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The Saints of Santa Ana: Contesting the Boundaries of Mexican Ethnoreligious Authenticity

DISSERTATION

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements  
for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

in Sociology

by

Jonathan Eli Calvillo

Dissertation Committee:  
Professor Stanley Bailey, Chair  
Professor Jennifer Lee  
Assistant Professor Jacob Avery  
Assistant Professor Glenda Flores

2016



## DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my future: Nani, Kalea, Mahalia, and any household additions yet to come. You represent the movement of continents, and the resistance of empire, all under one roof. You are a Divine gift that empowers me to dream of what the future might look like. Nani, love, you are the life partner that I always hoped to find. May we explore the world together and may we create new worlds in the process.

This dissertation is also dedicated to my roots, Alvaro and Lydia Calvillo, my parents, and David Calvillo, my brother. You have sustained me through my lows and have cheered me on through my highs. You have been my source of spiritual nourishment. David, you have become the companion on the journey I prayed for as a young boy. It has been for some years now that the “hand-me-downs” have faded and I have been the benefactor of “hand-me-ups.” Pop, tú has sido el mejor padre que yo pudiera haber pedido. Tu ejemplo de ayudar a otros en el nombre del Señor siempre vivirá en mí. Mom, he seguido en tus pasos de educación Cristiana. Este doctorado es el resultado de los esfuerzos que iniciaron cuando una joven de trece años de edad comenzó a estudiar en el instituto bíblico de Betania. Los quiero mucho. Dios me los bendiga.

Finally, as a study about church communities, I dedicate this dissertation to the past members of El Puente Community Church in all its iterations. For a prolonged season in my life, this community allowed me to experience in a tangible way grace, understanding, generosity, and redemption.

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## **CURRICULUM VITAE**

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Committee: Stanley Bailey, Jennifer Lee, Jacob Avery, Glenda Flores

My dissertation examines the influence of religious affiliation on the ethnic identity construction of Catholic and Protestant Mexican immigrants in Santa Ana, CA. My findings suggest that Mexican ethnic identities diverge along religious lines. Data from four years of field work and fifty in-depth interviews of Mexican immigrants uncover several spheres of social boundary work. Catholicism bolsters Mexican ethnicity via its homeland orientation while Protestantism diversifies cultural orientations. Contested boundaries are revealed in the intra-ethnic policing of Mexican authenticity, views of folk religion, social network patterns, and engagement of ethnic enclaves. Beyond the religious sphere, my study carries implications for understanding Latino experiences of assimilation, civic engagement, and racialization.

Qualifying Exams: Race and Ethnicity, Immigration

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M.A. Sociology. University of California, Irvine (2012)

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Race and Ethnicity, Immigration, Sociology of Religion, Latino Sociology, Urban Sociology

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Latino Protestant Congregations Project Research Fellowship (2014-2016)

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UC Irvine Summer Research Fellowship (2014)

Institute for the Study of American Evangelicalism Luce Research Grant (2014)

UC Irvine Associate Dean’s Fellowship (2013)

UC Irvine Graduate Student Researcher (2012)

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Talbot School of Theology Students of Underrepresented Groups Scholarship (2002-2004)

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Course: Introduction to Sociology (taught four sections total)

Adjunct Professor, Vanguard University, Costa Mesa, CA; Sociology Department (2012)

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Teaching Assistant, UC Irvine (2009-2014):

Courses: Race and Ethnicity, Intro to Sociology, Mexican Politics, U.S. Mexico Border, Intro to Chicano Studies, Intro to Gangs, Sociology of Religion, Media Writing

Hispanic Programs Coordinator, Vanguard University (2005-2008):

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Teaching Assistant, Biola University (2000-2003):

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“The Ethnic Self-identification of Mexican Immigrants Along Religious Lines.” Paper selected for presentation at American Sociological Association National Conference, Chicago, IL (August 2015)

“The Diversity of Cultural Influences in Latino Evangelical Worship Practices.” Paper selected for presentation at Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Annual Meeting, Newport Beach, CA (October 2015)

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Latino Protestant Congregations Project Research Fellow (2014-2017):

Southern California researcher/representative of national qualitative study on Latino Protestant Churches; involves participant observation and in-depth interviews.

Latino ethnic boundaries lived out within ethnic and religious communities (2012-2015): Research on how religious affiliation influences the social organization of ethnic neighborhoods. Questions of ethnic identity and social networks are central to this study; involves field observation, participant observation, and in-depth interviews.

Latino hip hop artists and ethno-racial identity construction (2012): Interviewed Latino hip hop artists on their experiences of racialization. Conducted participant observation work within urban arts scene to examine racial boundary crossing.

Latino Pentecostal church ethnography (2011-2012): Conducted participant observation and in-depth interviews at a Latino Pentecostal mega-church to understand the cultural toolkit that parishioners gain from their religious experience.

Latino Linguistic Acculturation and Religious Affiliation (2010-2014): Analyzed quantitative data from a Pew Hispanic Center study on Latino religions; examined how religious affiliation correlates with markers of assimilation and acculturation.

Jesse Miranda Center for Hispanic Leadership organizational assessment (2006): Conducted focus groups of community leaders, faculty members, and institutional administrators to assess the effectiveness of the organization in light of community needs.

Community non-profit organization ethnography (2001-2003): Examined the relationship between a community based organization in Santa Ana, CA and its surrounding inner-city neighborhood. Assessed needs of the community and services offered by organization. Conducted informal interviews and field observation.

Community Demographic Consultation, Arroyo Grande, CA (2000): Conducted residential surveys in an under-resourced community and assessed data for a start-up non-profit organization.

### **SELECTED NON-ACADEMIC PRESENTATIONS**

Presenter, Cesar Chavez Celebration and Youth Conference, Santa Ana, CA (2013)

Presenter, Biola University Multi-Ethnic Programs (2011)

Presenter, Vanguard University Latino Programs (2011)

Panelist, UCI Latina/o Student Psychological Association graduate student panel (2010)

Presenter, Biola University Student Congress on Racial Reconciliation, "Latinos in Higher Education" (2008)

Presenter, Urban Youth Workers Institute, Azusa Pacific University, seminar on religious movements in urban contexts (2007)

Keynote Speaker, Point Loma Nazarene University, "El Encuentro Latino Student Conference" (2006)

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Pastor and Founder, El Puente Community Church, Santa Ana, CA (2004-2014)  
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Mentor, worked with college interns within Kidworks Urban Immersion Program (2011)  
Community Organizer, Santa Ana Building Healthy Communities Summer Program (2010)  
Mentor Coordinator, mentoring program for at-risk youth in Santa Ana, CA (2008-2009)  
Co-founder, Saint City Session urban arts program for at-risk youth, Santa Ana, CA (2007)  
Coordinator, Youthworks urban leadership program, Santa Ana, CA (2004-2005)

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## **ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION**

### **The Saints of Santa Ana: Contesting the Boundaries of Mexican Ethnoreligious Authenticity**

By

Jonathan Eli Calvillo

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Irvine, 2016

Associate Professor Stanley R. Bailey, Chair

This dissertation examines the influence of religious affiliation on the ethnic identity construction of Mexican immigrants in the U.S. The intersection of Latino ethnicity and religion presents a timely topic given that significant segments of the Latino population have shifted from Catholic to Evangelical adherence. These shifts in religious affiliation are being experienced in salient fashion in Santa Ana, CA, the research site for this project. Santa Ana is a dense urban center that counts a majority population that is of Mexican origin. The city continues to experience a diversification of its religious landscape. I argue that the social boundaries tied to these differing religiosities result in diverging and reconfigured ethnic identity projects. Catholics and Evangelicals both make claims to authentic ethnic identities, but they live out their ethnicity in notably different ways.

Three key differences emerge in how Catholics and Evangelicals conceptualize their ethnic identities. The manner in which both groups engage the ethnic enclave differs markedly; Catholics frame the ethnic enclave as a source of resources and a site to be sacralized while Evangelicals cast the ethnic enclave as a place to be reformed. Secondly, both groups employ differing discursive strategies in terms of how they identify

themselves ethnically. Catholics are more confident in asserting themselves as Mexican, while Evangelicals argue for their legitimacy as members of the ethnic community via additional designations such as legal status, regional status, and panethnicity. Finally, Catholics and Evangelicals are engaged in a type of social policing wherein both groups contest the boundaries of ethnic membership. Catholics question the authenticity of Evangelicals as ethnics, while Evangelicals assert for themselves a moral identity as a means by which to elevate their place in the ethnic community. Beyond the religious sphere, my research carries broad implications for understanding Latino experiences of assimilation, civic engagement, and racialization. Ultimately, this work on first generation Mexican immigrants lays the groundwork for understanding the experience of subsequent generations, as well as that of other Latino groups in the U.S.

## INTRODUCTION

### Encountering Ethnicity and Religion

The parishioners that I found myself standing alongside of on a brisk winter evening were participating in a classic display of ethnoreligiosity, a religious tradition where the boundaries of faith are tightly linked to the boundaries of ethnic identity (Dillon 2010; Mora 2006). The sanctuary of the church that I was visiting was filled beyond capacity. The rows of pews spilled over with parishioners as entire families lined the walls of Our Lady of Guadalupe Church in Santa Ana, CA. Many of the faithful who could not fit into the building stood beyond the doors, in uncomfortable proximity to strangers, mashed between two outwardly angled walls leading into the church's main entry way.

What would normally appear to be conditions for unruly behavior, instead harnessed a palpable sense of collective effervescence. The crowd was transfixed. A highly anticipated moment had finally arrived. A brief pause of silence was broken by the joyous sound of a familiar song. The song lyrics wafted out of every orifice of the building echoing over speakers to the surrounding outdoor gathering spaces where additional hundreds, if not a couple thousand, gathered to commemorate the church's namesake, La Virgen de Guadalupe. The volume crescendoed as attendees annunciated the following lyrics:

Desde el cielo una hermosa mañana<sup>1</sup> (2)  
La Guadalupana (2)  
La Guadalupana bajó al Tepeyac.  
La Guadalupana (2)  
La Guadalupana bajó al Tepeyac.

*From heaven on a beautiful morning*  
*The Guadalupan*  
*The Guadalupan came down to Tepeyac*  
*The Guadalupan*  
*The Guadalupan came down to Tepeyac*

Desde el cielo una hermosa mañana...  
Suplicante juntaba las manos (2x)

*From heaven on a beautiful morning*  
*Pleading She joined her hands*

---

<sup>1</sup> There are slight variations of these song lyrics in circulation. There are also a number of other verses that are traditionally included in the singing of this song. Some of the additional verses were also sung on the

Eran mexicanos (2x)	<i>They were Mexican</i>
Eran mexicanos su porte y su faz.	<i>They were Mexican, her stance and face</i>
Eran mexicanos (2x)	<i>They were Mexican</i>
Eran mexicanos su porte y su faz.	<i>They were Mexican, her stance and face</i>
Desde el cielo una hermosa mañana...	<i>From heaven on a beautiful morning</i>
Desde entonces para el mexicano (2x)	<i>From then on for all Mexicans</i>
Ser Guadalupano (2x)	<i>Being Guadalupan</i>
Ser Guadalupano es algo esencial.	<i>Being Guadalupan is fundamental</i>
Ser Guadalupano (2x)	<i>Being Guadalupan</i>
Ser Guadalupano es algo esencial.	<i>Being Guadalupan is fundamental</i>

This was the day of *La Virgen de Guadalupe*, December 12; a day that commemorates the nearly five centuries old narrative of La Virgen de Guadalupe appearing to Juan Diego, a peasant of indigenous Mexican origins living in colonial Mexico c. 1521. Following generations of Marian veneration, recognition of this holiday by the Mexican state became official in 1895, signaled by a national coronation ceremony of La Virgen de Guadalupe's image (Matovina 2009; Traslosheros 2002). Among U.S. Catholics, it is now the most popular of Marian feast days (Deck 2014).<sup>2</sup>

The words sung by those *Guadalupanos*, a term used to describe devotees of La Virgen, reflected the powerful potential of mutual reinforcement between devotion to La Virgen, and ethnic identity: "For all Mexicans, being Guadalupan is fundamental." This proposition is predicated on the understanding that La Virgen de Guadalupe represents the Mexican people. She is believed to represent the Mexican people in a spiritual mediative role, pleading for her devotees before God the father, the ultimate judge, while at a more

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<sup>2</sup> There are a number of feast days that commemorate special events in the life of Mary the mother of Jesus. In addition, some Marian feast days commemorate what devotees consider supernatural apparitions of Mary such as the Dia de la Virgen de Guadalupe.

basic level, she is believed to embody Mexican features (Matovina 2009): “They were Mexican, her stance and her face.”

Children ran around the open courtyard area outside of the church, wearing costumes representative of Juan Diego’s culture, and social class. Little boys wore white pants and shirts, sown of *manta*, a rugged cotton fabric worn loosely in rustic fashion. Young girls wore the female historical counterpart, namely dresses with stitched flower patterns and hair braided into tight spirals resting on their heads. The costumes were meant to convey an air of Mexican indigeneity. The children played in the shadow of a large *Guadalupeana* shrine, a wooden pyramid-like structure with a statue of the Virgen de Guadalupe resting 15 feet overhead. A glowing neon sign on the shrine in front of Guadalupe’s image read, “*Reina de Mexico*” [Queen of Mexico].

### **Ethnoreligiosity Reinvented**

About a mile away from this Catholic church I witnessed another expression of worship which stood out for the manner in which it ostensibly blended assertions of ethnic identity with religious belief and practice. This took place on another day of much significance to nationalistically inclined people of Mexican origin. September 16, Mexican Independence Day, was being observed at an Evangelical church called El Crecimiento Espiritual (meaning “the spiritual growth”). One of the church leaders took to the stage during the worship service to give announcements. The church leader mentioned that this particular day was designated to celebrate Mexico’s independence from Spain. In order to commemorate the events that took place, a team of dancers and musicians provided a special performance for the one hundred or so members in attendance.



Dressed in long flowing dresses adorned with green, white, and red frills, a team of girls twirled and danced to several songs that were being played by the live band. The eight girls, ranging from four to eighteen years of age, clapped in unison onto tambourines as they danced. Two of them waved long undulating flags. One of the flags whipped me in the face as I sat in the front row, perhaps making the memory all the more vivid. This was an intimate setting, but one with a performative element to it nonetheless.

The dances that were performed by these young people were a mixture of various cultural elements. The wardrobe, as described, in color and style, was meant to convey a sense of Mexican folkloric attire. Most of those in attendance were Mexican immigrants, and they would have made the cultural connection quite readily. The style of music being played had more of a contemporary rock flavor to it. This was rock on the softer side. The songs being sung were Evangelical Christian praise tunes. The style of dance that was being performed was meant to portray Hebraic dance. This was intended to pay tribute to traditions from the Jewish scriptures, specifically that which Christians refer to as the Old Testament. In this particular congregation, symbols and imagery tied to the Old Testament were commonly celebrated. Pictures of the Hebrew Tabernacle, the blowing of Jewish shofar horns in trumpet fashion, and the playing of Hebraic sounding music among other things, were meant to draw a connection between these Evangelical believers of today, and the Hebrew people of ancient times.

The leader of the dance team announced to the audience that the team of young ladies, accompanied by several young men dressed in military fatigues, would be going out onto the street to perform their dances in public. During this time of the year, the

downtown area of Santa Ana was abuzz with a few thousand revelers enjoying a carnival like environment celebrating Mexican independence. This dance team would be going out into public space to perform some of their dances before the crowds.

I had the opportunity to witness the performance of these young children and teens. They gathered in a public square, set up some music to play using a cellular phone and portable speakers, and began to dance in similar fashion to how they had performed in the church. A few dozen people circled around to watch them dance. Some took pictures of them. Others paused momentarily and then continued on their way. The reception was generally positive. The young people were greeted with smiles and applause. The Mexican attire and Jewish dance seemed like a novelty to people. In speaking to the leader of the dance team, she was clear about the motive: This was an opportunity to evangelize. As some people came by to inquire about the dance team, they were invited to the church. The team and the church took great pride in the evangelistic efforts being made through these young women. Many of the church members, themselves converts from Catholicism, were committed to the work of “sharing the gospel” to those that were not of the same faith, most typically among their co-ethnics.

### **Ethnic Religious Expression**

Religious displays such as those at the two events described above are quite common in Santa Ana, CA. In the span of time within which I have undertaken this present study, along with my previous years of exposure to the religious communities in Santa Ana, I have witnessed many religious displays of this sort. Often, the commemoration of a

common origin via the recollection of national mythologies<sup>3</sup> infuses these religious expressions with an ethnic character oriented toward Mexico. Central to ethnicity, after all, is a sense of a common origin (Weber 1922; Schermerhorn 1978).

The two churches in the accounts above shared a number of commonalities in helping their predominantly ethnic Mexican constituencies to sustain some type of ethnic identity. In this case, both churches were performing ethnicity via their special celebrations. The practice of Spanish language, the use of certain wardrobes, the centrality of ethnic music, all pointed to a connection to the Mexican homeland. Members from both of these churches, one Catholic and one Evangelical, were commemorating a common past. Yet, a deeper examination into the manner in which ritual and belief are framed within these two traditions reveals diverging strategies of identity formation. My extended exposure to the performative elements of these two traditions began to reveal a rift in how ethnicity is conceptualized within these two traditions.

While both traditions stressed a sense of a common origin, the “origin” itself was understood differently across Catholic and Evangelical lines. The emphasis on indigeneity present within Catholic churches, was nearly non-existent in the Evangelical churches I visited. The emphasis on regional and localized traditions common in Catholic practice, was more sparse among Evangelicals. The use of icons and the veneration of saints symbolically tied to particular towns and locations in Mexico was absent from Evangelical worship, and there was very little that approximated this aspect of Catholic faith.

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<sup>3</sup> Here I use the term “myth,” not necessarily to denote a fictional account, but to indicate a narrative that is meant to explain a nation’s early history, an origin story of sorts.

Instead, I noticed that Evangelicals refashioned their sense of the past, and connected themselves not with the Saints of Catholic veneration, but with the “Saints” of ancient Israel. Much of the past that was highlighted by Evangelicals hearkened back to the imagery and personages of the Hebrew scriptures, the Old Testament. As demonstrated by the dance team at El Crecimiento Espiritual, the musical stylings and the dances performed were reminiscent of Jewish dance. Other Evangelical churches employed similar tropes. Ancient Israel served as a backdrop amongst these Evangelical parishioners. They identified with the sense of being God’s chosen people. They knew that their roots were in a particular nation state, but they often would display in more prominent fashion their belief that their origin was a spiritual one rooted in biblical history.

Both the Catholic and Evangelical churches I became familiar with were vocal about strongly valuing ethnic tradition. Was it possible that their religious differences were leading to different pathways of ethnic identity formation? Could it be that these religious differences had effects beyond the religious sphere? Certainly, many of the religious participants that I met in the city were highly invested in the rhythms of their faiths. These questions simmered in my mind for some time. Further research was needed.

### **Personal History and Research Trajectory**

My excursion into the religious landscape of Santa Ana began the Summer after my freshman year in college, the Summer of 1997. I volunteered to be an intern at a non-profit organization in Santa Ana that served inner-city communities by working with at-risk students and their families. The organization I worked with had established after-school programs in several communities and ran youth leadership development programs for

teens in target neighborhoods. For two Summers I lived in an inner-city community that was known as a gang territory and as a center for drug dealing. Truth be told, during those Summers I frequently witnessed drug deals taking place and I witnessed numerous acts of violence. More importantly, however, I witnessed countless acts of kindness and social support. Neighbors looked out for each other, they shared food, they celebrated together, and, quite simply, they knew each other well.

The non-profit organization that I worked for was a non-denominational faith-based organization, so it was not a stretch for me to key in on the religious dynamics that existed within the community. The organization was originally founded by Evangelical Protestants, but it served a community that was predominantly Catholic. I continued to volunteer through the years and saw the organization gradually expand its partnerships to work with other organizations of both religious and nonreligious backgrounds. One local Catholic parish provided a particularly valuable partnership for the organization. Most of the community members being served by this organization were members of that particular parish. The list of partners grew to include organizations invested in community organizing work, as well as city-based departments such as law enforcement agencies and political committees.

Even as the organization began to diversify its religious and community-based ties, I saw a parallel process taking place in the surrounding neighborhoods. The community was becoming more religiously diverse. More Evangelical churches were emerging here and there, the Catholic church was providing an increasingly diverse array of programs and volunteer groups for its parishioners, gang outreach programs from certain Pentecostal

churches had a visible presence in some of the toughest neighborhoods in the city, and sects such as the Jehovah's Witnesses were ubiquitous throughout the city. Furthermore, young activists were taking a visible role in the city. It was difficult to miss the spiritual undertones that many of these activists embodied, as they practiced religious rites that connected them to the religious traditions of meso-America.

Being in the community opened my eyes more acutely to the dynamic ways that religion influenced the lives of my mostly immigrant Mexican neighbors and their families. I saw the way that religious communities provided status for those that were at the bottom of the social ladder. I observed how religious customs enabled people to maintain ties to that which they left behind in their homeland. I experienced how religion was part of the celebratory side of life's milestones. I encountered the transformative side of religion among those who credited their faith with helping them to break away from harmful habits. I experienced numerous types of churches in the community, often because I had been invited to visit by someone in the community.

I eventually began to set my eyes on opportunities to research the religious dynamics of Santa Ana. A critical mass of people were drawing key resources from their religious traditions. Important cultural tools (Swidler 2001) were being made available within the particular religious communities that people participated in. How then did identification with a particular tradition influence the life opportunities of the faithful? In what ways might participation in one type of religious community versus another influence the manner in which immigrants established themselves in the U.S.? My approach in this project, is thus an outgrowth of over a decade of observing and inquiring about the

religious dynamics in the city of Santa Ana. I am both an insider to the community, as someone who has invested much personal energy into the religious communities of Santa Ana, and an outsider, as someone who from the beginning arrived in the city with many questions.

## CHAPTER ONE

### Religion at the Boundaries of Ethnicity

Mexicans have traditionally identified with the Catholic Church, arguably since the early colonial days of Nueva España, and more so by the time that Mexico gained its own nationhood (Bowen 1996; Deck 2015; Fortuny Loret de Mola 1994; Lopez 2009).<sup>4</sup> The centrality of La Virgen de Guadalupe in Mexican Catholicism visually encapsulates the encounter between pre-Colombian meso-American faith and Old World Catholicism (Elizondo 1983; Leon 1999; Matovina 2009). For Catholic Mexicans, including those in diaspora, the devotional practices of folk Catholicism are intertwined with Mexican ethnic identity. Observing the thousands of people crowding Catholic churches to participate in the ethno-religious festivities of the Virgen de Guadalupe, one might think that the fusion of Catholicism and Mexican identity continues to be a nearly universal trend.

What do we then make of the growing number of non-Catholic Latinos and Mexicans (Pew Research Center 2014; Telles and Ortiz 2008)? For students of U.S. religions, it would be difficult to miss the barrage of recent publications, both popular (Dias 2013; Hagerty 2011; Salguero 2013) and academic (Jones, Robert P., Daniel Cox, Juhem Navarro-Rivera 2013; Kosmin and Keysar 2009; Lugo and Pond 2007) drawing attention to the growth of Protestant, Evangelical, and Pentecostal<sup>5</sup> adherence among Latinos at the national level. In

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<sup>4</sup> To assert Mexico's strong historical ties to the Catholic church, one need not negate that the relationship between church and state has at times been tumultuous (Schmitt 1960). Mexico's constitution included anti-clerical provisions that were enforced at varying levels in the nation's history and were once the cause of a revolt known as the Cristeros' Revolt. The revolt's name alludes to those that supported the Catholic church. Cristero literally means, "Of Christ" or "For Christ."

<sup>5</sup> The distinction between these three terms will be addressed in Chapter 2 of this book.



Santa Ana, the cityscape is dotted with Latino Evangelical churches with everything from storefront Latino churches with a few dozen members to several large Latino dominant congregations that boast over a thousand members. Consequently, the expansion of Latino Evangelicalism has come at the cost of Catholic membership (Hunt 1998; Pew 2014); Andrew Greeley preemptively noted the beginning of this trend two decades earlier as “an ecclesiastical failure [for Catholicism] of unprecedented proportions” (1991).

The strong emphasis on conversion, a turning away from past allegiances (Bialecki et al. 2008; Form 2000; Luhrmann 2012; Meyer 1998), and the higher levels of commitment exhibited by Latino Evangelicals, in comparison to their Catholic co-ethnic counterparts, are noted experiential markers that help to distance Latino Protestants from Catholic traditions and likewise bolster religious boundaries (Newport 2013; Pew 2014). What happens to ethnic identity, when it is decoupled from a traditionally salient marker such as religion? How are understandings of community and ethnic membership challenged when intra-ethnic schisms emerge? How does religious switching, both at the individual and at the aggregate level, alter the configuration of co-ethnic networks that have a long history of being tied to a single religious tradition? Might these changes not alter the very meaning of what it means to be Mexican in the U.S.?

In previous work on Latino ethnicity and religion, I argue that the present trend of dramatically broad religious affiliation divergence among Latinos does indeed have effects on how Latino identity is framed and fragmented. While that work focuses on the Latino panethnic population in the U.S., and not solely on Mexican immigrants (Calvillo and Bailey 2015), its findings and conclusions are highly relevant to this study. For example, that

research shows how differences in religious affiliation among Latinos lead to diverging linguistic practices. Moreover, it finds that Catholics are more likely to retain the use of Spanish language at home while Protestants are more likely than Catholics to speak English at home. This is an important finding given the prominence of Spanish language usage as an ethnic boundary marker among Latinos (Stevens-Arroyo 1994; Warner et al 2012).

In noting the linguistic divergence between Catholic and Protestant Latinos, we posit that this may indicate that the ethnic sentiments and identity trajectories of Protestant and Catholic Latinos are diverging in significant ways (Hunt 1998).<sup>6</sup> Ethnicity is multidimensional, both internally (intra-group) and externally (extra-group) defined (Jenkins 2000). External factors include the homogenizing effects of official ethnoracial labels that are used, for example, by states, social movement, and corporate actors. Processes of discrimination also externally define ethnic boundaries; in the case of Latinos, several scholars emphasize racial or skin color discrimination as central to their experiences (Jeung et al. 2012).

Nonetheless, in terms of internal definition, ethnicity at its core corresponds to a population's perceptions of "real or putative common ancestry, memories of a shared historical past, and a cultural focus on one or more symbolic elements defined as the epitome of their peoplehood" (Schermerhorn 1978). This oft cited definition of ethnicity is central to this study, particularly as it highlights both the retrospective aspect of ethnic identity and the cultural markers that are understood as the "epitome of peoplehood." These elements refer to an imagined community that is predicated on, and mediated by,

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<sup>6</sup> Hunt (1998) also finds that some Protestants appear to demonstrate "attenuated Hispanic identification" (828).

perceptions of shared traditions and experiences rooted in a mythologized past or a purportedly primordial origin. I will argue in this study that these markers are precisely what are being contested in the current intra-ethnic boundary processes that define membership in the ethnic Mexican community very differently for Catholic versus Evangelical Mexican immigrants.

The role of religion in orienting ethnic groups toward understandings of their past has been substantially explored in the social sciences. Several social dynamics related to ethnic identity and religion as highlighted in the literature are of particular relevance to the Mexican and Latino immigrant experience; I will begin by discussing the literature that highlights these particular patterns. Secondly, I will explore a broader body of literature that focuses on the intersection of religion and ethnic identity in the lives of immigrants; in reviewing this literature, I argue that the discourse on ethnic identity and religion has been constrained by assimilatory constructs. That is, understandings of how religion and ethnicity intersect have been limited by theories of assimilation.

### **Maintaining Connections to the Past**

An important difference that emerges from the literature related to how Catholic and Evangelical Latinos construct identity, is tied to how these two groups frame their understandings of the past at the group level. As discussed above, conceptualizations of shared histories and shared origins are an important dimension in solidifying ethnic identity. For centuries Catholicism has been the dominant religion in Latin America, and as such has been significantly intertwined with nation building and national identification across the region. Moreover, Catholicism in Latin America exemplifies an inculturated

religion (Schreiter 1985; Warner et al. 2012): a universal belief system that is expressed through and in localized perspectives, symbols and experiences. One core example, as alluded to above, is “inculturated” Marian devotion practiced by both folk and official Catholicism in Latin America. As Matovina (2012: 31) comments: “Every country of Latin America has at least one shrine dedicated to a Marian image which is a center of national veneration and identity.” Particular images for Marian devotion reflect religious worldviews through an inculturated lens. Each image has a story connected to its arrival or appearance in a country, region, or local, and the image is generally ceremoniously enthroned and celebrated as “patroness” of this country, region, or another. These images are then utilized and celebrated in private devotion and public festivals and worship, many times officially sanctioned and promoted by the state.

The repercussion of that inculturated religiosity in the host context is explained by Baquedano-Lopez (1997). She writes that devotions to the Virgin of Guadalupe among Mexican Latinos, for example, “encourage identification with the place of the apparition” (Baquedano-Lopez 1997:32, see also Warner et al. [2012]). This is surely the case as well for devotions to the Our Lady of Peace among Salvadorans and to Our Lady of Altagracia for Dominicans.<sup>7</sup> Moreover, this is an aspect of religiosity that has increasingly gained acceptance in the U.S. Catholic church (Deck 2015)

In addition, the fact that the character of the region’s Catholicism is highly devotional and family-oriented adds to the centrality of inculturated images in Catholic

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<sup>7</sup> See list of Marian images and associated countries:

<http://campus.udayton.edu/mary/resources/english.html>

Another example of enculturated religious traditions that Catholics practice is the Dia de los Muertos (Day of the Dead).

religiosity and the tie to ethnicity. Jeung et al. (2012) explain that for Catholics, the lines between religion, ethnicity, and family are closely blurred. As a result, the continued practice of that devotionism in the host country remits to the home and to the homeland, constantly reconnecting Catholic Latinos to a sense of common origins, which is the crux of ethnicity (Schermerhorn 1978). Warner et al.'s (2012) study of Latina Catholics found that the symbiotic relationship between their religion and ancestry leads them to feel that "disengagement from Catholicism would not be worth the consequent deracination" (p. 54); it would constitute "an action of cultural abandonment" (p. 55).

In contrast, social scientists do not often write about folk Latin American Evangelicalism. With a long history as a minority religious affiliation in Latin America, Evangelicalism has not been closely tied to nation building or to the nation-state. In fact, Evangelical churches in Latin America have frequently suffered discrimination at the hands of their compatriots (Fortuny Loret de Mola 2002). In addition and partly as a consequence, Latin American Evangelicalism lacks the inculturated quality of both official and folk Catholicism. Vasquez (1999) even notes that for some Latino Evangelicals, "national identity is synonymous with the archaic, 'corrupt' Catholicism of feasts and processions that the believers have left behind" (p. 624). At its core, Evangelicalism is about breaking with traditions and the past (Yang and Ebaugh 2001b). Hence, religious practice among Evangelical Latinos does not generally have the same retrospective essence, folk symbols, and national sentiments (Garces-Foley 2008; Warner 2006).

Perhaps most importantly, Evangelical Latino religiosity is prospective and forward-looking in the host country. León (1998) writes that among the Evangelicals that he

studied, many of them Catholic converts, the attraction of those congregations was the notion of change and the possibility of empowerment, messages clearly not part of, or at least not clearly articulated, within Latin American or U.S. Latino Catholicism. In fact, Warner and his colleagues write that Latino Catholics may experience their religion more like “a fetter than a force for personal change” (Warner et al. 2012, 53). In contrast, Latino Evangelical churches more often convey to their members a transformed identity characterized by a broader Christian association, rather than one tied to homeland and, thus, past particularities (Sanchez-Walsh 2003). Ideologically, Latino Evangelicals view the past as something to be reformed (Flores 2009), which in social settings is manifested by what Klienman (1996) calls a “moral” identity, creating social fissures with their co-ethnic non-affiliates. In this way, Evangelicalism potentially elevates religious affiliation to the rank of master identity over and above ethnicity (Sanchez-Walsh 2003; Menjívar 2003).

Nonetheless, there is evidence of the salience of ethnic practice among Evangelical Latinos. For example, while many musical genres and worship styles employed by Latino Evangelicals may be modeled after U.S. based cultural expressions (Alviso 2002), there is also evidence that some Latino Evangelical churches incorporate musical styles that mirror regional Latin American musical genres (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000). León (1998, 175), for example, reports on an Evangelical congregation that uses what he calls a “cultural oxymoron: Pentecostal mariachis.” The pastor of that church views this practice as an attempt to become “culturally relevant.” León frames it in part as seeking to satisfy a “lust of memory.” Furthermore, at the organizational field level, the diversification of the religious marketplace in Latin America has produced indigenous movements with

transnational ties (Miller 2013); one by-product of this trend is that increasingly, Latino Evangelical churches in the U.S. are affiliated with Evangelical movements indigenous to Latin America (Martinez 2011; Robbins 2004). These examples may suggest that finding spaces of cultural familiarity remains important for Latinos of both Catholic and Evangelical affiliation.

### **Ethnic Replenishment and Sustained Ties to Homeland Cultures**

While the connection between contemporary Latino religiosities and homeland cultures is still a moving target, there is much to be learned from previous waves of immigrants. For example, Catholic immigrants from Europe expressed similar devotional folk religiosity through national or regional iconography as that of contemporary Catholics from Latin America. The Italian immigrant experience may be particularly relevant (Tomasi 1976; From 2000; Lopez 2009). However, as Alba and Orsi (2009) lay out, homeland-oriented religiosity was compromised in later generations. As immigration ebbed and the immigrant generation grew older, their children and grandchildren's religious reference group became American Catholicism and their nation-based reference group, non-ethnic American peers. U.S.-born ethnics set the tone for subsequent ethnic identification, which inevitably faded as it became more and more distanced from the homeland.<sup>8</sup>

Homeland-oriented religiosity, however, finds itself situated differently among contemporary waves due to “ethnic replenishment” (Waters and Jimenez 2005; Jimenez and Fitzgerald 2007; Jimenez 2008, 2010). This framing signals both a demographic reality

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<sup>8</sup> See Jimenez and Fitzgerald (2009) concept of dissimilarity.

of large and continuing immigrant waves, as well as a shift in ethnic culture and worldviews towards homeland culture among ethnics. The effect of this new reality is yet to be fully understood, but Massey (1995) suggests substantial changes in the character of immigrant-origin ethnicity compared to earlier waves. With contemporary continuing immigration, “the character of ethnicity will be determined relatively more by immigrants and relatively less by later generations, shifting the balance of ethnic identity toward the language, culture, and ways of life of the sending society” (645). That is, the second and later generations lose some ground as arbiters of what entails authentic ethnic expression in host country.

Jimenez (2008: 1558) examines the influence of the weighty, replenished first and early second generations that is produced through the “policing” of “ethnic authenticity.” For example, Jimenez describes a dynamic where “Mexican immigrants and the young Mexican American second generation assert strong notions of ethnic authenticity in their interaction with later-generation Mexican Americans” (1551). He explains how later generation “Mexican Americans are treated as ethnic outsiders when they are unable to live up to the criteria for group membership that co-ethnics impose” (1530). In that instance, Jimenez focuses on the policing of homeland language use. However, the markers of homeland culture available for policing are variable, and in the case of the Latino ethnic experience, Catholic religiosity is a prime candidate. As commented above, Catholicism is an inculturated religiosity, i.e., intertwined with Latin American national identification and culture. Moreover, Catholicism still dominates the Latino religious marketplace. It remains a majority religious affiliation in almost all Latin American countries; it is the majority



religious affiliation by far among contemporary foreign-born Latin American immigrant populations; and, robust majorities of all second-generation Latinos profess a Catholic affiliation (Portes and Rumbaut 2006: 318).

Authenticity policing of homeland Catholic religiosity stimulated by ethnic replenishment could have at least two important effects in terms of differentiating identity trajectories for Evangelicals and Catholics. First, Catholic Latino policing of ethnic authenticity can lead to Evangelical avoidance of spaces where homeland Catholic religious culture is on display. Those spaces include a multiplicity of ethnic celebrations and gathering, including many beyond specifically religious events, such as birthdays and quinceañeras. Secondly, Catholic policing of ethnic authenticity incentivizes Evangelical Latinos to de-emphasize ethnicity in favor of their religious identification. That is, they may react to charges of ethnic inauthenticity by emphasizing a super-ordinate identity of *cristianos*, *evangélicos*, or *pentecostales*, which may be both master and moral identities for Evangelical. Moreover, self-policing among Evangelicals may ensue wherein co-adherents are sanctioned from participating in various cultural traditions of co-ethnic Catholics that involve activities frowned upon by some Evangelicals, such as certain styles of music, dancing, smoking and drinking (Robbins 2004). The result of intra-ethnic authenticity policing based on religious symbols leads to the reformulation of identity boundaries where assumed co-ethnics fall on different sides of reference group boundaries.

### **Ethnic Identity, Assimilation, and Religion**

Understandings of how ethnic identity and religion interact have been the subject of an ongoing conversation in modern sociology for nearly as long as the discipline has

existed (Durkheim 1912, Weber 1922). Scholars of immigration and assimilation theory have, in the previous century, greatly influenced the trajectory of this conversation. These scholars of a bygone era focused on the processes by which predominantly European immigrants incorporated into U.S. society. Religion was identified as an important aspect of the assimilation process, both as a variable affected by the process of assimilation, and as a vehicle through which adaptive identities were formed in the receiving context (Park and Burgess 1925). For many scholars, then, religion was both a marker and a means of assimilation.

Religion was understood as being intertwined with various key markers of U.S. societal integration. Assimilation was not conceived of as a purely structural process, but rather one in which immigrants would culturally assimilate into a society that was white Anglo-Saxon Protestant. Early theories of ethnic immigrant assimilation bowed to this idealized image. This perspective was perhaps best articulated by Milton Gordon: "If there is anything in American life which can be described as an over-all American culture which serves as a reference point for immigrants and their children, it can best be described, it seems to us, as the middle-class cultural patterns of, largely, white Protestant, Anglo-Saxon origins" (Gordon 1964: 72). The expectation was that immigrants and their children would orient themselves toward this reference point and that with time, they too would reflect these traits. Ethnics were kneaded into the mass of "White Protestant, middle class clay" (Fishman 1961 cited in Gordon 1964:72). The expected and assumed trajectory was a fairly straight-forward one, labeled as "straight-line" assimilation (Gordon 1964; Handlin 1951; Hansen 1940; Park and Burgess 1925; Warner and Srole 1945).

