

# Latinos and American Catholicism: Examining Service Provision Amidst Demographic Change

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**Abstract:** The Catholic Church currently sits at the forefront of U.S. demographic change as a prominent institution that is working on how to positively respond to a growing Latino population. Understanding the factors that either complicate or facilitate that endeavor may help other institutions in their future efforts to likewise integrate and serve Latino communities. Further, there may be broader implications for the success of Catholic churches to serve as research has found that participation in church activities is positively related to increased rates of civic and political engagement. However, these positive effects cannot be felt if churches fail to present the opportunity to participate in the first place. To that end, this study examines the relationship between Latino population density, the presence of a Latino minister, and the likelihood a church would offer Spanish mass or any other service relevant to the Latino community. I find these factors are useful in predicting service provision to a limited degree, and that individual leaders' initiative and decision making also play a role in determining institutional responsiveness.

**Key words:** Latinos, representation, service provision, religion and politics, institutions.

Approximately 34 of the 57 million Latinos in the United States are Catholic, constituting upwards of 40% of the American Catholic population and 71% of all Catholic growth since 1960 (Census Bureau 2017; USCCB 2012; Ziegler 2011). These numbers place the U.S. Catholic Church squarely at the forefront of U.S. demographic change, a phenomenon already experienced by some states.<sup>1</sup> While Latinos made up 12% of eligible voters in 2016 (at 27.3 million), they also constituted 37% of all

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new voters (Krogstad 2016) and their overall population size is predicted to double to 119 million, or 28.6% of the total population, by 2060 (Census Bureau 2017). In this context, it is important to understand the factors that may predict when institutions will and will not be responsive to Latinos—including the Democratic Party and other political organizations that have consistently failed to recruit and mobilize Latinos (Planas 2016; Romero 2016). Further, understanding organizational responsiveness to minority populations will be increasingly important as the U.S. population nears a minority-majority status on account of not one single racial or ethnic group, but an increasingly diverse population through immigration and mixed marriages. From this perspective it is important to understand the institutional response to minority populations, generally speaking, as the composition of the “majority” population is soon to change.

The Catholic Church serves as an excellent case study in analyzing institutional responsiveness to immigrant and immigrant-derived populations. Not only is it already experiencing a near majority Latino population, but its parishes are located in communities across the country that demonstrate great variation with respect to the size, immigration patterns, country of origin, culture, and English language proficiency of their Latino population. Importantly, the Church has both formally and informally stated its dedication to serving Latino Catholics. Given these factors, one would expect that the Church would indeed be very responsive. This study examines whether that is the case, and whether there are contextual factors that also impact church responsiveness.

Understanding the Catholic Church as an institution facilitates this endeavor. The Church has “rules and organized practices” that last through time, almost regardless of the individuals who make up the congregations or the leadership (Wilson 1995). Because these rules establish behavioral expectations for both leaders and members (March and Olsen 1984), the patterns of service provision may give an indication of whether the Church’s rules and practices facilitate or complicate service provision to the Latino community. Additionally, theories of constituency response directly relate the likelihood of service to the size of the receiving population: as the density of the local Latino population grows, so too should the number of services that cater to them (March and Olsen 1984; Wilson 1995). Regardless of population size, representation theories tell us that co-ethnic leaders consistently serve ethnic minority populations better (Mansbridge 1999; Meier 1975; Pitkin 1972). Yet because churches are voluntary organizations, they should be more willing to provide services regardless of representation levels since incentivizing membership is

central to the Church's survival. Identifying which of these factors relate to higher versus lower levels of service provision can be fruitful in anticipating how responsive other institutions will be as they too become reliant on the membership of a growing Latino population.

Lastly, Church responsiveness has implications that extend beyond faith and religion, as scholars have identified a positive correlation between participation in one's church community and political engagement, broadly speaking (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Djupe and Gilbert 2006; Djupe and Neiheisel 2012). Such effects may explain why the Church has long been found to be a primary socializing institution for immigrant groups and their descendants (Alba and Nee 1997; Lader 1987).

In order to assess the conditions under which the church may be responsive to the growing Latino population, I compile an original dataset of Catholic churches and their services to Latinos for three U.S. cities. I combine that information with U.S. Census data to test the relationship between descriptive representation, Latino population density, and the likelihood that churches offer services to Latinos, thereby opening the possibility of resource acquisition and skill development. I find that institutional and contextual factors (Latino population size and descriptive representation) are useful in predicting service provision to a limited degree, and that for all the influence institutional norms may exert, individual leaders' initiative and decision making also play a role in determining responsiveness. This has potentially negative implications not only for the future of the Church, but also for the future of institutional response and outreach to Latinos, more broadly speaking.

## THE CATHOLIC CHURCH: AN INSTITUTION

The Catholic Church serves as an excellent case study for institutional responsiveness to the Latino population. Even though it is a faith-based organization, it remains a proto-typical institution; it has "rules and organized practices," provides specific roles and behavioral expectations for members, is a source of identity and belonging, and creates a common purpose that can bind communities together (March and Olsen 2008, 3).<sup>2</sup> Further, these rules, meanings, and expectations are resilient and lasting through time, almost regardless of the individuals who make up the congregations or the leadership. Recognizing the Church as an institution then allows for a systematic approach to analyze its responsiveness to Latinos in a way that can easily be applied to other (non-religious) organizations.

A primary consideration to this study concerns whether or not such responsiveness is in fact a goal of the institution in question. Serving Latinos has repeatedly been asserted as a goal of the Catholic Church. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops" (USCCB) has a subcommittee on Hispanic Affairs that is dedicated to serving and promoting the needs of Latino Catholics. The USCCB wrote and promotes the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry that outlines best practices for serving Latinos at the local level, and has repeatedly worked to be in conversation with Latino leaders and laity about their needs within the Church (USCCB 1988; USCCB 2002).<sup>3</sup>

While the rhetoric of the Church values Latinos, there is no doubt that a better indicator of an organization's goals comes from its behavior (Meadows 2008). So then, while the Catholic Church states that it strives to serve and include Latinos, the only way to determine if that is an actual goal is to see whether church behavior works towards that end. This would be seen in parish responsiveness to Latinos (addressed below), a behavior that is often directed by a priest or pastor whose behaviors are both influenced and constrained by the expectations of the church (Boudinhon 1910; March and Olsen 1984).

