IMMIGRANT IDENTITY DEVELOPMENT IN THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH: A COMPARATIVE STUDY OF HISPANICS IN THE UNITED STATES

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This thesis was prepared under the direction of the candidate's thesis advisor, Dr. Jacqueline Fewkes, and has been approved by the members of his supervisory committee. It was submitted to the faculty of The Honors College and was accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Bachelor of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences.

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ABSTRACT

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Christian churches in the United States are very diverse. The diversity seen often goes unmentioned by religion and immigration scholars who write about the key role churches play in the assimilation of Hispanic immigrants. Scholars use the word “church” in order to refer to all Christian religious institutions. The use of one word to encompass the broad range of institutions can misguide readers to believe that all Christian churches in the United States help Hispanic immigrants assimilate in the same way. This comparative study includes Anglo, Immigrant, and Transnational Christian churches throughout the United States The focus is to explore the particular methods by which immigrants forge identities in Christian churches, identities with assimilation potential into an already multi-cultural, American society. Whether immigrants build an ethnic identity, a religious identity, or a mix of both, there is no guarantee that the identity developed will help immigrants assimilate.

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CHAPTER 1: Introduction

A recurrent theme in the literature of religion and immigration in the United States is the relationship between religion and assimilation. Many academics state that religion helps immigrants assimilate into American society and some even refer to the church as the main aiding agent (Menjívar 2003, Yang & Ebaugh 2002, Warner & Wittner 1998, Herberg 1960, Dolan 1975, Hammond & Warner 1993). Within the literature, authors use the word "church" as an umbrella term to include an array of distinct religious institutions. The diversity of Christian institutions in the United States alone is extensive. Particular socio-economic environments, geographical locations, representations, congregational or hierarchical compositions, make each church different from each other. Adding to this diversity, much of the published literature includes the role each institution has in immigrant identity development, which can aid with immigrant assimilation. Many authors state, and stress, the importance of the relationship between the church and assimilation without acknowledging the multiple kinds of churches that exist. The rich diversity in Christian institutions makes the use of the term "church" problematic. By using the single noun, readers wonder: what kind of church are we talking about?

The realization of this uncertainty brought me to the research question for this thesis. I knew I wanted to focus on the new Hispanic immigrants and their interactions with Christian churches. I also knew that, in the United States, Hispanic immigrants either join their local church, or start their own (Hirschman 2004). Thus, stating that Christian churches in the United States have an important role in immigrants'

assimilation is not enough. There is an additional set of questions arising from the uncertainty in the literature and the lack of individualization Christian churches receive. What kinds of Christian churches in the United States are helping Hispanic immigrants build identities? Is there only one type of church aiding immigrants forge an identity with assimilation potential? or do both local, native-started churches and immigrant churches have a key role in immigrant assimilation?

Stephen Warner was one of the first scholars to point out that very little attention "has been given by social scientists to the religious institutions of Latinos" in comparison with their European and Asian counterparts (1998:194). This lack of attention derives from the fact that Hispanic immigrants are "new" to the religion and immigration academics. The heavy migration of new Hispanic immigrants is recent, starting in 1965. Warner also stated that "new immigrant and ethnic groups [in the United States] are overwhelmingly Christian" due to their Latin American origins (1998:198). Many Hispanic immigrants are Christian, bringing their particular religiosity into the United States.

Latinos are one of the largest ethnic groups in the United States. Heyck estimated that in the next fifty years, if immigration and birth rates are maintained the same, the Latino population will go from comprising nine percent of the country's population to 21 percent (1994). As Warner noted, most Hispanic immigrants are Christian, and a majority are Catholic. A New Immigrant Survey Plot report showed that 42 percent of all legal adult immigrants are Catholics, with Hispanics being the largest group (Jasso et al. 2002). The second largest group is Christian Protestants, who make up 23 percent of all immigrants (Jasso et al. 2002). When referring to Latinos in the United States, both

immigrant and native-born, the numbers do not change dramatically: 66 percent are Roman Catholic and 23 percent are from other Christian groups, mainly Protestant denominations like Baptist, Pentecostal, Jehovah Witness and Methodist (Kosmin et al. 1992). Because of the magnitude of their representation in the United States and their availability in the literature, Hispanic Christians are the community in focus for this research.

The way in which religious organizations facilitate the adaptation of immigrants into American society "remains a central theme in recent studies [of religion and immigration]" (Cadge & Ecklund 2007:362). Cadge and Ecklund also noted that the strength recent research in religion and immigration shows is also its greatest weakness. The research relies on richly descriptive individual case studies but lacks "systematic analytic comparison and synthesis" (2007:360). This includes work such as that presented by Warner & Wittner, and Ebaugh & Chafetz that focused on individual congregations to explore what immigrants "were doing together religiously" (Warner & Wittner 1999:9).

With some notable exceptions (for example see Menjívar in the later literature review section, and Ebaugh & Chafetz 2000), there is a need for more comparative works in the literature. Comparative studies are beneficial because they "help bridge insights gained from recent scholarship" (Menjívar 2003:22). Bringing related works about congregational studies together makes it easier to point out any macro conclusions that, in the end, might help us understand any arising themes.

The authors of the Annual Review of Sociology call for more comparative analysis among different immigrant and native churches, and for studies about religious

organizations situated in different, broader geographical locations (Cadge & Ecklund 2007). For these reasons, I researched immigrant churches and native churches with American-born, non-Hispanic second-generation congregants, as well as congregations in different states and North American regions.

CHAPTER 2: Literature Review

I. Religion & Immigration

Religion plays a significant role in the life of immigrants (Menjívar 2003). Whether it helps them assimilate, enforce ethnic identities, or provide them with social spaces and status, religious institutions are key players in immigrant aid. Academics write about religion as a determinate factor in identity building for many immigrants in the United States, and thus talk about the ethno-religious identity of different peoples (Yang & Ebaugh 2002; Sullivan 2000b, Hammond & Warner 1993). Similar to Latin America, the United States has a religious agenda dominated by Christianity. Researches of the General Social Survey of 1996 found that 82 percent of native-born Americans are Christian (Jasso et al. 2002). Even though the United States shares similar religious identifications with Latin America, their practices and histories vary in detail.

The earliest literature in religion and immigration in the United States dates to the mid-twentieth century (see Herberg 1960). Over the past few decades, with the increase in international immigration in the world, immigrants start to become the focus on much scholarly research. Early scholars of religion and immigration expose the lives and experiences of European immigrants in the nineteenth century and early twentieth century their research. In 1975, Jay Dolan wrote about the first large scale wave of

immigrants, the Irish and German Catholics of New York. After the American Civil War, many Irish and German Catholics migrated to the United States and made Catholicism more than just an "Agrarian parish" (Dolan 1975:2-3). These immigrants were the first to bring Catholicism to the urban American setting of New York. Their preferred urban setting showed a shift from the then existing American Catholic minority that lived in rural areas (Dolan 1975). This large-scale Catholic migration gave birth to the new "national parish," which served the needs of the immigrant community and was a replica of the one from their country of origin (Dolan 1975).

