

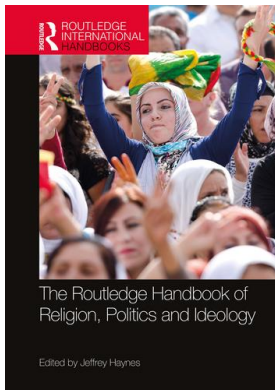
This article was downloaded by: 10.2.97.136

On: 29 Mar 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

Informa Ltd Registered in England and Wales Registered Number: 1072954 Registered office: 5 Howick Place, London SW1P 1WG, UK



The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Politics and Ideology

Jeffrey Haynes

Evangelicals and ideology—transnational or local?

Publication details

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780367816230-19>

Ruth Melkonian-Hoover, Dennis R. Hoover

Published online on: 15 Aug 2021

How to cite :- Ruth Melkonian-Hoover, Dennis R. Hoover. 15 Aug 2021, *Evangelicals and ideology—transnational or local?* from: *The Routledge Handbook of Religion, Politics and Ideology* Routledge

Accessed on: 29 Mar 2023

<https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9780367816230-19>

PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR DOCUMENT

Full terms and conditions of use: <https://test.routledgehandbooks.com/legal-notices/terms>

This Document PDF may be used for research, teaching and private study purposes. Any substantial or systematic reproductions, re-distribution, re-selling, loan or sub-licensing, systematic supply or distribution in any form to anyone is expressly forbidden.

The publisher does not give any warranty express or implied or make any representation that the contents will be complete or accurate or up to date. The publisher shall not be liable for an loss, actions, claims, proceedings, demand or costs or damages whatsoever or howsoever caused arising directly or indirectly in connection with or arising out of the use of this material.

16

EVANGELICALS AND IDEOLOGY—TRANSNATIONAL OR LOCAL?

Examining the case of Latin American Evangelicals

Ruth Melkonian-Hoover and Dennis R. Hoover

Since the rise of the “religious right” in the 1980s, a large majority of white evangelicals in the United States has aligned with partisan and ideological conservatism. White evangelicals, which by most estimates comprise approximately one-fifth of the US population, have become overwhelmingly Republican, with approximately eight out of ten reliably voting Republican in presidential elections. Public opinion studies of religion and US politics have found that white evangelicals are much more likely than average to be conservative not only on “traditional morality” issues like abortion and gay rights but also broader issues like economic policy, the role of the state, and immigration (Guth 2019; Melkonian-Hoover and Kellstedt 2019).

By contrast, among multi-nation comparative studies, there is less consensus regarding the ideological contours of evangelical politics. The literature contains conflicting or ambiguous accounts about the extent to which evangelicalism has a common political effect across borders. This lack of clarity is especially evident in the case of Latin America. On the one hand, given the historical and contemporary influence of the US government and of US evangelical Protestants (via missionaries, denominational ties, and evangelistic media) in Latin America, some observers have put forward a narrative of Latin American evangelical politics trending quickly toward the US model of a “religious right” (e.g., Brouwer et al. 1996). On the other hand, some scholars of global evangelicalism in general, and of Latin American evangelicalism in particular, offer a narrative that highlights the indigenization and autonomous agency of evangelical movements, which manifests in various ways, including a greater diversity of political attitudes and behavior (Freston 2001; Forster 2020).

Clarifying the patterns and trends of evangelical politics in Latin America is increasingly important because the region has seen dramatic growth in its Protestant population. Evangelical Protestantism, in particular, continues to rise, primarily through a surge of Pentecostals and neo-Pentecostals. Once overwhelmingly Catholic, the population of Latin America is now estimated to be 19% Protestant, with two-thirds of that population Pentecostal (Pew 2014a). In numerous Central American nations, over a third of the population is now evangelical, which exceeds the evangelical percentage of the US population (Pew 2014a; Pew 2014b).¹ In the largest Latin American nation, Brazil, evangelicals comprise over

one-fifth of the population and are expected to surpass the proportion of Catholics by 2032 (IBGE in Zylberkan 2020).

In this chapter, we contribute needed empirical clarity to the question of evangelical political ideology in Latin America through analysis of a large multinational survey conducted by the Pew Research Center in 2014.² This survey is ideal for the purposes of this analysis as it includes detailed measures of religious affiliation, belief, and behavior, as well as numerous variables measuring ideological identification as well as opinions on policy issues.

Background and literature

US neo-imperial transnationalism: rationales and dominance

As social movement scholars have shown, transnational diffusion of ideas and tactics is a common occurrence (McAdam and Rucht 1993). Through globalization processes, cross-border diffusion naturally increases as national boundaries become more permeable to cultural flows.

In the case of evangelical Protestantism and its politics, some observers have seen these flows in neo-colonial/neo-imperialistic terms—that is, the flow of cultural power and influence is seen as moving primarily from the West, especially the United States, to developing countries. Indeed, American evangelicalism has vast resources that it can and does apply around the world, supporting myriad forms of leadership training, missionary work and revivalism, humanitarian relief and development, broadcasting, publishing, and policy activism. Brouwer et al. (1996, 19) argue that

Christian fundamentalists in other countries find common cause with American evangelists because the United States is the wellspring of anticommunism and a host of other cultural ideologies and values that have become transnational. Halfway around the world, religious leaders have managed to link the destinies of their countries to that of the United States.

While they acknowledge that many of the missionaries of today are *from* the developing world, they maintain that such transnational agents still tend to export an American-formulated “gospel” of right-wing perspectives.

In Latin America, the Cold War history of American entanglements in the region is often cited in support of the above perspective. A longstanding interpretation of the growth of evangelicalism in Latin America is that it was an “invasion of the sects,” i.e., a pattern of religious change very actively encouraged and supported by the US government and allied interests. Brian Smith (1998) described the US government’s support of missionaries in Latin America in the 1950s as a bulwark against communism and the channeling of USAID (U.S. Agency for International Development) funds to evangelical-sponsored development projects for similar reasons (See also Levine 2000; Stoll 1990).

Given this history, it is perhaps not surprising that recent developments in Latin American evangelical politics have often been seen as part of a broader pattern of transnational conformity to a right-wing “made in America” model. This narrative has been greatly bolstered by the political rise of Jair Bolsonaro, who was elected president of Brazil in 2018. Bolsonaro, who is often considered the Brazilian counterpart to Donald Trump, has actively stoked right-wing cultural populism. He received significant support in the election from evangelical (especially Pentecostal and neo-Pentecostal) leaders and voters.

Writing in *The Nation* in 2017, Omar G. Encarnación anticipated this arrival of Bolsonaro style politics in an article titled, “Amid Crisis in Brazil, the Evangelical Bloc Emerges as a

Political Power.” While Encarnación conceded that Brazilian evangelicalism is not a carbon copy of American evangelicalism, he argued that their respective politics are increasingly transnational.

In crafting their advocacy against moral decline, Brazilian evangelicals take their cues directly from the American Christian right ... facilitated by the many transnational ties linking the American and Brazilian evangelical communities ... [For example,] Trinity Broadcast Network (TBN), the world’s largest religious broadcaster, reaches 220 Brazilian cities ... covering 45 million people.

(Encarnación 2017)

Encarnación pointed especially to the dramatic increase in the number of evangelicals holding seats in the Chamber of Deputies. Known as the *Bancada Evangélica* (evangelical bloc), they now number over 90, some 15% of the legislature. And according to Encarnación, the evangelical bloc has strongly aligned with other conservative factions within the legislative body:

Together with the law-and-order lobby and the agrarian oligarchs, the evangelicals make up the formidable—and deeply conservative—“bullet, beef, and Bible” caucus. Collectively, the ‘BBB caucus’ accounts for some 60 percent of the seats in the Chamber of Deputies.

Other analysts have been quick to connect the dots between developments in Brazil with events elsewhere in Latin America. In a *New York Times* piece titled “A Perfect Marriage: Evangelicals and Conservatives in Latin America,” Javier Corrales (2018) argued that evangelicals are “transforming politics” in Latin America by

giving conservative causes, and especially political parties, new strength and new constituencies ... That there is convergence between the United States and Latin America on evangelical politics is no accident. American evangelicals coach their counterparts in Latin America on how to court parties, become lobbyists, and fight gay marriage.

