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Cristen Dalessandro

University of Colorado Boulder, cristen.dalessandro@colorado.edu

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Hispanic and Catholic, or Hispanic-Catholic? Racialized Religious Identity for Self-Identified “Hispanic” Students at a Predominantly White Institution

Cristen Dalessandro
University of Colorado Boulder
Department of Sociology

Abstract:

Drawing from in-depth interviews with undergraduates at a predominantly non-Hispanic white and secular university in the U.S., I investigate how those self-identified as both Hispanic and Catholic negotiate the identity statuses that classify them as minorities on their campus. While participants in this study who did not identify as Hispanic also did not make connections between religious affiliation and racial/ethnic group membership, most Hispanic undergraduates did make these connections. I found that self-identified Hispanic students used the meanings they attach to Catholic religious affiliation to help them also make sense of their racialized Hispanic identities in the university space. Despite coming from diverse geographic, social class, and cultural backgrounds, these students move toward creating a shared definition of what it means to be a racialized Hispanic person (or Latinx person with Spanish-speaking ancestors) in this particular collegiate context. I conclude with suggestions for future research.

Keywords:

Hispanic, Catholic, Identity, Intersectionality, Students

I feel like especially coming from a Hispanic family, religion is everywhere in the home... like, your typical Hispanic family, we had the picture of Lady Guadalupe, crosses in almost every room, Palm Sunday palms everywhere in the house... so religion is just there.

For Anthony, the interview participant who is quoted above, religion seems to be intimately connected to his racialized identity as a Hispanic/Latinx person in the U.S.¹ Though ethnicity often refers to culture or national origins and race refers to visible markers of difference (such as skin color or hair texture), many social scientists and historians consider both race and ethnicity to be socially constructed—or, defined according to economic, social, and political circumstances.^{2 3 4} This is the case with those individuals labeled “Hispanic” or “Latinx” in the United States, since diverse individuals with Spanish-speaking and/or Latin American ancestors are often grouped together under these broad terms.⁵ In addition to language, culture, and geographic origins, religion has been another characteristic through which people have been racialized, or have been recognized as belonging to certain racial or ethnic identity groups.⁶ That Anthony makes this connection communicates the importance of religion to his own racialized identity. The context within which Anthony makes this connection is also important. Anthony’s status as a self-identified Hispanic man at an American university where most of the students are non-Hispanic white—and not Catholic—can influence how, and why, he understands his religion as important to his racialized identity.

During the 2011-2012 school year, I interviewed undergraduates at a large research university in the United States who are practicing Catholics or who were

¹ “Anthony” and all other participant names appearing in this paper are pseudonyms.

² As opposed to being rooted in quantifiable biological differences between groups.

³ Dorothy Roberts, *Fatal Invention: How Science, Politics, and Big Business Re-Crete Race in The Twenty-First Century* (New York: The New Press, 2011), 3-4.

⁴ The complicated nature of defining ethnicity and race is exemplified by the U.S. Census Bureau’s ever-changing questions on racial and ethnic categorizations. For more, see “What America Calls Us: A Historical Timeline.” Last modified June 10, 2015.

<http://www.pewsocialtrends.org/interactives/multiracial-timeline/>

⁵ Rubén Rumbaut, “The Making of a People,” in *Hispanics and The Future of America*. Eds. Marta Tienda and Faith Mitchell (Washington, DC: The National Academies Press, 2006), 18-20.

⁶ Nasar Meer, “Racialization and Religion: Race, Culture, and Difference in the Study of Antisemitism and Islamophobia,” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 36(2013): 385-398.

raised Catholic.⁷ The university these students were attending, Midwestern University (a pseudonym), qualifies as a predominantly white institution because the majority of the student body identifies as non-Hispanic white.⁸ While the non-Hispanic white students and one non-Hispanic black student I interviewed did not usually make connections between their racial/ethnic identities and Catholicism, the self-identified Hispanic students told stories that intertwined being Catholic with having a racialized Hispanic identity. In this paper, I use exploratory evidence to assess how these Hispanic students used their Catholicism to help understand and explain their identities as Hispanic at a predominantly non-Hispanic white institution of higher education.

