

**TEXTO PARA DISCUSSÃO Nº 370**

**IS BRAZIL REALLY A CATHOLIC COUNTRY? WHAT OPINIONS ABOUT ABORTION,  
SEX BETWEEN INDIVIDUALS WHO ARE NOT MARRIED TO EACH OTHER,  
AND HOMOSEXUALITY SAY ABOUT THE MEANING OF CATHOLICISM  
IN THREE BRAZILIAN CITIES**

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BRAZILIAN CITIES\***

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## **RESUMO**

A ideia de que o Brasil é um país católico ainda é bastante difundida no país. O que significa ser católico no Brasil? Os católicos seguem a doutrina da Igreja Católica? O objetivo deste artigo é investigar a relação entre religião e envolvimento religioso (medidos através de filiação religiosa e frequência às cerimônias religiosas) e opiniões sobre aborto, sexo entre pessoas não casadas entre si e homossexualidade em São Paulo, Porto Alegre e Recife. Os dados são provenientes da Pesquisa “Espírito e Poder: Uma Pesquisa sobre Pentecostais em Dez Países”, levada a campo em 2006. Os resultados sugerem que os católicos são um grupo heterogêneo com respeito às opiniões sobre aborto e sexo entre pessoas não casadas entre si. Os protestantes com alta frequência às cerimônias são, de longe, o grupo mais conservador. Além disso, há uma forte associação entre frequência à missa e as opiniões, exceto homossexualidade, um tópico sobre o qual os católicos tendem a ter opiniões semelhantes, independentemente da frequência à Igreja.

## **ABSTRACT**

The idea of being a Catholic country is quite widespread throughout the nation. What does it mean to be Catholic in Brazil? Do Catholics follow the Catholic Doctrine? The objective of this paper is to investigate the relationship between religion and religious involvement (measured by religious affiliation and service attendance) and opinions about abortion, sex between individuals who are not married to each other, and homosexuality in São Paulo, Porto Alegre, and Recife. Data come from the survey “Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals,” carried out in 2006. Results suggest that Brazilian Catholics are a very heterogeneous group with respect to opinions about abortion and sex between individuals who are not married to each other. In addition, service attendance among Catholics and those opinions are strongly correlated, except for the case of homosexuality, a topic which Catholics tend to have the same opinions about, irrespective of their religious involvement. Committed Protestants are, by far and away, the most conservative group.

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## INTRODUCTION

Catholics are the oldest and most traditional religious group in Brazil and the idea of being a Catholic country is quite widespread throughout the nation. Yet census data indicate that the proportion of self-declared Catholics has fallen substantially over the years. Catholicism was universal by the end of the nineteenth century and decreased gradually until 1970. However, the last three decades have witnessed a change in the pace of the decline. In 2000, the proportion declared Catholic was reduced to  $\frac{3}{4}$  of the total population (Table 1). At the same time, there was an increase in the proportion who declared to be Protestant or to have no religious affiliation – from 5.2 and 0.8% in 1970 to 15.4 and 7.3% in 2000, respectively.

Despite the sharp decline, the majority of the Brazilian population is still Catholic. From this standpoint, Brazil could claim to be a Catholic country. However, what does it mean to be Catholic in Brazil? One way to answer this question is to investigate whether Catholics agree with the rules imposed by the Catholic Church.

**TABLE 1**  
**Percentage of Catholics - Brazil, 1872-2000**

Year	% Catholics
1872	99.72
1890	98.92
1900	(na)
1920	(na)
1940	95.01
1950	93.48
1960	93.07
1970	91.77
1980	88.96
1991	83.34
2000*	73.57

\* Resident population. Other years (1872-1991): Present population  
Source: Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística (IBGE), 2009.

The objective of this paper is to investigate the relationship between religion and religious involvement (measured by religious affiliation and service attendance) and opinions about abortion, sex between individuals who are not married to each other, and homosexuality in three state capitals (São Paulo, Porto Alegre, and Recife) located in different macro-regions of the country (Southeast, South, and Northeast, respectively). Data come from the survey “Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals,” carried out in 2006. The paper begins with a brief review of the association between religious affiliation and opinions regarding sexual behavior, as well as reasons why Catholicism is declining in Brazil. The following section presents a description of the data and methods. Results suggest that Brazilian Catholics are a very heterogeneous group with respect to opinions about abortion and sex between individuals who are not married to each other. In addition, service attendance among Catholics and those opinions are strongly correlated, except for the case of homosexuality, a topic which Catholics tend to have the same opinions about, irrespective of their religious involvement. Committed Protestants are, by far and away, the most conservative group.

