

THE NATIONAL SURVEY OF LEADERSHIP IN LATINO PARISHES AND CONGREGATIONS

A social science contribution to The PARAL Study

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The National Survey of Leadership in Latino Parishes and Congregations (NSLLPC) has relied on the advice, vision, energy and collaboration of scholars in the PARAL network. On the pillars of such collegiality is a better academia constructed. The directors of this survey wish to acknowledge that while the work in this project is our own, it is sustained by many colleagues in myriad ways and that this survey is part of a larger vision that makes this “The PARAL Study.”

Financial support from foundations is crucial to much research today. Certainly, the presidents and often the entire staff of a foundation have a role in approving funding for projects such as ours and we are truly grateful for the votes of confidence delivered to us. A foundation’s program officer, however, plays a special role. Sister **Jean Knoerle** made the NSLLPC one of her last projects before relinquishing her post at the Lilly Endowment. Mr. **Chris Coble** has delivered strong support at every step of the way and has been her worthy successor at the Endowment. Sister Jean also opened the door for PARAL to the office of **Constance Buchanan** at the Ford Foundation, who had been given the weighty responsibility of developing a new initiative in religion at Ford and supported this project with colleagues such as **Fred Davies** and **Cristina Eguizabal**. In her wisdom, **Constance Buchanan** urged on us a special attention to issues of gender and to the agency of women in the churches. In following her suggestion, much relevance has been added to the study. **Carole Thompson** of the Annie E. Casey Foundation was a savior for the community study phase of the project by providing funding for two sites, after a prospective funding partner chose not to walk with us. We cannot mention program officer support without recognizing the contributions of **James Lewis** at the Louisville Institute. He had confidence in our capacity even while the program was little more than an ambitious outline put on paper. Jim funded our planning efforts at key junctures of the process. Simply speaking, without the seed money from the Louisville Institute that he provided in due season, there would never have been such a rich harvest. We were also enriched by the comments and encouragement of key members of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) and the Religious Research Association (RRA), some of whom accepted our invitations to contribute from their wisdom. There were several research centers, most notably CARA under the direction of Bryan Froehle, that were sources for data and counsel. Our international contacts in Cuba, Puerto Rico and the Dominican Republic also assisted us with the choice of issues and the appropriate terms to be used when researching religion in the Spanish Language.

Special mention must be made of the various officials within the denominations who provided us with the lists that were used for sampling and mailing. Certainly, those accustomed to research requests understood our needs and sometimes made helpful suggestions on procedures. However, academics do not always perform an adequate job in representing the utility of research to persons focused upon pastoral matters. It is perhaps more a tribute to faith in our vision than a vote of confidence in our powers of

persuasion that so many Hispanic leaders within denominations moved mountains with church agencies to secure for us the lists and the permissions to use them.

At Brooklyn College, President **Christoph Kimmich** welcomed us to the campus by establishing an Office for Research of Religion In Society and Culture (RISC). That office became headquarters for the survey project and the Secretariat of PARAL. We were helped by the Office of Research and Development, headed by Mr. **Edward Leight**. Mr. **Alan Evelyn**, also of that office, gave great assistance in drafting the proposals, especially in preparing the budgets. However, particular mention must be made of the cheerful collaboration provided by Ms. **Christina Sferruzzo**, who often had to expend great amounts of her boundless energy in smoothing out for us many tangles in processing checks and payments. We also want to mention the special attention to our needs for space that was delivered by **Steve Little**, Vice-President for Finance and Administration at Brooklyn College.

The calm hand on deck during the sudden storms and crises that arose during the project came from Ms. **Irene Quiles**, our Technical Manager and Director of the Office. She anticipated the material needs and administrative resources so well that we scarcely if ever lacked for the addresses, paper, supplies or files that were needed. Moreover, she attended to these ordinary tasks with extraordinary kindness and gentleness so that each day in the office was made brighter. People who visited 3231 Boylan Hall or called on the telephone were greeted with the graciousness of Irene, thus making our tasks both easier and more pleasurable. She also recruited for us Ms. **Dorothy Craig** and **Christina Spinuso**, each of whom made important contributions to the smooth operations of the project. The technical work with the computerized data was elaborated for us by **Andras Tapolcai**, a graduate student in Sociology at CUNY who became our Statistical Manager. His hard work in combing through the statistical data is reflected in the tables and the graphs that were crisply executed by the staff. This summary report was nourished by his patience and competence. **Ana María Díaz-Stevens** added polish and professionalism to the Spanish versions of our letters and questionnaires, making the survey truly bilingual.