Though the term “Hispanic” itself does not define a racial group—rather, it denotes having origins in one of the many countries in which Spanish is the primary language spoken—in this paper I treat the term “Hispanic” as a “pan-ethnic” label or category.^{9 10 11} My participants are Americans who self-identify as “Hispanic” to indicate ancestry in one of the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America—for the students here, this is either Mexico or the Caribbean. Though it is arguable that the terms Latino/Latina (or the inclusive “Latinx”) are more accurate in referring to these students’ raced identities, the students themselves used the term “Hispanic” when describing their own raced selves, so I honor their self-identifications throughout this paper. Though an ongoing dispute, many researchers prefer the term “Latinx” over “Hispanic” when discussing race. This is because Latinx signifies having ethnic origins in one of the many countries of Latin America, several of

⁷ I received Institutional Review Board approval to conduct this research in 2011.

⁸ See Tabbye M. Chavous, “African American College Students in Predominantly White Institutions: Considerations of Race and Gender,” *Perspectives* 8 (2002): 142-150.

⁹ Pan-ethnic labels are social and political categories that subsume multiple ethnic groups under a single term. Pan-ethnic labels often are applied to minority groups. One example from the United States is subsuming all those of Latin American descent (such as Mexicans, Puerto Ricans, Cubans, etc.) under a single “Hispanic” or “Latinx” label. Another example from the U.S. is the labeling those of Chinese, Japanese, Vietnamese, or Korean ancestry as simply “Asian.”

¹⁰ Yen Le Espiritu, *Asian American Panethnicity: Bridging Institutions and Identities* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1992), 2-3.

¹¹ Rubén Rumbaut, “The Making of a People,” 18-20.

which are home to significant non-Spanish-speaking populations.¹² Despite this debate, neither term is totally adequate in capturing the diversity of Latinx and Hispanic peoples. Instead, the terms are social and political constructs that designate individuals with Spanish-speaking (usually Latin American) ancestors as a racial/ethnic minority group in a U.S. context.¹³ Before I discuss my findings, I review below some background on the Latinx/Hispanic presence in the U.S. Catholic Church as well as sociological theories of racial/ethnic identity construction.

As of 2015 in the U.S., approximately 20.8% of adults identified as Catholic.¹⁴ This percentage is down from 2007—a year in which about a quarter of U.S. adults claimed a Catholic identity.¹⁵ Among those identifying as Hispanic, however, approximately 68% also identify as Catholic.¹⁶ Over the last century, there has been much demographic shifting in the U.S. Catholic Church. Once characterized as a Church catering mostly to poor European immigrant groups,¹⁷ the Catholic Church in the U.S. now has many middle-class parishioners¹⁸ and an increasing number of parishioners with Latin American heritage.¹⁹

Though non-Hispanic white parishioners tend to hold more social power than Hispanic parishioners within the institutional structure,²⁰ Latinx parishioners are well on their way to becoming the majority in the U.S. Catholic Church.²² Latinx

¹² Taylor Pittman, “A Quick Breakdown of the Difference Between Hispanic, Latino and Spanish,” *The Huffington Post*, August 19, 2015, http://www.huffingtonpost.com/entry/difference-between-hispanic-latino-and-spanish_us_55a7ec20e4b0c5f0322c9e44

¹³ Rubén Rumbaut, “The Making of a People,” 24.

¹⁴ “America’s Changing Religious Landscape,” last modified May 12, 2015, <http://www.pewforum.org/2015/05/12/americas-changing-religious-landscape/>

¹⁵ “A Portrait of American Catholics on the Eve of Pope Benedict’s Visit to the U.S.,” Last modified March 27, 2008, <http://www.pewforum.org/2008/03/27/a-portrait-of-american-catholics-on-the-eve-of-pope-benedicts-visit-to-the-us/>

¹⁶ Agustín Gurza, “What’s Right with this Picture?” *U.S. Catholic* 76(2011): 14.

¹⁷ David P. Baker and Cornelius Riordan, “The ‘Eliting’ of the Common American Catholic School and the National Education Crisis,” *Pbi Delta Kaplan* 80(1998): 17.

¹⁸ Ralph E. Pyle, “Trends in Religious Stratification: have Religious Group Socioeconomic Distinctions Declined in Recent Decades?” *Sociology of Religion* 67(2002): 62.

¹⁹ Gurza, “What’s Right with this Picture?” 14.

²⁰ Arthur Jones, “Hispanic Catholics Ignored,” *National Catholic Reporter*, February 11, 2000, http://www.natcath.org/NCR_Online/archives2/2000a/021100/021100d.htm

²¹ J.D. Long-Garcia, “More and More Hispanics in the Pews, but Not on the Altar,” *U.S. Catholic*, 76(2011): 34-35.