## BACKGROUND

The relationship between religious affiliation and attendance on the one hand, and issues related to sex and reproduction on the other, has not been sufficiently investigated in the Brazilian case. For the US, research has shown that religious affiliation is associated with sexual behavior and opinions. Protestant men are less likely than all Catholics to engage in extramarital intercourse, regardless their religious involvement (Hill et al, 2004). Although Protestants and Pentecostals are against abortion, they are more permissive with birth control practices, except some conservative groups who maintain a pro-natalist ideology (Wilcox, 1998). Yet both Catholics and conservative Protestants are more likely than others to oppose abortion (Ellison et al., 2005). Conservative Protestants are more intolerant toward homosexual behavior than Mainline Protestants or other religious groups. Moreover, their attitudes reveal opposition to the role homosexuals play in society, although there is heterogeneity among the Conservative Protestants (Burdette et al., 2005). Religious factors are also important for African Americans, who are overwhelmingly Protestant, and their opinions regarding same-sex marriage. Religious commitment, in this case, helps solidify the opposition to marital rights for gays and lesbians (Sherkat et al., 2009).

Catholicism is declining in Brazil and the literature points to several reasons for this trend. First, because the Catholic Church has strong roots in rural areas, the increasing urbanization of the country may have taken a toll in the number of Catholics (Decol, 1999). Second, this decrease is also linked to the structural crisis that the Catholic Church has faced not only in Brazil, but also in other countries (Decol, 1999). Third, the urban world poses challenges to the Catholic values (Decol, 1999). Fourth, the decrease in Catholic Church members can be associated to the increase of Protestantism and, more specifically, Pentecostalism<sup>1</sup>. The choice between rewards “here and now” (Pentecostalism) and after-life (Catholicism) can be part of explanation of this phenomenon (Byrnes, 2005). Finally, the Catholic Church has failed to connect with and relate to less educated and low income individuals, providing opportunities to Protestant and Pentecostal churches, whose work with poor people and the provision of direct assistance, from financial help and jobs to emotional and spiritual support, has attracted new members (Burdick, 1996, Byrnes, 2005).

The Catholic Church responded with the Catholic Charismatic Renewal, a worldwide movement that began in 1967 and was supposed to “play a significant role in promoting the much-needed defense of Christian life in societies where secularism and materialism have weakened many people's ability to respond to the Spirit and to discern God's loving call” (Pope John Paul II, 1992). Although particularly popular in Brazil, the movement did not help recover its membership in the country.

The Catholic doctrine is very clear about the three topics under study here. The Pontifical Council for the Family, on “The Truth and Meaning of Human Sexuality - Guidelines for Education within the Family,” argues against abortion, out-of-wedlock sex, and homosexuality. The Catholic Church is opposed to abortion, no matter the woman's situation or health condition (mother's life risk, for example); to contraception (regulation of fertility must be natural and sex is for procreation only,

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<sup>1</sup> In Brazil, Evangelical is a general denomination for Protestants and Pentecostals, although there are fundamental differences between the two groups. For further distinctions between them, see McKinnon et al., 2008.

so there must be chastity even within marriage); and homosexuality (considered “abnormal,” homosexuals should be called to chastity) (Papa Paulo VI, 1965; Trujillo and Sgreccia, 1995; Trujillo, 2002; Papa Bento XVI, 2007).

Protestants may not be that different. Generally speaking, they are against extramarital sex, homosexuality, and favor abstinence outside marriage. Regarding abortion, McKinnon and colleagues point out that “it is highly unlikely that any religious organization in Brazil would do anything to promote or condone the use of abortion in the early teenage years” (McKinnon et al, 2008, p.294). The same is probably true for adult women, as abortion is illegal in Brazil except in cases of rape, life threatening situations for the mother or for the child.

In sum, “real” Protestants, as well as “real” Catholics, should be against abortion, homosexuality, and sex with married individuals. Are Brazilian Catholics really like that?

## DATA AND METHODS

We analyze data from the survey “Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals,”<sup>2</sup> provided by Association of Religion Data Archives. The survey investigated religious, political, and civic views of renewalists (pentecostals and charismatics), as well as the general public. Adults 18-90 years-old were interviewed face-to-face in three state capitals: São Paulo (Southeast), Porto Alegre (South), and Recife (Northeast).