Finally, we must thank the heads of religious communities and the leaders of those vibrant parishes and congregations who took the time to respond to our questionnaires. After carefully weighing all the options, we decided on a mailed survey because it best fit the detailed information we sought. Even with its drawbacks, that proved a successful strategy, especially because we were able to supplement that effort through a follow-up telephone survey directed by the very capable **Micky Blum** and **Julie Weprin**. Unfortunately, the second part of the mailed survey to the lay and volunteer leaders coincided with the events of September 11, 2001. These conditions made response to the survey markedly more difficult.

To each of these and all the others who formed our experiences, we render a heartfelt, "*Gracias*." We hope that this report – which only summarizes a rich and complex set of data – will measure up to the expectations showered upon us and make the PARAL Study a lasting contribution to an understanding of religion among our people.

INTRODUCTION

The National Survey of Leadership in Latino* Parishes and Congregations (NSLLPC) was organized by the network called the **Program for the Analysis of Religion Among Latinas/os** (PARAL). With funding from the Louisville Institute, a planning session was held in the city of Chicago in 1997. Key members of the PARAL network were invited to help shape the project for submission to funding agencies. The participants in the Chicago meeting, along with other members of PARAL, contributed as co-investigators to the eventual design of the survey. They are identified here with their current academic position:

Gustavo Benavides, *Villanova University*
Gilbert Cadena, *California Polytechnic University*
Ana María Díaz-Stevens, *Union Theological Seminary*
Ricardo Flores, *University of Texas*
Anneris Goris, *Brooklyn College, CUNY*
Edwin Hernández, *University of Notre Dame*
Luis León, *Arizona State University*
Otto Maduro, *Drew University*
Lara Medina, *California State University, Northridge*
Segundo Pantoja, *Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY*
Milagros Peña, *University of Florida*
María Pérez y González, *Brooklyn College, CUNY*
Andrés Pérez y Mena, *Brooklyn College, CUNY*
Yolanda Prieto, *Ramapo College*
Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo, *Brooklyn College, CUNY*

The PARAL network invited other colleagues to advise the initial drafting of the project design. Accepting the invitation were **David Roozen** from *Hartford Seminary*, who at that time was engaged in organizing the coordinated project called the "Collaborative Congregational Study Project" (CCSP); the late **Patrick McNamara** from the *University of New Mexico*, a scholar with much experience in research among Latinos in religious matters and **Mark Chaves** of the *University of Arizona*, who was engaged in research with the General Social Science Survey and developed the study National Congregational Study. At that Chicago planning session, the broad outlines of a survey were given to Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo, Anneris Goris and Milagros Peña for development into a formal proposal, intended for submission to appropriate foundations.

The proposal for the PARAL Study was funded in 1998 by the Lilly Endowment with a grant of more than \$500,000. With this funding, Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo became the Principal Investigator and the person responsible for the project's administration. Another grant of more than \$500,000 was awarded by the Ford

* The choice of "Latino/a" or "Hispanic" as a term of reference was presented as a question in the survey. In this report, the terms are used interchangeably. When referring to individuals, the masculine and feminine form "Latino/a" or plural "Latinos/as" are used to avoid exclusion of either gender.

Foundation the following year, and the Annie E. Casey Foundation added \$180,000 in 2001. Brooklyn College of the City University of New York (CUNY), the home academic institution of the Principal Investigator provided significant space and office services to the project under the name of the Office for Research of Religion In Society and Culture (RISC). The staff of RISC conducted the daily operations required to achieve the goals approved in the grants. Additionally, beginning in 1999, RISC organized annual presentations at the scholarly conferences of the Society for the Scientific Study of Religion (SSSR) and the Religious Research Association (RRA). Through this and other means, both the co-investigators who continued with the project, and other interested colleagues maintained contact with the project.

SCOPE

As detailed in Section IV of this report, the NSLLPC is the result of a much larger process that began in the 1990s under the aegis of PARAL:

- to deepen a social science based understanding of religion among Latino/a;
- to enlist scholars in collaborative efforts; and
- to train people for these projects.