²² Wade Clark Roof and Christel Manning, “Cultural Conflicts and Identity: Second Generation Hispanic Catholics in the United States,” *Social Compass*, 41(1994), 172.

Catholics are considered an extremely important demographic group for the U.S. Catholic Church because the number of Latinx Catholics in the U.S. is increasing while, at the same time, the number of non-Hispanic white Church members is on the decline.^{23 24}

Although Catholicism is a religion, in the United States it has been historically associated with certain racial or ethnic groups²⁵—Italian or Irish immigrants, for example. Fewer non-Hispanic white young people in the U.S. identify themselves as Catholic in contemporary times, and the linkage between European immigration to the U.S. and Catholicism has arguably diminished. Thus, the association of Catholicism with ethnic and racial identity for the descendants of European immigrants in the U.S. has waned. Conversely, immigration from Latin America to the U.S. has increased over the last century, and many of those immigrants—and their descendants—are Catholic. Due to these patterns, Catholicism may be becoming an identity increasingly associated with Hispanic or Latinx youth in the United States.²⁶ Indeed, some Catholic leaders have warned that the U.S. Catholic Church must develop effective Hispanic outreach programs or else risk losing current and future parishioners.²⁷

As the changing patterns in the U.S. Catholic Church demonstrate, associations between religious affiliation and race/ethnicity is a phenomenon subject to ever-shifting social circumstances. According to sociological theories of social construction, identity categories (such as race and ethnicity) are made “real” to the extent that individuals assign meanings to those identities. As contexts change,

²³ Bailey Netsch, “Catholic Church is Increasing Hispanic Outreach,” *The Tucson Sentinel*, September 21, 2015, http://www.tucsonsentinel.com/local/report/092115_catholic_hispanics/catholic-church-increasing-hispanic-outreach/

²⁴ Renate Robey and Staff Writer, “Hispanic Outreach Urged Catholics Must Retain Members,” *Denver Post*, August 12, 1993, <https://colorado.idm.oclc.org/login?url=http://search.proquest.com.colorado.idm.oclc.org/docview/291327534?accountid=14503>.

²⁵ David P. Baker and Cornelius Riordan, “The ‘Eliting’ of the Common American Catholic School and the National Education Crisis,” 17.

²⁶ For both those born outside the U.S. and in the U.S.

²⁷ Allan Figueroa Deck, “Hispanic Catholics: Does the Church Speak Your Language?” *U.S. Catholic*, 58:1993, 27-30.

individuals' understandings of racial/ethnic identity can change as well.²⁸ Scholarship on race in the U.S. generally finds that whiteness as a racial category is sometimes assumed to be an invisible, non-raced category, especially by many white people themselves.²⁹ Conversely, U.S. society and social convention often treat non-white people as racial "others."³⁰ That whiteness is normalized and non-whiteness is othered is due to the particular ways that race and ethnicity are socially constructed in U.S. society. The labeling of individuals as "Hispanic" or "Latinx" is a U.S. phenomenon in which individuals are given a racial classification that serves to identify them as non-white, despite the preponderance of Hispanic and Latinx people with European ancestry.³¹ "Hispanic" and "Latinx" are social and political racial/ethnic categories in a U.S. context that function to label a group of people as a non-white, pan-ethnic minority group.

In the specific context of higher education, some work has explored the process of young people constructing non-white racial identities during their time as students at predominantly white institutions of higher learning. For example, Amy C. Wilkins' work examines how black women enrolled in predominantly white universities construct and make sense of their identities as black women in the university space.³² The women in Wilkins' study give meaning to black womanhood that transcends the women's disparate backgrounds and creates an agreed-upon definition of what it means to be a black woman in the context of predominantly white universities. Wilkins finds that one way the women do this is by telling stories about intimate relationships between white women and black men that construct black womanhood as forthright and strong. The stories also differentiate black womanhood from both white womanhood and black manhood.

²⁸ Angela Onwuachi-Willig, "Race and Racial Identity Are Social Constructs," *The New York Times*, September 6, 2016, <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2015/06/16/how-fluid-is-racial-identity/race-and-racial-identity-are-social-constructs>

²⁹ Peggy McIntosh, "White Privilege: Unpacking the Invisible Knapsack," *Independent School*, 49(1990), 34.