The sample consists of 1000 individuals (700 from the general public and 300 from an oversample of renewalists), among which 313 are Pentecostal (106 from the general public sample and 207 from the oversample of renewalists), 329 are Charismatic (236 from the general public sample and 93 from the oversample of renewalists) and 358 are Catholic (from the general sample).

This study explores the responses to the question “Please tell me, for each of the following items, whether you think it can *always be justified*, *can sometimes be justified*, or *never be justified*: abortion; sex between individuals who are not married to each other; homosexuality”<sup>3</sup>. These three topics were chosen because they are among the most polemic issues regarding sexual and reproductive behavior.

We used binomial logistic regression (Hosmer and Lemeshow, 1989) and constructed one model for each of the three topics under study. The categories “can always be justified” and “can sometimes be justified” were collapsed together because Catholicism totally forbids abortion, sex between individuals who are not married to each other, and homosexuality. Therefore, Catholics are supposed to believe these behaviors can never be justified.

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<sup>2</sup> The 10 countries are the United States, Chile, Brazil, Guatemala, Kenya, Nigeria, South Africa, India, the Philippines, and South Korea.

<sup>3</sup> A question for each of the three topics was asked separately.



Model A – *Abortion*

Dependent variable: 1 if “abortion can never be justified,” 0 otherwise.

Model B: *Sex between individuals who are not married to each other*

Dependent variable: 1 if “sex between individuals who are not married to each other can never be justified,” 0 otherwise.

Model C: *Homosexuality*

Dependent variable: 1 if “homosexuality can never be justified,” 0 otherwise.

Independent variable: Religion and service attendance

This variable came from a question about belonging to a particular religion with those denominations: Roman Catholic, Evangelical (Evangélico or Protestant)<sup>4</sup>, Afro-Brazilian, Jehovah’s Witness, Orthodox, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, no religion, not a believer, atheist, agnostic, Kardecist – Spiritism, Spiritism and other religion. The survey data were originally coded with nine categories. The respondents were divided into Roman Catholic (48,5%), Evangelical (36,1%), Afro-Brazilian (4,5%), Jehovah’s Witness (0,7%), Buddhist (0,2%), no religion, not a believer, atheist and agnostic as a single category (5,7%), Kardecism – Spiritism (1,1%), Spiritism (2,3%) and Other religions (0,9%).

Catholics are our main category of interest. For models A, B and C we used four categories – Catholics, Protestants (Evangelicals), other religions (Afro-Brazilian, Jehovah’s Witness, Buddhist, Kardecism – Spiritism, Spiritism and Other religion) and no religion (no religion, not a believer, atheist and agnostic) – to compare the opinions among those with different religious affiliations.

Attendance variables are based on six original response categories for the question “Aside from weddings and funerals, how often do you attend religious services?” – (1) More than once a week; (2) Once a week; (3) Once or twice a month; (4) A few a times a year; (5) Seldom; (6) Never. Based on Ellison et al (2005), we constructed the variables including service just for Catholics and Protestants.

- *Committed Catholics*: Catholics who attend services weekly or more (response 1 or 2);
- *Occasional Catholics*: Catholics who attend sporadically (response 3 or 4);
- *Nominal Catholics*: Catholics who attend services never or almost never (response 5 or 6).
- *Committed Protestants*: Protestants who attend services weekly or more (response 1 or 2);
- *Occasional Protestants*: Protestants who attend sporadically (response 3 or 4);
- *Nominal Protestants*: Protestants who attend services never or almost never (response 5 or 6).

Control variables include gender, education (incomplete primary school; complete primary school; incomplete secondary school; complete secondary school; some university level but no

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<sup>4</sup> Although there are many distinct denominations for Evangelicals (Protestants and Pentecostals, for example) in Brazil, the survey does not differentiate them.

diploma; university level, with diploma)<sup>5</sup>, age group (18-34, 35-39, and 50 and over), race/skin color (*negro* and *white*)<sup>6</sup>, marital status (married, living with a partner, widowed, divorced/separated and never married), children (yes or no), and city of residence (São Paulo, Recife and Porto Alegre).

The models were estimated with Stata version 10.1. Each logistic regression consists of two models for each dependent variable. Model 1 investigates the effect of religion and service attendance, whereas Model 2 controls for socioeconomic and demographic factors. All analyses included weights to account for sampling. The results are presented in odds ratios.