The common Catholic religion acted as a cohesive instrument amongst the new immigrants. Dolan explained that the Latin liturgy, loyalty to a common Pope and having the same prayers, gave them a sense of unity (1975). All immigrant Catholics had a sense of loyalty to their adopted homeland thanks to their national parish. This national parish "aided the newcomers in becoming hyphenated Americans by providing them with a familiar experience in a strange environment" (Dolan 1975:162). The Church was able to build a national parish similar to the ones the immigrants experienced back home; this parish assisted with the assimilation by providing immigrants with something familiar in their new setting.

Another well-known academic that writes about the earlier European immigrants is Will Herberg, who found religion to be a primary category of identity and association in American society. He claims that through religion, immigrants could find a place in the United States (1960). Herberg argues that immigrants and their descendants would give up almost everything from the old country but would retain the same religion (1960). This means that earlier immigrants valued their religion more than other

identifications, like their ethnicity and nationality. In reality, however, religious identity never completely replaces ethnic identity. Most scholars of religion and immigration would agree that both ethnicity and religiosity could reinforce each other. One identity never replaces the other, but in fact work together at different levels. Church historian Timothy Smith argues that many factors play a role in immigrants' identity formation (1978). He further says that the migration process strengthens the religious factor in ethnic identity formation (1978). In addition, Jay Dolan comments that "religion and ethnicity were intimately bound up together in the national parish, and one supported the other" (1975:360). Although Herberg states that a religious identification was the primary category of identity for immigrants, later studies show that immigrants in diaspora use both religious and ethnic identifications at the same level.

The new, post-1965 immigration wave in the United States by peoples of Central America, South America and Asia, becomes the focus of more recent studies (Yang & Ebaugh 2002). David Badillo writes about the history of Latinos and the immigrant Catholic church, speaking mainly of Mexican, Puerto-Rican, and Cuban immigrants of the early and mid-twentieth century. Unlike earlier European immigrants, the post-1965 wave of immigrants did not have a Latin liturgy. The constitution of the Sacred Liturgy introduced the use of the vernacular in worship and the translation of the scriptures into the tongues of local cultures (Badillo 2006). This means that if available at their local church, Hispanic immigrants are able to listen and follow mass in Spanish in the United States. This Vatican II Catholic innovation changed the relationship between immigrants and the Church, and increased the potential for a more personal relationship between the two (Badillo 2006).

Badillo also mentions a more recent change in the religious sphere called "reverse missionization." This new kind of missionization involve Latin American people who adopt a Protestant religion at home and, when moving to the United States, form an even more hybrid mix of their religion (Badillo 2006). Reverse missionization allows many immigrants to start their own churches and broadens the religious agenda present in the United States. Badillo also notes a new way of forming congregations among immigrants. Unlike the former national parish, formed around national origin, many Protestant immigrant congregations are formed "on the basis of a common language, overcoming the cultural distinctions linked to nationality" (Badillo 2006:193). This common language tie allows immigrants to form groups and churches under the term Hispanic or Latino.

In Christianity, the church is the pillar and representative of religion. Hirschman states that "churches and temples…become central to the lives of immigrants" (2004:1229). Religion, but in particular the church, helps immigrants go through the transition and settlement into a new place. Hirschman notes that the practical help churches give to their congregants helps reinforce their faith and "has helped successive generations of immigrants and their children to become American" (2004:1229-1230). The practical help offered varies by church but can run from any sort of class, whether it is ESL, citizenship, GED; to emotional and counseling services, creating food banks for those in need, and job fairs. In Menjívar's comparative study, she explains that most Salvadorans, regardless of their specific location, share similar views in the role the church played in their lives (2003).[1] In the words of Isabel, one of Menjívar's informants: "[our] faith is very important because without it it's very difficult to survive

here…One finds many barriers in this country, enormous barriers…the language, customs, legal barriers. So our faith keeps us going. The church helps us get through all this" (2003:28). The church is the one entity that helps immigrants overcome these barriers. The unreserved aid makes the Church an important and key factor in immigrants' life.

II. Assimilation & Identity

Immigration scholars continue to debate whether or not new immigrants will assimilate in the same way or at the same pace earlier waves of immigrants did (Alba & Nee 1997, Badillo 2006). Yang and Ebaugh write: "new immigrants show us that religion, both Judeo-Christian and other traditions, continue to play the dual role of facilitating assimilation of its members and preserving ethnicity" (2002:269). In a similar manner, Charles Hirschman states that a significant number of immigrants become American by participating in religious and community activities of churches and temples (2004).

New immigrants are also increasingly "transmigrants," peoples whose daily lives "depend on multiple and constant interconnections across international borders and whose public identities are configured in relationship to more than one nation state" (Glick Schiller et al. 1995:48). This means that immigrants are no longer uprooted, for they are not seeking a permanent stay in their host country. Immigrants depend on both places, not just to develop an identity, but also for economic, social and familial issues. Menjívar states that although the context of immigrants' reception is crucial, immigrants

have always kept ties with their home countries while at the same time have attempted to integrate into their host community (2003).

It is easy to stay connected due to advances in communication technologies and faster methods of transportation. These advances help maintain the strong attachments transmigrants have with their communities (Portes et al. 1996). New immigrants, and especially transmigrants, do not fit in the old dichotomy between Anglo and Latino. The use of this dichotomy implies that Hispanic immigrants either become Anglo and assimilate, or stay Latino and do not assimilate. In actuality, transmigrants fall somewhere in between these experiences, as they build identities in both places because they "continue to be active in their homelands and at the same time become part of the countries that received them" (Levitt & Jaworsky 2007:130). In addition, Kearney explains that transnational identities "escape" from an either-or classification and rely on a both-and logic in which "subjects share partial, overlapping identities" (1995:558). Proponents of old formulations of assimilation lacked an understanding of social dynamics and ethnicity, for they generally attempted to eradicate minority culture (Alba & Nee 1997). By erasing all signs of ethnic origins, proponents of older assimilation formulations hoped to bring ethnic minorities into the mainstream of American life (Alba & Nee 1997). Some academics have argued that these old formulations and the Anglo-Latino dichotomy are "too simplistic and mechanical to make sense of the ways in which [immigrants] draw from [religion] to navigate everyday life" (Vasquez 1999:630). The formation of this dichotomy simplifies immigrant identity building. It implies that all immigrants, regardless of origin had to become the same kind of American.