In addition to the election of Bolsonaro, Corrales points to evangelical involvement in anti-gay rights marches in Colombia, Costa Rica, the Dominican Republic, Peru, and Mexico; evangelical mobilization to defeat a referendum in Columbia on a peace deal with the FARC (Fuerzas Armadas Revolucionarios de Colombia); and evangelical backing of the conservative Sebastián Piñera in Chile’s 2017 presidential election.

Latin American divergence: rationales and evidence

However, in addition to the above narratives emphasizing transnational political similarities, the extant literature on evangelical politics also includes a range of arguments that point instead to expectations that global evangelicalism will diverge from US patterns.

First, an observation frequently made in US–Canada comparisons (Kim 1993; Reimer 1995; Hoover and Reimer 2004; Hoover 1997) is equally valid for US–Latin America comparisons, namely, that, unlike US evangelicals, Latin American evangelicals have no history of cultural dominance. They cannot appeal to founding myths and nostalgia for a time when supposed evangelical values of moral traditionalism and economic self-reliance were the de facto civil religion.

Second, while global evangelicalism affirms a core set of doctrinal attributes (Bebbington 1989), it has always been a movement with a high degree of denominational diversity and considerable disagreement on theological particularities outside the core beliefs. The specific denominational/theological composition of evangelicalism can vary dramatically from country to country and region to region, which may have important influences on evangelical politics. In the US, the fundamentalist wing of evangelical Protestantism is unusually strong, which has been shown to bolster a more thoroughgoing ideological conservatism (Hoover et al. 2002).³ In many other countries, evangelicalism was only marginally shaped by the fundamentalist movement. In Latin America, as in many other developing world contexts, it is the Pentecostal/neo-Pentecostal stream of evangelical Protestantism that is particularly prominent.

Third, by contrast to analyses that make today's US religious right the primary reference point, scholars who take a broader historical and global approach to evangelicalism are more apt to highlight examples of evangelical politics that do not conform to contemporary right-wing stereotypes. For example, Paul Rowe (2019, 39–40) highlights the long tradition of social reformism within Anglo-American evangelicalism that stretches at least to the 19th century.

Early missionaries such as William Carey and David Livingstone campaigned to promote social change in overseas colonies. During the 1800s several evangelicals came to lead whiggish campaigns to effect global change. No doubt the most notable was William Wilberforce and the Clapham Sect. This group of influential friends was the driving force behind the first efforts to bring an end to the slave trade, succeeding in the passage of the 1833 Slavery Abolition Act, signaling an end of slavery in the British Empire. Such evangelical religious influences had a part to play in the public health campaigns spearheaded by Florence Nightingale, the Christian social relief of William Booth's Salvation Army, and the Transatlantic medical and relief mission of Wilfred Grenfell ... Early 20th century populists on both sides of the political spectrum in the United States, including both William Jennings Bryan and Theodore Roosevelt, owed much to the efforts of earlier reformists.

Moreover, as Lamin Sanneh explains, while Western missionaries in the developing world worked with colonial actors, they also brought the linguistic tools that local actors used to fight colonialism and assert self-rule, as the Bible was translated into their own languages (2008, 271).

Echoes of historic evangelicalism's reformist legacy are also evident in more recent movements that have enjoyed evangelical support, including the Jubilee debt relief campaign, refugee resettlement efforts, and international religious freedom.

Relatedly, scholars have identified myriad examples from around the world, both past and contemporary, of evangelicals aligning with economic policies that are progressive and/or populist in nature. During the Depression era in Canada, for instance, radio preacher William "Bible Bill" Aberhart founded Alberta's Social Credit Party, which offered a populist economic prescription to the economic woes of the time (Hoover 2019). Scholars of evangelicalism in the Global South, such as Philip Jenkins (2006), stress that the experience of socioeconomic and political vulnerability often leads such evangelicals to embrace a political theology emphasizing solidarity with the poor. There is consequently often evangelical sympathy in such contexts for economic policies that by Western standards are statist and redistributionist. Timothy Samuel Shah (2004, 117) argues that,

though evangelicals [in the Global South] are assumed to be agents of the American religious right and purveyors of militant "fundamentalism," their lower socioeco-

conomic status often leads them to consider economics at least as important as “morality” and consequently to align with left-wing political movements perceived to be pro-poor.

Joel Carpenter likewise concludes that “on abortion or gay marriage, [Global South evangelicals] sound like American conservatives. But on war and peace or economic justice, they sound like the Democratic Party” (Nussbaum 2006).

Some studies of Latin America similarly cast doubt on any easy assumption that US patterns will be replicated elsewhere. For example, British sociologist of religion, Paul Freston (2001), has found a substantial degree of Pentecostal independence from foreign missions.⁴ “Most Pentecostal churches (unlike their historical counterparts) were founded either by Latin Americans who broke with an existing Protestant denomination or by independent missionaries, and only rarely by a foreign Pentecostal denomination” (Freston 2001, 194–195). In the realm of political attitudes, a study of Latin Americans’ views of US foreign policy found that evangelicals are not more pro-US than non-evangelicals (Melkonian-Hoover and Hoover 2009). With respect to partisan politics, political scientist Amy Erica Smith notes that many Latin American evangelicals have been more ambivalent than ideological. She finds that, “Though many evangelicals have cross-national ties, the most important leaders and their funding are local” (Smith 2018, 6). Some Latin American evangelicals are self-consciously apolitical, seeing politics as too dirty an affair for the faithful. Those who do participate in politics often exhibit flexibility and pragmatism regarding partisan politics. In Brazil, for example, Catherine Osborn (2019) argues that while a majority of evangelical voters supported Bolsonaro in 2018, this may have been more of a transient anti-establishment wave than a stable realignment. In the recent past, a majority of Brazil’s evangelicals supported the left-wing Workers Party (PT), and evangelical leaders were credited with helping PT’s Luiz Inácio Lula get elected. Thus, the mostly white, male, right-wing “evangelical bloc” in Brazil’s legislature is highly unrepresentative of practicing evangelicals, who are disproportionately female, of color, and divided on Bolsonaro’s performance (Romano 2020; Forster 2020).

Finally, there is a small but vocal evangelical left in Latin America, one that has become galvanized to speak out against the rise of right-wing politics in the region (Deister 2018). This evangelical left movement has deep roots, having emerged in parallel with the Liberation Theology movement within the Catholic Church. The often-overlooked history of this movement is recovered in recent books by David Kirkpatrick (*A Gospel for the Poor: Global Social Christianity and the Latin American Evangelical Left*, 2019) and Melani McAlister (*The Kingdom Has No Borders: A Global History of American Evangelicals*, 2018). They show how the Latin American evangelical left, led by René Padilla and Samuel Escobar amongst others, helped inspire a similar movement that arose in the US in the 1970s among white evangelicals. That is, the direction of influence ran *from* Latin America *to* the US, not the other way around. Such transnational progressivism is a significant reality, helping dismantle presumptions of right-wing evangelical “political homogeneity” at home and globally, according to Kirkpatrick (2019b).

Thus, we are confronted with two narratives of evangelical politics pointing in opposite directions. One suggests that evangelical politics in Latin America can be expected to conform to the pattern of right-wing politics evident among white evangelicals in the US. The other suggests more local variation in evangelical views, especially regarding economic issues. Accordingly, in what follows, the question we investigate empirically is: do Latin American evangelical Protestants fit the US “religious right” model of uniformly conservative ideology across moral and economic issues?

Data and methods

Our analysis is based on data from the 2014 Pew Religion in Latin America Survey. The data was gathered via face-to-face interviews with over 30,000 respondents across 18 Latin American countries (Costa Rica, El Salvador, Guatemala, Honduras, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Argentina, Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Paraguay, Peru, Uruguay, and Venezuela) plus the US territory of Puerto Rico.⁵

Our independent variable is a dichotomous measure of evangelical Protestantism. Evangelicalism is a Bible- and missions-focused movement within Protestantism. Most evangelicals stress adult baptism and conversion experiences in which believers make strong self-conscious decisions to follow Christ (typically described as being “born again”). While evangelicalism is concentrated in certain overtly evangelical denominational families such as the Pentecostal tradition, it is not limited to these. Evangelicals can be found in all denominations, including mainline Protestant denominations. And they are very prevalent in nondenominational churches.

