

Religion, Religiosity, and Attitudes Toward Immigrants: The Influence of American  
Mainline Religions on Sociopolitical Views

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## Dedication

The author wishes to dedicate this work to Vera, Mark, and Evan, for their unwavering support throughout the past few challenging years.

## Acknowledgements

The author wishes to acknowledge Steven A. Tuch for his thoughtfulness and meticulous care in guiding me through this work; particularly while navigating lengthy syntax files and delicate conceptual nuances surrounding issues of religiosity, immigration, and public opinion. The author would also like to acknowledge and thank Daniel E. Martinez for providing his guidance and expertise to this work as well.

## Abstract of Thesis

### Religion, Religiosity, and Attitudes Toward Immigrants: The Influence of American Mainline Religions on Sociopolitical Views

The growth in recent decades of less traditionally religious groups has inspired a reevaluation of the effect of religious tradition and religiosity on sociopolitical attitudes, particularly attitudes toward immigrants. Additionally, the historic increase in Mexican and Central American immigrants to the U.S. has fixed national attention on immigration reform. Despite a consensus concerning the need for immigration reform in the U.S., existing literature, surveys, and public commentary have shown that issues of immigration foster atypical patterns of support and opposition, particularly among religious groups. As a result, research examining the effects of religious tradition and religiosity on attitudes toward immigrants has yielded contradictory results.

Using data from the 2004 General Social Survey, the author aims to construct a more nuanced theoretical framework that distinguishes between the effects of religious tradition and religiosity on attitudes toward immigrants. Among the most notable findings are that members of less traditionally religious groups, those with lower religiosity, and more highly educated respondents have more positive attitudes toward immigrants, while greater perceived economic and cultural threats posed by immigrants create more negative attitudes. The author also finds that religiosity has different effects on attitudes

toward immigrants for Black Protestants compared to white Evangelical Protestants.

Additional findings and their implications are discussed.

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## *Introduction*

In recent decades Americans have been reshaping their religious identities and traditions, with increasing numbers identifying with ‘spiritual’ or ‘non-affiliated,’ as opposed to traditional, religious categories. America has also been witness to a growing immigrant population, largely Latino and Asian — albeit one that has now plateaued (Passel et al. 2014; Meckler 2014; Krogstad and Lopez 2014b). [In the present study I use the terms “Latino” and “Hispanic” interchangeably.] These shifts in religious tradition and racial-ethnic demographics have motivated researchers to develop new theoretical and methodological approaches to better understand the effects of religion and religiosity on sociopolitical thought, especially attitudes toward immigrants. The influx of Latino immigrants in particular has inspired advocacy from highly religious, and typically conservative, groups (Jones et al. 2013) while also rousing familiar partisan divides between Republicans and Democrats (Lipka 2014; Lee and Nicholas 2014; Felsenthal 2014).

The present study focuses on Americans’ attitudes toward immigrants as shaped by religious tradition, religiosity, perceptions of cultural and economic threat, and various ascribed and achieved background characteristics. I argue that because the issue of immigration engenders atypical patterns of support and polarization, the literature has produced inconsistent and contradictory findings concerning the determinants of attitudes toward immigrants. My aim is to provide a more nuanced analytical framework in order to more clearly decipher the influence of religiosity on Americans’ attitudes toward

immigrants. The study of attitudes toward immigrants also provides an opportunity to reexamine the combined influence of race and religious tradition on sociopolitical ideology, considering the high religiosity of many African Americans (Jones and Francis 2012; Laser et al. 2010).

Prior research on attitudes toward immigrants and immigration reform has focused on a few primary explanatory factors: Religiosity; the significance of cultural and economic motivations for immigration; perceptions of cultural and economic threat posed by immigrants; and the influences of ascribed and achieved background characteristics like age, sex, race, and political affiliation. Though not all of the literature reviewed below focuses solely on immigration to the U.S., it discusses either U.S. religion, religiosity, or American attitudes toward immigrants and immigration reform. Prior to reviewing the literature it will be beneficial to outline demographic shifts in religious tradition, immigration, and the Latino American population.

### ***Demographic Shifts***

#### ***A Different America: Spirituality and Immigration***

The shifts within religious and immigrant populations have altered the ability of religious tradition and religiosity to predict attitudes toward immigrants. In particular, the historically high rates of Latino immigration, the recent plateau of Latino immigrants, and the growing religiously unaffiliated population in America have largely driven the national conversation on immigration and religion. These demographic shifts are pivotal in terms of examining the ways race, ethnicity, and religion predict sociopolitical views,

especially Americans' attitudes toward immigration. These shifts have been noted in the literatures of sociology, psychology, political science, and religion. Each study referenced below can be related to, or explicitly concerns, the interactions among religion, politics, and immigration.

*The “Spiritual but not Religious” and the Religiously Non-Affiliated*

Often described as alternatives to organized religion, two increasingly popular identities pivot on redefining religious beliefs to focus on concepts of spirituality, naturalism, or agnosticism while typically avoiding the identification ‘religious.’ Cited by scholars as “spiritual but not religious” (Ammerman 2013) — a common phrase culled directly from members of the demographic — this philosophy posits a connection to one’s inner self and to a deep appreciation for human life (Lugo 2012; Frank 2014; Goodenough 2014). The basis of spirituality is also connected to a feeling of self-transcendence (Frank 2014), especially given the emphasis sometimes placed on universal connections to all living things (Lugo 2012). Similarly, “Religious Naturalists” couple their religious and spiritual beliefs with scientific theories of evolution, creation, and anthropology (Goodenough 2014). In other words, while the “spiritual but not religious” focus on the inner spirit and humankind’s connection to the surrounding world through the spirit, religious naturalists pivot their exploration of religion and spirituality on widely accepted scientific theories (Goodenough 2014). Both the “spiritual but not religious” and religious naturalists can believe in a deity, unlike atheism or some

religiously unaffiliated, but typically remain religiously unaffiliated in the traditional sense (Kosmin et al. 2009; Ammerman 2013; Goodenough 2014).

Religious non-affiliation has also been on the rise for over a decade in America, and largely consists of Millennial members (Lugo 2012; Kosmin et al. 2009). Beginning in the 1990s — as immigration from Mexico and Central America began increasing as well — the religiously non-affiliated, often referred to as ‘nones,’ and atheists began increasing with the decade’s jumpstart of New Atheism advocates such as Richard Dawkins, Christopher Hitchens, and Sam Harris (Kosmin et al. 2009; Frank 2014). Sam Harris in particular is credited with pioneering the New Atheist movement (Goodenough 2014; Frank 2014). The percentage of Americans who identify as non-affiliated with any particular religion increased to 20 percent in 2012 from 15 percent in 2007 (Lugo 2012). It should be noted, however, that most Americans who identify as non-affiliated are not atheists but rather agnostic or deist (Lugo 2012). Like the non-affiliated, the spiritual-but-not-religious and religious naturalists primarily consist of younger generations and largely vote Democratic (Lugo 2012; Kosmin et al. 2009; Chituc 2014). It is these demographic shifts that have directly challenged religious, sociological, and political science research to update the definitions and measures of religiosity and devotional style and to decipher the influence of these new identities on American public life.

However, while “nones” and “spiritual but not religious” Americans have been on the rise in recent decades, it should be noted that religious affiliation remains a primary facet of American life. The persistent hesitation of most Americans to identify as