Proponents of newer definitions of assimilation claim that elements from minority cultures are absorbed with their American equivalents. Some of these elements fuse with the mainstream ones in order to create a hybrid cultural mix (Alba & Nee 1997). Other definitions validate the existence of a variety of different subgroups within American identity, and acknowledge them as a valid form of identification accepted in American society. For example, Hirschman writes:

> As the country grew during the nineteenth century, the definition of American identity had to be sufficiently broad to include the wide cultural variations between town and farm, the north and the south, and the frontier and the more established regions of the country. Gradually it was accepted that the new immigrants and their descendants could find a place in the American mainstream by joining one of the already existing subculture or by creating their own. (2004:1209)

Hirschman notes that there is no single path to all assimilation in American society. As more immigrants arrive in the United States, American identity grows bigger in order to accommodate new immigrants. These immigrants either create or join existing sub-groups with space in the American mainstream in order to achieve assimilation. Hirschman further argues that as American society grows, it does not by adding completely assimilated people into the "old culture," but by expanding the definition of American culture (2004:1210).

Many old definitions of assimilation, such as that of the Anglo-Latino dichotomy, form at the group level (Alba & Nee 1997). New definitions and constructions of assimilation are more reflective of current issues in immigration. For example, on the individual level "…the assimilation of individuals of minority origins involves changes that enable them to function in the mainstream society" (Alba & Nee 1997:864). This individual definition requires fewer modifications made in immigrants' lives in order to

assimilate. Actually, the individual definition defines assimilated individuals as people with enough modification in order to "enable them to function" in their receiving communities. To be part of American society, immigrants are no longer required to obtain an Anglo identity; other identities (Latino, Mexican-American, etcetera) give them enough elements to function and are accepted in American society. In support of this idea of other non-Anglo identities, Handlin writes that to become American, immigrants have to first become "ethnic American" and adapt names such as Latino, Hispanic, Italian American, etcetera (1973).

"American ethnicities," like the pan-Latino and Hispanic identities, make their way into the religious sphere. Catholic Church leaders treat all Latin American Catholics as one national group by referring to them as Hispanics and forging a pan-Latino identity (Badillo 2006). This Hispanic identification takes place because church leaders see Latin American immigrants as sharing similar cultural bonds and a common language (Badillo 2006). Contrastingly, some Latin Americans embrace and make use of the Latino identification. In some neighborhoods of Washington D.C., Latinos "forge a common identity as a cultural and political group" (Badillo 2006:199).[2] This pan-Latino identification is more fitting to use within the Protestant community since many Hispanic Protestant congregations in the United States form based on common language and overcome cultural and national distinctions (Badillo 2006).

The creation of an all-encompassing identity has a few implications. Menjívar notes that this identity builds a collective that might help with immigrants' assimilation (2003). She writes "[collective identities] may lead to coalition building and a sense of ethnic identity with potential to impact the immigrants' long-term integration" (2003:42).

While helping some Hispanics assimilate into American society, this pan-Latino identity, can also discriminate and leave other Latin Americans out, especially indigenous peoples.

Nancy Wellmeier's work with the Mayan people of Santa Eulalia, Guatemala shows the lack of comprehensiveness of the pan-Latino identity. Mayan Catholics practice their religion in form of fraternities with a saint association and do not experience their religion and their church in the same way *mestizo* people do (Wellmeier 1999). Members of the Fraternidad Ewulense Maya Q'anjob'al (FEMAQ) live in Los Angeles and lack official recognition and insertion into the local Catholic church (Wellmeier 1999). The Catholic Church has failed to incorporate the Maya into their community by embracing a pan-Latino identity that only serves the needs of Mexican, Salvadoran, Nicaraguan, and Honduran Spanish-speaking urbanite immigrants (Wellmeier 1999). The lack of incorporation of Mayan people has long-term implications on their assimilation into American society. If they cannot find an identity that aids with their assimilation, they will remain marginalized and neglected. The lack of introduction into the American mainstream would keep Mayan immigrants separated from other assimilated immigrants. In this separate space, Mayan immigrants would remain as strangers and would lack an identity accepted in American society.

Immigrants can also fail to reach an identity that helps their assimilation by blatant perceived rejection from American society. Alba and Nee note that immigrants could respond to their seeming lack of opportunity and to their rejection by constructing 'reactive ethnicities' (1997). Reactive identities assert "upon value schemes that invert those of the mainstream in important ways" (1997:848). This means that immigrants can

act in ways that reject the conventions and the values of the system they now live in, because they perceive American society is rejecting them.

CHAPTER 3: Methodology

I utilize a comparative approach to my research. I researched literature on religion and immigration, focusing on articles and books on Hispanic immigrant Christian churches. I rely on articles and books by sociologists and religious studies academics, information which has been discussed in the literature review, as the main source of background.[3] From a religious context, only Christian Hispanics (Catholic and Protestant) in the United States are part of the discussion. Most published works on Christian churches in the United States expose problems, patterns, and merely just depict their internal interactions. These published works on congregation studies make up the case studies section and examples of Anglo and immigrant churches helping immigrants find an acceptable identity in American society. The churches included in the study derive from the few case studies published within the field for their representation and composition. It must be considered that there are limited resources available in the literature about the congregation studies. Studies of religion and immigration are recent and the amount of church case studies on Hispanic Christian immigrants is not vast.

Some of the case studies are on Hispanic immigrant churches, however most are transnational immigrant churches. Here, my definition of "immigrant churches" is Christian churches started by immigrants. The difference between immigrant churches and "transnational immigrant churches" is based on the geographical location of their headquarters. Transnational immigrant churches can have headquarters located

somewhere outside the United States, in either Central or South America, and keep ties with their headquarters. Yearly visits to the headquarters, mission trips, building media spaces connecting both communities, are some of the examples of the ties transnational immigrant churches keep with their headquarters. Contrastingly, all immigrant churches have headquarters located within the United States. All other case studies are on "Anglo churches." These churches are started in the United States by non-Hispanic Americans, and used to have an overwhelmingly white congregation but are currently made up of an immigrant majority that is not exclusively Hispanic.

My research consists of seven case studies of Christian churches, all of which fall into the three categories explained above: transnational, immigrant domestic and Anglo.[4] I divided the case study section of this thesis into three parts. The first part includes all of the background information and a general profile of each church. In the second part, I will explain the three categories I have developed for understanding each church and will also explain why and how each church fits this category. The third, and final part, contains information on how each congregation forms its identity and other larger-scale trends seen at a macro-level. Finally, since most of the individual congregations embody the particular methods by which immigrants build their identities, I will compare the distinct identity construction methods of each church, methods developed in order to create identities that can be accepted as part of the already multi-cultural American society.

CHAPTER 4: Case Studies

I. Church Profiles:

This section includes all the background information for my case study examples. It consists of data that provides a framework needed for the analysis section and helps understand the categories developed in the second section for all the churches. They are in no particular order.

Gran Comisión

One of Manuel Vasquez' research presents us the Gran Comisión church, an independent, Pentecostal congregation (1999). Started in 1943 by a Puerto Rican pastor in Paterson, New Jersey, the Gran Comisión church is the oldest Hispanic Evangelical church in the city (1999). The congregation is bilingual and serves around 600 parishioners (1999). Although the majority of congregants are Puerto Rican and Dominican, there is a Peruvian minority in the church (1999). Peruvians have been arriving to Paterson since the 1920s (1999).