## RESULTS

### Abortion

Table 2 presents the percentage distribution of the variables used in the abortion models. In general, more than 80% of the respondents are against abortion in any circumstance. The response patterns are very similar but some categories present a slight variation: a higher proportion of those with no religious affiliation and more education are less opposed to abortion.

Regarding religious affiliation, Protestants – mainly Committed Protestants – are more pro-life (90.3%) than the other affiliations. Among Catholics, attendance also plays an important role: 16.7% of Committed Catholics consider that abortion can be justified, whereas 19.9% of Occasional Catholics and 27.7% of Nominal Catholics have the same opinion. However, we have to be cautious because there are a few observations for Occasional and Nominal Protestants (N=33 and N=22, respectively), meaning that Protestants attend service regularly and, therefore, are more committed to their religions.

The proportion of females who think that an abortion can be justified slightly outnumbers the proportion of males – 19.3% versus 16.9%. A more liberal position is observed among more educated<sup>7</sup>, younger, and childless women. Opinions about abortion vary modestly by race but marital status seems important – a higher proportion of divorced/separated and never married individuals have more favorable opinions. Regarding regional differences, more Porto Alegre residents agree with “abortion can be justified” (20.1%) than Recife and São Paulo residents (19.1% and 16.3%, respectively).

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<sup>5</sup> The codebook does not clarify what the educational categories really mean in terms of years of schooling. We assume that incomplete primary school ranges from 1 to 7 years of schooling; complete primary school equals to 8 years of schooling; incomplete secondary school means 9 or 10 years of schooling; complete secondary school is equivalent to 11 years of schooling; some university level with no diploma ranges from 12 to 14 years of schooling; and university level with diploma is 15 or more years of schooling.

<sup>6</sup> The original categories were: branco (white), pardo/mulato (brown), negro, amarelo (yellow - asian)/mestiço and indígena (indigenous). The Brazilian Census Bureau (IBGE – Instituto Brasileiro de Geografia e Estatística) classifies the race/skin color in a different way: white, pardo (brown), black, amarelo (yellow - asian) and indigenous. Therefore, in order to maintain the comparability, we have collapsed the categories pardo/mulato and negro and dropped the amarelo and indígena categories – the last two categories, according to the 2000 Census, account for less than 1% of the total population of the country.

<sup>7</sup> In this case, the highest percentage (43.8%) has “some university level, without diploma”.

**TABLE 2**  
**Percentage Distribution of Variables Used in Abortion Models (A1 and A2)**

	Dependent variable		% in each category	N
	Opinion about abortion			
	Can be justified	Can never be justified		
<b>Independent variable - Religion</b>				
None	30.9	69.1	5.5	55
Catholic	21.9	78.1	48.3	480
--- <i>Committed Catholic</i>	16.7	83.3	13.3	132
--- <i>Occasional Catholic</i>	19.9	80.1	17.2	171
--- <i>Nominal Catholic</i>	27.7	72.3	17.8	177
Protestant	9.7	90.3	36.4	361
--- <i>Committed Protestant</i>	8.2	91.8	30.8	306
--- <i>Occasional Protestant</i>	15.2	84.8	3.3	33
--- <i>Nominal Protestant</i>	22.7	77.3	2.2	22
Other	23.7	76.3	9.8	97
<b>Covariates</b>				
Gender				
--- <i>Male</i>	16.9	83.1	50.1	497
--- <i>Female</i>	19.3	80.7	49.9	496
Education				
--- <i>No formal education</i>	-	-	0.0	0
--- <i>Incomplete primary school</i>	12.1	87.9	37.4	371
--- <i>Complete primary school</i>	6.8	93.2	4.4	44
--- <i>Incomplete Secondary school</i>	15.8	84.2	19.1	190
--- <i>Complete secondary school</i>	19.6	80.4	27.3	271
--- <i>Some university level, without a diploma</i>	43.8	56.2	6.4	64
--- <i>University level, with diploma</i>	39.6	60.4	5.3	53
Age group				
--- <i>18-34</i>	18.2	81.8	51.0	506
--- <i>35-49</i>	18.8	81.2	36.5	362
--- <i>50 and over</i>	16.0	84.0	12.6	125
Race				
--- <i>Negro</i>	17.0	83.0	47.4	471
--- <i>White</i>	18.9	81.1	48.5	482
Marital status				
--- <i>Married</i>	14.7	85.3	41.8	415
--- <i>Living with a partner</i>	17.6	82.4	13.7	136
--- <i>Widowed</i>	15.6	84.4	3.2	32
--- <i>Divorced/Separated</i>	21.9	78.1	9.7	96
--- <i>Never married</i>	22.0	78.0	31.6	314
Children				
--- <i>No</i>	21.8	78.2	30.5	303
--- <i>Yes</i>	16.5	83.5	69.4	689
Region				
--- <i>São Paulo (Southeast)</i>	16.3	83.7	45.0	447
--- <i>Recife (Northeast)</i>	19.1	80.9	27.4	272
--- <i>Porto Alegre (South)</i>	20.1	79.9	27.6	274
<b>Total</b>	18.1	81.9	100.0	993

