

Event Transcript

Changing Faiths: Latinos and the Transformation of American Religion

Wednesday, April 25, 2007

Conference call with journalists

In a telephone conference call, the directors of the [Pew Hispanic Center](#) and the [Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life](#) discussed the findings of a [survey](#) on Latinos and religion. The study explores the distinctive characteristics of Hispanics' religious beliefs and practices and examines how these are related to the political views of Latinos of all faiths.

To research the complex nature of religion among Latinos, the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life and the Pew Hispanic Center collaborated on a series of bilingual public opinion surveys that totaled more than 4,600 interviews, constituting one of the largest data collection efforts ever undertaken on this subject.

Speakers:

[Roberto Suro](#), Director, Pew Hispanic Center

[Luis Lugo](#), Director, Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life

ROBERTO SURO: Hello, everybody. I assume you've all been able to [download the report](#) from either the Pew Hispanic Center Web site or the Pew Forum Web site. I'm here with Luis Lugo, director of the Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life, and we're going to briefly go over some of the major findings of this study, and then we'll answer your questions.

By way of introduction, the Pew Hispanic Center has done a lot of surveys and studies of the Hispanic population, which have shown, in rich detail, this is not a monolithic population but one with a variety of different attitudes, actions and behaviors. We've seen effects in the assimilation process, for example, and differences by country of origin. The Pew Forum on Religion & Public Life has done a great many studies on religion, exploring differences in practices and beliefs, both in the United States and around the world.

We hadn't done much on religion, and they hadn't done much on Hispanics, so we joined forces for this study. We're both projects of the [Pew Research Center](#), which is a non-partisan research organization based in Washington and supported by [The Pew Charitable Trusts](#). We do non-partisan, non-advocacy research on a variety of topics.

Let me describe briefly what we did to collect the data for this survey. In order to understand how religion plays out across the full range of this Hispanic population, we started out with a fairly large sample of 4,000 interviews in our main survey. That sample included over samples of the non-Mexican countries of origin so that we're able to look at differences among Hispanics

who come from countries other than Mexico, such as Puerto Rico and Cuba, as well as countries in Central and South America. It affords us a much richer look than you would normally get at differences by country of origin. Also, because of the large sample size we're able to look at differences by generation, by education, by a variety of demographic variables that wouldn't be possible with a smaller sample.

We also set out to capture the full range of religious expression among Hispanics. Because about two thirds of all Hispanics are Catholics, most surveys don't get enough non Catholics to be able to explore them in great detail. For example, it is hard in most surveys of Hispanics to look in any detail at the important and growing sector of the Hispanic population that is evangelical Protestant – about 15 percent of the total. This survey also included an over sample of non Catholics. It produces a unique view of that important part of the Hispanic population – based on 905 interviews with evangelical Protestants – that allows us to look carefully at that population, probably in more detail than has been done before.

The questionnaire was about 25 minutes long on average. It explored, in considerable detail, a variety of forms of religious identification, practice and belief. Also, we explored the conversion process among people who were formerly of one religion, and now they're practicing another, or who have given up religious faith all together. Finally, we also explored views on a variety of policy issues and on partisan identification. This gives a very rich panorama of the texture of religious expressions and some measures of how religion interacts with politics.

We are able to explore and compare these attitudes and behaviors among Hispanics with non Hispanics because of the Forum's rich database of surveys conducted among the non-Hispanic population. Indeed they were in the field doing a survey of the general population on religion about the same time we were in the field doing the survey of Hispanics, so we have real-time comparisons at a variety of points between the Hispanic population and the non-Hispanic population of the United States. As a result there are many topics documented in this survey on which no data existed before. We had some preconceptions about what things might look like but didn't have data to substantiate those preconceptions.

There's an awful lot of interesting material here. The 100 pages or so of this report are just a first cut. I expect this database will be explored further over time, and there's a great deal more that could be found out from the data we produced.

Let me summarize some of the important things we found. At the first cut, the most interesting and puzzling results involved Hispanic Catholics, in particular the findings that more than half – 54 percent – of Hispanics identified themselves as charismatic. This stood out because among non-Hispanic Catholics you get a much lower level of identification as charismatic, just 12 percent. That was striking and frankly surprising, so we went back into the field and verified that finding with additional data. We did another 650 interviews with Latino Catholics that explored in considerable detail the meaning of that charismatic identity, the kinds of beliefs and practices that are associated with it. Along the way, we also explored another interesting and surprising phenomenon that emerged from the first cut of the data, which was that among Latinos of all faiths, there is a tendency to worship together in Hispanic-oriented churches and places of

worship, a phenomenon we cover in a chapter titled “[The Ethnic Church](#).” We were able to go back and explore that issue in more detail among Catholics as well.

I am trying to summarize very briefly some of the broad themes that emerge from our analysis of this data. First of all, one of the most profound and widespread changes in religious expression across the world involves this range of beliefs and practices that fall under the heading of the [renewalist movement](#), or spirit-filled Christianity. We found in the United States that renewalism is having much more impact among Latinos than non Latinos, and this true both among Catholics and Protestants.

The second very broad finding is that Hispanics of all faiths are clustering in houses of worship with distinctly ethnic characteristics, places where at least some of the clergy are Latinos, where services are available in Spanish, and where most of the members of the congregation at a given service are Latinos. These two points are both distinguishing characteristics of the Hispanic population.

If you take those two characteristics and multiply them by the size of this population, and the pace at which it’s growing, you will find a real impact, particularly in the Catholic Church, but also among evangelical Protestants. Simply put, Latinos are in the process of transforming the nation’s religious landscape. It is a process that is still underway, a transformation that may be closer to its beginning than to its end. Though we may not be able to see the end point, this survey illuminates the process at work, its mechanism and some of its trajectories.

Finally, the study shows that this transformation has consequences beyond religion. Among Latinos, religion and politics are intertwined. By some measures there’s a closer association of religion and politics among Hispanics than among non Hispanics. You can’t understand the roles Latinos play as political actors without also understanding the ways in which they worship.

At the beginning of the report, there are two chapters that go into great detail about the demography of religion, which we’re not going to review here: you can find them in the report. We can certainly answer any questions about them.

My colleague Luis Lugo is now going to explore some of the major findings in terms of religious practices and beliefs. Then I’ll come back and talk briefly about politics, and then we’ll take your questions. Luis.