Alcance Victoria of East Los Angeles

Luis León's work brings us Alcance Victoria, a Pentecostal, transnational church with over 200 chapters in different countries around the world (1998). Alcance Victoria was founded by a Puerto Rican ex-drug user in 1967 and it started "as a ministry to Chicago gangs" (1998:166). León's work focuses on the East Los Angeles church, a Mexican American and recent Mexican immigrant congregation located in Boyle Heights, California, a place that "could easily be mistaken for Mexico City or

Guadalajara" (1998:169-170). The church moved to its current location of a "defunct movie theater" in 1994 (1998:168). At the time of the study, 75 percent of the Alcance Victoria of East Los Angeles congregation was under the age of 50 and the average attendance to Sunday mass was around 300 people (1998).

Iglesia de Dios

Kathleen Sullivan studied the Iglesia de Dios church for the RENIR I project.[5] This is a storefront, Protestant church located in the Mimosa Park neighborhood in eastern Houston (2000a). With a headquarters in Guadalajara, Mexico, the Iglesia de Dios church of Houston is one of several missions around the world (2000a). Founded in 1920, the central church claims 1.5 million members in Mexico and five million non-Mexican members (2000a). The church is present in 28 nations around the world and, in the United States alone, it has 45 congregations, most of them located in Texas and California (2000a). Founded in 1988, the Mimosa Park congregation is made up of 20-30 core families (2000a). Nearly half of them were church members in Mexico before immigrating to the United States (2000a). The church's total membership is around one hundred and eighty people, all of whom are Hispanic and can only speak Spanish (2000a). Out of the members, more than half are U.S citizens, 45 percent are Mexican immigrants who are not citizens, and five percent are Salvadoran and Honduran refugees (2000a).

Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica

David Cook studied the Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica for the RENIR I and RENIR II projects. This church was founded by a group of Argentine immigrants in Houston who were members of the Plymouth Brethren church in Mendoza, Argentina (2000). At first, they used the facilities of the American Brethren congregation in Houston, but differences in the way of worship and style took the Argentines to form their own that imitated the Mendoza congregation (2002). The church has had many different locations throughout Houston; it moved due to the ever-increasing number of followers, pushing the church to accommodate the congregation with bigger spaces (2000). The church started in its "South Town" location, which consisted of a rented garage, and met under the name Hispanic Bible Fellowship (2000). An increase of members over the following years forced the congregation to move out of the garage and into a house where all members helped to pay the mortgage (2000). It was not until the 1980s that the church acquired its current name and current location in the southwest suburbs of Houston, an area with great diversity (2000). In the beginning, the church consisted of Argentines, all of them with roots in Mendoza (2002). As the church grew, it acquired a significant amount of other Hispanics followers like Mexican, who make up the 16 percent; Central American, who make up 14 percent; Caribbean, who make up eight percent; and South Americans, who make up ten percent (2002).

Southwest Assembly of God

In the same pluralist environment of southwest Houston, Patricia Dorsey studied the Southwest Assembly of God church. This is an Evangelical, Pentecostal church that

“encourages the full manifestations of the gifts of the Holy Spirit…speaking and interpreting in tongues... to read the bible for themselves and to pursue a personal relationship with Jesus” (2000:293). Founded in 1943, the church’s follower increase made it change locations a couple of times, ending its change in its current location in 1974 (2000). Back in the 1970s, the southwest area was home to upper-middle-class families whom earned good salaries at the time due to Houston’s then booming economy (2000). During this time, Anglos (80 percent) and other small minorities, mostly African American (ten percent) belonged to the church (2000). A crash in Houston’s economy happened in the mid 1980s, and the community began to experience a considerable change (2000). Many residents started to move away and vacancy rates in apartment buildings rose significantly (2000). Owners reduced apartment rates and accepted people in subsidized housing programs, bringing a large population of low-income families and ethnic minorities into the area (2000). Since then, the number of minorities attending the church has increased whereas the number of Anglo attendees has decreased. In 1997, the church’s membership was comprised of Africans (25 percent), Anglos (25 percent), African Americans (15 percent), Hispanics and Caribbeans (30 percent), and other minorities (2000).

Saint Catherine

Kathleen Sullivan also studied the St. Catherine Catholic church for the RENIR I project. This church is a multi-ethnic parish that exemplifies “how the Catholic church is responding to the influx of new immigrants and ethnic populations” (2000b:255). St. Catherine is located in the southwest of Houston, a neighborhood that has seen drastic

transitions in its demographical composition (2000b). When the congregation first started in the 1970s, it was made up of two thousand members, mainly Anglos (90 percent) with an African American and Hispanic minority (2000b). Currently, the church has 6,311 registered members that make up several identifiable communities, the largest group being Asian (64 percent), with smaller communities of Hispanics (20 percent), Anglos (15 percent), and some other Creole, African American, Indian and Middle Eastern families (2000b). The parish mainly serves working-class families, all whom live in the adjacent lower middle-class neighborhood (2000b). Many of the ethnic groups within the church are officially recognized as "Catholic communities"; to achieve such recognition, groups must organize members of the same ethnic group to register in the parish in order to "produce [enough] numbers" for recognition (2000b:260). This organizing starts up as a process of networking among nationals for jobs, housing, transportation, and other essentials (2000b).

Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas

Manuel Vasquez, author of the first case study, also studied the Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas. Salvadoran immigrants from eastern El Salvador founded this church in 1981. This is an indigenous Pentecostal church, with transnational chapters in multiple cities of the United States such as in the D.C. area, Long Island, Dallas, and Houston (e-mail to author, November 28, 2007). With its headquarters in El Salvador, the church serves a largely Salvadoran community, with some Guatemalan and Brazilian congregants (1999). The church's worship style is formal; during the ceremonies, men sit on the right, wearing suits and ties, and women sit on the left, wearing long dark

skirts, long-sleeved white blouses, and white veils over their heads (1999). The congregation is located in northwest Washington D.C., a white middle-class area (1999). Most of its members are bused into the area from the neighborhoods of Takoma Park and Silver Springs, where they can find less expensive housing (1999). Many of the 350 members, particularly the Salvadoran ones, are relatives, or were tied by god-parenthood in El Salvador before converting to Pentecostalism (1999).

II. Anglo, Immigrant Domestic, Immigrant Transnational:

All of the churches used for this case study fit into two categories: Anglo churches, and immigrant churches.[6] The Anglo churches are churches headed by non-Hispanic Americans and started by native-born Americans in the United States. This category includes St. Catherine Catholic Church and the Southwest Assembly of God Church, both with an Anglo pastor and a contemporary multi-ethnic congregation.