Source: Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals (2006)

Table 3 presents the odds ratio results from binary logistic regression models for opinions about abortion. Model A1 displays our variables of interest, religion affiliation and service attendance. Occasional and committed Catholics are twice more likely to have negative opinions about abortion than nominal Catholics, whereas committed protestants are four times more likely to be against abortion if compared to the same reference category.

Model A2 controls for socioeconomic and demographic effects and results point to a persistent and slightest stronger association between religion and religiosity and the belief that abortion can never be justified. Although less significant, having other religions has a positive correlation with the belief that abortion can never be justified if compared to nominal Catholics. This result may be due to the fact that around one third of those who claim to have other religions declare to be affiliated to Spiritism, a religion that is against abortion. Education is strong a predictor of opinions about abortion – having completed secondary school or more reduces the odds of being against abortion. Living in Porto Alegre reduces the odds of being against abortion in any circumstance if compared to those living in São Paulo.

**TABLE 3**  
**Odds Ratios on Abortion Opinion Models**

	Abortion can never be justified - reference	
	Model A1	Model A2
Religion attendance (Nominal Catholic - reference)		
--- <i>None</i>	0.91	0.91
--- <i>Committed Catholic</i>	2.09**	2.22**
--- <i>Occasional Catholic</i>	2.08**	2.28***
--- <i>Committed Protestant</i>	4.01***	4.20***
--- <i>Occasional Protestant</i>	1.63	1.72
--- <i>Nominal Protestant</i>	1.50	1.06
--- <i>Other</i>	1.31	1.83*
Gender (Male omitted)		
--- <i>Female</i>		0.75
Education (Incomplete primary school - reference)		
--- <i>Complete primary school</i>		1.44
--- <i>Incomplete Secondary school</i>		0.65
--- <i>Complete secondary school</i>		0.38***
--- <i>Some university level, without a diploma</i>		0.16***
--- <i>University level, with diploma</i>		0.29***
Age group (18-34 - reference)		
--- <i>35-49</i>		0.76
--- <i>50 and over</i>		1.10
Race (Negro - reference)		
--- <i>White</i>		1.03
Marital status (Married - reference)		
--- <i>Living with a partner</i>		1.04
--- <i>Widowed</i>		1.30
--- <i>Divorced/Separated</i>		0.49**
--- <i>Never married</i>		0.74
Children (No - reference)		
--- <i>Yes</i>		0.84
Region (São Paulo - reference)		
--- <i>Recife (Northeast)</i>		0.90
--- <i>Porto Alegre (South)</i>		0.62*

\*\*\*p <= .01; \*\*p <= .05; \*p <= .1

Source: Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals (2006)

## **Sex between individuals who are not married to each other**

Another opinion investigated by the survey “Spirit and Power” regards sex between individuals who are not married to each other. It is important emphasize that this question does not mean sex *before* marriage or out-of-wedlock. Sex between people are not married to each other has a broad definition and can range be from casual sex or sex between boyfriend and girlfriend to lovers, in which one or both of them could be married to another person.

Although most of people agree that this situation can be justified (64.5%), there are huge differences between religious affiliations and degrees of commitment. More than 90% of those with no religion agree that sex between individuals not married to each other can be justified, whereas committed Protestants are on the other extreme – only 41% share that opinion. The proportion of committed Catholics who think this behavior is justifiable is almost twice the proportion of committed Protestants who agree with that. As expected, men are more likely to agree with this situation. Agreement tend to increase with education, decrease with age and be greater among those never married and divorced/separated, with children, and living in Recife, followed by Porto Alegre. Race differentials are almost inexistent.