Beyond institutional goals, the necessity for survival also defines the requirements of individual roles within an organization (March and Olsen 1984; Wilson 1995). Leaders are specifically tasked with maintaining membership levels so the organization can continue. This can be difficult within the Church given the voluntary nature of membership, since priests have "neither the effective power nor the acknowledged right to coerce the members" (a fact attested to by the presently record high attrition rate, March and Olsen 2008, 13; Pew Research Center 2018). Instead they must incentivize membership by providing the types of services and activities potential members find appealing. So then, if churches value the goal of serving Latinos in practice, or if leaders simply recognize the necessity of Latino membership for church survival (recognizing the two conditions are not mutually exclusive), we would find a high percentage of churches offering both Spanish mass and other culturally relevant services given the many incentives the Church has as an institution to respond to Latinos.

## DEFINING CHURCH SERVICE TO LATINOS

The exact form of service will vary by institution and the needs of the group to whom the institution is responding. The first indication of

welcoming to Latino populations into a Catholic church is if there is a weekly Spanish mass. There are two components to this assertion: the decision to identify mass as a first step, and the qualification that it be in Spanish. First, mass attendance is a weekly obligation for faithful Catholics, and is the foundation of Catholic life. As such, the mass is the first and most essential service that a church can offer believers. Second, I assert that the mass must be offered in Spanish. Some may critique this measure as being applicable only to Spanish-speaking immigrants. However an estimated 75% of all Latinos speak Spanish at home (not just immigrants), making the offering of Spanish mass a widely accessible service for the Latino population at large (Krogstad, Stepler, and Lopez 2015).<sup>4</sup> Further, those engaged in Hispanic Ministry indicate that Spanish for many Latinos is the “language of the heart,” meaning that regardless of how much Latinos use Spanish in their daily lives, they have a special connection to ritual and faith that is only accessed through Spanish, even if they are fluent or even dominant in English (Huckle 2016; Matovina 2011). With this understanding, Spanish mass, specifically, becomes an appropriate and essential first marker of a church’s willingness and ability to invite in Latino congregants and help them build a community that will result in their socialization.

The inclusion of Latinos, per the Bishops and Hispanic Ministers, must not stop with the Spanish Mass, alone. Instead it must also extend to a variety of services and activities that help Latinos feel *at home* in the Church given their unique culture, language, and worship practices (Hoover 2014; Matovina 2011; USCCB 1988). These recommendations are based off of the findings of the three *Encuentros* (national meetings amongst parish leaders ministering to Latino Catholics) held by the Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs in the USCCB between 1974 and 1985. The purpose of the *Encuentros* was to devise an action plan for improving service to the burgeoning Latino community (Matovina 2011; Paulson 2014);<sup>5</sup> the resulting recommendations were published in 1988 as the National Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry (USCCB 1988).<sup>6</sup> It called for not only welcoming Latinos as guests, but making them *at home* in their parishes (*de ser lugar a ser hogar*) by providing a variety of culturally relevant services and fostering Latino leadership (USCCB 1988; USCCB 2002). Services included providing sacraments (such as marriage and baptism) and Bible study in Spanish, as well as offering other activities such as Marian celebrations, Guadalupana societies, and quinceñera celebrations. Importantly, increasing lay leadership also facilitates these types

of responsiveness because they do not require the presence of a priest for the completion of a sacrament.

This is not to say that Latinos cannot or do not also participate in non-Latino specific groups or activities. Yet, Latinos choose to attend parishes that respond to them in this culturally appropriate way. An estimated 47% of Latinos drive past other churches on their way to their parish of choice, as compared with 30% of Anglo Catholics (Ospino 2014). This is perhaps because only 15% of all parishes in the United States have Hispanic ministries. Further, the more Latinos there are in a parish, the more likely they are to attend Mass in Spanish (Ospino 2014). All told, offering Spanish mass and culturally targeted services are an integral part of the Church's institutional response to Latinos because Latinos *could* attend the "regular" services of a given parish that are not targeted to their language or culture—but they simply do not. As such, the types of services churches provide to Latinos do matter, and a lack of culturally appropriate services fails to draw Latinos in.

## WHAT PREDICTS INSTITUTIONAL SERVICE PROVISION

Theories of constituency response and descriptive representation offer a logical mechanism for examining patterns in which Catholic parishes offer these culturally relevant services to Latinos. Representation theories hold that the demographic characteristics of service providers are highly influential in the type and quality of service constituent and group members receive, especially in the cases of ethnic and economic minority populations (Hindera 1993; Meier 1975; Pitkin 1972). Translated to the Catholic Church, this means that Latino ministers (priests and deacons) will be more likely to offer and promote the types of services and activities that would be both useful and appealing to other Latinos, generally speaking. Historically, Catholic populations have benefitted from this type of descriptive representation. The ethnic parishes of the 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries focused on serving specific cultural communities, and that service was predicated upon the presence of a co-ethnic priest who was familiar with their customs, language, and worship practices (Burns 1969; Cogley 1973; Dolan 1977; McAvoy 1969).

Such representation is not currently possible for Latinos who constitute 40% of the American Catholic population, but only 8% of American clergy (USCCB 2012; Ziegler 2011).<sup>7</sup> This makes it increasingly important for churches to practice substantive representation, where services are

provided based upon what people need, rather than according to the characteristics of those who serve. Indeed, Catholicism advocates for exactly this type of response, mandating that all Catholics respond to the spiritual, social, and material needs of those around them without regard to race, status, or even religion (Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis 1999). While this idea is not uniquely Catholic (it is a concept espoused in some form by most Christian denominations<sup>8</sup>) it nevertheless significantly informs Catholic theology. As such, we should expect Catholic churches to respond substantively to Latinos, regardless of the presence or absence of Latino clergy in any given community.

The Catholic bishops have made specific recommendations on how parishes should enact such responsiveness by providing Spanish mass<sup>9</sup> and facilitating the organization of culturally unique religious celebrations, such as the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, among other things.<sup>10</sup> The Church also acknowledges that co-ethnic pastors are preferred, though not *required* to ensure service to Latino congregants (USCCB 2002). In short, the Catholic Church as an organization has broadly promoted substantive representation for Latino Catholics, and advocated for the provision of services and activities that have been shown to positively impact political participation outcomes, even though history and research on other public service institutions indicate that descriptive representation may be a better predictor of service. To the extent that other churches, religious, and voluntary organizations also have a tradition or practice of caring for their population and communities, the expectations around the Catholic Church should easily export to other community-based institutions.