Founded by Hispanic immigrants, immigrant churches follow two patterns: they are either domestic or transnational churches. Domestic churches include both independent one-chapter congregations and congregations that are part of a larger denomination (e.g. Pentecostal). These churches have no strong ties to any particular Latin American country. In contrast, transnational churches have strong national ties to particular Latin American countries and have headquarters in either that country or in the United States. Domestic immigrant churches include the Gran Comisión Pentecostal church, with a Hispanic congregation and no strong ties to any Latin American country, and the Iglesia de Dios church, with a Central American pastor and congregation. Finally, transnational immigrant churches include the case studies of Alcance Victoria,

Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas and Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica, all started by immigrants in the United States and headquarters in either the host country or back home.

III. Analysis:

In this section, I present an argument about how the churches fit into the above-explained categories. The argument pertains to how congregants forge identities that may or may not help them find a place within American society. The analysis presents the significance, implications, and the importance of the identities each category develops and the role the church has in this development.

1. ANGLO CHURCHES:

Anglo churches pay a lot of attention to the needs of their immigrant congregation. The immigrant influx into congregations in the past couple of decades has caused church institutions to reorganize both doctrines and theologies. Diverse multi-cultural membership prevents members of the church from forming just one ethnic identity for all congregants. Therefore, if allowed, members of an Anglo church may form small sub-groups based on their ethnic identities. These ethnic identities serve as a familiar ground, allowing immigrants to feel at home. The familiarity that arises from this micro-level ethnic identity allows them to take the first step towards assimilation, to feel at home by recreating customs, values and rituals with other co-nationals. However, in order for immigrants in Anglo churches to achieve assimilation and obtain an identity accepted by American society, they must make a religious identity their primary identity. Anglo church members build a Christian identity at the macro-level that unifies all the

ethnic sub-groups present. Congregants build a common Christian ground with other sub-groups in the church, and together achieve something they cannot get with their ethnic identities alone: assimilation into the American mainstream.

For example, the ethnic identity formed at St. Catherine's church arises from the church's theology that emphasizes unity in diversity. Based on a pastoral letter on cultural diversity, the pastor uses the theology in order to help families and councils to "discuss the gifts and challenges of cultural diversity" (Sullivan 2000b:257). The pastor states: "The national [ethnically distinct sub-group] parish gave immigrants a sense of identity and community…This is so that the immigrants can: first, feel at home; then secondly, be enriched; and thirdly, become willing to enrich the Church" (Sullivan 2000b:255). Due to its multi-cultural members, the Church must make diversity a crucial part of its theology. This theology allows immigrants to build a familial common ground with other immigrants with the same background.

The other case study of Anglo churches, the Southwest Assembly of God, works on asserting sameness onto its members and embracing its multi-cultural congregation. The success of Southwest Assembly of God's all-inclusive policy is attributed to the pastor's "whomsoever will" policy of church attendance (Dorsey 2000). The policy arises from John 3:16 and states: "whosoever believes in him [Jesus] should not perish, but have an everlasting life" (Dorsey 2000:306). The unity in diversity seen in the church is a new phenomenon brought in by the pastor's policy. The Church leaders believe that as cities change and become more diverse, so should the church "if it is to survive" (Dorsey 2000:320).

At the Assembly of God church, pastors do not encourage members to form sub-groups based on ethnicity. The Assembly of God church has a Hispanic department in charge of a Spanish bible study and an ESL course that beyond anything provides "a cultural identity that cannot be derived from the English services" (Dorsey 2000:296). Because English is the national or second language for most ethnic sub-groups attending the church, there is no need for other separate departments that utilize other languages (Dorsey 2000). Although many congregants see cliques within the church based on ethnicity, they do not see this as a result of intolerance but as a result of familiarity (Dorsey 2000). Members of the Assembly of God church form cliques based on ethnicity although the church does not encourage them. Ethnic sub-groupings happen out of familiarity and as a recognizable network group, and do not have any major implications about immigrants' assimilation by themselves.

The religious identities members in both churches build are Christian identities. Built at the macro-level, Christian identities unify the multi-cultural congregation in these churches. At the Southwest Assembly of God, members agree that "the one English language service helps unite the church" (Dorsey 2000:301). Dorsey emphasizes that native language is only needed to maintain ethnic identity and not to maintain religious identity (2000b). Church members focus on a macro-level religious identity and see each other as Christian believers. This occurs with the help of the pastor's theology that stresses the unification of all Christians under Jesus. The religious Christian identification built is acceptable in American society and aids with immigrant assimilation. In a similar manner, St. Catherine church builds a religious identity with assimilation implications in a macro-level. The church's pastor believes the church

should be multicultural "yet one in the Body of Christ" (Sullivan 2000b:255). Sullivan notes that the sub-groups the church allows to form "give immigrants a sense of identity and community that allows for assimilation into the larger society" (Sullivan 2000b:255). This way, ethnic sub-groups can express their cultures within the church and at the same time, on a larger scale, help immigrants build a common ground where they could all stand as children of God. This common ground is their religious identity that, together with their ethnic identity, allow for their assimilation into American society.

Sullivan notes that although there is an emphasis on diversity and the parish encourages and warmly welcomes newcomers, there is an obvious parallel among ethnicities at St. Catherine church. Each ethnic sub-group is self-sufficient and does not rely on each other; the differences in numbers, composition and access to services create variation among the ethnic sub-groups. The pastor has implemented several events such as "multilingual religious services, pot luck suppers, cultural theme nights, and raffles, in an attempt to neutralize differences and assert the sameness of congregational members" (Sullivan 2000b:275). Sullivan blames this parallel on the fact that the ethnically based structure of the church tends to encourage its ethnic sub-groups to develop separate communities. Nevertheless, at a macro-level, these parallels are overcome by the unifying religious identity. People of different backgrounds come to the church to worship God, and although different sub-groups are present, they all see themselves as being home together in Christ.

Congregants in Anglo churches build a Christian identity on the macro-level. Their religious identity is accepted as part of American multi-cultural society and aids with immigrant assimilation. Members of St. Catherine's church must also build an

ethnic identity at a sub-group level in order gain assimilation. Although the creation of these sub-ethnic groups creates parallels among groups, these separate ethnical communities are necessary, since they account as the first step towards their assimilation: a sense of community. This identity, built in a familiar environment, will later assist immigrants with their assimilation into the larger society.

The Southwest Assembly of God relies on its multicultural environment to forge an inclusive policy that makes its congregants relate to each other as Christians. They focus on a religious identity that links all groups together and forges a unity as a Christian family. The church's transformation from a mainly white middle class church into a mainly immigrant church changed the identity members of the church build. With a diverse congregation, the church members cannot claim unity through just one ethnic identity, so they must separate it from their religious identity. The congregation must be unified and see each other as equals in order to achieve this. In addition, their religious identity must play a more significant role than their ethnic identity; congregants must see each other first as Christians above anything else. Southwest Assembly of God followers forge a strong Christian identity that unites all immigrants and non-immigrants together.