The Pew survey contains three questions that, when used in combination, yield a sufficient indicator of a respondent’s likely alignment with evangelicalism. The first question is: “what is your present religion, if any?” Pew coded responses into five categories: Roman Catholic, Protestant, other, unaffiliated, and don’t know. Those indicating a Protestant religious self-identification were also asked two follow-up questions that are directly relevant to identifying evangelicals. First, Protestants were asked, “do you belong to a historical Protestant Church, for example, Baptist, Seventh Day Adventist, Methodist, Lutheran, or Presbyterian; or a Pentecostal Church, for example, Assemblies of God; or another Protestant church?” Second, Protestants were asked, “would you describe yourself as ‘born again?’” We coded as evangelical all Protestants who self-identified either as Pentecostal or born again. On this definition, this dataset yields an estimate of 17% of the Latin American population as Evangelical Protestant. This estimate is similar to that produced in other studies (see, for example, the 2012 AmericasBarometer survey, which found that 15% of Latin Americans are Evangelical Protestant; Marcano 2013).

Table 16.1 presents the religious affiliations of Latin Americans in the 2014 Pew data by country (weighted). The distributions are very comparable with prior studies (see data reports in US State Department 2018; Latinobarómetro 2010–2015; IGBE report in Darlington 2012). In Central America, we see the highest proportion of evangelicals, comprising approximately one-third or more of many nations (Honduras, Guatemala, Nicaragua, El Salvador). By contrast, Paraguay is 90% Catholic, followed by Mexico (81%). Uruguay is by far the most secular of Latin American nations, with 37% of its population unaffiliated.

Our dependent variables are five survey questions measuring ideological orientations and issue positions. Our first variable is a general political ideology self-identification item. Respondents were asked to locate themselves on a numerical ideological spectrum, typically from left to right, which we then aggregated and recoded for comparability on a 1–5 scale from (1) left to (5) right. Additionally, to assess attitudes on major “culture war” issues of traditional morality, we used two survey questions: “do you strongly favor, favor, oppose, or strongly oppose allowing gays and lesbians to marry legally?”; and, “do you think having an abortion should be legal in all cases, legal in most cases, illegal in most cases, or illegal in all cases?” Lastly, to assess ideological dispositions on economic issues, we used two survey items: “do you completely agree, mostly agree, mostly disagree, or completely disagree that it is the responsibility of the government to take care of very poor people who can’t take care of themselves?”; and, “how important is it for followers of the Christian faith to persuade government officials to protect

Table 16.1 Latin American religious affiliations by country $N = 28,582$

| Country | Catholic (%) | Evangelical Protestant (%) | Non-evangelical Protestant (%) | Other religion (%) | Unaffiliated (%) | n^a |
|--------------------|--------------|----------------------------|--------------------------------|--------------------|------------------|-------|
| Argentina | 71.4 | 10.8 | 4.0 | 2.9 | 10.9 | 1,513 |
| Bolivia | 77.0 | 11.2 | 4.9 | 3.1 | 3.7 | 1,503 |
| Brazil | 60.9 | 21.5 | 4.2 | 5.0 | 8.4 | 1,998 |
| Chile | 64.4 | 10.0 | 7.4 | 2.4 | 15.8 | 1,513 |
| Colombia | 78.7 | 9.4 | 4.1 | 2.3 | 5.5 | 1,505 |
| Costa Rica | 62.3 | 19.0 | 6.7 | 2.8 | 9.2 | 1,487 |
| Dominican Republic | 56.5 | 21.5 | 1.7 | 2.0 | 18.3 | 1,699 |
| Ecuador | 79.5 | 9.7 | 3.2 | 2.4 | 5.2 | 1,848 |
| El Salvador | 49.6 | 30.6 | 5.2 | 2.4 | 12.1 | 1,498 |
| Guatemala | 50.2 | 37.1 | 4.1 | 2.5 | 6.1 | 1,499 |
| Honduras | 46.4 | 33.5 | 7.2 | 2.4 | 10.5 | 1,499 |
| Mexico | 80.6 | 5.4 | 3.3 | 4.1 | 6.7 | 1,999 |
| Nicaragua | 49.7 | 35.1 | 5.2 | 3.4 | 6.5 | 1,497 |
| Panama | 70.0 | 16.2 | 2.9 | 3.9 | 7.0 | 1,494 |
| Paraguay | 89.7 | 5.4 | 2.1 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 1,501 |
| Peru | 75.7 | 12.5 | 4.7 | 3.5 | 3.6 | 1,500 |
| Uruguay | 42.5 | 8.4 | 6.3 | 5.7 | 37.2 | 1,502 |
| Venezuela | 72.9 | 9.5 | 7.2 | 3.8 | 6.6 | 1,541 |

Note: ^aWeighted individually by country.

the rights of the poor? Very important, somewhat important, not too important, or not at all important” (asked only of Christians).

In what follows, we first present cross-tabulations and mean scale scores for evangelicals and non-evangelicals by country on each of our dependent variables. We present the cross-tabulations to expose the range of opinions by evangelicals and non-evangelicals across Latin America, while our analysis homes in on the comparison of means. Next, we compare the means of Latin Americans across all major categories of religious affiliation (plus the unaffiliated). Finally, we share the findings of our multivariate regression analysis on each of the dependent variables.

Findings

In Table 16.2, we highlight the placement and the average or mean score of evangelicals and non-evangelicals on the ideological self-identification scale (1–5).⁶ For Latin America as a whole, it is notable that evangelicals place themselves similarly to their non-evangelical peers, and in fact slightly to the left of non-evangelicals (3.20 vs. 3.23). Latin America is still a fairly conservative Catholic region, and evangelicals do not position themselves far from the center-right norm on the whole. On a country-by-country basis, averages are also quite similar in most countries. Yet, in Argentina and Uruguay, evangelicals are much further to the right in ideological self-identification than non-evangelicals (4.12 vs. 3.44 and 3.37 vs. 2.84, respectively). However, in countries like Colombia and Costa Rica, evangelicals are somewhat further to the left (3.27 vs. 3.42 and 2.94 vs. 3.07, respectively).

Next, we turn to questions measuring opinion on two major issues of traditional values, gay marriage, and abortion.⁷ Table 16.3 presents findings on the gay marriage question on a

Table 16.2 Evangelicals and ideology *N* = 22,289

| Ideology | | Left (1) (%) | (2) (%) | (3) (%) | (4) (%) | Right (5) (%) | Scale Average |
|----------------------|-----------------|--------------|---------|---------|---------|---------------|---------------|
| Latin America | Evangelical | 10.9 | 9.0 | 48.9 | 11.6 | 19.7 | 3.2018 |
| Overall | Non-evangelical | 10.9 | 9.8 | 45.8 | 12.3 | 21.2 | 3.2298 |
| By Country | | | | | | | |
| Argentina | Evangelical | 7.7 | 5.8 | 17.3 | 5.8 | 63.5 | 4.1154 |
| | Non-evangelical | 10.6 | 17.4 | 26.5 | 8.2 | 37.3 | 3.4407 |
| Bolivia | Evangelical | 5.8 | 4.5 | 81.3 | 3.2 | 5.2 | 2.9742 |
| | Non-evangelical | 7.9 | 5.8 | 73.0 | 5.9 | 7.4 | 2.9909 |
| Brazil | Evangelical | 6.9 | 16.8 | 35.8 | 23.3 | 17.2 | 3.2716 |
| | Non-evangelical | 5.7 | 14.8 | 37.6 | 28.5 | 13.5 | 3.2918 |
| Chile | Evangelical | 6.3 | 6.9 | 74.3 | 4.9 | 7.6 | 3.0069 |
| | Non-evangelical | 10.8 | 11.1 | 64.0 | 6.0 | 8.1 | 2.8944 |
| Colombia | Evangelical | 13.9 | 8.3 | 37.0 | 18.5 | 22.2 | 3.2685 |
| | Non-evangelical | 9.6 | 8.4 | 38.6 | 17.2 | 26.2 | 3.4186 |
| Costa Rica | Evangelical | 16.0 | 12.5 | 47.5 | 9.5 | 14.4 | 2.9392 |
| | Non-evangelical | 16.0 | 9.6 | 43.5 | 13.0 | 17.9 | 3.0721 |
| Dominican Republic | Evangelical | 11.1 | 12.0 | 17.3 | 20.4 | 39.1 | 3.6444 |
| | Non-evangelical | 11.6 | 9.4 | 14.4 | 21.6 | 43.1 | 3.7512 |
| Ecuador | Evangelical | 3.8 | 3.8 | 72.0 | 15.3 | 5.1 | 3.1401 |
| | Non-evangelical | 6.0 | 10.2 | 64.7 | 13.2 | 5.8 | 3.0239 |
| El Salvador | Evangelical | 17.4 | 3.6 | 53.5 | 7.0 | 18.5 | 3.0552 |
| | Non-evangelical | 17.3 | 7.1 | 52.8 | 6.7 | 16.2 | 2.9744 |
| Guatemala | Evangelical | 3.6 | 8.0 | 63.3 | 12.1 | 13.0 | 3.2297 |
| | Non-evangelical | 3.1 | 8.3 | 64.3 | 11.7 | 12.7 | 3.2260 |
| Honduras | Evangelical | 8.2 | 12.6 | 39.7 | 11.7 | 27.8 | 3.3833 |
| | Non-evangelical | 9.1 | 11.5 | 37.6 | 10.3 | 31.5 | 3.4367 |
| Mexico | Evangelical | 10.4 | 13.0 | 46.1 | 13.9 | 16.5 | 3.1304 |
| | Non-evangelical | 9.8 | 12.9 | 51.3 | 13.2 | 12.9 | 3.0634 |
| Nicaragua | Evangelical | 21.6 | 10.8 | 44.6 | 5.5 | 17.5 | 2.8656 |
| | Non-evangelical | 22.2 | 10.9 | 39.9 | 9.0 | 18.0 | 2.8971 |
| Panama | Evangelical | 6.6 | 7.0 | 43.8 | 24.4 | 18.2 | 3.4050 |
| | Non-evangelical | 3.1 | 9.0 | 42.9 | 21.7 | 23.3 | 3.5318 |
| Paraguay | Evangelical | | | 14.6 | 4.9 | 80.5 | 4.6585 |
| | Non-evangelical | 3.5 | 1.4 | 13.4 | 4.7 | 77.0 | 4.5029 |
| Peru | Evangelical | 2.9 | 5.8 | 79.6 | 5.8 | 5.8 | 3.0584 |
| | Non-evangelical | 3.5 | 9.2 | 69.5 | 11.6 | 6.1 | 3.0762 |
| Uruguay | Evangelical | 28.7 | 5.3 | 12.8 | 6.4 | 46.8 | 3.3723 |
| | Non-evangelical | 38.5 | 10.1 | 13.8 | 4.1 | 33.6 | 2.8428 |