Constituency response offers another parsimonious theory for predicting when churches will offer services to Latinos, arguing simply that churches will respond to Latinos when they are part of the congregation or parish neighborhood (March and Olsen 1984; Pitkin 1972; Wilson 1995). This expectation is bolstered by the territorial nature of parishes and the responsibilities of pastors.<sup>11</sup> According to Canon Law (the set of laws that outline the organization of the Catholic Church, its governance, liturgy, and worship practices), pastors must “strive to know the faithful entrusted to his care” (Canon 529), in reference to all who live within the parish, including those who are not necessarily church members. Combining constituency response with an operational understanding of parishes translates into the theoretical expectation that a parish with a high population of Latinos should be more likely to offer Spanish mass and other culturally relevant small group meetings or activities than a

parish with a smaller Latino population. The high rate of Catholicism among Latinos (48%, Pew Research Center 2018) also suggests that a large Latino population will necessarily indicate the presence of a large Latino *Catholic* population, increasing the motivation for parishes to respond with services and activities that target Latinos, specifically.

## THE POTENTIAL IMPACT OF SERVICE PROVISION

Church responsiveness to Latinos may have an impact beyond the parish boundaries. Scholars have identified a positive correlation between religious engagement and political participation (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995; Djupe and Gilbert 2006; Djupe and Neiheisel 2012). One body of research focuses on church attendance—how often one attends religious services at their house of worship—believing that higher levels of attendance serves as a proxy for a higher exposure to political messaging in churches, or indicates a higher devotion to the moral teachings of one's religion (some of which promote the importance of civic engagement; DeSipio 2007; Jones-Correa and Leal 2001; Kelly and Kelly 2005). It is also possible that belonging to a religious community can develop higher levels of social capital and linked fate, which could positively incline members to participate politically (Brinig and Garnett 2014; Putnam 2001; Putnam and Campbell 2010; Verba, Schlozman, and Brady 1995).

Religious participation through leadership is thought to provide opportunities to learn and practice civic skills, which could have a more direct impact on political participation. It is theorized that those who run worship services, small group meetings, or any other volunteer activity through the church have the opportunity to learn how to organize, engage, and lead (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995). These are skills that can be transferred easily into the political realm.<sup>12</sup> Yet such skills can also be gained simply by participating in small groups and other activities outside of worship services (Djupe and Neiheisel 2012), and the effect of such small group engagement on levels of political participation was found to be stronger and more consistent than the effect of holding leadership positions or attending religious services. Importantly, there are significantly more opportunities to participate in a small group than there are to take on leadership roles, further increasing the potential significance of this form of church participation.

Lastly, churches are also significant for passing on political knowledge to congregants either from the pulpit, or through conversations among



community members (Jones-Correa and Leal 2001; Neiheisel, Djupe, and Sokhey 2009). These conversations also serve to communicate the societal norms that “form a nucleus of conformity, stability, and social order in communities that would otherwise be volatile” (Cnanna, Boddie, and Yancey 2003, 20). Such norms are an integral part of the social-political context as they transmit public values, including the expectation for participation. Such social norms are particularly pertinent to predicting behavior since “many political activities involve locally based social interaction” (Huckfeldt 1979, 580; Wilson 1995).

These conclusions are specific examples of the continued finding that churches continue to operate as a significant socializing institution in the United States. By participating in church activities, individuals have the opportunity to both learn about politics as well as how to participate. Yet these benefits cannot be gained if churches are not creating opportunities for engagement in the first place. As such, it is important to identify the factors that make Church service provision to Latinos more or less likely.

## ARGUMENT AND EXPECTATIONS

This project uses theories of constituency response and descriptive representation to predict when Catholic churches, as institutions, will respond to and serve Latinos as an increasingly large portion of the American Catholic population. Constituency response argues simply that churches will respond to Latinos who either live within the parish bounds or are a part of the congregation as their constituents (March and Olsen 1984; Pitkin 1972; Wilson 1995). Further, due to their territorial nature, parishes with a high population of Latinos should be more likely to offer Spanish mass and other culturally relevant small group meetings or activities than a parish with a smaller Latino population. This is augmented by the high rate of Catholicism among Latinos (48%, Pew Research Center 2018), which also suggests that a large Latino population will necessarily indicate the presence of a large Latino *Catholic* population, specifically, increasing the motivation for parishes to respond with services and activities that target Latinos.

*H1:* The probability that parishes will offer both Spanish Mass and Culturally relevant services will increase as the size of the Latino population increases.

Institutions respond to more than the simple presence or absence of members. The composition of their leadership has also been found to

impact patterns of responsiveness. Specifically, representation theories hold minority populations are better served by leaders who share their ethnic or cultural background (Hinderer 1993; Meier 1975; Pitkin 1972). Translated to the Catholic Church, this would mean that Latino ministers (priests and deacons) are more likely to offer and promote the types of services and activities that would be both useful and appealing to other Latinos. However, Catholicism mandates that all Catholics respond to the spiritual, social, and material needs of those around them without regard to race, status, or even religion (Abell 1960; Coleman 2004; Catholic Charities of St. Paul and Minneapolis 1999). In other words, Catholicism advocates for substantive rather than descriptive representation. However, numerous studies have found that minority populations within a variety of service institutions with similar mandates continue to benefit from having a co-ethnic leader (Hinderer 1993; Meier and Nigro 2003; Meier et al. 2006; Pantoja and Segura 2003). As such, it is logical to hold that descriptive representation will offer similarly positive benefits to Latinos within the Catholic Church.

*H2: The presence of a Latino minister ( priest or deacon) will increase the probability of parishes offering Spanish mass and cultural services.*

Lastly, because of the theories of representation hold that Latino ministers ( priests and deacons) will be more likely to offer and promote the types of services and activities that would be both useful and appealing to other Latinos, generally speaking, then the presence of a Latino minister should be viewed as a sign of service in and of itself.

*H3: As the Latino population increases so too will the probability of a Latino minister.*

## DATA AND METHODS

This paper seeks to determine which factors predict Catholic church service provision to Latinos given the Church's position as a major institution at the forefront of U.S. demographic change. This understanding may help other institutions in the future as they come to deal with the reality of an increasing Latino population. While the Church clearly advocates for a strong response to and inclusion of Latinos, Church leaders are influenced by more than the stated goals of the Church. Other well-known factors may sway their individual decision about whether or not to provide

relevant services to Latinos: the size of the Latino population, and levels of descriptive representation within a given church community.

As such, this study utilizes a unique data set<sup>13</sup> containing information about the services offered by Catholic churches in three areas, (Seattle, WA; San Antonio, TX; and the Diocese of Yakima, WA) combined with U.S. Census data regarding regional demographics.<sup>14</sup> I use the Diocese of Yakima (rather than the city) in order to make Yakima's sample size closer to that of San Antonio and Seattle, increasing the analytical leverage of the data.