In his famous work, *Protestant, Catholic, Jew*, Will Herberg offered an important caveat regarding the role of religion in the assimilation process of immigrants and their descendents (1960). Herberg, employing a classic assimilation theory framework, argued that immigrants' religious identities would typically persist and even increase in salience through the process of assimilation. Herberg maintained an essentially Anglo-dominant perspective of assimilation, but he saw religion as being the primary space of identity persistence for immigrants. This allowed for a straight-line assimilation trajectory, but one which would lead to a "triple melting pot" based on religious affiliation, an argument built on the previous work of Kennedy (1944). Religion, not ethnicity, would remain the most salient distinction for assimilated immigrants. While some religious assimilation would take place under this view, religion would also provide continuity to previously held ethnic identities.

Yet, Herberg's thesis was brought into question as classic models of assimilation began to lose favor in the discipline. Research on white ethnics spotlighted the fact that many white ethnics still maintained aspects of ethnic identity beyond religion, even after being incorporated into U.S. society (Glazer and Moynihan 1970; Greeley 1971; Novak 1972). Glazer and Moynihan, for example, noted the continued distinctiveness of white ethnics in New York City. They affirmed the prominence of religion in distinguishing white ethnics, to the point of asserting that "to name an ethnic group is very much the same thing as naming a religious group" (Glazer and Moynihan 1970: 17). However, they also identified a variety of markers that kept ethnic boundaries visible, including structural markers such as

group concentration in particular occupational fields. Social closure, it appeared, was an important factor in the maintenance of ethnic identity.

Gans further theorized that white ethnics maintained a type of symbolic ethnicity, one which was expressive in nature, but inconsequential to major life opportunities (1979; See also Waters 1990). A distinction which Gans argued was often downplayed by previous scholars was the notion that certain ethnic cultures were actually bound by “sacred” boundary markers while others were united by secular boundary markers. This distinction was characterized by Gans as “two different kinds of ethnic cultures, sacred and secular” (1979:2). Gans observed that sacred culture tended to persist more than secular culture when it came to ethnic identity, though even religion would experience change in the U.S. context. Again, this persistence of ethnoreligious identity was not seen as precluding assimilation, which Gans argued was most certainly happening among white ethnics; Gans simply set out to highlight the salient role that religion could play in providing ethnic continuity for subsequent generations since migration.

While discussions of religion, immigration and ethnicity would emerge from time to time, a period of inconsistent research on immigrant religion ensued. Several scholars have noted, for example, that there was a season in the study of immigration where religion waned as a topic of conversation (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2007; Kivisto 1992; Massey and Higgins 2011; Menjivar 2010; Warner 1997). The 60’s, 70’s, and 80’s, the season of emergence for the “new,” post-1965 immigrants, particularly presented a dearth of research on immigrant and ethnic religion according to Massey and Higgins (2011). Ebaugh and Chafetz attribute this in part to “skepticism about religion among social

scientists” (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2007:360). Menjivar concurs by positing a “general secularization trend in intellectual thought” (Menjivar 2010:10). Ebaugh and Chafetz (2007; see also Kivisto 1992) note that the lack of researchers that shared the backgrounds of the new immigrants may have contributed to the lag in this field. Finally, Wimmer observes that work on the new immigrants retreated from the previous focus on sociocultural assimilation and instead placed attention on structural means and markers of incorporation (2009). Perhaps the study of immigrant religions fell by the wayside because religion was perceived as falling outside of the realm of structural incorporation.

Oddly enough, even during this supposed intertestamental period, a nearly canonical thesis was proposed related to religion and ethnicity. Projecting echoes of Herberg, Smith (1978) argued that religion was a “theologizing experience.” A number of scholars would later follow suit, affirming that a fusing of religion and ethnicity takes place because the circumstances surrounding immigration predispose migrants to higher religious participation, and likewise prop up religious spaces as the primary means by which to sustain ethnic identities (Casanova 2007; Hirschman 2004; Menjivar 2003). This thesis has not been without its detractors, however. Massey and Higgins (2011), for example, argue that religious participation erodes for many immigrants; that is, some immigrants exhibit higher levels of religious participation in their place of origin than in the U.S.. Cavalcanti and Scheef (2005) draw attention to the often overlooked demographic of non-religious immigrants, and call upon researchers to explore the means of sociocultural incorporation for that group. These debates would take place at a later time, though.

Subsequent immigration scholarship turned much attention to the demographic of post-1965 immigrants. Researchers noted that previous work on immigrant religion focused on groups from a century past that were more readily racialized as white, thus gradually gaining entry into white middle class U.S. society (Chen and Jeung 2012). Scholars doubted that the experiences of post-1965 immigrants would parallel those of European immigrants from a previous century given that more recent waves of immigrants were far less likely to be labeled as white (Alba and Nee 2003; Portes and Zhou 1993). The nations sending the most immigrants were based in Asia and Latin America. Furthermore, the new immigrants brought levels of religious pluralism never before seen in the U.S. (Joshi 2006; Kurien 2002; Warner 2006). These traditions did not fit neatly into the rubric presented in *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (Herberg 1960). Finally, the context of reception in regards to religion has itself been shifting, with a growing segment of the population opting out of religion altogether (Putnam and Campbell 2010). In response, revised theories of assimilation would emerge, accompanied by more detailed understandings of the role of religion in immigrant adaptation.

While previous conceptualizations of incorporation placed a premium on sociocultural assimilation, scholars began to emphasize structural modes of incorporation and the structural roadblocks that impeded the societal belonging of some ethnic minorities (Alba and Nee 1997; Wimmer 2009). Racial and ethnic identification, Glazer and Moynihan would argue (1975), placed certain groups at a disadvantage in comparison to the mainstream white middle class. Gans again provided input, suggesting that

assimilation, rather than moving along a “straight line” path, occurred along a “bumpy line,” a pathway fraught with obstacles and at times regressive steps (1992).

Segmented assimilation was an assimilation model introduced to address the disadvantage experienced by subsets of the immigrant population and their native born progeny. Key proponents of this model, Portes and Zhou argued that immigrant groups might experience diverging intra-ethnic trajectories (1993), with some segments of a particular immigrant group approximating the straight-line model of upward mobility, and others experiencing a downward trajectory for an extended or permanent stay in the underclass (see also Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Scholars desiring to emphasize the sustained and overpowering effects of race conceived of a racialized minority model wherein some immigrant groups were unable to escape the gauntlet of racialization (Joshi 2006; Massey 2007; Omi and Winant 1997; Telles and Ortiz 2008).

With the advent of assimilation models addressing the disadvantages faced by the “new” immigrants, an emergent body of research explores religion’s role in serving as a ballast against the pitfalls of assimilation processes (Warner and Wittner 1998; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Min and Kim 2002). Often focusing on congregational settings, various scholars have explored whether religious participation serves as a bridge or a boundary to assimilation (Cadge and Ecklund 2006; Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Warner 1997; Weigert et al 1971). The segmented assimilation model has figured prominently into this body of research. Warner, in particular, has done extensive work in articulating the manner in which religious institutions serve as prime mechanisms for the facilitation of selective acculturation. In keeping with Portes and Rumbaut’s definition of selective acculturation

(2006), Warner (2007) argues that religious institutions allow for immigrant parents and their children to adapt together to the receiving context. Religion serves the double role of preserving culture, and of providing new adaptive tools. A number of scholars have explored these benefits of religion as well (Bankston and Zhou 1995, 1996; Cao 2005; Ebaugh 2003).

### **Ethnoreligiosity and Immigrant Assimilation: A Limiting Relationship**

As I have demonstrated, a substantial discourse on the interaction between religion and ethnic identity in the lives of immigrants has derived from work related to assimilation theory. On a disciplinary level, the relationship between ethnoreligiosity and immigrant assimilation has been symbiotic. Work in one of these fields has often informed the other, and vice-versa. However, the relationship between these interrelated bodies of work has been characterized by an imbalance. The study of ethnoreligiosity within the discipline of sociology has been more dependent on immigrant assimilation research than the reverse. As discussed above, shifts in the field of assimilation research has at times meant a downplaying of religion's place in the lives of immigrants. More importantly, at both the theoretical and methodological levels, the shortcomings of assimilation theory have significantly limited the study of ethnoreligiosity.

The presupposition of ethnicity as a given in the field of assimilation theory (Wimmer 2009) has had a major influence in the study of ethnoreligiosity. While primordialist notions of peoplehood are loudly decried by many in the discipline of sociology, they are functionally still present. This approach can be seen in the manner with which boundaries of ethnicity are understood as superseding other categories (Brubaker



2004). Ethnicity, especially when it is demarcated by “race,” is assumed to be the primary mode of being. In terms of research design, as Wimmer posits, ethnicity is assumed to be an “explanans” rather than an “explanandum” (Wimmer 2009:244). Certainly there are cases where ethnicity serves as a master status, the most salient identity that a group of actors adheres to. Yet, this is something that should be scrutinized rather than assumed.

In my analysis of ethnoreligious identities, I employ a constructivist conceptual framework that aligns with scholars such as Barth (1969; 1998), Brubaker (2002), Alba (2005), and Wimmer (2009, 2010). These scholars, along with others, argue that the boundaries delineating ethnicity exist as processes rather than as static entities (Loveman 1999; Bailey 2008). The salience of ethnic boundaries changes, transitioning between thick or thin (Cornell and Hartmann 2006), bright or blurred states (Alba 2005). The location and meaning of boundaries can be strategically engaged via processes such as expansion, contraction, inversion, and redefinition (Wimmer 2008). As people engage boundaries, the boundaries themselves may change, and/or people that were once within the boundaries may traverse them (Barth 1998). Boundaries may move across people. People may move across boundaries. Boundary processes may be summed up as the contestation of markers, members, and meaning.

Religion may function in several ways to disrupt the assumed preeminence of ethnoracial identities. There are three particular inter-related dimensions that provide important points of inquiry within which religion at times reinforces, at times diminishes, and at times surpasses the significance of ethnicity in the lives of immigrants: The shifting salience of identities, the facilitation of cross-cutting connections, and the manner in which

intra-group differences catalyze contestations of group boundaries. In the following section I will make a case for how these points of variability may lead to divergent pathways of identity construction for immigrants in general. These dynamics will be further elucidated in the chapters to follow.

### **Identity Salience and Boundary Meaning**

Though a sense of belonging is often assumed as characteristic of ethnic groups, varying levels of identity salience and the prominence given to some identities over and above others may affect the actual boundedness of ethnic groups. When considering the members of a particular ethnic category, is ethnicity necessarily the most salient unifying factor underlying solidarity and social connectedness? This assertion has been problematized by scholars such as Brubaker, who characterize boundedness as the assumption of “groupness.” Groupness is described by Brubaker as a fluid process that needs to be measured rather than assumed (Brubaker 2002; see also Wimmer 2009). What is deceiving about groupness, when a dimension like religion is brought into the picture, is that the salience of religion may in fact give the illusion of groupness based on ethnicity. That is, members of a particular religious community, when they share a particular ethnic label, may be characterized as having a unity based on their ethnicity, when it may actually be the cultural and institutional factors of religion that are at work in sustaining group unity (Brubaker 2002).

Moreover, sub-sets within a particular ethnic group may place greater weight on a particular identity to the extent that it becomes more influential in some contexts (Cornell and Hartmann 2007). The case of religion among Latinos and Mexicans is of particular

interest as the segment of religious affiliation experiencing high levels of growth, that of Evangelicalism, is known for its high levels of identity salience (Sanchez-Walsh 2003; Smith 1998). Hammond contends that religion and ethnicity are two dimensions of identity that may shift from being constant to being more contingent (Hammond 1998). Furthermore, it is possible that the salience of one or the other of these identities may be transposed from master to secondary, or vice versa (Hammond 1998). Among marginal communities, religion is more likely to become a master status (Hammond 1998; see also Sanchez-Walsh 2002). It is possible that for a sub-set of ethnic Mexicans, religion is touted as being a master status over and above ethnicity; hence, the possibility of intra-ethnic cleavages appears, some of these perhaps very important to the extent of challenging an overriding ethnic assumed ethnic unity.

The assertion of a particular master status over and against ethnicity may be a strategy used by some to overcome real and perceived stigmas that are tied to a particular ethnic category. Self-presentation and social representation along the lines of religion may be altered, as Alba (2005) notes, in such a way that other types of boundaries, such as those of race or ethnicity, are blurred. Chavez makes a similar observation in discussing how religious change may provide a way for Latinos in the U.S. to make greater claims of social citizenship in the face of a prevalent “Latino threat narrative” (2008). Additional parallels to this conceptualization are evident in Bonilla-Silva’s framework wherein some attempt to gain honorary white status through perceived cultural achievements in contra-distinction to other groups (Bonilla Silva 2004).

### **Cross-Cutting Connections**

A particular religious affiliation may construct a pathway by which adherents from one ethnic category form meaningful connections with co-religionists from other ethnic groups. Religious communities may comprise cross-cutting cleavages wherein ethnic adherents become connected to a broader mainstream religious movement, for example, due to similarities of belief and/or practice (Wimmer 2008), and/or due to institutional parallels (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Yang and Ebaugh 2001). In some cases this connection may be symbolic, but in other cases it may point to actual integration taking place and a broadening of social networks. This is especially the case when like religious identities are of high salience for both the broader religious group and the minority group in question. The common ground of religion may become more dominant in particular contexts. Research on Evangelicalism points to this possibility, as “Evangelical” is an umbrella category that brings disparate groups together (Sanchez-Walsh 2003; Woodberry and Smith 1998).

A growing body of research is currently focused on multi-ethnic congregations and the manner in which members are influenced by participating in that type of community. Some findings indicate that multi-ethnic congregations provide added benefits to members in that they expand the networks that members belong to and/or have access to (Emerson and Woo 2008). Even in diverse settings, members may maintain salient ethnic identities, according to Emerson and Woo (2008). It may actually be the increase in weak ties that brings added benefits to participants of this type of community (Granovetter 1973). While the churches that have been the focus of this study are primarily comprised of Latino congregants, with a majority of these Latinos being ethnic Mexicans, some of these

churches do have meaningful ties with other local congregations that are multi-ethnic. The influence of these ties will be examined in this study.

Finally, institutional level assimilation or isomorphism (Wilde 2007), may create some important cross-cutting connections at symbolic and cultural levels. The fact that assimilation is experienced at the institutional level and not just by individual persons is a significant observation that has elsewhere been documented within immigrant congregations (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Form 2000; Yang and Ebaugh 2001). Individuals need not change their affiliation in order to reflect assimilatory movement. The institutions that ethnics belong to may actually be undergoing a process of institutional assimilation, engaging within an existing organizational field and conforming to its norms (DiMaggio and Powell 1983). One manner in which this occurs is that non-Christian religious institutions conform to a congregation-focused model which emphasizes weekly attendance (Warner 2000; Yang & Ebaugh 2001). The same can happen for Christian based churches initially guided by ethnic traditions that gradually divest themselves of these practices. This may provide immigrant and ethnic adherents with a sense of legitimation as their religious rhythms conform to that of a broader religious majority; externally, their practices may also be viewed as less foreign.

### **Intra-group Difference and Group Boundary Definition**

The intra-group differences that exist among members of an ethnic category may be significant enough to influence the manner in which a group boundary is defined, even when ethnicity is a salient category. A strong argument for the capacity of intra-group difference in “[shaping] the outlines of identity for all group members” has been made by

Jimenez et al (2015:109). Jimenez et al argue that intra-ethnic diversity is often overlooked as a causal factor in group identity formation because it is assumed to solely be an outcome of other, perhaps macro-level, social factors. This blind spot in the research has led to an under-theorizing of how “intra-group diversity also functions as a driving mechanism in the formation, activation, and expression of group identities” (Jimenez et al 2015:109).

The emphasis on a homogenized majority, pitted against a homogenized minority, as critiqued by Wimmer (2009), is itself a misconception. The majority is not monolithic. This understanding, however, serves to downplay the importance of contested space within a particular ethnic group since it brightens the boundary with those outside of the category in question. Moreover, the insider/outsider distinction as the primary zone of boundary building defines away the role of intra-group processes such as those brought about by religious diversity.

To be fair, there is merit in considering the role of the state in the establishment of ethnic boundaries. Indeed, this legitimation from above, what Nagel refers to as “external authentication” (Nagel 1994), is often a dominant force in establishing the categories being contested, as well as in enforcing the power dynamic at work within intra-group disputes. Given the role of the state in granting societal membership, an important body of literature frames the process of establishing legitimized ethnic boundaries as the struggle for citizenship. By categorically achieving formal citizenship, via state recognition, groups can make a rightful claim to membership within a society.

Yet, focus on formal citizenship does not fully clarify the boundaries of societal membership (Coutin 2013, Fishman 1968, Sassen 2002). Populations with extensive

histories of marginalization at the hand of the state may give up on the prospects of formal citizenship. Scholars have spotlighted this reality by filtering conceptualizations of membership through broader notions of citizenship such as “substantive citizenship” “cultural citizenship,” or “symbolic citizenship.” In these alternative notions of citizenship, actors and groups attempt to avail themselves of the benefits of citizenship even as they fall short of full formal recognition from the state. The point to highlight is that members of marginalized groups may turn inward, to the group, as a source of legitimation. The contested spaces found within the group, may come to shape how members and non-members understand the boundaries of ethnicity.

In-group differences are important not only for group members, but also for how the group is perceived by outsiders. The manner in which internal differences are managed may play an important role in how a group is positioned within broader society. Employing the notion of citizenship, for example, Purvis and Hunt (1999:461) point out, that there is a “distinct friction between citizenship and the identities that arise from other aspects of our lives.” This observation relates to how in-group negotiations over points of tension influence the types of rights and recognitions that a group receives from broader society. Because of what is at stake for marginalized communities in positioning themselves advantageously in the broader social order, many of these tensions will be policed in-house. As various scholars note, the boundaries of ethnic authenticity are often policed intra-ethnically. Struggles to define authenticity intra-ethnically have been documented by the likes of Carter (2003), Jimenez (2010, 2015), and Vallejo (2012).

Nonetheless, intra-ethnic boundary struggles are very important in and of themselves for many reasons I will explore in this research. These include the anchoring of one's self in a strong reference group, the development of achieved identifications that may bring greater or additional or other benefits than traditionally ascribed ethnicity, and the establishment of new networks with non-ethnics, among other. Most importantly, perhaps, the study of intra-ethnic boundary formation may be vital when and if the cleavage is great enough to fragment the ethnic canopy itself; here, I am studying bits of these processes where that overarching canopy based on ethnic origin may be fragmented by intra-ethnic religious affiliation differences.

### **Methodological Design**

In order to understand how religious affiliation influences the ethnic identity processes of Mexican immigrants, my research design juxtaposes side by side the experiences of the two largest religious cleavages among ethnic Mexicans, Catholics and Evangelicals. Availing myself of the broad knowledge I gained of Santa Ana's religious economy via years of community work, I retraced some of the ties I had previously made within Santa Ana's Catholic and Evangelical communities. Perhaps my initial sample was biased towards churches that had a more visible presence in the local neighborhoods that I was familiar with. I reached out to local leaders, and asked them about their knowledge of various churches that were active in the city. I wanted to have a sense of which were some of the congregations and parishes that were drawing members from the local neighborhoods.



Concurrent with the conversations I began to have with local religious leaders, I began to attend public meetings where religious leaders and/or church parishioners would be present. I attended city sponsored gatherings where religious leaders were there to represent their churches. I attended collaborative meetings where groups of church leaders gathered to discuss ways to better serve the city. I attended meetings at non-profit organizations where some of the local participants would also be aware of the churches that were influential in their community. This stage entailed dozens of conversations wherein I was able to map out some of the most influential and/or active churches in the community. I was also intentional about gaining insight about churches that were perhaps not as visible or influential in the city, but which still served members of the community that were considered to be on the margins. Whereas before I had a strong sense of what was happening in the religious economy of my neighborhood, at this stage I walked away with a sense of having a broad understanding of the religious landscape in the entire city.

Next, I set out to conduct fifty interviews of parishioners from both Catholic and Evangelical churches. The sample would be divided in half, twenty-five Catholic parishioners, and twenty five Evangelical parishioners. Having a broad base of knowledge regarding the numerous churches in the city, I then selected six churches from which to sample parishioners from; two of these were Catholic churches, and four of them were Evangelical. These churches were initially selected as sampling pools based on their potential in providing respondents who met the above specified criteria. Focal churches were also initially screened along socio-economic and geographic measures so as to draw respondents from similar socio-economic networks.

I visited all of the churches in my sampling cluster to ascertain that there was not a major disparity in the types of members that were participating in these churches in terms of socio-economics. For the most part, I was able to confirm that these churches served working class parishioners. Some churches had a broader geographic base of membership than others, namely the Evangelical churches. Also, it should be noted that Catholic parishes in Santa Ana count on much higher memberships than the vast majority of Evangelical churches in the city, which is part of the reason why I only sampled from two Catholic churches. There is one Latino Evangelical mega-church which approximates the membership count of local Catholic parishes. This Evangelical church was part of this study, along with four other smaller sized churches of close to two-hundred members each. Finally, there were other demographic differences across the Catholic/Evangelical divide which I will deal with in subsequent chapters. Nevertheless, parishioners had to meet the following criteria: They were adult Mexican immigrants that resided in Santa Ana, CA and belonged to congregations based in the city.

The contributions of this study are in large part tied to my three-tiered approach in examining the intersection of religion and ethnicity. To begin, there are several ways in which I approached the structural influences of the ethnic identity of Mexican parishioners: I observed the religious economy of Santa Ana within the broader social ecology of the region, allowing me to note the manner in which churches comprise an organizational field. I analyzed the demographic realities that exist in the local communities and surrounding regions, paying particular attention to how socio-economic and geographic realities affect the selection bias of particular religious groups. I spoke with a variety of clergy and leaders

involved in the religious institutions of Santa Ana in order to gauge organizational culture and organizational similarities. I made it a point to identify ties that exist across religious institutions, both formal and informal, in order to document collaborations, isomorphism, and the likes. Finally, I attended ecumenical and inter-church gatherings, along with civic and community based meetings in order to understand the manner in which churches function beyond the religious sphere. These higher level processes provide a glimpse into the degrees of social and cultural proximity that Mexican congregants share with people from across a variety of backgrounds.

To better understand the culture of the churches in my study, for a span of three years I spent roughly three hundred hours observing and participating in religious gatherings, both Catholic and Evangelical, within Santa Ana congregations. During the latter portion of my study, my participant observation component became an outgrowth of the interviews that I conducted. Through my interviews I became aware of the types of gatherings and activities that parishioners were involved with. Whenever possible, I would attend meetings and activities that were meaningful to my interviewees. This approach took me to a wide variety of religious events: I attended Pentecostal worship concerts, visited church anniversaries, participated in regular Sunday services, observed morning prayer meetings, took part in funeral masses, integrated myself into rosary recitations, walked along with neighborhood processions, and enjoyed family celebrations that included religious undertones.

My observations of personal agency in the formulation of ethnic identities were primarily drawn from the in-depth interviews and from my fieldwork conducted via

participant observation. My interviews typically ran for about an hour and were conducted in the location of choice for interviewees. Locations ranged from homes, to churches, to public establishments. Along with interviews, I had the opportunity to visit a number of family celebrations that involved my interviewees. This allowed me to triangulate some of their responses in regards to social networks, giving me the opportunity to observe who were those they were most close to. In all, I spent over one hundred hours participating in personal and community based celebrations involving my participants. In a city as densely populated as Santa Ana, the neighborhood based observation times were particularly rich with social interactions. I was able to hear about how participants conceived of themselves, and was able to observe the social world they were embedded in.

The fieldwork portion of my study provided the opportunity for numerous hours of informal interviews. Whenever invited to neighborhood based religious events, church services, or family celebrations, I made it a point to talk to those that were present. Here, I often made new acquaintances with people. In some cases, I was able to schedule formal interviews with people that I met during my field research. The informal interviews were invaluable as they provided less manicured versions of identity presentation, or rather, manicured versions of the self that were tailored for an audience other than me. Much of what I witnessed, was, after all, performative in nature.

## **Overview of Chapters**

Conceptually, this dissertation proceeds in the following order:

**Chapter 2:** This chapter will provide an in-depth analysis of the lay of the land, in terms of the religious and socioeconomic demographics of Santa Ana. There are some unique

patterns that characterize Santa Ana that must be taken into consideration, such as its long standing history of ethnic Mexican residents, as well as its history as a gateway city. This chapter will also deal with the primary religious boundaries that are of relevance to this study. I will discuss important movements in Catholicism and in Evangelicalism that are significant to the residents of Santa Ana. I will also discuss the history of religious identities and ethnic identity for ethnic Mexicans.

**Chapter 3:** This chapter will focus on the divergent ways in which Catholics and Evangelicals engage the ethnic enclave. Ideologically, there are significant differences in the ways with which Catholics and Evangelicals engage the barrio. These ideological differences lead not only to differing spiritualities, but also to different forms of investing in the localized ethnic community. Catholics have a far more positive view of the neighborhood, which tends to highlight the resources found in the barrio. Evangelicals tend to have a more negative view of the neighborhood, which emphasizes the need to transform the barrio. Ultimately, Catholics and Evangelicals configure their social networks differently. Evangelicals are better at cultivating bridging social capital, whereas Catholics are better and harnessing bonding social capital. Much of this is due to differences in the structuring of the respective institutional models.

**Chapter 4:** This chapter will explore ethnic self-identification across religious lines. Generally speaking both Catholics and Evangelicals have a strong propensity for identifying as Mexican. Nevertheless, Evangelicals in particular employ diverging discursive strategies as a way to argue for the legitimacy of their membership in the ethnic community.

Catholics are less likely to dispense efforts intended to prove the legitimacy of their ethnic identity whereas Evangelicals are invested in proving their legitimacy.

**Chapter 5:** This chapter will delve into the intersection of religious affiliation and ethnic authenticity. Herein I will discuss the manner in which religious practices are used to demarcate the boundaries of ethnicity for Mexican immigrants. In addition, I will discuss the dynamic of intra-ethnic policing. This phenomenon primarily takes place as Catholics question the ethnic authenticity of Evangelical adherents. Finally, I will discuss the manner in which Evangelicals respond in-kind by projecting a moral boundary in order to vindicate their suspect ethnicity. The use of a moral boundary by Evangelicals does not actually neutralize the ethnic authenticity policing but instead serves to brighten this particular boundary.

**Chapter 6:** This chapter will conclude the study by arguing that the diverging structures of socializing exhibited by Catholics and Evangelicals, the discursive strategies of legitimacy, and the policing of social spaces, contribute to diverging ethnic identity projects along religious lines.

### **Contributions of this Study**

There are various gaps that I purport to fill in the extant body of literature dealing with ethnic identity and religion. First of all, a foundational body of research deals with immigrant populations that experienced their migratory apex a century ago (Gordon 1964; Handlin 1951; Herberg 1955). Research focused on post-1965 immigrants is growing, but still merits further attention. A second lack in the existing body of research relates to the comparative component in how studies have been designed, and by extension their

generalizability. While there are some examples of studies that have a comparative aspect built into their research design (Garces-Foley 2008; Menjivar 2003; Vasquez 1999; Weigert 2012), many studies of immigrant religions rely primarily on single case studies (Cadge and Ecklund 2007). Individual case studies certainly contribute to the knowledge of immigrant religions, but for comparative purposes they should robustly account for the demographic and geographic realities that play into each respective case. As Cadge and Ecklund point out in their review of immigrant religion literature, most studies are wanting in this area (2007). Inter-ethnic comparisons along religious lines may be helpful, but intra-ethnic research designs are more effective in isolating religious effects (Greeley 1988; Form 2000; Lopez-Sanders 2012; Menjívar 2003; Cavalcanti and Schleef 2005; Yang and Ebaugh 2001).

Research focusing on the Mexican origin population provides an important case study. Various demographic measures suggest that Mexicans may be an exceptional case among Latinos, though studies of Latino religions often lump Mexicans into the broader pan-ethnic category. Numerically, Mexicans are the largest immigrant group and one whose migration stream has been unrivaled for over thirty years (Migration Policy Institute 2013)<sup>9</sup>. Mexicans hail from the second most Catholic nation in the world, second only to Brazil (INEGI 2000), and demonstrate the highest levels of Catholic affiliation in the U.S. among Latinos (Pew 2014). The history of Mexicans in the U.S., particularly their religious presence in the Southwest, places ethnic Mexicans in a unique position (Deck 2015; Lopez 2009). It is misleading to project the religious patterns of all Latinos onto the

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<sup>9</sup> This is an observation that takes broader time periods into consideration. Recent recent findings suggest that Central American nations are surpassing the number of immigrants from Mexico (Seghetti and Durak 2014).

Mexican-origin population. A more effective approach would be to examine the effects that ethnic Mexicans have on other Latinos in the religious sphere, and vice versa. As such, this study focuses primarily on immigrants of Mexican origin. The first generation is the primary focus as the trajectory of this particular segment of the population has the potential to influence subsequent generations. Moreover, the second generation cannot exist independent of the first.

One final contribution of this study is that many analyses of religion place an emphasis on religious participation more so than on the potential effects of particular religious affiliations themselves. While I do note levels of religious participation, in part signaled by weekly religious attendance, I argue that the differences within varying affiliations significantly affect members of the respective traditions. In that sense, I am taking a Weberian approach to religious affiliation. The religious ideologies, rituals, and structures within Evangelicalism and Catholicism have proven to influence Mexican parishioners in divergent ways, or so I hope to demonstrate.

The religious economy of Santa Ana is a thriving space of competition, collaboration, and exchange. If religious traditions were voices clamoring for devotees, Santa Ana would be a cacophony of sermons, symbols, and sites filling the streets, and neighborhoods with suggestive messages. At the center of Santa Ana's religious economy is a Mexican and Chicano population with a long history of religious engagement and religious innovation. As a population that is both native born and foreign born, the Mexican-origin population of Santa Ana is poised to influence the regional religious economy, while maintaining ties and exercising influence in transnational fashion across borders. Even still, Santa Ana is a



gateway city that receives innovations from other nations, and as such has the capacity to both give and receive religious capital. To borrow and adapt from Vasquez and Knott, Santa Ana contains nodes of production, reception, innovation and amplification (2014).

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **The Religious and Demographic Context of Santa Ana, CA**

The funeral for Eusebio Castellon was attended by what appeared to be a tight-knit group. Cars zoomed down the busy thoroughfare outside of the small Santa Ana funeral chapel, while inside, most sat quietly, somberly contemplating the life and death of this young man who suffered from a degenerative condition. Eusebio's sister, Griselda, could be seen milling around the entrance of the hall greeting newcomers. As others circulated through the small meeting space, body and coffin resting at the front of the hall, a sense of ceremony, or order, had yet to be established.

A few people whispered that the deacon from their local Catholic parish would soon arrive, but before his arrival, two people went to the front podium. Two friends of Eusebio's family, a man and a woman in their mid-thirties, explained that they had been invited to share some words of encouragement to the family during this time of mourning. Some members of Eusebio's family had been attending an Evangelical church, and they had asked for these church acquaintances to share some words with the attendees. Both friends shared a brief reflection about Eusebio. Their thoughts were not particularly personal, as their connection was more with Eusebio's sister than with him. Their words were meant to communicate their solidarity with the family in mourning. Various verses from the Bible provided the underlying foundation for their reflections. "We are with you during this time," the man said after leading attendees through an impromptu prayer.

When the two acquaintances sat down, another woman came forward and led the attendees in singing an Evangelical Christian hymn. A sprinkling of people sang along with

the words, signaling that perhaps they were of Evangelical background; others sat quietly, and respectfully. As the song was drawing to a close, a man in his late fifties wearing a white robe could be seen entering the building. The man put on a colorful shawl, and paused to confirm that his vestments were properly in place. This was the Catholic deacon that many were waiting for.

As the deacon settled into his role, it appeared that he had little to no awareness of the chain of events that had taken place in the chapel prior to his arrival. The deacon briskly proceeded to occupy the podium from whence he gave some brief words to those in attendance. By then, most of those wandering the premises had settled into the small chapel area and awaited further instruction from the deacon. Not all seemed attentive to the words of the religious representative though. A few sat in the lobby area of the facility, uninvolved with the service. Others remained outdoors.

Earlier, several people had commented that they were waiting for the deacon to lead them in the praying of the rosary. Now their wish was being granted. As he began to lead those present, the attention of some attendees appeared even more focused. But not all attendees obliged. At one point the deacon stopped, chiding the group for not being vocal enough in their repetition. Something was not completely right in his eyes. The problem appeared to be that a segment of the sixty or so people in attendance were not professing Catholics, and they preferred not to participate in the recitation even as they sat in the hall. After reciting the rosary for some time, the deacon gave some final words to his audience. He performed some last rites upon the body of the deceased, and left in an inconspicuous manner.

The experience of Eusebio's family is reflective of the shifts in religious boundaries that are taking place in the Mexican community of Santa Ana. While tensions on this particular occasion were not particularly salient, given the respectful demeanor exhibited by all parties present, this type of unexpected intra-religious interaction was an example of one family's attempt to grapple with religious change. Evangelicals were not the majority at this funeral, but those that participated certainly made their presence felt via their informal style and attentive demeanor. The Catholics present demonstrated their solemnity and respect towards the formal institutional church and its accompanying traditions. All the while, some individuals demonstrated that they preferred to distance themselves from the formal performance of religious rites. In some ways, this funeral was a microcosm of what is happening in Santa Ana's religious sphere. Religious boundary lines had been crossed, even if just temporarily for some. To better understand the maintenance and shifting of religious boundaries that is occurring in the ethnic Mexican community, particularly in the intra-ethnic sphere, I now turn to the primary forms of religious affiliation experienced by Mexicans in Santa Ana and beyond.

In this chapter I give an overview of the primary religious streams that attract substantial numbers of Latino and Mexican adherents, explaining the general characteristics of each tradition as experienced by ethnic Mexican adherents. To put these religious traditions in perspective, I examine broader factors that play into these important movements, such as historical nuances and contextual and demographic details that influence the structuring of the local religious marketplace. All the while, I will highlight the boundary processes that are reflected in separating/defining the religious affiliations of

ethnic Mexicans.

## **CATHOLICS**

“The oldest Catholic parish under the flag of the United States of America is Hispanic” (Ospino 2014); so remarks leading Catholic researcher, Hosffman Ospino, in underscoring the fact that Latino Catholicism in the U.S. is a long-standing phenomenon though many assume it is new. Puerto Rico and St. Augustine Florida had Catholic parishes established in 1523 and 1566 respectively. With the acquisition of what is now the Southwest U.S., a number of other Latino parishes, these predominantly Mexican, were now roped in by the newly extended U.S. borders. And while the acquired cities of the Southwest were far less populated than the major U.S. cities of the Eastern seaboard, it is notable that there were various urban centers already established within the Southwestern territories. All of these had a Catholic presence. Cities such as San Antonio, El Paso, Santa Fe, Tucson, Monterey, and Santa Barbara were all burgeoning settlements whose development emerged alongside the Catholic mission system (Deck 2014).

Unlike the national parishes<sup>10</sup> serving European Catholics from Eastern and Western Europe, a majority of which were eventually assimilated into non-ethnic focused parishes, Latino congregations have continued to maintain a strong ethnic inclination. In large part, this continued ethnic identification is influenced by the ongoing ethnic replenishment of Latin American migration. The migration waves of the last decades have ensured the maintenance of the Catholic Church’s numbers, in contrast to the decline experienced by many Protestant denominations, especially Mainline denominations

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<sup>10</sup> National parishes were organized around parishioners of a particular nationality, typically of the same language.

(Putnam and Campbell 2010). Given the demographic skew of the Latino population in terms of youthful age, it is projected that Latinos will continue to provide bodies in the pews for the Catholic church. In 2008, almost 50% of Catholics under the age of forty were Latinos (Lugo 2008). In that same year, Latinos comprised about 29% of the Catholic Church (Lugo 2008). The latest figures from Ospino show that of the 78 million Catholics in the U.S., 31.2 million are Latinos (2014). Latinos are now 40% of the Catholic Church. In fact, about 70% of the Catholic Church's growth since the decade of the 60's has come from Latinos (Ospino 2014).

Mexicans in particular play a significant role in sustaining the Catholic Church's numbers, and in innovating Catholic practices. Cadge and Ecklund note that Mexico leads the way in supplying parishioners to U.S. Catholic churches (2006). Compared to the percentage of Catholic adherents from other Latin American national groups residing in the U.S., Mexicans in the U.S. beat out all other nationalities, boasting a 61% allegiance to the holy see (Pew 2014). Dominicans come in at a close second (Pew 2014). As a point of comparison, when all Latinos are enumerated together, 55% label themselves as Catholic; 22% of the general U.S. population considers themselves to be Catholic.

The degree of religious commitment exemplified by ethnic Mexicans in the U.S. would be less noteworthy were it not for the major numerical contribution of the Mexican population to the general U.S. population. The Migration Policy Institute notes that there have been 11,600,000 Mexican immigrants living in the U.S. through 2012 (MPI 2012). After 1980, No other national origin group has come close to sending even half of the

population of Mexican immigrants.<sup>11</sup> Immigrants coming from Mexico are coming from a very religious context. It is helpful to note that in Mexico, of the 120 million people residing there, 85% consider themselves Catholic (Pew 2014). On the global scale, Mexico is second only to Brazil in its numerical allegiance to Rome. Plainly, the degree of Catholic allegiance and the magnitude of Mexican immigration suggest the potential for Mexican immigrants to markedly influence the Catholic church in the U.S..

Some local regions have experienced the influence of Mexican immigrants more than others. "Churches in Los Angeles now fall into two categories: They 'are either Latino or in the process of becoming Latino,'" according to Fernando Guerra of Loyola Marymount University (Reiff 2006). To boot, Guerra's observation is not merely a demographic note but also a cultural one. In a region such as Los Angeles, with a heavy concentration of Mexican and Central American residents, the Mexican and Latino involvement in the Catholic church has cultural ramifications. Observers have noted that Latinos bring a particular type of intimacy to the Catholic mass. In fashion similar to what I have observed in Santa Ana, Reiff provides a snapshot of a Mexican majority mass: "People bring their children, and the intermingled sounds of laughter, babies' tears and parents' admonitions and reassurances echo through the church as a counterpoint to service, sermon and song (2006).