Such tasks constitute the central purpose of PARAL, and for that reason, the national survey is appropriately called “**The PARAL Study.**”

Other surveys on religious topics have focused on the faith beliefs of Latino/as, religious practices particular to Hispanics, denominational affiliation and other important issues. Frequently, Latino parishes and congregations are surveyed with the same instrument as all other parishes and congregations. Recognizing these efforts, the PARAL Study sought to examine Latino church leadership in ways that allowed for comparison with the general population, but which would also explore issues of special importance to Hispanics. The survey sought to explore leadership’s attention to:

- the material needs of the people;
- the importance placed on culture through the maintenance of ethnic traditions and the Spanish language in church operations, organizations and ritual worship.

Why a special survey for Latinos/Hispanics?

- ❑ The rapid growth of the people of Latin American heritage in the United States is a demographic fact that affects all churches.
- ❑ This important population is not homogeneous. There are racial, ethnic and regional differences that require exploration for their effect on religious practice.
- ❑ Some states in the Southwest and on the Pacific Coast were annexed by the United States and did not need foreign immigration to achieve a high percentage of Latino population.

- ❑ The “immigrant paradigm” that has been so important to understanding other population groups, does not apply evenly to Hispanics.
- ❑ The number of Latinos (born in the United States and therefore citizens) is growing faster than the annual admission total of immigrants from Latin America.
- ❑ The churches often provide a common meeting ground within local neighborhoods for both Latinos and Latin American immigrants, identifying them with common goals.
- ❑ This survey was designed to provide data that describe both the similarities and the differences in practice and opinion about the social role of religion as reported by the heads of faith communities and their volunteer and lay leaders nationwide.
- ❑ The information is derived from the nation-wide data base of participating denominations and is generalizable for the leadership of these churches.

The PARAL Study was to be accomplished in a three-step process:

- 1) Survey of the heads of Latino faith communities.
- 2) Survey of the volunteer and lay leaders of these faith communities.
- 3) Community studies at selected sites.

This report summarizes the survey results from the first step.

- I. Faith communities nationwide; and
- II. Heads of Latino faith communities.

Subsequent reports will describe the results of the survey of lay and volunteer leaders (*Step 2*) and summarize The Key Findings of the communities Studies (*Step 3*).

This summary is focused on the ways in which many denominationally affiliated parishes and congregations serving Latino/as nationwide address material needs and cultural expression. The co-investigators of PARAL as well as new scholars trained during the project are being provided with the computerized version of the survey data and the written reports of eight community studies. It is to be hoped that in addition to this summary report, the PARAL Study will generate important new social science literature in the form of monographs, articles and books that will be based on the empirical data gathered in this five-year project.

Why focus on social services and culture in the faith community?

- ❑ Latino/as now outnumber African Americans as the largest "minority" in the United States.
- ❑ Political trends suggest that government attentions to social inequalities may focus increasingly on the Hispanic populations, creating opportunities for faith-based communities to fund important service delivery and to professionalize church outreach programs.
- ❑ The vitality of many churches located in Latino neighborhoods may depend on attracting the generation born in the United States into membership.

- The convergence of new leadership resources among the U.S. born segment of the Latino population and funded opportunities for outreach ministries in faith-based communities creates a remarkable opportunity for religion in the 21st century.

Who are the denominational participants?

The names and addresses of Latino/Hispanic parishes and congregations or of pastors were obtained from these cooperating denominations or agencies . (*See Appendix III for a detailed listing of denominational sources.*)

American Baptist Church
Christian Reformed Church
Disciples of Christ
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Pentecostal Church of God
Presbyterian Church, USA
Roman Catholic
Seventh Day Adventist
Southern Baptist
United Church of Christ
United Methodist Church

The survey obtained about an equal number of responses from the heads of Roman Catholic faith communities as they did from the heads of all other denominational congregations. *The response rates to the questionnaire for the heads of faith communities are reported in Appendix III.*

It is important to note here, however, that the approximate 50-50 split in denominational affiliation for the number of responses does not correspond to the proportion of Latinos who are Roman Catholic or from a Protestant/Reform tradition.

