controlling for generation, not only the posited most important effect on language use, but also for Spanish and English proficiency and level of religious participation, among other variables and possible mechanisms, the significant difference between these two populations remains strong: Protestants are more likely than Catholics to move toward English monolingualism in the home context. How do we explain this intraethnic religious boundary effect and what does it mean? In this discussion, we first lay out the elements that are most central to our accounting, and we then broaden the
picture to what the boundary signifies. Finally, we address how our research engages some other scholars’ theses on the relationship between religion and ethnicity.

Through the use of (1) descriptive statistics, (2) regression modeling demonstrating the religious affiliation effect and allowing the exclusion of several alternative mechanisms, and (3) key findings from the literature supporting our argument, we posit that Latino Catholicism and Protestantism connect differently to homeland culture in both the home and host countries in ways that help explain the stubborn association between home language use and religious affiliation. Latino Catholic religiosity differs from Latino Protestantism in its inculturation in the sending context and orientation toward ethnic culture in the host context. In doing so, it displays a retrospective element, increasing the salience of homeland cultural materials available for Latino ethnic identification (Baquedano-López 1997). In addition, that retrospective element is frequently manifested in the home through the domestic character of Catholicism. The influence of domestic religiosity is suggested by our data pertaining to the striking difference between Catholic and Protestant Latinos’ use of religious objects in the home shown in Table 1. Finally, the institutional response of Catholicism values Latino ethnic culture and favors the continued practice of inculturated religiosity in public worship and theology (Matovina 2012). This domestic and inculturated quality of Catholic religiosity daily renews the symbiotic connection between religion and ethnicity for this population. This may be so much the case that Latino Catholics often remain “cultural Catholics” even when displaying lax religious practice (Warner, Martel, and Dugan 2012:53–54).

Latino Protestant religiosity, in contrast, has a strong prospective element, focused not on homeland culture, but on personal transformation as a community heavily characterized by the conversion experience. Even if one is born into a Protestant family, the expectation is that one must undergo a “conversion” or “born again” experience in order to truly be of the faith (Martínez 2011). Protestantism, then, is about breaking with traditions and fully embracing the identity that matters most, being a cristiano. As our descriptive data show, Protestants are more likely to view their religious identity as more important than their ethnic one compared to Catholics. Our regression showed that those holding that attitude were more likely to embrace English monolingualism, although this was true controlling for religious affiliation. Supported in those data and in the literature, we posit that Protestantism animates a decoupling of ethnic and religious identification, granting primacy to the latter (Sanchez-Walsh 2003).

What does the divergent outcome on Spanish-language use between Catholic and Protestant Latinos signify? We posit that it constitutes suggestive evidence that the ethnic sentiments and possibly identity trajectories of Protestant and Catholic Latinos are diverging in significant ways. As noted earlier, ethnicity is multidimensional. In terms of internal definition, ethnicity at its core corresponds to a population’s perceptions of real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared past, and an embrace of certain markers believed to be core to that population’s personhood (Schermherhorn 1970). These include religion and language, among other possible symbols. Both Catholicism and Spanish would surely be considered markers of Latino ethnicity during most of the 20th century, and still are today (Stevens-Arroyo 1994; Warner, Martel, and Dugan 2012), although Protestantism is growing rapidly among this population and Spanish-language use continues to wane across generations. Yet, contemporary ethnic replenishment (i.e., the continual arrival of new immigrants and the existence of large critical masses of first-generation Latinos) may provide additional support for Spanish-language use in some contexts (Linton and Jimenez 2009). In that vein, amid those dynamics, our data suggest that while many Catholic Latinos continue enmeshed in ethnic-centric religiosity, and also more often continue to embrace Spanish-language use in the home, Protestant Latinos often embrace a more de-ethnicized religiosity, prioritize religious identification, and more frequently move toward English monolingualism in the home.

As some scholars have stipulated, de-ethnicized religious practice does not necessarily coincide with a loss of ethnic identification, at least not in the first generation. Nonetheless, we
believe our results suggest that Latino Protestants and Latino Catholics may not share some of the critical markers that generally help to unify heterogeneous ethnic populations. Of course, there are other factors that do unify these populations. For example, Cornell (1996) explains how ethnicity may be viewed as having three central components or supports: shared culture, shared institutions, and shared interests. Further research is needed to gauge the relative importance of these to ethnic identification among Latinos. In addition, the aforementioned external categorization and discrimination may also affect Latino ethnic identification beyond those dynamics initiated within that population. Though the relative influence of internal and external factors may be hard to calculate with regards to ethnic trajectories, these two populations undoubtedly show significant signs of divergence in terms of internal definition.