four-point scale that moves from left to right (ranging from one, strongly favor, to four, strongly oppose). In this 2014 data, Latin Americans as a whole leaned conservative, yet even in this environment, evangelicals were notably more conservative, with an average of 3.27 vs. 2.87 for non-evangelicals. Evangelicals were also more conservative than non-evangelicals in every single country in the study. Differences were minimal in some nations (Paraguay and many Central American states), yet in Argentina and Uruguay, we see stark differences between evangelicals and non-evangelicals (3.06 vs. 2.36 and 2.92 vs. 2.13, respectively).

Table 16.3 Evangelicals and gay marriage *N* = 26,431

| <i>Views on legalizing gay marriage</i> | | <i>Strongly favor</i> | <i>Favor</i> | <i>Oppose (3)</i> | <i>Strongly oppose</i> | <i>Average</i> |
|---|-----------------|-----------------------|----------------|-------------------|------------------------|----------------|
| | | <i>(1) (%)</i> | <i>(2) (%)</i> | <i>(%)</i> | <i>(4) (%)</i> | |
| Latin America overall | Evangelical | 3.6 | 8.7 | 44.6 | 43.2 | 3.2740 |
| | Non-evangelical | 11.0 | 22.9 | 34.6 | 31.6 | 2.8671 |
| By country | | | | | | |
| Argentina | Evangelical | 9.0 | 18.0 | 30.8 | 42.1 | 3.0602 |
| | Non-evangelical | 24.3 | 34.1 | 23.2 | 18.5 | 2.3584 |
| Bolivia | Evangelical | 0.6 | 9.6 | 42.9 | 46.8 | 3.3590 |
| | Non-evangelical | 7.2 | 19.9 | 41.8 | 31.1 | 2.9679 |
| Brazil | Evangelical | 5.1 | 19.9 | 38.6 | 36.4 | 3.0631 |
| | Non-evangelical | 12.4 | 39.4 | 25.2 | 23.0 | 2.5867 |
| Chile | Evangelical | 10.2 | 19.7 | 33.6 | 36.5 | 2.9635 |
| | Non-evangelical | 21.9 | 29.4 | 23.0 | 25.6 | 2.5235 |
| Colombia | Evangelical | 2.9 | 7.4 | 41.2 | 48.5 | 3.3529 |
| | Non-evangelical | 9.7 | 22.1 | 38.0 | 30.2 | 2.8874 |
| Costa Rica | Evangelical | 5.0 | 5.8 | 48.4 | 40.7 | 3.2481 |
| | Non-evangelical | 11.4 | 20.4 | 34.7 | 33.5 | 2.9035 |
| Dominican Republic | Evangelical | 1.7 | 7.6 | 27.7 | 63.0 | 3.5198 |
| | Non-evangelical | 7.2 | 21.0 | 21.3 | 50.5 | 3.1517 |
| Ecuador | Evangelical | 2.2 | 2.8 | 33.7 | 61.2 | 3.5393 |
| | Non-evangelical | 6.4 | 11.3 | 37.0 | 45.3 | 3.2106 |
| El Salvador | Evangelical | 3.7 | 3.3 | 39.7 | 53.3 | 3.4258 |
| | Non-evangelical | 4.8 | 9.0 | 40.4 | 45.8 | 3.2729 |
| Guatemala | Evangelical | 2.4 | 4.6 | 73.0 | 20.0 | 3.1066 |
| | Non-evangelical | 6.0 | 10.2 | 67.5 | 16.3 | 2.9410 |
| Honduras | Evangelical | 2.5 | 5.7 | 44.1 | 47.7 | 3.3691 |
| | Non-evangelical | 4.9 | 9.7 | 43.2 | 42.2 | 3.2270 |
| Mexico | Evangelical | 6.1 | 22.9 | 38.9 | 32.1 | 2.9695 |
| | Non-evangelical | 13.0 | 38.1 | 28.9 | 20.0 | 2.5575 |
| Nicaragua | Evangelical | 1.0 | 6.3 | 52.2 | 40.4 | 3.3204 |
| | Non-evangelical | 5.2 | 17.6 | 47.5 | 29.7 | 3.0167 |
| Panama | Evangelical | 5.3 | 9.8 | 41.2 | 43.7 | 3.2327 |
| | Non-evangelical | 8.6 | 14.2 | 45.1 | 32.1 | 3.0076 |
| Paraguay | Evangelical | 4.9 | 37.0 | 58.0 | | 3.5309 |
| | Non-evangelical | 1.5 | 13.9 | 33.6 | 51.0 | 3.3415 |
| Peru | Evangelical | 1.2 | 6.8 | 54.9 | 37.0 | 3.2778 |
| | Non-evangelical | 6.1 | 23.5 | 44.2 | 26.2 | 2.9050 |
| Uruguay | Evangelical | 11.9 | 19.5 | 33.1 | 35.6 | 2.9237 |
| | Non-evangelical | 31.1 | 37.5 | 18.6 | 12.8 | 2.1311 |
| Venezuela | Evangelical | 4.2 | 4.9 | 33.8 | 57.0 | 3.4366 |
| | Non-evangelical | 9.9 | 22.1 | 31.3 | 36.7 | 2.9481 |

Table 16.4 presents findings on the abortion question on a four-point scale ranging from the belief that abortion ought to be legal in all cases (1) to illegal in all (4). As with gay marriage, we found that on the abortion question, evangelicals were more conservative than non-evangelicals across the board. The evangelical average was 3.44 vs. 3.18 for non-evangelicals in Latin America as a whole, and evangelicals were likewise more conservative in every country. Here again, differences