KEY FINDINGS

A Summary of Issues Explored in Part I

1. More than a quarter of Latino faith communities participating in the PARAL Study have been founded since 1995, reflecting the 57.9% demographic increase of Latinos/as in the United States over the past decade as reported by the 2000 US Census. Of the Latino faith communities that had been founded before 1995, 78% had an increase in membership as contrasted with the national average* of 51% of pre-1995 congregations with an increase in membership.

**as reported by FACT 2001*

2. Three out of four Latino faith communities share space with other believers who do not speak Spanish. Half of Roman Catholic parishes (52%) are integrated with non-Latinos and more than a third (37%) of congregations of all other denominations share space with another worshiping language group.
3. Nearly two-thirds (64%) of Latino faith communities are Multi-Hispanic with two or more Latin American nationality groups worshiping together. Hymns in traditional Latin American musical styles and the use of instruments such as the guitar are considered “Very Important” in worship by 70% of all respondents. It appears that churches contribute to pan-Latino awareness since they report a high degree of cooperation among various Latin American nationality groups.
4. In all, 44% of Latino faith communities receive some sort of subsidy, grant or funding, but only 2% receive funding from governmental sources. Most grants come from denominational sources. The median size of such grants is \$17,500 yearly.
5. Despite the low number of faith communities now receiving governmental funds, 49% of those surveyed agreed that such money should be accepted to help provide social services. This suggests that Latino faith communities are inclined to welcome Latino-focused initiatives from programs such as Charitable Choice.
6. Although there are significant differences in size and theology that distinguish Roman Catholics from Latinos in all other denominations, the type and frequency of social services delivered by all Latino faith communities is very much the same.
 - Two out of three of these churches distribute clothing and food to the needy on a regular basis.
 - Nearly one-third of Latino faith communities nationwide provide social services to immigrants in their own locale, and offering classes in English is the most common of these services.
 - Leadership training and youth conferences such as retreats are offered in a majority of Latino faith communities nationwide.
7. Faith communities of all other denominations are more likely to support candidates for political office (21%) than Roman Catholic parishes (12%).
8. Both Roman Catholics and Latinos/as of all other denominations refer the needy to secular agencies for many social services, especially those that require professional training. However, for most services Roman Catholic Latino faith communities refer persons to a religious agency (Catholic Charities) more frequently than all other denominations.
9. A quarter of Latino faith communities (27%) presently sponsor a religious private school and most of them (86%) are in Roman Catholic parishes. Half of the Latino faith communities without a private religious school said they would use government vouchers to establish a school.

10. Ecumenical participation across the denominational boundaries of Roman Catholic-All Other Denominations is relatively low, but lowest for Roman Catholics. Roman Catholics, however, frequently cooperate among themselves in outreach/social justice ministry and civic celebrations.

11. The term "*evangélico*" is preferred to "Protestant" among those who spoke Spanish better than English, which suggests that Spanish-dominant Protestants do not utilize the theological distinction in English that contrasts "Evangelical" to "Protestant".

12. Heads of Latino faith communities of all other denominations are more likely to always preach on political topics such as electoral procedures, anti-poverty programs and affirmative action than Roman Catholics.

A Summary of Issues Explored in Part II

1. The two biggest differences distinguishing heads of Roman Catholic Latino faith communities from those in all other denominations were **marriage** and **ethnicity**.

- 95% of those heading Roman Catholic Latino faith communities professed celibacy, while 94% of those of all other denominations were or had been married.
- The heads of Latino faith communities in all other denominations were three times more likely to be of Latin American heritage (78%) than Roman Catholic heads (25%).

2. Heads from all other denominations had a higher median income (more than \$35,000) than Roman Catholics (less than \$25,000). These numbers reflect the impact of marriage and celibacy on salaries for clergy.

3. The median age of the heads of Latino faith communities is between 50 and 54 years, virtually the same as in most non-Latino faith communities in the US, but significantly higher than the median age of Latinos in the country, which is 25.8 years old as reported by the 2000 US Census. Thus, the age gap is greater among Hispanic heads of faith communities than in the general population where the median age is 38.6 years old.

4. Three out of four of the heads of Latino faith communities nationwide hold advanced degrees and there is no significant difference between Roman Catholics and those of all other denominations in this regard. However, 17% of those of all other denominations hold doctorates, which is double the percentage of Roman Catholics (8%).