LUIS LUGO: *Gracias, Roberto. Buenos dias*, and thank you all for joining us today. I’m just going to emphasize the two points Roberto made about the nature of Hispanic Christianity in this country, and how it’s transforming the landscape in the United States.

The first point is the influence of this renewalism Christianity, as we call it. Basically these ideas and practices have been influenced by the growth of the Pentecostal movement, which also began in this country about 100 years ago, out in Los Angeles. This movement seems to be having a remarkable influence throughout the world, as we have documented in some of our other surveys, but also in the United States, particularly through Latinos. The Latino population

in this respect resembles more closely the Latin American religious scene than it does the U.S. religious scene, in terms of the high numbers who practice these Pentecostal-influenced beliefs.

You will see in [Chapter 3](#) that this extends not just to expressive worship – what I call bringing the “fiesta spirit” to church – but even to distinctive Pentecostal practices, such as speaking in tongues, divine healing, and prophesying. These practices are much more common among Hispanics, both Protestant and Catholic, than among their co religionists in this country.

One of the most interesting findings comes out of this follow-up survey with Latino Catholics. One of the questions was whether taking on this charismatic identity, which has been influenced historically by Pentecostalism, is weakening or strengthening Catholic identity among those Catholics who become charismatic. The clear finding here is that taking on a charismatic identity seems to strengthen rather than weaken Catholic identity. Those two things are able to co exist and somehow reinforce each other.

The ethnic church, as, Roberto pointed out, is the second major way in which Latinos are creating distinctive institutions. Two-thirds of Latinos are worshipping in these kinds of congregations, and Roberto laid out the criteria we used to define the ethnic church.

I would point out, however, these findings make clear the process of assimilation is also at work. Hispanics that don’t have a linguistic necessity still attend Spanish services, but there’s a significant drop off as we go from the first generation to the second to the third, who attend only Spanish-speaking masses, let’s say, in the Catholic Church. This goes hand in hand with acquiring English proficiency. We see both dynamics at work. Like most Americans throughout history, people tend to gravitate toward churches or synagogues or mosques that most closely resemble their own backgrounds and cultures. On the other hand, there is this effect of American culture bringing people into closer contact with those who are not part of their cultural tradition.

In [Chapter 4](#) we see in the Latino community a more dynamic religious marketplace than perhaps we anticipated. Latinos are converting from one religion to another, or to no religion, at rates that are typical of the country as a whole. They have come into this dynamic religious marketplace which is the United States and adopted some of those practices and some of that dynamism. About 20 percent of Hispanics in this survey are converts.

Who’s losing? Very simply, the Roman Catholic Church, because that’s where most of them belong when they come into the country. About 70 percent of these converts used to be Catholics. Who’s gaining? On the one hand, about 25 percent of those who convert are becoming seculars or non affiliated. But the vast majority – about 70 percent – are becoming Christians of one variety or another, and evangelical Christians in particular. So roughly three-fourths of these converts are not abandoning religion as might be the case in, let’s say, a European setting. In fact, they’re gravitating to other religious traditions and more specifically evangelical or Pentecostal churches. All of this has important religious consequences, but also social and political consequences. I’ll turn to Roberto to elucidate some of those.

SURO: [Chapter 7](#), which explores Hispanics’ views on a variety of public policy issues, finds the interaction between religion and politics varies from issue to issue.

On this point, we did a number of comparisons between Roman Catholics and evangelical Protestants on their basic ideology, that is, whether people identify as conservatives, moderates or liberals. There's a clear association: people who attend church often, at least once a week or more, tend to be more conservative than those who go less frequently. Evangelical Protestants tend to be more conservative than Roman Catholics.

The same association is evident on social issues like abortion and gay marriage, and there's a similar pattern among non Hispanics as well. But on other issues, for example, the death penalty or economic and social well-being issues, there are not real differences among Hispanics, while you do see some among non Hispanics. Latinos regardless of religion, for example, are more supportive of guaranteed health insurance and government help for the poor than you see among their white counterparts.

[Chapter 8](#) explores the interaction of religion and partisan identification, which also includes a distinctive finding on Hispanics. Among both Hispanics and whites – in this case, we've excluded African Americans from the analysis because they're so overwhelmingly Democratic regardless of religion – evangelicals are more likely to be Republicans than are Catholics. But the difference for Latinos is greater than for whites. Latino evangelicals are more Republican by comparison to Latino Catholics than the difference you see among whites. So, difference in religious affiliation is more strongly associated with difference in political identification among Hispanics than among whites. That finding clearly has implications for the future as more Latinos become voters and as this process of conversion continues.

That's it in a very small nutshell. We'll go from here to your questions.

JEFFREY WEISS, *THE DALLAS MORNING NEWS*: My question is about the group you call "seculars." In other surveys the "none of the above" turn out to believe in God and angels and heaven and so on. Do you know whether your group is actually secular or whether it breaks down more like it does among non Hispanics?

LUGO: This category of seculars is one I find increasing discomfort with in our surveys here in the United States, because it tends to hide an awful lot. Hidden in that category are people who range from principled atheists and agnostics to people who have no relationship to a church, synagogue or mosque, but nevertheless believe in God – they may even pray; they say religion is somewhat important in their lives; et cetera. So to classify them as secular is a bit of a stretch. Maybe "non-affiliated" is the best category.

Among the Latino population, we found the non-affiliated or seculars comprise a smaller percentage than among the American population as a whole. Even among those folks, it is clear there's a good number who are spiritual but not religious, a phrase often used for these folks. When we ask them whether religion is important in forming their political views, a third of them, I think, tell us religion is important. So clearly, these are not hardcore seculars.

WEISS: So it's more like the non Hispanics' "none of the above" [category]?

LUGO: I think that's right. They are more like the non-affiliated than the four or five percent who say they are atheist or agnostics.

ADELLE BANKS, RELIGION NEWS SERVICE: Could you say what the significant percentage of Hispanic charismatics and pentecostals in both the Protestant and Catholic churches mean for the future [in] churches in the U.S., whether they happen to be predominantly Hispanic or not?

SURO: I'll talk about the Catholic Church some, and Luis can talk about the non Catholics. [Hispanics bring] a distinctive form of Catholicism. It's well within the boundaries of Catholic practice among non Hispanics in the United States and worldwide, where the charismatic movement is a real and significant part of the Catholic Church.

