

INTRODUCTION

The National Survey of Leadership in Latino¹ 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 academic position at the time the survey was planned:

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*

Various related projects that surveyed faith communities in the United States influenced those designing the NSLLPC. Chief among these allied research efforts were the Collaborative Congregational Studies Project that was based at Hartford Seminary and the National Survey of Religious Congregations directed by Prof. **Mark Chaves**, presently on the faculty of the University of Arizona. Many of the co-investigators and the staff for the project met in Chicago with Dr. Chaves and Dr. **David Roozen**, representing the Hartford Seminary's project. In addition, PARAL invited the late **Patrick McNamara**, a distinguished sociologist at the University of New Mexico at the time, and a pioneer in the field of religious research among Hispanics. The vision of the project was explained to the outside consultants and their suggestions and advice was incorporated into the final elaboration of the PARAL Study.

The PARAL Study was designed for three stages:

1) a survey of the heads of Latino faith communities;

¹ The choice of "Latino/a" or "Hispanic" as a term of reference is discussed in Part III. Throughout the PARAL Study, the terms are used interchangeably. When referring to individuals, the masculine and feminine forms "o/a" or plurals "os/as" are used to avoid gender exclusion.

- 2) a survey of leaders serving in the faith communities that responded;
- 3) community studies at selected sites around the country.

Guided by a periodic consultation with the co-investigators, the staff working from Brooklyn College began to shape the survey instruments, conduct pre-tests at various locales across the nation and cultivate the institutional contacts that would foster cooperation among church leaders. In all, eleven denominations representing approximately 85% of Hispanics in affiliated churches responded to the invitation to participate in the survey. They provided the survey's staff with comprehensive lists of churches where services were offered at least once a month for Latinos/as.² Most often, this definition also fit use of the Spanish language.

For much of the years 1998-1999, the NSLLPC developed its research strategies. As described in Appendix II of the Parts I and II, regional samples were derived for the largest denominations: Roman Catholic, Seventh Day Adventist and Southern Baptist. For all other denominations, the NSLLPC sent questionnaires to all the congregations listed as serving Latinos/as. While the survey of the heads of the Latino faith communities allowed for the implementation of familiar methodologies, the survey of lay and volunteer leaders working with their pastors and other heads presented a greater challenge. There was no easy way to contact these lay and volunteer leaders, except through the persons actually serving as head of the faith community. The NSLLPC adapted the method used by Dr. Chaves in the National Congregations Study. He had surveyed individual respondents identified by the General Social Survey. Among his questions were some seeking the name and location of a head of the individual's faith community. The second stage of Chaves' national survey, therefore, went from individuals back to their pastors and congregations. The NSLLPC decided to ask the heads for the names of the lay and volunteer leaders, thus utilizing the Chaves method, but in reverse.

As part of this strategy for contacting leaders through the pastors, the heads of the faith community were asked to fill out a sheet with the names of the persons serving as leaders in various aspects of ministry, affiliated with the parish or congregation. The data derived from these lists of leaders is reported in Part III.3. Based on those numbers and the total number of members in the faith community, a packet with instructions and the questionnaires for the lay and volunteer leaders was to be sent to those communities where the head had responded to the survey. It should be noted, however, that these packets did not contain the names in the lists that had been used to approximate the number of ministries in the parishes and congregations of the sample.

Although there were similar questions asked of both the heads and of the lay and volunteer leaders in the faith communities, the questionnaires were different. Hence, there were two surveys within the PARAL Study: 1) of the heads of faith communities (many of these pastors); and 2) of the leaders engaged in various ministries within these same faith communities. The third segment consisting of community studies repeated some questions from the surveys but also constituted a distinctive research effort. By using these three research

² For Roman Catholics, the lists came from the Center for Applied Research on the Apostolate (CARA) and from its director, Dr. Bryan Froehle.

approaches within the same coordinated study, each part gained from the others. The community studies provided a “thick” description of the profiles gained from the two surveys. Still to be developed are texts suitable for the class-room and scholarly monographs exploring specific issues.