Similar to St. Catherine's church, the Southwest Assembly of God's multi-cultural congregation must work together and unify all of its members in order to achieve assimilation. Similar to the earlier case, Southwest Assembly of God church unifies its congregants under a Christian religious identity; although, St. Catherine's achieves this fusion by unifying all its ethnic sub-groups because it deems it necessary. The Assembly of God church clearly separates religious and ethnic identity. In this church, a religious identity, occurring on the macro-level, aids in the assimilation of its members. Only

members who feel themselves part of a Christian family can access the religious identity that will aid with their assimilation. Followers must make the religious identity their first point of reference and experience it above any other identities. In addition, the religious identity helps them achieve assimilation because it has a recognizable and acceptable role in American society.

2. IMMIGRANT TRANSNATIONAL CHURCHES:

Transnational churches vary in the way they build the identities used by their followers in order to achieve assimilation. Forms of assimilation are different among the churches due to their locality and environment. Geographical location and local environment affect transnational churches as they seek what is best for their individual congregation and not the Church as a whole. Each church uses distinctive modes of identity building that may or may not help members assimilate: religious identities, ethnic identities, or a mix of both. In addition, not only the local environment forces transformations in the churches, but also the changes the Churches experiences as they expand, or try to expand affect them.

An environment influencing transnational churches does not only happen among different denominations, but also happens within affiliations. For example, although most Alcance Victoria churches might seem similar due to the large number of working-class members, not all congregations are the same. León mentions that "each [church] assumes an identity that largely depends on its own geography and class" (1998:167). Therefore, even big, transnational churches vary by congregation and mold its needs to its parishioners. For this reason, the East Los Angeles congregation is effective at

absorbing local popular culture as seen in many of its activities and groups. Their youth ministry is called God's Anointed Now Generation (GANG) and creates a Christian image that "mimics a Los Angeles Chicano youth gang aesthetic, encoding it within a Christian vernacular" (León 1998:167). After every service, women of the congregation prepare food and serve it in the church's vestibule (León 1998). This ritual of commensalisms is also part of Chicano culture, as is the addition of trumpets and other mariachi-like instruments to the congressional signing during the services (León 1998).

Members of the Alcance Victoria church of East Los Angeles build an identity in an environment that discriminates against them. The church promises its members an opportunity of cleansing and change in the face of the "city corrupt" full of "racism, structural inequality, and xenophobia" (León 1998:190). The greater Los Angeles area is plagued by these problems, and the Alcance Victoria of East Los Angeles offers help through conversion. The way the church approaches the scriptures allows it to offer help to its converts. León states, "Pentecostal theology is malleable enough so that doctrine can be pragmatically molded to fit the needs of very different constituencies," so it has something to offer everyone (1998:190). In the cases of immigrants who move to Los Angeles "expecting new beginnings," Alcance Victoria offers them a change the city cannot produce for them (León 1998:190). Through Alcance Victoria, those "without much economic success, the disinherited, become instated in the American myth: their lives matter' they are special, chosen, given a divine commission direct from God himself" (León 1998:192).

The church uses the hostile environment that surrounds it for its own benefit. They call the greater Los Angeles area the "city corrupt" and offer protection from it.

Most significantly, the church's Boyle Heights location does not allow it to form a mainly Christian/Pentecostal religious identity at the end of conversion because its overwhelming Chicano population makes their ethnic identity a large part of their daily lives. As explained above, the East Los Angeles church does a good job at absorbing popular Chicano culture. Therefore, in this case, the converts build an identity that combines "Mexican, American and Christian evangelical archetypes and mythologies into a fresh identity" (León 1998:192). Their ethnic heritage is included and blended with the "Protestant symbolism that permeates the American consciousness and ethos" (León 1998:192). The East Los Angeles church of Alcance Victoria helps followers forge a Chicano/American/Christian identity that mixes both the ethnic and the religious identities into one. The emphasis on the Chicano part of the identity, and not on the pan-Latino one, was possible because of the overwhelmingly Mexican and Mexican-American presence in Boyle Heights.

The Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas also forges an identity shaped by its local environment. The large Hispanic presence the church brings into this white neighborhood has generated tensions with the neighbors that have gone as far as "calling the police about their missionaries to stop them from preaching in the streets and evangelizing door to door" (Vasquez 1999:626). Congregants strongly believe in practicing evangelization as part of their "great commission" noted by their Pentecostal doctrine, but the problems with the neighbors, undermined the evangelization efforts in the D.C. area (Vasquez 1999). The Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas has a rigorous outlook and takes a sectarian approach against the outside world. Their theology is strongly dualistic, depending on the idea that the world is inherently sinful and in need of

redemption, that is only found in Jesus (Vasquez 1999; e-mail to author, November 28, 2007). Since they find themselves surrounded by a sinful, Anglo world, the congregation strongly focuses on El Salvador. Their weekly radio program transmitted in both communities, their missionary activity, and their pastoral work in the two congregations started in the eastern part of El Salvador, are some of the actions taken that support the emphasis they place on their home country (Vasquez 1999).

The Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas asserts its national origin and cultural roots by constructing a "transnational community of the elect" (Vasquez 1999:628). This community arises due to the "perceived exclusion from the dominant Anglo world" (Vasquez 1999:628). Unlike the previous example, the Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas finds itself in an overwhelming white neighborhood, not a Hispanic one. The abrasive encounter with its environment helps them re-enforce this inward looking approach and having their community of El Salvador as a point of reference. Salvadorans in the church see the outside Anglo world as "modern, secular, and impersonal" and reconstruct their close-knit community in the United States as a "kind of refuge against the outside evil world" (Vasquez 1999:631).

Pentecostalism and the reactions of the locals around the church's neighborhood play an important role in the identity formation of the Salvadorans at the Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas. This complex endeavor of identity building offers survival strategies for Salvadorans suffering the rejection of their Anglo environment. The reconstruction of the close-knit rural community they left behind is at the base of their identity building. The idealized notion of a close-knit space is that everyone is equal and part of the community and no one is marginalized. The reactive identity Salvadorans

build forces members of the church to create this national, ethnic, and religious focus. Members of the Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas mix their ethnic and religious identities and make it anti-Anglo. The anti-American part of the identity build by members of the church makes a pro-assimilation identity impossible. In addition, the overwhelming Salvadoran composition allows them to specify their ethnic identity and disregard a pan-Latino identity, a possible identity with assimilation potential.

Unlike in the Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas, in the Alcance Victoria church in East Los Angeles members are able to create an identity that is not reactive, and allows its members to obtain an identity accepted in American society. Although the East Los Angeles congregation experiences racism and inequality, it does not find itself in the same neighborhood as the agents of their oppression like the Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas. The congregation is located in the same Boyle Heights neighborhood the members live in. The fact that they are located in the same neighborhood allows them to have a point of reference within their town in the United States and create their mixed identity.