**TABLE 4**  
**Percentage Distribution of Variables Used in “Sex between individuals not married to each other”  
Models (B1 and B2)**

Independent variable - Religion	Dependent variable		% in each category	N
	Opinion about sex between people who are not married to each other			
	Can be justified	Can never be justified		
None	91.2	8.8	5.8	57
Catholic	76.8	23.2	48.2	478
--- Committed Catholic	69.7	30.3	13.3	132
--- Occasional Catholic	77.6	22.4	17.2	170
--- Nominal Catholic	81.3	18.7	17.8	176
Protestant	40.9	59.1	36.2	359
--- Committed Protestant	36.2	63.8	30.7	304
--- Occasional Protestant	69.7	30.3	3.3	33
--- Nominal Protestant	63.6	36.4	2.2	22
Other	75.3	24.7	9.8	97
<b>Covariates</b>				
Gender				
--- Male	66.6	33.4	50.2	497
--- Female	62.4	37.6	49.8	494
Education				
--- No formal education	-	-	0.0	0
--- Incomplete primary school	54.8	45.2	37.0	367
--- Complete primary school	56.8	43.2	4.4	44
--- Incomplete Secondary school	66.8	33.2	19.2	190
--- Complete secondary school	70.2	29.8	27.4	272
--- Some university level, without a diploma	83.1	16.9	6.6	65
--- University level, with diploma	77.4	22.6	5.3	53
Age group				
--- 18-34	69.8	30.2	51.2	507
--- 35-49	61.0	39.0	36.2	359
--- 50 and over	52.8	47.2	12.6	125
Race				
--- Negro	64.2	35.8	47.3	469
--- White	65.8	34.2	48.6	482
Marital status				
--- Married	55.2	44.8	41.7	413
--- Living with a partner	74.8	25.2	13.6	135
--- Widowed	53.1	46.9	3.2	32
--- Divorced/Separated	73.2	26.8	9.8	97
--- Never married	70.7	29.3	31.7	314
Children				
--- No	71.1	28.9	30.7	304
--- Yes	61.7	38.3	69.2	686
Region				
--- São Paulo (Southeast)	61.6	38.4	44.7	443
--- Recife (Northeast)	67.5	32.5	27.6	274
--- Porto Alegre (South)	66.1	33.9	27.6	274
<b>Total</b>	<b>64.5</b>	<b>35.5</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>991</b>

Source: Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals (2006)

Table 5 presents the odds ratios for believing that sex between individuals who are not married to each other can never be justified. Committed Protestants are nearly 6 times more likely than nominal Catholics respondents to favor the statement “sex between people who are not married to each other can never be justified.” Committed Catholics are almost 2 and a half times more likely than Nominal Catholics to oppose to sex between individuals not married to each other (Model B1).

After controlling for socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, the odds ratios for religion and religiosity hold strong. No religion is now significant and negatively related to the odds of thinking that sex among individuals not married to each other is never justifiable. Although interesting, this result must be analyzed with caution due to the small number of individuals who declared to have no religious affiliation. Once again, education appears as a strong predictor of opinion – the higher the education, the less likely it is for people to disapprove sex among individuals unmarried to one another is not acceptable. Compared to younger people, those 50 years-old and above are nearly two times more likely to be against the justification of out-of-marriage sex. In contrast, as expected, people who are living together or are divorced/separated, for obvious reasons, agree with out-of-marriage sex. Recife and Porto Alegre residents are less likely than São Paulo residents to be against that – once again, São Paulo presents the most conservative view.



**TABLE 5**  
**Odds Ratios on “Sex between not married people” Opinion Models**

	<b>Sex between people who are not married to each other can never be justified - reference</b>	
	<b>Model B1</b>	<b>Model B2</b>
Religion attendance (Nominal Catholic - reference)		
--- <i>None</i>	0.44	0.37*
--- <i>Committed Catholic</i>	2.31***	1.96**
--- <i>Occasional Catholic</i>	1.5	1.39
--- <i>Committed Protestant</i>	6.31***	6.29***
--- <i>Occasional Protestant</i>	1.65	1.94
--- <i>Nominal Protestant</i>	2.53	2.42
--- <i>Other</i>	1.50	1.59
Gender (Male omitted)		
--- <i>Female</i>		1.22
Education (Incomplete primary school - reference)		
--- <i>Complete primary school</i>		0.99
--- <i>Incomplete Secondary school</i>		0.64*
--- <i>Complete secondary school</i>		0.44***
--- <i>Some university level, without a diploma</i>		0.36**
--- <i>University level, with diploma</i>		0.26**
Age group (18-34 - reference)		
--- <i>35-49</i>		1.35
--- <i>50 and over</i>		1.79*
Race (Negro - reference)		
--- <i>White</i>		1.11
Marital status (Married - reference)		
--- <i>Living with a partner</i>		0.53**
--- <i>Widowed</i>		1.21
--- <i>Divorced/Separated</i>		0.32***
--- <i>Never married</i>		0.72
Children (No - reference)		
--- <i>Yes</i>		1.02
Region (São Paulo - reference)		
--- <i>Recife (Northeast)</i>		0.56**
--- <i>Porto Alegre (South)</i>		0.61*