Another ostensible shift in the Latino influenced worship experience has been in the language that mass is conducted in. The changes enacted via the Vatican II council opened the door for a linguistic transition to take place (Levitt 2002; Wilde 2007). Many parishes,

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<sup>11</sup> Most recently there has been a decline of Mexican migration, and as such several Central American nations have been sending higher numbers of immigrants. Overall, Mexico still has the highest number of immigrants in the U.S. though.

even ones in regions with fairly small Latino populations, now offer the option of masses conducted in Spanish. The significance of this option is demonstrated in the fact that opposition and resentment at the inclusion of Spanish mass has been vocalized within the ranks of the church (Matovina 1991; Reiff 2006). Yet, the church leadership continues to offer this worship opportunity as demand is steady.

Language often serves as a salient group boundary marker, and all the more when it is grouped with another salient marker, religion (Brubaker 2013; Calvillo and Bailey 2015; Yaeger-Dror 2015). The expansion of Catholic churches offering mass in Spanish helps to ensure that groups such as Mexican immigrants retain higher degrees of social closure. It may also mean, however, that Mexicans must expand their boundaries to coincide with a broader pan-ethnic group. Sullivan's ethnography of a parish in Houston (2000 St Catherine's) documents the struggle of Mexicans in embracing the new reality of a diversified congregation, for example. Lopez-Sanders brings to light a similar phenomenon for a parish in South Carolina where a previously Columbian congregation grapples with welcoming a stream of immigrants from various places in Latin America, including Mexico (Lopez-Sanders 2012). Language generally unified these pan-ethnic groups, though culture and social status were points of tension.

### **Mexican Folk Catholicism**

Just as previous waves of predominantly Catholic immigrants brought with them expressions of folk Catholicism, so too ethnic Mexicans continue to intertwine folk traditions with the more accepted orthodox forms of devotion. Folk Catholicism for Mexicans may manifest itself through the celebration of particular regional festivals,



through the veneration of particular saints, or it may involve a syncretism of Catholicism and pre-Columbian practices. A smaller minority of Mexicans may include elements associated with African traditions (Deck 2014), though this is more prevalent among Latinos of Caribbean nationalities. Some folk traditions for Mexicans revolve around *curanderismo*, or healing practices using natural and spiritual remedies (Roeder 1988). In some ways, these practices reveal an underlying worldview wherein spirits and spiritual forces exercise influence over the physical world and must be dealt with in order to rectify certain wrongs or certain evils (Espinosa 1999). A number of studies demonstrate that even beyond the first generation, Mexican-Americans seek assistance from *curanderos*, the masters of this art (Bushy 1992, Eisenberg 1998, Rivera 2002). Perhaps Durkheim's (1912) distinction between religion and magic is appropriate in this case, given that the practices of *curanderismo* most often take place outside of the walls of the church. Nevertheless, because *curanderismo* is often partaken of by self-identified Catholics, it is debatable whether these practices deserve to be categorized separately from Catholicism.

One of the most recognizable symbols of folk Catholicism, and an important bridge between the institutional church and folk tradition, is the *Virgen de Guadalupe*. Though there are similar images of the Virgin Mary venerated in other countries, it must be clarified that this particular representation of the *Virgen* is not historically venerated by all Latinos. Specifically, *La Virgen* is embedded in the psyche of Mexican culture; the tradition surrounding the manifestation of her image originates in Mexico and therein is easily recognized by the general populace. Due to the increasingly strong presence of the Mexican community, as one local priest put it, "we're making a big effort to be inclusive

with the Virgin of Guadalupe” (Reiff 2006). As with the Poles and Italians, the church hierarchy is not always welcoming of these beliefs. For the time being, though, these customs are stretching the limits of orthodoxy for U.S. Catholics.

An important corollary to devotion of the Virgin Mary and the saints is that veneration often provides an opportunity for sacralizing public and private secular spaces. For many Latino and Mexican parishioners, spirituality is lived out in the neighborhood and in the home setting (Sullivan 2000). Coleman notes that extra-congregational activities among religious adherents, such as these, are often pivotal in building social capital (2003). Processions through the community, for example, are an extension of the parish in the sense that they are often endorsed by the church and may include participation from parish leadership (Lopez 2009); but these traditions also allow for high levels of independence from formal leadership and may draw participants who rarely set foot within the walls of the church, as I discovered in my participant observation of such events. For many, Catholicism is incomplete without public displays of spiritual devotion (Pena 2011 - performing piety).

The types of boundaries that are brought to attention via folk religion are multi-dimensional. On the one hand, folk traditions such as those relating to the veneration of the Virgin of Guadalupe are gaining support within U.S. Catholic parishes (Deck 2014). More research is required to ascertain whether the Virgen de Guadalupe is being revered by non-Mexicans and non-Latinos. Nevertheless, the fact that her image is more recognizable across U.S. Catholic parishes is at least a form of light boundary blurring. On the other hand, if folk practices are viewed by outsiders as too distinct, or are engaged in at

high degrees of social closure, such as festivities connected to people from a very specific Mexican region, then these traditions may brighten boundaries. In this latter scenario, Catholicism would become a regionally distinct phenomenon. Folk traditions may cause intra-religious divisions if they are deemed as unorthodox. Some healing practices, for example, may be deemed as pagan by conservative Catholic adherents. I came to discover that there certainly are Mexican Catholics that adhere to a brand of conservative orthodoxy that look upon some practices of their co-ethnics as illegitimate. Finally, folk practices in their entirety tend to mark a boundary with Evangelicals, as alluded to above. Folk spirituality is most definitely a contested territory for Evangelicals, and they are often very verbal about the fact that folk practices are idolatrous, as is documented in this study.

### **The Social Gospel**

Another manner in which Mexicans and Latinos in general are influencing the culture of the Catholic Church is in the arena of social action at both the local and national level. The relationship between politics and religion as exhibited in Mexican immigrants demonstrate that the hierarchy of the church has itself made adjustments in the political stances that have been taken by the church in order to better accommodate their Latino constituency (Cadena 1989). A strand of Catholicism prevalent in Latin America known as liberation theology which focused on advocacy for the poor along Marxist lines was strongly excoriated by the higher ranks of the Catholic church (Lopez 2009). However, whispers of this ideology can be heard through the speeches and homilies which local priests dispense addressing the current needs of the immigrant community. As Lopez notes, the Southwest U.S. has served as a focal point for clergy that subscribe to this

theology, many having been trained in Latin America (2009). Garcia chronicles the lives of some of these key priests, such as Juan Romero, Luis Quiluis, and Virgilio Elizondo, the latter a prominent voice in both the cultural and the academic sphere (2005). The image of the “worker priest” popularized in post World War II France is conjured up by Garcia to characterize the efforts of these clergymen in identifying with the experiences of their working class parishioners. Furthermore, labor leaders of Chicano extract such as Cesar Chavez and Dolores Huerta drew heavily from their Catholic spiritual traditions when mobilizing the masses for social change. Social justice efforts have now expanded beyond labor to highlight the rights of immigrants. Mexicans have not invented these streams of social justice within the Catholic church, which have arguably been present for centuries. Nevertheless, the ethnic Mexican population has raised awareness of this movement at times by being advocates of it and at other times, simply by voicing their needs and sparking the desire for mobilization in a broader population.

The boundary processes for participation in these types of social justice initiatives are marked by a tendency to draw the faithful into closer participation with more progressive political organizations. This places the Latino Catholic church in a position that shares some common ground with the African American church. That is, the Catholic church holds to conservative stances on various issues labeled as “moral” issues, such as advocating for heteronormativity and having strict views on reproductive rights, but it holds a more liberal position on issues related to labor, immigration, and structural injustices in general. I have noted that this particular area of emphasis provides an attractive space for younger generation Latino Catholics as they attempt to reconcile

socially progressive views with a traditional faith structure. On the other hand, if an emphasis on social justice completely blurs the boundaries with broader mainstream culture, church allegiance may become superfluous for those whose membership in the church is primarily focused on social justice advocacy. This latter observation is in alignment with Smith's analysis of Mainline Protestant churches, where he argues that Mainline churches continue to lose adherents because their progressive views blur the boundaries with mainstream society, and the boundaries lose meaning and significance when they are not reconceptualized (Smith 1998).

### **Charismatic Catholicism**

A particular movement within the Catholic church which has brought vitality to church membership in general and to Mexicans in particular, is the Charismatic movement, or the Charismatic Renewal. Numerically, about 26% of Latino Catholics identify with the Catholic Charismatic movement in the U.S. (Espinosa, Elizondo and Miranda 2003). The Charismatic belief system places an emphasis on experiential manifestations of God's power through spiritual gifts such as speaking in foreign and/or unknown tongues, spontaneously sharing words of prophecy, and exhibiting exceptional amounts of faith in regards to the healing of diseases or other miraculous possibilities. Believers from this orientation have an expectation that God can be experienced in both a spiritual and physical sense. This belief system is not solely present in Catholicism and has many parallels to particular strands of Protestant Christianity such as Evangelicalism and Pentecostalism. Within the Catholic church, this movement has gained an inordinate amount of Latino followers (Deck 2014). Organizationally, it provides a number of

important opportunities, which is part of what makes the movement attractive. It draws leadership from outside of the professional clerical sphere, is more egalitarian in nature, and decentralizes activities from the traditional foci of the parish model.

The Charismatic Renewal may also function as a cross-cutting cleavage, in this case with Evangelical Christianity. Various scholars have noted the similarities of Charismatic Catholicism with Evangelicalism in terms of lay leadership, its lively worship music, and its style of teaching the Bible (Deck 2014; Espinosa et al. 2003; Pew 2014). In sharing so many similarities with Evangelicalism, does involvement with the Charismatic renewal blur the boundaries between Evangelicals and Catholics? Several of my respondents are involved in the Charismatic renewal and certainly exhibit a language and conduct very similar to Evangelicalism. On the other hand, the Charismatic Renewal is known to energize Catholics in some of their distinctively Catholic traditions, such as the veneration of the Virgen of Guadalupe (Pew 2007). This type of activity is typically viewed as anathema by Evangelicals.

### **Challenges to the Universal Church**

Despite the manner in which the Catholic church has defied decline, and despite the fact that Latinos have contributed heartily to the maintenance and innovation of the church, the relationship between the Catholic church and its Latino faithful, has not been without its challenges. The latest membership figures demonstrate a struggle to retain significant segments of membership. Herein I will discuss a number of historical factors that have proven to be festering wounds in the church's relationship to ethnic Mexicans. I will then provide a brief overview of the numerical shifts that are being experienced by the

Catholic church.

Historically, the priestly vocation has encapsulated various problems in the engagement of the Mexican community by the Catholic church. The dearth of indigenous clergy in the first century of the Catholic church's establishment in Mexico, according to one church historian, is one of the greatest failures of the Catholic church (Ricard 1966). At a more focused regional level, in what would eventually become the U.S. Southwest territory, the scarcity of priests, both under Spanish rule and under Mexican rule, left the missions in under-resourced and often ailing conditions (Weber 1981). In part, this struggle was an outgrowth of the political transitions that took place as Mexico gained its independence, and then later, as the U.S. took control of the region. The supply of priests primarily came from Spain, and as relations with Spain at the national level changed, the Mexican church lost important access to resources. The remote missions and parishes of the U.S. Southwest arguably experienced the most abandonment and isolation out of all Mexican based churches. This was particularly the case during the period of Mexican control, from 1821 until 1853 when the Gadsden purchase solidified the modern U.S. Mexico border. Later, under U.S. control, Mexican-Americans in the Southwest were at a loss if they sought co-ethnic priests, since such were not yet allowed. It was not until the early-twentieth century that men of Mexican origin could enter the priesthood (Fernandez 2007).

Mexico also had its share of problems with the Catholic church in the twentieth century. This time period ushered in a phase of anti-church, anti-clerical legislation. While these anti-religious policies had surfaced earlier, at the inception of Mexico's independent

rule, the height of animosity towards the Catholic church was during the rule of President Plutarco Elias Calles, starting in 1924 (Young 2015). During this time, the Catholic church in Mexico was stripped of property ownership, and outlawed from running schools, convents or monasteries. The number of priests was restricted, the state was entitled to remove priests, and foreign priests were barred from serving on Mexican soil. The Catholic church and its representatives had no right to defend themselves in court. A number of policies also affected Catholic adherents, such as prohibitions against wearing religious items in public or using certain religious language in public. Clearly this did not dissuade people from maintaining Catholic allegiance, but it certainly restricted the power of the church.

On the U.S. front, Mexicans and Mexican-Americans experienced periods of marginalization by the church (Krause and Hayward 2012). Members of the Catholic hierarchy at times viewed Mexican customs as superstition (Burns 1994). When Mexican-origin men were accepted into the priesthood, they were often expected to distance themselves from their cultural customs, a process which Chicano priest Virgilio Elizondo refers to as assuming the “shame of our own people” (Elizondo 2010:55). As mentioned above, the use of the Spanish language was at times a contested territory (Matovina 1991). Cultural resistance from above, was bolstered by the social distance experienced by priests and parishioners (Lopez 2009). Lopez argues that even though the Catholic church currently champions immigration reform in the U.S., there was a time in the Southwestern states that the Catholic church struggled to welcome non-white migrants (2009). One quantifiable signal of the Catholic church’s struggle in reaching out to Mexican adherents is



in its limited provision of parochial education among Mexican-American Catholics (Lopez 2009); Ospino (2014) notes in similar fashion, that among Latino Catholics, only 3% of children attend parochial schools.

The underlying strength of the Catholic Church has been in its inculturation, the notion that religious belief and practice is intertwined with ethnic and nationalistic culture (Deck 2014). Given the structural and social challenges that the Catholic Church has faced in serving people of Mexican-origin, the locus of church authority must be understood as not merely existing as an inherent property of the church unto itself. Moreover, the cultural space that has been created for Catholic religious ideals is what has sustained Mexican affiliation to the church. The strength of this connection has been maintained via home-based and neighborhood based devotion (Lopez 2009). The concessions made by the church in allowing processions and other localized expressions of faith are in large part what solidified the Catholic Church's inter-connectedness to Mexican affiliates. In conjunction, the visual symbolism that colors the home and communal acts of devotion is a powerful engine of ethno-religiosity. Had this home/community/symbolic aspect not emerged with such dominance, it is conceivable that the Catholic Church's institutional dominance would have faded, given the hardships it had to endure and overcome, both in Mexico and in the U.S.

The limitations in ethnic leadership, and the scarcity of resources allocated for serving Mexicans and Latinos in the U.S. in part has opened the door for the shifting of religious identities among ethnic Mexicans as of late. This is not a new phenomenon (Sanchez-Walsh 2013). It is, however, a more pronounced phenomenon, and certainly one

that is garnering more attention from scholars, popular pundits, and ecclesial leadership alike.

The Pew Research Center has provided the latest points of comparison in regards to religious change across the key affiliation groups for Mexicans and Latinos. In 2010, 71% of ethnic Mexicans identified as Catholic in the U.S. In 2013, only 61% identified as Catholic. This indicates a 10% drop in Catholic adherents among Mexicans in a span of only three years! In contrast, 11% identified as Evangelical in 2010, and 13% identified as such in 2013. As a point of comparison, 9% identified as having no formal religious affiliation in 2010, and this number jumped up to 17% in 2013. The most drastic shift is away from Catholicism. The greatest shift is toward non-affiliation, though this is a phenomenon that is skewed significantly toward younger adults. It should also be noted that those who identify as non-affiliated may still hold to spiritual beliefs, but they are no longer affiliated formally with a religious institution. These could, in theory, be individuals that still hold to Catholic or Protestant beliefs, but see no need in being part of a church (Pew 2014). The growth among Protestants is more pronounced when Mainline Protestants are combined with Evangelicals in 2013; this adds an additional 5%, making it a total of 18% Protestant adherence among ethnic Mexicans. I will now discuss Evangelical Protestantism, its traditions, and the reasons why it is experiencing growth.

## **EVANGELICAL PROTESTANTS**

Because Latinos have traditionally been so strongly associated with the Catholic church, there has been a tendency to overlook the growing number of Protestant adherents from among Latinos. In Mexico, census data shows that about 9% of the population

considers themselves to be either Protestant, or some type of Protestant off-shoot (INEGI 2000; Pew 2014). Furthermore, the Pew Hispanic Center in a recent survey has demonstrated that a high number of Latinos, including a substantial number of Mexicans, have defected from the Catholic church (2007). Putting things in perspective, Espinosa et al state that, "there are now more Latino Protestants in the United States than Jews or Muslims or Episcopalians and Presbyterians combined. (Espinosa et al 2003)" The distribution of Latino Protestants among the various denominations and movements presents some contrasts to that of the broader population, particularly of the "W.A.S.P." variety. Mainline Protestantism accounts for about 18% of the total U.S. population, but very few of these are Latinos; Latinos constitute only 3% of mainline parishioners and only about 5% of Latinos identify as Mainline Protestant.

Latino Protestants flock to Evangelical and Pentecostal churches. In fact, one survey found that 88% of all Latino Protestants are Evangelical and 64% are members of Pentecostal or Charismatic denominations (Espinosa 2003). A salient quality that characterizes Latino Evangelicals is the belief in being "born-again," understood to mean that neophytes undergo a spiritual transformation upon conversion which permeates all aspects of the converts' lives and emphasizes an orientation towards Jesus Christ (Espinosa 2003). For Mexican evangelicals, this is not just a cerebral acceptance of new ideas but it is a pronounced allegiance to a new way of life which at times entails separation from and reaction against the broader culture (Flores 2009; Weigert et al 1971). Davis (2004) notes that for many poor Latin Americans who turn to this form of Christianity, particularly of the Pentecostal brand, a notion of separation often provides an impetus for surviving adverse

situations and not succumbing to detrimental coping strategies.

The growth of Protestant and Pentecostal Christianity among Mexicans has been explained in various ways. The religious diversity and freedom in the U.S. should not be overlooked as a factor in how shifts in the religious landscape can occur. Likewise, it must also be taken into account that religious diversity in Mexico is actually increasing (INEGI 2000; Pew 2014). While some outside observers may assume that religious conversion is primarily a post-migration experience, a significant number of immigrants experience conversion in their country of origin; among Latino immigrants who have converted to Protestantism, the numbers are split fairly evenly between those who convert in the homeland and those who convert in the U.S. (Pew 2014). In reference to Pentecostal growth in Latin America, Freston points out that some countries already have significant Pentecostal constituencies and some exhibit growing minorities: "At the upper end are Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Guatemala, El Salvador and Nicaragua, in all of which Pentecostals represent more than 10% of the national populations, according to the World Christian Database. At the lower end are Mexico, Venezuela, Colombia and Peru, where Pentecostals represent well below 10% of the population. However, some of the countries with small Pentecostal populations, such as Mexico, Colombia and Peru, also are currently witnessing significant Pentecostal growth" (2004:229).

Protestantism among Mexicans in the U.S. has actually existed since the mid-nineteenth century. As Martinez and Scott chronicle, with the acquisition of the Southwest territories, a new pathway for Protestant missionary efforts was opened, in this case upon U.S. soil (2012). The 80,000-100,000 Mexicans that remained within the newly acquired

territories were primarily Catholic, something which made them all the more a prime target for proselytization. Early efforts at establishing Protestant churches among Mexicans in the Southwest were not measurably fruitful. Denominations such as the Presbyterians, Methodists, Episcopalians, and American Baptists had limited success in their initial efforts. The failure of this missionary work was in large part due to the organizational weakness of the agencies sending missionaries, the rapid changes that began to happen in the Southwest context, the prejudice of U.S. religious leaders in dealing with Mexicans, and in some places, the acculturation of newly formed Protestant groups who eventually were assimilated into primarily white Protestant churches (Martinez and Scott 2012). This latter scenario happened in some places in New Mexico, which ultimately led to the disappearance of certain *Hispano*<sup>12</sup> Protestant churches. By the start of the twentieth century, the Methodists, Presbyterians, and American Baptists had established a sprinkling of churches in the Mexican communities of the Southwest U.S. (Martinez and Scott 2012). While these churches did not boast large congregations numerically, they still occupied a significant place in the development of Latino Protestantism. These churches paved the way for later movements that would experience more growth. In a broader sense, they diversified the religious economy, creating competition, and also providing opportunities for Mexicans to gain familiarity with Protestant traditions.

A crucial stage in the expansion of Latino Protestantism came at the inception of Pentecostalism. Similar to Charismatic Catholicism described above, its precursor, Pentecostalism, also emphasizes that supernatural phenomena are normative aspects to be

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<sup>12</sup> Hispano is the self-designated term used by the descendents of Spanish settlers that remained in New Mexico.

experienced by adherents. Occurrences such as divine healing, speaking of unknown languages, and the ability to speak prophecies are among the types of supernatural experiences Pentecostals come to expect. A central belief of Pentecostal doctrine is what is called the “Baptism in the Holy Spirit.” This is an experience in which God’s spirit is believed to come upon and fill a person, as evidenced by speaking in tongues unknown to the individual.

The inception of the Pentecostal movement came about at what was known as the Azusa Street Revival, in Los Angeles. This was an emotional protracted gathering wherein participants claimed to experience supernatural healings as well as other supernatural phenomena such as speaking in tongues (Espinosa 2002). Mexicans were present at the birth of Pentecostalism at Azusa Street, and reports of the time document their participation (Espinosa 1999; Ramirez 1999). As leadership emerged from within the movement, Mexican-American leaders were front and center. One of the most dominant figures in the earlier half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century was a Mexican immigrant by the name of Francisco Olazabal. Olazabal came to be known as “*El Azteca*,” a celebrated evangelist who drew tens of thousands of attendees to his revival meetings in Latino barrios throughout the U.S. and Puerto Rico. Furthermore, a particular brand of Pentecostalism, the Apostolic church, which spread throughout the Southwestern U.S. and Mexico, was from its inception Mexican led (Martinez and Scott 2009). Moreover, they serve as an ideal example for how Mexicans in the Southwest helped to influence religion at an international level.

This brief historical overview is meant to highlight several underlying principles. First of all, the Southwest region has played a critical role in the development of Latino

religions. Secondly, both because of the religious history and the rise of Mexican populations in the Southwest, this region came to supply religious movements with important leaders, some of which would go on to make an impact internationally. Thirdly, the stage for the diversification of Latino and Mexican religions was set a century and a half ago, and the punctuated movements being experienced now must be understood in the context of movements that have been in existence for some time.

As far as describing the specific aspects of Protestant and Pentecostal Christianity that draw and maintain a growing membership, several explanations have been offered. Protestant churches have been involved in providing social services in varying degrees to communities in need. The immigrant community is a prime population to target with social programs. Hirschman asserts that conversions often take place as people avail themselves of services offered by Protestant churches (2004). A plethora of options are offered by Espinosa et al: "aggressive proselytism, indigenous clergy, churches, liturgy, prayer groups, increased pastoral and lay leadership opportunities, church planting, healing, and greater roles for women in ministry have all contributed." (2003:16). In general, Davis (2004) asserts that Pentecostalism is growing because it meets people's needs. This refers not only to material needs, but also to emotional needs. Davis points out that Pentecostal churches have a great track record of administering healing over a number of ills, though Davis considers these to be psychosomatic cases of healing. On a global scale, Davis describes Pentecostalism as "the largest self-organized movement of urban poor people on the planet." (2004: 32)

It may be posited that a slight shift for Latinos towards Protestantism is a sign of

acculturation (Telles and Ortiz 2008). Protestantism is, after all, still the historical religious majority in the U.S. A hint of acculturation may be noted in that among young Latinos ages 16-25, a correlation pattern between church and language in the Catholic church exists. 67% of Spanish dominant Latinos are Catholic, 57% of bilingual Latinos are Catholic, and 47% of English dominant Latinos are Catholic (Taylor 2009). Similar patterns are found by Calvillo and Bailey, even after controlled for a number of other variables (Calvillo and Bailey 2015). This alone does not point to a growth in Protestantism along the lines of acculturation, but it does point to the possibility of transfer growth as some move away from the Catholic church. The lack of emphasis from the Catholic church in maintaining Latinos from the second generation and beyond may provide some transfer growth for Evangelicals, who, according to Ebaugh, invest more effort in keeping the younger generation engaged ( 2003). When comparing Protestantism and Catholicism among young Latinos the Pew Center also finds that among first generation young Latinos, 66% are Catholic and 14% are Protestant, for the second generation 49% are Catholic and 25% are Protestant, and for the third generation and up, 49% are Catholic and 19% are Protestant.

What of the correct labels to use when talking about Protestant adherence among Latinos? Among scholars of Latino Protestantism, the consensus is that the label “Evangelico” most effectively captures the manner in which adherents self-identify (Espinosa et al 2003; Martinez and Scott 2009; Martinez 2011). It should be noted that Evangelical, Charismatic, and Pentecostal are not mutually exclusive terms. For some adherents, these terms overlap. Among Mexicans, most Pentecostals/Charismatics would



call themselves Evangelicals or *evangelicos*, but not all Evangelicals would call themselves Pentecostal (Lugo 2007). Woodberry and Smith note that terms such as Evangelical, Protestant, and Pentecostal embody complex and multi-layered relationships (1998). From a structural perspective, organizations that identify with one or some of these terms are connected to networks of organizations such as schools, seminaries, and parachurch institutions. Likewise, as Sanchez-Walsh points out, identifying with the label of Evangelical allows Latinos to come under the broad umbrella of Evangelical Christianity in the U.S. and beyond (2013).

The term *Evangelico* in the Latin American context has come to signify an important social boundary as it is understood to stand in distinction to Catholic identity (Martinez 2011; Ramirez 1999). Being a minority together, provides an opportunity for Latino Evangelicals to build strength (Martin 1990; Stoll 1990; Putnam and Campbell 2010). Furthermore, with the growth and dominance of Evangelical and Pentecostal traditions, other types of Protestant churches exhibit isomorphism, being influenced by the music, liturgy, and theology of these mega-movements (Espinosa 2004). For Latinos in the U.S., as in Latin America, most Protestants are either Evangelical and/or Pentecostal (Warner and Wittner 1998).

## **NON-RELIGIOUS**

Though religiosity is strongly associated with Latinos and Mexicans, trends in secularization present some interesting questions, with an increasing number of Latinos identifying as non-religious (Cooperman 2014). Mexico has a history of having separation of church and state. As discussed above, there were historical periods where the church

was treated by the state with hostility. U.S. acculturation for some Mexicans may correlate with Protestant affiliation but for others it may correlate with secularization. According to Taylor (2009), there is actually an initial drop in Catholic adherence for the Mexican population in the U.S. in the first generation but then there is a drop in Protestant adherence as well for later generations. The rise in religious adherence from the second to the third generation is slight when it comes to other traditions outside of Protestantism and Catholicism, but the rise among those who claim no religion demonstrates a growth of 5%. Though ascertaining the statistical significance of this shift merits more research, it may be posited that acculturation is accompanied by an inclination towards secularization for some. After all, as described by Robert Putnam (2010), the oft accepted trend of people taking a break from religion, typically in their youth, and then returning to it in later adulthood, is no longer as consistent. Many are remaining in what he calls the "Nones" category, that is, those who explicitly state that they have no religious affiliation or inclination. Unlike previous generations, the Nones are not returning to religion to raise their children. Might this be hinted at by data demonstrating that 19% of young Latinos that are 3rd generation do not attend any type of religious service (Taylor 2009)? Navarro-Rivera, Kosmin and Keysar also point out that geographic areas where Latinos are numerous and Catholics and Nones are highly represented "tend to be [regions] with large Mexican influence" (2008:19).

A further clue may be found in the shifting views of some educated Mexican-Americans in conjunction with the Chicano movements present on campuses of higher education. Though the Chicano movement has demonstrated a high level of spirituality, it

has also questioned the institutional church and at times challenged it directly (Espinosa and Garcia 2008). This does not mean immediate distancing from the Catholic church or other religions per se, but it may present a varied approach to institutional religion wherein some will eventually identify as being unaffiliated. As of yet, more research is warranted into how secularization trends in the general population will affect Mexicans in correlation with acculturation, but it is nonetheless a trend worthy of attention.

### **RELIGION IN THE CONTEXT OF RECEPTION**

The uniquely religious climate in the U.S. has provided an environment wherein immigrant religions have flourished. The U.S. is a religious anomaly among industrialized nations considering that its religious adherence significantly surpasses that of all other industrialized nations and rivals that of many developing countries (Putnam 2010). No less meaningful is the observation that U.S. religious diversity continues to persist in a climate of relative tolerance, unlike other nations where religious unrest in the face of religious diversity is the norm (Alba 2005; Foner and Alba 2008). Some have used the persistence of religiosity in the U.S. as an interpretive lens to assert that a particular brand and degree of religiosity is integral to U.S. identity (Finke and Stark 1992; Tweed 1997); conservative strands of Christianity are particularly adept at making these historical interpretations (Smith 1998). At times this has fueled nativism framed along religious boundaries (Gleason 1987; Zolberg 2008).

Conversely, religion may provide immigrants with social and cultural capital with which to construct and fuse their identities with those of other mainstream groups. This is assimilation by religion. As discussed above, some immigration scholars have focused on

how Protestant affiliation and specifically the experience of conversion to Protestantism for immigrants may be a sign of assimilation (Telles and Ortiz 2008). In similar fashion, but along a different trajectory, secularization theorists posit that gravitating towards non-affiliation may be a sign of assimilation (Cavalcanti 2005; Taylor 2009). Furthermore, several religious scholars have observed that religious assimilation can also occur at the institutional level, as immigrant serving religious institutions evolve so as to more fully mirror dominant U.S. based Christian/Protestant movements (Ebaugh and Chafetz 2000; Warner 2006; Yang and Ebaugh 2001). Whether or not these propositions are at odds with each other, it is clear that the religious marketplace provides a field wherein immigrants can explore various affiliations in ways that would not have been accessible in their sending context. For the Mexican-origin population, this means that settling into life in the U.S. may involve some form of religious change, even if the change occurs within the same religious tradition that was subscribed to in Mexico.

### **The context of Santa Ana: General Demographics**

The city of Santa Ana rests at the heart of a famed region, Southern California, and an infamous county, Orange County. As the county seat, Santa Ana provides space for the headquarters of county governance. Santa Ana also contains several federal service centers such as the Ronald Reagan federal building, and it is even home to a Mexican consulate office. Santa Ana was established as a U.S. township in 1870, under the guidance of William H. Spurgeon. Once Spurgeon connected Santa Ana to a regional stagecoach line, Santa Ana came to be the urban hub to generally agricultural area (Harwood and Myers 2002). World War II brought about significant developments as industry expanded in the region,

catapulting the growth of Santa Ana. In the years from 1960 through 1990 Santa Ana saw astounding growth as its population nearly tripled from 100,350 to 300,000 (Harwood and Myers 2002).

As the city approached the turn of the millenia, a number of local leaders questioned whether the population of the city was headed in an unsustainable direction (Harwood and Myers 2002). The white middle-class population vacated the city center for newer developments outside of Santa Ana's city limits. At that time, there was some growth in the African American communities leading into the 1970's, but it was the Latino population that came to propel the numerical growth of Santa Ana residents (Gonzalez and Lejano 2009; Harwood and Myers 2002). Much of the growth among Latinos came from an immigration swell, and Santa Ana aggregately exemplified a sense of being a transitional city moving into the 80's. While a substantial number of residents remained in their hometown, many of the newer immigrants exhibited a high turnover rate in their place of residence; that is, even if newer immigrants remained in Santa Ana, many exhibited a turnover rate of 3-6 months, leading to less cohesion at the neighborhood level. Public schools often demonstrated these high turnover rates as students transitioned out of their classrooms (Harwood and Myers 2002). Adding to this lack of permanence was the fact that many immigrants were not yet citizens and could not vote. The absence of a political voice among newer residents posed challenges for the civic engagement of the immigrant community. Nevertheless, moving into the 90's and beyond, more immigrants were permanently settling down in Santa Ana. Among those that found prosperity in Santa Ana, some chose to take their financial capital elsewhere, where they could pay less and have a

higher standard of living, such as in Riverside County (Flores 2011).

Current statistics on Santa Ana demonstrate the city's continued status as a gateway city. Nearly 50% of Santa Ana is composed of foreign born residents (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Latinos constitute 78.2% of the city's population whereas whites now only compose 9.2% (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). While 43.2% of California's population speaks a language at home other than English, 82.9% of Santa Ana residents above the age of 5 speak a language other than English at home (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Cultural markers may shift, however, given that nearly a third of the city's population is under the age of 18. If the younger segment of the population remains in Santa Ana, perhaps they will contribute to a shift in cultural markers such as language more closely paralleling the broader population.

In regards to education, Santa Ana has a significantly lower percentage of High School graduates in comparison to state level figures. Among Santa Ana residents above age 25, only 51.9% are high school graduates, while in the general Californian population 80.8% of the residents have graduated from high school (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Even more pronounced is the difference in completion of Bachelors' Degrees. With 11.7% of residents above age 25 earning a B.A., Santa Ana barely surpasses a third of the percentage of state residents that have earned the same (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). The issue of overcrowding continues to draw attention as Santa Ana households on average are composed of 4.35 members, while the state average is 2.91 members. This effect is further compounded by the fact that over 40% of Santa Ana residents live in multi-unit structures, more than 10% above the state figure (U.S. Census Bureau 2010). Median household income in Santa Ana is \$54,399 while the state figure is \$61,632. Finally, poverty in Santa

Ana is reported by 19.5% of its residents whereas only 14.4% of the overall state population reports this status (U.S. Census Bureau 2010).

In light of some of the trends stated above, a report from the Nelson Rockefeller institute named Santa Ana as the hardest place to live (Montiel et al 2004). The description given by this report is as follows:

*[Santa Ana] displays many of the same characteristics associated with hardship in the older “rust belt” cities listed above: a central city that represents a low, possibly shrinking share of population in the metropolitan area; stuck within inflexible city boundaries; with limited new housing stock; and tough social challenges, such as having nearly six out of every ten adults over 25 years of age having less than a high-school education.*

### **The context of Santa Ana: Santa Ana’s Religious Economy**

Santa Ana arguably exemplifies a robust religious economy given that it provides a diverse offering of religious traditions for local spiritual seekers. “World” religions such as Judaism, Islam, and Buddhism are all represented among the plethora of religious congregations located within the city limits (Grammich, Hadaway, Houseal, Jones, Krindatch, Stanley, and Taylor 2012). Despite some religious diversity, given the demographics of Santa Ana, it is no wonder that the bulk of religious organizations veer towards Christian traditions. There is, nevertheless, diversity in this regard as well. Through data collected via the 2010 religion census, the microdata areas representing Santa Ana reveal that Santa Ana is home to congregations from all of the major strains of Christianity: Eastern Orthodox, Catholic, Historically black Protestant, Evangelical Protestant, and Mainline Protestant (Grammich et al. 2012). Congregations of Pentecostal and Charismatic inclination are included in some of the above mentioned categories as

these are cross-cutting categories.

A variety of other subcategories within broader Christian movements are also listed within the 2010 religion census data as being present in Santa Ana (Grammich et al. 2012). Given the association between Latinos and Catholicism, and given that the population of Santa Ana is overwhelmingly Latino, it is expected that Catholicism would be the highest represented religious groups in the religious census data. 41.5% of respondents indicated membership at a Catholic church compared to 37.8% of the aggregate sample for all of California (Grammich et al. 2012). Evangelical Protestants constituted 12.7% of congregants while California's population is more than double that percentage at 26.5% (Grammich et al. 2012). Nevertheless, this number might be skewed by the large percentage of those responding as "other." Nearly a third of respondents stated that their religious affiliation does not fit into the major categories listed. I hypothesize that this is due to the widespread presence of independent Christian startup churches. These are churches that have no formal affiliations with denominations and as such, members do not identify with larger institutional movements, even though their belief systems may be in close alignment to a movement such as evangelicalism and/or Pentecostalism.

Newer religious movements that may be classified as Christian sects have a visible presence in Santa Ana as well. The Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons are easily spotted walking local neighborhoods or visiting specific homes in order to make inroads with spiritual seekers. One major difference in terms of the visibility of these two groups is that Jehovah's Witnesses that are doing the ostensible work of proselytizing tend to be local residents that are members of local Kingdom Halls. Mormon missionaries also visible



throughout the city, are typically young male adherents serving in their required mission duty. These Mormon missionaries are typically white. I have also observed Polynesian and Latino Mormons on their mission. In addition, I have observed that some Mormon missionaries serving in Santa Ana, are fluent in Spanish, including non-Latinos. While not part of my primary research sample, I did meet local Latino residents in Santa Ana that were faithful to the Mormon church. In other words, besides Mormon missionaries coming in from other regions, there is also a local Mormon population. The religious census data notes that there are three Jehovah's Witnesses congregations and two Mormon congregations in Santa Ana. While these groups are not numerically dominant, their visibility and vigorous efforts toward proselytizing certainly add to the religious competition present in Santa Ana.

### **Latin American Sects**

There is a pair of lesser known Christian sects that were founded in the Americas, South of the border, that have a presence in Santa Ana and deserve mention. With a beautiful facility on a major thoroughfare in Santa Ana, the Universal Church of the Kingdom of God, a movement founded in Brazil, has a recognizable presence in Santa Ana. This Brazilian-based church has sent out missionaries throughout communities in the Americas, targeting Spanish speaking individuals. While they are not seen out on the streets in the same manner that Jehovah's Witnesses and Mormons are seen, their message and presence is accessible via televised programming. Many Latinos have become aware of them through TV ads and regular television shows encouraging people to visit their churches. The slogan, "Pare de Sufrir/ Stop Suffering," has reached iconic levels in the

Latino communities I have researched.

A second Christian sect that merits attention is La Luz Del Mundo, a church movement which is based in Guadalajara Mexico. This movement claims to be the re-institution of the original Christian church from the first century and they refer to their international leader as an “apostle” with direct spiritual lineage to the original apostles and founders of the Christian church as spoken of in the Bible. Their main temple is also in a highly travelled section of Santa Ana close to the downtown area and several blocks from a busy train station. They incorporate a distinctive aesthetic that purports to be based on Old Testament Hebrew culture. Their Santa Ana temple appears a mixture of Roman architecture plastered with ancient Hebrew worship motifs. I refer to these churches as Christian sects because they are based on Christian tradition, but they do not associate with other churches of Christian faith.