Changes occurring in the church's composition are also key influent agents in identity building in transnational churches as seen in the Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica's move to a Hispanic identity. Cook explains that Argentines at the Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica arrive with a strong Argentine identity, maintained and reproduced thanks to their religious community (2000).[7] On their beginnings, the Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica had a "significantly doctrinal dependence on the home congregation" in Mendoza (Cook 2000:185). The Argentine pastors from Mendoza helped with the organizational structure of the Houston chapter and for a while, the liturgical practices of the

congregation were imports from Argentina (Cook 2000). The doctrinal dependence and liturgical imports helped the maintenance and reproduction of an Argentine identity.

Now, as a transnational institution –with missions in Honduras and Spain - the church has developed into a bigger institution. The church accommodates to the new societies in which its members find themselves (Cook 2000). With the increase in its national compositions, the Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica is gradually forging a Hispanic identity and sees as its center goal to serve the broader Hispanic Community, moving away from its previous Argentine identity (Cook 2000). Their newest Centro de Ministerios Familiares (Family Ministry Center) project aids this idea of a broader, inclusive identity. The project houses a bigger worship space, classroom spaces for a variety of family oriented programs and others such as ESL or GED classes (Cook 2000). The center also incorporates recreational facilities and, overall, spans in a 15.5-acre region whose primary focus is the Hispanic family (Cook 2000). The Centro de Ministerios Familiares project initiated due to the "alarming trends in Hispanic community portrayed by current statistics" of high school dropouts, gang affiliation, low voter turnout and family dissolution, trends experienced by current church member and their families (Cook 2000:180).

Although some of the initial followers have adopted a Hispanic ethnic identity, many Argentines continue to identify themselves with their nation of origin rather than in the broader level (Cook 2000). The resistance to adopt a Latino identity arises from the fact that many Argentines are descendents from Europeans (mainly Italians) and do not consider themselves Hispanic because they do not see it as an ethnic identity (Cook 2000). All they see is the language tie, the common Latin American heritage, and to a

point, the use of the term *hispano*, which "avoids the racial connotations associated with the American usage of 'Hispanic'" (Cook 2000:182).

Transnationalism and the move to a multicultural community changed the ways in which the Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica forms its identity. From a complete Argentine identity, maintained in the United States, the changes in the church's composition brought its members to emphasize a Latino identity. At the Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica, the emphasis is on an ethnic identity that aids assimilation by adopting an American-ethnic identity that is big enough to encompass all members new and old. Although we do not fully see the fruits of this new push in the church, we can infer that this new broader identity and its inclusivity can help its members achieve assimilation. A strictly national identity (being Argentine) would be problematic to use among the members, because it does include all congregants and it is not recognized as an American identity. This lack of acceptance in American society will make the retaining of an Argentine identity hurtful for the members, since it would hinder their possibilities of assimilation.

Members of the Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica choose a pan-Latino identity and benefit from the implication this identity has in the United States, a space in American culture that allows them to assimilate. This identity arrives from its increasingly multi-national following as more people from Latin American join the church in Houston. In contrast, the East Los Angeles and the Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas create their own, specific identities. The East Los Angeles creates a Mexican/American/Christian identity with a space in the American mosaic, and the Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas creates a completely religious identity that rejects the Anglo world and has their home country of El Salvador as an ethnic focus.

3. IMMIGRANT DOMESTIC CHURCHES:

Immigrant domestic churches present us with two vehicles useful for assimilation. These examples bring us ethnic and religious identities accepted in American society. The ethnic identity is American-ethnic identity: pan-Latino. By adopting this identity, church members are allowed to remain in the United States and retain some of their cultural heritage they share with other Hispanics. This religious identity is a Christian identity

The Peruvians at the Gran Comisión church reject their national ethnic identity because they see it as deeply ingrained in Catholicism and as "pagan and idolatrous…[and] traditionalism" (Vasquez 1999:623). Unlike Catholicism, Pentecostalism permits them to "become modern by breaking from [their] Peruvian past" (Vasquez 1999:623). The Pentecostalism at this church makes members form a dichotomy between being catholic/traditional and evangelical/modern. This modernity brought on by Pentecostalism is seen in the collective identity of the "multi-national community of the saved," a community that encompasses all Pentecostals in the United States (Vasquez 1999:624). This "modern" community makes its entire congregation equal under the church, uniting them through their faith above anything else.

The Gran Comisión church facilitates its members' assimilation into the American society by providing them with a new pan-Latino identity that re-affirms their Hispanic roots rather than their Catholic roots (Vasquez 1999). This identity emerges as a defensive scheme against the discrimination that exists, and as a testimonial said, Latinos need to come together not to "confront the Anglos or Blacks, but to achieve some

representation to erase the negative stereotypes that follow Hispanics" (Vasquez 1999:624). The term "Hispanic," imposed by the U.S bureaucracies, has made its way to civil society accumulating all sorts of derogatory overtones (Vasquez 1999). This reconceptualizing of identities emerges as a collective consciousness that has the potential of growing as a political voice, and in fact, the Gran Comisión "has a long history of involvement in civic matters in Paterson" (Vasquez 1999:632).

The Iglesia de Dios members form an identity in a somewhat similar manner. The church's theology "defies labels such as Evangelical or Pentecostal…they insist that there is only one rule book, the Bible…accept the virgin right and the divine election of the apostles...believe its founder is an apostolic successor. The second coming of Jesus is proclaimed and Baptism by water is practiced" (Sullivan 2000a:142). Sullivan suggests that what truly makes them different from other Christian groups is their strong civil code. Church members are encouraged to be good citizens, respect cultural and patriotic symbols, and define the government as protecting the good (Sullivan 2000a). Members of the church emphasize living like early Christians, before the "Romanization" of the church (that insured the primacy of the pope), and see themselves as "restorers of the early church" and not as "Protestants" or part of the "sect" (Sullivan 2000a:143).

The majority of Mexicans are Catholic, and Mexico is known as a Catholic nation (Sullivan 2000a). The imbedded Catholic religion brings problems to the Iglesia de Dios Mexican members' theology practice. Members are not Catholic and their church's theology emphasizes a strong civic code. In order to emphasize one more than the other, members focus on the "civil structure rather than the religious culture of nations" and this

way they can see themselves as Mexican without experiencing contradictions (Sullivan 2000a:146).

While most of the congregation of this church is of Mexican descent, the other Central Americans do not feel the need to define themselves by their national identity (Sullivan 2000a). Some congregants express the unimportance of national identity; Sullivan quotes a Salvadoran man saying that it doesn't matter whether one is Mexican or not Mexican because they are all here to stay, and "we will become American citizens" (Sullivan 2000a:146). Church members use religious terms to define themselves above everything else. In this religious identification, differences in national origin are not taken into consideration. Even though this church does not exhibit the amount of diversity as previous churches and its primary composition is one nationality, it does not focus on just one nationality but on a religious identity that is inclusive off other non-Mexicans. The ethnic identity presented by the Mexican members serves to satisfy the civil code requirement the pastor emphasizes.