³⁰ Sune Q. Jensen, "Othering, Identity Formation, and Agency," *Qualitative Studies*, 2(2011), 63.

³¹ Rubén Rumbaut, "The Making of a People," 22.

³² Amy C. Wilkins, "Becoming Black Women: Intimate Stories and Intersectional Identities," *Social Psychology Quarterly*, 75(2012), 173-196.

Like the women in Wilkins' study, the students in this paper come from different social classes and geographical backgrounds. What they do share, however, are Hispanic and Latinx roots.³³ These students also accomplish something similar to the women in Wilkins' study in that they are creating an agreed-upon definition of an identity (Hispanic), although they go about this process in a slightly different way. While these students do not explicitly compare themselves to non-Hispanic Catholics, their identities as Hispanic shift the meanings associated with their Catholic affiliation. Their identities as Hispanic and Catholic become especially salient to them in college as they are markers of difference in the university space. Unlike the non-Hispanic participants in my larger study, those claiming a Hispanic identity make links between their identities as Catholic and their racial/ethnic identities. I argue below that this linkage, which is absent in non-Hispanic participants' stories, assists these students in constructing their identities as Hispanic in a predominantly white institutional space. These students use religious affiliation as a resource in their constructions of their racialized Hispanic identities.

In this project, six of the original twenty-four participants self-identified as "Hispanic" when asked to describe their race (though one of the six, Nadine, identified as both Hispanic and non-Hispanic white). Though the term "Hispanic" itself does not refer to race, it is a racialized category that has been used to indicate a Latinx identity.³⁴ In this paper, I focus on the Hispanic participants in my interviews, though I sometimes discuss the non-Hispanic participants in terms of what was *absent* from their accounts when compared to their peers.

At the university where I conducted this study, 11% of the total student body identified as Hispanic/Latinx in 2015. However, when I conducted my interviews during the 2011-2012 school year, the percentage was 8.8%. Despite the increase in the percentage of Hispanic students, the largest group represented on campus is still non-Hispanic white. Of the six participants here, three of them (Nadine, Ashley, and Jennifer) came from upper-middle-class backgrounds, one (Anthony) from a middle-class background, and two (Danny and Diane) from working-class backgrounds.

³³ Although participants' ancestors are from different Spanish-speaking nations.

³⁴ "Hispanic," instead, refers to having Spanish-speaking origins.

Though social class in the United States can be difficult to evaluate, I assessed social class background based on parental occupations and participants' own understandings of their social classes growing up. For example, to be classified as upper-middle-class, students had to report parents working in high-status or professional occupations (such as CEO of a company or architect). Middle-class parental occupations include parents with medium-status occupations (administrative positions, for example). Lastly, working-class parental occupations include jobs such as working in construction or service work that does not require a college degree. I also used students' perceptions of the wealth/affluence of their families of origin to determine social class.

I recruited participants primarily through introductory sociology courses and provided them with a \$10 gift card for their time. Criteria for selection included being Catholic (or having been raised Catholic) and being a current (or recently graduated) undergraduate student at the university. Most interviews lasted from forty-five to ninety minutes, and all participants agreed to be recorded so that the interviews could be transcribed later. I transcribed each interview and assigned all participants pseudonyms. I followed a semi-structured interview guide with a set of questions on college life, personal relationships, and students' relationships with their own religious identities. Most interviews took place on campus in library study rooms.

Following Holstein and Gubrium, I treat interview data as narratives the students use to create and manage concerns about how they see and understand themselves and their identities.³⁵ I came to conclusions about the data inductively. I read each interview and made notes on the most striking patterns. I discovered that five of the six self-identified Hispanic students made connections between their identities as Hispanic and their identities as Catholic. This was unlike the non-Hispanic white and black participants, who generally did not connect Catholicism to race or ethnicity. None of the white participants connected being Catholic to being racially white. Only one white participant associated his Catholicism with a European

³⁵ James A. Holstein and Jaber F. Gubrium, *The Active Interview* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995).

ancestral group or ethnic identity (Polish), but it was only in passing and he did not expand upon the association.