### **Latino Folk Religious Expressions**

A type of religious expression not covered in the religious census is that of folk religious practices among Latinos. One localized expression of folk religious practices is the presence of *botanicas*, businesses that offer alternative remedies for various ailments. The treatments offered at botanicas may include herbal and naturalistic remedies that are coupled with some type of ritualistic prescription. Santa Ana has eleven botanicas listed as actual storefront businesses, but there are some such establishments that double as another type of business and may not officially be listed as a botanica. I have noted one that serves as a hair salon and one that doubles as a printing company, for example. Still, these have visible signage indicating that the business is a botanica. There even exists the

possibility that these types of services are also offered out of people's homes or that individual practitioners make house calls. Those who subscribe to these services may still identify as members of Catholic parishes, but it is important to mention that Santa Ana is a place where some of these practices are legitimate businesses as well as legitimate cultural practices. The boundaries between folk religious traditions and institutional religious affiliation will be discussed further as data is expounded upon.

### **The Influence of Mega-Ministries**

The physical and symbolic presence of various evangelical ministries in Santa Ana or on the edges of the city limits are also an important component of the religious marketplace. The shift of the Crystal Cathedral, arguably one of the most iconic churches in the U.S., from being part of a Protestant denomination to coming under the ownership of the Catholic Archdiocese of Orange County, made waves throughout the surrounding cities, including Santa Ana. While this church is not in the Santa Ana city limits, it is about a mile away, well within distance for local parishioners to visit. It now serves as the county Cathedral and hosts large events for the Catholic faithful from the region to attend.

There are various Evangelical churches that wield a broad influence in the Latino community. Santa Ana is home to one of the largest Latino evangelical congregations in the nation. This church, Templo Calvario, boasts upwards of 6,000 congregants. There are also other Protestant Latino churches in close proximity to Templo Calvario which claim to have over 1,000 members. In addition, there are large and well known English speaking ministries which house congregations catering to Latinos. Calvary Chapel of Santa Ana, the flagship church of the Calvary Chapel movement and one of the original California mega-

churches, and Calvary Church of Santa Ana (no relation), are large evangelical churches that have Latino congregations. While these final churches mentioned are not typically recognized for their Latino congregations, they have made inroads in the Latino community; they have both the visibility and the resources to influence the local religious marketplace. The point to consider is that though Catholicism has the greatest number of adherents, Santa Ana residents are regularly confronted with material and social markers of a competitive religious marketplace.

## **CONCLUSION**

The story of Mexican religions in the U.S. has not started with the most current waves of immigration. Nevertheless, one would be remiss to ignore the impact that current immigration is having on religious institutions in the U.S., on the broader U.S. population, and even on older generations of ethnic Mexicans. Groups such as Mexican immigrants help to dispel as mythical the predictions proffered by some that religion is dying and fading into secularization (Hirschman 2004). The fact that religion correlates with positive forms of acculturation will likely continue to reinforce the religious connection for Mexican immigrants. For many religious institutions as well as for political groups who see religious affiliation as an effective way to make inroads with communities, the growing demographic of ethnic Mexicans would seem to be a field ready for harvesting. What is not always as obvious is that fruit harvested will plant seeds of its own. These seeds, already embedded in the soil of the U.S. religious landscape, will change U.S. religion for years to come. The fact that ethnic Mexicans are actively engaged across the spectrum from older denominational hierarchies to the formation of new religious movements bears witness to

the notion that when it comes to religion, ethnic Mexicans are not only followers, they are also leaders. While they are not the most powerful as of yet, religion does provide a hierarchical ladder that is unique and in some ways separate from other markets. As they continue to progress in influence, ethnic Mexicans will provide an increasingly significant lens into the future of religion in the U.S.

## CHAPTER THREE

### **Ethno-Spatial Spirituality**

“If you really want to see what our religion is like, you have to come around here to the community. This is where the true religion takes place.”<sup>13</sup>

That was the advice I was given by Edgar Olvera,<sup>14</sup> as we sat at a table on the front yard of a home, enjoying some freshly made pozole, a traditional Mexican stew. A few others around the table nodded in approval as Edgar harangued us about the importance of participating in community based religious gatherings. It was difficult to miss Edgar’s loud gruff voice as it floated above the din of the small crowd gathered at the local Santa Ana residence. If his voice did not draw people’s attention, then surely his jolly personality and enthusiastic pantomime would. At that moment, Edgar appeared as a public character of sorts, even if just a temporary one. He functioned in fashion similar to a loudspeaker. As people engaged with him, he made public the matters being discussed. I met others like him, but perhaps none as loud and jovial.

Edgar was the figurehead of the day’s gathering, but the event itself was organized communally. The occasion for gathering on this Spring Saturday morning was a tradition called Rosario de la Aurora, an event focused on the communal praying of the rosary. The tradition of praying the rosary, long a staple of Catholic faith, and highly valued among Latino Catholics, has often been carried forth in Mexico by setting up prayer stations at different homes in local neighborhoods, and conducting a procession to each of the

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<sup>13</sup> Most dialogue with and quotation of subjects has been translated from Spanish to English.

<sup>14</sup> Names of subjects are pseudonyms.

designated sites. The Rosario de la Aurora, as it was being carried out, was a public act of piety.

The manner in which Catholics lived out their spirituality in my study demonstrated a reliance on the use of public space and an expectation of communal participation for the reproduction of the faith system. This was a public, communal religion. Edgar's advice to me about true religion taking place in the community was embodied by many of the participants I interacted with at the neighborhood events I attended. Their truest religious expression, as my observations elucidated, was to be found in the local neighborhood.

For the Catholic faithful, their lives lived in the barrio made their faith feel all the more plausible. The neighborhood as it currently existed, for these Catholics, undergirded the plausibility structure of their faith (Berger 1967). The ubiquity of their belief system, instantiated by the statues, stickers, and altars peppered generously throughout the neighborhood, served to reify outwardly that which internally was held so dearly. These artifacts connected parishioners to their past and to the homeland, and it allowed them to stake a claim in the U.S. Through these localized practices, the bungalow homes and apartment courtyards were transformed to hearken back to small towns, rural villages, and urban barrios left behind in Mexico.

The term I use to describe the type of spirituality lived out by Catholics is ethno-spatial spirituality. Ethno-spatial spirituality was intricately woven into the structure of the ethnic enclave. It would be difficult to conceive of life in Central Santa Ana without the many layers of ethno-spatial spirituality that were at work. Certainly life could go on without these elements of spirituality, but it would be a completely foreign experience to

the Catholic residents that called central Santa Ana home. Evangelicals, too, were affected by this Catholic ethno-spatial spirituality. In many ways, their brand of spirituality as situated in public space was an antithesis to the Catholic approach.

In this chapter, I argue that the Catholic and Evangelical parishioners in my study employ drastically different approaches to neighborhood engagement at both the individual and group level. In terms of religious practices, Catholics work to recreate an experience of the homeland via their ethno-spatial spirituality in the U.S.. The spatial approach of Catholics strengthens their retrospective emphasis. The efforts to recreate how things were in Mexico, raises the value of the ethnic enclave where such efforts can and do take place. Consequently, Catholics are able to highlight positive aspects of their barrio and are far more likely to speak about neighborhood assets than their Evangelical neighbors.

Evangelicals on the other hand, view the neighborhood as a place to be reformed. The primary discourse that Evangelicals engage in when talking about their neighborhood is one of transformation. This plays into the forward looking approach that is characteristic of Evangelicals. Evangelicals desire to invest in their neighborhoods for the good of others, but they struggle to acknowledge the assets that already exist in their ethnic neighborhoods. I will demonstrate that for the parishioners in my study, this closely correlates with diverging pathways of accessing resources, particularly the types of social capital that each group avails themselves of.

In presenting these diverging forms of neighborhood engagement, I purport to highlight distinct ethnic identity projects as related to the ethnic enclave. For Catholics, the



reproduction of ethnicity becomes a performance that is communally staged in neighborhood space, to be viewed publicly. Evangelicals on the other hand, perform ethnicity primarily in more privatized church settings. The more privatized “particularistic spaces of sociability” (Ammerman 1997:355; see also Flores 2014, and McRoberts 2003) wherein Evangelical ethnic performance takes places, generate a different type of social and cultural capital than that of Catholic spaces. While both the social capital emerging from the Catholic experience and that of the Evangelical experience provide benefits to respective practitioners, they bolster ethnic boundaries in different ways. Catholic spirituality reinforces notions of the *barrio* as being a central aspect of ethnic identity, while Evangelical spirituality weakens this tie.

### **The Role of the Enclave**

Spatial boundaries play a significant role in the formation of ethnoreligious identities among ethnic Mexicans in Santa Ana. On the surface, it would appear this claim is belied by the paradoxical patterns of spatial incorporation exhibited by ethnic Mexicans. Ethnic Mexicans are among the least segregated from other ethnic groups, and are simultaneously among the most isolated ethnic groups (Iceland, Weinburg, and Hughes 2014). To focus solely on the more integrated segments of the population obscures the continuing significance of the ethnic enclave for many ethnic Mexicans (Alba and Nee 2003), including the role that it plays in the religious sphere.

For the working class immigrant residents of central Santa Ana, a residential pattern of isolation was most common. These patterns of isolation in Central Santa Ana experienced as spatial boundaries for many ethnic Mexicans increases the concentration

and thus salience of ethnoreligiosity, likewise elevating the status of the neighborhood to that of a sacralized space. In the following section, I will briefly review findings on housing and segregation trends for Latinos that contribute to the salience of ethnic boundary maintenance among ethnic Mexicans in the U.S. The information presented deals at times with Latinos in general, and at other times with the Mexican-origin population in particular. Many of the trends which I will review have been cast in a negative light when viewed through the lens of assimilation theory, but they may function as positive factors in the preservation and transmission of ethnoreligiosity.

Santa Ana has exhibited housing patterns that have challenged the stability of its central corridor residents. The subprime mortgage crisis of 2008 was hard hitting in Santa Ana, fitting Omi and Winant's characterization that it "constituted the largest regressive racial redistribution of resources to have occurred in U.S. history" (2014:227). Vulnerability to predatory lending was characteristic of working class Latino homebuyers in the early 2000's (Tienda and Fuentes 2014). Older barrios bore the brunt of foreclosures (Tienda and Fuentes 2014). Santa Ana reflected this pattern, as noted by numerous popular news outlets (Gittelsohn 2008; Hagerty 2011; Christie 2009). One Wall Street Journal article characterized the foreclosure housing market as "blazing hot" in Santa Ana. What offered investment opportunities for some, presented a life crisis for others.

Foreclosure trends adversely affected the core of the city in that people were more likely to rely on support from their network ties to secure housing. While more homes were initially being vacated due to foreclosures, and this pushed some residents out of the city, others moved in with acquaintances, friends, and family members still in the city. The

theme of renting out space, or renting space from someone else came up with frequency in my interviews. This was a trend that most of my subjects had experienced first hand. Moreover, a phenomenon that to some extent was thinning out the city's population, was also contributing to higher levels of residential density per occupied housing unit.

Immigration provides an important additional layer to spatial boundaries experienced in Santa Ana. Various scholars indicate that higher rates of Latino immigration to a particular region correlate with higher levels of segregation (Alba and Nee 1999; Logan, Stowell, and Oakley 2002). When immigration streams are rapid, segregation rates are precipitated (Massey and Denton 1987). As Harwood and Myers note in regards to older residents in Santa Ana, "many people perceived the neighborhood decline as a result of the influx of immigrants, which then drove residents to protest at city council meetings and complain to city staff." (2002). In the 90's, Immigrants came to constitute about half of Santa Ana's residents, a level which has remained steady until today (Harwood and Myers 2002; U.S Census 2010).

Generally, immigrants that are more acculturated, tend to reside in closer proximity to whites, according to South and colleagues (2005). Conversely, a higher concentration of less acculturated immigrants are more likely to remain within the ethnic enclave. These trends are evident in central Santa Ana, where the trade language is Spanish, and the majority of businesses cater to an immigrant population. Older, established Latino neighborhoods are a typical haven for immigrants and ethnics of lower socio-economic resources in large part because of the social support that is available there (Massey and Denton 1987). The flight that many non-Latinos and later generation Latinos exhibited in

the face of immigration led to greater levels of social closure and social support within immigrant communities in central Santa Ana. Santa Ana is considered a sanctuary city, and for many residents this is more than a symbolic designation.

Ethnic enclaves in Santa Ana provide important functions for Mexican immigrants in particular. The enactment of spirituality in the ethnic enclave serves to supercharge the connections that are present in the barrio (Putnam et al 2012). The strength of localized ethnic networks for immigrants has been well documented, at times under various labels, with similar and complementary results being uncovered (Light and Karageorgis 1994; Portes and Bach 1985; Waldinger 1996). Research focusing on ethnic enclaves, ethnic niches, and ethnic economies, demonstrates that these structural phenomena provide immigrants with a solid social and economic foundation upon which to build their lives in the U.S. Ethnic enclaves have been essential to the formation of niche industries wherein immigrants have been able to achieve mobility (Waldinger 1996). Ethnic enclaves also provide cultural resources wherein immigrants find transnational connections to their homeland in terms of people, goods, and services (Hernandez-Leon 2008).

As immigrants settle into and interact within ethnic enclaves, they are able to gain and exchange social capital. Social capital may be conceptualized as a set of assets relating to social interaction between individuals or within a network that enable people to work together (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Putnam 1995). That which binds people together has both cultural and structural elements. The cultural elements are those things such as norms, reciprocity, and trust which are acted out through social interaction (Hargreaves 2001). Religion is particularly conducive to these aspects of social capital (Putnam et al

2012). The structural components are those things which facilitate the actual interaction between agents such as the networks and organizations that contain the capital. Social capital, after all, does not reside in individuals but rather in their connections to others. There is a productive advantage which immigrants may find in ethnic enclaves due to the social capital accessible there (Portes 1993). Religious affiliation helps to strengthen the pathways through which social capital is shared. At activities such as the Rosario de la Aurora, interactions extended beyond wooden ritual, and facilitated extensive social interaction. These events provide an undergirding for social contracts to form between people, via the exchange of spiritual teachings and socialization processes in general. I now turn to the experiences of local residents themselves.

### **The Nostalgia of Ethnoreligiosity**

“It’s a very heavy nostalgia that one feels.” As he uttered the phrase, Jesus Ibarra took a deep breath and paused. It was as if the very nostalgia he had mentioned began to set in. In a very reflective tone, Jesus proceeded to describe the type of festivities that he would frequently participate in in his hometown in Mexico:

*On the fourteenth day of December they had a fiesta at the Capilla Señor de los Milagros [the Chapel of the Lord of Miracles] where most of the town would attend. Then, they had a pilgrimage from the “rancherias,” [the rural ranch areas] where people from the outskirt villages would come into town. When those pilgrimages were completed, the barrios from within the town would participate in their own pilgrimages. This was all to honor la Virgen de Guadalupe. On the 12th of December they would gather to sing Las Mañanitas. The whole pueblo would participate in pilgrimages. Then the posadas would start, at the barrios until Christmas. I really miss those days.*

*-Jesus Ibarra, Catholic*

Jesus further elaborated, “It was difficult for me to move away from those celebrations, but it was even harder for my wife.” Jesus, who had already been in the U.S.

for a decade prior to his wife coming here, recalls his wife's experience once in the U.S. Their families were from the same hometown in Mexico and they met during a season of festivities while Jesus and his family were visiting their hometown from the U.S.. He recalled meeting her several years prior, when they were both teens, but not thinking much of her as she was "too young." Eventually, their paths would cross again at a pueblo festival, when Jesus and his family were in town. After a brief courtship, Jimena and Jesus married in Mexico and she returned with him to the U.S. It was Jimena's first time in the U.S. Jesus described her experience in the following manner:

*[Jimena] had never left her town. Now she was away from her family. It is a time of nostalgia, of depression during the holiday season. Back then it was a time of tradition, a time for family. It was a time of traditional gifts, of customs. They would make the fruit, candies, peanuts, one candy, two candies and they would give it to the children. When they would host the posada they would give these to the children. She got to experience that very well over there.*

Jimena was present for one of my conversations with Jesus. She added to his description:

*With the neighbors, we the young people would make piñatas, fruit punch. There were a lot of people. We would get together as youth, right there in the middle of the piñata breaking. We would all share in these moments together.*

Both Jesus and Jimena were emphatic about the communal aspects of their holiday celebrations in Mexico. Their voices would become more excited, their words more annunciated, as they drew attention to these moments of localized solidarity. These experiences were shared "with the neighbors." Unlike the consumer traditions of American holidays, there were very little material spoils to be acquired from the holidays that they reminisce about in Mexico. The candies and fruits that Jesus referred to comprised the totality of goods to be had from the celebrations. The experience for the Ibarra family was

most memorable because of the communal aspect of these traditions, not necessarily because of the goods they exchanged.

Several other respondents echoed a similar sentiment related to missing the same level of community that was facilitated by the traditions in Mexico. In conversing with Ricardo and Francisca Delgado, they stressed that they missed the protracted aspect of the religious festivals. What mattered to the Delgados was that the community came together for an extended period of time. This was not a quick meet and greet. Devotional capital, a type of social capital which requires a performative investment in the religious sphere according to Peña (2011), was shared in this experience. That is, as people invest in putting together and in participating in a religious activity, they are viewed with more respect and their ties to others grow. In cases where all expend energy together, people form a more extensive bond.

*Ricardo: Here they don't do what one does in Mexico. I came [here] with that illusion.*

*Jonathan: What's missing here? What do you miss most?*

*Ricardo: The processions that they do over there. They're different. Maybe it's that over there they are done in the open field. We would walk from station to station far away. We would leave at 10[am] and would return at 10[pm].*

I interviewed Ricardo and his wife Francisca several months before the winter holiday season. When I participated in some of the neighborhood festivities during that time, Ricardo and Francisca, sure enough, were at the forefront. Yes, the experience was different than what it was in Mexico, but it was still an opportunity to experience something approximate. Ricardo expressed that he was not able to make mass on many occasions, because his work as a construction worker left him very tired. His wife often

attended mass without him. Yet, when neighborhood based festivities came around, he was proud to say that he was there consistently.

There were two aspects of the nostalgia that were specified by the subjects that shared this sentiment: On the one hand, there was an intentional effort made to recall the past. People yearned for what they had in their sending country. There was an imagined experience, and an imagined community that was not physically present with them here in the U.S. The nostalgia discourse uncovers the retrospective aspect of Catholic adherence. In addition, there was a strong motivation to recreate that which was lost. While subjects could not bring Mexico to Santa Ana, and many of my respondents could not return back because of their legal status, they could invest their efforts to replicate what they had in Mexico while in the U.S. context.

Mercedes Uribe was a shining example of someone for whom communal religious expression was a way to bridge temporal and geographical boundaries. In the surrounding homes and apartments, there were residents that considered Mercedes to be very devout. Among the people I interviewed, at least four subjects from the same parish referred me to her as someone that was a good example of a faithful Catholic. What made Mercedes such a notable religious figure in the community?

Mercedes was known for the frequency with which she volunteered her home for church festivals and celebrations. For example, leading up to Christmas time, Mercedes opened up her home for the tradition of *posadas* to take place. Posadas reenact the Christian belief that Joseph and Mary, the parents of Jesus Christ, traveled to a city called Bethlehem while Mary was pregnant with Jesus; in Bethlehem they sought shelter for the



night, but kept meeting rejection. “The scheduling for my home is already filling up,” Mercedes said in regards to the upcoming posadas. My initial conversation with her took place in the month of May, and the posadas take place in December. “Some people are asking if I can start hosing the posadas sooner,” Mercedes added, “so that more of them can fit into the schedule.” This was an unconventional practice, the early scheduling that is. It was reflective of the high value that was given to hosting these celebrations at Mercedes’ home. This was not merely about the location of Mercedes’ home. Rather, observing her in action made it abundantly evident that she was a masterful host.

When I asked Mercedes about her church attendance, she had very little to say. She casually acknowledged that she tried to attend mass weekly but was not always able to. I noticed that many of the community prayer events were hosted by specific prayer groups that were tied to the local parish. I asked if she was part of one of those. Uninterested, Mercedes said, “No. I’m not part of those prayer groups or any of those teams.” At her festivals, she was surrounded by people who exhibited some of the highest levels of church commitment that I met. She herself was nearly indifferent to these opportunities.

However, when we started conversing about Mercedes’ involvement in bringing opportunities for devotion into the neighborhood, then our conversation came to life. She spoke elaborately of the events she liked to help organize and of all the people that attended her events. She made sure I understood that people came from other cities in the county to her events. She specifically mentioned that some participants came from the city of La Habra, a city on the northwestern edge of Orange County.

For Mercedes, the primary locus of faith expression resided in the neighborhood. According to her, “this is what I know that the people want to participate in.” Mercedes’ practices and explanations helped to elucidate why ethno-spatial spirituality was so important to people. Mercedes believed that neighborhood festivities served as a reminder to immigrants of what life was like in Mexico.

According to Mercedes, one of her recent guests exclaimed, “It’s exactly like over there [in Mexico],” when he visited one of Mercedes’ celebrations for the first time. This guest was surprised that the decorations and the activities involved were very similar to what he used to experience in Mexico. This man did not live in central Santa Ana, and he thought that he would not see these types of celebrations in the U.S. Mercedes believed that “many people are surprised that way when they first come to see.” Her efforts are partially an attempt to offset the gloom that overcomes some immigrants having to let go of past ritual and celebration. As I conducted an interview with her on the front porch of her home, a large Mexican flag billowed atop a thirty-foot pole in the yard. “Oh that?” Mercedes responded to my inquiry about the flag. “One of my tenants takes care of that. He makes sure it’s clean and nice.”

### **Local Miracles and Material Objects of Devotion**

In visiting numerous community-based celebrations, it became clear to me that ethno-spatial spirituality could not be understood without the physical markers that accompanied it. The statues, altars, stickers, and images in general that were prevalent throughout the barrio were not merely accessories to faith and ritual, they themselves were often the object of faith and the focus of ritual. As I attended a rosary procession

making its way through a central Santa Ana neighborhood, the group had a planned stop at the home of a young couple. They lived in a weathered but well manicured home with a chain link fence around it and a wide front lawn. I pushed in on the edge of the small crowd to listen to a story that the residents would be relating.

The husband, Giovanni Ayon, walked forward, coming out from his front porch with fidgety steps. He seemed reluctant to speak but his body language reflected a sense of excitement. He began by pointing to the altar on their front porch and stating how important it was to them. The altar contained a statue, about two feet tall, of the Virgen de Guadalupe. Giovanni said that the family was worried during a recent spell of the Santa Ana winds. Before describing more, he choked up. Several audience members yelled out, "We can't hear!" It was unclear if it was simply nervousness that brought a halt to his speech or if the story was emotionally moving. Estefania, Giovanni's wife, stepped in to continue the story.

Estefania explained that she found out about the initial happenings when her husband called her on her cell phone. She rushed home to inspect the altar. She communicated a sense of urgency to the crowd over the concern that possibly their statue of La Virgen had not survived the extended gust of wind. This would be a terrible tragedy.

To the surprise of Estefania and Giovanni, the statue was perfectly fine. Her husband had put the statue back into its place and there were no cracks, or scratches on it. The statue had fallen flat on the ground, a concrete patio area, and the small house-like structure that encased it, the altar, had fallen over the statue. Neither from above, nor from below was the statue harmed. To Giovanni and Estefania, this was a miracle. This was a sign

to those in attendance that la Virgen had shown favor upon them. Giovani's beaming smile after the re-telling of this story reflected a sense of confidence that came from his faith. His faith, in turn, was very much centered on his interaction with their physical altar.

Focus on a physical representation of a spiritual being was not an uncommon element in the religious narratives of my subjects. Many discussed a turning point in their lives based on devotion that was directed to a patron saint, or a particular representation of La Virgen. Material objects were almost always present in these narratives. Most typically, these acts of devotion marked continuity with previously held faith to these spiritual figures. A common theme, which has been explored by a number of other scholars, is the presence of these objects of devotion before and after the process of crossing from Mexico into the U.S. (Hagan 2009; Durand and Massey 1995). These material symbols often marked a connection to spiritual tradition in Mexico. They served as constant, public reminders to my subjects.

Objects of devotion in some cases strengthened transnational ties in that the object of devotion was itself brought over from Mexico. The case of La Virgen de Juquila provided one such example, as brought to my attention by Miguel Luna. Miguel Luna explained that a particular statue of La Virgen de Juquila was brought from his region in Mexico. La Virgen de Juquila represents a particular iteration of the Virgen Mary in a specific location in Oaxaca. Miguel explained that a particular statue of her had been brought from Mexico and would be on display in a particular home. On a designated day, the Virgen's clothing would be changed and this would be an occasion for gathering and rendering honor to her. Another similar happening, a nearby visit of a statue of Santo Toribio, a saint from the

Mexican state of Jalisco, was brought to public attention via an article in the Los Angeles Times (Bermudez 2014).

Veronica Ochoa's interaction with material representations of La Virgen stand out as one of the most devout cases among those I interviewed. Some neighbors that had referred me to Veronica stated that her devotion to La Virgen and her involvement at the local parish increased because she needed God's help to deal with her young adult son's delinquent tendencies. When I visited Veronica at her home, I immediately noticed that she had numerous religious objects on display that were brought to her by family members that returned from Mexico. These were primarily icons. Two of these objects actually list the state in Mexico that they are from. This was a fusion of transnational location and religious symbolism orienting the faithful toward the homeland.

When speaking to Veronica I found that she was not able to attend mass on a weekly basis, for a combination of reasons. She often served as the caretaker for her grandchildren and other local children, and she frequently worked on the weekends by selling food items to make money on the side. She began to worry for her son as he became involved with different elements in the neighborhood that she deemed to be harmful. As a single mother in her early sixties, she turned to the Catholic Church for support.

Veronica's devotion was most public in that she cared for a shrine at the center of an apartment courtyard. The residents of this courtyard were given permission to build a shrine a decade ago in the corner of their apartment complex's open air courtyard. The shrine started smaller, and initially had a more rustic look, but it was now a well constructed porch-like structure, measuring about five feet by nine feet at its base area and

about nine feet in height. It had entryway pillars covered in a lightly stuccoed textured. On the surface, in its general design, the shrine was not necessarily different than most shrines I saw in the area. One distinction, given its location, was the communal nature of this shrine. It was shared by the entire neighborhood. What further distinguished this shrine was that at various times in the year, it housed three statues of La Virgen, almost identical in dimensions and design.

There was a geographical significance to the three virgins that Veronica cared for. Two of the three statues would travel to other parts of the county periodically. One statue traveled about 20 miles away to Aliso Viejo, a city in South Orange County. Another statue traveled to another home in Santa Ana. This was the description given to me by Veronica Ochoa's son, Rodolfo, as I conversed with him next to the altar after interviewing Veronica. Months after a procession commemorating the day of the Virgen de Guadalupe, which Veronica invited me to, several attendees confirmed this practice of transporting the statues elsewhere. When these statues were received at another altar, they were then venerated there.

The practice of transporting objects of devotion illustrated the centrality of this particular ethnic enclave as a hub of ethno-spatial spirituality. Veronica lived in an economically depressed community. She made her living from taking care of children, selling items at swap meets, and sometimes by selling food around the neighborhood. Her adult children help her pay the rent. Veronica rarely ventured far beyond her neighborhood. Yet, through her devotion to La Virgen, and her caring for the local altar, she was able to have influence beyond the neighborhood that she was anchored to. In her

devotion, by adding value to an object and space of value to others, she gained significance beyond her immediate circle.

Upon Veronica's invitation, I attended a particular processions close to Christmas time in honor of La Virgen de Guadalupe. I immediately noticed that the carrying of La Virgen in public spaces provided an opportunity for neighborhoods to strengthen their connections. The performance of participating in a procession was a very public statement. As a sizable number of residents from one neighborhood passed through another neighborhood, they were drawing attention to themselves. In this case there were nearly eighty participants in the procession. Often, there were relatives and other acquaintances that participants would spot along the way in the community. As one young woman pointed out to me, there were young men in one of the neighborhoods along the route that were related to some of the people in the procession from the destination neighborhood. At one point, the procession crossed into a gang territory. I was concerned because the neighborhood where the procession originated from and would return to, was home to a rival gang. I asked Ricky, a teen, if he thought it would be dangerous for the procession. "No, because we have La Virgen. They can't do anything to us," Ricky responded. This young teen understood that the image they carried was powerful among residents.

### **Views of the Barrio**

Juanita Vargas was perhaps the greatest champion for the benefits of the parish model of church. Her enthusiasm for having the church close by seemed to influence her positive perspective about living in her working class community. Juanita says that she is "thankful to God for living close to the church." She says that when she first arrived in the

U.S. “[I] began to go, little by little, [to church], and what I am most thankful for is that God brought me to THIS neighborhood that is so close to the church and the church is what has brought me so close to my kids.”

Juanita expressed her valuing of the parish model in reference to a conversation with her son. Her son was preparing to go to college the following Fall. As he had not yet decided on what college to attend, Jose Luis, asked his mother what she thought about him attending college far away. She responded in the following manner: “I tell him, wherever you go, pay attention to where the closest church is. Even if it’s an hour, if that’s the closest that’s where you have to go. God is everywhere and our [Catholic] churches are everywhere. Find the one that is closest to you.” Juanita assumed that if Jose Luis was going to look for a church, he would naturally attend the Catholic church closest to him.

The church added value to Juanita’s experience in her neighborhood, even though the block she lived on was considered to be part of one of the toughest neighborhoods in the city. As of this writing, the neighborhood was placed under a gang injunction by the Santa Ana Police Department. At several points in our conversation, Juanita discussed how she had confronted negative assumptions about her neighborhood.

*I am very happy where I live. I know that it’s a lower neighborhood, but I am happy because I know my community. We don’t complain about where we live. We live by ourselves. We are independent. We have two bathrooms. The only thing we lack is room to run. I learned if you can’t afford a house, work for your community, for it to change.*

The context of her description regarding the size of their apartment home related to suggestions she received about moving to a different neighborhood. Though their home was not large, she felt happy that they were living within their means. She contrasted their



experience to that of other family members that she had who had lived above their means and now were in debt. She preferred to not put her family at risk by moving. For her, staying there was less risky because they could live at a sustainable socio-economic level. Juanita was married and she and her husband had three children, two teens and one young adult.

Juanita's children had all gotten involved with the local parish, and she suggested that the church had contributed to the success of her children. All of Juanita's children were honor students. Speaking to Juanita did not conjure up images of a neighborhood plagued by gang violence, police raids, and drug dealers. Her stories gave the impression that her neighborhood was stable and safe. Juanita studied to be a nurse in Mexico, and served in that role for nearly a decade. She arrived in the U.S. more educated than many of her co-ethnics, yet she felt very much at ease living in her working-class neighborhood, given the resources she learned to access there. The sense of safety that Juanita conveyed was tied to her involvement in the church and in community based organizations.

Gerardo and Araceli Zamora talked about how religion provided a unifying factor in their neighborhood. They lived in a trailer park in central Santa Ana. Gerardo was a butcher for a living, and Araceli was a maintenance worker. For them, religion allowed their neighbors to "get along," as Araceli summed it up. In their enclosed community, many rallied around religious celebrations similar to those described above. They characterized this experience as one of unity. "We have a lot of unity in our neighborhood," Gerardo said. "We like it there, it's peaceful," he added.

The theme of neighborhood unity through religion came up explicitly with several of

my subjects. In one conversation with Francisca and Ricardo, Francisca observed that faith was a unifying factor in their neighborhood, primarily “for those of us that are Catholic.” Her husband, Ricardo, expressed that Ash Wednesday was an example of how religion unified the neighborhood. He said it strengthened the relationships “with those we [already] have a connection with.” Ricardo explained that the last time Ash Wednesday came around, he did not go to church as he had done in the past. Instead, a group from the church came and administered the customary Ash Wednesday sacramentals in the neighborhood. A deacon was present, as a representative of the church, and placed the ash markings on people’s foreheads as is typically done for Ash Wednesday. These types of experiences forged institutional ties and also strengthened ethnoreligious networks in the community.

Beto Flores and his sister Delia, along with her husband and children, were a family that chose to stay in the barrio, despite having had the resources to move out. While Beto Flores’ life experiences were more akin to that of second generation Chicanos, he had some valuable things to say about what the barrio means to Mexicans. Beto came to the U.S. as a toddler, and had little recollection of Mexico. Having lived for five decades in the barrio, Beto had interacted extensively with his more recently arrived neighbors. In addition, Beto’s line of work had brought him consistently into contact with more recently arrived Latino immigrants. Based on his experiences as a real estate agent, Beto believed that Mexicans tended to highly value living in neighborhoods where Latinos were the majority. He recalled that having shown a great number of homes to Mexican clients, many of them

ended up eschewing neighborhoods where they were in the minority, even if they could afford them.

I prodded further for Beto to explain to me why he thought that it was the case that Mexicans highly valued living in the barrio. His response: “Mexican people look at a crowded neighborhood and say I want to live here. I can throw my parties, quinceaneras.” His sister Delia, who was also part of the conversation, interjected: “That comes from Mexico.” She meant that those types of celebrations originated in Mexico, and that the desire to maintain those customs was also Mexican. Their observation was that the barrio affirmed practices which would not be permitted in other neighborhoods. “They know they can’t do that in the other neighborhoods,” Beto asserted. His argument was further fleshed out by his proposition that “[Mexicans] will throw a quinceanera [party] before they buy a car.” In other words, Beto believed that these type of celebrations were of utmost importance to Mexicans and that Mexicans would attempt to secure circumstances that would facilitate these type of celebrations.

Beto’s assertion about Mexican residential preference is his opinion, but my fieldwork in the residential neighborhoods of central Santa Ana certainly suggested that he was on to something. In the very least, Beto’s statement was a reflection of his, as well as his sister’s perception of their neighborhood. They themselves had hosted parties in the neighborhood where they invited neighbors and played loud music. The freedoms of the barrio were certainly something that they had taken advantage of. Thus the generalization that he had made about most Mexican households was exemplified by his own family’s lifestyle. In this sense, Beto’s assertion was part observation and part projection. Beto and

Delia were essentially suggesting that for some Mexicans the desire for residential upward mobility was attenuated by a desire to maintain ethnic traditions which would be less readily accepted in non-Latino neighborhoods. This view finds support in Alba and Logan's (1993) suggestion that the higher tendency of Mexicans to reside in co-ethnic barrios may be largely influenced by preference. I discount structural barriers, but merely acknowledge that preference matters.

### **Reforming the Barrio**

The Evangelicals in my study tended to reflect a very different view of the barrio than the Catholic parishioners I spoke to. Evangelicals did not exhibit the same brand of ethno-spatial spirituality that was exhibited by their Catholic co-ethnics. Instead, Evangelicals tended to frame their discussions of the barrio in what I label as the barrio reformation perspective. This framing emphasized that the barrio is in need of transformation through the Evangelical gospel message. Phrases such as "being a light to my neighbors," "sharing the gospel," and "giving testimony" permeated the discourse that Evangelicals used to describe their self-designated role in the community.

The barrio reformation outlook was closely tied to the subjects' own personal reformation, reflective of their conversion narratives. Evangelicals desired for their neighbors to experience what Evangelicals themselves testified to having experienced. Evangelicals were highly invested in the barrio reformation efforts because these efforts reified their own faith narratives. To see others change and embrace Evangelical faith brought affirmation and confirmation to Evangelicals.

There were three dominant patterns of neighborhood engagement which bolstered the barrio reformation perspective: 1.) A transformational presence outlook, 2.) an apathetic engagement outlook, and 3.) a retreat from hostility outlook. These engagement patterns characterized the primary framing that particular subjects used in order to make sense of and explain their relationship to the ethnic enclave. McRoberts (2004) documents very similar patterns of neighborhood engagement among the Protestant churches that he studied in the Four Corners neighborhood of Boston. The congregations in his research viewed themselves as foreigners to the world around them and constructed frames of community engagement that allowed them to distance themselves from “the street.” In my work, these framings are not necessarily mutually exclusive, though each subject tended to rely more on one respective frame over the others.

A small minority of Evangelical subjects did express a more positive outlook about the barrio and had few negative observations to share. This small minority demonstrated a consciousness about being different due to their faith, but they were able to highlight the positive relationships that they had established in their neighborhood, primarily with non-co-religionists. Those within this group verbalized some desire to see transformation in their neighborhoods, but were less driven by an outlook that problematized their neighborhood. I categorize this frame separately as the neighborhood asset awareness outlook.

In the following section I will discuss the varying approaches to the barrio reformation perspective. I will then briefly discuss the barrio asset awareness outlook and

will highlight some of the distinctions of those holding this outlook. Finally, I will discuss how the prevailing barrio reformation outlook is lived out collectively by Evangelicals.

### **A Transformational Presence**

Many Evangelicals saw themselves as potential catalysts for the transformation of their surrounding co-ethnic community. They understood it as their duty to provide a positive example to their neighbors. Patricia Martinez, a devout member of a Pentecostal church, embodied the transformative presence outlook. My interview with Patricia took place at her home in a patio area facing the front yard. From that vantage point, most of her cul-de-sac neighborhood could be seen. As she described her experience in her neighborhood, she would often point to the places where particular interactions took place.

In order to illustrate her experience of interacting with her neighbors, Patricia recalled an incident with a group of young men that she labeled as gang members. The neighborhood where Patricia and her family lived was a known gang territory. If the young men described by Patricia were out on the street and looked like gang members, there is a strong possibility that they were gang members; posers were at risk of getting threatened by the neighborhood gang. The young men would loiter close to the Martinez home, particularly along a fence at the front of the property. At one point in our conversation, she pointed to a specific space between two fence posts on her front yard, and offered the following description: “Before, a group of cholos [people that exhibit Chicano gang styles and mannerisms] would come and drug themselves there. They would smoke marijuana and pass the time there. We had to pray about that! Now they don’t hang out there

anymore. Thank God that all of that is going away. If God has placed us in this place, we need to pray to be the light.”

For Patricia, the presence of her and her family made a difference in their community. “Being the light,” as Patricia expressed, involved simply being present, even without having direct interaction with those holding to different views of spirituality. Prayer was a way that Patricia believed her family contributed to the well-being of their neighborhood. Her prayers helped to do away with the negative activity that the young men were engaging in on her front fence, Patricia believed.