Table 16.4 Evangelicals and abortion $N = 27,878$

| <i>Views on abortion</i> | | <i>Legal in all</i> | <i>Legal in some</i> | <i>Illegal in some</i> | <i>Illegal in all</i> | <i>Average</i> |
|--------------------------|------------------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| | | (1) (%) | (2) (%) | (3) (%) | (4) (%) | |
| LA overall | Evangelical | 2.6 | 9.9 | 27.9 | 59.5 | 3.4436 |
| | Non-evangelical | 6.6 | 16.9 | 28.7 | 47.8 | 3.1768 |
| Country | | | | | | |
| Argentina | Evangelical | 1.4 | 15.6 | 23.4 | 59.6 | 3.4113 |
| | Non-evangelical | 12.9 | 28.8 | 31.9 | 26.4 | 2.7171 |
| Bolivia | Evangelical | 1.2 | 7.5 | 31.1 | 60.2 | 3.5031 |
| | Non-evangelical | 5.2 | 16.5 | 30.9 | 47.5 | 3.2064 |
| Brazil | Evangelical | 1.7 | 13.5 | 32.0 | 52.8 | 3.3590 |
| | Non-evangelical | 2.8 | 18.8 | 34.8 | 43.6 | 3.1914 |
| Chile | Evangelical | 6.9 | 23.6 | 20.1 | 49.3 | 3.1181 |
| | Non-evangelical | 12.1 | 37.1 | 21.7 | 29.0 | 2.6772 |
| Colombia | Evangelical | 1.4 | 10.1 | 21.7 | 66.7 | 3.5362 |
| | Non-evangelical | 5.0 | 19.2 | 25.4 | 50.3 | 3.2111 |
| Costa Rica | Evangelical | 4.8 | 7.8 | 27.4 | 60.0 | 3.4259 |
| | Non-evangelical | 6.2 | 13.6 | 27.9 | 52.4 | 3.2643 |
| Dominican Republic | Evangelical | 2.3 | 9.0 | 28.2 | 60.6 | 3.4704 |
| | Non-evangelical | 2.8 | 11.0 | 27.0 | 59.2 | 3.4266 |
| Ecuador | Evangelical | 2.7 | 7.6 | 23.8 | 65.9 | 3.5297 |
| | Non-evangelical | 5.0 | 14.8 | 29.3 | 50.9 | 3.2617 |
| El Salvador | Evangelical | 1.3 | 7.9 | 19.7 | 71.1 | 3.6060 |
| | Non-evangelical | 2.4 | 9.1 | 25.1 | 63.4 | 3.4955 |
| Guatemala | Evangelical | 1.6 | 3.0 | 44.2 | 51.2 | 3.4505 |
| | Non-evangelical | 2.8 | 6.0 | 37.6 | 53.5 | 3.4179 |
| Honduras | Evangelical | 1.9 | 7.2 | 17.5 | 73.4 | 3.6236 |
| | Non-evangelical | 4.9 | 7.1 | 17.9 | 70.1 | 3.5309 |
| Mexico | Evangelical | 5.9 | 18.5 | 18.5 | 57.0 | 3.2667 |
| | Non-evangelical | 8.8 | 22.2 | 26.2 | 42.8 | 3.0299 |
| Nicaragua | Evangelical | 2.8 | 15.3 | 35.3 | 46.6 | 3.2570 |
| | Non-evangelical | 6.4 | 21.1 | 33.7 | 38.8 | 3.0494 |
| Panama | Evangelical | 2.9 | 10.8 | 27.4 | 58.9 | 3.4232 |
| | Non-evangelical | 2.5 | 10.1 | 38.3 | 49.1 | 3.3404 |
| Paraguay | Evangelical | | 4.8 | 22.9 | 72.3 | 3.6747 |
| | Non-evangelical | 1.8 | 3.5 | 25.2 | 69.5 | 3.6238 |
| Peru | Evangelical | 3.0 | 8.4 | 32.9 | 55.7 | 3.4132 |
| | Non-evangelical | 5.1 | 16.8 | 34.5 | 43.6 | 3.1661 |
| Uruguay | Evangelical | 12.2 | 17.1 | 24.4 | 46.3 | 3.0488 |
| | Non-evangelical | 27.3 | 31.3 | 20.7 | 20.6 | 2.3461 |
| Venezuela | Evangelical | 2.0 | 5.4 | 21.5 | 71.1 | 3.6174 |
| | Non-evangelical | 1.9 | 9.6 | 30.1 | 58.4 | 3.4500 |

between evangelicals and non-evangelicals were most stark in Argentina and Uruguay (3.41 vs. 2.71 and 3.05 vs. 2.35, respectively). However, in a number of other countries, the differences between evangelicals and non-evangelicals were negligible, e.g., Paraguay (predominantly Catholic), the Dominican Republic (majority Catholic), Guatemala (half Catholic), likely reflecting the considerable role of the Catholic Church with its longstanding disapproval of abortion.

Next, we turn to our two economic variables measuring attitudes toward the government's role in caring for the poor. We first examine responses to the question of whether or not it is the government's responsibility to care for the very poor who cannot take care of themselves (Table 16.5). The variable is a four-point, left-to-right scale measure. The findings are the inverse of the pattern we observed for the traditional morality variables discussed above. That is, in

Table 16.5 Evangelicals and government support for the poor *N* = 28,347

| <i>Views on government responsibility to care for the very poor</i> | | <i>Completely agree (1) (%)</i> | <i>Mostly agree (2) (%)</i> | <i>Mostly disagree (3) (%)</i> | <i>Completely disagree (4) (%)</i> | <i>Average</i> |
|---|------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|
| LA overall | Evangelical | 74.4 | 18.8 | 4.0 | 2.8 | 1.3526 |
| | Non-evangelical | 69.2 | 22.1 | 5.4 | 3.3 | 1.4271 |
| Country | | | | | | |
| Argentina | Evangelical | 75.0 | 20.8 | 2.8 | 1.4 | 1.3056 |
| | Non-evangelical | 67.2 | 26.4 | 4.5 | 1.9 | 1.4112 |
| Bolivia | Evangelical | 60.7 | 28.2 | 7.4 | 3.7 | 1.5399 |
| | Non-evangelical | 61.8 | 25.1 | 10.4 | 2.7 | 1.5392 |
| Brazil | Evangelical | 68.6 | 25.2 | 3.5 | 2.6 | 1.4009 |
| | Non-evangelical | 70.4 | 23.6 | 3.6 | 2.4 | 1.3811 |
| Chile | Evangelical | 67.3 | 22.0 | 7.3 | 3.3 | 1.4667 |
| | Non-evangelical | 59.8 | 26.5 | 8.9 | 4.8 | 1.5865 |
| Colombia | Evangelical | 78.6 | 17.9 | 2.1 | 1.4 | 1.2643 |
| | Non-evangelical | 80.3 | 14.6 | 2.7 | 2.4 | 1.2717 |
| Costa Rica | Evangelical | 77.5 | 16.7 | 3.6 | 2.2 | 1.3055 |
| | Non-evangelical | 75.5 | 15.1 | 4.9 | 4.5 | 1.3842 |
| Dominican Republic | Evangelical | 89.1 | 8.1 | 1.4 | 1.4 | 1.1513 |
| | Non-evangelical | 91.1 | 6.0 | 1.6 | 1.3 | 1.1315 |
| Ecuador | Evangelical | 75.1 | 20.0 | 4.3 | 0.5 | 1.3027 |
| | Non-evangelical | 75.1 | 20.9 | 3.1 | 0.9 | 1.2985 |
| El Salvador | Evangelical | 74.8 | 16.5 | 4.2 | 4.4 | 1.3835 |
| | Non-evangelical | 76.1 | 16.3 | 2.9 | 4.7 | 1.3619 |
| Guatemala | Evangelical | 73.7 | 16.6 | 5.6 | 4.0 | 1.3993 |
| | Non-evangelical | 71.2 | 16.9 | 6.9 | 5.0 | 1.4562 |
| Honduras | Evangelical | 86.9 | 9.1 | 1.9 | 2.1 | 1.1913 |
| | Non-evangelical | 82.3 | 11.2 | 2.8 | 3.7 | 1.2801 |
| Mexico | Evangelical | 55.9 | 24.3 | 10.3 | 9.6 | 1.7353 |
| | Non-evangelical | 57.7 | 28.1 | 7.7 | 6.5 | 1.6299 |
| Nicaragua | Evangelical | 84.1 | 10.8 | 2.8 | 2.4 | 1.2338 |
| | Non-evangelical | 81.6 | 11.6 | 3.7 | 3.1 | 1.2830 |
| Panama | Evangelical | 50.0 | 40.2 | 6.6 | 3.3 | 1.6311 |
| | Non-evangelical | 49.9 | 39.4 | 9.3 | 1.4 | 1.6210 |
| Paraguay | Evangelical | 87.8 | 11.0 | | 1.2 | 1.1463 |
| | Non-evangelical | 87.1 | 10.7 | 1.8 | 0.5 | 1.1567 |
| Peru | Evangelical | 47.4 | 45.0 | 6.4 | 1.2 | 1.6140 |
| | Non-evangelical | 42.8 | 47.2 | 8.0 | 2.0 | 1.6921 |
| Uruguay | Evangelical | 71.3 | 23.8 | 1.6 | 3.3 | 1.3689 |
| | Non-evangelical | 58.2 | 25.3 | 8.7 | 7.9 | 1.6629 |
| Venezuela | Evangelical | 73.6 | 19.6 | 4.7 | 2.0 | 1.3514 |
| | Non-evangelical | 67.1 | 23.8 | 5.7 | 3.4 | 1.4536 |

this survey, Latin Americans as a whole were highly progressive when it comes to government support for the poor, but evangelicals were *even more* progressive than non-evangelicals (1.35 vs. 1.43). On a country-by-country basis, evangelical scores were generally either more liberal or equal to non-evangelical scores. Mexico was an exception (1.74 for evangelicals vs. 1.63 for non-evangelicals).