The three chosen regions also present distinct cultural contexts. San Antonio is a historically Latino dominant area. Including it here for analysis allows me to juxtapose the responsiveness of the Catholic Church to Latinos who make up a majority—rather than minority—of their congregant and local population. In contrast, Seattle is a metropolitan city with a fairly small (6.6%) Latino population. The small size of the Latino population makes Seattle an excellent study for Church responsiveness to the needs of a much smaller ethnic population, and is also representative of the majority of Latino congregations across the United States where Latinos do not constitute a significant portion of the population. Lastly, I chose to include the Diocese of Yakima, a largely rural area covering almost half of Eastern Washington, because its Latino population grew to a significant size (from approximately 6% in 1970 to 31% in 2010) only in the last few decades. As such this provides an opportunity to measure how well Catholic churches respond to a rapid regional demographic change and the accompanying unique needs of a new population.

I first created a list of all churches in the three designated areas from the relevant Archdiocesan websites,<sup>15</sup> and then conducted an online search to verify each church's basic information, such as their address, phone number, and website (if available). From the websites and digitalized parish bulletins I identified each church's pastor, other priests or deacons<sup>16</sup> also serving the parish, mass times and their languages. I also collected information on any Latino-specific services offered in each parish (discussed below). All data was verified via phone calls to parish offices.<sup>17</sup>

Data from the 2015 American Community Survey is used to account for the demographics of each church's zip code. I include two variables measuring zip code wide demographics, age and poverty level, that could directly affect the willingness or ability of churches to respond to their local populations. Because the focus of this study is on the responsiveness of churches to the Latino population, specifically, I gathered data on the size of the Latino population, as well as the estimated

change in the Latino population from 2010 to 2015 in order to see if churches respond to Latino population growth. I also include the rate of homeownership, median income, employment rate, and educational achievement for Latinos, specifically, in order to see how these community-specific elements may impact church responsiveness. Church information and Census data were joined by zip code using GIS software.

Zip code operates as a proxy measure for a parish. In many Archdioceses there is one Catholic parish per zip code (such as Seattle) and, in decades past, households' parish membership was determined by zip code rather than personal preference. Where parish boundaries are not determined by zip code, zip defines a reasonably sized area within which parishioners can attend church services without constraints in traffic, limits in transportation, or convenience.<sup>18</sup> As such the zip code provides a realistic approximation (if not definition) of parish boundaries, facilitating my calculation of neighborhood demographics.

I measure descriptive representation by the presence of a Latino pastor, priest, or deacon. Because there are so few Latino priests (and priests in general) I include the presence of Latino deacons as a marker of service in my analysis because the appointment of deacons when there are not sufficient priests to fulfill the pastoral duties of a parish demonstrates an effort to provide Latino ministerial support.

My dependent variables measure the presence of Spanish (or bilingual) mass, and any type of social, cultural, or material service or activity directed at Latinos. This is because the services churches provide to Latinos must also be the services that are applicable or desirable to Latinos in the first place, as they will not join or participate in church communities that have little interest to offer them. To that end, I include any small group meeting, activity, volunteer opportunity, or service that is directly applicable to a Latino community as a service outside of mass. Examples include Spanish Bible study, quinceñera celebrations, Marian festivals, Guadalupana societies, immigration or legal support, or the presence of an office of Hispanic Ministry. For simplicity, I refer to these as "cultural services."

I also calculate the effect of Latino population density on the likelihood of having a Latino pastor, priest, or deacon given the importance of co-ethnic representation on the functioning of ethnic parishes. I treat Latino minister,<sup>19</sup> Spanish mass, and services as dichotomous variables where the simple presence of any Latino leader, mass, or service generates a one.

My initial analysis calculates the observed rates of service and representation using census data for population numbers for each city or region. I then use logistic regression to produce predicted probabilities of the outcome variables.

## FINDINGS

One way of determining if institutions are responding appropriately to Latinos is to see if their rate of service provision is on par with Latinos' share of the population. As the Latino population grows, so too should the number of churches working to serve them. For example, if Latinos were to constitute 25% of the population, then we should anticipate that roughly 25% of churches would offer Latino targeted services. Likewise if the population were 75% Latino, then the percentage of churches offering services should be closer to 75% than 25%. In examining the observed data, it appears that churches are indeed responsive to the size of Latino populations. Across my sample, the mean Latino population size is 50%, while 67% of churches in the observed areas have Spanish mass, 34% offer some form of Latino-specific services, and 58% have a Latino pastor, priest, or deacon (see [Table 1](#)). This first assessment suggests that Catholic churches are responding appropriately with services to a growing Latino population in spite of the shortage of Latino priests.

Disaggregating the data presents a more nuanced story. The majority of churches in San Antonio and Yakima provide mass in Spanish (79% each). It may be possible to explain this by the large Latino presence in these areas, since a larger Latino population should prompt churches to offer them more services. Yet only 35.7% of Yakima's population is Latino, as compared with the estimated 72.6% of San Antonio. The majority of churches in both cities also have a Latino minister (priest or deacon) to serve their Latino populations. However, no city reports a high rate of offering any other cultural service (as described above), even though these services can be led by any willing layperson (see [Table 1](#)).

Next I subject my data to a more rigorous analysis in order to test the relationship between the outcome variables and the relevant covariates. I hypothesized that as the Latino population increases, so too would the likelihood that churches would offer Spanish mass and other Cultural Services. The regression analyses do not support this hypothesis (see [Table 2](#)). While the coefficient is positive in the regression on Spanish

**Table 1.** Demographic and descriptive statistics

	Seattle	Yakima	San Antonio	Sample total	National data
Church-based data:					
Spanish mass	17% (5)	79% (34)	79% (65)	67% (104)	29%* (once a month)
Cultural services	14% (4)	28% (12)	44% (36)	34% (52)	N/A
Latino minister	10% (3)	65% (28)	71% (58)	58% (89)	8% (priests only)
Latino specific demographics, by Zip:					
% Latino population 2015	7.2%	35.7%	72.6%	50%	17%
Change in Latino population 2010–2015	–.2%	5.5%	1.8%	2.5%	.7%
% Latinos who own home	27.5%	46.7%	53.3%	28.9%	45.6%
% Latinos with a BA or higher	44.1%	7.7%	13.7%	17.8%	15.5%
Latino median income	\$57,500	\$41,000	\$40,000	\$43,000	\$45,000
% Employed	71.3%	61.1%	60%	62.4%	67.0%
Total population demographics, by zip:					
% Under poverty line	15.4%	19.8%	24.6%	21.5%	13.5%
Median age	37	32	34	34	38

Data compiled from 2015 *American Community Survey*. U.S. Census Bureau's American Community Survey Office, 2015; Center for Applied Research of the Apostolate (CARA); and author's original dataset.