Patricia asserted that it was critical for her and her family to live life in a manner different than her neighbors. The home-based celebrations that Patricia’s neighbors hosted provided a type of opportunity that Patricia and her husband used take to establish a moral boundary. Patricia explained it as follows:

*When they have parties, those neighbors over there [pointing to a home across the street], they see that we don’t participate ever. We don’t participate in the parties that any of these neighbors have. And when we have parties, they see the difference. We’ve had some problems with those neighbors across the street there. They have wanted to do bad things to us. But they haven’t been able to. God has protected us. And we can continue to be a light in this neighborhood.*  
-Patricia, Evangelical

Some of the elements that Patricia disapproved of which were present at her neighbors’ parties involved certain music, and drinking. Patricia and her husband did not listen to the music that her neighbors listened to. They also abstained from drinking. The types of parties that Patricia and her husband hosted were typically smaller family parties that did not involve the types of elements that she disapproved of. Patricia believed that through

her example, her neighbors would change, which would in turn bring transformation to the neighborhood.

Patricia recognized that the door was open for her family to visit the celebrations that their neighbors hosted. Her statement, “they see that we don’t participate,” was in reference to the fact that they themselves did not attend any of the local parties hosted by neighbors. In these working class communities, it was customary for neighborhood parties to be attended by neighbors and local friends. I was frequently invited to neighborhood parties and had the opportunity to attend several festive occasions. When a relationship had been established with a neighbor, it was typical for an open invitation to stand. Patricia and her husband chose to stay away from these events because they believed their faith precluded them from participating in certain elements of the party.

Patricia also noted that some of the neighbors across the street had wanted to harm them. In this case, the threat had not primarily been one of physical violence, but rather one of personal tensions and verbal assaults. Furthermore, there was a belief that there was a desire for spiritual harm to come upon Patricia and her family. Folk understandings of curses and spells were still articulated by some Pentecostal believers and this was one such example. Patricia and her family felt that their neighbors desired spiritual harm to befall them.

Sixto Nuñez also embodied the transformational presence outlook. Like Patricia, one of the most salient interactions that Sixto shared had to do with living close to “cholos.” Sixto explained that there was a group of cholos that lived close to his apartment home. He passed them on a regular basis, and often acknowledged them by nodding at them and



saying “hello.” As a young adult, and a single one at that, Sixto was a prime target for getting “hit up” by local gang members. Getting hit up was when gang members asked a passer by about whether or not they were affiliated with a gang. Sixto’s appearance looked far from that of a gang member, in his brand name polo shirt and neatly gelled and parted crew cut. Nevertheless he attributed the respect that he had gained from these young men to one particular thing: “They see me with my Bible often.” Sixto lived in close proximity to the church that he attended. He rented a room from other church members, all of whom were Central American. He believed that his carrying of the Bible both signaled to the gang members that he was different, and provided them with an example that they may attempt to follow.

Yolanda Herrera, a preschool teacher that worked at a school located in a tough inner-city neighborhood, was well acquainted with the surrounding community. She lived in a neighborhood not far from her work, but also spent a significant amount of time in the neighborhood around her work. She often served as an informal counselor for many of the mothers and parents that she worked with. Her work in the community embodied the observations made by Small about how local professionals in working class communities often perform duties beyond their job description which is instrumental in the transmission of social capital (2004). Yolanda had spent time visiting the homes of many local families, and saw this as a duty tied closely to her faith commitment. She made it clear that her motivation was to see reformation take place in the neighborhood. She stated, “it has been of great impact to be in this neighborhood where they don’t know Christ. I see that they come to me and they ask for prayer. There is a conviction that when one prays,

something is going to happen. Mara [a local mother] on several occasions has asked me for prayer. She asked me for something. She tells me, 'guess what? My mom this. Guess what? My mom that.' She says 'Oh you that pray. You can help me.' So I don't miss the opportunity."

Having higher levels of social capital compared to most of her working class co-ethnics might have been a significant factor in Yolanda's experience. Her position at work provided her with higher levels of social capital and it likewise placed her in a position where she was accessible to others that had less social capital. This is likely a factor in why some of her neighbors came to her for help. It was clear, however, that Yolanda's personal migration narrative facilitated common ground with these neighbors. Yolanda was an immigrant who had lived in some of the lowest income areas in her city. In fact, she still lived in a lower income community. Having spent much time as a single mother, she identified with many of the struggles of the working mothers that she encountered via her job. Yet, her connection with these neighbors was not simply an outgrowth of the common ground she had with them. She was not merely there to commiserate. She communicated that it was imperative for her to reach out to them. They "don't know Christ," and she wanted to do what she could so that they would know him.

For some Evangelical respondents, their transformational presence outlook was expressed via formal and programmatic outreach activities. Rosario Galindo arguably provided the best typology for someone involved in neighborhood transformation work in a very systematic way. Rosario was involved in a ministry that went out into the streets to reach out to gang members. This ministry, called Lives Worth Saving, was active in some of

the roughest neighborhoods of Santa Ana and interacted with gang members at the times that they were most likely to be hanging out on the street. The ministry was started by a retired police officer turned minister who worked on the Santa Ana police department for over two decades. Because of the high levels of gang involvement that this officer witnessed in Santa Ana, he decided to start a gang intervention ministry.

Rosario's involvement with the gang intervention ministry expanded beyond the particular program itself. She explained that she initially used to participate in the program once a month by going out into the streets with a team of people trained within her ministry and reaching out to gang members. The outreach involved several components. Team members offered to pray with gang members, they offered words of encouragement and informal counseling to gang members, and they would inform gang members of social services and resources that were available to them locally. Then, Rosario began to participate in a human trafficking outreach component of the program. The human trafficking component involved making contact with victims of human trafficking and attempting to rescue them from their work.

Through her work in Lives Worth Saving, Rosario became involved in a group called Reaching Our Community, or R.O.C. Based on her description of this collective, "this is a group that helps to educate local organizations about serving youth that are at-risk of joining gangs or are currently involved in gang activity." In other words, she was not only involved in outreach efforts to gang members. She was also involved in training others to do this work more effectively. This was all in addition to her regular church attendance.

Some subjects were more subtle in their espousing of the transformation presence

outlook, but some took it upon themselves to be neighborhood clergy of sorts. Obed Herrera was perhaps the most fervent of the subjects interviewed in terms of how far he was willing to go to interact with his neighbors. During an interview conducted at his home, he related a recent encounter he had with a neighbor, a woman who then introduced him to some of her friends and family members:

*The neighbor over there was talking to me about how she listens to Guadalupe Radio [a Catholic radio station]. She had a lot of questions about how prayer works. [She herself was Catholic.] She said that Father Juan Rivas on Guadalupe Radio said that he admired how Evangelicals pray because they pray with fervor. She asked if I could do one of those prayers with fervor. She was having a number of problems at home and she invited me to pray at her home. One of her prayer requests had to do with some neighbors that they were having problems with. These neighbors had been fighting with them and were threatening them. She was starting to be concerned about her family living there next to these neighbors and she hoped that the neighbors would move out soon.*

*I prayed that the neighbor would leave, as she had asked. A couple of weeks later I ran into her again and she said, they were evicted! They were very conflictive people. The prayer worked!*

*She said 'now I want you to pray for some friends' kids. They smoke and we don't want them to smoke.' These were teenagers that had no business smoking. Most of them only had the guidance of a mother. They were acting out however they wanted to. I said 'Okay.'*

*I went the next Wednesday to her home as she had asked me to do, and I could see that the room was full of women with their grown kids. As I was walking in, I felt the Lord tell me, 'Take your belt off.' God told me this as I was at the entrance of the house. I said, 'Really, God?' But I felt like that's what he was telling me to do. So I did it. I took my belt off as I was walking in, and said, "Orale, who's first?" [as he told the story, he motioned as if he was hitting a belt on his hand, as if he were threatening to spank someone.] You guys are doing this because you didn't have a father to discipline you. Because you don't let go of your addiction and your mothers are crying and asking me to pray for you to leave this addiction. And they started to put their heads down one by one. As I talked to them more, they began to throw away their cigarettes. They started to walk up to where I was standing and started to throw away the junk that they had with them. Now there needs to be follow up.*

*-Obed, Evangelical*

Obed lived for these types of encounters yet talked about them in a very nonchalant manner. He emphasized that he believed, “when people pray, and they are faithful to obey what God is asking them to do, things begin to change.” One thing that helped to balance Obed’s confrontational style, was that he had a warm and friendly personality. As he walked me to my car after our interview, I noticed him greeting some of his neighbors. They smiled at him and he waved back, engaging in small talk with them along the way. In that brief instance, it was clear that he had a positive relationship with at least some neighbors. For him, desiring to see his neighbors change was not something spurred by hate, per se, but something that came from his belief that what he had to offer would provide a welcomed change for those that did not know God.

### **Apathy towards Neighborhood**

Several respondents spoke of the neighborhood in a manner that was not explicitly negative per se, but which reflected an underlying apathy towards the neighborhood. For these respondents, the neighborhood was simply a place to reside in and not necessarily a place for forging connections with others. In some cases, the factor that socially distanced people from their neighbors seemed to be their heavy involvement in church activities. While church activities provided an escape from a world that some adherents perceived to be hostile, high frequency church participation also reified symbolic boundaries by limiting the amount of time that Evangelicals could spend in their neighborhood.

Eduardo and Clarisa Aceves had very little to say about their neighborhood. They both had extremely busy work schedules. Their jobs allowed them to spend time together as they waited tables for the same diner. Eduardo chuckled when he described how, “many

can't believe how me and my wife can work together. 'How do you do it?' they ask us."

Eduardo and Clarisa took pride in this. They saw this as part of the way in which they give a "good testimony." Beyond their busy work schedule, Eduardo and Clarisa were heavily active at church. Their work schedule regularly held them back from being able to attend Sunday church services. Their response was to attend as many other church activities as they could throughout the week. A major part of their attendance involved taking their children to church activities for children. There was a music ministry for children, for example, that would teach their kids about music and prepare them to sing, dance, and play instruments at church. They took their children to this activity weekly.

Eduardo and Clarisa had such busy schedules when it came to work and church participation that they had very little time to interact with neighbors. Consequently, they did not express particular concern for their neighborhood. Their reformatory outlook was expressed as something that needed to take place among individuals, particularly among members of their extended family, but not in a manner that demonstrated investment in their neighborhood. Their notions of neighborhood and community were almost non-existent in their discussions of where they lived. Their emphasis on the nuclear family was highly salient, however. It would seem, then, that their notion of "giving a good testimony" was tied to the way in which they were able to manage and present their family life to others. For two individuals that came to the U.S. with very little material wealth, and limited social ties, all the while dealing with having an unauthorized status, the ability to maintain a strong nuclear family provided an important marker of success. The maintaining of the

nuclear family became emblematic of not only “making it” in the U.S., but also of being spiritually “blessed.”

Federico and Gloria Reyes spoke about their neighborhood along the same lines as Eduardo and Clarisa. In many ways, the personal narratives of Federico and Gloria portrayed them as an older version of Eduardo and Clarisa in terms of their focus on the nuclear family and their strong work ethic. Their stories similarly stressed their opportune encounter with one another and their harmonious relationship. They too stressed that they were very busy with church and had little time to connect with people in their community. Federico described their neighborhood with the phrase, “Nobody bothers nobody.” They both seemed to be at peace with the fact that they did not experience conflict in their community, but neither did they express a sense of camaraderie there. When I asked further in regards to what his interaction was like with his neighbors, Federico simply nodded and expressed that he had nothing else to add. What Federico and Gloria did express was a desire to see individuals change. People were viewed as individuals and not necessarily as members of a community. Perhaps this hinted at an individualization effect that takes place within an evangelical framework.<sup>15</sup>

### **Negative Experiences of Neighborhood**

For some, a reformative outlook was fueled by negative personal experiences in the barrio. According to Maite Barrera, her family moved out of Santa Ana to get away from the crime and violence that was there. Maite is an office administrator in her early 30's and an Evangelical. She recalled an incident that happened in the 90's, close to her home, which

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<sup>15</sup> While further research is needed to examine this correlation, a longstanding body of research since Durkheim (1897) and Weber (1930) has examined the individualistic tendencies of Protestantism.

appeared to be a turning point in how she and her family related to the neighborhood. The incident in question involved Maite's uncle, Jacinto, which was all the more important because, according to her, he "served as her primarily male role model and father figure." On this occasion, Maite, her uncle, and another family member, needed to make a stop at a gas station close to their home to refuel their vehicle. After her uncle stepped out to purchase gas, he was assaulted. A man approached him from behind and told him to get on the floor, all the while holding a gun to his back. He was asked to give up his money. After Jacinto gave the assailant the money in his wallet, the man ran off.

The assault that Maite's uncle Jacinto experienced was the straw that broke the camel's back for she and her family in terms of their residence in Santa Ana. Soon after that, her family moved to the neighboring city of Anaheim. Maite experienced much of her schooling in Anaheim, and she said she definitely experienced a difference in terms of the school environment. The schools she experienced in Anaheim were better resourced, according to Maite. Eventually Maite and her family would move back to Santa Ana. She explained her reaction in the following manner: "When we moved back to Santa Ana from Anaheim, it was huge [it was a significant change]. I still had that mentality like Santa Ana is bad, it has gangs, they're going to hurt you. We only stuck to the perimeters." Maite's return to Santa Ana took place nearly two decades after initially living there. She eventually married a man with deep roots in Santa Ana.

It is important to stress that in spite of these negative experiences in the barrio, Maite still espoused a strong desire for the residents of central Santa Ana to have positive experiences in their neighborhoods, and more than anything for them to experience



neighborhood transformation. She indicated that she enjoyed “going out into the community and doing evangelistic work.” For Maite, the main purpose of going into the neighborhood was to share the gospel message with others.

### **Barrio Asset Awareness**

Some evangelical respondents expressed more positive views of the neighborhood and focused less on aspects that they perceived as negative. Those that were more positive in expressing their opinions still tended to lean towards less descriptive views of the neighborhood than their Catholic co-ethnics. Simply stated, Evangelicals had far less to talk about when it came to discussing their neighborhoods. Certainly I could press questions further to obtain more information, but a clear trend that emerged was that for Catholics, it was far more natural to discuss positive aspects of their local neighborhood as compared to Evangelicals. Nonetheless, some Evangelicals still referenced positive relationships that they had with neighbors along with other positive aspects of their neighborhood experience.

Arturo and Julieta Esparza verbalized the most positive opinion of the neighborhood among their co-religionists. Arturo and Julieta, both factory workers, had been married for over thirty years and were faithful to their Evangelical church. When asked about how they got along with their neighbors, Arturo recounted a moving story about how he helped to launch and coordinate a neighborhood soccer league. During this time, his children were in elementary school, and he had a desire to create a positive recreational activity for them to participate in. Arturo was a soccer aficionado. He himself was a committed soccer player

in his teen years and into young adulthood. His idea was to create a soccer league for children in the neighborhood.

After planning out what a soccer league would look like, Arturo described the steps that he took to make the league a reality: “I went and knocked on doors and asked people if their kids wanted to be part of a soccer team. We got a bunch of kids to come out and play. We made teams in our neighborhood. Kids from all over the neighborhood were happy to participate and we had enough kids for half a dozen teams.” For a Summer season, Arturo coordinated this league and his own children, along with the neighborhood children, participated. Friendships were forged between the Esparza family and their neighbors, and neighbors were very appreciative of what Arturo had done. Julieta added that neighbors developed a strong sense of trust with her, particularly other women in the neighborhood. A woman next door said to Julieta, “I feel comfortable confiding a lot in you.” Julieta was pleased that she could develop friendships of trust with her neighbors. This was in part an outgrowth of Arturo’s connections in the neighborhood, but it was also an outgrowth of Julieta’s own capacity for building friendships with her neighbors.

Aside from the Esparzas, a few other Evangelical respondents mentioned having positive relationships with their neighbors. Most of these references were brief. What stood out among Evangelicals in this regard, was that those who had more positive views of their neighborhood tended to be more established in the U.S.. Julieta and Arturo had worked in their respective factory jobs for over two decades. They had a stable home life and lived on the edge of Santa Ana’s inner corridor. Moreover, their neighborhood was more tranquil and suburban in its semblance. Evangelicals that were more

socioeconomically stable had less dependency on the barrio. They lived in neighborhoods with neighbors less reliant on each other when compared to the under-resourced inner-corridor neighborhoods. Evangelicals appeared to be more heavily taxed socially speaking when they broke with neighborhood expectations of inter-dependence. Perhaps this led lower income Evangelicals to experience more tension in their neighborhoods. Yet, the Evangelicals that were less dependent on the barrio were among those that had more positive things to say about it. It is possible that these Evangelicals are less invested in distancing themselves from the neighborhood because they already are distanced from their co-ethnic peers in the barrio

### **Group Engagement of the Barrio**

The reformative perspective that nearly all Evangelicals expressed about the barrio was bolstered by a particular manner in which evangelical institutions engaged the barrio. When it came to having a neighborhood presence, many of the group activities that Evangelicals engaged in publicly, tended to be framed as an “outreach” activity. The purpose of public Evangelical events tended to revolve around reaching others with the central spiritual message of their faith - that salvation comes through Jesus Christ and that people should accept him as their Lord and Savior. Public efforts are not framed as being acts of personal piety, but are rather framed as being about reaching those outside of Evangelicalism. This is understood primarily as an act for others, not for the self. What does this approach mean in terms of how boundaries are negotiated between Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals in this study?

### **Evangelical Outreach Events**

Among the many Evangelical events I participated in was a Halloween outreach event sponsored by Iglesia Cristo Vive, one of the largest churches in Santa Ana. Halloween presents both an opportunity and a challenge for Latino evangelical churches. Because Latino Evangelicals, especially Pentecostals, espouse extensive views of the spirit world, Halloween becomes a trigger point for discussion and teaching about the spirit world. Halloween is also an opportunity to reassert boundaries and affirm what it means to be an Evangelical/Pentecostal Latino. In the case of Iglesia Cristo Vive, Halloween was taken as an opportunity to invite others from the surrounding community to draw in and visit the church. I provide an overview of this particular event because it embodied many of the boundary processes that I observed in other types of Evangelical events.

I attended a Sunday service at Iglesia Cristo Vive prior to the Halloween outreach event where parishioners were encouraged to attend during a time for church announcements. Immediately following the announcements, a pastor took the microphone and elaborated further on the purpose of the event. The pastor stressed, "As believers we do not fear any day." He emphasized that Halloween had pagan roots, but that would not be reflected in their activity. "Even though we do not celebrate Halloween, we do not fear it," the pastor clarified. For the Evangelical Christians listening, the message was that this was not a Halloween event. This was an opportunity to honor God and serve the community by providing a safe and healthy alternative to an event corrupted by evil origins. "Every day belongs to God and this one is no different," the pastor assured congregants.

The language used by the pastor was an opportunity to highlight the boundary between Evangelicals and non-Evangelicals regarding practices deemed as “pagan.” However, the pastor’s instructions were also meant to provide adherents with a particular tool of engagement. Believers were not to live in fear of these perceived pagan practices. So while the decision of non-participation appeared to be an act of retreat, the notion of not having fear carried with it a sense of empowerment. Fearlessness is further stressed by the church’s provision to engage outsiders during Halloween, but not on their terms. Agency and empowerment were highlighted in the pastor’s discourse. Oddly enough, though this particular spiritual boundary was stressed in preparation for the event, it was hardly mentioned during the event. Other types of boundaries were on display however.

Halloween fell on a Friday in 2014 and I found myself standing in the church parking lot facing two main streets, surrounded by a crowd of people in a carnival-like atmosphere. The night sky drizzled on attendees as they guided children around to bounce houses, game booths, a bake sale tent, face painting artists, and other activities. The ambience was light and friendly. Greeters welcomed all those in attendance. Volunteers guided participants into each activity with care and instruction. The people in attendance appeared to be an even mix of local church goers, as well as residents from the surrounding neighborhood. It was clear that much preparation had gone into this event.

There was a stage set up which was rendered temporarily non-functional, as the rain picked up; this was the primary center of communication with the crowd. As the rain dwindled, different people came forward to play music, or to share short words of thanks, motivation, or encouragement. The event did not project an overt agenda to proselytize

attendees. There were some scattered references to the church's belief in Jesus Christ, and there were some brief prayers, about 30 seconds long, that were conducted from the stage. Perhaps the most overtly "evangelistic" aspect of the event was the music. The music played was Christian music. The band that played for the longest period of time, about forty minutes, played regional Mexican music. I immediately recognized several of the songs as older Spanish language Evangelical praise songs, often called "coritos." These stood out to me because in my times of visiting Iglesia Cristo Vive, this was not the type of music that was typically played. The music most typically played during regular services at this church consisted primarily of English language praise songs translated into Spanish, along with Spanish language contemporary praise songs reminiscent of American soft rock.

The genre of the music may have been familiar to non-Evangelicals in the crowd, with the instruments being an accordion, guitars, a bass guitar, and a drum set; this sound was easily associated with the Northern regions of Mexico, as well as Tex-Mex regional music. In other words, the origins of the music were ethnically very Mexican. At the entire event, this would have been the most culturally Mexican element. The songs themselves, however, would likely have been non-familiar to many non-church members, unless they had exposure to Evangelical music. The music, then, would have brought some connection, and some affirmation of culture, but not to the extent that it would have been considered mainstream.

The host for the night was a young man who was bilingual but spoke more English than Spanish. A young lady in her late twenties translated much of what was said. At one point, the young man joked about the band that had played the Mexican style music. He

looked to them and said, “I used to wear cowboy boots too! But I don’t wear them anymore!” His tone carried a hint of sarcasm. He was presenting himself as more assimilated than the musicians on stage. This would have been relatable to many young men and women in the audience, aware of the assimilation processes their families experienced. However, this would not have resonated with many local visitors, since for many of them, cowboy boots were an item to be worn on special occasions. Cowboy boots are expensive and owning a pair represents an investment. Unknowingly, this young man was highlighting a boundary related to generational cultural differences. To some visitors, this would have been the face of Evangelicalism. He was using first generation Mexican culture as a trope for comedy relief.

### **Blurring Boundaries in Public**

Two of the churches in my sampling pool were part of another significant outreach event in central Santa Ana. This event took place in a neighborhood in central Santa Ana at an elementary school. The event turned out to be the launching point for an ongoing initiative aiming to foster the collaboration of local churches and community based organizations, in order to catalyze community development initiatives throughout the city.

The format of the event was similar to the Halloween outreach, but on a larger scale. There were game booths, community service organizations represented, and giveaways that attendees could participate in. Papa John’s Pizza was a corporate sponsor at the event and was giving away pizzas; a couple hundred people took advantage of this meal. Attendees had the opportunity to wander around to the different activity stations or giveaway outlets. While there was not an explicit Evangelical message being preached,

there was a booth designated as a prayer booth. People that had needs and petitions that they wanted prayed for could go over to that booth and volunteers would pray with them. Hundreds of people from the surrounding neighborhood came to the event.

“Love Santa Ana” and other similar outreach efforts communicate messages about community engagement and about collaboration. This is a message that speaks to both insiders and to outsiders. For insiders, partnership with a diverse group of churches communicates and reinforces the notion that evangelical Christians share significant common ground across various social boundaries. Despite being affiliated with different governing denominations, churches were working together. Furthermore, these collaborative efforts crossed ethnic, and socioeconomic barriers. These events facilitated social interaction and generated memories moving beyond a sense of imagined community. Evangelicalism here functioned as a cross-cutting cleavage (Wimmer 2008).

Events like “Love Santa Ana” also moved the concept of Christian unity into a public performative arena observable by outsiders. Mexican and Latino participants were demonstrating publicly their unity with evangelical Christians of other ethnic backgrounds and social classes. The location of the Love Santa Ana event was particularly significant for Mexican adherents in terms of the boundary work being accomplished, perhaps unintentionally. Adherents were making a statement about who and what they belonged to. They were also reinforcing that the outsider that was being reached was primarily the co-ethnic neighbor. The “we” working to accomplish this goal were a mix of Latinos, Asian-Americans, blacks, and whites.



Compared to neighborhood residents, most of whom were of Mexican-origin, those putting on Love Santa Ana reflected a distinct demographic mix from what was present around them day to day. Yes, there were many Mexican and Latino volunteers actively participating on the day of the event. I estimate that Latinos constituted a third of volunteers at the event. For some, seeing the diversity present could convey a powerful positive statement. Members of a marginalized community could perhaps experience hope in seeing others like them integrating into a more diverse and upwardly mobile group. For others, the group of volunteers was perhaps overly foreign. The social distance between neighborhood residents and the conglomeration of congregational volunteers could be experienced as socially distant. This is not to say that the event was unsuccessful, but simply to note the type of boundaries that these events have the potential of communicating.

## **Conclusion**

While participation in both Catholic and Evangelical churches provides a type of social capital for congregants, the two traditions provide different types of social capital. Putnam (2000) makes the distinction between bonding and bridging social capital. Bonding social capital constitutes links that reinforce homogeneity. Bridging social capital indicates building ties across more heterogeneous groups. On the surface, because the churches of Santa Ana, both Catholic and Evangelical, are primarily composed of ethnic Mexican constituencies, it would appear that both traditions dispense bonding social capital. Williams and Fortuny Loret de Mola (2007), for example, make this assertion when studying Mexican immigrant congregants in Florida. However, the distinction between

bonding and bridging social capital provides an important overlay to the Catholic and Evangelical social network structures. The patterns of ethno-spatial spirituality exhibited by Catholics reinforce bonding social capital. The reformatory perspective employed by Evangelicals leads to a type of bridging social capital.

In both attitude and practice, Catholics exhibit the transmission of social capital within local barrios. The parish model of church, a model which relies on the notion of geographic communities, is reflected in the spiritual and social rhythms of Catholic residents in central Santa Ana. Badillo notes, for example, in his study of Latino churches, how Catholic parishes tend to retain a commitment to the neighborhoods where they are first established (2004, 2006). In central Santa Ana, those that are very active in their parishes and/or participate in acts of communal spirituality in the neighborhood, primarily experience life among co-ethnics. The bonding that takes place in these spaces primarily takes place among co-ethnics that live in the barrio. In that sense, Catholics are able to truly draw from the ethnic enclave as a source of resources. In many ways, the Catholics that I interviewed exhibited a classic form of assimilation that relied heavily on the ethnic enclave. The children of many of the locally active Catholics that I met were very successful and had grown up relying on localized resources.

Evangelicals, on the other hand, because of their dominant reformatory outlook towards the barrio, spent most of their time within an alternative ethnic space - church. Ethnic churches for Evangelicals were in line with what Ammerman (1997) describes as particularistic spaces of sociability, a term which is meant to contrast with the Catholic parish model. Given the manner in which Evangelical churches draw particular boundaries

with the local neighborhood, drawing from a broader geographic region increases their chances of maintaining a vibrant constituency. Furthermore, as there is competition for members in the organization field, Evangelical churches remain particularistic in that they cater to a particular audience through their music, preaching styles, and programs. Moreover, Evangelical churches are more intent on establishing a particular institutional identity that distinguishes them from other similar churches. Evangelicals transmitted bridging social capital by drawing members from a broader geographic region who had access to different types of resources beyond the ethnic enclave, even as those from the enclave may benefit from these resources as members of these churches.

Evangelical churches also facilitated the exchange of bridging social capital in another manner: They were more panethnic than Catholic churches. As Santa Ana's residents are overwhelmingly of Mexican origin, churches employing a parish model were more likely to draw from local Mexican populations. Furthermore, neighborhood based activities, because they had such a strong emphasis on ethnic Mexican tradition, tended to draw Mexican participants. In turn, at the Evangelical churches I studied there was a more visible presence of non-Mexican Latinos. I met Central American, South American, and Caribbean Latinos at the various Evangelical churches I visited. In part, this is simply due to the demographic breakdown of Latino Evangelicalism. Evangelicalism is more prevalent among non-Mexican Latinos percentage wise, so Latino Evangelical congregations are more likely to have a higher representation of non-Mexican Latinos than are the local Catholic parishes, which are dominated by Mexicans. The congregation of one of the churches that I studied, for example, was nearly fifty percent Central American.

The Mexican Evangelicals that I studied were more likely to have ties with non-Mexican Latinos because of their participation in the church. This was precipitated by the extensive hours that Evangelicals spend in their churches. While they are less present in their co-ethnic neighborhoods, they are forging ties with pan-ethnic co-congregants. In this case, pan-ethnic ties should be seen as a type of bridging social capital, particularly when contrasted with some of the dense co-ethnic networks that tend to characterize central Santa Ana neighborhoods. Some of the Mexican Evangelicals that I met shared a home with Central American housemates, and some had romantic relationships with Central Americans. While this could certainly happen among Catholics, it was not evident among the Catholics I interviewed.

While both Catholics and Evangelicals express ethnic affinities, Catholics are more likely to express these within a localized ethnic community, and with more explicit ties to the homeland. Evangelicals are more likely to express their ethnic affinities in their alternative church space with less emphasis on homeland material and more emphasis on pan-ethnic commonalities. The localized ethnic neighborhood is not a place of resources for Evangelicals, but it is a place that needs to be resourced. Catholics, however, ensure that the barrio remains a space where ethnicity is performed and transmitted. Catholics also ensure that the true keepers of ethnicity are the poor, the immigrant, and at times the undocumented. These are the cultural brokers of the barrio. These are the bearers of ethnic authenticity.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### **The Ethnic Self-Identification of Mexican Immigrants Along Religious Affiliation**

Carmen Gomez, a preschool teacher at a central Santa Ana school that serves under-resourced students, has an identity problem. The problem that Carmen verbalized to me during our interview at her small Santa Ana church does not necessarily reside within her own understanding of who she is. Instead, Carmen's problem is that she feels that others unduly question her in regards to her ethnic identity. Specifically, Carmen's Mexican ethnicity has been cast in a doubtful light by co-workers at the school, as well as by some parents of the children she teaches.

Carmen settled in the U.S. a bit over two decades ago. She had initially come as a young elementary school student but she and her family returned to Mexico. Her father carried out a circular migration pattern, and after several back and forth trips, in her early teens, her father provided for her and her family to return to the U.S. and settle permanently in Orange County. She was able to earn her high school diploma in the U.S. and eventually completed sufficient college credits to be certified as a preschool teacher. She is one of the most educated individuals among the sample of respondents that I interviewed. She is highly committed to work, as she believes she is making an important contribution to the lives of the children she works with.

Carmen's work commitment is rivaled by another institutional commitment. Carmen is extremely invested in her church congregation. This commitment is more than just an affective or emotional tie. Rather, Carmen is at her church three to four days a week on average. Some weeks she is there with more frequency. She is a leader in her church

and has worn a variety of hats there, such as teaching children and teens, and managing some of the administrative work of the church. She also helps to plan for the missionary initiatives that the church participates in. The church is very proud of the evangelistic and relief work that they do in Latin America.

Given the substantial amount of time that Carmen spends at her church, and has been doing for many years, it is no surprise that she met her spouse there. Byron, Carmen's spouse, is from El Salvador. His background, to some extent, is indicative of a demographic transition that has taken place within this congregation of roughly a hundred members. Their church, which for decades was primarily a Mexican majority church, now counts nearly half of its membership as hailing from Central America.

Carmen complains that when people at her work find out that her husband is from El Salvador, and that she is not Catholic, they tend to assume that she is not Mexican. In some cases, Carmen believes, people forget that she is Mexican. Carmen was distraught in describing how she often has to make it a point to remind people of her ethnicity. While she is very open about revealing her religious identity to her acquaintances, she believes that having a husband from El Salvador actually makes people assume that she is Evangelical, which she is. In her words, "I don't know if they focus on me like that because my husband is from El Salvador and they think that most people from El Salvador are Evangelical. Right away you get labeled like this. Then they find out I'm Mexican and they say, 'Oh!'"

When asked about her preferred ethnic label, Carmen stated that she prefers to be labeled as "Mexican." Carmen takes a step further in asserting her ethnicity in this regard.

She explains that when she is among Mexicans, she often lets them know that she is from the capital of Mexico, Distrito Federal, or DF. The nickname for people from Distrito Federal is “Chilango/a.” Carmen asserts that she likes to be called a “Chilanga.” She raised her hands and cheered, “whoo hoo!” after brandishing her regional status. After all, what can be more Mexican than being from the very capital of the Mexican nation?

### **Religion and the Negotiations of Self-Identification**

Carmen’s example illustrates how self-identification can be largely influenced by the way a person is seen or perceived by others (Jenkins 1994). That is, the manner in which Carmen understood herself and by extension presented herself socially, was partly in response to how people perceived her. Carmen attempted to assert herself as a legitimate member of a particular community. She saw her experiences as being tied to this particular community, but felt slighted when others did not recognize her as co-ethnic.. As someone whose life was tightly knit within a co-ethnic network, Carmen hoped that others would recognize her as someone of Mexican ethnicity. Unfortunately for Carmen, she had several counts against her in the eyes of some co-ethnics: She was married to a non-Mexican, she had more education than many of her working class co-ethnics, and she was not Catholic. The last layer was the most salient distinction in her eyes.

This chapter explores how some Evangelicals like Carmen are engaged in asserting an ethnic identity that is not fully accorded to them by their broader co-ethnic community. The legitimacy-seeking projects that Evangelicals engage are often subtle. The subjects interviewed exhibited a variety of responses in terms of how they conceptualized their ethnic identities. There were general patterns and many commonalities across religious

affiliation. Only after careful examination did it become apparent that Evangelicals carried this added burden of having to assert their ethnic membership. Furthermore, a small but important minority of Evangelical respondents employed non-traditional labels to legitimize their place within the ethnic community and/or within broader society. As such, I argue that Evangelicals carry a disproportionate burden of having to assert their Mexicanness among their co-ethnics who often call that ethnic identity into question.

Catholic subjects were much less prone to seeming feeling the need to assert their Mexican ethnic identity. The underlying reason that is suggested by my findings is not that Catholics are less likely to identify with their ethnic community; instead, Catholics are more likely to take their ethnic identity for granted, i.e., not questionable. Catholics do demonstrate some variation as to how they identify as well, but most responses point back to a confidence in their ethnic membership.

### **The Lens of Identity**

It is significant to note that the modern day usage of the term “identity” came about in the context of immigration research (cf. Gleason 1994; Rumbaut 1994). One of the first scholarly tomes to appropriate the term “identity” in a manner approximating its common usage today is Will Herberg’s *Protestant, Catholic, Jew* (1960). Of relevance to this study is the fact that Herberg’s work presents a theory for how immigrants integrate religion and ethnicity into an aggregate identity. Herberg famously argues that the processes of ethnic identity formation reside primarily within the space of religion in U.S. contexts.

In documenting the rise of the term identity, Gleason, a scholar of immigrant religions, attributes the emergence of the modern usage of “identity,” including its



appropriation by scholars such as Herberg, to the writings of psychologist Erik Erikson (1994). Erikson, an immigrant himself, revealed that his conceptualizations of “identity” and “identity crises” were birthed from observing the experience of “emigration, immigration, and Americanization” (1975). Nevertheless, as Brubaker and Cooper contend (2000), the term identity has been used in such fluid ways that it often loses its predictive power within empirical studies.

To avoid ambiguities in the usage of the term “identity,” I focus primarily on identity as a claim to membership within a particular group, and by extension, within a particular society. A productive contribution of Erikson’s work on identity formation is his proposition that stages of identity formation are “intrinsically linked through social interaction to the milieu in which the individual finds himself” (Gleason 1994). Moreover, while stages of development may activate different identities for any given individual, they also reveal a consistent tie to the individual’s social “milieu.” More precisely, this chapter will focus on identity as an outgrowth of group level boundary work manifested at the individual level (Owens, Robinson, Smith-Lovin 2010; Wimmer 2008). So while the term “identity” will be used in reference to the labels that contribute to the continuity of selfhood, or the semblance thereof, the self is to be located in the constellation of social categories and meaningful groupings present in society.

Ethnic self-identification is an important tool that provides insight into where individuals locate themselves in the social order and how they seek to legitimate their membership in society (Brubaker and Cooper 2000; Cornell and Hartmann 2007). Ethnic identity may be both a product of assignment and assertion (Cornell and Hartmann 2007).

Larger structural forces are at work in defining the boundaries of membership for a particular category, but likewise members themselves exercise agency in self-definition (Lamont 2014). Moreover, the interaction of structural and cultural forces leaves room for individualized notions of identity, albeit ones that are operating within a limited scope of options (DiMaggio 1997). Some individuals are left with far more limited options than others. Given the weight of reliance placed on interviews for this portion of the study, particular attention is being given to the “ways in which social identities enter into the constitution of individual selves” (DiMaggio 1997:275).

In some cases, an ethnic identity is meant to forcefully differentiate an individual from a larger group. Oppositional, non-linear, and reactive identities, for example, are predicated on individual divergence, but still oriented towards group level dynamics (Portes and Rumbaut 1990, 2003, 2006; Massey and Denton 1993), and are not merely matters of preference. Such tensions of identity may bring into question a person’s membership in a group or in society (Purvis and Hunt 1999). Yet, these reactive identities may be in response to a real or perceived sense of exclusion. In other words, those who project oppositional identities may not be excluding themselves, but may instead be dealing with exclusion at the hands of others. Identities that accompany segmented assimilation may embody such a typology, particularly in cases of downward assimilation (Portes and Rumbaut 2003, 2006). Some scholars argue that more pronounced experiences of racialization, beyond those of segmented assimilation, may lead to identities that are rooted in categories perceived and experienced as permanent, constant, and less contextual (Feagin 2010; Massey 2007; Omi and Winant 1997; Telles and Ortiz 2008).

These categories colored by race may project greater salience and in some cases elicit greater opposition.

Reactive identities tend to be the stuff of the second-generation (Portes and Rumbaut 2001; Portes and Zhou 1993), however, and first generation immigrants may experience disadvantage in a different way. So how do first generation members establish their legitimacy in society when legitimacy is not readily bestowed upon them? First generation immigrants who are primarily oriented toward the homeland and who hold on to homeland culture for utilitarian purposes more so than for expressive purposes may seek legitimacy through alternative pathways. In fact, the membership that is viewed as legitimate by the first generation immigrant may differ from that which is formally prioritized by the state or symbolically upheld by society. Intra-ethnic spaces of legitimation become particularly valuable to marginalized ethnics, in light of the fact that state sanctioned recognition is lacking, even if just symbolically so (Chavez 2008; Jimenez 2010; Jimenez et al 2015).