Looking in the American context, however, the extent of spirit-filled religiosity among Latino Catholics does pose a contrast to what have been the dominant characteristics of the Catholic Church in the United States, at least for the last generation or so, which has been a primarily white, suburban form of expression that does include a charismatic movement, though it is much smaller. There are just many fewer white Catholics who identify with these beliefs, and who identified themselves this year, and who practice their Catholicism in this way.

In terms of the future, given the proportion of Catholics who are Hispanic and the extent to which it is growing, and the extent to which Hispanics represent the youth of the church, there is going to have to be some accommodation involving both parties. I wouldn't begin to try to predict what direction that accommodation will take, but there will be a process of change. There would seem to be enough Latino Catholics who practice this distinctive form of Catholicism, who are worshipping together in ethnically oriented churches, to represent what is an important strain of Catholicism in the United States today, one that's distinctive and large and likely to be influential.

One of our interesting findings is that Latino Catholics can absorb many renewal ideas, without necessarily being associated with charismatic organizations, per se – because many of them are not – but still remain very devoutly Catholic. The absorption of these ideas that have their origins in pentecostalism is not automatically taking people away from the church. Rather it's creating a population within the church that has these distinctive characteristics.

LUGO: That last point, Roberto, is critical. It has huge pastoral implications, and I'm sure the bishops in this country and elsewhere will be paying attention. I say that with a great degree of confidence because we're getting calls from Brazil, from news organizations there that see the implications of this study for next month's meeting of the [Latin American bishops' council](#), which will include a papal visit. We did a [report on pentecostalism in Brazil](#) that showed some of the very same trends happening among Latinos in this country are happening among Latinos in Brazil, both in the Catholic community and among those who are leaving the Catholic Church and becoming pentecostal.

The general comment I would make, Adelle, on the non Catholic or evangelical side, is that the influence of this movement is even more profound in that community. Among Latinos

evangelicals tend to be much more charismatic or pentecostal than Catholics. It's also a pattern we're seeing in Latin America where, in some countries, up to 80 percent of Protestants are now pentecostal or charismatic. Evangelicalism, as we know it in this country, is fast disappearing in many places in the [global] South; basically, evangelicals are becoming pentecostals. That is a growing movement throughout the world, and Africa in particular, not just in Latin America.

So Christianity in the developing world is becoming increasingly pentecostalized. Whether people become members of pentecostal churches or adopt pentecostal practices and remain within their churches, this is clearly the most dynamic movement in Africa and Latin America. Not surprisingly, then, we're beginning to see some of that among immigrants to this country, who are predominantly Christian. They are helping to transform American Christianity; I think that is one of the results of post-1965 immigration. The immigrants reflect the major changes going on where they're coming from, and no change has been more central than the spread of pentecostalism.

BANKS: Is there a figure for what percentage of Hispanics Christians are charismatic or pentecostal overall? I kept seeing the figure relating to either Catholics or Protestants specifically.

SURO: We'll get this for you during the course of this press conference.

BANKS: Thank you very much.

JAVIER APARISI, [BBC WORLD SERVICE/BBC MUNDO](#): Good afternoon. I would like to ask a question in Spanish to Mr. Lugo. (SPEAKING IN SPANISH.)

SURO: Luis, could you summarize that in English briefly? The question was on the distinction between charismatics and pentecostals, and how they are defined in this study.

LUGO: It is also the way we define them in our [10-country pentecostal study](#). Basically we refer to pentecostals as those who adopt these practices, like speaking in tongues, divine healings, et cetera, and join pentecostal denominations, either older pentecostal denominations such as the [Assemblies of God](#) or the [Church of God in Christ](#), a major African-American pentecostal denomination, or some of the newer ones. In Latin America these are growing very fast like the [Universal Church of the Kingdom of God in Brazil](#), which is growing very, very fast.

So those are the people that we call pentecostals. They adopt these practices and become members of pentecostal churches or denominations.

We are calling "charismatics" people who adopt many of these same practices but do not leave their present churches. Unlike the Catholics we were describing, they adopt these practices but remain Roman Catholic or, in the African context, remain Anglican or Methodist or Presbyterian or Baptist.

That is the distinction between the two: what they do in terms of their affiliation. We are suggesting the influence of pentecostalism goes way beyond the growth of pentecostal churches;

it is in the adoption of these pentecostal practices by people who remain part of other churches, and it is helping to transform those churches as well.

APARISI: But how does that trend compare with Latin America? (SPEAKING IN SPANISH).

LUGO: Take a look at our [study on Brazil](#) and see if you do not find a lot of similarities between what is happening in Brazil or Guatemala or Chile along these lines and what is happening in the U.S. among Latinos. It is very, very similar. Latinos resemble more the religious dynamics in Latin America. However, when you compare U.S. Latinos to the rest of the U.S. population that picture is very, very different.

So what is happening in Latin America we are seeing in this country. It is just that we are seeing it primarily among Latinos and not among the country as a whole.

SURO: Let me just give you the number that was requested before. Looking at all Hispanics seven percent are pentecostal Protestants, meaning they are people who belong to Pentecostal denominations and identify themselves as pentecostals. Six percent are charismatic Protestants: people who identify themselves with these beliefs but are not members of pentecostal Protestant denominations. Thirty-six percent are charismatic Catholics, that is, they identify themselves with these ideas and beliefs but are still members of the Catholic Church. As a total, 49 percent of all Hispanics are renewalists in one of these three categories.

LUGO: “Renewalists” is the umbrella term we use when we are referring to both pentecostals and charismatics. It gets a little complicated but it is worth the effort given the importance and the growth of this movement.

LAURIE GOODSTEIN, [THE NEW YORK TIMES](#): What percent of the American population is Hispanic, and how has that changed over the last, say, 25 years? What are the projections for 10 or 20 years out?

SURO: Hispanics are roughly 14 percent of the population now. I can not remember what they were in 1980, but they were less than 10 percent as I recall.

GOODSTEIN: I just wanted to get a sense of the change.

SURO: Between 1990 and 2000, the Hispanic population as a whole grew by close to 60 percent – 58 percent actually. Laurie, before this call is over I will have all the numbers in front of me.

GOODSTEIN: Thanks.

JOSHUA JOHNSON, [WLRN / MIAMI HERALD NEWS](#): Good afternoon. I have two questions. Number one, this study is gigantic, and it seems like a big, omnivorous look at all things related to Hispanic religion. What are the main one or two most important points you want everyone to take away from this study?