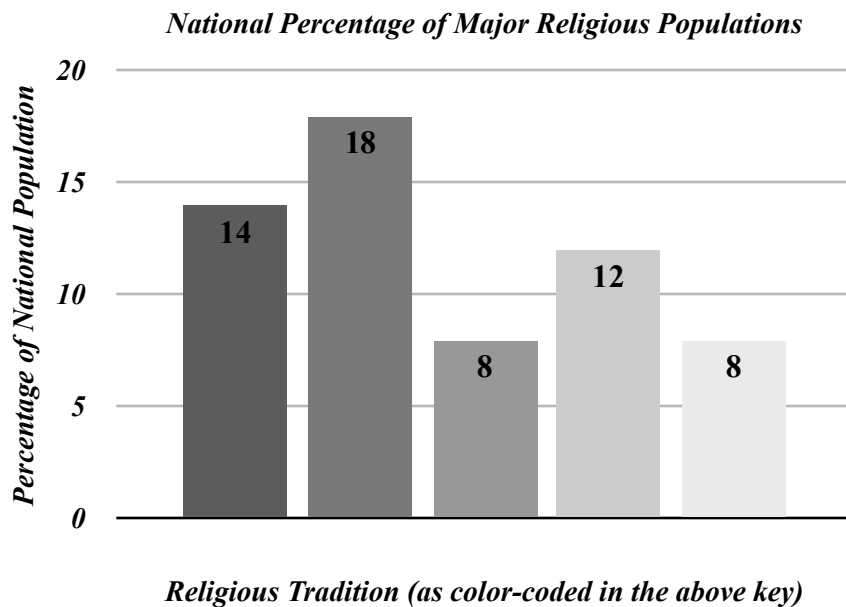
“atheist,” and the continuing value they place on spiritual connection to the world, suggests that Americans still embrace some sort of religious belief (Lugo 2012; Frank 2014; Goodenough 2014). A report from the Pew Forum on Religion and Public Life finds that the majority of Americans identifying as unaffiliated or spiritual-but-not-religious are still “religious or spiritual” in terms of prayer, belief in a God, and feeling a connection to nature (Lugo 2012; Ammerman 2013). Similarly, another study suggests that categorizing ‘spiritual’ and ‘religious’ as an either-or dynamic masks a rather fluid relationship between the two (Ammerman 2013). The study finds that spiritual-but-not-religious can be broken down into four “cultural packages” that encompass the varying identity rationales (Ammerman 2013). Through qualitative analysis, the study finds that *Theistic*, *Extra-Theistic*, *Ethical Spirituality*, and the *Belief and Belonging Spirituality* to be common spiritual-but-not-religious identities. The “Theistic” package involves personal deities, the “Extra-Theistic” package involves “naturalistic forms of transcendence,” the Ethical Spirituality involves “everyday compassion,” while Belief and Belonging Spirituality involves “cultural notions of religiosity” (Ammerman 2013).

In sum, it is clear that threads of traditional religious devotion are still relevant to a diverse population of Americans, to their values, and to their identities as well (McDaniel et al. 2011). Using statistics adapted from *The American Values Atlas* — an interactive map of religious affiliation released by the Public Religion Research Institute this year — Figure 1 shows that white evangelical Protestants, white mainline Protestants, and black Protestants make up roughly 40 percent of the national population

(PRRI and SSRS 2014). White Catholics and Hispanic Catholics make up the second largest population of religious demographics in America, constituting about 20 percent of the population (PRRI and SSRS 2014). It has also been noted that white evangelical and mainline Protestants make up 40 percent of the total voting population in the U.S.: 22 percent and 18 percent respectively (Laser et al. 2010). Black Protestants also make up a significant portion of the voting population in America and remain one of the most traditionally religious American demographics (Laser et al. 2010). Black, mainline, and evangelical Protestants together are three of the most highly religious demographics in America, and all reveal varying sociopolitical views despite this commonality (Laser et al. 2010; Jones and Francis 2012).

**Figure 1**

White Mainline Protestants
  White Evangelical Protestants
  Black Protestants
  White Catholic
  Hispanic Catholic



Source: 2014. "The American Values Atlas." Public Religion Research Institute and Social Science Research Solutions.



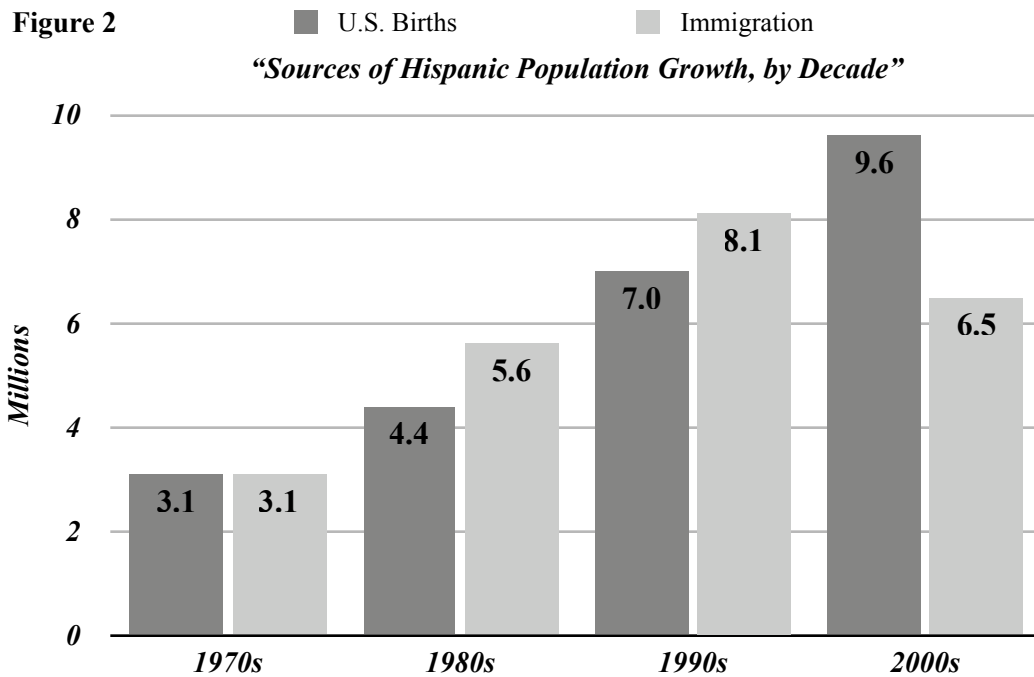
### *Immigration Stalls while U.S.-Born Latinos Increase*

About a century ago, from 1890 to 1919, a large influx of European immigrants arrived in the U.S. Beginning about a century later, in the 1990s and 2000s, a significantly larger influx of Latino immigrants began arriving in the U.S. (Krogstad and Lopez 2014b; Krogstad and Keegan 2014). According to the Pew Research Center, for example, Mexican immigrants represent the single largest influx of immigrants from one country to another in history (Krogstad and Keegan 2014). The article highlights a 1965 Congressional legislation that opened the US borders and helped initiate the large influx of immigrants from Central America, Mexico, and Asia. Another article about Indian immigration to the U.S. reports that Indian immigrants are the third largest immigrant population in the U.S., exceeded only by Mexican and Chinese immigrants (Whatley and Batalova 2013). Moreover, the same Pew Research Center article states that, “Today, five times as many immigrants in the U.S. are from Mexico than China...” putting into perspective the number of immigrants from Mexico, given that Chinese immigrants are the second largest U.S. immigrant population (Krogstad and Keegan 2014).

The most recent data, however, reports that the influx of Latino immigrants has plateaued after the population rapidly increased throughout the 1980s and ‘90s (Lopez et al. 2014; Passel et al. 2014; Meckler 2014; Abramowitz 2014; Krogstad 2014; Krogstad and Lopez 2014a; Krogstad and Lopez 2014b). It has been reported in particular that the number of Mexican migrants entering the U.S. is now roughly equal to the number leaving (Krogstad and Lopez 2014b). This is due to growing border security, the

relatively poor condition of the U.S. economy at least until recently, and increasing dangers of crossing the border illegally (Krogstad and Lopez 2014b). Furthermore, the number of unauthorized immigrants living in the U.S. has also remained relatively unchanged from 2009 to March of 2013 (Passel et al. 2014).

While Latino immigration has stalled, the rate of U.S. born Latinos has steadily risen beginning around the year 2000 (Krogstad and Lopez 2014b). Between the years 2000 and 2010 the number of U.S. born Hispanics was about 9.6 million while the number of immigrants to the country was about 6.5 million (Krogstad and Lopez 2014b). As adopted from a report by the Pew Research Hispanic Trends Project, Figure 2 below shows the shifting ratios between U.S. birth and immigration rates of the Hispanic population by decade between 1970 and 2010 (Krogstad and Lopez 2014b). As the figure



*Source: Krogstad, Jens Manuel, Mark Hugo Lopez. 2014. “Hispanic Nativity Shift: U.S. births drive population growth as immigration stalls.” Washington, D.C.: Pew Research Center’s Hispanic Trends Project.*

shows, the rate of U.S. births significantly increased during the 2000s. Additionally, the figure shows that this is the first decade since the 1970s in which Hispanic immigration rates have dropped. Although the Latino population is still expected to grow throughout the coming decades, the increasing dependency on U.S. birth rates for the growth of the Latino population has lowered the projections of exactly how much the population will grow. Specifically, the Census Bureau has lessened its projection of the Hispanic population's growth for the year 2050 from about 106 million to about 75 million (Krogstad 2014).