Through a broader lens, we believe our findings contribute to discussions on the robust U.S. religious marketplace and its effects on evolving ethnic dynamics. Specifically, we speak to the “disentangling of religion and ethnicity” and the changing roles that ethnic churches play in contemporary processes of ethnic identity construction (Garces-Foley 2007; Jeung 2005; Kurien 2012; Min 2010; Warner, Martel, and Dugan 2012). In essence, using the metaphor of a protective harbor and the sea, ethnic churches resulting from earlier immigrant waves were oftentimes like ethnic sanctuaries in an all-engulfing secular sea of de-ethnicization (or Americanization) and individualization. The existence of those protective ethnic harbors was possible due to early American acceptance of religious pluralism. Within religious structures, immigrant ethnicity could flourish; however, outside those protected spaces in the secular sphere, the ideology of Americanization reigned supreme. Across generations, due to strong Americanization and restricted immigration, religious harbors lost their ethnic definition and mostly disappeared into the sea of Americanization (e.g., Fishman 1972; Herberg 1960).

For contemporary immigrants and ethnic groups, however, there has been a sea change: secular American discourse is multiculturalist and pluralist, not equally requiring de-ethnicization for integration (see Kurien 2012); instead, as Min remarks, “American multiculturalism in the post-civil rights era even encourages minority and immigrant groups to use their religion to mark their ethnic culture and identity” (2010:19). So, there has been a shift in the secular sphere, Americanist to multiculturalist. In contrast to early immigrant waves, it may be the religious sphere that is more earnestly de-ethnicizing and individualizing among contemporary ethnic populations (Yang and Ebaugh 2001b). Kurien (2012) argues, then, that contemporary ethnic churches are the mirror image of earlier ones with the religious and secular dimensions reversed: the secular sphere embraces the ethnic dimension, and the religious sphere rejects it.

Our findings are concordant with Kurien’s thesis (and also with that of Herberg’s [1960] religious primacy thesis), but only as concerns Latino Protestants. The religious orientations of evangelical and even many mainline Latino Protestant churches may more frequently lead to the shedding of ethnic markers, the precedence of religious identity over ethnic, as well as individualization and “Americanization.” In contrast, Catholic Latino religious practices and ethnic churches are clearly not equally de-ethnicizing. As Jeung and colleagues state: “Nothing flies in the face of Herberg’s theory of religious primacy more directly than the persistence of Latino Catholicism several generations out” (2012:13). They continue: “Rather than universalizing the boundaries of membership and transcending parochial affinities, [Catholic] religion reinforces the particularistic ties of family especially but also of ethnicity” (Jeung, Chen, and Park 2012:17). For Latino Catholics, then, there is what might be viewed a novel concordance between the ethnically-oriented religious sphere and the multicultural secular sphere. In contrast, for Protestant Latinos, there may be discordance between the religious and secular spheres: religion takes

25Herberg’s (1960) thesis posited the weakening of ethnic identification as religion became the more salient and accepted identity for the children of immigrant populations.
on universalizing and individualizing traits, whereas the secular sphere may sustain or favor some ethnic-oriented dynamics.

**CONCLUSION**

In short, we draw attention to the possible increase in the consequent effects of religious boundaries among Latinos that can be conceptualized as diverging ethnic trajectories. Ethnicity is not a static trait; it can be fluid, is context dependent, and is always a product of both internal and external definition. The U.S. racial and ethnic scheme—white, black, Latino, Asian American, and American Indian—constitutes potent identity categories to be inhabited (Hollinger 1995), perhaps especially weighty for immigrants and their second-generation children. However, those labels can hide significant intraethnic cleavages. That is, while state, social movement, media, and corporate actors homogenize for their purposes (Mora 2014), ethnic populations themselves may self-differentiate in the social construction of social boundaries. The intraethnic religious cleavage that we document may be one such differentia. More research will be needed as this cleavage plays out in the coming decades in the ethnically replenished context of contemporary immigration flows (Jimenez 2008), but our findings suggest the possibly growing importance of the divergent ethnic trajectories of Catholic and Protestant Latinos.

**REFERENCES**