SURO: I would point you to the [executive summary](#), and I tried to summarize them in my introductory remarks. You have got the growth of the renewal spirit that we have been talking about. Also, the ethnic church phenomena and the impact on politics. Those are probably the three big points.

LUGO: I affirm very strongly what you said about the enormity of this report. It felt around here like we were drinking from a fire hose for the last four weeks trying to put this together. So I feel your pain.

JOHNSON: It is a little tough to generalize it for radio purposes, where I do not have the length of print to work with. My other question was this. Since we are in South Florida, I am wondering whether you saw differences in the way Hispanic religion played itself out in South Florida as compared to other parts of the country. As you said you over sampled to compensate for the influence of the Mexican-American population. I am wondering if there are any other differences as far as Cuban or Venezuelan or Colombian populations.

SURO: There are very detailed findings throughout the study on country of origin, so you can look at Cubans in particular – certainly a great many Cubans live in South Florida. There are also tabulations for South Americans. The nature of the survey is such that we have not done geographic breakouts and nor will we attempt to because of the complexity of the over samples involving both country of origin and the non-Catholic populations. The study was not designed to produce geographic differences.

But there are some interesting findings about Cubans. In terms of religion and politics, the simple bottom line is while religion matters a lot in defining political views among other Latinos, among Cubans being Cuban matters more than religion. In terms of religiosity, does anybody remember anything very distinctive?

LUGO: Yes, Cubans are the most secular of any of the Latino group. They are not only the most Republican on the political side, but they also stand out on the religion side for being the most secular of any of the Latino groups.

JOHNSON: For non-Hispanic people, white people or black people [might] see this study and say, “This tells me stuff that I already know: Hispanics are Catholic, yes, big deal.” It is not a ground-breaking thing for a non-Hispanic person. What would you say to them as far as why this study matters to them?

SURO: We have been going on here for about 45 minutes about some of the rich and important findings in this study. [Our remarks] cover a great deal of ground, and we can not reprise everything we have just been over. I think the broad finding you are looking for is that a distinctive form of Christianity is having a very profound impact on the religious landscape across the country. That ought to be of interest to non-Hispanics in your audience.

[ABE LEVY, SAN ANTONIO EXPRESS-NEWS:](#) My question concerns this charismatic element that you describe as shaping Hispanic worship. Is there a coming confrontation between Catholic and Protestant leaders, as we see this element influence Hispanics on both sides of the

aisle of worship? When you think about how Protestants are less hierarchical and more based on individual expression, it just seems like there might be a show down in the future.

LUGO: That is an excellent question. But the findings here among Latino charismatics would tend to argue against what you just said. What you said makes sense, and it is intuitive, but what we found here is, if anything, Latino Catholics who become charismatics tend to have an even closer relationship with the church. If you look at the extent to which they pray rosary or go to confession or participate in parish life, whether it is singing in the choir or being a youth minister, it tends to strengthen that relationship.

There is absolutely no evidence in this report – and again I find this somewhat surprising precisely because of what you said – that [renewalism] is in any sense diminishing or undercutting either the degree of their Catholic orthodoxy or their degree of connection to their parish life. In fact, the reverse seems to be the case, that it is strengthening it.

[Renewalists] also tend to take positions on certain hot-button issues within the Catholic Church, such as the ordination of women. On the whole, they tend to be more conservative than white Catholics. So I understand where you are coming from, but I do not see much evidence of that in this report.

I do not think a broader clash between Catholics and pentecostals in this country is very likely. We are seeing that in places like [Brazil, where the Pope is visiting](#). There, pentecostals are a much smaller percentage of the population; they are just starting to grow. These communities have historically been overwhelmingly Catholic, so the degree of distrust and, yes, even animosity between Catholicism and pentecostalism is fairly sharp.

As you may know from reading some of the statements coming out of the Vatican and the Latin American bishops' conference in the run up to this meeting in Brazil, the question of the “sects” is very high on the agenda for both the pope and the bishops. Typically what they are referring to there is the proliferation of pentecostal groups in places like Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America.

LEVY: Do you see any of the traditional Catholic way of worshiping and doing church influencing Hispanics? I am turning the tables on this; we talked a lot about this Protestant, evangelical influence, but is it only in one direction?

LUGO: We see that among the second and third generation and those who become more English proficient. They do tend to place less emphasis, although it is still fairly high, on Hispanic-style worship, and they seem to be mixing their participation in Hispanic-style worship with, let us say, more mainstream non-Hispanic, Catholic worship.

Even within the church my sense is there is some integration or assimilation going on, but many of those Hispanics are carrying those practices with them, even when they go to a predominately Anglo context. I do think you are right that the influence is both ways, but it seems to be predominately in the direction of incorporating more of these charismatic practices into Catholic worship.

DANIEL DALE, [HOUSTON CHRONICLE](#): I am interesting in the gap between Latino evangelical support for Republicans and Catholic support for Republicans. As I am sure you know, the [“Hispanic Churches in American Public Life” survey](#) in 2006 showed a gap that was virtually non-existent within the margin of error. Were you surprised by the size of this one, and, to your knowledge, has any previous national poll, like exit polls in 2006 or 2004, shown a gap of this size?

SURO: The 2004 exit polls, which we examined in some detail in [a report we did on the 2004 election](#), showed that a great deal of President Bush’s gain in Hispanic votes between 2000 and 2004 can be explained by higher turn out and a higher distribution among Hispanic evangelicals.

In terms of voting behavior in that election, and certainly in 2000, between Hispanic Catholic voters and evangelical voters there was a clear differential in their preferences for president. This survey does not look at voting behavior, it looks at party identification. It is important to keep in mind that those are two different things. Voting behavior changes from one election to another and party identification tends to be somewhat stable.

It is not surprising that evangelicals are more Republican than Democrat among Latinos or non Latinos. What is interesting is the percentage of Republicans among [Hispanic] evangelicals is double that of [Hispanic] Catholics. That is quite a difference, and it is larger, that doubling of Republican identification across religious categories, than what you see among non Hispanics.

Non-Hispanic evangelicals tend to be more Republican than Hispanic Catholics. But the difference is larger among Latinos, and it has very real consequences in electoral strategies. If you look at the electoral strategy that the two Bush presidential campaigns deployed, especially in 2004, [you’ll see] they either were aware of this tendency, or they helped produce it. It’s hard to tell whether we’re looking at the chicken or the egg here.