Latino immigrants' lower rates of citizenship status and higher illegal border crossings have also shaped the national conversation as well as Americans' attitudes toward immigrants. Despite a higher rate of illegal entry into the U.S. among Mexican immigrants — and the subsequent controversy over border security — it has also been found that as of 2011, 36 percent of *legal* Mexican immigrants in the U.S. have not acquired citizenship. As a comparison, the combined percentage of non-Mexican immigrants who have achieved citizenship was roughly 68 percent as of 2011 (Gonzalez-Barrera et al. 2013). Furthermore, a national survey finds that 93 percent of Hispanic immigrants without citizenship report that they would “naturalize” if they could (Gonzalez-Barrera et al. 2013). It should be cautioned that a path to citizenship may not be the path that all Latino immigrants might take, as Mexican immigrants make up the largest share of immigrants with legal permanent residency rather than citizenship (Gonzalez-Barrera et al. 2013). Nevertheless, the discrepancy between Latino immigrants

with citizenship and those wanting citizenship underlies the increasing sociopolitical pressure on the current administration to enact immigration reform.

Similarly, another Pew Research report cites that while immigration rates have plateaued and U.S.-born Latinos have increased, there has also been a significant increase in “the median length of time that unauthorized immigrants have lived in the U.S. ...” (Passel et al. 2014). More specifically, one source finds that the population of immigrants having entered the United States illegally has remained here for an average of 12.7 years (Meckler 2014). As of 2012, “there were roughly 4 million unauthorized immigrant adults living with their U.S.-born children,” (Passel et al. 2014). The vast majority of those parents “do not have protection from deportation” under either the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals or the Temporary Protected Status program (Passel et al. 2014). The issue of family unity, therefore, has also gained the attention of an increasing number of religious leaders (Medrano 2014; Knoll 2009), as many are active in promoting comprehensive immigration reform that focuses on the well being of immigrant families (Knoll 2009). Evangelical Protestants in particular structure their support for comprehensive immigration reform around the sanctity of family values (Knoll 2009).

### *The Latino American Electorate*

The recent statistics on Latino immigrants remaining in the country indicates that this population’s influence on electoral outcomes and political platforms will continue to grow. The Latino population has become an increasing percentage of the electorate: in the

2014 midterm elections, a Pew Research Center report for Hispanic studies shows that Latinos made up 11 percent of the nation's eligible voter population, an increase from roughly 9 percent in 2006 (Lopez et al. 2014).

Latino voters are still “lagging” in national election voter turnout, however. This is partially because 33 percent of the Latino electorate is aged 18 to 29. Like Millennials in other racial groups, who notably make up lesser percentages of their corresponding racial groups, this age group is less likely to vote in general (Lopez et al. 2014). The population of younger Latinos will become eligible to vote in the coming decades through aging alone, which may increase voter turnout among Latinos in the coming few decades (Taylor et al. 2012). The lack of voter participation is also due to the large portion of Latino immigrants without citizenship and who are thus ineligible to vote (Taylor et al. 2012). So while many studies note the population's political power by citing the population's growth overall as well as their increase in voter turnout, a large portion of the population has yet to join the electorate. In the case that immigration reform helps provide a better path to citizenship for Latino immigrants, and that the population chooses to acquire citizenship, the voter turnout may increase even more in the coming decades. It should also be noted that the smaller percentage of Latino voters in the 2014 midterm election was due to concentrated residency in non-swing states (Lopez et al. 2014), which could be misleading when interpreting the sociopolitical significance of the Latino vote.

Stalled immigration from Mexico and Central America, the expanded duration of Latino immigrant residency, and the increase in U.S.-born Latinos are all significant trends influencing future election outcomes and political platforms' focus on immigration reform. Multiple studies have noted the historically sharp increase of the population and the solidifying presence of Latinos as a growing sociopolitical influence, particularly concerning attitudes toward immigrants and comprehensive immigration reform (Cornelius and Rosenblum 2005; Jones et al. 2013; Ayers et al. 2009; Chandler and Tsai 2001). The influence of the Latino vote was the subject of much speculation during and after the 2012 election, concerning both the overall election outcome as well as the Democratic and Republican platforms' emphasis on immigration issues. The increasing Latino population has also been speculated to motivate religious leaders whose congregations are lacking in church attendance to focus on issues of immigration (Medrano 2014); many Latino immigrants are still religiously affiliated and typically attend church (Medrano 2014).

### ***Developing Theories among Conflicting Findings***

As the above sections begin to show, the complex and nuanced nature of religious affiliation leaves room for variation in determining religiosity's effect on sociopolitical ideology, specifically attitudes toward immigrants. For example, one of the highly religious, and typically conservative, demographics lobbying for comprehensive immigration reform are white evangelical Protestants (Jones et al. 2013; Jones et al. 2014). What is perplexing about this group coming forward in support of comprehensive

immigration reform is not only the extreme political and social conservatism frequently assumed of the demographic, but that there is a significant amount of data indicating that traditional, fundamentalist religiosity enhances political and social conservatism (Laser et al. 2010; Passel et al. 2014; Lipka 2014). As a result, studies are increasingly examining the influences of religious tradition and religiosity using measures of psychological and attitudinal commitment to religion, which will be explored below (Ammerman 2013; Mocakbee et al. 2001; Perry 2013; Steensland et al. 2000; McDaniel et al. 2011; Knoll 2009; Jones et al. 2013).

#### *Devotional Style and Religious Tradition*

Religious restructuring, coined by John Green in his 2007 publication *The faith factor: How religion influences American elections*, emphasizes individual's attitudinal and behavioral variations of religious commitment (Knoll 2009; Green 2007). This concept was drawn from and has also been referred to as devotional style (Welch and Leege 1988). Theoretical frameworks akin to religious restructuring and devotional style have been adopted by many studies of the effect of religiosity on various social attitudes (McDaniel et al. 2011; Knoll 2009; Perry 2013; Mockabee et al. 2001). These studies aim to determine whether characteristics of devotional style like church attendance, prayer, or scripture reading, as a few examples, significantly affect sociopolitical views, including attitudes toward immigrants. It should be noted that although church attendance is considered a characteristic of devotional style, it can be interpreted in combination with religious tradition theories, as will be demonstrated later

in this section through the Knoll (2009) study emphasizing theories based on both religious tradition and devotional style. McDaniel et al. (2011) also, in part, utilizes higher church attendance and religious salience among Christians as measures to predict negative attitudes toward immigrants.

By emphasizing the importance of religious “salience, beliefs, and practices” Perry (2013) examines the effect of religious affiliation and devotional style on willingness to engage in an interracial relationship. While this study notes that many other researchers have used church attendance alone to measure devotional style, Perry (2013) also notes that others have pressed contemporary devotional style measures to differentiate between “public and private” or “intrinsic and extrinsic” devotional styles, like private or public prayer. Similarly, Mockabee et al. (2001) emphasizes the importance of differentiating religious belief, a sense of belonging to a religion, and religious behavior. This point is stressed under the pretense that not all religious traditions practice the same behavioral rituals at the same frequency, therefore psychological characteristics of religious devotion need to be taken into account as well. Mockabee et al. (2001) weighs the behavioral and attitudinal measures in proportion to how much other members of the religious tradition engage in the activities as well. Perry (2013) predicts that individuals who identify with more internal, private devotional styles will be more likely to engage in interracial relationships, while those with higher religious salience will be less willing to engage in interracial relationships.



Important to studies concerning attitudes toward immigrants, Perry (2013) suggests that those with more salient religious views may tend "...to view the world in terms of ingroups and outgroups, thereby fortifying social divisions..." (Perry 2013:1320). This finding is especially important for studies on attitudes toward immigrants, because it does not solely suggest an intensity of devotional style or religiosity — it also suggests a devotional style that directly contributes to an ingroup-outgroup worldview. Perry (2013) also finds that those who engage in more internal, private devotional style practices are more open to interracial dating. Mockabee et al. (2001) finds that weighting religious commitment by the relative normativity to members of the same religious group reveals significant variations in religious commitment within and between religious traditions. However, Mockabee et al. (2001) also finds that when support for abortion and presidential vote are dependent on the weighted measures of devotional style, the difference in normativity of religious commitment between religious traditions is no longer significant in predicting the included sociopolitical views. This may suggest that though religious traditions vary in normative religious beliefs and practices, the variations in devotional style have some commonalities in affecting sociopolitical views across religious tradition.

The present study, then, largely focuses on religiosity in terms of devotional style and religious restructuralism rather than solely the religious tradition of the entire group (Knoll 2009; Fetzer 1998). Other common themes of religiosity, however, include religious marginalization, "ethnoreligious" devotion, frequency of church attendance, and

(more recently) civil religion (Jones et al. 2013; Fetzer 1998; Knoll 2009; McDaniel et al. 2011; Chandler and Tsai 2001). The following discussion provides an overview of literature utilizing those theories.