\*\*\*p <= .01; \*\*p <= .05; \*p <= .1

Source: Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals (2006)

## Homosexuality

According to Table 6, most respondents (57.4%) claim that homosexuality can never be justified. This is more so for Protestants (78.8%) and unaffiliated individuals (62.3%). Catholics are more liberal – most of them think homosexuality can be justified – and there are no significant differences between committed, occasional and nominal Catholics. Males and individuals 50 and more years-old are more conservative in that regard. Education and acceptance of homosexuality are positively associated – the higher the education, the higher the proportion of those who think homosexuality can be justified. Whites are also slightly more supportive of the opinion that homosexuality can be justified. Individuals who are married or widowed, have children, and live in Recife are less likely to accept it.

**TABLE 6**  
**Percentage Distribution of Variables Used in Homosexuality Models (C1 and C2)**

Independent variable - Religion	Dependent variable Opinion about homosexuality		% in each category	N
	Can be justified	Can never be justified		
None	37.7	62.3	5.6	53
Catholic	54.3	45.7	48.3	459
--- Committed Catholic	54.2	45.8	12.4	118
--- Occasional Catholic	52.7	47.3	17.8	169
--- Nominal Catholic	55.8	44.2	18.1	172
Protestant	21.2	78.8	36.2	344
--- Committed Protestant	17.8	82.2	30.7	292
--- Occasional Protestant	39.4	60.6	3.5	33
--- Nominal Protestant	42.1	57.9	2.0	19
Other	67.0	33.0	9.9	94
<b>Covariates</b>				
Gender				
--- Male	35.5	64.5	49.8	473
--- Female	49.7	50.3	50.2	477
Education				
--- No formal education	-	-	0.0	0
--- Incomplete primary school	35.2	64.8	36.7	349
--- Complete primary school	38.6	61.4	4.6	44
--- Incomplete Secondary school	43.6	56.4	19.1	181
--- Complete secondary school	45.4	54.6	27.4	260
--- Some university level, without a diploma	60.3	39.7	6.6	63
--- University level, with diploma	56.6	43.4	5.6	53
Age group				
--- 18-34	48.2	51.8	51.4	488
--- 35-49	38.8	61.2	36.1	343
--- 50 and over	31.1	68.9	12.5	119
Race				
--- Negro	41.6	58.4	47.3	449
--- White	44.1	55.9	48.7	463
Marital status				
--- Married	37.1	62.9	41.7	396
--- Living with a partner	44.4	55.6	14.2	135
--- Widowed	35.5	64.5	3.3	31
--- Divorced/Separated	44.1	55.9	9.8	93
--- Never married	49.5	50.5	31.1	295
Children				
--- No	48.8	51.2	30.0	285
--- Yes	40.0	60.0	70.0	665
Region				
--- São Paulo (Southeast)	43.0	57.0	43.8	416
--- Recife (Northeast)	38.5	61.5	28.4	270
--- Porto Alegre (South)	46.2	53.8	27.8	264
<b>Total</b>	<b>42.6</b>	<b>57.4</b>	<b>100.0</b>	<b>950</b>

Source: Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals (2006)

Model C1 (Table 7) suggests that, relative to nominal Catholics, Protestants are four times more likely to think that homosexuality is never justified. Individuals with other denominations but Catholics or Protestants are about half as likely to view homosexuality as something that cannot be justified. Surprisingly, individuals with no religion are almost twice more likely than nominal Catholics to have an unfavorable opinion about homosexuality.

When controlled for other variables (Model C2), the odds of endorsing the opinion “homosexuality can never be justified” increase for both Protestants and unaffiliated individuals if compared to Nominal Catholics. The effects for the other religion category disappears. High education still plays an important role towards the opinion regarding homosexuality – having some university level reduces the odds of being against homosexuality. However, there is no other significant education category. Women are more liberal than men and younger individuals are much more liberal than older individuals. The remaining control variables are not significant.