Self-identification, then, may highlight legitimacy projects wherein actors seek alternative forms of legitimation not fully recognized by mainstream society. For those whose residence in the US is unauthorized in the eyes of the state, for example, alternative pathways of legitimacy become crucial (Coutin 2013, Fishman 1968, Sassen 2002).

Asserting one's ethnic identity may be a way to experience a sense of legitimacy, even if one is of unauthorized status. This is a legitimacy not rooted in the state, but in one's ethnic community; this may be reliant on a very localized community. Thus, ethnicity may constitute the primary form of being, and belonging for some. State recognition of a

particular ethnic category certainly reinforces this (Omi and Winant 1997), but the affirmation that is most legitimating may be that of the co-ethnic. Those who bear a layer of liminality in one sphere may find solace in owning up to a category that is seen as legitimate in another sphere. Asserting a religious identity, for example, may provide an alternative pathway of being legitimized in the eyes of society (Chavez 2008).

### **Legitimate Mexican Identities**

The processes of Mexican ethnic identity formation have historically involved the negotiation of numerous boundaries. There are several spaces of boundary negotiation that emerge in the literature which are of relevance to this study. In this section I briefly discuss how constructs of legality/illegality, assimilability, race, panethnicity, and ethnoreligiosity are all dimensions that come into play in the negotiation of boundaries for Mexican immigrants. These dimensions come into play as Mexicans seek to situate themselves in relation to their homeland, as members of an identifiable ethnic minority group in the U.S., and as individuals that generally hope to establish themselves within U.S. society.

Questions of legality and citizenship have posed issues to the Mexican-origin population as many have worked to combat the stigmatized status of being “undocumented,” (Hall, Greenman, and Farkas 2010; Yoshikawa and Kalil 2011). So influential is the notion of “illegality” in broader society that even Mexicans that reside in the U.S. legally, including some who are of later generation, must contend with being associated with an unauthorized status (De Genova 2004; Ponce 2014). In addition, a cultural threat narrative projected onto the Mexican and Latino populations has

presupposed a barrier of cultural unassimilability for Latinos (Chavez 2008; Huntington 2004). Some ethnic Mexicans have made it a point to distance themselves from these perceptions of being unassimilable (Dowling 2014; Jimenez 2010; Vila 2000).

Questions of race in the U.S. may influence ethnic classifications for people of Mexican origin in the U.S.. Mexicans have confounded categorizations of race in the U.S., not fitting neatly into a black/white binary (Almaguer 1994; Lee and Bean 2007) but instead being carted around into various categories as the state has seen fit (Dowling 2014; Mora 2014; Rodriguez 2000). Racial categories themselves do not mean the same thing for Mexicans and other Latinos than what their state sanctioned definitions purport to convey (Dowling 2014; Rodriguez 2000). As Emeka and Vallejo note (2011), many Latinos, including some Mexicans, struggle with how to respond to questions of racial identification in the U.S. While some more neatly fall into categories of “white,” or “black,” based on a combination of “like” ancestry (Emeka and Vallejo 2011) and affiliative identities (Jimenez 2010), others consider themselves “Other” (Emeka and Vallejo 2011). Given the confusion about race, it is no wonder that many first generation Mexicans find more value in identifying primarily as “Mexican” (Emeka and Vallejo 2011; Dowling 2014; Taylor et al 2012).

Panethnicity has been one option that has provided a sense of legitimacy as the category has gained acceptance by the state, by the media, and by activists (Mora 2014). Panethnic identities for Latinos may be a result of aggregate level racialization from external sources and a desire for coalition building internally (Alcoff 2000; Rodriguez 2000; Itzigsohn 2004). The perception of a shared culture and history may help to fuel

panethnicity among Latinos, even if such a frame is externally imposed (Mora 2014). Instrumentalist motivations such as political mobilization have also been posited by various scholars as being central to the emergence of Latino panethnicity (Padilla 1985; De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003). Shared experiences along socioeconomic measures may assist further in the framing of panethnicity (De Genova and Ramos-Zayas 2003). Yet, as Dowling (2014) contends, pan-ethnic labels are used in disparate ways regionally and do not hold constant meanings.

Finally, religion itself has served as a boundary marker with which to label outsiders, as was the case for Catholics throughout most of the U.S.'s history (Greeley 1977; Jaret 1999; Zolberg 2007). This clearly has ramifications for the Catholic majority Mexican population. Likewise, Mexicans of Protestant inclination, a population that has been present for upwards of a hundred and fifty years (Martinez 2006, 2011), may share a symbolic and/or institutional connection to broader U.S. society not shared by Catholics. Of course, the meanings of these affiliations are themselves changing as religious boundaries in the U.S. shift. Catholics are less marginalized and Protestant influence is waning, even as the nonreligious population expands (Putnam and Campbell 2010). This is precisely why further research at these intersections is needed.

### **Ethnic Labels and Self-Identification**

Mexican-origin Catholics and Evangelicals share many commonalities when it comes to the types of ethnic labels they prefer to be identified with. This should not be surprising, as numerous macro-level factors, such as time spent in the U.S., age of arrival, socio-economic status, and educational levels cut across religious affiliation to influence ethnic

self-identification. Likewise, other studies have shown that there are dominant patterns of ethnic identification that appear to hold strong for ethnic Mexicans and other Latinos (Dowling 2014; Taylor et al 2012). On the other hand, there are some perceivable differences between these two groups.

The divergence of responses at the group level is structured along two primary patterns: First of all, a minority of respondents from each group provided different responses than their larger respective sample and these minority responses exhibited differences across religious lines. Secondly, even when responses were similar across religious groups in terms of the self-identification preference, the qualifiers that some respondents offered in conjunction with their primary responses often revealed some divergence across religious lines. I will begin by discussing the various labels that respondents used to describe their own ethnicity, comparing the specified labels across religious lines. When possible, I will suggest why the similarities in self-identification matter and likewise why differences may or may not be indicative of diverging ethno-racial projects across religious lines.

Subjects were asked to respond to the following question:

*“What label would you use to describe your ethnic background?”*

Subjects were allowed to answer in an open ended manner, but were also allowed to respond as succinctly as they desired. The terms that respondents indicated as their preferred ethnic labels fell into one of the five following categories:

- National origin label: Mexican, Mexicano/a
- National origin label modified by a regional qualifier: Mexican from Oaxaca, for example.
- Pan-ethnic label: Latino or Hispanic

- Legal status label: Ciudadano/Citizen [of the U.S.]
- U.S. oriented label: American, Mexican-American

In the sections below, I will discuss the patterns that emerged in the types of responses given across religious affiliations, noting the influence of respondents' particular churches whenever appropriate (Weigert 1971).

### **National Origin as Ethnicity**

A great majority of both Catholics and Evangelicals indicated that they prefer to be identified with the national origin label of "Mexican." Nearly three-fourths of all respondents indicated that this was their preferred label. Subjects from both groups responded this way in similar proportion. For many, this particular question elicited very little discussion. A lack of discussion did not necessarily indicate lack of importance given to this label, but perhaps suggested the opposite. For some respondents, the national origin label was assumed to be the best fit with a high level of confidence and the need for explanation was viewed as superfluous. Perhaps knowledge of my Mexican-American heritage led to an assumption that further explanation was unnecessary. I did not require nor push respondents to elaborate on their labels if they did not feel the need to do so with my initial line of questioning. However, if respondents did return to this topic in the process of answering other questions, such information was taken into consideration.

It is significant that nearly half of all respondents simply referred to themselves as Mexican, or Mexicano/a, with little to no further description. Even when given the opportunity to elaborate on this response, most felt satisfied with this label alone. This pattern cut across religious affiliations. These respondents espoused a majority default label. They were part of a regional ethnic majority and they did not express a desire to



further explain their ethnicity beyond their national origin. As a city where most of its residents are of Mexican origin, and nearly half of all residents are foreign born (U.S. Census Bureau 2010), it is no surprise that respondents from Santa Ana felt comfortable identifying simply as Mexican. The experience of being Mexican in Santa Ana is an experience of being in the majority. The demographics of the churches in the study also consisted of a Mexican majority. The experience of being in the demographic majority, then, appeared to be a dominant factor regardless of religious affiliation.

Several respondents did opt to give an explanation as to why “Mexican” was their ethnic label of choice. Several themes emerged from the explanations given. Jose Luis Vargas, for example, highlighted the importance of nation of birth as central to ethnic identification. Jose Luis explained, “I’ve always seen myself ... I’ve never really been asked to describe myself... I guess if someone were to ask me, ‘I was born in Mexico’ so Mexican.”

Jose Luis was highly committed to his local Catholic parish; he was twenty years old and grew up in a densely populated neighborhood within close walking distance to his family’s parish. Jose Luis’s family abode was comprised of humble living arrangements, with five family members living in a two bedroom apartment. However, relative to most families in their neighborhood, Jose Luis’ family had better living arrangements. His household only had immediate family living in their apartment. Many of Jose Luis’s neighbors in surrounding apartments rented out rooms, or even a couch to other sub-renters. As someone that was still to some degree dependent on parents, it was significant that Jose Luis’s parents had a steady income for the entirety of his life.

Jose Luis worked for a local non-profit organization helping to run programs for students in the community. Having graduated from high school two years prior to our interview, Jose Luis had aspirations of attending a four-year university. He was among the most driven of interviewees in terms of the goals he had set out for himself. He was also among the most culturally assimilated interviewees, given that he came to the U.S. as a young child. English was Jose Luis's language of choice.

Sixto Nunez, who worked at a dessert foods processing plant, expressed a similar sentiment emphasizing that where one "comes from" should be the prevailing factor in ethnic identification. Sixto confidently proclaimed, "Well I always say that I'm Mexican. I live in this country, but ... 'where am I from?' I'm from Mexico, and I take pride in that."

Sixto was a devout Evangelical Christian. Like Jose Luis, he also lived in close proximity to the church that he belonged to. Sixto rented a room in a large house along with some members of his church. He explained that some of his housemates were Central American, from Honduras and El Salvador. He was happy to share in living arrangements with his housemates because they shared the same faith. Also like Jose Luis, Sixto was a single young adult. Sixto was less assimilated than Jose Luis, as he arrived in the U.S. in young adulthood. He attended high school in Mexico, and was also very driven to succeed at his job. Yet, for both of these young men working to establish themselves in the U.S., country of origin was an important orienting marker.

Unlike other labels that were used to describe ethnicity, being Mexican was framed by some as a primordial reality when describing their preferred ethnic label (Brubaker 2013; Wimmer 2009). A great example of a primordial construct was provided by Yolanda

Herrera, a mother of two that worked in early childhood education and converted to Evangelical Christianity in young adulthood. Yolanda insisted, “I’ve been in this country. I’ve learned to love this country. I know that when I die I want to be here. But I know, I’m Mexican. I’m Mexican!” Yolanda had an expression of determination as she repeated her final phrase, “I’m Mexican!” The volume of her voice became elevated, as did her pitch.

For Yolanda, being Mexican was immutable and was not to be erased by love of her new country. She further stressed that her daughters were born in the U.S. and that she wanted them to continue to identify as Mexican. She was emphatic in stating that she had no plans of living in Mexico again, let alone of seeing her daughters live in Mexico. Ethnicity for this group, then, was not only about past experiences in general, but about one’s origin, specifically oriented towards one’s birthplace, or possibly that of one’s parents. Labels emerging from personal history were emphasized as being unchangeable by most within this group.

When comparing this set of responses across religious groups, it was the Evangelical respondents that offer more forceful statements about wanting to be identified as Mexican. In their cases, they did not discuss being Mexican as simply a default category, but rather as a category that they took pride in and/or could not change. Is it possible that their emphatic responses were reflective of a desire to be viewed as legitimately Mexican while being in a religious minority group that is less associated with Mexican ethnicity?

### **Regional Mexican Identity**

Moving beyond the explicit options provided by the questionnaire, a few respondents expressed the desire to be identified not only as “Mexican,” but as Mexican from a particular region. A number of respondents had much to say about their regions of origin, in fact, but two in particular stated that they wanted to be recognized for being from a certain region. I label these respondents as having a “Regional Mexican Identity.”

Margarita Luna, on various occasions during our interview, made reference to aspects of her home state of Oaxaca, noting especially how much she missed her home state. Margarita was a homemaker in her early sixties, and she was very involved in doing volunteer work at her Catholic parish. Margarita had been in the U.S. for about thirty years, and during that time had always resided in an ethnic enclave. Within her community, she would find ways to express her regional origin, such as through cooking, or participating in festivals. In Santa Ana, there are others from Oaxaca, but they are greatly outnumbered by Mexicans originating from states such as Guerrero and Michoacan.

In light of her broader discussion about her home state of Oaxaca, it was not a surprise that Margarita stated her ethnicity as being “Mexicana de Oaxaca” (Mexican from Oaxaca). Margarita was very involved in a church prayer group and attended meetings multiple times a week beyond her regular Sunday mass attendance. I initially met Margarita at a rosary prayer gathering during which she and her husband invited me to visit a special ceremony that they would be participating in. At this ceremony, a statue of Mary, who is venerated as the Virgen de Juquila in the state of Oaxaca, would be unveiled (Higgins 1990).

Margarita's more traditional Catholic practices were punctuated by religious customs that hearkened back to her home state. In other words, Margarita's emphasis on a more specific region of origin correlated strongly with her regional brand of Catholic devotion. Margarita spent much of her time among co-ethnics who shared her same religious beliefs and practices, and she valued the fact that she could make an added contribution via knowledge of her home state in Mexico.

The state of Oaxaca is a state that is known for having a population with a high proportion of indigenous residents. Nearly half of the residents of the entire state identify as indigenous. Only one other state in Mexico surpasses this proportion. Socioeconomically, the state is known for having high rates of poverty. Margarita was well aware of the fact that she was a minority of sorts within her community. She took pride in this particular intra-ethnic boundary. She also tended to use it to her advantage. In her case, she was able to leverage her unique status within her religious community. As shall be explored in Chapter 5, poverty and homeland distinctions may be imbued with an added sense of ethnic authenticity and legitimacy by the broader co-ethnic community.

Carmen Gomez, whose story was included at the introduction of this chapter, also chose a regional Mexican identity as her primary label of ethnic self-identification. There was a salient difference between the way that Carmen and Margarita dispensed these discursive strategies of a regional Mexican identity. For Carmen, her regionality served to overcome the added burden that her non-Catholic religion placed upon her. For Margarita, her regionality actually strengthened and even brightened her Catholic religious identity. Margarita's regional identity provided an added legitimacy within her religious community.

She was seen as someone worthy of leadership who was properly able to lead others in particular homeland traditions. I witnessed her in action on several occasions. Carmen, on the other hand, chose to deploy her regional Mexican identity to counterbalance her religious identity. For Carmen, her regional identity was compensatory whereas for Margarita it was additive.

### **Pan-ethnicity**

In terms of case frequency, the use of pan-ethnic labels did not differ significantly between Catholics and Evangelicals; both groups had a minority of respondents in similar proportion indicate that they preferred a pan-ethnic term. Miguel Luna, for example, stressed that “Latino” was a term that he preferred to use because it was more inclusive of other Latin Americans. He compared the tendency of some to use “Mexican” for all Latinos to the tendency that seem people exhibit of incorrectly referring to all Asians as “Chinese.” He summarized his views by alluding to a conversation he had with a co-worker:

*I use Latino because it is more general and not all Latinos are Mexican. I can refer to people from Asia as Chinese, but not all of them are Chinese, as I was telling one of my co-workers. In the same way, not all Latinos are Mexican.*  
-Miguel, Catholic

Miguel was a member of a Catholic parish, and was very involved in the neighborhood based activities organized by the church. More than emphasizing his involvement at church, however, Miguel stressed that his religious devotion was oriented towards the religious customs of his region. His use of a pan-ethnic label did not necessarily indicate that he was attempting to distance himself from his co-ethnics or from clearly identifiable aspects of his culture. He was more than happy to talk about the

regional celebrations and festivals from his region of Mexico that he still hoped to maintain in the U.S.. He had been in the U.S. for about thirty years, and yet continued to practice many of the folk Catholic traditions from his home town. Nevertheless, in using a more inclusive label, he felt that he was able to emphasize solidarity with non-Mexican Latinos. His reason for making this decision appeared to be based on his context at work as a gardener and landscaper. Because his Latino co-workers were from different regions and countries, Miguel had learned the value of building solidarity with other non-Mexican Latinos.

Juanita Vargas, was a Catholic parishioner in her mid-40's who was a facility maintenance worker. She explained her preference for the pan-ethnic label in the following manner:

*Juanita: I believe that I am Mexican, but here what is used is "Latino." Over there [in Mexico], it's not used. Hispanic isn't used either. Here we are Latinos. I came to learn this here.*

*Jonathan: So you use this term to interact with others here in the U.S.?*

*Juanita: Latino, now it's Latino. I no longer say Mexican. I know that being Latino includes Mexican.*

For Juanita, emphasis was placed on how the use of the term Latino marks a break with how she used to identify in Mexico. She admitted that it was a term that she used because she had been exposed to it with more frequency in the U.S. Again, she recognized that Latino was a term that was more inclusive, and she implied that this was important; based on her response, she felt comfortable using the term Latino not merely because it was generally inclusive of all Latinos but because specifically it was recognized as including the term Mexican.

The final acknowledgment of inclusion may seem redundant (if it includes all Latin American nations it obviously includes Mexicans), but to Juanita this was a central premise for the concession she made to adopt the panethnic term. Paralleling those that expressed their sense of being Mexican along more essentialist lines, she initially stressed that “we are Latinos.” Yet, after a slight pause, she modified her response by adding, “that is what we are here.” Her explanation, then, was more constructivist in nature, revealing that she was aware of how her reference point shifted in the U.S.

Several Evangelical respondents also preferred to be identified with a pan-ethnic label. Juanita, as discussed above, acknowledged the term “Hispanic” but preferred “Latino.” Maite Barrera, simply offered “Hispanic” as the most appropriate label for herself. Having arrived in the U.S. at a very young age, Maite could properly be labeled as belonging to the 1.5 generation. Now in her early 30’s, Maite was an office administrator. “Normally I usually do Hispanic,” Maite admitted. She elaborated on how she did not typically like to be identified in a more particular way:

*Maite: I tried to be part of ... what is that?... it's a club that's in HS and goes into college.*

*Jonathan: Mecha?*

*Maite: I tried to be part of Mecha, and I was like, I don't get you. But it's also because I wasn't brought up to have my culture mixed in with my heritage.*

Terms such as Mexican, Mexican-American, and Chicano, for Maite, did not capture her experience; yet, these are all terms that indicate a Mexican heritage. She attributed her side-stepping of more particular ethnic labels to her attenuated cultural exposure at home. Her single mother began attending an Evangelical church with her daughters when Maite was ten years old. Attending church quickly became a central component of their week and



became one of Maite's primary spaces of social interaction with co-ethnics. When Maite's mother converted to Evangelical Christianity, there was also a distancing from many of the social events that would have provided more cultural exposure for Maite. This may also be a factor in Maite's identification.

Perhaps of significance was the fact that Maite's husband, whom she met at church, was a "fourth-generation Hispanic, Mexican-American," as Maite described him. She was well connected to his family, and expressed enjoyment at participating in his family's gatherings. Nevertheless, because his family had been in the U.S. for several generations, she perceived them to be less connected to Mexican culture than she was.

Maite's age of migration is also important as she came to the U.S. at age six. Now, about twenty-five years later, most of her life had been lived in the U.S. Her age of arrival, in comparison to those that arrived at a later age, was likely one of the most significant factors influencing her ethnic self-identification. Maite was primarily educated in the U.S. though she did begin elementary school in Mexico. Much of her socialization had taken place in the U.S. Her preferred label correlated with these aspects of her upbringing.

Federico, a warehouse worker in his late 40's, was another Evangelical respondent who preferred a pan-ethnic label and elevated the term Hispanic to a higher status than Latino. He stated that he did not like the term Latino, but that "all of us are Hispanic." In similar fashion to others that subscribed to the pan-ethnic label, Federico emphasized the inclusivity of Hispanic. As explained below, Federico believed that Mexican did not describe his experience either because it did not take into account his legal status. In other

words, Federico perceived the label “Mexican” as indicating citizenship in Mexico, and possibly a lack of citizenship in the U.S.. He was proud of his U.S. citizenship.

It is notable that the handful of Evangelical respondents that preferred a pan-ethnic label all chose the term “Hispanic” over the term “Latino.” Is this an important distinction? One detail that I observed via participant observation was that most of the higher level leaders of the Latino churches where I sampled respondents from were from or had had extended exposure to the Southwestern U.S. Several leaders pointed out their decades long presence in Southern California, Arizona, New Mexico, and Texas. Arguably, the term “Hispanic” has more history in regions occupied by Mexican origin populations for multiple generations. Texas in particular continues to show a strong inclination toward usage of the term “Hispanic” (Dowling 2005; Lopez 2013; Mindiola et al 2002).

Is it possible that the presence of the term “Hispanic” in the vocabulary of Mexican and Mexican-American church leaders has trickled down to their parishioners? I certainly heard this term used in several Evangelical church settings, and several Evangelical respondents used the term to describe others, even though they did not claim it as their preferred label of self-identification. There were observable signs that the term “Hispanic” was part of the institutional vocabulary in at least two of the Evangelical churches I studied. Iglesia Cristo Vive, for example, uses the term on their church website when describing their church history.

Another important difference across religious affiliation emerged among those who chose the pan-ethnic label. For Catholic respondents, the pan-ethnic label was used to stress inclusivity. Pan-ethnicity did not exclude “Mexican-ness,” but rather was understood

as an acceptable label because it created a place for being Mexican. On the other hand, Evangelical respondents used the pan-ethnic label as a way to highlight their distance from co-ethnics. Maite chose Hispanic because it allowed her to retain a sense of difference from broader society, but also separated her from those who were more explicitly ethnic. Federico, while highlighting the inclusive nature of being “Hispanic,” also made it clear that there were perceived aspects of being Mexican that he did not want to be associated with. For Evangelicals, then, the panethnic label was a way to highlight an intra-ethnic boundary. Simultaneously, it provided a way to claim a legitimate place in society as a person of color.

### **Legal Status**

The question of legal status provided a counter-current to the national origin based discussion of ethnicity for a number of respondents. Evangelical subjects, in particular, drew attention to legal status as an important marker when discussing their ethnic self-identification. A number of Catholics made mention of their legal status as well, but it was not spoken of directly in connection to ethnicity.

Leo and Patricia Martinez, both Evangelical respondents, initially focused on their national origin when asked about their preferred ethnic label, but they modified their terminology by inserting a statement regarding their legal status following their original responses on ethnic identity. Leo was a landscaper in his early-50’s and Patricia was a homemaker of roughly the same age.

*Jonathan: How do you identify yourself when it comes to your ethnicity?*

*Patricia: For me, Mexican and Latina. I don’t have papers. I’m neither from here, nor from there.*

*Jonathan: And you use the term Latina also?*

*Patricia: Yes, I am from Mexico.*

*Leo: I am Mexican and I opened up my legalization process when amnesty opened up.*

*Patricia: He's a resident.*

In a manner similar to several others, Patricia used the label of Mexican, along with a modifying label, in this case “Latina.” The interjection of her legal status here marked certain parameters that she perceived as constraining the labels available to her for identification. “Mexican” coupled with “Latina” was a way for Patricia to emphasize her descent based understanding of ethnicity, but also to signify her otherness and her in-between-ness.

Patricia is from Mexico but she expressed that since she is no longer in Mexico, she can not merely belong to Mexico. Her legal status limited the extent to which she could travel to Mexico, for example. Her legal status also caused her to live a more restrictive life in the U.S. for fear of deportation. Patricia still had close family in Mexico, though she had lived in the U.S. for nearly thirty years. Her legal status held her back from feeling more “American,” but it also limited the connection that she desired to have to Mexico. “Mexicana y Latina” paralleled her expression, “Ni de aqui ni de alla.” As “Mexican,” she was “not from here”; as Latina, she was something different from her compatriots in her homeland. Patricia’s legal status magnified the “otherness” that she perceived on both sides of the border.

Leo, Patricia’s husband, made mention of his legal status by explaining that he did have “papers,” which his wife clarified to mean that he was a legal resident. In some ways contrasting with his wife’s statement, Leo was emphasizing that he did have legal standing in the U.S., but still was Mexican. Mexican was not merely what he called himself; it was what he believed himself to be. Unlike his wife, he did not need a broader pan-ethnic term

to emphasize his otherness. It was interesting that though Leo's legal residency could have given him more legitimacy in the U.S., it allowed him to feel more at ease about asserting a Mexican identity, in contrast to his wife, who expressed a stronger sense of liminality.

Two other respondents brought to light their citizenship status in connection to their ethnicity. As mentioned above, Federico Reyes stated that he would use the term Hispano because he did not like the term Latino. Federico, having a very outgoing personality, explained further how he felt about the term "Mexican."

*Federico: If I identified as Mexican ...[trails off] we are American citizens also! A lot of times there's controversy, like, "are you Mexican or are you an American citizen?" We can't call ourselves simply Americans, though, because we don't have blue eyes.  
Jonathan: What about those [Latinos] that call themselves American?  
Federico: I've met some of those. I tell them, "I'm also an American citizen, but I don't identify myself in the same way as you."*

For Federico, the term Mexican was closely intertwined with being of Mexican citizenship. He valued his U.S. citizenship, and did not want his status to be questioned, even if he did not explicitly state it. This implied that he did not want his rights as an American citizen to be questioned. Though he did not indicate that being a U.S. citizen entirely constituted his preferred ethnic identity, he was clear that it strongly informed it.

Hispanic, on the other hand, allowed him to affirm the "otherness" that he experienced in the U.S., an ethno-racial otherness, simultaneously allotting him a category into which his citizenship could be subsumed. Federico hinted at the otherness as particularly racial by pointing to a physical characteristic that he was devoid of. He stated that he and his wife [and perhaps he included me in the "we"], did not have blue eyes. Moreover, he was using blue eyes as a proxy for whiteness. He considered himself

something other than white, so he did not feel comfortable calling himself an American, or even solely a U.S. citizen. He actually was of darker skin tone, had dark hair, and an indigenous phenotype. It would be highly unlikely for him to be externally racialized as white merely based on appearance.

On the other hand, being a U.S. citizen, Federico no longer felt that “Mexican” did justice to his legal status. It is important to keep in mind that Federico was undocumented for a number of years when he first came to the U.S. He experienced being the “other,” and living in the shadows. He recounted at length his clandestine crossing into the U.S. He had not fully divested himself of the vestiges of that experience; yet he was proud of the rights that he now had due to being a U.S. citizen.

While Pedro Perez without hesitation described himself as “Mexican,” he later added that in public he was viewed as a “citizen.” As will be discussed, for Pedro, “citizen” in the U.S. was to be separated from his faith designation. He substituted the term citizen for his previously specified ethnic term, “Mexican,” when asked whether he placed more value on his ethnic identification or on his faith identification. According to Pedro, his legal status influenced the place that he had in society as well as how he was viewed by others. It may not have been true that people acknowledged his legal status immediately. Perhaps this was something which Pedro perceived or which was shaped by a specific experience. What was clear was that Pedro had hopes that his legal status would be acknowledged by others.

As someone involved in leadership at his Evangelical church, Pedro was in a position where he was visible to others and where he had a platform to share details of his life to groups of people. While his statement that “people see me as a citizen,” may have implied

that society at large was his point of reference, the people at his church constituted the largest social group that Pedro interacted with on a consistent basis. Like many of his parishioners, Pedro too was once undocumented; he was now proud of his acquired legal status. Pedro was herein specifying that his legal status was something that he wanted acknowledged publicly, and his church was a prime social space in which to highlight this.

All of those that brought up citizenship in their conversation regarding ethnic identification shared in common an important characteristic; they were all Evangelical respondents and members of the same church, Iglesia Cristo Vive. Is it possible that something within the institutional culture at Iglesia Cristo Vive influenced the connection that these members were making between ethnic identity and citizenship? While it is difficult to respond to this question with certainty, my participant observation time within this congregation provides some suggestive data.

At Iglesia Cristo Vive, there were various programs to assist people that working through issues of immigration status. Brochures in the foyer provided contact information relating to programs offered by the church to assist people that had questions on this matter. Various leaders from within this church had also taken public stances on issues of immigration reform, such as Pastor Larry Prado, the associate pastor of the church and the president of the community development corporation founded by the church. In the very least, lending a hand to the immigrants in the congregation was a salient aspect of the church's institutional identity.

Yet, Catholic leaders have long been proponents of immigration reform, including Father Ron Sikorsky, the parish priest of Mary the Mother of God Roman Catholic Church,

one of the key churches in this study. Why would Catholic respondents not readily associate legal status with ethnicity? They certainly did bring up the topic of legal status, some of them disclosing that they were unauthorized when they first came to the U.S., and some even admitting that their residence still was not legally authorized. Clearly this was a salient aspect of the personal and institutional experience of Catholic respondents also.

Perhaps a missing component in regards to why legal status became a salient aspect of ethnic identity for some respondents at Iglesia Cristo Vive was because most of the higher level leaders within the leadership at Iglesia Cristo Vive were Latinos born in the U.S. Iglesia Cristo Vive undoubtedly had many first generation Latinos, certainly the majority of adults were. Those at the highest levels of leadership, though, were primarily U.S. born. More specifically, many of the pastors, and top level leaders were second and third generation Mexican-Americans. For example, the senior pastor, Rev Adam Prado, and his brother, associate pastor Larry Prado, were both born in Texas. The stories of these Texas born leaders was weaved into the narrative of the church's institutional history. It was present on church promotional material, and was brought up during some of the church services as I visited.

In terms of ethnicity and generation, the leadership of Iglesia Cristo Vive was unique among the Latino congregations in Santa Ana. The Catholic churches in Santa Ana were run mainly by foreign-born priests of various nationalities, with some but not all from Latin America, along with some native born white priests. Other Latino Evangelical congregations were usually run by foreign born Latino leaders. The church leaders that Iglesia Cristo Vive members interacted with were either U.S. citizens by birth, or many of



them were naturalized citizens. It is possible that in the very least, the language of citizenship fused with the language of ethnicity for some adherents because their church conceptualized one as a natural progression of the other. The natural trajectory of a Mexican in the U.S. is to become a U.S. citizen, based on the reference group that these Evangelical members were exposed to. The examples of what it meant to be a Mexican and Latino leader par excellence in an Evangelical context such as Iglesia Cristo Vive, was embodied by the images of U.S. born or naturalized U.S. citizens.

The boundary that was projected in relation to legal status highlights the sense of marginality for respondents that were unauthorized, and the sense of legitimate membership from those that obtained legal residence or citizenship. While Patricia's legal status did not preclude her membership into the larger Mexican community of Santa Ana, since many compatriots shared her status, Patricia was more saliently aware of her marginalized status. As will be discussed in Chapter 5, Patricia drew strong moral boundaries with her non-Evangelical co-ethnics. Her state of "illegality," in this case, added an additional layer to her sense of being marginalized. Out of all respondents, she expressed her ethnicity in the most tenuous terms.<sup>16</sup>

For Federico and Pedro, legal status also provided material for asserting a type of boundary. For these two, being U.S. citizens allowed them to distance themselves from any stigmas that may be imagined as characterizing some of their co-ethnics. In some ways, paralleling the conversion into Evangelicalism that they both shared, becoming U.S. citizens

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<sup>16</sup> In the case of Patricia, gender may also factor into her expressed sense of liminality. She fulfills very traditional gender roles, and per

highlighted a rupture with their pasts. To some extent, then, being U.S. citizens bolsters a moral boundary for Federico and Pedro.

### **American Identification**

For several respondents, the term that they preferred to be identified by included the word “American.” These responses consisted of American, Mexican-American, and Hispanic-American. While these three terms do not all mean the same thing, they do all make reference to the U.S. as an integral aspect of identification. To be fair, these three terms each take a particular angle on “American-ness.” Given the context and reference points expressed by the respondents that used these terms, it is appropriate in this case to group these responses together.

Two respondents, Abel Lopez and Delia Carrillo, referred to themselves as “Mexican-American.” Both Abel and Delia were brought to the U.S. at a very young age. They were raised in contexts where they were around Chicanos and others who like them, had lived in the U.S. most of their lives. Yet, they were in situations where race was more salient to them, and they felt like the “other” in contrast to the white majority population. Abel’s wife mentions that he was labelled as a cholo because of how he dressed and carried himself. Prior to his religious conversion into Evangelical Christianity, his appearance brought others to judge him as a gang member. Moreover, Abel had an experience of belonging to a sub-culture, Chicano street culture, that carried with it a certain level of marginalization in broader society, even if it is a sub-culture with many cultural elements originating in the U.S.

Delia recalled a number of experiences where she was discriminated against. Her experience as the “other” was very salient. Like Abel, Delia had very little memory of Mexico. Like Abel, she too emphasized her “American-ness,” in conjunction with an experience of being the “other.”. Delia was Catholic, and she explained that much of her spirituality was lived out among co-ethnics. She recalled a time when her local parish offered few services for Latinos. During that time period, about fifty years ago, Mexicans clung to their faith through community based practices, according to her.

Abel was Evangelical, but he converted in young adulthood, so he spent much time among co-ethnic Catholics in Santa Ana prior to conversion. For many years, Abel had the opportunity to experience some of the customs of Mexican Catholicism with his family and neighbors. These experiences of being connected with co-ethnics, in large part through religion, reinforced the “Mexican” aspect of the label preferred by both Abel and Delia. Yet, having almost no memory of Mexico led both of them to feel that “American” is also an important part of their identity.

For Obed Herrera, a term denoting a broader pan-ethnic identity, coupled with the label “American” seemed most fitting; Obed referred to himself as “Hispanic-American.” Obed was the sole respondent that was not born in Mexico, though he did live in Mexico for a number of years in his youth. Technically, he should be classified as second-generation, as his parents were born in Mexico, but he did also share in the experience of immigration, having spent a portion of his childhood in Mexico. Obed received a portion of his high school education in Mexico. He was now in his late 40’s and his wife was a Mexican immigrant. He maintained much of his ethnic connection via his involvement in his Latino

congregation but he has also had access to educational and employment resources that others did not have. His response, that of “Hispanic-American,” connotes a sense of independence that gives a nod to pan-ethnicity while simultaneously acknowledging a partial upbringing in the U.S.

For Beto Flores, a real estate agent in his late 50’s, the preferred term of ethnic identification was “American.” Having come to the U.S. slightly after his toddler stage, Beto had little to no recollection of Mexico. In interviewing Beto, he did have many memories of growing up in the San Diego area, and soon after in Santa Ana. Beto recalled the demographic shifts that were taking place in Santa Ana in the 60’s and 70’s. He recalled an era when Mexican immigrants and Chicanos were viewed as outsiders and as a minority. With an entrepreneurial spirit, Beto fought his way up the pay scale having begun work as a grocery checker in young adulthood.

Beto retold with detail a number of stories indicating the racial stereotypes and structural disadvantages that he had to overcome to achieve some level of financial stability. Contrasting the marked outsider status he and his family endured throughout his childhood and early adulthood, Beto’s life now had the semblance of middle class status. He spoke an articulate, standard English, which was consistent with his narrative of having performed well in school despite being tracked into lower tiers of instructional quality, arguably because of his ethnicity. Being able to call himself “American,” was an achievement more than an ascribed status for Beto. He displayed it with pride.

Those that used the term “American” in their identification share several important characteristics: They all had lived in the U.S. forty to fifty years, had worked in settings

with ethnic, racial, or socioeconomic diversity, had experienced being a minority in their community and/or job setting, and had also achieved a high level of structural assimilation into the workforce. Moreover, they had employment opportunities where they worked in non-blue collar jobs, expressed a sense of job stability, and had other options available to them if a particular job did not work out. This group tended to be among the most assimilated. Even still, these respondents also demonstrated a desire to sustain ethnic identification, both through co-ethnic networks and through cultural practices. Indeed, for all of these respondents, their support network consisted entirely of co-ethnics. The boundary that was brightened by these respondents' responses contrasted their higher levels of structural assimilation with that of their local co-ethnics. This is relative however. It is possible that in other contexts, their ethnic identity would have been far more salient.

### **Discussion: Negotiating boundaries**

As introduced above, the responses regarding ethnic self-identification brought to the surface three key dimensions that respondents were negotiating. Respondents contended with the experience of coming from and leaving Mexico behind geographically, though not necessarily affectively. Secondly, they contended with a sense of otherness and minority status in the U.S.. Thirdly, they contended with a process of incorporation into broader U.S. society. Respondents often expressed negotiating these boundaries simultaneously.

As discussed above, for most respondents, what made sense was to simply identify with their place of origin. All respondents were of working class background, though a number had risen to higher status jobs, mainly in education and administrative positions.

The majority of those that identified as Mexican without any qualifiers tended to be of working class background, of lower socio-economic status, and had the least amount of years in the U.S. For those of lower socio-economic status, with less years in the U.S., the ethnic enclave was especially a place of resources and reliance. The default identification as Mexican was thus most likely reflective of high levels of embeddedness in a community where respondents were in the majority and there was less contact with non-Mexicans. The primary orientation was towards the country of origin for such respondents simply because most social relationships and material livelihood was bound together with the lives of other co-ethnics. This is an important comparison group for this study in that it serves as the default comparison group, being that they reflect how a majority of respondents identify.

Those that strayed from the majority response tended to occupy social spaces where they had to engage various types of diversity: Ethnic and racial diversity with non-Latinos, pan-ethnic diversity, socio-economic diversity, and educational diversity. Other forms of diversity may be included, but these were the most significant ones made evident from the data collected. Those that began to distance themselves from the majority group, are important because they typically represented higher levels of structural assimilation. Their more nuanced responses were reflective of the boundary negotiation taking place since they now had to engage different socio-cultural boundaries. Even though less assimilated respondents also made note of boundaries that they were exposed to, they had less power to position themselves in respect to these boundaries, and were to a greater extent bound by the effects of these boundaries.

In this study, religion emerges as an important factor in the negotiation of boundaries in two ways: First of all, by belonging to a certain group, adherents are perceived in a certain way by co-ethnics, creating intra-ethnic boundaries that need to be negotiated. Secondly, religion provides respondents with a cultural toolkit with which to engage the various boundaries they are presented with. As a religious minority, the manner in which Evangelicals engage boundaries contrasts with the Catholic response.