In the case of the Gran Comisión Pentecostal church, we find two identities the members can obtain. The pan-Latino identity is possible due to the interactions among the various Central and South American groups in the church and unites them. The multicultural environment of Paterson allows the church to forge a pan-Latino identity in response to the "increasing poverty, community disintegration, welfare reform, opposition to affirmative action, and anti-immigration policies" (Vasquez 630). Besides their ethnic identity, members of the Gran Comisión church also belong to the "community of the saved," a community that unites all Pentecostals in the United States. Therefore, these people have both the pan-Latino ethnic identity and their

Pentecostal/Christian identity. In the case of the Gran Comisión, they have a religious identity and an ethnic identity and both of them can help them achieve a place in American society.

CHAPTER 5: Conclusion

Christian Hispanic Churches in the United States are more diverse than most academics note. Although some of the literature states that the church helps immigrants assimilate, it is only safe to say that religiosity aids immigrants build identities that may have assimilation potential into the American mainstream. Readers might be lead to believe that Christian churches as whole help immigrant assimilate due to the lack of individualization Christian institutions receive. In this comparative study, I have presented information on the role churches have in this identity building of immigrant members. As proven by this research, the identity building and the assimilation potential each member has, is relevant to the particular framework of their individual church, and it would be wrong to make any large conclusion about the role the Church plays before knowing what this particular framework is.

Different issues such as the way in which church members build identities, the role of the church in the identity building, the local environment of the church, and the church's congregational composition, affect each church in particular ways regardless of denomination and geographical location. The analysis of these religious institutions has surfaced that although trends are visible and churches can build similar identities, the way in which churches achieve these identities is unique due to their framework. Larger issues, like the church's framework have to be established before moving on to talks

about specific ways in which immigrants build identities with assimilation potential. The church's framework explains who makes up the church and where it is located, how this locality and other forces influence immigrants at this church, etcetera. After this framework is established, we can understand the particular ways in which the members of a given church build their identity. Therefore, as seen in the case studies, each church is established in a particular framework that either allows or does not allow members of the church build a pro-assimilation identity. After this, we can try to understand how members of a given church develop their identity. Therefore, whether congregants forge a religious identity, an ethnic identity, or a mix of both, each church finds an identity that is relevant and accepted to its congregation because of their established framework.

Anglo churches embrace their multi-cultural environments and followers. These churches help their members build a Christian identity at the macro-level that offers them an accepted identity in American society. Although Saint Catherine allows each ethnic group to build an ethnic identity in order to help them find something familiar in their new setting, both churches achieve the same result of uniting their congregation under a religious identity. The religious identity allows immigrants at Anglo churches to achieve assimilation and become a part of the American mainstream.

Transnational churches vary in the way they achieve their identities and on how much they depend on an ethnic focus. The Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica and Alcance Victoria's East Los Angeles congregation focus on their local community for an ethnic identity, although they have headquarters outside the United States. The Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas does not focus on their local environment like the others because of the blatant rejection they experience. The church forms a reactive ethnicity and uses their

hometown in El Salvador as their ethnic focus. In the transnational churches case, only two of the three case studies build an identity with assimilation potential: the Iglesia Cristiana Evangélica and the Alcance Victoria of East Los Angeles. The Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas builds an identity that is a mix of both religion and ethnicity just like the Alcance Victoria congregation. The difference lies on the ethnic emphasis members at the Iglesia de Apóstoles y Profetas forge that does not allow them to forge a pro-assimilation identity.

Immigrant domestic churches forge religious identities. They focus on their Christianity as a unifying factor. The Gran Comisión church belongs to the multi-national community of the saved that unifies all Pentecostal across the United States regardless of ethnic identification. In contrast, the Iglesia de Dios connects its members with older Christian practices. In addition of this religious identity, The Gran Comisión church uses the pan-Latino identity to bring together its diverse Latino congregation. This ethnic identity serves as a tool for immigrants to fight discrimination and allows them to have another identity with acceptance in American society. Both religious and ethnic identities presented by the Gran Comisión and the Iglesie de Dios help them become a part of the American mainstream.

Ethnic identities, like the pan-Latino identification, give members of the churches a space in American society. This identity is the only one that can help immigrants achieve assimilation, if they were purely to focus on an ethnic identity. This identity is only possible in pluralistic environments and churches with several national compositions.

Religious identities, in this case Christian identities, can also give immigrants a identities accepted in American society. Identities build on this factor unifies churchgoers across denominations if they identify on the broader Christian level. Here, we find members seeing themselves as "children of God" and "one in the body of Christ."

On top of the identity issues, other factors help immigrants that are members of immigrant domestic and transnational churches be a part of American society. After arriving to the United States and not finding a church that served their needs, these immigrants practiced the American tradition of starting their own church. As Hirschman noted, "[i]f immigrants cannot find a church or temple with their religious traditions, and preferably in their mother tongue, the American custom is to start one of their own" (1212). Thus, many immigrants start their "Americanization" process by founding a church or temple.

As noted in the methodology section, the literature on religion and immigration is still developing. The specific frameworks churches are placed in order to have an efficient comparative study also arise more questions that can't be answered in this research. For example, as it pertains to Catholic churches, there is a need of more congregational case studies that present the influence of lived religion on Catholic immigrants. Although there is literature available about the lived religion of many immigrants, these studies need to go in further detail of the influence lived religion has in building an immigrant's identity. Unlike other Christians, many self-identified Catholics do not attend mass as often as other Christians and do not frequent the church environment. Yet, the role their Catholic religion plays in their lives is important, but

does the specific framework the catholic church is build upon have anything to do with the way these Catholics build their identities since they are not a big part of the church's environment?

Other works that involve the opinions and experiences of Anglo Christians that attend churches with immigrants are also lacking in the literature. Most studies of Anglo churches only go as far as studying multi-cultural churches but not churches in where Anglos remain a majority in the church that they share with an immigrant minority. From this scenario, we can ask if the large Anglo representation might bring conflicting, beneficial, or neglectful environments to the identity formation of these immigrants. Even more so, what would be the role of members of American culture in the identity building of fellow non-assimilated congregants? Or what would a church's framework look like in a church with a big non-immigrant influence?

NOTES:

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1. Cecilia Menjívar looked at Salvadoran immigrants in Catholic and Evangelical parishes in San Francisco, California; Washington, D.C.; and Phoenix, Arizona.
2. In the quote, Badillo talks mainly about Salvadoran, and Guatemalans but, also, other Latin Americans.
3. I should note that I contacted Dr. Manuel Vasquez through e-mail for clarifications on his article used for this study.
4. The reason why Wellmeier's work with the FEMAQ is part of the literature review and not a case study is its lack of official organization and recognition within their denomination in the United States. This is a fraternity run by Central American indigenous people.
5. The Religion, Ethnicity and New Immigrants Research (RENIR) is a study carried out in Houston, Texas. Scholars involved in the study looked at different religions and immigrants, holding location constant.
6. The terminology: Anglo churches, immigrant transnational, and immigrant domestic, was defined by the author for the purpose of this research.
7. No examples were provided in the literature about the differences that arose between the Argentine and American Brethren religious practices.

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