**Table 2.** Regression models on Spanish mass, cultural services, and Latino minister

Variables	Spanish mass	Cultural services	Latino minister
Latino minister	1.232** (.532)	1.062** (.503)	
2015 Latino population	3.114 (1.943)	-.210 (1.576)	.978 (1.705)
Seattle	-.204 (1.810)	.471 (1.395)	-2.372. (1.370)
Yakima	1.801 (1.804)	1.139 (1.409)	.169 (1.443)
Median age	.0360 (.0420)	.0270 (.0274)	.0269 (.0275)
Percent Latinos own home	-.00684 (.0282)	.0336 (.0230)	.000214 (.0224)
% Latinos w/BA	-.0266 (.0302)	-.00837 (.0340)	-.0458 (.0337)
Latino median income	$4.67 \times 10^{-5}$ ( $2.97 \times 10^{-5}$ )	$8.34 \times 10^{-6}$ ( $2.90 \times 10^{-5}$ )	$3.23 \times 10^{-5}$ ( $2.61 \times 10^{-5}$ )
% Employed	-.0147 (.0625)	.0165 (.0513)	.0582 (.0553)
% Under poverty line	.0789 (.0728)	.0188 (.0415)	.0177 (.0514)
Constant	-4.839 (5.939)	-5.284 (4.370)	-5.325 (4.834)
Observations	144	144	144
Pseudo R <sup>2</sup>	.3698	.1161	.259
AIC	130.42	186.38	175.44

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ ,  $p < .1$ .

mass, it is not statistically significant. Latino population size is *negative* and non-significant in regressing on Cultural Services (see [Figure 1](#)).

My second hypothesis held that the presence of a Latino minister would correlate with a higher rate of both Spanish Mass and Cultural Services. The coefficient for Latino Minister is positive and significant in both models (see [Table 2](#)), demonstrating that theories of descriptive representation hold when examining the behaviors of religious institutions (see [Figures 2](#) and [3](#)).

Representation theories suggest that having co-ethnic priests and deacons will increase the rate of service to Latinos, making the presence of a co-ethnic leader in and of itself an act of service to the Latino community (a proposition partially supported by the analyses above). My third hypothesis held that churches would be more likely to offer this service to a larger Latino community. However, the regression results demonstrate that the presence of a Latino minister is in fact statistically unrelated to the Latino population size. The only variable to produce a marginally significant coefficient is Seattle, and it is negative—surely a reflection of the observed smaller Latino population (both clergy and laity) there as compared with San Antonio and Yakima.

It is entirely possible that constituency response and descriptive representation are insufficient on their own for understanding institutional responsiveness to minority populations. This is particularly true for the Catholic Church given its shortage of priests—there may simply not be enough Latino ministers to serve in all of the parishes with sizable Latino communities. This does not preclude the possibility that once Latino priests are placed, they may do more to proactively respond to their surrounding Latino community than a non-Latino minister. In order to test this possibility, I created an interaction term between Latino Minister and Latino population to regress on both Spanish Mass and Cultural Services (see [Tables 3](#) and [4](#)). This interaction term is only marginally significant and negative in the regression on Cultural Services, and is not significant for Spanish Mass. This indicates that church service provision is not augmented by the presence of both a large Latino population and a Latino minister.

I also tested to see if there was a relationship between service provision and a change in the Latino population, in place of the simple measure of the Latino population size. It could be that areas with rapid demographic change would be more responsive because of an increasingly visible Latino population, which would demonstrate a high level of service provision that would be obscured in the aggregated analysis.



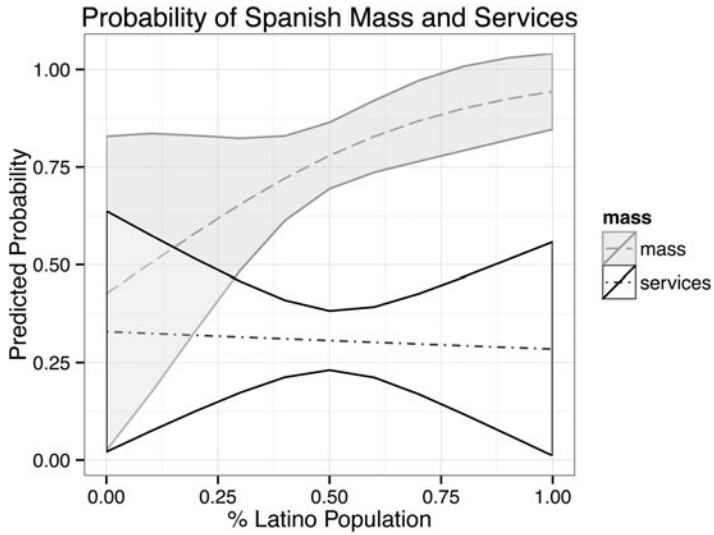


FIGURE 1. Probability of Spanish Mass and Services.

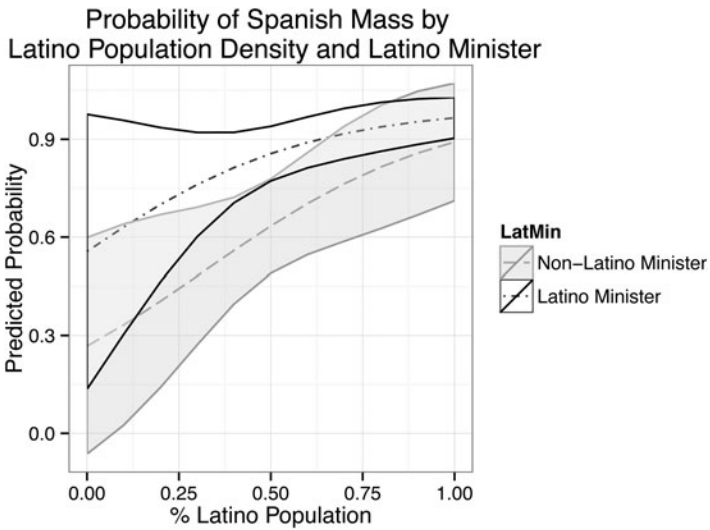


FIGURE 2. Probability of Spanish Mass by Latino Population Density and Latino Minister.