Contrary to one's devotional style, the "ethnoreligious" theory tests collective religious groups' influence on attitudes toward immigrants (Knoll 2009). This theory posits that one's overall religious tradition largely influences individual's sociopolitical viewpoints. When religious tradition is theoretically located as the primary determinant of sociopolitical views, scholars argue that increased church attendance would be significant in shaping the individual's views (Fetzer 1998; Knoll 2009). Knoll (2009) argues, for example, that because some evangelical and Protestant religious figures preach positive messages about immigration, then members of that religion who attend church more frequently will take on the positive views of the sermons.

In this particular study, Knoll (2009) finds that both Catholics and Protestants who attend church more frequently are more likely to exhibit positive attitudes toward immigration reform. According to the study, the theory of religious marginalization helps explain Catholic and Protestant support for immigrants given the religious ideologies of the two groups. The study reports that the "Catholic Church has taken perhaps the strongest stand on immigration reform measures," while connecting the necessity for comprehensive immigration reform to human rights issues (Knoll 2009:315). Both evangelical and mainline Protestants, the study also reports, preach religious philosophies in support of welcoming "the stranger" and acting "redemptively and compassionately

toward those in need,” (Knoll 2009:315). Assuming that these are messages commonly preached by religious leaders of Catholics as well as evangelical and mainline Protestants, members of these groups who frequently attend church services may be more influenced by these messages.

Much like theories of racial marginalization, religious marginalization posits that members of religious groups who have historically been oppressed or currently believe that they are an oppressed group will be more sympathetic to other oppressed demographics (Fetzer 1998; Knoll 2009). The findings from a study published in 1998 specifically testing the religious marginalization theory report that being a member of a religiously marginalized group predicts support for immigrant rights (Fetzer 1998). The study also finds that the influence of religious marginalization occurs independently of the members’ individual religious commitment (Fetzer 1998). As religiously marginalized groups the study includes Jewish and Catholic Americans, French Protestants, and France’s religiously unaffiliated to test the level of support members of these groups express for immigrant rights (Fetzer 1998). Utilizing a rationale from the social standing theory, this study proposes that experiences of collective oppression can influence group members’ sociopolitical views on other issues as well (Fetzer 1998).

Similar to the ethnoreligious theory, Welch and Legee (1988) study the effects of “agentic” as opposed to “communal” religious orientations on Catholic parishioners’ sociopolitical views. The study defines agentic religious orientations as focusing on “individual’s problems, needs, and the religious solutions to them...” (Welch and Legee

1988:542). Whereas communal religious orientations focus more on the problems and needs “commonly shared by all people...” The study finds that communal religious orientations significantly influence the parishioners’ sociopolitical views. These two studies emphasize and empirically support the idea that religious traditions, as categories, significantly influences members’ attitudes toward immigrants.

Select studies have examined the influence of civil religion on attitudes toward immigrants (McDaniel et al. 2011; Chandler and Tsai 2001). The term civil religion was coined by sociologist Robert Bellah in the 1950’s and refers to the “transcendence” of religion into public life (Wimberley 1998). Most explicitly, civil religion manifests in political figures’ publicized Judeo-Christian beliefs in God and that God helps guide the welfare of the United States (Wimberley 1998). Civil religion also denotes that American ideals of justice and liberty are grounded in Christian values (Wimberley and Swatos). These studies have generally found that the relationship between religious identification and self-identification as an American significantly influences attitudes toward immigrants (McDaniel et al. 2011; Chandler and Tsai 2001). McDaniel et al. (2011) posit that “Christian nationalism” fosters negative attitudes toward immigrants; while Chandler and Tsai (2001) find that self-identifying as an American fosters negative emotions toward immigrants.

McDaniel et al. (2011) poses Christian nationalism as a concept of civil religion in which the coupling of Christian values with nationalistic views fosters a specific religious and sociopolitical viewpoint (McDaniel et al. 2011). This concept pivots on

nationalistic ideals and the ways in which many Americans relate them to Christian ideals. McDaniel et al. (2011) explains that Christian Nationalism operates under the “conservative strand” of civil religion positing that America “...holds a unique covenant with God, which requires it to be protected from outsiders and those who would do it harm” (McDaniel et al. 2011:212). Many Americans’ nationalistic beliefs incorporate the assertion that America was founded as a Christian nation, and that Christian values are therefore embedded in American values. From this viewpoint, then, one’s “Americanness” or an outsider’s ability to integrate into American society rests to a significant degree on their identity as a Christian.

McDaniel et al. (2011) finds that though Christian nationalism significantly influences attitudes toward immigrants, religious tradition remains a significant indicator when Christian nationalism is excluded from the analysis (McDaniel et al. 2011). The study also finds that frequent church attendance creates more positive attitudes toward immigrants; that evangelical Protestants exhibit more negative attitudes toward immigrants; that higher church attendance fosters more positive attitudes toward immigrants; and that evangelical Protestantism has no significant influence when Christian nationalism is included in the model. These findings suggest that higher religious salience (evangelicalism, in this case) and higher church attendance do not predict negative attitudes toward immigrants and that civil religion might predict negative attitudes toward immigrants or perhaps other ‘outgroups.’

### *Political Polarization, Race, and Religion*

In addition to religion, race is also one of the most significant factors influencing sociopolitical views; both have been shown to shape voting patterns as well as polarization among the American electorate, particularly in recent decades (Abramowitz 2014). For example, recent data has shown a rapid increase in religiously “observant” members of the Republican party, while the same trend is virtually absent among Democratic voters (Abramowitz 2014). In other words, while religious non-affiliation is on the rise and many of those remaining religiously affiliated are “modernizing” their approach to expressing religion (Laser et al. 2010), traditionally religious demographics have significantly increased among Republican voters. The same dramatic increase has not occurred within the Democratic party ‘nones’ or atheists (Abramowitz 2014). Concerning race, data has also shown a sharp increase in the nonwhite American electorate voting Democratic over recent decades (Abramowitz 2014).

Public commentary also supports the finding that religiously unaffiliated and nonwhite Americans tend to vote Democratic while highly religious and white Americans tend to vote Republican (Abramowitz 2014; Laser et al. 2010). The same can be said for liberalism and conservatism: it is typically reported that the former tends to attract the religiously unaffiliated while the latter tends to attract the highly religious (Laser et al. 2010). In the most recent midterm election, for example, these typical religious and racial divisions are reflected (Lipka 2014). The voter turnout shows that white evangelical

Protestants largely voted Republican (67 percent), that the overwhelming majority of Black Protestants voted Democratic (88 percent), that unaffiliated Americans mostly voted Democratic (62 percent), while mainline Protestants and Catholics are almost equally split between Democratic and Republican votes (Lipka 2014). These data show that though there are hotly debated topics that can foster intra-group as well as inter-group division, the overall voter trends remain largely the same (Lipka 2014).

However, recent research has challenged these typical themes of political polarization and has uncovered a more complex dynamic (Jones and Francis 2012; Laser et al. 2010; Jones and Cox 2006; McDaniel et al. 2011; Knoll 2009). Other datasets and polls reflect generally atypical public opinions on immigration compared to what the voting patterns described above might initially predict. Though immigration has become a hot button issue in America, for example, a majority of Americans report that they believe immigration reform should be a top priority of the Obama administration (Jones et al. 2014). Furthermore, most Americans believe that current immigration policies are mostly “broken” and in need of fundamental restructuring (Jones et al. 2014). These Americans differ, however, in the exact reform each demographic tends to advocate for (Jones et al. 2014).

While supported by the larger trends, some argue that the discrepancy between the highly religious Republican party and the non-affiliated Democratic party is largely a perceived discrepancy (Jones and Francis 2012; Laser et al. 2010). Cited by Jones and Francis (2012) as the “God Gap,” this argument posits that this apparent discrepancy

leads some Americans to believe that the Democratic Party is “unfriendly” toward religion. One of the study’s primary criticisms of the “God Gap” perception is that Black Protestants are one of the most traditionally religious groups in America, however they largely vote Democratic (Jones and Francis 2012). While it is clear that race is a factor in the primarily Democratic affiliation of black Americans (Jones and Francis 2012), the Democratic affiliation of many black Americans does not necessarily indicate overwhelming support for liberalist sociopolitical views (Jones and Cox 2006). High religiosity does not always predict the sociopolitical views of other races, either.