The process of data collection for the first stage, the survey of the heads of Latino faith communities, began with the mailing of a letter to the prospective respondents in October of 2000. This was followed by an initial mailing of the survey instrument in November of the same year. A second mailing of the instrument was employed in January of 2001 for those who had not responded. In March of 2001, **Blum and Weprin**, a highly respected New York polling agency, was contracted to conduct a telephone survey of those heads who had not responded by mail. The telephone interviews were conducted during the month of April and early May 2001. Both phases were supervised by the Associate Director of the PARAL Study, Dr. Anneris Goris.

Approximately 50% of the data in Parts I and II were collected from the mailed survey and the other half from the telephone data collection. Parts I and II reports these findings under the headings of “The Faith Communities” and the “Heads of the Faith Communities.” A description of the research methodology and appendices with participating denominations and response rates can be found there.

Unfortunately, the second mailed survey to the lay and volunteer leaders coincided with the events of September 11, 2001. The mailing address for the office was in New York city, within visible distance from the site of the destroyed twin towers of the World Trade Center. Although law enforcement authorities conducted a nationwide search for those responsible for mailing quantities of anthrax through the US postal service, reception of any package through the mails provided alarm. These conditions made response to the survey markedly more difficult than had been the case with the first part of the survey that had been conducted among the heads of the Latino faith communities. The PARAL Study did not have the financial resources to devise a separate strategy to overcome the impediments created by these extraordinary circumstances.

In all, 825 lay and volunteer leaders responded to the second questionnaire that had been sent to the heads for distribution in Latino faith communities nationwide. Although many would consider this a response sufficient for analysis, it must be pointed out that the 825 responses did not come from 825 separate faith communities, but were multiple responses from a much smaller sample of faith communities. As a result, there are not sufficient responses from the several regional areas to ensure in this part of the study a reliability equal to that asserted for the heads of the faith communities in Parts I and II.

Moreover, the responses of lay and volunteer leaders were mostly from Roman Catholics (84%) as contrasted with an unrepresentative segment of Hispanics of all other denominations (16%). This contrasts unfavorably with the first survey of the heads of faith communities, where there were almost equal numbers from both groups. The data in this survey of lay and volunteer leaders, therefore, does not provide reliable analysis of either differences among the various

Protestant denominations or of the differences between Roman Catholics and leaders from all other denominations.

Despite these limitations, it bears noting that the ethnic representation of the lay and volunteer leaders is close to the ethnic distribution reported among Hispanics by the 2000 US Census. The table provided below for the ethnic background of lay and volunteer leaders in Latino faith communities may be compared to national census data. For instance:

- Persons of Mexican heritage are 49% of those responding, while the nationally verified percentage of Mexican ethnicity is about 58%.
- Puerto Ricans are the next largest group (10%) compared to 9% in the US Census.
- The Salvadoran leaders are a slightly higher percentage (4%) than the Cubans (3%) which also corresponds to the findings of the 2000 US Census.

Table: Intro.1 Ethnic Background of Lay and Volunteer Leaders in Latino Faith Communities

Argentinean	7	1%
Bolivian	5	1%
Chilean	1	-1%
Colombian	18	2%
Costa Rican	9	1%
Cuban	22	3%
Dominican	15	2%
Ecuadorian	14	2%
Guatemalan	24	3%
Honduran	5	1%
Mexican	400	49%
Nicaraguan	5	1%
Panamanian	2	-1%
Peruvian	10	1%
Puerto Rican	81	10%
Salvadoran	30	4%
Venezuelan	2	-1%
African	1	-1%
Asian	1	-1%
Canadian	1	-1%
US	113	14%
Non-Spaniard European	7	1%
Spaniard	12	2%
Other	5	1%
No Answer	<u>35</u>	<u>4%</u>
TOTAL	825	*100%

***May not equal 100% because of rounding**

While we do not offer the findings from the survey with a confidence that it describes the lay and volunteer leadership with the same accuracy as the previous segments of the survey, these findings do make a contribution to an understanding of leaders committed to and working within parishes and congregations that serve Latinos/as.