Five out of the six Hispanic participants expressed in interviews that having a Catholic identity is intertwined with being Hispanic. For example, Ashley shared, “My dad’s also Catholic, my dad’s Hispanic. Like, they’re all Catholic—the whole family. And my mom’s Catholic...But I’ve just always been Catholic, and I’m like, I don’t want anything different.” Ashley’s statement, similar to Anthony’s from the beginning of this paper, communicates a connection between being Hispanic and being Catholic. It is notable that Ashley’s family is not only Catholic, but Hispanic as well—and she links the two together in a matter-of-fact way. Only one respondent, Nadine, did not make explicit connections between being Hispanic and being Catholic. However, this may be because Nadine has a “thinned attachment” to her Hispanic heritage.³⁶ She does not have a Spanish surname, and originally answered “white” to my interview question about racial identification before saying that she was “technically” also “Hispanic.” For the other five, however, being Catholic and being Hispanic are connected.

Sophomore Diane explicitly makes connections between being Catholic and being Hispanic. She shared:

I don’t know, I feel like a lot of Catholics are Hispanic... a lot of Hispanics are definitely Catholic...[and] just from what I’ve seen, Catholics are a lot more flashy with it—in their homes, kind of... like, I know when my parents bought our house, our house got blessed. Like, the Father came and blessed our house...Like, we do stuff like that. And my mom has crosses all over, and the Virgin Mary’s like, huge, you know what I mean? That’s my uncle’s name—Guadalupe—and so I don’t know I feel like it’s definitely... it’s definitely like, a, like “I’m *proud* to be Catholic” type view of it.

In addition to acknowledging that “a lot of Hispanics are definitely Catholic,” Diane makes connections between her identity as Hispanic and Catholicism. Rather than

³⁶ Jessica Vasquez, *Mexican Americans Across Generations: Immigrant Families, Racial Realities* (New York: New York University Press, 2011), 58.

discuss them as two separate identities, she intertwines them. While the non-Hispanic students I interviewed do not associate being Catholic with race, the Hispanic students make the connection between religion and race/ethnicity. As Diane's quote indicates, elements of Catholicism are blended together with a racialized Hispanic identity. For example, Diane shared that her uncle's name is "Guadalupe." The Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe is a major holiday for many Mexican Catholics,³⁷ but is not held in particular esteem by Catholics with European ancestry. Diane's experiences with Catholicism are wrapped up with her experiences growing up in a Hispanic family.³⁸

Though the students indicate that Hispanic and Catholic identities are intertwined for them, this does not necessarily mean that they believe all Catholic people are Hispanic. However, Hispanic students' interviews indicate that their experiences encountering fewer Catholics on campus when compared to their home communities seems to be related to the low number of Hispanic people they encountered on campus. Jennifer, a freshman who is from Florida, said she is surprised by how few Catholics she seems to encounter on campus. However, she reasoned that the lower number of Hispanic people—when compared to what she grew up with—may have contributed to this: "[E]veryone I know from Miami was raised Catholic, basically. Miami's very... a lot of Hispanic people live there, and usually Hispanic people are Catholic, I feel." Likewise, freshman Anthony recounted his life growing up in Texas as much more immersed in his Hispanic "roots"—and by association, Catholicism—than his time at Midwestern University: "[I went] to a Catholic high school, Catholic family, you know very traditional Catholic family. [I'm] Hispanic—second generation—so I have that strong Catholic root, Hispanic root." In contrast, Anthony said he does not have any Catholic friends at Midwestern University. These connections further solidify to these students that Catholicism is something intimately connected to a Hispanic identity.

³⁷ Eric R. Wolf, "The Virgin of Guadalupe: A Mexican National Symbol," *The Journal of American Folklore*, 71(1958): 34.

³⁸ In Diane's case more specifically, a Mexican-American family.

Though the absence of both Catholics and Hispanic people on campus seems unrelated, these two minority identities intersect in different ways for the Hispanic students I interviewed and the non-Hispanic white and black students. While non-Hispanic white students may be different due to religious background, their racial identities place them as part of the majority. They do not connect any experiences of religious difference to their racial identities. However, Hispanic students experience at least two minority identity statuses on campus—Catholic *and* Hispanic—that impact their experiences as they navigate college and make sense of their identities in the space. Their interviews indicate that these students connect being a minority due to religion with being a minority due to race—a connection the non-Hispanic white students did not make. Yet, the one black student I interviewed did not connect Catholic affiliation with being black. Hispanic students were those who connected Catholicism to their racial minority status. While white and black Catholic students may have made sense of their raced identities in other ways, the Hispanic Catholic students I interviewed drew on religious affiliation to make sense of their racialized selves.