**TABLE 7**  
**Odds Ratios on Homosexuality Opinion Models**

	Homosexuality can never be justified - reference	
	Model C1	Model C2
Religion attendance (Nominal Catholic - reference)		
--- <i>None</i>	1.87*	2.22**
--- <i>Committed Catholic</i>	0.90	0.81
--- <i>Occasional Catholic</i>	1.08	0.95
--- <i>Committed Protestant</i>	4.21***	4.75***
--- <i>Occasional Protestant</i>	1.70	1.48
--- <i>Nominal Protestant</i>	1.59	1.36
--- <i>Other</i>	0.56**	0.64
Gender (Male omitted)		
--- <i>Female</i>		0.43***
Education (Incomplete primary school - reference)		
--- <i>Complete primary school</i>		1.03
--- <i>Incomplete Secondary school</i>		0.75
--- <i>Complete secondary school</i>		0.70
--- <i>Some university level, without a diploma</i>		0.51*
--- <i>University level, with diploma</i>		0.63
Age group (18-34 - reference)		
--- <i>35-49</i>		1.53**
--- <i>50 and over</i>		2.61***
Race (Negro - reference)		
--- <i>White</i>		1.24
Marital status (Married - reference)		
--- <i>Living with a partner</i>		1.49
--- <i>Widowed</i>		0.92
--- <i>Divorced/Separated</i>		0.82
--- <i>Never married</i>		0.97
Children (No - reference)		
--- <i>Yes</i>		1.44
Region (São Paulo - reference)		
--- <i>Recife (Northeast)</i>		1.33
--- <i>Porto Alegre (South)</i>		0.85

\*\*\*p <= .01; \*\*p <= .05; \*p <= .1

Source: Spirit and Power: A 10-Country Survey of Pentecostals (2006)

## DISCUSSION AND CONCLUDING REMARKS

This study investigated the relationship between religion and religious involvement and three polemic issues – abortion, sex between individuals not married to one another, and homosexuality. Religious attendance was measured by three categories: committed, occasional and nominal. The main focus was on Catholics and the other religious groups (Protestant, others, and no religion) were used for comparison. This section discusses some of the findings.

Opinions about abortion, sex between individuals who are not married to one another, and homosexuality have shed light on what it means to be Catholic in Brazil. Among the three topics, abortion is, by far, the most sensitive. Only a relatively small proportion of respondents (less than 20%) thought it could eventually be justified. It is important to stress that we are not talking about

being in favor of abortion, but rather considering whether it can be justified under certain circumstances – whatever these circumstances may be. Logistic regression results indicate that, even after controlling for socioeconomic and demographic characteristics, nominal Catholics are different from Catholics who have any degree of religious involvement, as well as from Protestants who attend services at least once a week and those who have other religious affiliations. Yet the effect is greater for committed Protestants, who are the most conservative group with respect to abortion. Nominal Catholics and those who have no religion are not different from each other. Therefore, service attendance plays a crucial role in understanding the differences in opinions about abortion.

Sex between individuals not married to each other was the least sensitive of the three topics. In fact, the majority of the respondents (over 60%) said this behavior could be justified. Even committed Catholics were on the liberal side – as much as 70% of them agreed there was justification for that behavior. The odds of thinking that sex between individuals who are not married to each other can never be justified are positively correlated to attending service once a week or more for both Catholics and Protestants. Committed Protestants, once again, have shown the most conservative position in comparison to nominal Catholics.

Regarding homosexuality, around 40% of the respondents claimed it could be justified. Based on frequency distributions, committed Protestants seemed quite homophobic – as much as 82% of the interviewees revealed thinking that homosexuality could never be justified, whereas this opinion was shared by less than half of the committed Catholics. Logistic regression results suggest that Catholics have similar opinions and, therefore, can be considered a homogeneous group with regard to homosexuality. Committed Protestants are the ones who really differ from nominal Catholics and have the highest odds of being against any form of justification to homosexuality. Surprisingly, those with no religious affiliation have a more conservative position about homosexuality than nominal Catholics.

Is Brazil really a Catholic country? The answer is yes if based on religious affiliation but can as well be no if conforming to the rules also matters. The meaning of Catholicism in Brazil is closely related to religious involvement. Catholics in general and nominal Catholics in particular are far more liberal regarding the three topics under study than they should be if they followed the rules imposed by the Catholic Church.

Future studies lead us to investigate regional differences, as the control variables for place of residence were often significant. Another venue is the study of possible differences in religious affiliation and attainment among those who claim the topics under study can sometimes be justified or always be justified.

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