But the Bush White House, between 2000 and 2004, very specifically and very openly put a lot of effort into cultivating evangelical Hispanic preachers and their flocks. Through the [Faith Based Initiative](#), and through strictly political efforts, they made that an important target. The 2004 exit polls showed that effort yielded some important results.

This survey shows that in terms of party identification, very clearly, Latinos who are evangelical and who go to church regularly are the most Republican segment of this population.

LUGO: Judging from these numbers, if you are Republican, your best prayer for this is, “Let them convert from Catholicism to evangelicalism, and please, Lord, let them be regular church attenders.” Because those two things are very strongly correlated with Hispanics becoming Republicans.

As Roberto mentioned, Hispanic evangelicals went for Bush by 56 or 57 percent in 2004. When you break down the numbers from 2000 to 2004, a lot of that bump was attributed to the much higher percentage of evangelicals who went for Bush in 2004.

Clearly, they got some traction there. But this raises an interesting question, Roberto. Even though Latino evangelicals are gravitating towards the Republican Party, and even though on hot-button social issues that have mobilized many white evangelicals – like abortion and gay marriage, on which, they are, if anything, even more conservative than white evangelicals – there is still this question of immigration, and how that’s playing out within the Republican Party. I have personally spoken with Latino evangelical leaders who feel very let down, that despite their effort in 2004 to get behind abortion and those issues, they have not seen the same reciprocity from evangelicals on the question of immigration which, as the report points out, is also very, very high on the agenda of Latino evangelicals, as it is of Roman Catholics.

DALE: Just very quickly, has any national poll shown a gap this size, to your knowledge?

SURO: I’m not aware of a national poll that’s explored it in this detail, or that has these sample sizes.

Let me just offer some numbers on the Hispanic population. A rough way of measuring the pace of growth is that the Hispanic population doubled in size from 1980 to 2000. According to current estimates, it will more than double in size between 2000 and 2020.

The growth between the 1990 census and the 2000 census went from 27.4 million to 35.3 million, up 58 percent. Our latest numbers on 2005 have the Hispanic population right below 42 million, at 41.9 – that’s the population in the 50 states and the District of Columbia; it doesn’t include Puerto Rico. Forty-two million, that’s the 2005 number. Obviously it’s more than that now.

The percent change from 2000 to 2005 was 21.5 percent. So there’s a lot of demographic energy in this population.

HIRAM SOTO, [SAN DIEGO UNION-TRIBUNE](#): You were saying that Latinos are in the process of transforming the religious landscape here in the country. Can you talk more about the role of the issue of immigration in that transformation?

The other thing is, can you specify what kind pentecostal practices those Catholics are adopting? Is there overlap between both sides?

SURO: I can talk about the role of immigration in the demographic process.

One of the interesting findings in terms of basic demography is that the foreign-born population is more Catholic than the native-born, and it’s not an insubstantial difference.

Among Latinos, 74 percent of the foreign-born are Catholic, compared to 58 percent of the native born. That difference is made up with more evangelicals, more mainline Protestants and more seculars.

What you see is this two-way process. There are twin trends occurring in the demography. On the one side you have an influx of immigrants who are predominantly Catholic. On the other side

you've got a movement away from Catholicism that's very manifest in the native-born generations.

Those two dynamics are shaping the religious distribution.

SOTO: Can I rephrase my question a little bit? I was asking more on the issue of immigration reform and the politics of immigration and what impact the national debate on immigration is having on this transformation of the religious landscape by Latinos. Is it playing a role in this transformation, or no, not really?

SURO: I would say probably not.

There's no evidence that political views play into conversion, though Latino Catholics report more activity by their church on immigration than do evangelicals.

We asked a question about whether their churches participated in the immigrant rights protests or boycotts in the last 12 months. About twice as many Latino Catholics said their church had as had Latino evangelicals.

But I wouldn't say, in terms of the change in religious orientation, that immigration politics is a big factor.

LUGO: Or any factor whatsoever.

To your second question I would say the chart on page 37 of the report (in [Chapter 3](#)), Figure 3.9 answers your question directly. These are the ways Catholics describe what's going on in their Mass. A significant majority is seeing displays of excitement and enthusiasm, such as raising hands and clapping, and so forth – that's associated with Pentecostalism. That's what I called bringing the “fiesta spirit” into the Mass.

But then they go beyond that. The bottom half of Figure 3.9 shows a good number of them – not as high a percentage, but a good number – are also witnessing what I would call high-octane Pentecostalism, which is not just enthusiastic displays during Mass, but also things like speaking in tongues and prophesying and offering the word of knowledge, which are distinctive practices historically in Pentecostalism.

So there is both a soft influence and a heavy influence of Pentecostal beliefs and practices.

SOTO: But they sound like non-threatening practices to the Catholic Church. Or are they threatening, in the sense that some of these worshippers might go to, say, a pentecostal church?

LUGO: This is the issue the Catholic Church is working through now, frankly. In fact, there's a high-level commission appointed by the pope that's engaging in theological discussions with pentecostal leaders on what each tradition means by the baptism of the spirit, which is a central teaching in pentecostal theology.

You will have your answer before long, whether Rome thinks that teaching is compatible with Catholic theology, or whether it departs in significant ways.

TIM FUNK, [THE CHARLOTTE OBSERVER](#): Down here in the Carolinas, I'm hearing from a lot of Protestant churches, some of them mainline, who say they're so eager to tap into this growing number of Hispanics that they're willing to let their worship styles change a little bit – music and things like that.

If you look down the road, are these Catholics taking their crucifixes and rosaries and devotion to Mary over to the Protestant side? Are those cultural things?

About half the Catholics in the Charlotte diocese are now Hispanic. There's a sense that they're not necessarily stepping up to the plate to become leaders in the diocese and in the parishes, that they're still deferring to the dwindling number of priests. That's a cultural difference in the post-sexual abuse era. Do you see any of that in your survey?

LUGO: Let me address the second part, and then Roberto can address the first part of your question.

We document in this survey the extent to which charismatic Catholics tend to be more involved in those activities you mentioned than non-charismatic Catholics. We do not have a comparison here between Latino Catholics overall and white Catholics on the question of parish participation that you raised. The only comparison we have here is between Latino Catholics who are charismatics and those who are not. It is very clear that charismatics are twice as likely to participate in parish activities than those who are not charismatic.