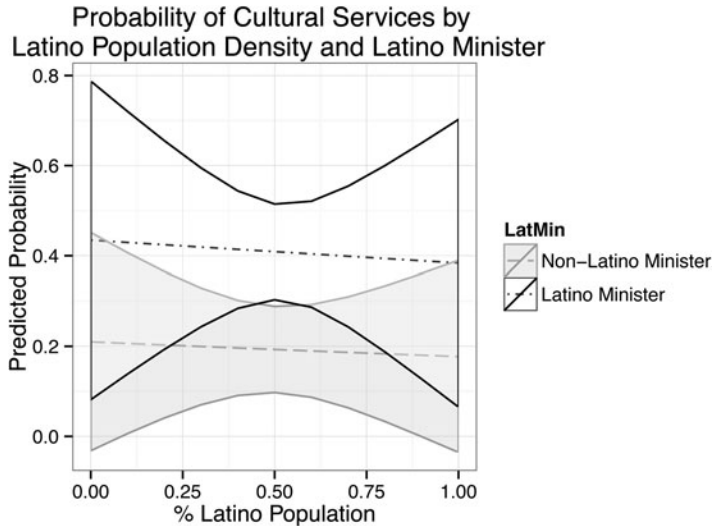


FIGURE 3. Probability of Cultural Services by Latino Population Density and Latino Minister.

The results of these alternate regression analyses were nearly identical to those reported above, with a few exceptions (see Tables 3 and 4). Where Latino population size was significant in modeling the likelihood of a Spanish mass, an increase in the Latino population was not. This is perhaps because the churches in my sample already have a high rate of responsiveness as predicted by the Latino population size. As such there may be a ceiling effect with a population increase. Further, the average increase in Latino population size was relatively small (ranging from  $-0.2\%$  in Seattle to  $5.5\%$  in Yakima) which puts any potential corresponding growth in the rate of Spanish mass within the standard error and thereby making it undetectable by statistical measures. The percentage of the population under the poverty line became significant and positive in this second regression, perhaps indicating that the growth in Latino population between 2010 and 2015 corresponded with a growth in the number of families below the poverty level. However, the poverty variable and the population change variable are not strongly correlated (Pearson’s  $r = .07$ ), although there is a strong correlation between poverty and the Latino population (Pearson’s  $r = .66$ ).

The regression model on cultural services did not produce a significant coefficient for the interaction term between population change and Latino minister, though the Latino minister base term remained positive

**Table 3.** Alternate regressions predicting Spanish mass in churches

Variables	(1) Short model	(2) Full model—interaction	(3) OLS model	(4) Pop change	(5) Income Dif
Latino minister	1.953* (.829)	1.794. (1.054)	.335* (.197)	1.098. (.563)	2.046* (1.037)
2015 Latino population	5.720** (1.373)	3.798. (2.281)	.580* (.322)		3.760. (2.257)
Latino minister × Latino population	−1.543 (1.508)	−1.141 (1.697)	−.298 (.260)		−1.588 (1.703)
Seattle	.781 (.962)	.0739 (1.814)	−.0723 (.287)	−1.797 (1.686)	.999 (1.564)
Yakima	2.161** (.739)	2.020 (1.802)	.206 (.258)	.615 (1.671)	3.137* (1.580)
Median age		.0352 (.0418)	.00384 (.00488)	.00851 (.0388)	.0261 (.0406)
Percent Latinos own home		−.00454 (.0281)	−.000645 (.00438)	−.00867 (.0275)	.0157 (.0227)
% Latinos w/BA		−.0204 (.0316)	−.00452 (.00507)	−.0437 (.0322)	.0103 (.0266)
Latino median income		$4.33 \times 10^{-5}$ ( $3.02 \times 10^{-5}$ )	$6.17 \times 10^{-06}$ ( $4.85 \times 10^{-6}$ )	$4.90 \times 10^{-05}$ ( $3.05 \times 10^{-5}$ )	
% Employed		−.0165 (.0640)	−.00276 (.0101)	−.00442 (.0614)	−.0204 (.0649)
% Under poverty line		.0808 (.0759)	.00949 (.0102)	.120** (.0603)	.0508 (.0763)
Latino pop change 2010–2015				−6.260 (5.669)	

Latino minister × Population change				4.557 (5.961)	
Latino/non-Latino income disparity					$-2.60 \times 10^{-5}$ ( $2.91 \times 10^{-5}$ )
Constant	-3.074** (.977)	-5.166 (6.045)	-.0598 (.942)	-2.853 (5.666)	-3.499 (6.020)
$R^2$			.418		
Pseudo $R^2$	.369	.444		.440	.4431
AIC score	134.45	132.03	127.64	132.79	134.46
Observations	154	144	144	144	144

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ ,  $p < .1$ .

**Table 4.** Alternate regressions predicting cultural services in churches

Variables	(1) Short model	(2) Full model—Interaction	(3) OLS model	(4) Pop change	(5) Income Dif
Latino minister	1.959* (.912)	2.706* (1.157)	.440* (.188)	1.012* (.501)	2.706* (1.193)
2015 Latino population	.932 (1.358)	2.002 (2.202)	.236 (.338)		1.607 (2.208)
Latino minister × Latino population	−1.649 (1.367)	−2.689. (1.630)	−.401 (.305)		−2.674 (1.671)
Seattle	−.747 (.926)	1.462 (1.608)	.294 (.270)	−.0519 (1.565)	1.023 (1.516)
Yakima	−.769 (.525)	1.662 (1.442)	.314 (.251)	.807 (1.509)	1.623 (1.308)
Median age		.0251 (.0295)	.00424 (.00500)	.0338 (.0404)	.0289 (.0271)
Percent Latinos own home		.0408. (.0238)	.00819* (.00399)	.0268 (.0244)	.0374. (.0212)
% Latinos w/BA		.00976 (.0351)	.00145 (.00545)	−.0107 (.0337)	.00900 (.0280)
Latino median income		−2.07×10 <sup>−6</sup> (2.94×10 <sup>−5</sup> )	−1.26×10 <sup>−7</sup> (4.71×10 <sup>−6</sup> )	1.14×10 <sup>−5</sup> (2.94×10 <sup>−5</sup> )	
% Employed		.0157 (.0558)	.00151 (.00945)	.0276 (.0602)	.0149 (.0507)
% Under poverty line		.0207 (.0422)	.00372 (.00865)	.0204 (.0394)	.0121 (.0394)
Latino pop change 2010–2015				−10.47 (7.099)	

Latino minister × Population change				5.444 (7.649)	
Latino/non-Latino income disparity					$-6.05 \times 10^{-5}$ ( $3.22 \times 10^{-5}$ )
Constant	-1.460 (.950)	-6.794 (5.122)	-.614 (.826)	-5.992 (5.208)	-6.108 (4.667)
$R^2$			.150		
Pseudo $R^2$	.093	.180		.210	.201
AIC score	190.61	185.49	197.44	179.46	181.30
Observations	154	144	144	144	144

Robust standard errors in parentheses.