Like Jennifer, senior Danny contrasted his experiences finding Catholics outside of the Midwestern University space and inside the space. Danny, who grew up in Colorado, said, “I come up here, and it’s so hard finding Catholic people... but [at] home, I could probably turn to the person next to me and they would be Catholic... most Hispanic people I knew [back home] were Catholics.” Jennifer, Anthony, and Danny all make connections between Catholicism and the presence of people identifying as Hispanic—which is more limited at Midwestern University than in their home communities. The students’ accounts indicate a belief that the presence, or absence, of people with Hispanic roots can impact the number of Catholics present in the space.

For the Hispanic students I interviewed, being Catholic and being Hispanic are intertwined. Though Catholicism is a religious affiliation, the students also understand it to be an important cultural trait or characteristic among Hispanic people. Though these students all come from different geographical and social class backgrounds, they consider themselves to be Hispanic-American college students in

the U.S. Their observation that Catholics are less common at Midwestern University than they are in hometown communities supports students' connections between Catholicism and the presence of Hispanic identity.

What these young adults' accounts reveal, especially when compared to the accounts of their peers, is the process of crafting a specific kind of racialized identity in a university space in which they are considered ethnic/racial minorities due to their Hispanic roots. At Midwestern University, identifying as Catholic and identifying as Hispanic are both minority statuses. Hispanic students use their understandings and experiences with Catholicism to give meaning to Hispanic identity (and vice-versa). While the white students I interviewed have socially unmarked or "optional ethnicities,"³⁹ this is not necessarily the case for Hispanic students. Being Hispanic on a majority-white campus requires that these students contend with their identities as minorities in the space. Catholic affiliation is one characteristic they can use to make sense of themselves as different. The students craft a shared identity that is Hispanic-Catholic, rather than just Hispanic *and* Catholic. Their identities as Catholic intersect with their identities as Hispanic and each identity status helps define the other.⁴⁰ Further, that the non-Hispanic black student I interviewed did not make connections between Catholicism and race suggests that this process may not work the same for other racial/ethnic minorities on campus. The connection between Catholicism and a racialized identity is especially useful for Hispanic students exploring what it means to be Hispanic in the predominantly non-Hispanic white space.

While I only have a small number of interviews to draw from here, it would be useful to research these observations further. My evidence suggests a few possibilities. First, for students who identify as American with Hispanic roots, defining Hispanic identity can become newly salient to them as they move from their

³⁹ Mary C. Waters, "Optional Ethnicities: For Whites Only?" In *Origins and Destinies: Immigration, Race and Ethnicity in America*, ed. Sylvia Pedraza and Rubén Rumbaut, (Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Press, 1996), 444-454.

⁴⁰ For more on theories of intersectionality, see Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violence Against Women of Color," *Stanford Law Review* 43(1991): 1241-1299.

communities of origin (which, in many cases, were largely Hispanic and Catholic) into spaces that include both fewer Catholics and fewer Hispanic individuals. Identity is constructed, and these Hispanic college students are trying to define for themselves what it means to be Hispanic. These students can use religion or religious affiliation as a unifying factor even though their experiences as Hispanic diverge based on geographical, social class, and cultural differences. It is also important to note that while 68% of people in the U.S. who identify as Hispanic also identify as Catholic,⁴¹ this means that 32% of self-identified Hispanics do *not* identify as Catholic. It would be useful to explore how Hispanic students who are not Catholic make sense of themselves compared to those who are Hispanic and have a Catholic identity.

Next, questions raised by my exploratory findings can be of interest to scholars of religion as well as scholars of race and identity. For religion scholars, there remain interesting questions regarding how the U.S. Catholic Church may change going into the future given the rise in Latinx Church members and the importance of Catholicism to Hispanic identity in some contexts. For example, might Spanish language masses and/or outreach efforts become more mainstream or normalized in the future? How will the Church address the changing demographics of parishioners? Interesting questions also remain for scholars of race. The category of “Hispanic” is a socially constructed category, and it is worth exploring how Catholicism might be a factor in defining this racialized term, especially for young people and those born in the U.S. to Latin American immigrant families. Lastly, of interest to scholars of identity are questions regarding *how* and *why* these students are using Catholicism to help explain and define their identities as Hispanic in this particular context. While I have touched on the answer to this last question in this paper, further research is needed in order to paint a more comprehensive picture of what the linkage of Hispanic and Catholic identities accomplishes for the students themselves.

⁴¹ Agustin Gurza, “What’s Right with this Picture?” 14.

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