To the extent that there's Latino leadership in these parishes, it is more likely going to be Latino charismatics who are stepping up to the plate. Whether Latinos overall are stepping up to the plate, keep in mind this is a very immigrant community.

These are folks, not unlike I was when I immigrated to this country from Cuba back in '62 – You're just learning the language, and your parents have two or three jobs trying to make ends meet. It takes a while to have enough personal security. Then you can begin to volunteer and take on those leadership positions.

The high percentage of very recent immigrants in the Latino community may be a part of the explanation for why some of the Anglo Catholics there are saying they're not stepping up to the extent that they should.

SURO: The other question is, is there a cultural element of religious practice? If you look on page 20 (in [Chapter 2](#)), Figure 2.4, there are the results of two questions, one asking whether people have a crucifix or another religious object in their homes and the other on whether they pray to saints or the Virgin Mary in difficult moments.

The contrast between Hispanic Catholics and Hispanic evangelicals is quite sharp. You see 86 percent of Catholics have a crucifix or a religious object compared to 30 percent of evangelicals. With prayer to saints or the Virgin, it's an even starker difference, 79 percent to nine.

There's a very clear difference. It appears that when people convert, they make something of a clean break with those typically Catholic practices.

KIM VO, SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS: Because of a preference for separate ethnic worship, do you perceive in the future two distinctive worship styles in the Catholic Church? Or do you think, because of the growth of the Latino population within the Catholic Church, that some of the more charismatic preferences are going to bleed over and influence the traditional non-Hispanic Catholic Church service?

SURO: The short answer to that very good question is stay tuned. I'd give it 10 to 20 years, and we'll know the answer. As I said in my first remarks, we're early in this process. But you've identified some of the really important questions about how this will play out.

LUGO: I would only add that we employ many methodologies for survey research here at the Pew Research Center, but reading crystal balls is not one of them. As Roberto says, we just have to wait and see.

PATRICIA ZAPOR, CATHOLIC NEWS SERVICE: I see you broke down some of your data by first generation, second generation and third generation.

Were you able to draw any conclusions about the rates of conversion and whether people are bringing ideas of what a lively Catholic Church is from home countries? It doesn't look like you're likely to find conversions among the first generation, but that may just be because people are busy trying to earn a living and learn English and do the other things immigrants do.

SURO: Yes. If you look on page 43 (in [Chapter 4](#)), Figure 4.2, there's a breakdown of conversion by generation.

ZAPOR: But why? That's my question. Did you get to the whys?

SURO: There are lots of other measures of opinion and behavior in which you see clear differences across the three generational variables for Hispanics. This [measure of conversion] is one where the real difference is between immigrants and everybody who is born in the United States, because there's not much of a difference between the second generation, the children of immigrants, and the third generation, which is everybody who is native born of native-born parents. There's just no difference between those two groups. The real difference is between immigrants and the native born.

You see that reflected when you look at that table, which breaks down the differences by language. Latinos who are primarily English speakers, English dominant, are almost twice as likely to be converts as those who are Spanish dominant, and bilinguals are in the middle.

This corresponds to a lot of other questions of attitudes and views of family, questions like should adult children live with their parents until they're married; should a husband have the final say in a marriage; questions on attitudes towards fatalism; does it make any sense to plan for future? There you see real differences by these language categories and differences between the native born and the foreign born.

We looked for a long time to try and determine whether we could say that conversion is strongly associated with the process of assimilation. In some ways it is, and other ways it's not.

For example, there is not much difference in the pace of conversion among immigrants who have been here for a long time compared to those who have been here for a few years. The associations aren't as strong as they are on some other behaviors that really do change over time here.

The best you can say is there are indications that being in the United States – certainly being born here and being raised here – is associated with a movement away from either the Catholic Church or religiosity in general. Language seems to be associated with it.

I don't think we're prepared say flat out that the whole complex of processes that we call assimilation or acculturation is a driver in conversion.

CARLOS BARDASANO, TELEMUNDO TELEVISION: Could Mr. Lugo please repeat the percentage of Hispanics that have left the Catholic Church?

LUGO: Thirteen percent are formerly Catholics.

SURO: Yes, that's right. Thirteen percent of all Hispanics were once Catholic but are no longer. If you add that to the 68 percent, it rounds out to 82 percent of all Hispanics, at one time, being Catholics.

BARDASANO: I believe I heard [you say] a percentage of around 20 percent, let me go back in my notes.

LUGO: That's a different number than what you asked for. About 20 percent of all Hispanics have converted from one religion to another. You were asking more specifically about Catholics and obviously, a large percentage of that 18 percent are former Catholics, but there's also conversion in other directions, too. That figure of 18 percent, to be very exact, is on page 42 (in [Chapter 4](#)), Figure 4.1.

JOSE DIAZ, REFORMA NEWSPAPER: In general, how relevant is the church experience for first-generation immigrants? Second, how important are those services that churches perform, like psychological and health services, for people who join another denomination, other than Catholic?

SURO: If you look at page 25 (in [Chapter 2](#)), there's a section on the kinds of social services that Hispanics receive. It's not broken down by immigrant [variables] specifically, but across

religious traditions. If you look at the Catholic population, which encompasses most immigrants and certainly most Mexican immigrants, you get a sense of how many of them report getting some kind of services from the church. On some measures, food or clothing, for example, 84 percent of all Hispanics say their church or house of worship helps people. That doesn't mean they specifically got it but, among churchgoers, the places where they worship have these services. The numbers are quite substantial, and a majority attend churches or houses of worship that offer a variety of these services such as help with finding a job or help with financial problems, et cetera. There are strong indications that churches have some of these services available. How much of an impact it actually has on the social well-being of immigrant families is harder to measure but they do report that the services are there.

LUGO: It's generally high among all the religious communities, including Catholics, but it was interesting the finding that evangelicals in particular, on a variety of these services, such as food and clothing and finding a job and financial problems, were significantly more likely to have these services offered at their congregations. The only difference there was on language or literacy training. Evangelical churches were offering language or literacy training at the same rate [as other denominations,] while with those other services, the Hispanic evangelicals were significantly higher in number than among Hispanic Catholics.

DIAZ: Compared to other institutions like unions or schools, how important are churches in the first-generation immigrant community?