For example, a study critiquing the theoretical models used to analyze religion in public action notes that “Liberal, Mainline Protestantism opens room for individual, spiritual exploration (Davie 1995) and tends to soften boundaries between Christian denominations and between religious and secular culture (Hoge, Johnson and Luidens 1994),” (Lichterman 2012). Rather than remaining a static identity, this study posits that in theoretical models religion should act as a social factor that reacts to culture, circumstance, and individual subjectivity (Lichterman 2012). Further concerning race in public life, a report released by the Center for American Values cites that African Americans are largely disillusioned with U.S. politics, specifically “promises of equality and express feelings of alienation from public life,” (Jones and Cox 2006). Additionally, the report cites that African Americans typically support laws “upholding human rights,” while consistently exhibiting a “streak” of conservatism concerning issues of, for example, homosexuality and same-sex marriage (Jones and Cox 2006). Conclusively,



these studies highlight that political affiliation and religious tradition alone do not entirely predict the subtleties of public action and sociopolitical views.

*The Threats and Motives of Immigration: Cultural and Economic*

The following two sections review literature with less contradictory results, but are still highly relevant to the field of study. Several of the following studies examine the motivations individuals have for immigrating, and likewise how those motivations affect the locals of host countries (Ayers et al. 2009; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Jackson 1995; Cornelius and Rosenblum 2005; Fetzer 2000). The majority of these studies focus on what is essentially a dynamic between the cultural (though some call demographic) and economic benefits that foster immigration and affect host countries. While this research largely examines motives for immigrating, it equally explores the perceived cultural and economic impacts immigration has on native populations and the immigrants among them. Concerning both motives and subsequent effects of immigration, a majority of the literature finds that cultural, ideological, and demographic factors are more significant than economic or personal benefits (Ayers et al. 2009; Chandler and Tsai 2001; Fetzer 2000; Cornelius and Rosenblum 2005).

The literature notes that while it makes sense in times of economic turmoil for an individual to immigrate to a more industrialized, wealthier country, the cultural and demographic impacts of the immigration on host countries is more significant than the original economic motivations (Cornelius and Rosenblum 2005). One study finds that income does not have an effect on attitude toward immigrants (Chandler and Tsai 2001).

The same study also finds that the fear of immigrants increasing crime rates was not significant in predicting attitudes toward immigrants, while also noting the commentary usually arguing otherwise (Chandler and Tsai 2001), further exemplifying the lack of influence economic circumstances may have on host country citizens' attitudes. The continued inclusion of perceived immigrant crime rates will help to clarify whether that is accurate or an effect of the study's particular methodology.

One study criticizes the usual findings discussed above (Ayers et al. 2009). The study posits that economic conditions in the destination country can provide an *opportunity* for negative cultural and racial sentiments to surface (Ayers et al. 2009). In such a case, economic circumstances may not be ruled totally insignificant, but rather a basis through which cultural conflict can flourish. For example, just as many immigrants may come to the U.S. in pursuit of work, the 2008 stock market crash had both an effect on immigrants coming into the country as well as on Americans' perceptions that immigrants in the work place are harmful (Passel et al. 2014).

#### *Age, Proximity, Education, and Sex*

Ascribed background characteristics like age, race, and sex are also usually incorporated in the literature to control for basic demographic differences in immigration attitudes (Ayers et al. 2009; Chandler Tsai 2001; Jones et al. 2013; Jackson 1995; Knoll 2009). Though much of the literature on background factors yields similar findings, some of the specific background characteristics create contradictions. Three studies report inconsistent results as to whether proximity to Latinos affects attitudes toward

immigrants: The first study finds that neighborhoods with larger concentrations of Latinos decreases an individual's support for legal immigration as well as amnesty for those who entered the country illegally, while personal contact with minorities has no significant influence (Ayers et al. 2009); the second study finds that close friendships with Latinos do not have a significant influence on attitudes toward Hispanics by Anglos (Jackson 1995); based on the social contact theory, the third study shows that respondents' perceived proportion of immigrants within their neighborhood, the frequency of contact with those who speak little to no English, and the number of friends or family members that are recent immigrants are significant factors only if the interactions occur between individuals of the same socioeconomic status (Knoll 2009).

Alternatively, it is commonly understood that Millennials and those with higher education are more likely to display positive attitudes toward immigrants and stronger support for immigration reform (Chandler and Tsai 2001; Knoll 2009; Jones et al. 2013). Only one study was found to show that respondents aged 65 and older exhibit positive attitudes toward immigrants (Jones et al. 2013). The authors propose that the finding may be due to a lack of fear among seniors regarding their economic situation, assuming they are retired with benefits (Jones et al. 2013). There is conflict in the literature over how sex influences attitudes toward immigration issues, and little explanation of the results is provided. Two studies find that gender is not a significant indicator (Jones et al. 2013; Chandler and Tsai 2001), while one other finds that females exhibit more positive attitudes (Knoll 2009). In addition to the contradictions discussed in the previous section,

it has also been found that black Americans and white Americans equally would like the number of immigrants coming into the country to decrease (Chandler and Tsai 2001).

### *Hypotheses*

Given the current demographic shifts, the theoretical developments concerning psychological and attitudinal aspects of devotional style are critical in unpacking religiosity's influence on sociopolitical views across race, political affiliation, and religious tradition. The present study posits that a nuanced measure of religiosity in particular will yield less ambiguous findings than in past research.

Eight primary hypotheses are posed:

- H1) Religious affiliation will influence attitudes toward immigrants. [Given the contradictory findings of past research, I do not hypothesize which religions will be more, and which less, supportive of immigration.]
- H2) Respondents' religiosity — devotional style and Christian nationalism — will shape attitudes toward immigrants, positively in the case of devotional style and negatively in the case of Christian nationalism.
- H3) Both perceived cultural and economic threats posed by immigrants will increase negative attitudes toward immigrants, but cultural threat will have a stronger influence than economic threat.
- H4) Younger respondents will exhibit more positive attitudes toward immigrants than their older counterparts.

H5) Respondents self-identifying as lower economic status will exhibit more negative attitudes toward immigrants than those who identify with higher classes.

H6) More highly educated respondents will exhibit more positive attitudes toward immigrants than their less educated counterparts.

H7) Democratic party identifiers will exhibit more positive attitudes toward immigrants than Republican party identifiers.

H8) Sex will not have a significant effect on attitudes toward immigrants.

### *Methods*

To test these hypotheses data from the 2004 General Social Survey is used. The GSS is a national survey based on a full probability sampling design and is representative of the noninstitutionalized adult population of the continental United States. The sample size for the 2004 survey is 2,812. For further details on the GSS sampling methodology, refer to Smith, Hout, and Marsden (2012). The 2004 GSS is the most recent year in which a sufficient range of immigration attitude variables was included. Although some variables about immigration were included in the 1990s and early 2000s, most questions on immigration were asked in 2004. Though the dataset is a decade old, it remains relevant in terms of developing a theoretical and methodological framework to better understand the process by which religious tradition and religiosity affect attitudes toward immigrants. The 2004 dataset was collected following the significant demographic shifts outlined above, encompassing the subsequent attitudinal shifts that persist today.

Indicators were chosen from the 2004 GSS questionnaire to operationalize attitudes toward immigrants — the dependent variable — along with the influence of several independent variables: *religiosity, religious tradition, economic threat, cultural threat, race, political affiliation, age, gender, and class*. The question wording for all indicators is reported below.

### *Dependent Variable*

#### *Immigration Attitudes*

The dependent variable is measured with a series of questions asking respondents whether they feel immigrants are a criminal threat, whether immigrants put a financial strain on the country, and what citizenship rights should be granted to immigrants or their children. These variables were chosen based on previous research designed to measure immigration policy attitudes (McDaniel et al. 2011; Jones et al. 2013; Ayers 2009; Knoll 2009; Welch and Leege 1988). Eight GSS questions are combined to create an index measuring attitudes toward immigrants. The responses for the following questions are coded 1 (*agree strongly*) 2 (*agree*) 3 (*neither agree nor disagree*) 4 (*disagree*) 5 (*disagree strongly*): “Now we would like to ask a few questions about minorities in America. How much do you agree or disagree with the following statements?” 1) “Ethnic minorities should be given government assistance to preserve their customs and traditions;” 2) “America should take stronger measures to exclude illegal immigrants;” 3) “There are different opinions about immigrants from other countries living in America. (By “immigrants” we mean people who come to settle in America.) How much do you agree

or disagree with each of the following statements? Immigrants increase crime rates;” 4) “Immigrants are generally good for America’s economy;” 5) “Immigrants improve American society by bringing in new ideas and cultures;” 6) Government spends too much money assisting immigrants;” 7) “Legal immigrants to America who are not citizens should have the same rights as American citizens;” 8) “Do you think the number of immigrants to America nowadays should be...” 1 (*increased a lot*) 2 (*increased a little*) 3 (*remain the same as it is*) 4 (*reduced a little*) 5 (*reduced a lot*). Questions are reverse coded as necessary, such that high scores indicate stronger anti-immigrant sentiment. The Cronbach’s alpha reliability coefficient for the eight-item summated index is .778.