The desire for legitimacy as an ethnic Mexican points to an intra-ethnic boundary being negotiated by Evangelicals in contrast to Catholics. Carmen Gomez arguably exemplified this theme the best in discussing how her Mexican identity is questioned, in part, due to her religion. As someone who had a college education, Carmen had achieved a higher level of upward mobility than a majority of local co-ethnics in Santa Ana. Her experience of growing up in Mexico and of being part of a Spanish speaking church, however, gave her a sense of still being connected to her heritage. Those Evangelicals who explained how they were proud of being Mexican, such as Yolanda and Sixto, also did so in a more forceful manner than any of the Catholics I interviewed.

For those Evangelicals that used panethnicity as a primary form of ethnic identification, there was also a unique pattern. The pan-ethnic label for Evangelicals served more as a marker of otherness in comparison to Juanita's description of how it included her Mexican identity. Maite, for example, made it clear that labels denoting Mexican heritage did not quite suit her. Hispanic provided her with another label that distinguished her from the majority U.S. society but also connected her, even if at least symbolically, with a broader Latin American heritage. While Patricia used both the labels

Mexican and Latina, she made it evident that “Latina” was a label that denoted her otherness. It showed that she was now separate from Mexico, and it showed that she was not fully integrated into U.S. society, though the U.S. was now her home. For Evangelical respondents that leaned towards pan-ethnicity, panethnicity provided a means by which to negotiate otherness. This appeared to be part of the cultural repertoire that Evangelicals were given within their churches. The emphasis placed on pan-ethnicity, while not overpowering enough to become the label of choice for all or most respondents, was still a useful tool that some respondents were able to conjure up to express their otherness.

The Evangelicals that pointed to citizenship as an important part of their ethnic self-identification also revealed an important move toward assimilation into U.S. society. As legal status is placed on a pedestal within Evangelical churches, it becomes a cultural tool and cultural motivator for adherents to elicit at times when they feel out of place. While at the Catholic churches I observed, adherents tended to discuss immigration status as more of an issue of social justice, at the Evangelical churches I observed, members discussed immigration status along the lines of personal success, and of receiving a “blessing” from God.

For those primarily framing their ethnicity along the lines of legal status, the motivation appeared to be a desire for full recognition in society. Those who emphasized this label did not explicitly denounce their Mexican heritage, but rather expressed a desire to be viewed as fully belonging in the U.S. Their struggle was not being seen as legitimately Mexican, but as legitimately having a claim to the rights granted to any U.S. citizen. In this case, broader society was the reference group that would be seen as granting legitimacy.



As discussed above, this seemed to be a framing that also resulted from the preponderance in the Evangelical churches I observed of having leaders who were either born in the U.S. or who have been in the U.S. for a long time and have obtained citizenship status.

Among those who used the term American as a preferred label of self-identification, it appears that broader sociological factors were at work in encouraging these responses. As discussed above, the amount of time spent in the U.S. is one particular factor that appears most prevalent among these respondents. Also of importance is the fact that this category of respondents was from an earlier wave of immigration to the U.S., pre-1965. This group of respondents is reflective of an older assimilationist paradigm. The experiences of this group are very important, but they are also less reflective of the post-1965 experience.

Older immigrants do matter to ethnic identity processes in a different way. To the extent that they are involved in institutions that serve newer waves of Latino immigrants, pre-1965 respondents have the opportunity to influence newer immigrants. This seems to be what is reflected in some of the culture within the Iglesia Cristo Vive leadership as well as in several other churches I researched. Because the leadership tends to be from older waves of immigrants and Mexican-Americans, the newer immigrants there are influenced by a culture distinct from that of their co-ethnic immigrant cohort.

Overall, Catholics demonstrated much more confidence and simplicity in their ethnic identities. Even in cases where their identities diverged from the majority, there was not a sense that their boundary work was reactive in nature, at least not in reaction to intra-ethnic processes. The Evangelical respondents were most attuned to intra-ethnic

differences in how they formulated their identities. This is not to say that Catholics are less concerned with the markers, members, and meaning of boundaries, but merely to say that their self-identification is less influenced by co-ethnics that differ from them. As will be explored in Chapter 5, Catholics are highly invested in the maintenance of ethnic boundaries. In chapter 5, the focus will turn to the ethnic authenticity policing enacted by Catholics, and the moral boundary assertion prevalent among Evangelicals.

## CHAPTER FIVE

### **Ethnic Authenticity Contested**

The burden expressed by some Evangelicals of having to demonstrate ethnic authenticity among co-ethnics is the result of intra-ethnic social dynamics taking place across the Catholic/Evangelical divide. These social dynamics are largely contingent on the manner in which religion functions as an ethnic boundary marker. Possession of the proper religious markers, in this case, signal ethnic authenticity to a broader ethnic community. As a result, a sorting process takes place, which I label as intra-ethnic authenticity policing. This social phenomenon is characterized by a stigmatization, a distancing, or an othering of individuals that do not display or perform the proper markers of authenticity. Many differences can exist within an ethnic group, but intra-group cultural differences alone do not lead to disputes about legitimate membership. It is when differences are situated along the lines of “diacritical features that people look for and exhibit to show identity,” that disputes over legitimate membership arise (Barth 1969: 14).

As discussed in previous chapters, religion emerges as an influential factor in the contestation of authentic ethnic membership because of Catholicism’s history of being an inculturated component of Mexican ethnic identity (Bowen 1996; Calvillo and Bailey 2015; Deck 2015; Fortuny Loret de Mola 1994; Lopez 2009). Catholicism effectively sacralizes past events for large segments of the ethnic Mexican population (Durkheim). Commemoration of the appearance of the Virgen de Guadalupe, for example, and the manner in which her image has historically been emblematic of the nation state, are two instances wherein religion bleeds into the nation’s historical psyche. This aligns with

definitions of ethnicity that emphasize a population's understanding of ethnicity as their consciousness of "real or putative common ancestry" and "memories of a shared historical past" (Schermerhorn 1970:12). Shared history, then, is closely tied to a sense of kinship, which can be real, imagined (Cornell 1996; Schermerhorn 1970) or a combination of both. A look towards the past may be accompanied by a shared understanding of a population's current place in the world, along with a shared sense of destiny (Wimmer and Schiller 2002; Wimmer 2007).

Evangelicals report being scrutinized by their Catholic co-ethnics along the lines of ethnic authenticity, but they themselves are not merely passive recipients within this social phenomenon. Evangelicals respond to Catholic co-ethnics by asserting a moral identity (Kleinmann 1996). Moreover, if the ethnic authenticity of Evangelicals is questioned along ethnoreligious lines, they can counter by stressing that their identity is characterized by high levels of morality. Evangelicals conceive of themselves as authentic in a different way than their Catholic co-ethnics. They are authentic vis-a-vis their morality.

In this chapter, I document the manner in which Catholics and Evangelicals engage in intra-ethnic authenticity policing. In addition, I examine the manner in which Evangelicals assert moral identities. The manner in which these two dynamics are juxtaposed reflects how they are two sides of the same coin. Essentially, each group is arguing for the legitimacy of their place in the ethnic community. Before delving into the accounts of my subjects, I expound upon how these dynamics are particularly heightened in a context such as Santa Ana.

### **The Context of Intra-ethnic Authenticity Policing**

An important pattern that further influences the manner in which religion brightens intra-ethnic religious boundaries in the context of Santa Ana is that of ethnic replenishment. First brought to light by Massey (1995), ethnic replenishment draws attention to the manner in which an ethnic population is socio-culturally reinvigorated via the continued migration of the first generation. Ethnic replenishment bolsters the sense of distinction or difference that a community experiences. Various scholars have documented the phenomenon of ethnic replenishment, with the likes of Waters and Jimenez as key proponents of the concept (Waters 2003; Waters and Jimenez 2005; Jimenez and Fitzgerald 2007; Jimenez 2008; 2010; Linton and Jimenez 2009). It has been particularly noted that immigrants are numerically replenishing religious movements and institutions in the U.S., and are engaging in cultural replenishment by reviving, introducing, and hybridizing religious practices in the U.S. (Lugo 2008; Ospino 2014; Putnam and Campbell 2010).

The current patterns of ethnic replenishment stand in contrast to patterns exhibited by previous waves of immigrants from 1880-1920. Earlier immigrant populations oriented their ethnic identity toward the 2nd and 3rd generation experience (Massey 1995). Conversely, the homeland orientation of ethnic communities would weaken. Central to ethnic identity formation has been the question of who the primary reference group is. For many ethnics today, newer immigrants provide the standard for what authentic ethnicity is.

The pattern of replenishment complicates traditional assimilation models through its unique intra-ethnic dynamics. The common pattern of homeland language attrition, for example, is mitigated by the higher influx of immigrants (Linton and Jimenez 2009). For

Mexicans, language attrition in the 1.5 generation and beyond is countered as Spanish becomes a more “vibrant, accessible and desirable part of US-born Latinos’ identity repertoire” (Linton and Jimenez 2009: 985). Interpersonal and institutional contacts across generation increase with the influx of immigrants. A sense of cosmopolitanism becomes more palpable with the more visible presence of immigrants. Finally, labor markets are influenced by the labor patterns of immigrants, providing rewards for those that know how to work with that particular segment of the population (Linton and Jimenez 2009).

Within this context, ethnic boundaries are experienced as “patterns of social interaction that give rise to, and subsequently reinforce, in-group members’ self-definition and outsiders’ confirmation of group distinctions” (Sanders 2002:327). Boundary distinctions are commonly fueled by a constant supply of “ethnic raw materials” that act as markers brought from the homeland (Jimenez and Fitzgerald 2007). This especially stimulates intra-ethnic boundaries in contexts such as Santa Ana. Social fissures between those who embrace homeland cultural markers and those whose ethnic expressions are more distanced from the homeland become more evident. In contexts of ethnic replenishment, it is the first generation that has a disproportionate amount of authority in spotlighting those aspects of membership that matter the most. The great majority of first generation Mexicans are Catholic, reflecting the religious demography of Mexico; hence, many of the most salient markers of Mexican ethnic identity in ethnically replenished contexts are drawn from Mexican Catholic religiosity.

Yet, Social fissures are not self-activating. How then do they function? In the

context of salient intra-ethnic boundaries, fissures are enlivened by the practice of “ethnic authenticity policing” (Jimenez 2008: 1558). Authenticity policing is a practice that is pervasive beyond the context of immigration. It has been documented within various communities and along various types of boundaries that delimit legitimate membership within a group. Nagel posits that “questions of authenticity are not limited to the realm of ethnicity. We see authenticity of identity, behavior, or group membership challenged in other social realms as well: ‘Who is really poor?’ ‘Who is really a Christian?’ ‘Who is really a man?’” (2000:101).

The dynamic nature of the boundary markers designated to signify authenticity is aptly described by Carter (2013: 138):

*Racial and ethnic groups create cultural boundaries to demarcate both intergroup and intragroup differences. That is, groups create internal cultural boundaries to separate the “real” (“authentic”) from the “not real” (“inauthentic”) co-ethnic, and individuals construct self-conscious ways in which they use “natural” and specified characteristics to signify group affiliation (Tuan 1999). As groups socially construct what is authentic, their members use myriad in-group cultural codes and signals. Hence, authenticity work requires signifiers (Peterson 1997), and these signifiers often embody non-dominant cultural capital.*

The “signifiers” in question are not merely dead symbols or wooden codes. There is typically acquired knowledge and extended repertoires that accompany these boundary markers. This thickens the experience of ethnicity all the more.

Understandings of ethnic boundaries that are brought along by immigrants often mirror the hierarchies that were established in the homeland. This places religious minorities at a particular disadvantage in the immigrant Mexican community. As Fortuny Loret de Mola notes, “Members of Mexican immigrant [minority] religious communities in

the United States constitute a population that historically has been marginalized at the social, political, and economic levels. They also have been constructed by Mexican Catholics as the inferior 'Other,' the non-Mexican, the ignorant" (2002:33). Inasmuch as their religious identities have been a source of marginalization, the salience of religious identities for immigrants may remain all the more pronounced (Hammond 1998).

### **Responding to Authenticity Policing**

Ethnics that experience intra-ethnic policing often respond by "avoiding situations in which boundaries are likely to become salient" (Jimenez 2008: 1555). Authenticity is not, after all, an intrinsic characteristic possessed by cultural artifacts. Instead, "The enactment of ethnic culture as part of affiliative or any other type of ethnic identity has currency only to the degree that others deem it authentic." (Jimenez 2010:14) Avoiding spaces where a particular diverging characteristic will be labeled as inauthentic in the eyes of others is one way in which members of a subgroup steer clear of experiencing direct delegitimation of their membership in a more expansive category.

While avoidance is an important strategy for Evangelical Mexicans, there is a more forward response that Evangelicals take to actually promote their membership in the ethnic community as legitimate. Evangelicals assert a moral identity as a means of gaining legitimacy over and against the Catholic majority. A moral identity, as conceptualized by Kleinman, is an "identity that people invest with moral significance" and which "testifies to a person's good character" (1996:4). Moreover, Evangelicals highlight ways in which they perceive their lives to be more virtuous than their Catholic neighbors, co-workers, and family members; if they are converts from Catholicism, they stress the manner in which



their lives have changed for the better since having left Catholicism. The conversion experience is a dominant component of Evangelical identity considering that a high percentage of Latino Evangelicals are converts from a different religion [citation], and that adherents are expected to be “born-again.” What makes this a salient social boundary at a local level is that it is brightened within the social and public spaces that adherents inhabit in a densely populated and intricately networked city such as Santa Ana.

In the sections to follow, I will first present my findings by discussing the manner in which Catholics police Evangelical co-ethnics. Based on my data, the points of policing that emerged were the following: 1) Some Catholics employ labeling strategies for the generalized Evangelical other. This does not mean that they have a negative view of Evangelicals, per se, but that they cast Evangelicals as “other.” 2) Some Catholics employ direct confrontation in their encounters with Evangelicals. It is possible that a recounting of confrontations reflects a discursive device rather than something that continually occurs. In other words, it is quite possible that Catholics talk about confrontations more than they actually occur. 3) Some Catholics generally reflect a neutral disposition towards Evangelicals but express a negative opinion about religious change, from Catholic to Evangelical affiliation. This point of tension is especially heightened when an immediate and/or extended family member has converted to Evangelicalism.

I will then turn to the boundary building strategies that Evangelicals employ to distinguish themselves from their Catholic co-ethnics while at the same time making a case for their own legitimacy. Evangelicals most readily employ a moral identity as a way to retain claims of legitimacy. This Evangelical moral identity employs a reformatory rupture

framing characterized by a distancing from the past. Distancing from the past is central to the moral identity and it manifests itself in three ways: 1.) Rupturing with Past Phases: This is the practice of abstention from behaviors now deemed as deleterious but which an actor previously partook of. 2.) Rupturing with Familiar Faces: This is a strategy of distancing oneself from individuals that appear unsympathetic to one's faith. 3.) Rupturing with Cultural Spaces: This is the practice of individuals distancing themselves from social spaces where cultural expressions deemed as "pagan" are practiced.

### **Ethnic Policing Along Religious Lines**

Catholic adherents in the barrio are strongly aware of their majority status among co-ethnics. Religious symbols and religious traditions abound in the public spaces of Santa Ana. Holiday seasons are times of community solidarity, with celebrations such as the day of the virgin of Guadalupe, las posadas, Christmas, and Easter. Special days of praying the rosary also abound in public spaces. In addition, family based celebrations such as weddings and quinceaneras have strong religious overtones, which are all the more magnified given the public nature that these celebrations are carried out in Santa Ana. For those involved consistently in these "patterns of social interaction," in-group members are readily able to confirm who is part of the group and who is not (Barth 1969). This boundary of participation is made all the more salient as others opt out of participating. That is, as participants become aware of non-participants, labels of distinction and differentiation become more prevalent.

In order to draw attention to Evangelical acquaintances that no longer participate in the social spaces that Catholic respondents are embedded in, a number of Catholics

employed euphemistic labels in reference to Evangelicals. The two terms that were most prevalent were “Hallelujahs/Aleluyas” and “Hermanos.” When discussing with Beto Flores some of the different churches in his area, particularly those that worship in a spirited manner with a praise band and loud music, Beto commented, “We used to call those ‘Aleluyas.’” As Sanchez-Walsh (2003) recounts from her interaction with Pentecostals, this is a term that Catholics have been using to label Evangelicals and Pentecostals for some time. The term is in reference to the way that many Pentecostals shout out “Aleluya!” at climactic moments in their worship services. Labeling Pentecostals as ‘Aleluyas’ is meant to identify them with the loud clamor and perceived emotional outbursts of Pentecostal worship (Navarro 1998; Ramirez 1992). This is not just a Latino practice, as it can be found in white and black Pentecostal churches. It is, however, a particularly common label employed by an older generation of Latino Catholics to identify Pentecostals. For Catholics, this serves as a boundary marker that draws a contrast with the more solemn practices of Catholic liturgy.

The term “hermanos” has displaced aleluyas as the most common way of referring to Evangelicals, at least in Santa Ana. The phrase, “he became an hermano”/“she became an hermana,” is sometimes used to denote that someone converted to Evangelical Christianity. The label of hermano derives from the common use of the term among Evangelicals themselves. Evangelicals call each other hermano/a, which means brother or sister. Often, they will preface the name of a co-religionist with the term hermano/a. This was a common practice among all of the Evangelical churches I visited for this study.

For people such as Catholic parishioner Alicia Suarez, the term has clearly crossed over into her vocabulary as a way to mark evangelicals. “Sometimes the hermanos come here to the door,” Alicia describes as she pointed to her front door. As I interviewed her at the kitchen table of her humble apartment, a large picture of the Virgen de Guadalupe looked down upon us. She continued, “The last time they came, and other times also, they told me that I shouldn’t have this here.” She signaled to the picture of La Virgen. “They don’t think any of this should be up,” she explained further as she waved her hand across the room to point out the various pictures of saints and La Virgen that are propped up around her home.

Upon inquiring further, I made a curious discovery. It appeared that the “hermanos” that Alicia was referring to were actually Jehovah’s Witnesses. This is a mistake that I noticed several Catholic respondents make throughout my interviews. In fact, four of the Catholic subjects I interviewed referred to Jehovah’s Witnesses as hermanos, mistaking them for Evangelical Christians. The boundary marker of non-Catholic religion coupled with the Evangelistic efforts typical of Jehovah’s Witnesses was enough to place them in a category with Evangelicals, at least in the religious taxonomy of some Catholics. This discovery suggests that for Catholics, there is a salient Catholic and non-Catholic boundary. Non-Catholics do not necessarily experience a sense of boundedness. Jehovah’s Witnesses and Evangelicals, for example, do not view themselves as allies. But to Catholics, these all are religious others.

The notion of a generalized religious other can sometimes emerge in subtle ways. Jesus Ibarra, for example, talked about a church that had been started close to his home. I

was aware of the church, and pointed out to him that the church used the term “Catholic” in their name. The church, which is no longer in operation, was apparently a type of independent, non-Roman Catholic church. Jesus exclaimed, “Oh! We have to be careful of these types of churches. You have to be careful of how churches try to reach our people. They may take advantage of what people don’t know! Not just that one there. There are a lot of groups. There are a lot of these types of churches that pop up and people just don’t know. People go looking because they don’t know.”

While Jesus here is not explicitly mentioning Evangelicals, his widening of the scope in referring to “a lot of these churches that pop up” was most likely an indirect reference to the many Evangelical churches that have been started in the area. In terms of the bulk of church up-starts in Jesus’ community, Evangelical congregations were by far the most common. Jesus’ phrasing as inclusive of non-Catholic churches highlights the Catholic, non-Catholic divide in the mind of some Catholics. These religious others are to be avoided, when their religious beliefs are on display for the purpose of converting Catholic people. It should be noted that Jesus was generally a person of very positive demeanor and was not the type of person to treat people negatively along the lines of religion. I myself witnessed him interacting with others of different religious backgrounds at a community organization that he volunteers at. He is capable of navigating religious diversity on an interpersonal level. He is, however, bothered by a general sense that non-Catholics would try to convert Catholics to a different faith.

### **Conflictive Encounters**

The grand majority of encounters between Catholics and Evangelicals, both witnessed and narrated, were peaceful, but on occasion there were situations where tensions mounted. In some cases repeated micro-aggressions lead to at least one party becoming angry or frustrated. In some rare situations, tensions escalated to a point that hinted at violence. Miguel Luna, for example, described a situation where he was speaking to Evangelical Christians who were walking through his neighborhood inviting people to their church. Antonio described the situation in the following manner:

*There go the hermanos! They're here in our neighborhood talking to people; inviting them to their church. Talking to them about the Bible. [Miguel is in no way against the Bible, and actually claims to enjoy reading it]. They started to ask me if I was saved. I turned it on them and asked them "Are you saved?" They told me "Yes, we're already saved, and we're sure of it." They were trying to say that I'm not sure! So if they're so sure, since they say they are, I told them, "Well let me go bring a gun and I'll shoot you with it. After all, you're sure that you're saved!" After that they left and they stopped bothering me.*

As Miguel told me this story, he raised his hands in agitation and motioned as if he was pointing a gun at someone in his front yard. Our conversation was made all the more vivid because it was taking place in his front yard, precisely where Miguel indicated that this confrontation took place. Miguel was actively involved in community based religious activities in his neighborhood; his neighborhood was a safe space of sorts. I witnessed Miguel volunteering for community based celebrations, helping to provide food for celebrations, organizing other volunteers, and helping to clean up after several celebrations. Miguel reflected a sense of ownership about "his community," as he referred to his neighborhood. It bothered Miguel to see non-Catholics attempting to gain converts in his community. He too conflated Jehovah's Witnesses with Evangelical Christians at

various points. The story recounted above, however, involved Evangelicals. When he did talk about people that were Jehovah's Witnesses as hermanos, Miguel was later able to distinguish between them and Evangelicals. Nevertheless, employing the religious other frame, Miguel remarked, "All these different kinds of religions show up here!". As he spoke those words, he nodded his head angrily, and bore an expression of disgust on his face.

### **Negative Views of Religious Change in the Family**

Often the most volatile experiences of tension between Evangelicals and Catholics that subjects talked about were those that involved immediate and extended family members. What makes these points of tension unique is that the parties involved have an added incentive to maintain at least some engagement with each other. Moreover, the familial tie increases the probability that interactions between the parties involved will continue, though this is certainly not guaranteed. Furthermore, since these tensions involve close ties, they often present emotionally charged situations. Yet, since these ties provide opportunity for extensive and extended interactions, they allow people opportunities to develop discursive strategies with which to interact across religious boundaries.

A great example of how familial tensions develop across religious boundaries was provided by Rodrigo Alonzo. Rodrigo narrated a cross-religious interaction involving he and his sister Hilda, which greatly saddened him. Rodrigo's sister had converted to Evangelicalism and it was difficult for he and his family to comprehend why she had done this. She had been raised as a devout Catholic most of her life, but now, married and with a family of her own, she was choosing to affiliate herself with the Evangelical tradition. In

merely acknowledging his sister's conversion, Rodrigo already demonstrated a degree of inner-conflict. "I mean, she's my sister. I don't know why she would do that. How could you give up on something like that?" Rodrigo thought outloud. "We still talk and everything. She's still my sister." Moreover, Rodrigo faces the inner-conflict of wanting to maintain a relationship with his sister, but feeling betrayed by her conversion.

Tensions became particularly elevated and were manifested in an outward manner, according to Rodrigo, when his sister came to Rodrigo's home and brought some Catholic religious paraphernalia with her. Hilda had brought these images, depicting the Virgen de Guadalupe and some saints, back to Rodrigo in order to leave the items with him. She told Rodrigo, "I can't keep these anymore because I'm a Christian now." Rodrigo's voice quickened as he told me this portion of the story. For anyone doubting Rodrigo's valuing of these types of objects, even a quick perusal of the exterior of Rodrigo's home will answer questions of this nature: Rodrigo has a statue of the Virgen de Guadalupe situated as the centerpiece of his front yard, with two small spotlights facing the statue. He also has a sign on his front door, admonishing visitors that his home is a Catholic home and that they do not accept literature of other types. Hilda, herein was exhibiting actions that completely went against Rodrigo's religious convictions.

As Hilda handed these religious items over to Rodrigo, "She began to cry and cry," reported Rodrigo. "There were big tears coming out of her and she kept crying," he continued. He further recounted, "then she laid these items down on the kitchen table and I tried to make her see what she was doing. I told her that I could never give up those things because they are so dear to me. I don't know how she could do it." Rodrigo recounted that



she choked back tears as she explained to him that she could no longer “worship” those images. She said she saw things differently now and that her faith was in Jesus Christ. Rodrigo was frustrated at Hilda’s response, but he also felt a sense of urgency to “honor the images, that she was treading so badly.” So Rodrigo obliged her action and received everything that she left.

In the aftermath of this incident, Rodrigo recounted that he spent time assuring his mother that Hilda would be fine since she still believed in the same God as them. Their mother was noticeably upset by this incident and needed assistance to come to grips with the change. As Rodrigo described, she was most concerned that Hilda had “forgotten that she has a mother.” The phrase “remember that you have a mother,” was something that Rodrigo himself used multiple times during our conversation. The mother in question is not her biological mother, but la Virgen de Guadalupe. Rodrigo’s response was that “she [Mary] will be there when Hilda needs her.” In his description of the second conversation with his mother, Rodrigo presented himself as a peacemaker of sorts. Rodrigo portrayed himself as someone willing to work across the religious boundary, albeit still holding to his personal convictions. However, the phrase about having a mother was something that Rodrigo used in describing how he likes to remind others about the need to honor La Virgen. In other words, Rodrigo also likes to present himself as someone who polices the religious boundary.

According to Rodrigo, it is difficult for him to conceive of being Mexican and not being a “Guadalupano,” a devotee of la Virgen de Guadalupe. He explained, “I am proud to be faithful to La Virgencita.” Rodrigo added that the devotion expressed by him and others

is drawing attention from many other people, including non-Mexicans. He told me “I know of [white] Americans that also consider themselves Guadalupanos. Yes! They’re noticing what she’s about! They’re seeing what she can do!” For Rodrigo, being devoted to la Virgen is a duty not only to the Catholic church at large, but also to his ethnic group. “This is something very special that we have as Mexicans,” Rodrigo gloated. “It’s up to us to maintain it.”

### **Evangelical Experiences of Policing**

Catholics described some instances where they were involved in ethnic policing along religious lines, but it was primarily from Evangelicals that stories of Evangelical policing were amassed. In part, this may reveal a flaw in the apparatus of data collection. The questions relating to ethnic policing asked about respondents being the objects of discrimination, and did not ask about them being the aggressors. In most cases, as the minority out-group among co-ethnics, Evangelicals were the target of co-ethnic policing. On the other hand, the accounts compiled may also point to a heightened sense of minority status that Evangelicals experience. As such, they may be more likely to discuss these types of experiences than their Catholic co-ethnics. A heightened sense of being policed has a certain type of religious effect. It bolsters the framing that Evangelicals employ in discussing their faith commitment. Evangelicals are more readily able to talk about having a rupture with their past because of how they experience distancing from their co-ethnics. The intra-ethnic policing experienced by Evangelicals comes to form an important component of their moral identity.

### **Reformational Rupture**

To be Evangelical is to have a story of reform. For the Mexican Evangelicals I interviewed and met in my church visitations, having an experience of reformation was an essential part of the Evangelical identity (Flores 2009). While some Catholics talked about a reformatory experience, this dimension of religious experience was not as pronounced among Catholics. What should be emphasized here is that reformation is not only about self improvement but also about intentional discontinuity with “past” identities. This is a reactive identity (Portes and Rumbaut 2006); it is a moral identity (Kleinman 1996). There were three primary dimensions of the reformatory rupture experience that emerged from my discussion with Evangelicals:

- 1.) Rupturing with Past Phases: This is the practice of abstention from behaviors now deemed as deleterious but which an actor previously partook of.
- 2.) Rupturing with Familiar Faces: This is a strategy of distancing oneself from individuals that appear unsympathetic to one’s faith.
- 3.) Rupturing with Cultural Spaces: This is the practice of individuals distancing themselves from social spaces where cultural expressions deemed as “pagan” are practiced.

All of these forms of reformatory rupturing have been witnessed directly through my participant observation, but they also comprise discursive strategies that Evangelicals express verbally. Moreover, these strategies were most evident in the narratives that Evangelicals communicated.

### **Rupturing with Past Phases**

One of the most common elements within the conversion narratives of Evangelical adherents is a sense of rupturing with past behavioral patterns. The narratives that are held up as ideal examples of what it is to belong to the Evangelical faith overwhelmingly include a component that emphasizes the difference between who one was in the past, and who one is now. This can be encapsulated by a Biblical verse alluded to by one of my Evangelical subjects: "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (2 Corinthians 5:17)." Evangelicals had been socialized to emphasize how "the old has gone," and in what ways "the new is here." It is emblematic for Evangelicals to construct and communicate their narrative along these lines. This provides a boundary marker that stands in contrast to the experience of non-evangelicals who may not have this type of narrative to share with others. It was certainly clear that Evangelicals had been trained, even if by indirect socialization, to talk about their lives in this manner. There was life before Christ. And there was life after encountering Christ.

Berenice Lopez, an office manager in her early forties, told one of the most dramatic conversion experiences. Berenice talked about the day in which she "met the Lord [Jesus Christ]" and how her life had changed drastically since then:

*I met the Lord through my mother. I didn't like going to church. My mom would sell tamales, corn on the cob, champurrado [a Mexican hot chocolate-like drink] as a street vendor. She met the pastor of our church one day that she was out selling food. He evangelized her [shared the Christian message]. She went to church for the first time and she kept going back! There was a brother there at the church that wanted to teach me about the things of Jesus [Christ]. He wanted to disciple me. He said, "We'll meet on Fridays." He said, "That's fine if you want to go out dancing on Saturday with your friends, but on Sunday I'll pick you up to go to church." I would go to church and I was falling asleep there! My mom was already a committed Christian by this time, and was praying and praying for me. She could tell that I really didn't want to be there and that I hadn't given my life to the Lord.*

*One night, I went to a night club. In those days, I used to like arriving early to the club. I was really into “banda” music in those days. The style of music was also called “quebradita” [a Mexican regional type of dance that involved dance partners dancing very close together, the man often straddling the woman on his thigh]. So I was there at this club just as it was getting full of people.*

*Suddenly, a man shows up. He was blond and light skinned. He was dressed in white. This was unlike anything I had ever seen before. He came directly to where my friends and I were at. He took me by the hand. He took me out to the dance floor. He motioned as if he was going to start dancing with me. The way he took me was similar to how it is described in Song of Solomon [a book in the Bible that describes a love story between a king and a woman]. I later realized that this is what he was doing [acting out a scene from Song of Solomon] when I began to learn more about the Bible. He brought his face close to my ear, and he told me, “You shouldn’t be in this place.”*

*Immediately something changed. It’s as if something shifted in my spirit. I began to smell the odor of cigarette smoke. I began to listen to the music and something didn’t feel right. I began to pray inside of me! He let me go and I walked back to my friends.*

*“What happened to you?” my friends asked me. They could see something had happened. “What did he tell you?” they continued to ask. They couldn’t understand what had happened to me.*

*That was the last day that I went out dancing. I have never been to a dance club again and that was over twenty years ago. That night, when I got home, my mom hit me for going out. I kept crying and crying. I didn’t care about getting hit. It was more that something had changed in my life. I believe that man was an Angel sent by God. I don’t remember his face, his countenance. A blond man that I had never seen before.*

An important aspect of Berenice’s experience is the manner in which it served within her personal timeline as a “no turning back” type of marker. Berenice made sure that I did not overlook the fact that she never once returned to a dance club. This was a turning point, a point of transformation. She explained that after that experience she began to get involved in church, and began to “grow spiritually.” She is now known to preach and teach in the church and is a well respected leader in her congregation.

Even when recounting conversion experiences in mundane ways, subjects expressed a sense that God was the primary agent of transformation in their lives. Similar to Berenice, Arturo Esparza discussed how he gave up going to dance clubs and gave up

other activities he enjoyed participating in before becoming an Evangelical Christian.

Arturo's self-narrative focused on a particular Sunday where he visited a church and heard the pastor preach a sermon that changed his life. He points to that day as the turning point in his life. This was the point at which he would say that he experienced conversion.

Nevertheless, in reviewing the sequence of events that took place, Arturo brought to light a more gradual transition into the Evangelical tradition:

*Little by little, the Lord began to change me. At first I wasn't changing. I began to compare my life. I'd go to dance clubs. I'd feel happy for a moment. I'd see the brothers, how they'd greet me. I began to feel warmth. No one hugged me before that time. It was a new experience for me. I experienced the love of the brethren. They didn't reject me, and just accepted me as I was. There was a beautiful move of the Spirit there [this is an expression typical among Pentecostals denoting a perception that God is doing something supernatural in the congregation]. Prophecy, speaking in tongues. It was a new world.*

For Arturo, the reformational rupture was made all the more clear as he looked back on his life, having now been more integrated into the Evangelical community which would eventually become his church community. Arturo's initial motivation of visiting the church was to pursue a romantic relationship with a young woman. That young woman, Julieta, would eventually become his wife, but not until after he committed his life to faith in Jesus Christ in the Evangelical sense. After experiencing the warmth and embrace of the Evangelical church that he had been visiting for several months, he came to the realization that his life was drastically different than what it was before. He had no desire to return, and he remained firm in his Evangelical faith. He is now very involved in his church and is a volunteer leader with the youth ministry at the church. He plans church services for teens, and plans regular outings for these young people of the church.

There is often a cultural element that is present in the way Evangelicals frame their rupture narrative. The change at conversion, though framed along moral lines, may involve letting go of cultural practices that are coupled with those things that are deemed immoral. Federico Reyes, for example, prefaced his conversion narrative by describing some cultural elements that he let go of post conversion. Specially, he references the way that he used to dress in Mexico. While he does not explicitly say that his attire was immoral, he appears to conflate his attire with his perceived negative habits of using dirty language and smoking. This becomes part of the complete package that gets left behind with his transformation.

*We [he and two other friends] had been attending church for some time and little by little I began to change. I had long hair, like in Mexico. And we dressed ... what can I say ... we didn't dress right ... we dressed the way people dress over there [in Mexico]. People looked at us like strange creatures. But we started to realize, how can we be hungry for God and remain the same. We used to talk with curse words. Little by little God began to deal with us. I prayed to God and said, "If it's your will, I'm going to stop smoking." At once, I was able to stop smoking! I haven't done it again by the grace of God. Also, we used to get together and drink and smoke. Now we're so much better. When the dog returns to his vomit ... that's how I saw myself when I look back on my past. Always returning to what was bad. But not anymore.*

As with Federico, for many respondents the rupture was gradual, but can now be talked about in salient fashion when examined in hindsight. An important element of Federico's rupture narrative is that it carries with it a sense of socio-cultural assimilation. He left behind some of the customs that he had in Mexico in following through with his religious conversion. For people such as Federico, a more thorough change that includes cultural expressions along with practices deemed as immoral may provide for an easier or cleaner transition. This becomes an all or nothing change.

### **Rupturing with Familiar Faces**

Talking about a rupture from past actions and activities is often insufficient for making the moral identity boundary salient. The moral identity boundary is made salient through conscious discussions of changed dynamics in respondents' social circles. The rupture that occurs often includes a rupture with "familiar faces," or people that once shared a close social bond with the subjects. Many of the stories that were shared by Evangelicals, similar to Rodrigo's story above about his sister's conversion, involve navigating tensions with family members or close friends over religious change and/or drawing a contrast between oneself and one's family members. This is the other side of policing.

References to family were detailed or brief, but were either way useful to Evangelicals highlighting the type of change that has taken place. An underlying subtext within this particular discursive strategy was that a subject's family represented their origin and their past. Subjects often introduced their families and friends into the discourse to demonstrate how they had been able to improve upon, and perhaps overcome negative characteristics present in these acquaintances.

Miguel Sanchez, for example, shared the following: "I was following my dad's path, I drank much... yes. But I don't do that anymore." Miguel's recollections of his father tended to be negative, but they were brought out with a redemptive purpose in mind. Miguel emphasize, "I'm not angry with my father. I don't think he understood the consequences of his actions." The purpose of this reference was to emphasize the contrast between his past life, or his origins, as represented by his father's actions, and his present life. By showing



that his negative habit was not only habitual to him but also to his father, Miguel added weight to the salience of the transformation that had occurred in his life.

Federico Reyes, in similar fashion, conjured up a negative memory about his father in order to highlight the change that had taken place in his life. Federico explained, “I got to see my father beating my mom. Why? Because he’s macho. And he could be with other women and all. And we carry that as tradition. Why? We have this pattern. We carry this with us. But this is something that I don’t do anymore. I’ve broken with this pattern.”

The notion of breaking with one’s family pattern was explicitly expressed on several occasions by Evangelicals. They conceptualized their personal reformation as a rupture with patterns associated with their family. Federico himself, as he later explained, was involved with heavy drinking for some time, but he claimed he was never involved with beating his wife or being unfaithful to her in their marriage as his father had done to Federico’s mother. Nevertheless, it was important for Federico to stress that he had broken with this pattern to ensure that this would never be an issue for him. An underlying assumption here is that if there is not a clear rupture from the family pattern, these same issues may surface in the life of subjects.

Finally, as discussed above in the case of Catholics, Evangelicals also described instances of policing where they were the ones being targeted. When Evangelicals were targeted by their own family members, the experience became especially significant because it forced Evangelicals to more intentionally make a decision about how to respond. When these situations happened at work among co-workers, some Evangelicals chose to ignore the situation or to simply limit their interaction with the aggressor. When family or

close friends are involved, however, Evangelicals were more likely to take action. The responses may have involved an in-depth conversation, repeated dialogue, or it may have lead to something private such as saying that they were praying for the person exerting pressure on them. Praying for a family member that does not share a subject's faith tradition was a frequent response from Evangelical respondents.

Patricia and Leo Martinez described an extended situation that they faced with some of their family members wherein their family began to cut them out of their lives.