SURO: That's a difficult comparison to make. There is one point of comparison that is pretty clear. A great many more Latino immigrants are attending churches, or having some relationship with churches, as compared to unions. The labor movement is a much smaller institution than religion is in the United States, so it's a different kind of impact. If you belonged to a labor union, obviously, in terms of work life, that institution has a very direct and important impact in a way a church won't in terms of economic outcomes. But I think it's safe to say the churches are the institutions with which the largest number of immigrants have some contact in the United States. The broadest point of contact for immigrants, in terms of institutions in the United States, is through churches.

LOUIS MEDINA, [THE BAKERSFIELD CALIFORNIAN](#): As Mr. Lugo said, the trends in attendance at ethnic and language-specific services seem to be "that even Hispanics who don't have a linguistic necessity to attend these services also attend them." If that's the case, then, how will growth come? Will it come only from the Hispanic community and not the mainstream community, because the mainstream community may not speak Spanish? To me that signals there won't be as much of a crossover effect. If that's the case, how does the growth of Hispanic churches impact or transform the greater American religious landscape? Is it because the numbers are just so huge? If so, is the growth going to rely on increasing numbers of immigrants only?

LUGO: It is largely being driven by the new immigrants who are coming in. There's no question about that, and those numbers will continue to elevate the percentage of Catholics in this country who are Hispanic. So in sheer numbers alone, [immigration] will have an impact.

But, look, the Catholic Church in this country even quite apart from the Hispanic community, has to compete in a very vibrant and dynamic religious marketplace and, already, those who have studied these things have pointed to the Catholic Church adopting, if not Pentecostal, at least, evangelical practices in order to try to build up their numbers. Latinos might be reinforcing a lesson that is already there, among many Catholics, which is, to survive and thrive in this marketplace, you have to become increasingly better at reaching your own parishioners and people beyond your parish to bring them into the church. My sense is Latinos are reinforcing that which is already there to some extent. I just think they're putting that instinct on steroids.

SURO: Let me return to the topic as it relates to Latinos alone. One of the very important findings regarding the ethnic church is the extent to which English-speaking Latinos seek out religious services in Spanish. In looking at Latino Catholics, 61 percent of those who say they can carry on a conversation in English pretty well, which is one of the standard ways of measuring English language ability, and 23 percent of those who say they speak English very well say they prefer to attend Mass in Spanish. For those people it's not a linguistic necessity. They're not going to Mass in Spanish because they can't understand in English. They're going to Mass in Spanish for a variety of reasons. It may have to do with ethnic identification. It may have to do with the nature of spirituality. It may have to do with the way they (INAUDIBLE) when they worship. They worship in Spanish, even though English may be the language they speak at work or with their neighbors.

This finding strongly suggests that ethnic clustering is a phenomena that, while being driven by the growth of the immigrant population, is not exclusive to the immigrant population. You've got a significant portion of the native-born, English-speaking population participating in this phenomena, in which ethnicity is important to religion.

MEDINA: I understand that. If the greatest growth we're seeing is among the Hispanic churches, and the trend seems to be to have worship in Spanish, then where does that leave the mainstream churches? Do you ever foresee people having to learn Spanish so they can go to a church service – that's not one of the ways it's transforming the religious landscape, right?

SURO: No, and it's unlikely to. If you look at the Catholic Church where you've got the greatest concentration of Latinos, a third of Catholics today are Hispanic. That proportion will grow. We have some projections in [Chapter 1](#) that look to the future, and how that proportion will grow. But the church will remain with a majority of Catholics being non-Hispanics well out 25 or 30 years ahead.

I don't think non-Spanish speakers are going to be obliged to go to Mass in Spanish, but they may go to parishes where there are two or three Masses offered in Spanish, where this kind of religious practice is not just an addendum to parish life, not a niche. Something that was very common 10 or certainly 20 years ago was there might be one Spanish-language Mass at an odd hour. It's more likely to be a central part of the life of parishes all across the country now. In some parts of the country, it's going to be the dominant part of parish life.

LUGO: I think that's precisely right. I would also put a global spin on this and say that what you're seeing in the United States is in some sense what you're seeing globally among the 1.2

billion Catholics. The language most commonly spoken among Catholics throughout the world is Spanish. Latin America has replaced Europe as a demographic center of global Catholicism.

A lot more Catholics, internationally, are going to be speaking Spanish because of the growth of the importance of the church in Latin America for the global Catholic Church. But that doesn't mean the church is going to adopt Spanish and reinstitute a common language, with Spanish instead of Latin. It just means it will add to the great variety of the global Catholic Church. It means that English or Italian won't necessarily be the lingua franca anymore.

What you're seeing in this country is a reflection of what's going on in global Catholicism more generally.

MEDINA: Why do people look for these ethnic and language-specific services, in Spanish among Hispanics? Is it a desire to return to what was familiar in childhood, for example, the prayers your grandma taught you? Being Hispanic myself, I still remember *El Padre Nuestro*, the *Credo*, and all of those things, even though I left Catholicism, converted to evangelicalism and sort of left it. Now I'm still Christian, adopting a Christian viewpoint, but not necessarily belonging to any specific church, even though I feel comfortable with the Catholicism of my childhood. Did people speak about that?

SURO: We should be interviewing you. That's very interesting. The survey maps out these phenomena, the dynamics of motivation. We haven't teased it out of these data so far, and I'm not sure you'd be able to get at the psychological factors you're describing there.

ELOISA GONZALEZ, [YAKIMA HERALD-REPUBLIC](#): How do the charismatic Catholic Latinos impact the non-Hispanic Catholic church? What is the reaction we can expect from the non-Hispanics?

SURO: We're a little hamstrung because we didn't survey non-Hispanic Catholics for this study to get their reaction. That's a very good idea for a follow up. How they'll react in the long term as this process unfolds – as I said before, it's one of the really interesting pending questions. But we don't have anything quantifiable at this point to report to you on that.

GONZALEZ: What kind of impact are we looking at directly on the non-Hispanic Catholics? We've been talking about charismatic coming into the Catholic Church, but is that going to move into the non-Hispanic services?

LUGO: The Catholic charismatic renewal movement predates the more recent large wave of Hispanics coming into the Catholic Church [in the United States.] You're talking about a development that goes back to the late '50s and early '60s, when various denominations, including the Roman Catholic Church, begin to witness charismatic renewal movements within them.

It's not as though Hispanics are the only ones who are bringing this into the church. They're just bringing it in in such numbers that it dwarfed the pre-existing Anglo charismatic renewal movements within the Catholic Church.