Hispanics are excluded from this analysis and are not explicitly mentioned in any of the eight items measuring attitudes toward immigrants. Though explicit mention of Hispanic immigrants is absent from the wording of the dependent variable, the dramatic increase of these immigrants permeates the national conversation about immigrants and immigration reform. Given their numbers and prominence, references to immigrants and immigration reform very likely trigger an association with the Latino-American communities in the minds of respondents, although we cannot be absolutely certain.

### *Independent Variables*

#### *Religious Tradition*

The religious tradition indicator is a focal point of the present study and, as such, it requires careful operationalization in order to be as exhaustive as the 2004 GSS allows;

the schema used follows the Steensland et al. (2000) measure of religious tradition. Using the GSS religious identification variables, Steensland et al. (2000) creates a 'reltrad' variable that breaks down Protestant affiliations by creating what he argues are more nuanced, denominationally based categories. Steensland et al. (2000) advocate such a measure in place of T.W. Smith's well-known and widely adopted religiosity measure that categorizes respondents on a liberal-moderate-conservative scale, based on the respondents' denominational affiliations.

Following Steensland et al. (2000), the GSS 'relig,' 'denom,' and 'other' variables are used to create the following religious tradition categories: Black Protestants, Evangelical Protestants, Mainline Protestants, Conservative Nontraditional Protestants, Liberal Nontraditional Protestants, and an Other Affiliations category. In addition, separate categories are created for Catholics and Jews. The 'relig,' 'denom,' and 'other' variables in the GSS, respectively, ask respondents, "What is your religious preference? Is it Protestant, Catholic, Jewish, some other religion, or no religion;" "If Protestant: what specific denomination is that, if any;" and "other Protestant denominations."

The 'relig' variable is utilized primarily to identify Protestant respondents. Various response options from the 'denom' and 'other' variables are then combined with the Protestant category in separate indices in order to break down the above religious tradition categories. Response options from the GSS 'other' variable are also used to create the Nontraditional Protestant categories, which are more contemporary religious traditions that Smith's measure does not include. Steensland et al. (2000) argue that this



measure better represents "...essential historical differences between American religious traditions..." (Steensland et al. 2000:292). Relative to Smith's measure of religious belief on a fundamentalist-moderate-liberal scale, Steensland et al. (2000) argue that focusing on religious affiliation rather than religious belief or ideology accounts for the different effects the two concepts have on sociopolitical ideology. White Evangelical Protestants serve as the reference group for this variable.

### Race

The racial identification variable used for the present study includes non-Hispanic blacks, non-Hispanic whites, and Asians; American Indians and Hawaiians are excluded as a result of too few respondents. Although Hispanics are not included in the present study, the 'hispanic' variable was first added to the GSS in 2000 and is utilized here to differentiate between Hispanic whites and non-Hispanic whites, Hispanic blacks and non-Hispanic blacks. Non-Hispanic whites serve as the reference category for the race variable.

### Age

To measure potential generational differences in attitudes toward immigrants, the GSS 'age' variable is recoded based on a Pew Research Center definition of the five generations at the time of the 2004 GSS. The variable is recoded as follows, corresponding to the 2004 definition: ages 18 to 27 are Millennials, ages 28 to 39 are Generation X, ages 40 to 58 are Baby Boomers, ages 59 to 76 are the Silent generation, and ages 77 to 104 are the G.I./WWII generation (Pew report 2010). Generational status

is measured as a series of dummy variables, with Millennials serving as the reference group.

### Sex

Respondents' sex is included in this model as well, as much past research has yielded conflicting findings about the role of sex in shaping attitudes toward immigrants.

Sex is coded as 1 'Male' and 0 'Female.'

### Political Party Affiliation

Respondents' political party affiliation is included to determine whether party identification affects attitudes toward immigration reform. Political party identification is measured by one indicator: "*Generally speaking, do you usually think of yourself as a Republican, Democrat, Independent, or what?*" Party identification is included in the model as a series of dummy variables, with "Independent" serving as the reference group.

### Class

Class is measured with three separate indicators: household income, education, and a subjective class identification variable. The question wording for household income and education, respectively, are: "*In which of these groups did your total family income, from all sources, fall last year before taxes, that is?*" and "*What is the highest grade in school that you finished and got credit for?*" The response options for household income range from 1 (*under \$1,000*) to 23 (*\$110,000 or over*). The response options for education range from 0 (no education) to 20 (post-graduate education). The subjective class indicator question reads, "*If you were asked to use one of four names for your social*

class, which would you say you belong in: the lower class, the working class, the middle class, or the upper class?” Subjective class is entered into the regression model as a series of dummy variables, with “middle class” serving as the reference group.

#### Economic Threat

A single item is used to measure perceptions of economic threat: “*Immigrants take jobs away from people who were born in America.*” The response options are 1 (*agree strongly*) 2 (*agree*) 3 (*neither agree nor disagree*) 4 (*disagree*) 5 (*disagree strongly*), with higher scores indicating less perceived threat. The operationalization of the economic threat variable follows the Jones et al. (2013) usage.

#### Cultural Threat

A single indicator is used to measure cultural threat: “*It is impossible for people who do not share American customs and traditions to become fully American.*” The response options are 1 (*agree strongly*) 2 (*agree*) 3 (*neither agree nor disagree*) 4 (*disagree*) 5 (*disagree strongly*), reverse coded such that higher scores reflect less perceived threat. This indicator was chosen to mimic the cultural threat measure from the Jones et al. (2013) study.

#### Religiosity

Religiosity is measured with two different multi-item indices: *Christian Nationalism* and *Devotional Style*.

### 1. Christian Nationalism

Christian Nationalism, as described in the literature review, refers to the coupling of Christian values with nationalistic views. Christian Nationalism is included as a measure of religiosity because it presumes Christianity and Christian values to be synonymous with Americanness and American values. In other words, identifying as Christian, or at least explicitly relating to Christian values, is viewed as critical in order to identify as American.

The following six indicators are used to measure Christian Nationalism: “*Some people say the following things are important for being truly American. Others say they are not important. How important do you think each of the following is... 1) To have American citizenship 2) To have lived in America for most of one’s life 3) To be able to speak English 4) To be a Christian 5) To feel American.*” The response options for the above questions are: 1 (*very important*) 2 (*fairly important*) 3 (*not very important*) 4 (*not important at all*); 6) “*Now we would like to know something about the groups or organizations to which individuals belong. Here is a list of various organizations. Could you tell me whether or not you are a member of each type? Church-affiliated groups.*”

The response options for this question are: 1 (*yes*) 2 (*no*). The indicators are designed to reflect whether respondents believe one’s “Americanness” is tied to having U.S. citizenship as well as whether respondents believe one’s “Americanness” is tied to being a Christian. The alpha reliability coefficient for this index is .703.

## 2. Devotional Style, Religious Restructuralism

Researchers use devotional style to help develop a more nuanced measure of what religiosity means — be it more, less, or an alternative form of religious expression (Mockabee et al. 2001; Perry 2013). The present study utilizes the religious variables adapted from Perry (2013) and the devotional style concepts adapted from Mockabee et al. (2001) to create a combined devotional style measure. The indicators initially chosen were selected to mimic *religious salience*, *public religious practices*, and *devotional practices* from Perry (2013) as well as *psychological commitment*, *ritualistic behavior*, and *private devotionalism* from Mockabee et al. (2001).

Ideally, the measure of devotional style should take a restructuring approach by including a variety of both behavioral and attitudinal indicators. However, as reported in the *Limitations* section below, too many missing cases existed for the majority of the original devotional style indicators chosen, necessitating a three-item index with an alpha reliability coefficient of .57:

### Psychological Commitment Mockabee et al. (2001)/Religious Salience Perry (2013)

- 1) “*Fundamentalism/liberalism of respondent’s religion*” The response options for this question are: 1 (*fundamentalist*) 2 (*moderate*) 3 (*liberal*);
- 2) “*Would you call yourself a strong [religious preference] or a not very strong [religious preference]?*” The response options for this question are: 1 (*strong*) 2 (*not very strong*) 3 (*somewhat strong*) 4 (*no religion*).