In Table 16.6, we present findings of the last dependent variable, based on a question asked only of self-identified Christians (which in this highly religious region comprise over 87% of the dataset). When asked how important it is for followers of the Christian faith to persuade government officials to protect the rights of the poor, the vast majority of Latin American Christians found it to be important. And evangelicals, on average, were even more liberal than non-evangelical Christians (1.41 vs. 1.54). However, there was greater variation by country. In 12 countries, evangelicals were more liberal, marginally or substantially so (see especially Uruguay, 1.37 for evangelicals vs. 1.66 for non-evangelicals). However, in six countries, the average of non-evangelicals was more liberal, and especially so in Argentina, Paraguay, and Mexico.

Next, we review all of our dependent variables by major religious affiliation categories (Evangelical Protestant, Non-evangelical Protestant, Catholic, other, unaffiliated) across Latin America (see Table 16.7). Beginning with ideology, it is clear that evangelical Protestants are similar to other Protestants (3.2 and 3.19), while Catholics appear to be driving up the non-evangelical ideological conservatism altogether (3.30). As for gay marriage and abortion, evangelical Protestants are clearly more conservative than non-evangelical Protestants. Indeed, they are more conservative than all the other groups. The religiously unaffiliated are the most liberal, with a substantial average difference of 0.8 on gay marriage and 0.6 on abortion. When it comes to views on government support for social services for the poor, evangelicals are more progressive than all other categories, and the unaffiliated are the most conservative, though the averages are close (only 0.2 difference, and likely driven by Uruguay given previous findings). Lastly, on the final question of whether or not Christians ought to lobby the government to support the poor, evangelical Christians are again the most liberal across the board, but not by much. The contrast is greatest with the other-Christians category (1.41 for evangelicals vs. 1.68 for others).

Finally, in Table 16.8, we analyse each of our dependent variables side by side via regression analyses. In addition to common demographic control variables (age, gender, education) we also include as controls two other likely drivers of political opinion in the Latin American context. These include frustration with the political system and corrupt politicians (Osborn 2019) and concern over one's personal economic status (Kirkpatrick 2019a).⁸

The results confirm our initial bivariate analysis. Evangelical identity is related to conservative positions on gay marriage and abortion, and with progressive positions on government support for the poor and the need for Christians to lobby the government to support the poor. As for ideological self-identification, it points in the expected direction (evangelicals are slightly to the left), but the relationship is not statistically significant (though interestingly becomes so with a revised dataset⁹).

Among the control variables, frustration with corrupt leadership appears to hold more explanatory value than religion when it comes to explaining the appeals of authoritarianism and populism. Frustration with corrupt leadership is associated with greater conservatism on social issues and a more rightward ideological identification, but it is associated with liberalism on economic issues. Concerns over one's personal economic status play out the same as evangelical status but is not consistently significant. Older people lean rightward ideologically and are more conservative on gay marriage, but not necessarily abortion. Latin American women are more

Table 16.6 Evangelicals and Christians lobbying for government protection of the poor $N = 24995$

| Views on Christian role to lobby government to care for the poor | | Very important (1) (%) | Somewhat important (2) (%) | Not too important (3) (%) | Not at all important (4) (%) | Average |
|--|------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------|------------------------------|---------|
| Latin America overall | Evangelical | 69.3 | 22.5 | 5.6 | 2.6 | 1.4146 |
| | Non-evangelical | 61.2 | 27.5 | 7.8 | 3.5 | 1.5350 |
| Country | | | | | | |
| Argentina | Evangelical | 56.3 | 28.1 | 9.6 | 5.9 | 1.6519 |
| | Non-evangelical | 56.1 | 33.2 | 8.0 | 2.6 | 1.5717 |
| Bolivia | Evangelical | 54.4 | 36.1 | 8.2 | 1.3 | 1.5633 |
| | Non-evangelical | 51.7 | 35.1 | 9.8 | 3.4 | 1.6482 |
| Brazil | Evangelical | 69.8 | 24.7 | 4.0 | 1.4 | 1.3705 |
| | Non-evangelical | 68.6 | 24.4 | 4.9 | 2.1 | 1.4061 |
| Chile | Evangelical | 52.7 | 29.1 | 12.2 | 6.1 | 1.7162 |
| | Non-evangelical | 47.9 | 29.9 | 13.7 | 8.5 | 1.8282 |
| Colombia | Evangelical | 74.5 | 14.6 | 7.3 | 3.6 | 1.4015 |
| | Non-evangelical | 75.0 | 18.2 | 4.5 | 2.3 | 1.3400 |
| Costa Rica | Evangelical | 85.1 | 12.4 | 1.8 | 0.7 | 1.1818 |
| | Non-evangelical | 81.2 | 15.5 | 2.2 | 1.0 | 1.2308 |
| Dominican Republic | Evangelical | 82.2 | 14.4 | 2.0 | 1.4 | 1.2260 |
| | Non-evangelical | 79.3 | 16.6 | 2.8 | 1.3 | 1.2599 |
| Ecuador | Evangelical | 51.4 | 34.1 | 12.3 | 2.2 | 1.6536 |
| | Non-evangelical | 50.1 | 34.6 | 11.9 | 3.3 | 1.6847 |
| El Salvador | Evangelical | 65.5 | 23.5 | 5.1 | 6.0 | 1.5160 |
| | Non-evangelical | 73.0 | 19.9 | 3.8 | 3.3 | 1.3736 |
| Guatemala | Evangelical | 70.0 | 23.8 | 5.0 | 1.3 | 1.3750 |
| | Non-evangelical | 75.6 | 20.8 | 3.0 | 0.6 | 1.2854 |
| Honduras | Evangelical | 77.6 | 19.0 | 2.3 | 1.1 | 1.2693 |
| | Non-evangelical | 75.0 | 21.1 | 1.7 | 2.3 | 1.3129 |
| Mexico | Evangelical | 31.6 | 33.1 | 22.6 | 12.8 | 2.1654 |
| | Non-evangelical | 40.3 | 35.5 | 16.5 | 7.7 | 1.9159 |
| Nicaragua | Evangelical | 89.5 | 9.1 | 1.0 | 0.4 | 1.1228 |
| | Non-evangelical | 85.3 | 11.8 | 2.0 | 0.8 | 1.1830 |
| Panama | Evangelical | 56.1 | 35.7 | 5.3 | 2.9 | 1.5492 |
| | Non-evangelical | 44.8 | 46.1 | 5.4 | 3.7 | 1.6793 |
| Paraguay | Evangelical | 62.0 | 31.6 | 6.3 | | 1.4430 |
| | Non-evangelical | 68.2 | 27.6 | 2.1 | 2.1 | 1.3804 |
| Peru | Evangelical | 57.6 | 34.3 | 7.0 | 1.2 | 1.5174 |
| | Non-evangelical | 54.6 | 34.7 | 9.6 | 1.2 | 1.5725 |
| Uruguay | Evangelical | 61.6 | 17.9 | 10.7 | 9.8 | 1.6875 |
| | Non-evangelical | 49.4 | 23.8 | 13.2 | 13.7 | 1.9123 |
| Venezuela | Evangelical | 59.9 | 24.5 | 13.6 | 2.0 | 1.5782 |
| | Non-evangelical | 51.8 | 28.5 | 15.9 | 3.9 | 1.7186 |

supportive of gay marriage than men but less supportive of the legalization of abortion. Having more education is associated with a more leftward ideology, and more liberal positions on moral issues, but *not* more liberal positions on economic issues (perhaps not surprising given higher income associated with increased education).