\*\*\* $p < .001$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \* $p < .05$ ,  $p < .1$ .

and significant. Lastly, there were no differences for the regression on having a Latino minister.

I also created a variable that accounted for the difference between Latino and non-Latino income. Given that churches are theorized to be more important to the lives of those who are less well-resourced (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995), it may be that churches would offer more services to Latinos when they have comparably less income than their neighbors. Conversely, simple economics may predict that churches located in communities with lower incomes would have fewer resources to spend on providing services or organizing non-worship activities. I found that the variable measuring income disparity between Latinos and non-Latinos was only significant in the regression on non-worship services, and it was negative (see Tables 3 and 4). This indicates as the income disparity increases, the likelihood of churches offering culturally relevant services and activities to Latinos decreases.

## LESSONS FROM AND FOR THE CATHOLIC CHURCH

The Catholic Church currently sits at the forefront of U.S. demographic change as a prominent institution that is working on how to positively respond to a growing (and soon to be majority) Latino population. Understanding the factors that either complicate or facilitate that endeavor may help other institutions in their future efforts to likewise integrate and serve Latino communities. Further, there may be broader implications to the success of Catholic churches to serve as research has found that participation in church activities (notably in small groups outside of the worship service) is positively related to increased rates of civic and political engagement (Djupe and Gilbert 2006; Djupe and Neihsel 2012; Jones-Correa and Leal 2001). However, these positive effects cannot be felt if churches fail to present the opportunity to participate in the first place. To that end, this study endeavors to determine which factors best predict when churches will provide services to Latinos.

Based on theories of representation and constituency response, I hypothesized that churches would be more likely to provide Spanish mass and other culturally relevant services if they were situated within a larger Latino population (hypothesis 1) or if they had a Latino minister within their parish (hypothesis 2). I found that the size of the Latino population was not statistically significant in predicting the likelihood a church would offer either service. Further, a striking pattern emerged—churches

were much more likely to offer Spanish mass than to offer any other kind of culturally relevant service even though these other services could be organized and offered by anyone in the community. This logically implies that as the Latino population increases, so too should the number of non-worship oriented services because the number of organizers and participants necessarily increases along with the overall population. Yet instead of population size, it was the presence of a Latino minister that was significant in predicting both types of service provision (hypothesis 2). Because of the importance of Latino leadership, I also examined the factors that may predict whether or not a parish would have a Latino priest or deacon. While I hypothesized that a large Latino population would predict a higher likelihood of having a Latino minister (hypothesis 3), no such relationship emerged in the regression analysis.

One potential explanation for these findings (high likelihood of mass; lower likelihood of other services) is the structure of the Church as an institution with “rules and organized practices” that define behavioral expectations. The mass, then, as a central component of the Catholic faith, can be considered an “organized practice” that is fairly simple to initiate and integrate into parish life. In contrast, the requirements for organizing and promoting activities such as Bible studies, festivals celebrating the Marian patrons, and legal clinics are widely varied, and there is little systematic training within the Church on how to offer these types of services. While the Church’s many publications advocate for the outreach and inclusion of Latinos, very few offer practical advice on how to do so (Huckle 2016).<sup>20</sup> As such, the provision of these services may be less a factor of institutional and contextual factors (such as Latino population size and descriptive representation) than of individual leadership and decision-making, regardless of that individuals’ ethnic or cultural background.

This conclusion is consistent with the representation theory’s discussion of *discretion*, defined as when administrators have the ability to make their own decisions and act on their values. Discretion is afforded because “organization rules cannot cover every contingency and because organizational socialization is rarely total” (Meier and Bohte 2001, 463) The larger the organization—and the more people one person must supervise—the greater amount of discretion will be found. Priests have a large amount of discretion in how they run and minister to their parishes. As such, the decision to serve Latinos by providing cultural services outside of Spanish mass may be the result of individual-level factors, rather than institutional.



Further, we must consider the necessity of serving Latinos to the Church's institutional survival. The Church is dying, suffering from high attrition rates, church closures, and continued fallout from numerous sex scandals. Latinos, as the only significant source of membership and growth, represent a lifeline. As such, Church officials should be conducting as much welcoming, outreach, and service provision as possible in order to stave off closures, particularly since it is one of the primary responsibilities of leaders to maintain membership levels. This can be a difficult task given the voluntary nature of membership, and so members must be incentivized to join (March and Olsen 2008). Incentives include not only offering mass in Spanish, but also the provision of other services and activities that directly appeal to Latinos. Indeed, many have theorized that it is precisely because of the Church's failure to provide these enticements that so many Latinos have left Catholicism (Martinez 2011; Martinez, Hernandez, and Pena 2012). The success or failure of the Catholic Church to accept—and take seriously—this reality should serve as a lesson to other institutions that will soon be reliant on the membership of a growing Latino population for their survival.

## NOTES

1. Latinos constitute 48% of the population in New Mexico, almost 40% in Texas and California, and approximately 30% in Nevada and Arizona (Stapler and Lopez 2016). These populations are particularly important to the Church as Latinos constitute 72% of all Catholics in Texas, 67% in California, 52% in Arizona, (Latino-specific data was not available for all states, Pew Research Center 2018).

2. "An institution is a relatively enduring collection of rules and organized practices, embedded in structures of meaning and resources that are relatively invariant in the face of turnover of individuals and relatively resilient to the idiosyncratic preferences and expectations of individuals and changing external circumstances (Hinderer 1993)."

3. Between 1974 and 1985 the Secretariat for Hispanic Affairs in the USCCB held three *Encuentros* (national meetings amongst parish leaders ministering to Latino Catholics) in order to devise an action plan for improving service to the Latino community (Matovina 2011, Paulson 2014). Increasing Latino access to leadership positions was one of the core recommendations that resulted from these meetings. A fifth *Encuentro* was recently completed and the results are being prepared for publication (there was a fourth *Encuentro*, held in 2000, that focused on multiculturalism within the Church).

4. The study considered Latinos age 5 and older.

5. The Committee on Hispanic Affairs was relegated to a sub-committee underneath the newly formed Committee of Cultural Diversity as part of a restructuring in 2006. This action significantly detracts from the advancements previously made in serving Latino Catholics. I address this action in other works where I investigate the role of representation amongst the Episcopate, leaving this paper to focus on Latino leadership at the parish level.