### Ritualistic Behavior Mockabee et al. (2001)/Public Religious Practices Perry (2013)

3) “*How often do you attend religious services*” The response options for this question are: 0 (*never*) 1 (*less than once a year*) 2 (*once a year*) 3 (*several times a year*) 4 (*once a month*) 5 (*two to three times a month*) 6 (*nearly every week*) 7 (*every week*) 8 (*more than once a week*).

### ***Results***

An ordinary least squares (OLS) regression model is used to analyze the effects of the independent variables on attitudes toward immigrants. After eliminating cases with missing data on any of the study variables, 769 cases remain for analysis; the majority of the missing data is a consequence of ballot differences, not item non-response. Table 1 presents descriptive statistics for all study variables. The sample includes fewer males (45 percent) than females (55 percent). The vast majority of the sample is also non-Hispanic white (84 percent), with 13 percent non-Hispanic black and 2 percent Asian. There is a relatively even distribution of Democrats, Independents, and Republicans: 33 percent, 32 percent, and 34 percent respectively. Middle class identifiers are the most common (53 percent), followed by the working class (38 percent), the lower class (5 percent), and the upper class (3 percent). The largest religious group are evangelical Protestants at 28 percent, which is larger than the national percentage of white evangelical Protestants at 18 percent as reported earlier, followed by Catholics (23 percent), mainline Protestants (17 percent), not-affiliated (14 percent), Jews (3 percent), conservative non-traditionals (2 percent), and black Protestants, liberal non-traditionals, and other religious identifications (1 percent each). The Boomer generation (41 percent) and Generation X (23 percent) are the most common age groups, while the Silent generation (18 percent) and Millennials

(14 percent) are almost equally represented, and the G.I. generation (4 percent) is the least common age group.

The distributions of attitudes about immigrants, Christian nationalism, devotional style, household income, years of education, cultural threat, and economic threat can be further described by the interquartile range, which reveals skewed distributions for some of these variables: The middle 50 percent of respondents on the attitudes toward immigrants index are between 20 and 26, which shows that the data are slightly skewed to the left; the middle 50 percent of respondents on the Christian nationalism index are between 7 and 11, indicating that the distribution is skewed to the right; the distribution of Devotional style is nearly normal with an interquartile range between 5 and 11; the middle 50 percent of respondents report a household income between 15 and 21, which indicates that wealthier respondents are slightly more common in the present study; the distribution of respondents by years of education is slightly skewed to the left with an interquartile range between 12 and 16, suggesting that higher educated respondents are more common in the present study; while cultural threat (2 to 4) and economic threat (2 to 4) exhibit normal distributions.

**Table 1. Descriptive Statistics for All Study Variables (N=769)**

<b>Variable</b>	<b>Range</b>	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Attitudes About Im-migrants	7-35	22.83	4.79
Male	0-1	0.45	0.50
Non-Hispanic Black	0-1	0.13	0.34
Non-Hispanic White	0-1	0.84	0.36

Asian	0-1	0.02	0.14
Christian Nationalism	6-22	9.05	2.74
Devotional Style	2-15	8.18	3.68
Democrat	0-1	0.33	0.47
Independent	0-1	0.32	0.47
Republican	0-1	0.34	0.47
Other Party	0-1	0.01	0.07
Lower Class	0-1	0.05	0.22
Working Class	0-1	0.38	0.49
Middle Class	0-1	0.53	0.50
Upper Class	0-1	0.03	0.18
Household Income	1-23	17.08	5.33
Years of Education	0-20	14.19	2.53
Cultural Threat	1-5	3.13	1.14
Economic Threat	1-5	2.73	1.11
Black Protestant	0-1	0.01	0.11
Evangelical Protestants	0-1	0.28	0.45
Mainline Protestant	0-1	0.17	0.38
Conservative Non-Traditional	0-1	0.02	0.15
Liberal Non-Traditional	0-1	0.01	0.08
Jewish	0-1	0.03	0.17
Catholic	0-1	0.23	0.42
Other Religious Identification	0-1	0.01	0.10
Not-Affiliated	0-1	0.14	0.35
Millennials	0-1	0.14	0.35
Generation X	0-1	0.23	0.42



Boomer Generation	0-1	0.41	0.49
Silent Generation	0-1	0.18	0.39
G.I. Generation	0-1	0.04	0.19

*Source: 2004 General Social Survey*

Table 2 presents findings from regressing immigration attitudes on the religious tradition, religiosity, cultural and economic threat, and sociodemographic predictors. Models 1 through model 6 in the table show the unstandardized and standardized regression coefficients. The baseline model 1 regresses attitudes toward immigrants on religious tradition only; model 2 increments model 1 by adding the religiosity predictors Christian nationalism and devotional style; model 3 increments model 2 by adding race; model 4 increments model 3 by adding both the cultural and economic threat measures; model 5 increments model 4 by adding the generational variables; and model 6 (the full model) increments model 5 by adding the sociodemographic predictors.

Beginning with the baseline model 1 coefficients, Liberal Non-Traditionalists, Jews, other religious identifiers, and the religiously non-affiliated all display significantly more positive attitudes toward immigrants than white evangelical Protestants, the reference group. Liberal non-traditionalist Protestants exhibit the most positive attitudes toward immigrants relative to white evangelical Protestants, followed by other religious identifiers, Jews, and the religiously non-affiliated. In the present study, ‘other religious identifications’ include those who identify as “other,” Buddhist, Hindu, other Eastern, Moslem/Islam, Orthodox-Christian, and Native American. These identifiers collectively represent only 1 percent of sample respondents. The remaining religious tradition

variables do not significantly impact attitudes toward immigrants. Religion accounts for 3 percent of the variance in immigration attitudes.

Model 2 shows that when religiosity is included in the model — Christian nationalism and devotional style — both indicators are significant, and both are associated with more negative attitudes toward immigrants. Compared to model 1, Liberal Non-Traditional Protestants are no longer significantly lower on anti-immigrant sentiment than evangelical Protestants. Devotional style in combination with religious category explains 18 percent of the variance in attitudes toward immigrants, which is a significant increase from model 1.

Including race in model 3 shows that non-Hispanic blacks and Asians are significantly more positive toward immigrants than non-Hispanic whites, the reference group. With race in the model Catholics display significantly more positive attitudes toward immigrants than evangelical Protestants, while all other indicators remain unchanged. Model 3 explains 20 percent of the variance in attitudes toward immigrants, a significant increase from model 2.

Model 4 exhibits mostly minor shifts. When cultural and economic threat are included in the analysis, higher levels of both significantly increase negative attitudes toward immigrants, as expected. Additionally, Catholics and Asians are no longer significantly different from evangelical Protestants and non-Hispanic whites, respectively. Model 4 explains 46 percent of the variation in attitudes toward immigrants, a significant increase from model 3.

When generation is included in model 5, members of the Boomer and Silent generations are significantly more negative in their views of immigrants than Millennials. The only change relative to model 4 is that Asians are significantly different than non-Hispanic whites. There is no change in explanatory power between models 4 and 5, suggesting that generation does not provide any additional explanatory power.

Lastly, model 6 increments model 5 by adding the sociodemographic background factors. The only significant effects are political party (democrats are significantly more positive than independents) and as education increases, attitudes toward immigrants become more positive. None of the other background factors are significant. In this final, fully specified model, only mainline Protestants, other religious affiliations, and the unaffiliated are significantly more positive toward immigrants than evangelical Protestants; Christian Nationalism and devotional style remain significant; blacks and Asians are significantly more positive than whites; cultural and economic threat increase support of immigrants; Boomers represent the only significant generation effect; and democrats are more positive than other party identifiers. The full model explains 47 percent of the variance in attitudes toward immigrants. Some implications of these findings are considered below.