Table 16.7 Religious groups and ideology comparison of means

| | Ideology n = 22,249 | Gay marriage n = 26,388 | Abortion n = 27,838 | Govt. support poor n = 28,305 | Christians to lobby govt. for poor n = 24,980 |
|-----------------|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------|----------------------------------|--|
| Evangelical | 3.2018 | 3.2740 | 3.4436 | 1.3526 | 1.4146 |
| Non-evangelical | 3.1920 | 3.0502 | 3.3153 | 1.4383 | 1.6099 |
| Protestant | | | | | |
| Catholic | 3.2955 | 2.8974 | 3.2175 | 1.4134 | 1.5242 |
| Other religion | 3.0311 | 2.9893 | 3.2579 | 1.4278 | 1.6840 ^a |
| Unaffiliated | 2.8614 | 2.5225 | 2.7916 | 1.5201 | N/A |

Note: ^aOther religion on this fifth survey question only includes other-Christians (those who identify with other religion but respond “yes” to a follow-up question as to being Christian) .

Table 16.8 Evangelicals and ideology multivariate regressions

| Variables | Ideology (n = 21,602) | Gay marriage (n = 25,601) | Abortion (n = 26,980) | Govt. to support poor (n = 27,422) | Christians to lobby govt. for poor (n = 24216) |
|------------------------|----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------------------|--|--|
| Evangelical | -0.030(0.021) | 0.398(0.015) ^a | 0.234(0.015) ^a | -0.057(0.012) ^a | -0.111(0.013) ^a |
| Corrupt Politicians | 0.054(0.011) ^a | 0.056(0.008) ^a | 0.076(0.007) ^a | -0.100(0.006) ^a | -0.153(0.007) ^a |
| Economic Status | -0.005(0.010) | 0.044(0.007) ^a | 0.026(0.007) ^a | -0.009(0.006) | -0.022(0.006) ^a |
| Age | 0.002(0.001) ^a | 0.007(0.000) ^a | -0.001(0.000) ^b | 0.000(0.000) | 0.000(0.000) |
| Gender | -0.009(0.016) | -0.053(0.012) ^a | 0.054(0.011) ^a | 0.009(0.009) | 0.000(0.010) |
| Education | -0.022(0.005) ^a | -0.059(0.004) ^a | -0.081(0.003) ^a | 0.042(0.003) ^a | 0.014(0.003) ^a |
| (Constant) | 3.063 (0.062) ^a | 2.539(0.044) ^a | 3.072(0.042) ^a | 1.634 (0.033) ^a | 2.081(0.038) ^a |
| R ² | 0.003 | 0.069 | 0.041 | 0.022 | 0.028 |

Note: ^a P < 0.001.

Note: ^b P < 0.01.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to answer the question of whether, at the mass level, Latin American evangelical Protestants fit the US “religious right” model of uniformly conservative ideology. Some analysts have interpreted recent developments in electoral politics (e.g., the 2018 election of Jair Bolsonaro to the Brazilian presidency) as part of a larger pattern of conservative American evangelicalism exerting neo-imperial cultural/political influence on Global South evangelicalism. By contrast, other analysts highlight patterns of historical and contemporary diversity in evangelical politics around the world, at least with respect to policy issues beyond the hot-button “culture war” issues of traditional morality.

Our findings provide unambiguous support for the latter narrative. Data from Pew’s massive 2014 survey of Latin America show clearly that evangelicals are more conservative than average on key issues of traditional morality, but they are *not* more conservative on economic questions. Indeed, on the economic measures utilized, evangelicals are to the *left* of the Latin American average—an average that is already well to the left of American public opinion. As George Marsden succinctly argues in his study of global evangelicalism, evangelicals do share certain

core religious traits, but they vary immensely in personality and temperament. Thus, “it is a mistake to generalize about evangelicals on the basis of the behavior of white American Trump voters” (Marsden 2019, 282).

Our analysis also points to an important pattern of polarization within Latin American religion and politics. Latin American evangelicals’ ideological priorities are in increasing tension with those of secular and less-religious Latin Americans. Indeed, our findings regarding the religiously unaffiliated (see Table 16.7) are the exact inverse of the pattern for evangelicals—that is, seculars are the *most liberal* on issues of traditional morality and also the *most conservative* on the government’s responsibility to care for the poor.

Environments of polarization can obscure ideological diversity or centrism, with implications for representation. Recent Brazilian politics illustrates this point. Polarization has left many rank-and-file evangelicals, and Brazilians in general, politically “homeless,” as the current partisan configuration is not providing a viable option that represents economically center-left but culturally right positions. When combined with a strong anti-elitist/anti-corruption wave in Brazil, the conditions were ripe in 2018 for exploitation by a right-wing populist personality like Bolsonaro, who—despite his vitriolic rhetoric and imperfect ideological fit—was supported by many evangelicals, as well as people of lower socioeconomic status, people of color, and women. The political struggles of candidate Marina Silva in multiple presidential election cycles further underscore this point. She is an Afro-Brazilian environmentalist, leftist, Pentecostal who came from poverty and who tries to bridge many of Brazil’s social divides. But in an era of polarization, opponents have attacked from both the right and left, effectively undermining her chances (Freston 2018).

Polarization on both the religious right and secular left merits further research in Brazil and elsewhere across Latin America. Future research should examine transnational patterns of both right-wing cultural politics and left-wing cultural politics. Further, future comparative research on evangelical politics should be informed by careful attention to the specific indigenous patterns, histories, and contingent conditions in each country, particularly with respect to party systems and the vicissitudes of electoral politics.

Notes

- 1 When evangelicals are defined by affiliation and belief only, without regard to ethnicity or race, they are 30% of the US population. Two-thirds of these are white, and that proportion is declining: nearly half under 30 are non-white, and one-fifth of those are Latino. See Bacon Jr. and Thompson-DeVeaux 2018.
- 2 We wish to thank the Pew Research Center for the use of the Religion in Latin America Survey. The Center bears no responsibility for the interpretations presented or conclusions reached based on analysis of the data.
- 3 Fundamentalists, like Pentecostals, are a subset of evangelicals. Fundamentalists focus on the “fundamentals” of the faith, and are often biblical literalists who are strict and pietistic in lifestyle prohibitions. Pentecostals are charismatic, and highlight the gifts of the Spirit like speaking in tongues and healing.
- 4 Virginia Garrard-Burnett (1998) noted a similar dynamic regarding evangelicals in Guatemala.
- 5 As the purpose of this chapter is to compare/contrast Latin American nations with the US, we excluded Puerto Rico from our data analysis.
- 6 The N (22,289) is lower in part because Venezuela could not be included, as Venezuelans were not asked a comparable question. In addition, those who refused to answer the question, or said they didn’t know, were dropped from the sample. Those who responded that they didn’t have an ideology were placed in the center of the scale. We also analysed the data excluding those who didn’t have an ideology (with a resultant $n = 16,772$), and the findings were consistently similar; we share the fuller responses in our chapter. Also of note, Latin Americans were reluctant to identify with the major political parties

- in each country (with very low responses on party identification, ranging from 23% in Bolivia and 26% in Brazil, to 76% in Paraguay and 89% in Bolivia). On the whole, only half identified with a party, reflecting a clear disaffection with politics.
- 7 It is worth noting that more Latin Americans were willing to respond to questions on these key concerns than to label themselves ideologically.
 - 8 The corrupt politicians measure is based on how respondents rate the problem of corrupt political leaders: “not a problem at all (1), a small problem (2), a moderately big problem (3), or a very big problem (4).” Economic status is based on how respondents describe their personal economic situation: “very good (1), somewhat good (2), somewhat bad (3), or very bad (4).”
 - 9 In analysis not shown here, when Uruguay is dropped from the sample (an outlying country with a significant proportion of religiously unaffiliated; see Somma et al. 2017, 137), a statistically significant relationship is revealed with ideology as well.