5. 16% of heads of Roman Catholic Latino faith communities were trained by or studied at the Mexican American Cultural Center (MACC) in San Antonio. Since people of Mexican heritage are about half of all Latinos/as in the Roman Catholic Church, MACC

can be considered to have trained almost 1 out of every 3 persons directing Catholic ministry to Latinos/as.

6. Women assumed the responsibilities as heads of almost one out of every five Latino faith communities (19%). Roman Catholic women as heads equaled the national average in this regard. One in five of the women responsible for the Roman Catholic faith communities among Latinos/as belonged to a religious congregation of women.

7. A majority of the heads of Latino faith community had no opinion or saw no difference in the two major political parties of the US when it came to helping Latinos/as.

- Of those with a political opinion, however, 30% said the Democratic Party helped Latinos/as, while only 5% said the Republican Party.

- Even among those who said their ideology was “Conservative,” the Democratic Party (17%) was seen as helping Latinos/as the most in contrast to the Republican Party (12%).

8. Overall, more than 4 out of 5 (88%) of the heads of Latino faith communities nationwide consider that their denominations support them (*Very supportive*=55% and *Somewhat supportive*=33%). Roman Catholics are more likely to consider that their denomination is “Very Supportive” (64%) than heads of Latino faith communities in all other denominations (44%).

9. Mexican heritage was the most common Latin American heritage among the heads of Latino faith communities (17%), followed by Puerto Ricans (11%) and Cubans (4%). Among heads of Latin American heritage, Mexican heritage heads are 34% of all heads of Latino faith communities.

10. Puerto Ricans are 22% of Latino heads of Latino faith communities although Puerto Ricans are only about 10% of Latinos in the US according to the 2000 US Census.

11. Puerto Ricans who are heads of Latino faith communities are overwhelmingly of all other denominations (93%) rather than Roman Catholic (7%). This pattern is also found among Cubans (91%), Dominicans (85%), Guatemalans (82%) and Salvadorans (90%).

12. The only nationality to have a significantly higher number of Roman Catholic heads of the faith community were those born in Colombia. Among Colombians, 72% of the heads of Latino faith communities were Roman Catholic and 28% from all other denominations.

Interpreting the NSLLPC Results

It would be incorrect to read the results so that the percentage of those responding to the survey from a denomination is interpreted as the percentage of all believers in that denomination. For example, 19% of the heads of Roman Catholic faith communities is not 19% of all Latino Roman Catholics.

Likewise, 50% of all responses to the questionnaire is not the same as 50% of the heads of all Latino faith communities in the U.S. We record here the responses from Latino faith communities nationwide for the participating denominations only.

The NSLLPC results describe leaders and the setting for leadership in the majority of denominationally affiliated parishes and congregations serving Latinos in the U.S. today.

- All Protestant and Reform denominations will be listed as “All Other Denominations” whenever “Roman Catholic” is used.
- There are differences among Protestant and Reform congregations that are reported by the survey according to a self-definition of how best to classify the faith of the community. (*See I.9 Latino Faith Expressions*).

Since no Pentecostal denominations are included in this report, the survey result is best understood as a study of faith communities belonging to the Roman Catholic and mainline Protestant denominations.

- The NSLLPC studied the religious experience of Latino/as in the majority of faith communities affiliated with denominations in the United States.
- The survey methodology of the NSLLPC was not designed to study unaffiliated churches.
- The NSLLPC relied on community studies to include the experiences of unaffiliated churches and religious expression such as *Santería* and *curanderismo*.

In this report, comparisons and references are made to the collaborative congregational study, called “Faith Communities in the United States Today.” Although their survey embraced many more denominations than ours because it was not limited to Latinos/as, it was not focused on several issues that loom large for Hispanic parishes and congregations. Coordinated by the Hartford Institute for Religion Research at much the same time that the NSLLPC was underway, the organizers of the Hartford survey welcomed the PARAL Study as one related to their own, but autonomous because of funding and scope. The Hartford Institute issued a report in March of 2001 and it is referred to in our text as FACT.

Note to the Reader: *Throughout this summary report, data derived from the PARAL Study will be indicated by the use of bullets:*

- This is a finding of the NSLLPC

Information derived from other reports or from the US Census will be indicated by the use of square:

- This is a finding of the Census

Background information or definitions used in the text are boxed from the narrative text;

Definitions

This is information on how we use definitions and additional information not derived from reports such as the NSLLPC or the Census.