6. Most Archdioceses with an Office of Hispanic Ministry have used the National Pastoral Plan as the basis for their Archdiocese-specific Pastoral Plan, including recommendations on how to conduct outreach, what type of activities to include and promote, and prayers for welcoming and inclusion of the Latino community. These plans are generally available on each Archdiocese's website. For one

example, please see the Archdiocese of Seattle's Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry, From Guests to Hosts, at [http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/Assets/Hispanic/438\\_PaternalPlanEN.pdf](http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/Assets/Hispanic/438_PaternalPlanEN.pdf).

7. One study from 2011 found that 80% of Latinos report having a Latino priest in their church, and that 74% say their congregation is mostly Latino (Ziegler 2011). These numbers seem dubious. It would be plausible to believe with the small number of Latino priests if the Latino population were centralized in a few key areas, making such representation possible. However the Latino population is widely dispersed across the country, making it almost impossible for a few priests to serve them all within their communities. If the numbers are correct, that implies that Latinos are traveling a great deal to find their co-ethnic parish and priest, which limits the effectiveness of the parish as a community center and socializing institution.

8. Many cite the biblical passage Mathew 25:40 "The King will reply, "Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me"" as the foundation for this theological mandate.

9. An estimated 75% of all Latinos speak Spanish at home (not just immigrants), making the offering of Spanish mass a widely accessible service for the Latino population at large (Krogstad, Stepler, and Lopez 2015). Further, those engaged in Hispanic Ministry indicate that Spanish for many Latinos is the "language of the heart," meaning that regardless of how much Latinos use Spanish in their daily lives, they have a special connection to ritual and faith that is only accessed through Spanish, even if they are fluent or even dominant in English (Huckle 2016, Matovina 2011).

10. Most Archdioceses with an Office of Hispanic Ministry have used the National Pastoral Plan as the basis for their Archdiocese-specific Pastoral Plan, including recommendations on how to conduct outreach, what type of activities to include and promote, and prayers for welcoming and inclusion of the Latino community. These plans are generally available on each Archdiocese's website. For one example, please see the Archdiocese of Seattle's Pastoral Plan for Hispanic Ministry, From Guests to Hosts, at [http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/Assets/Hispanic/438\\_PaternalPlanEN.pdf](http://www.seattlearchdiocese.org/Assets/Hispanic/438_PaternalPlanEN.pdf).

11. "Parish" is a term that refers to both the members of a church congregation as well as the physical neighborhood surrounding a church. A pastor is the priest who runs and is in charge of a given parish.

12. Some have speculated that Catholics participate at lower rates because the perceived top-down nature of the Church precludes opportunities for engagement and leadership (Brady, Verba, and Schlozman 1995, Djupe and Neihsel 2012).

13. There are no comprehensive databases on church services to date. CARA has information on Spanish mass, but includes all parishes with one Spanish mass a month (Hoover 2014, USCCB 2012). Boston college has a much more complete analysis of the presence of services provided for Latinos, though this seminal study is limited by focusing only on services provided in Spanish, and does not consider services in relation to the Latino population size (Ospino 2014).

14. The ideal dataset would include information about the number and ethnicity of parishioners (those who attend a given church), as well as the number and ethnicity of Catholics in each region, the ethnicity and language ability of ministers assigned to a church, the number of masses, and quantity of culturally-specific ministries along with a count of the number of people who both participate and are served by such services. Some of these elements are collected by individual parishes, but there is no centralized dataset or nationally available information. The only exception to this is priest assignments, but the data do not include any demographic information or records in regards to the types of services the priests advocate or provide. Information about the Catholic population is also notoriously ambiguous—while organizations such as the CARA institute and PEW have estimates about population size, no data set has region-specific information to the level required for this analysis.

15. Since all churches are either operated or authorized by the Archdiocese in which they are located, the Archdiocese itself is the most reliable resource for identifying churches that are open and operating. More detailed information, such as mass times, other priests or deacons who serve each church, or other activities sponsored by a church community, is best collected from the churches themselves.

16. Deacons are an important part of parish life, particularly when there is not a pastor available to serve, or when the congregation is too large to be served by only one person. Deacons are official ministers of the Church, but do not have the authority to perform many sacraments that are central to Catholic life. (There are seven sacraments, or signs of the sacred, in the Catholic faith: baptism, reconciliation (confession of sin), communion, confirmation, marriage, holy orders, and anointing of the sick.). Most notably deacons cannot bless the Eucharist for communion or hear confession, but are

allowed to baptize and officiate weddings. They can also give the homily during mass and counsel congregant members. In this way deacons fill in an important pastoral function in a parish, but do not have the authority to fulfill all of the religious needs of a parish on their own.

17. Up to four phone attempts were made. Only two parishes out of the final 156 parishes have missing information after all verification attempts were completed. Ten have information that was collected but only partially verified; missing and unverified information most commonly concerned whether any deacons served in the parish. The 12 parishes with missing data were removed from the final analysis leaving a total N of 144. National parishes of other ethnicities (e.g. Polish, Korean, or Chinese) and the few Byzantine Rite churches were not included in this analysis as they are dedicated to serving a specific, non-Latino ethnic group and are not likely to have significant Latino congregant populations.

18. There are many valid reasons for using census tract data instead of zip code data, most importantly that the tracts are defined by the government and include all areas in the United States, while zip codes only include areas where postal mail is delivered. Also, census tracts are consistent in size and tend to have a more uniform distribution of population between them. As such, future studies that include a comparison of population demographics from different time periods will be conducted at the census tract level, given that multiple tracts can be associated with churches when necessary. For this analysis that examines a single point in time, however, I contend that zip codes remain the most effective unit of analysis.

19. It would be more accurate to inquire about the ethnic make up of all leaders serving at the included parishes (not just pastors and deacons, but also youth minister, directors of religious education, etc.) however the most basic inquiries for parish and leadership information were met with a great deal of hesitation and suspicion. I doubt that asking by phone about the ethnic background of all parish leadership would be any better received, and the sheer number and location of the included parishes precludes making personal visits for face-to-face interviews and inquiries.

20. Cardinal Roger Mahony created a document in 1997 entitled “Gather Faithfully Together,” that, among other things, offers practical advice on reaching out to Latino communities through worship, and on integrating diverse communities within the parish. In a recent interview he noted that he still receives positive comments regarding this document, specifically because of its simplicity and the practicality of its advice.

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