References

- Bacon Jr., Perry and Amelia Thompson-DeVeaux. 2018. “How Trump and Race Are Splitting Evangelicals.” *FiveThirtyEight*. March 2. <https://fivethirtyeight.com/features/how-trump-and-race-are-splitting-evangelicals/>.
- Bebbington, David W. 1989. *Evangelicalism in Modern Britain*. London: Unwin Hyman.
- Brouwer, Steve, Paul Gifford, and Susan D. Rose. 1996. *Exporting the American Gospel: Global Christian Fundamentalism*. New York and London: Routledge.
- Corrales, Javier. 2018. “A Perfect Marriage: Evangelicals and Conservatives in Latin America.” *New York Times*. January 17. <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/01/17/opinion/evangelicals-politics-latin-america.html>.
- Darlington, Shasta. 2012. “Ratio of Evangelicals in Brazil Jumps 44% in 10 Years.” *CNN*. June 29. <https://religion.blogs.cnn.com/2012/06/29/ratio-of-evangelicals-in-brazil-jumps-44-in-10-years/>.
- Deister, Jaqueline. 2018. “Evangelical Sectors Denounce Jair Bolsonaro as a Threat to Christian Values.” *Brasil de Fato*. October 24. <https://www.brasildefatoj.com.br/2018/10/24/setores-evangelicos-denunciam-jair-bolsonaro-como-uma-ameaca-aos-valores-cristaos>.
- Encarnación, Omar G. 2017. “Amid Crisis in Brazil, the Evangelical Bloc Emerges as a Political Power.” *The Nation*. August 16. <https://www.thenation.com/article/archive/amid-crisis-in-brazil-the-evangelical-bloc-emerges-as-a-political-power/>.
- Forster, Joel. 2020. “Brazil, Covid-19 and Bolsonaro: ‘Evangelicals Have Never Been as Divided as They Are Now.’” *Evangelical Focus Europe*. July 16. https://evangelicalfocus.com/world/7109/brazil-covid19-and-bolsonaro-evangelicals-have-never-been-as-divided-as-they-are-now?utm_source=akna&utm_medium=email&utm_campaign=Ultimato-nas-plataformas-Evangelical-Focus-e-Protestante-Digital-AB.
- Freston, Paul. 2001. *Evangelicals and Politics in Asia, Africa and Latin America*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- . 2018. “Marina Silva: A Brazilian Case Study in Religion, Politics and Human Rights.” *Church, Cosmivision, and Environment: Religion and Social Conflict in Latin America*. Edited by Evan Berry and Robert Albro. New York: Routledge.
- Garrard-Burnett, Elizabeth. 1998. *Protestantism in Guatemala: Living in the New Jerusalem*. Austin: UT Press.
- Guth, James. 2019. “Are White Evangelicals Populists? The View from the 2016 American National Election Study.” *Review of Faith and International Affairs*. 17(3): 20–35. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15570274.2019.1643991?src=recsys>.
- Hoover, Dennis R. 1997. “The Christian Right Under Old Glory and the Maple Leaf.” In *Sojourners in the Wilderness: The Christian Right in Comparative Perspective*. Edited by Corwin E. Smidt and James M. Penning. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield.
- . 2019. “Populism and Internationalism, Evangelical Style.” *The Review of Faith & International Affairs*. 17(3): 1–6. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15570274.2019.1643998>.
- Hoover, Dennis R. and Samuel H. Reimer. 2004. “Things that make for a Peaceable Kingdom: An Overview of Christianity and ‘Cooperativeness’ Across the Continental Divide.” *Journal of Ecumenical Studies*. 41(2): 205–246.

- Hoover, Dennis R., Michael D. Martinez, Samuel H. Reimer, and Kenneth D. Wald. 2002. "Evangelicalism Meets the Continental Divide: Moral and Economic Conservatism in the United States and Canada." *Political Research Quarterly*. 55(2): 351–374.
- Jenkins, Phillip. 2006. *The New Faces of Christianity: Believing the Bible in the Global South*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Kim, Andrew E. 1993. "The Absence of PanCanadian Civil Religion." *Sociology of Religion*. 54(3): 257–275.
- Kirkpatrick, David C. 2019a. *A Gospel for the Poor: Global Social Christianity and the Latin American Evangelical Left*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.
- . 2019b. "Globally, many evangelicals lean left." *The Washington Post*. August 30. <https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/2019/08/30/globally-many-evangelicals-lean-left-what-that-means-americas-future/>.
- Latinobarómetro. 2010–2015. Corporación Latinobarómetro. <https://www.latinobarometro.org/lat.jsp>.
- Levine, Daniel H. 2000. "The News about Religion in Latin America." In *Religion on the International News Agenda*. Edited by Mark Silk. Hartford, CT: Leonard Greenberg Center for the Study of Religion in Public Life, Trinity College.
- Marcano, Isaiah. 2013. "Evangelicalism and Gay Rights in Latin America." *Americas Barometer Insights*. 94: 1–10. <https://www.vanderbilt.edu/lapop/insights/IO894en.pdf>.
- Marsden, George M. 2019. "On Not Mistaking One Part for the Whole: The Future of American Evangelicalism in a Global Perspective." In *Evangelicals: Who They Have Been, Are Now, and Could Be*. Edited by Mark A Noll, David W. Bebbington, and George M. Marsden. Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans.
- McAdam, Doug and Dieter Rucht. 1993. "The CrossNational Diffusion of Movement Ideas." *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 528: 56–74.
- McAlister, Melani. 2018. *The Kingdom Has No Borders: A Global History of American Evangelicals*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Melkonian-Hoover, Ruth and Dennis Hoover. 2009. "Latin American Evangelicals' Attitudes about the United States' Role in the World." *Latin American Perspectives*. 36(3): 108–118.
- Melkonian-Hoover, Ruth and Lyman A. Kellstedt. 2019. *Evangelicals and Immigration: Fault Lines Among the Faithful*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Nussbaum, Paul. 2006. "Evangelical Christianity shifting outside West." *The Philadelphia Inquirer*. February 20. <https://wwrn.org/articles/20504/>.
- Osborn, Catherine. 2019. "Bolsonaro's Christian Coalition Remains Precarious." *Foreign Policy*. January 1. <https://foreignpolicy.com/2019/01/01/bolsonaros-christian-coalition-remains-precarius-brazil-b-rasil-president/>.
- Pew Research Center. 2014a. *Religion in Latin America*. Pew Research Center. November 13. <https://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/>.
- . 2014b. *Religious Landscape Survey*. Pew Research Center. <https://www.pewforum.org/about-the-religious-landscape-study/>.
- Reimer, Sam. 1995. "A Look at Cultural Effects on Religiosity: A Comparison Between the United States and Canada." *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 34(4): 445–457.
- Romano, Giovanna. 2020. "Datafolha: Mulheres e Negros Compõem Maioria de Evangélicos e Católicos." *Veja*. January 13. <https://veja.abril.com.br/religiao/datafolha-mulheres-e-negros-compoem-maioria-d-e-evangelicos-e-catolicos/>.
- Rowe, Paul. 2019. "The Global – and Globalist – Roots of Evangelical Action." *The Review of Faith and International Affairs*. 17(3): 36–49. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/15570274.2019.1644013>.
- Sanneh, Lamin O. 2008. *Disciples of All Nations: Pillars of World Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Shah, Timothy. 2004. "The Bible and the Ballot Box: Evangelicals and Democracy in the Global South." *SAIS Review*. 24(2): 117–132.
- Smith, Amy Erica. 2018. "For Latin America's Evangelicals, Bolsonaro is Just the Start." *Americas Quarterly*. November 9. <https://www.americasquarterly.org/article/for-latin-americas-evangelicals-bolsonaro-is-just-the-start/>.
- Smith, Brian H. 1998. *Religious Politics in Latin America: Pentecostal vs. Catholic*. Notre Dame, IN: Notre Dame University Press.
- Somma, Nicolás M., Matías A. Bargsted, and Eduardo Valenzuela. 2017. "Mapping Religious Change in Latin America." *Latin American Politics and Society*. 59(1): 119–142.

- Stoll, David. 1990. *Is Latin America Turning Protestant? The Politics of Evangelical Growth*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- US Department of State. 2018. "2018 Report on International Religious Freedom." US Department of State. Office of International Religious Freedom. <https://www.state.gov/reports/2018-report-on-international-religious-freedom/>.
- Zylberkan, Mariana. 2020. "Evangélicos Devem Ultrapassar Católicos no Brasil a Partir de 2032." *Veja*. February 4. <https://veja.abril.com.br/brasil/evangelicos-devem-ultrapassar-catolicos-no-brasil-a-partir-de-2032/>.