The church has been, for quite a few years, trying to make its peace with this movement and by and large it has been welcoming to the Catholic charismatic renewal, perhaps for some of the reasons that we uncover in this report, mainly that these people do not stop being Catholic. If anything, they become even more Catholic in their attachment to the church. No doubt that will be part of the considerations that the bishops and others will need to look at as they confront the growing number of Latino charismatics.

GONZALEZ: As for convergence, we're not seeing that the Catholic Church is going to see fewer Hispanics in their church, right? It still sounds like there's a significant proportion.

SURO: You have two factors, one that is a certainty and another that has the potential for creating a continued growth in the number of Hispanic Catholics. The one that's certain is the number of children being born in immigrant households, with those immigrant households being predominantly Catholic. That's one source of growth: more children are being born to non-Hispanic Catholic households. The natural increase among Hispanics is now larger than it is among whites.

The other source of growth is immigration. The net number of new immigrants coming into this country is something that's subject to a lot of other factors, and certainly will depend, in some measure, on how immigration policy shapes up in the future.

LUGO: Another way of stating it is that the gains for the Catholic Church in this country, among Latinos, from immigration and higher fertility rates are more than making up for those Latino Catholics, particularly among the second generation, who go to other churches or who turn secular. Yes, that is happening but those numbers are more than being replaced by higher fertility rates and high levels of immigration.

XAVIER VILA, [CATALUNYA RADIO](#): I wanted to ask a follow up on the path that you've seen among the younger generations. Do you think that it's going to be a major change?

SURO: Yes, to the extent that native-born Latinos, particularly those of the second generation, the children of immigrants, are less Catholic than the immigrant generation. Given that that second generation is the fastest growing sector of the Hispanic population, the demographic dynamics will have an impact.

Having said that, if you look at the projections we did, which start on pages 14 and 15 (in [Chapter 1](#)) and are found in more detail in a methodological appendix, even given that, even assuming that conversions continue, this still remains a predominantly Catholic population and its share of the Catholic Church continues to increase.

WEISS: I have a methodology question. I got an e-mail from a reader based on something I'd already posted [about the survey]. The question is to whether a phone survey is going to be truly representative. I think the point of our reader's question had something to do with people whose legal status may be compromised may have been less willing to participate in such a survey.

SURO: Speaking for the Pew Hispanic Center, we've done 19 or 20 surveys at this point with a total sample size by now in the 10s of thousands. We are able to capture, with very high response rates, recently arrived Spanish-speaking immigrants who have all the characteristics of people who are undocumented. We don't ask immigration status flat out, but there are lots of indications that we get a very representative sample of that segment of the population. When you're talking about a survey that has a total sample size of 4,000, when you're looking at a population of 42 million, we've got high confidence in these results.

WEISS: If it's a representative 4,200, it's a very powerful survey.

SURO: It is. We go to great, great lengths in drawing the sampling frame and designing the sample and then weighting the results. One of the things we're highly attentive to is to make sure that population of recently arrived, foreign-born, predominantly Mexican immigrants with low levels of education are represented in the numbers we would expect them to, and they are.

WEISS: That's a good answer. Let me throw out one other reader question. These days news is a process, not a moment.

On the question of speaking in tongues: Do Catholics understand the concept of speaking in tongues in the same way pentecostals do? Did your question burrow down as to what they meant by it?

LUGO: We did a [10-country pentecostal survey](#), and it did include the United States. There we probed deeper than we do with this report. Based on the information here, I don't think we can really answer that. Based on the other report, I would just say of the U.S. more generally that people have in mind different things when they say "speaking in tongues."

Within Catholic circles, oftentimes it's "praising in tongues," rather than speaking in tongues in a very public way like happens in many Pentecostal churches. We do have "praising" or "speaking" in tongues because we know there's greater diversity of that practice among Catholics than, let's say, among Pentecostals. We were sensitive to that but to get to the bottom of what you're talking about would require much further analysis.

WEISS: It's a question, then, whether we're talking about the same phenomenon or not.

SURO: In terms of the notion of speaking in tongues as a manifestation of a renewalist spirit, we did do some work, particularly with this Catholic over sample when we went back to 650 people to make sure there was an overlay between people who were saying they spoke in tongues and did other things explicitly identified as gifts in the renewalist spirit. If you look at page 36 (in [Chapter 3](#)), Figure 3.7, for charismatic Catholics, we asked about whether [they practiced] praying for miraculous healing, prophesying or receiving a word of knowledge, and speaking in tongues, you see somewhat the same orders of magnitude for all three of those phenomena. That gave us a good deal of confidence that we're talking about something real here because it's not just speaking in tongues, it's a variety of beliefs and practices that are all associated with that kind of Christianity.

LUGO: Just to add something on the methodological question. This survey was bilingual from the get go, which means you have bilingual interviewers on the phone making the initial contact who can switch to Spanish or English depending on the preference. We're very concerned about many numbers out there, generated by reputable pollsters who nevertheless do not have that fully bilingual interview. One of my concerns, personally, was missing precisely the kinds of people you were worried about missing in this survey. But we have a much higher degree of confidence that because it is bilingual from the get go, and not somebody calling back a few hours later, that we are picking up quite a few of these more recent immigrants, including those who may not be documented.

WEISS: Do you have any sense as to whether there's a significant percentage of folks without telephones who are even more recent?

SURO: To answer briefly, our response rates with recently arrived immigrants are quite high, and our preoccupations with cell-only households is actually not among recently arrived immigrants. It's more among more assimilated, younger, more educated Hispanics, as it is in the general population.

APARISI: This is for you, Mr. Suro, on the political ramifications of the survey. You pointed out there was a surge in Latino votes for the Republicans because of the Pentecostal aspects. Is there any sense of change since 2004, because, apparently, in 2006, there was a decrease in Hispanic votes for the Republicans.

SURO: Yes. The 2006 election was a bad election for Republicans with all kinds of people, and they did not do as well among Hispanics. They didn't do as well with any segment of the population. If you compare the drop in votes from the 2006 election to the previous off-year elections, the drop among Hispanics, proportionately, was about the same as it was among whites. It doesn't seem in that drop-off religion played as much of a factor as it did in President Bush's own gain, in the head-to-head contests in 2004.

Thank you all, and you know where to reach us if you've got any further questions. Happy writing.