*Patricia: His cousins don't talk to him. They discriminate against him.*

*Leo: Who knows if they are angry with me or if they're jealous. They used to come to the house [before Leo converted to Evangelicalism]. She [Patricia] tells me, you call them! You share the gospel message with them! I've tried many times, but it's hard to get them to respond. These cousins and I used to be inseparable.*

*Patricia: There are also old friends that we used to have that now discriminate against us. They don't talk to us anymore.*

*Leo: Sometimes when I'm working, my cousin will pass by, but he won't say anything to me. He just ignores me. I don't get mad at him, though.*

The treatment that Patricia and Leo received at the hands of their family members saddened them, but they were proud in being able to say that they responded in a positive manner. They were able to maintain a peaceful demeanor in the face of conflict. The responses that Evangelicals had in the face of co-ethnic policing presented an opportunity to make more salient one's moral identity. As Patricia and Leo highlighted in their story, they appeared as the more moral actors in the face of their family members' ill treatment of them. Certainly the peaceful response element strengthened the reformatory rupture strategy employed by Evangelicals.

### **Rupturing with Cultural Spaces**

Evangelicals were quick to point out that there are certain types of places that they should not visit because these places are associated with their sinful past. Some discussed the problems with visiting bars, or nightclubs, or places where drugs were being consumed. The aversion towards some of these places was similar to what some devout Catholics indicated as places to avoid. In that regard, Evangelicals and Catholics both indicated that their faith tradition was incongruous with certain types of overindulgent practices, and that the places that are known for housing these types of activities should be sidestepped. This was a very salient commonality with Evangelicals among the most devout Catholics that I interviewed. The most devout Catholics also asserted a moral identity by criticizing certain behaviors as immoral.

What tended to diverge between Catholics and Evangelicals was that Evangelicals often pointed to spaces heavily associated with Mexican cultural activities as places to be avoided. Moreover, Evangelicals were significantly more stringent than Catholics in terms of the types of spaces they were willing to move within and those that they intentionally stayed away from. In some cases, this had to do specifically with the avoidance of spaces that were associated with non-Evangelical religious practices; these would typically be tied to Catholic related events. In other cases, particular behaviors being enacted in a certain space was seen as sinful by Evangelicals. Even though those “sinful” behaviors were not representative of the entire event taking place, Evangelicals avoided the space altogether. It was not enough for Evangelicals to be present in a space and not partake of a specific “sinful” activity.

The avoidance taking place could serve a two-fold purpose. Evangelicals were avoiding the temptation and/or contamination from a particular activity, and simultaneously they were avoiding the policing that could take place at the hands of their Catholic co-ethnics (Jimenez 2008). In this sense, from the side of the divide opposite Catholics, Evangelicals were also propping up the religious boundary. They willfully distanced themselves from social spaces that were highly valued by their co-ethnics.

Patricia and Leo Martinez discussed some of the parties that family members and friends invited them to. This couple demonstrated an inner tension in their experiences. They desired to please their family but they also desired to establish their moral boundary. As salient as their religious commitments were, they still had to navigate the maintenance of their familial ties. Patricia related the following struggles she faced:

*In Mexico there were places and activities that I know I would not go to now. They do those same types of activities here and I don't feel like going. They're like the kind of fiestas that they would have in my hometown with dancing and everything. There's something that I don't feel anymore about those places. I don't even feel bad if I don't get invited anymore. Sometimes my husband and I go for a little while. Then we see that things are getting rough [which typically means that the party is picking up and people are drinking and dancing more]. When that starts happening I tell him, "Let's leave! We already accompanied them for a little bit. We did our part, now let's go."*

It is notable that Patricia conflates what used to happen in Mexico, with activities that they no longer participate in. This is especially meaningful for someone like Patricia who is undocumented and does not have the opportunity to return to Mexico to participate in local festivities as some of her immigrant co-ethnic in Santa Ana do. The closest thing available to her would be the local celebrations which she tends to shy away from due to her moral identity. Walking away from the immoral for Patricia also meant walking away

from that which most closely represents Mexico. Along the same lines, Leo expressed his negotiations and attempts to assert his moral identity via social spaces.

*There are places that we hardly go to anymore. They invite us but we don't go. You know, there are paisanos that are not so close to the family, and they invite us. We don't always go with the family, so even less with these other people. Sometimes we'll go just for a little while so that they don't say anything to us. But then I watch to see when they start drinking, and I say, "Let's go home!" Sometimes they tell me, "Have a drink! At least one! No one is going to see you drinking!" They don't understand that that's in the past now.*

Though Evangelicals employed an avoidance strategy to magnify their moral identity, sometimes Evangelicals did attend gatherings where activities that they do not approve of were taking place. Among the subjects that I interviewed, this was more likely to happen among newer converts. Newer converts tended to have stronger network ties with others who did not share the same faith tradition as them. Mariela Sanchez exemplifies this well. She was still considered by her church to be a newer convert. Mariela shared a past experience that she had at a party hosted by some neighbors in her apartment complex. Previous to becoming an Evangelical Christian, she spent much time socializing with friends that lived in the same apartment complex as her. Her neighbors comprised an important component of her support network, previously. Her participation in the social spaces that these friends inhabited began changing after she converted.

Mariela explains:

*A neighbor would invite me to parties. Recently she invited me to another neighbor's party. During the party, they did their rosary praying. I sat there with them and prayed to God while they were praying the rosary. Except, I never named the virgin, because she doesn't exist. I only called out to God, "Yes Lord, Hallelujah." I prayed in the way that I pray, and they turned around and stared at me! Because I was there with my hands lifted, because I am not ashamed of who I am and in whom I believe, that he is the king of kings and lord of lords. I said "Lord bless this home," I know they*

*know about you in their own way, they know you. when I opened my eyes, they were all looking at me. The host was looking at me. Before we ate, I also prayed, I prayed for the food, "Lord bless this food and this home." They kept looking at me. I was not embarrassed. I noticed that many of the people present that day began to distance themselves from me. The person that invited me doesn't talk to me as much as she used to. But I said, "Lord I didn't do anything."*

Mariela had been an Evangelical Christian for a relatively short amount of time, less than four years. The incident she described occurred just two years after she had become an Evangelical Christian. Her passion for her faith continued to be very salient even in the face of questions that she received from her old friends. Due to her actions, however, some of her ties with her Catholic friends and neighbors weakened. The rupturing process was more drawn out for those that retained connections to their community based networks, especially ties that helped meet needs. Nevertheless, persisting tensions along religious lines were enough to raise suspicion even among close friends. Mariela, who described herself as an "all purpose" kind of worker, (she sells food on the street, sells goods at a local swapmeet, and does cleaning jobs on an on-call basis) would be the ideal candidate to benefit from the strong community based social networks that many of her working class co-ethnics relied on. Yet, due to her religious distancing, the community based social network was becoming less accessible. In contrast, her church based network was gaining in significance for her. Many of her social and emotional needs were now being met by her church community.

Finally, on a practical level, sometimes subjects distanced themselves from social spaces in part because they became more active in church activities. As noted in the case of Mariela, the weakening of one's past social network was often accompanied by the

emergence of another social network. One of the most efficient ways to strengthen this new social network was through extended lengths of contact and interaction. As people became more active in the church, practically speaking, they had less time for outside socializing.

The pattern of network replacement emerged from my interactions with Eduardo and Clarisa Aceves. In one of my exchanges with this young married couple, they explained how their patterns of interaction with their families had shifted since having converted to Evangelical Christianity three years prior:

*Clarisa: Our family has taken things as if we are crazy. They tell us, "You guys are in church all the time! How can you go to church and not spend more time here with us" [during family celebrations]. They also say things like, "Why did you change your religion?" But they need to understand that God has restored my marriage.*

*Eduardo: It's very similar for me. I have my brother that loves to drink. You know, you have to separate yourself from this stuff, even if just a little bit.*

*Clarisa: Oh, and we used to love dancing.*

*Eduardo: That's what used to weigh on us the most! We can't go to nightclubs anymore. That's been a big sacrifice for us. The music. Dancing.*

*Clarisa: "Dance! Dance!" our friends and family tell us when they see us. We used to be known for that. "You taught me how to dance cumbia [musical genre from Colombia that is very popular in Mexico]. How is it that you don't even dance anymore!"*

*Eduardo: "You guys are so boring now!" See but we're getting filled by God so that we can help them! And sometimes they do see the difference and they ask about the differences they see in our lives. Sometimes they do come to us for advice.*

Eduardo and Clarisa's account is helpful because it embodies the various frames discussed in this section. Eduardo discussed his abstention from drinking as it is something which he came to understand as immoral post-conversion. They discussed the distancing from friends and family that took place as their lives began to change. They made mention of their distancing from certain cultural activities which they used to enjoy participating in but now found incompatible with their faith. Their story illustrates the

interconnectedness between moral distancing, social distancing, and cultural distancing. These are all aspects of the moral boundary that Evangelicals construct. Eduardo and Clarisa are still able to make claims of legitimate ethnic membership, though, because their lives have changed for the better, and friends and family members now come to them for advice. They believe they are there so that they can help their friends and family.

## **Discussion**

The ethnic authenticity policing enacted by Catholics and the moral identity asserted by Evangelicals function as two sides of the same coin. Both of these efforts serve to prop up the same intra-ethnic religious boundary. Catholics question the manner in which Evangelicals have abandoned certain cultural traditions, particularly those related to religion. Catholics also view Evangelicals as a generalized other, which is exacerbated by the vigorous proselytizing efforts that Evangelicals and other religious minorities engage in. Evangelicals conversion is read as abandonment by Catholics. Conversion is an abandonment of ethnic community. Evangelism is an effort toward weakening the ethnic community.

Avoidance is a passive response that is taken by Evangelicals, but it is typically accompanied by more direct discursive strategies. By emphasizing moralistic ruptures, Evangelicals feel vindicated as legitimate members of the ethnic community. Evangelicals, in their minds, are not distancing themselves from their ethnic community. Evangelicals are distancing themselves from immorality. Breaking with the past bolsters the Evangelical sense of moving toward a positive and improved future.



Several of the anchors that stabilize the experience of culture, the sense of shared ancestry, and a shared past, begin to fade in symbolic and practical ways. Because many Evangelicals are converts to the faith, their parents and relatives may not share their same faith. Ethnicity, for many Evangelicals, then, cannot be predicated on ancestry. Ancestors and family members that are still alive may represent those very things that the Evangelical desires to move away from. History, too, is often downplayed because it is the stuff of immorality; the past is not just neutral, it is conceptualized as the “sinful past.” The cultural spaces that help to maintain ties to an imagined past, while containing some positive qualities, are generally danger zones for Evangelicals.

While I would assert that ethnic authenticity policing is a very real phenomenon experienced by Evangelicals in a significant way, I would also argue that this authenticity policing would be less pronounced were it not for the moralistic rupturing lived out by Evangelicals. The ethnic policing by Catholics becomes more direct precisely because the efforts of Evangelicals are so direct. The fact that Evangelicals continue to make converts in part fuels their efforts. Evangelicalism as a whole continues to grow in Santa Ana, and this motivates Evangelical efforts.

There is another function that is served by the authenticity policing and moral identities related to intra-ethnic boundary processes. The discursive strategies that both Catholics and Evangelicals use to distinguish themselves from the other, serve an inner-group purpose. As Catholics and Evangelicals project their boundaries within their own groups, they are performing a type of boundary policing for their own. As Evangelicals

highlight their moral boundary among other Evangelicals, they are reproducing this boundary within their group.

For Catholics, references to the religious other, and a heightened sense of caution toward the proselytizing efforts of others, helps to sustain an in-group boundary. As Catholics continue to deploy these discursive strategies, they are helping to ensure that their members do not go out seeking other options. For those that do explore the increasingly diverse religious economy, they will be reminded that they “have a mother.”

## CHAPTER SIX

### **Different Foundations, Diverging Trajectories**

For those expecting that this study would evidence the advanced and unexpected fragmentation of an immigrant ethnic community due to a sudden, dramatic, and growing religious affiliation cleavage among co-ethnics, perhaps reaching the conclusion of this work leaves some expectations unmet. As I show in “Latino Religious Affiliation and Ethnic Identity,” religious affiliation does not significantly structure Spanish language use, a core marker of Mexican ethnicity, among the first generation. The significant association of religious affiliation with Spanish language use does, however, appear in subsequent generations. Hence, for those open to an argument of how a sudden, dramatic, and growing intra-ethnic religious affiliation cleavage may set the stage for diverging ethnic identity trajectories beyond the immigrant generation, then you may have found this study’s thesis compelling. If we are to take social constructionist theory of ethnoraciality seriously, we must look to explain how ethnic difference is constructed in its infancy; if not, although using constructivist language, we become quasi-primordialist in assuming their ever-present salience. Hence, I choose to focus my dissertation research on the first generation so to capture the seeding of differences in order to leverage a greater understanding of ethnogenesis (Nagel 1994; Bailey 2008).

The potential for shifting ethnic identity formation is surely, in most cases, born of in the seeding of markers. Depending on the growth conditions, some survive and can slowly mature. What’s more, issues of path dependency may begin to even more strongly make some harvests close to sure bets. The evidenced differences in how Catholics and

Evangelicals in the first generation engage the ethnic enclave, employ discursive strategies to legitimize their identities, and negotiate ethnic authenticity could be viewed as planting the seeds of ethnoreligious marker divergence that grow with time, i.e., across generations.

Understanding and even anticipating the ethnic dynamics of the second generation and beyond must take into consideration the first generation (Massey 1995). The role of the first generation is important as it may initiate baseline pathways that constrain the idea of limitless self-determined agency in subsequent generations, or at the very least provide the fodder for the ethnic futures. Current research examining the effects of parental legal status on children, for example, demonstrates that the life opportunities of children are greatly influenced by the life opportunities possessed by parents (Gonzales 2015). The second generation, while very different from the first, is not an island unto themselves. There are cross-generational linkages.

In addition to influencing the life opportunities available to the second generation based on parental socio-economic positioning, the first generation also transmits cultural tools to the second generation with ramifications in both the cultural and socioeconomic arena. The particular toolkit that the first generation receives from its religious context may serve to inform the types of strategies that the second generation employs in carving their place out in U.S. society. Conversely, the culture of the first generation may serve as a backdrop which the second generation attempts to distance themselves from, in cases of dissonant acculturation (Portes and Rumbaut 2006). Warner (2007) argues that the religious sphere presents an ideal space within which selective acculturation may take place as the first and second generations experience the religious community together.

In the sections to follow I will provide a brief overview of the findings of this study, and will reflect upon how these nuanced differences may work to reconfigure the very definition of Mexican ethnicity for subsequent generations. In particular, I first discuss the importance of the ethnic enclave and how the relationship to the barrio that Catholics and Evangelicals conceptualize becomes a marker of ethnicity. Secondly, I discuss the discursive strategies used by Catholics and Evangelicals when framing their ethnic identities. Thirdly, I discuss the boundary policing that is at play in order to define what it means to be authentically Mexican at the group level.

### **The Ethnic Enclave**

Examination of participation and performance within the ethnic enclave revealed clear differences in how ethnicity was lived out along religious lines. Although Catholics and Evangelicals lived side by side in central Santa Ana, there were qualitative differences in how they engaged the barrio. It was evident that both groups had different attitudes toward the barrio. Catholics reflected an ethno-spatial spirituality that focused on sacralizing localized spaces, while Evangelicals exhibited a barrio reformation attitude intent on changing the neighborhood. Of particular interest was the difference in the manner with which both groups transmitted social capital in relation to the localized ethnic community. The fact that Catholics were more likely to access resources from the local ethnic enclave helped to bolster a framing of ethnicity as something that coincides and is bolstered by spatial boundaries. Spatial markers of ethnicity were less prevalent among Evangelicals, as their social networks were less geographically contained.

Catholic ties to localized ethnic communities also correlated with the manner in which their religious traditions tied adherents to particular communities in the homeland. In other words, just as Catholics were more likely to value the local barrio in the U.S., they were more likely to demonstrate sustained ties with their local communities in the homeland through the practice of regional religious traditions. As discussed, many folk-Catholic practices are tied to particular regions in Mexico.

Conversely, Evangelicals were more likely to demonstrate pan-ethnic ties, and to benefit from these types of relationships. While self-identification alone did not prove to be a significant point of divergence for Catholics and Evangelicals in terms of pan-ethnicity, pan-ethnicity was certainly more present in the religious expressions of the Evangelicals I studied. For Evangelicals, the boundaries of ethnicity as a social category were more blurred along pan-ethnic lines. Furthermore, because of the extended inter-ethnic networks of local Evangelical churches, Evangelicals had more exposure to non-Latinos in voluntaristic religious settings. This helped to both solidify among Evangelicals that faith was a unifying factor beyond the more localized ethnic expression, and it helped to communicate to non-Evangelicals, via public displays, that Evangelicalism was ethnically less particularistic and less ethnically rooted.

The notion of the “catnet” is perhaps helpful in the discussion of engagement of the barrio across religious lines. Crossley (2010:196), borrowing concepts from Harrison White that were foundational to the development of social network analysis, explains the catnet in the following manner:

*Catnets exist where a set of actors are both internally densely networked in a relevant and meaningful manner and also share a common ‘category’ or*

*'collective identity'. Actors can belong to a common category and even adhere to a common identity without necessarily enjoying meaningful and dense network ties: hermits are an obvious example. Likewise actors can be densely networked in a meaningful fashion without necessarily belonging to a salient category or sharing a collective identity: socially heterogeneous friendship groups might be an example. Where both conditions come together, however, we have a catnet and catnets are important, according to White, because the combination of networks and identities is particularly conducive to collective action, including protest and social movement mobilization.*

The strength of the network in conjunction with a shared identity more effectively facilitates the mobilization of social actors for acts of solidarity and social change.

While Catholics and Evangelicals lay claim to the same ethnic categories, the fusion of a more particular ethnic category with a more particular ethnic network is weakened for Evangelicals and strengthened for Catholics. The ways in which each group engages the neighborhood brings this phenomenon to the forefront.

### **The Discursive Strategies of Self-identification**

Self-identification provides an important angle for examining how individuals perceive themselves in relation to particular reference groups. The self-identification response patterns demonstrated much similarity across religious lines, but also drew attention to the greater efforts dispensed by Evangelicals in attempting to prove their legitimacy as members of an ethnic community. Catholics generally demonstrated confidence in their identification with the ethnic Mexican community. There was not much to debate from their perspective.

Some Evangelicals carried with them a sense of not being fully accepted as legitimately ethnic among Mexican co-ethnics. However, Evangelicals did express desire to be identified with the broader ethnic community. As such, they engaged in various

discursive strategies to highlight their legitimacy. Some highlighted that they were from a particular region in Mexico, some highlighted commonality related to legal status, and some emphasized their love for their ethnic origin. Others sought to emphasize alternative sources of legitimacy, such as U.S. citizenship or panethnicity. These latter strategies provided opportunity for some to base their status in a source beyond the co-ethnic community, especially when co-ethnics questioned their self-identification. This was a way to assert that even if co-ethnics questioned their ethnic status, subjects were recognized in a positive light by some other authoritative source, or via another authoritative designation.

Again, it should be stressed that all subjects interviewed desired to be identified as ethnic in one way or another. No one employed a completely de-ethnicized discourse, even if they preferred a primary label other than “Mexican.” As such, varying discursive frames, in this case, tended to indicate strategic and socialized responses that helped to confirm ethnic status or combat doubts that subjects perceived in others. The discursive strategies employed by Evangelicals demonstrated a desire for these subjects to remain within the boundaries of Mexican ethnicity, even in the face of questioning, and even as shifting the markers of what it means to be Mexican.

### **Defining and Policing Authentic Ethnicity**

There were two opposing strategies employed by Catholics and Evangelicals when it came to contesting ethnic legitimacy in the face of the other. Catholics questioned the legitimacy of Evangelical ethnic membership as that of a group that had abandoned an essential marker of Mexican ethnicity and that was aggressively seeking to undermine their



ethnic community through unrelenting proselytizing or poaching. In turn, Evangelicals responded by emphasizing a moral status as a marker of heightened authenticity. To Catholics, Evangelicals had relinquished the faith of their forbearers. To Evangelicals, Catholics were immoral in lifestyle and heretical in their faith (idol worshipers). Evangelicals expressed a sense of being policed by Catholics, but they were also complicit in the bolstering of boundaries via their own willful avoidance of many social spaces where ethnic culture was most salient through fear of contamination and/or temptation.

In the context of Santa Ana, these processes of authenticity policing are heightened by the phenomenon of ethnic replenishment. That is, given the prominent presence of first generation immigrants, those most connected to the homeland may have the greatest influence in determining what is authentically ethnic (Massey 1995; Jimenez 2010). Due to the continued access to “raw” ethnic material (Jimenez 2010) and the dominance of Catholicism in Mexico and among the first generation, many look to the homeland for cues as to how ethnicity is to be properly performed, and the well of Catholic symbols connected to a Catholic nation is deep, and its waters are sweet. By privileging a moral status, vis-a-vis a conversion experience, Evangelicals place homeland orientation in the back seat; Mexico’s symbolic resources or repertoires for Evangelicals are certainly less obvious or visual, and perhaps less abundant.

Even as Evangelicals desire to be acknowledged as Mexican by co-ethnic Catholics, they recognize that the markers defining the boundaries of ethnicity must be negotiated. That is, the Evangelicals in the study were not attempting to exit the category of “Mexican,” but they were attempting to alter the way the category was defined. The phenomenon of

boundary policing, because it was countered by an assertion of a moral identity, was actually a contest to change that which was understood as the “epitome” (Schermerhorn 1978) of Mexican ethnicity. An important caveat here is that the strong emphasis that Catholics placed on connecting to the past was countered by an Evangelical emphasis on looking toward a favorable future. The retrospective aspect of ethnicity that was more readily bolstered via Catholic religiosity was downplayed in order to better accommodate a future oriented Evangelical religiosity. Evangelicals succeeded in instilling a sense of a shared destiny over and above a common origin. A belief in a shared destiny, findings suggest, was an aspect of religious belonging central to Evangelical tradition. However, a shared Evangelical destiny, unlike common origin, extends beyond the national origin boundary of Mexican ethnic identity; hence, while being Mexican is about common origins in Mexico, being Evangelical is clearly a different type of concept whose origins, through a common Evangelical lens, are in Jerusalem and Galilee, as the ethnoreligious dancers of Evangelical congregations I described above sought to represent. Of course, as the ethnicity of earlier waves of immigrants to the US faded as the homeland became more and more a distant memory, so too perhaps the pace of the distancing of the homeland as a cultural reference is accelerated in Evangelical networks and communities compared to those of Catholics. Nonetheless, it remains my argument is not that Evangelicals are less Mexican in the first generation than first-generation Catholics; instead, perhaps trajectories are being set in motion whose futures are hard to predict less we take more seriously that which first generation Mexicans take very seriously: religious affiliation cleavages.

## Reflections

Examining the three areas of ethnoreligious divergence discussed above, it is helpful to consider the potential long term outcomes that may emerge from these patterns. These outcomes should be considered as processes that potentially extend into the trajectories of generations subsequent to the first. I propose four potential outcomes that may emerge in the trajectory of ethnic Mexicans: 1.) A weaker interpretation of these findings would be to view the Catholic/Evangelical distinction as merely symbolic when it comes to ethnic membership. In this view, no definitive change would take place in the definition of what it means to be ethnic Mexican and both Catholics and Evangelicals would continue to claim membership within the group, with little consequence beyond the religious sphere. Perhaps in the view, external homogenizing labels by state, movement, and media actors mitigate or trump internally heterogeneity; likewise, continuing categorical discrimination against Latinos, which some refer to as racialization (cite) could also diminish the importance of internal differences. 2.) An interpretation that emphasizes a brightening of religious boundaries would project a scenario where boundary contestations would lead to heightened tensions across religious lines for ethnic Mexicans, with both religious groups vigorously claiming ethnic legitimacy, and with effects leading to a pronounced restructuring of the ethnic community. 3.) A more collaborative interpretation that emphasizes commonalities within the ethnic category would project a scenario where the boundary markers of Mexican ethnicity would eventually change to form a more inclusive group not tied to divisive markers associated with the Catholic homeland. 4.) An interpretation focusing on shifts in ethnic membership would emphasize that the the

membership in the group would change, with some opting out of the Mexican category and identifying elsewhere. In this case, the markers of membership remain the same, but those that do not adhere to these essential characteristics transition to other categories where their characteristics are a better match with group identities.

In the first proposed scenario, the interactions between Evangelicals and Catholics elucidated in this study would continue on for an indefinite amount of time, but with little to no effects in altering the membership contained within the ethnic category. This would mean that some tensions would persist, but both groups would continue to live side by side still making claims to ethnic membership. From the perspective of assimilation theory, this would also mean that subsequent generations would be influenced by the views of their parents and might continue to see some difference in ethnic identification across religious lines, but not to the extent that they would alter the membership structure. Considerations related to the second generation would also have to acknowledge that both Catholicism and Evangelicalism exist in very mainstream iterations in the U.S. alongside of Protestant traditions and some second generation ethnic Mexicans would be able to find a place within more mainstream expressions of these faiths. In such instances, contestation of ethnic categories would wane, as religion loses its ethnic character among the second generation. Previous markers of ethnicity would remain, but primarily as markers of symbolic boundaries, as opposed to social boundaries (Lamont and Molnar 2002).

In the second proposed scenario, boundary contestations would lead to escalating tensions across religious lines, as both Protestants and Catholics continue to lay claim to their ethnic legitimacy. This would be precipitated by the continued growth of Evangelical

adherence among ethnic Mexicans. The increasing numerical presence of Evangelicals, and the inversion effect that this would bring about, with Mexican Evangelicals losing their minority status or coming close to it, could lead to greater conflict. Numerically speaking, however, the rise of the non-religious would serve to neutralize these religious tensions as the Catholic/Evangelical distinction would now be informed by the religious/non-religious divide. It is highly unlikely that Catholics and Evangelicals will become rivals willing to unleash violence on each other en masse, for example, as occurs in some ethnoreligious struggles around the world. It is unlikely that a scenario of extreme heightened tension would play out in years to come, and in subsequent generations. Newer generations are becoming less religious, and religions will likely be viewed as less ethnic for many Catholics and Evangelicals alike.

In the third scenario, the boundary markers of Mexican ethnicity associated with religion would change via the boundary processes noted in this study. The increase of Evangelicalism among ethnic Mexicans would contribute to this type of trend. With Evangelicals becoming more visible, in the ethnic community, it becomes increasingly more difficult for Catholics to classify them in a marginal manner. Evidence from my work suggests that Evangelicals are already experiencing less marginal status. Increasing the acceptance and legitimacy of Evangelicals would entail the changing of boundaries. Emphasis on La Virgen de Guadalupe, for example, while not showing signs of fading from Catholic practice, would become more of a privatized, personal matter. Evangelicals who avoid revering the Virgen of Guadalupe's, would no longer be questioned along ethnic lines. A more general emphasis on spirituality could perhaps become a salient space of

commonality for ethnic Mexicans in such a way that is inclusive of various faiths. The growth of charismatic Catholicism coupled with the growth of Evangelical Pentecostalism could, for example, come to be viewed as a shared emphasis on supernaturalism. This would not necessitate that both groups agree to the fullest extent, but merely that they recognize the claims of legitimate membership being made by members of a sub-group vis-a-vis a mutual respect for certain religious commonalities.

In the fourth scenario, the membership in the ethnic group would itself change, even as the defining boundary markers remain the same. In this case, some would choose to identify in ways that downplay ethnic origin, and would ultimately opt out of ethnic identification. Religion already provides a master status for some, making ethnicity less important. If this is carried out in more extreme fashion, the cross-cutting cleavage of religion would ultimately erase the salience of ethnicity for some religious adherents. This scenario presents some parallels to the Herberg thesis, wherein religion supercedes ethnicity as the primary identity marker retained by previous ethnics. However, Herberg's thesis emphasizes affiliative continuity whereas in this scenario, some would identify as converts, and would emphasize discontinuity with the religion of their parents. Conversion and discontinuity, in this case, would serve as mechanisms of ethnic attrition. Could religion serve as a pathway to whiteness? More research is needed to make definitive conclusions in this regard. While the destination is uncertain, evidence does suggest a weakening of ethnic boundaries for Evangelicals, which in turn could lead to a generational distancing from more salient forms of ethnic identification.

Based on the findings of this study, there is evidence that the second, third, and fourth scenario would apply to different sub-groups within the broader ethnic community. Among those that are most sect-like in their religious expression, both on the Catholic and Evangelical side, differences will likely remain and may even be heightened. The nature of sect-like churches is not to bond with other movements, but rather to distinguish themselves from their competitors (Troeltsch 1931; Weigert 1971). For a segment of ethnic Mexican religionists, then, ethnic community will likely be experienced in very particularistic, exclusive fashion. This will most likely be the case among people of lower socioeconomic status for whom religion often becomes a primary source of experiencing a respectable status (Hammond 1988; Hirschmann 2003). Along the same lines, this mode of religious experience would be most likely found within the *barrio*, since ethnic enclaves tend to have higher levels of residents with a lower income (Tienda and Fuentes 2014). While I do not believe that this will lead to violence, I do believe it will lead to some forms of tensions among adherents. Those of more disadvantaged social status cannot merely opt out of ethnic affiliation, but they can certainly create more distanced and exclusive expressions of ethnic community.

Among groups that are more upwardly mobile, but who still identify with Mexican ethnicity, a blurring of religious boundaries is quite possible, so as to emphasize ethnic commonalities. These are people that will desire to partake of ethnic celebrations across religious lines, and may exhibit religiously diverse social networks. Successful Mexican-Americans who continue to value the ethnic enclave but have moved outside of its geographic bounds, as documented by Vallejo (2010), or those who are helping to create

ethnic enclaves dominated by upwardly mobile ethnics, would be prime candidates for this scenario. Upwardly mobile Chicanos who have experienced discrimination along ethnoracial lines, for example, might be more willing to express solidarity across religious lines with those who share similar experiences (Golash-Boza and Darity 2008). The isomorphism that continues to occur (Wilde 2007) across religions lines also helps to minimize religious differences.

Finally, I predict that among those that are upwardly mobile, there will be a sub-group of ethnic Mexicans that will de-emphasize ethnoracial identity, and will maintain a salient religious identity. These will be among those that experience a flight to “whiteness,” given higher socio-economic status, possibly coupled with less distinct physical markers associated with racialized phenotypes. This scenario would be more likely among Evangelicals, given the Evangelical propensity for emphasizing colorblindness, an ideology that when employed in Evangelicalism tends to downplay ethnoracial uniqueness for the sake of religious unity (Emerson and Smith 2000; Lichterman, Carter, Lamont 2009). The exit of this sub-group from the ethnic Mexican category would tend to heighten the differences amongst those that remain in the ethnic enclave since moderating opinions would be less present.

### **Mutual Respect in the Midst of Difference**

In concluding this study, it should be noted that Catholics and Evangelicals are not hate-filled adversaries towards each other. In Santa Ana, I have yet to witness an act of physical violence based on religious differences between Catholics and Evangelicals. The fact remains that both groups recognize that they must respect each other particularly in



light of their desire for continued and sustained relationship with the other. Often, Catholics express the desire to have Evangelicals return to the faith of their ancestors. The desire is not to do away with Evangelical adherents, but rather that Evangelicals would change their faith orientation. The assumption is that Evangelical Mexicans, in essence, are meant to be Catholics, and would be best served by embracing/re-embracing this faith. In similar fashion, Evangelicals desire for their Catholic neighbors to convert to the Evangelical faith system. They recognize that they need to “love their neighbor” in order to see their neighbor experience the same type of life transformation that they bear witness to. As religious diversity increases, particularly within neighborhoods and within extended families, Mexican religious adherents are increasingly likely to interact with others of a different faith. Whether in tension, or in solidarity, in the end, the interaction between both groups will continue to inform what it means to be Mexican in the U.S. The next story remains to be told by the second generation, in the midst of a growing non-religious sector, and in the face of raised consciousness regarding racialized identities. The fate of Evangelicalism and Catholicism in the U.S. will likely reside in the trajectories of second generation Latinos. The foundation laid in this study, has uncovered the foundation that the next generation will build on.

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## **APPENDIX A: Interview Schedule (English)**

### **Affiliation and Acculturation Questionnaire**

#### **Background Information**

1. Sex
2. Age
3. Please list the people that you consider to be part of your current household including name and relationship:
4. marital status:
5. Length of residence (years) in the U.S.
6. Education
7. Occupation

#### **Ethnic and Religious Self Identification**

1. What label would you use to describe your ethnic background?  
1. Latino 2. Hispanic 3. Mexican 4. Mexican-American 5. American 6. Other: \_\_\_\_\_
2. What labels best describe your faith beliefs? (For example, Catholic, Christian, Baptist, Pentecostal.) Which is the most important?
3. What do you think is more important, that people identify you because of your faith, or that people identify you because of your ethnicity?
4. What brought you to the United States?
5. Can you tell me about how you came to the faith and beliefs that you now have?
6. Please describe to me what a typical week of church participation looked like for you last year. Were there any other special events that came up throughout the year? Any events with other churches?
7. When you were in Mexico, was your church participation similar or different than what it is today? Please explain.
8. How long have you been at your current church?

#### **Religious Boundaries, social networks, and the policing of ethnicity**

1. Who do you feel more connected to?
  - a. people of the same faith as you,
  - b. other Mexican people,
  - c. both about the same?
2. How does your faith influence your relationships with your immediate and extended family? (Think about both positive and negative responses you get from others.)
3. How does your faith influence your experience of living in your neighborhood?

4. Are there places or events you will not go to because you feel that people of your faith should not be there? Please describe.
5. Have you ever felt discriminated against because of your faith? By who? Was it ever by other Mexican people?

### **Social Network**

1. In a crisis situation, who are the first three people you would call for help?  
What is your relation to them? Friend or family member?  
What is their age and occupation?  
Are any of them members of the same church as you?  
If not, are they of the same faith as you?
2. Have you ever obtained work through someone from your church?  
If so, who are they and what was the job you obtained?
3. When you think about your close friends, what are different characteristics that describe them?
  - a. Mexican
  - b. Latino, but not Mexican
  - c. Not Latino
  - d. Same faith as you/ comparten la misma fe
  - e. Not of the same faith as you/ no comparten la misma fe
4. Do you contribute time or money to any other organizations related to being Mexican or Latino?

### **Cultural Transmission**

1. Do you share the same beliefs as your immediate family? How do you express faith as a family?  
If yes, how so at home and at church. Is there any resistance?
2. What is the preferred future that you desire for your children's lives as adults?
3. What elements of Mexican culture do you think should be passed on to the next generation and which elements would you not want to pass on?
4. What language do you speak at home with your family members?

## **APPENDIX B: Interview Schedule (Spanish)**

### **Affiliation and Acculturation Questionnaire**

Este es un estudio sobre cómo las creencias espirituales, fe personal, y participación en una iglesia tienen influencia en la vida de personas inmigrantes. Estare haciendo preguntas sobre su identidad, su cultura, y los recursos sociales que vienen de tomar parte en una iglesia.

#### **A. Informacion personal - Background Information**

1. Cuántos años ha vivido en los Estados Unidos?
2. Ocupacion
3. Educacion
4. Estatus matrimonial
5. Edad

#### **B. Identificacion Propia - Self Identification**

1. Que termino usaria usted para describir su trasfondo etnico?  
1. Latino 2. Hispano 3. Mexicano/a 4. Mexico-Americano 5. Americano 6. Otro:
2. ¿Que término describe mejor sus creencias y su fe?  
Por ejemplo: Cristiano, Catolico, Catolico Romano, Bautista, Pentecostal
3. Que piensa usted que es mas importante? Que las personas le identifiquen por su fe, o que las personas le identifiquen por ser Mexicano/a?
4. Me pudiera dar un corto relato de lo que lo trajo a los estados unidos?
5. Me pudiera dar una descripción de lo que lo trajo a la fe y creencia que usted tiene hoy?
6. Pensando en el año pasado, como describiría usted una semana típica para usted en su participación en la iglesia?  
Hubieron eventos especiales que se llevaron a cabo a través del año? Hubo algún evento que incluyó la participación de otras iglesias?
7. Cuando usted vivió en México, fue diferente su participación de iglesia?
8. Que tanto tiempo ha estado en su iglesia?

#### **C. Demarcaciones Religiosas y Supervision de Etnicidad - Religious Boundaries and the policing of ethnicity**

1. Con que tipo de persona siente usted más coneccion?
  - a. Personas que comparten la misma fe que usted
  - b. Personas que comparten la misma cultura que usted
  - c. Los dos aspectos mas o menos igual
2. De que manera influye su fe la forma en la que usted y su familia se relacionan unos con los otros? (tanto lo positivo como lo negativo)
3. De que manera es influenciada por su fe la experiencia que tiene viviendo en su vecindario?

4. Hay lugares o eventos a los cuales usted no va porque cree que personas de su fe no deben ir allí?
5. Alguna vez ha sentido discriminación a raíz de su fe? De parte de quien? (eran Mexicanos o Latinos?)

#### **D. Red Social - Social Network**

1. Cuales son las personas que usted considera como parte de su hogar? Incluya nombre y relación a usted.
2. En una crisis personal, quienes serian las tres primeras personas que llamaria?  
Cual es tu relación hacia ellos?  
Que edad y ocupacion tienen?  
Algunos de ellos son miembros de la misma iglesia que usted?  
Si no, son de la misma fe que usted?
3. En alguna ocasion ha obtenido trabajo con la ayuda de alguien de su iglesia?  
Si la respuesta es "si," quienes son, y cual fue el trabajo?
4. Cuando piensas en tus amigos más cercanos, cuales son diferentes características que los describen? (Amistades en las que tienes confianza)
  - a. Mexicanos
  - b. Latinos, pero no Mexicanos
  - c. No Latinos
  - d. Comparten la misma fe
  - e. No comparten la misma fe
5. Contribuye usted tiempo o dinero a cualquier otra organizacion relacionada con ser de trasfondo Mexicano o Latino?

#### **E. Transmisión de Cultura - Cultural Transmission**

1. Comparten las mismas creencias usted y su familia? Como expresan su fe como familia (for example...)?  
De que forma en la casa, y de que forma en la iglesia? Hay resistencia de alguien?
2. Cual es el futuro que usted desea para sus hijos cuando sean adultos?
3. Que elementos de la cultura Mexicana piensa usted que deben ser adoptados por la proxima generacion y que elementos piensa usted que deben ser eliminados?
4. Que idioma habla usted en casa con sus miembros de familia?