**Table 2. OLS Estimates from Regression of Anti-Immigrant Attitudes on Religious Tradition, Religiosity, Cultural and Economic Threat, and Sociodemographic Predictors, 2004 General Social Survey (N=769)**

	Model 1		Model 2		Model 3		Model 4		Model 5		Model 6	
	b	Beta	b	Beta	b	Beta	b	Beta	b	Beta	b	Beta
Black Protestants	.64	.01	-.75	-.002	1.20	.03	1.63	.04	1.41	.03	1.70	.04
Mainline Protestant	-.85	-.07	-1.46**	-.12	-1.72**	-.14	-.91*	-.07	-1.01**	-.08	-.86*	-.07
Liberal Non-Traditional	-4.78*	-.08	-3.22	-.05	-2.65	-.04	-1.38	-.02	-1.42	-.02	-.97	-.02
Conservative Non-Traditional	-.64	-.02	.43	.01	.18	.01	-.10	-.003	.01	.00	-.18	-.01
Catholic	0.61	-.05	-.65	-.06	-.86*	-.08	-.45	-.04	-.51	-.05	-.35	-.03
Jewish	-3.95**	-.14	-2.94**	-.10	-3.33**	-.12	-1.93*	-.07	-2.11**	-.07	-1.59	-.06
Other Religious Identification	-4.44**	-.246	-5.65**	-.11	-6.01**	-.12	-3.58**	-.07	-3.53**	-.07	-3.51**	-.07
Not-Affiliated	-1.86**	-.14	-2.60**	-.19	-2.60**	-.19	-1.67**	-.12	-1.62**	-.12	-1.48**	-.11
Christian Nationalism	—	—	-.72**	-.41	-.71**	-.41	-.36**	-.21	-.34**	-.19	-.31**	-.17
Devotional Style	—	—	.41**	.31	.39**	.30	.23**	.18	.24**	.18	.24**	.18
Non-Hispanic Black	—	—	—	—	-1.70**	-.12	-1.89**	-.13	-1.78**	-.13	-1.31**	-.09
Asians	—	—	—	—	-3.11	-.09	-1.75	-.05	-1.78*	-.05	-1.78*	-.05
Cultural Threat	—	—	—	—	—	—	-.76**	-.18	-.75**	-.18	-.73**	-.17
Economic Threat	—	—	—	—	—	—	-2.03**	-.47	-2.04**	-.47	-1.97**	-.46
Generation X	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	.12	.01	.10	.01
Boomer Generation	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	1.01**	.10	.94*	.10

	<b>Model 1</b>	<b>Model 2</b>	<b>Model 3</b>	<b>Model 4</b>	<b>Model 5</b>	<b>Model 6</b>
	<b>b</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>Beta</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>Beta</b>
Silent Generation	—	—	—	—	.90*	.07
G.I. Generation	—	—	—	—	1.19	.05
Male	—	—	—	—	—	.10
Democrat	—	—	—	—	—	-.65*
Republican	—	—	—	—	—	.52
Other Party	—	—	—	—	—	1.28
Lower Class	—	—	—	—	—	.50
Working Class	—	—	—	—	—	.15
Upper Class	—	—	—	—	—	-.62
Household Income	—	—	—	—	—	.05
Education	—	—	—	—	—	-.15**
Adjusted R2		0.03	0.18	0.20	0.46	0.46
F		4.07**	17.68**	16.65**	46.78**	37.40*
Constant		23.58	26.97	27.42	32.97	32.08

\*p< .05 \*\*p< .01

### *Discussion*

Much of the results from the present study fall in line with themes from previous literature. Returning to the sequence of the hypotheses listed earlier, the first hypothesis posits that religious affiliation will influence attitudes toward immigrants. Consistent with previous research, mainline Protestants, the less traditionally religious (others and the unaffiliated), and in some cases religiously marginalized groups like Jews exhibit

more positive attitudes toward immigrants than white evangelical Protestants. However, the low R-square of model 1 that fits religious tradition alone indicates the variable's relatively weak explanatory power in understanding attitudes toward immigrants. Furthermore, the results from model 6, the full model, suggest that the combination of explanatory variables best explains the variance in attitudes toward immigrants. This supports the assertion that a more complex framework for predicting attitudes toward immigrants is necessary to determine the ways in which religious tradition and religiosity shape sociopolitical views of Americans.

The second hypothesis posits that respondents' religiosity as measured by devotional style and Christian nationalism will influence attitudes toward immigrants — positively in the case of devotional style and negatively in the case of Christian nationalism. The analyses consistently support this hypothesis. Challenging some previous literature, this finding suggests that more frequent attendance at religious services and feeling more closely connected to religion predicts more negative attitudes toward immigrants. Additionally, that the inclusion of religiosity in model 2 is the only model in which black Protestants exhibit more positive attitudes toward immigrants — albeit insignificantly — suggests that there is an opposing effect of high religiosity on black Protestants' and white evangelical Protestants' attitudes toward immigrants. This finding also supports the idea that religiosity is necessary to determining the ways in which religious tradition and religiosity shape sociopolitical views of Americans both

cumulatively and independently. The increase in adjusted R-square between models 1 and 2 further supports this notion.

The inclusion of race in model 3 is the only model in which Catholics are statistically significant. This finding suggests that racial and religious marginalization may intersect to influence the sociopolitical attitudes of certain demographics. The statistical significance of Christian nationalism may also help explain why black Protestants exhibit more positive views toward immigrants only when devotional style and Christian nationalism are present in the analysis. This may also help explain why white evangelical Protestants do not exhibit more positive attitudes toward immigrants.

The third hypothesis posits that both perceived cultural and economic threats posed by immigrants will increase negative attitudes toward immigrants, and that perceived cultural threat will have a stronger influence than perceived economic threat. The analyses consistently show that cultural and economic threat significantly influence attitudes toward immigrants in each model that the variables are included. As expected, increases in perceived economic and cultural threat increases negative attitudes toward immigrants. The prediction that the effect of cultural threat would be stronger than that of economic threat is not supported. In model 6, the standardized coefficient for cultural threat is  $-.17$  while that for economic threat is  $-.46$ . This does not follow most of the previous literature including economic and cultural threat variables. However, both variables are highly significant.

The fourth hypothesis positing that younger respondents will exhibit more positive attitudes toward immigrants than their older counterparts is supported. Relative to Millennials, the Boomer Generation in model 6 is the only generation significant in predicting negative attitudes toward immigrants. The other generations predict more negative attitudes toward immigrants but are not statistically significant.

The fifth hypothesis — predicting that (self-identified) lower class respondents would exhibit more negative attitudes toward immigrants — is not supported given that none of the class identifiers are statistically significant in predicting attitudes toward immigrants. In the full model, the only statistically significant indicator of class is years of education. As posited by the sixth hypothesis, higher education increases positive attitudes toward immigrants. It is interesting that household income and class identities are not significant given this finding, as higher education is often associated with higher income and economic status. This suggests that higher education provides a more substantive influence on respondents' world views, perhaps helping to dismantle ingroup-outgroup exclusionary rhetoric. The seventh hypothesis, that Democrats will exhibit more positive attitudes toward immigrants than Republicans or Independents, is supported. This reflects the typical disagreements among party identifiers. The final hypothesis, that sex will not significantly affect attitudes toward immigrants, is also supported.

### ***Limitations and Future Research Recommendations***

One of the primary limitations to this analysis is that the 2004 GSS dataset is a decade old. Because immigration continues to be a hotly contested political and social



issue, change since 2004 is expected. Thus more recent data are necessary in order to track the attitudinal shifts about immigrants and immigration reform, changes in the influx of immigrants, and shifts in religiosity since the data was collected. Replicating the current analysis with more contemporary data is recommended. The second most notable limitation of this research is that only one year of the GSS was applicable to the study, limiting the sample size as well as the pool of available indicators.

A replication of the present study using data from the years immediately following the 2008 economic recession is advisable to determine whether perceptions of economic insecurity continue to shape sociopolitical views, like attitudes toward immigrants and immigration reform, especially concerning issues rooted in socioeconomic struggles as immigration often is (Cornelius and Rosenblum 2005; Fetzer 2000; Chandler and Tsai 2001). In addition, a qualitative analysis may be useful to further explore this particular topic given the variance in personal devotional style, especially considering the growing “spiritual but not religious” population. As shown in Ammerman (2013), a critical factor is the way researchers have dichotomized spiritual and religious to be incompatible with each other. Ammerman (2013) also critiques the use of the GSS in studying religious ideologies, arguing that the questions produce oversimplified responses. However, that critique may be extended to many survey data sets rather than solely the GSS. I propose, rather, that a mixed-method study of the effect of religion and religiosity on attitudes toward immigrants would be particularly useful in deciphering the influences of spiritual, non-affiliated, or agnostic identities in particular.

Future research should also seek a larger sample size than that accessible in the present study. Utilizing a secondary data source that would allow for an analysis of multiple years of data would help provide the opportunity for a wider selection of indicators as well. Given the present study's findings, research focusing on the theory of religious marginalization should incorporate measures of racial marginalization and devotional style to better test the influence of these variables across various demographics and sociopolitical issues. Better diversifying the measures of religious marginalization and devotional style will also help future research to develop more precise theoretical and methodological frameworks. Given the findings of the present study and of previous research, a more complex measure of devotional style will better uncover religiosity's influence on sociopolitical perspectives, especially given the quickly changing demographics of the country.

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