- There is a significantly high percentage of leaders with US ethnicity (14%).
- Latino ministry reported here reflects the tendency among Roman Catholics for non-Latino members of religious orders to dedicate themselves to ministry among a targeted population such as Hispanics.
- Among all other denominations, it would be expected to find a much lower percentage of lay and volunteer leaders who were identified ethnically as from the US.

What is the value of this report on the lay and volunteer leaders in Latino faith communities?

Certain areas of research undertaken for lay and volunteer leaders lend this survey it an importance that overrides a professional concern about statistical reliability. We list these under the following headings, with a brief explanation of the relevance of these findings to various theoretical elaborations of the unique features of religious expression among Latinos/as. Please consult the list of recommended readings included in this report for additional perspectives.

1. Popular Religiosity

Through an involved process that took two years, the pretest effort for the questionnaire allowed for the survey to list practices, observances and customs for the rites of passage generally identified with Hispanic experiences including both Roman Catholics and all other denominations. The focus was on “function” rather than on content. Thus, for instance, placing a religious picture within the home was compared across denominational lines rather than focusing on whether the picture was of Christ or Mary. The issue of content, that is, whether of Christ or Mary, is a matter for theological and denominational difference, with Roman Catholics more likely than Protestants to hang a representation of Mary in the home. Rather than look for points of difference based on content in traditions, the survey focused on comparable functions. This approach was followed both among those traditional practices likely to be found among all Christians and also those more specific to persons of Latin American heritage. The NSLLPC devised a method of inquiring about traditions in ways to measure generational differences and to test whether certain traditions were building in popularity among current leaders, fading when compared with their parents, or likely to be perpetuated among their children.

2. Development within the church of civic and secular leadership skills

The role of the churches in developing the skills of its leaders so that they can participate in civic, political and secular efforts is of considerable importance as

Hispanics become the largest ethnic and racial minority in the United States. Other studies, such as that conducted by Sidney Verba and his associates,³ reported that Hispanic Protestants had much higher levels of skill preparation than Hispanic Roman Catholics. However, as shown in the results of the NSLLPC, the typical faith community among Latinos/as of all other denominations had fewer than 100 members, while more than a third of Roman Catholic parishes serving Latinos/as had more than a 1,000. The NSLLPC also found that congregations and parishes generally offer the same number of services and organizations, regardless of size. Hence, in the average Protestant congregation of 100 members, there are approximately ten times the opportunities for leadership than in a Roman Catholic parish that has 1,000 members. The NSLLPC repeated the questionnaire items developed by Verba et al. among only those already engaged in leadership roles, expecting to more accurately test a comparable function of skill development among those actually engaged in leadership.

3. Conversion

This survey examined patterns of switching affiliation among denominations on the part of Hispanics directly involved in leadership. As with the issue described above about leadership skills, this survey measures the response only of the leaders not including the general population. The responses reported here for the lay and volunteer leaders (mostly Roman Catholics) should be compared with the extensive analysis of religious identification among Hispanics contained in a report prepared by **Ariela Keysar, Barry A. Kosmin and Egon Mayer** for the PARAL Study. Based on data taken from the American Religious Identification Survey of 2001 (ARIS) and compared to similar data from the 1990 National Survey of Religious Identification (NSRI), this report analyzes religious switching among individuals. By comparing what happens among those whose membership may be nominal with those who are educated and committed to leadership, some significant patterns emerge.

It is a fond expectation of the staff and many of the co-investigators that the PARAL Study will generate much discussion. On the one hand, these several parts of the study offer rich data on the lived religion of most of the nearly 39 million people of Hispanic heritage living under the US flag, and make possible extended comparison with general religious experiences. On the other hand, the empirically derived data here invite theoretical exploration – and perhaps also, correction. We trust this effort enriches an understanding of religion among Latinos and Latinas.

We have included a brief set of observations about the formats used in this report that will make it easier for the reader to benefit from study of these findings.

³ Verba, Sidney, Kay Schlozman and Henry Brady. 1995. *Voice and Equality*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press.

How to read this report:

We have employed several formats in order to make this report user-friendly. Please note the suggestions in italics below for tips on how best to understand the different findings from the NSLLPC

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.