

Pathways of Hope and Faith Among Hispanic Teens

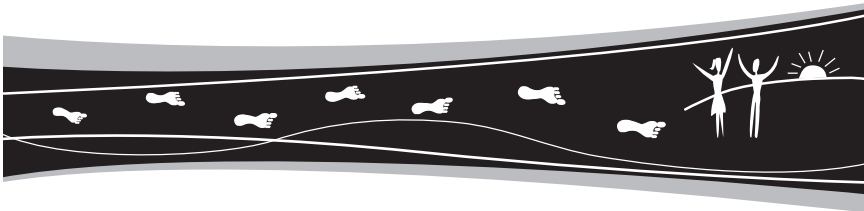
**Pastoral Reflections and Strategies
Inspired by the National Study
of Youth and Religion**

Edited by

Ken Johnson-Mondragón



Stockton, California



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Foreword

When in the year 2000 I first began to envision the research project that would eventually become the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR), I was aware that the findings of such a study could be interesting not only to scholars who study religion and adolescents, but also potentially informative and practically useful to adults “on the ground” who work with youth. Reliable information about people’s lives can often be helpful for knowing how better to relate to and work with people. One of the key premises of the NSYR when it began was that we lacked adequate knowledge about the religious and spiritual lives of American youth at a national level. It was only natural to think that improving our knowledge in that area could be helpful to youth pastors, clergy, church ministers, youth mentors, denominational leaders, community workers, and parents. Therefore, as program officers from Lilly Endowment Inc., which funded the NSYR, and I began working on the structure of the project, we agreed on the value of building into it resources to help disseminate our research findings to a variety of communities and constituencies that work with youth. Included in that was the intention to commission a set of thoughtful pastoral workers who minister with different kinds of American youth to reflect on the sociological findings of the NSYR and to write some theological and pastoral reflections to be published for the benefit of similar youth ministers.

This book is one of the results of that commissioning. During the collection of the first wave of NSYR data, I asked two members of the project’s Public Advisory Board, Carmen Cervantes and Edwin Hernandez, if they would be willing to organize a team of highly qualified scholars and pastoral workers to develop this book. They happily agreed and quickly brought Ken Johnson-Mondragón on board the project. Those three put their minds together and proposed back to me an unusual and creative approach to writing this book. Rather than tasking only one or two major authors to write a book on ministry with Hispanic youth, they proposed to gather together small teams of experienced leaders to engage, digest, and reflect theologically and pastorally upon the sociological findings of the NSYR when it came to Hispanic youth. The idea sounded great, so I commissioned them to run with it. With additional support from a Louisville

Institute Grant, Ken, Carmen, and Edwin formed a set of impressive teams to take on different aspects of the matter at hand. The products of their work are represented now in the chapters of this book.

I am very pleased to see this collaborative work come to fruition. It is the result of diligent years of work by the able hands of Ken, Carmen, and Edwin and their collaborators. It hardly needs to be said to anyone who knows American society that the Hispanic population in the United States has been growing dramatically and is transforming the character of American religion, both Catholic and Protestant. Anyone who hopes to grasp the central issues of American religious life and culture cannot afford to ignore this important Hispanic presence. Anyone who hopes to minister effectively among American teenagers cannot afford to simply treat them as if they were all Anglos, but must understand the cultural distinctiveness of different ethnic groups. But taking seriously the Hispanic presence of youth in the life of the church by conducting informative research has been hampered by the lack of solid information.

Before the NSYR, many of the best sources of information about the religious lives of U.S. adolescents were school-based samples that systematically excluded youth who were not in school or who were absent more than a typical number of days. This introduces a non-response bias against Hispanic adolescents, particularly among older Hispanic teenagers, many of whom either have dropped out of high school or are recent immigrants that are not in school because they came to the U.S. in search of work. Furthermore, most of the good studies of American youth were conducted in English only, which of course also systematically excludes some Hispanic youth from participating, especially when a parent is also a respondent or must give permission for their minor children to participate in the study. For these and other reasons, most of our best previously existing data on U.S. adolescents have not supported reliable studies of Hispanic teens.

The NSYR was determined to do better. That meant among other things making sure we had adequate survey and interview sample sizes to be able to conduct meaningful analyses of our Hispanic adolescents. It also meant conducting our survey in both English and Spanish for both the youth and parent respondents. It meant being sensitive to how we asked our survey questions about immigration and citizenship. And it meant making sure that we asked a set of questions about religious practices specifically relevant to our Hispanic respondents. We were very pleased in the end with the representative sampling, response rate, total sample size, and Hispanic participation of our NSYR study. Our data, therefore, are unique in the world of survey scholarship in the opportunity they present for a reliable analysis of the religious and spiritual lives of Hispanic youth in the U.S. The rigorous research design we implemented and study outcomes we achieved

mean that books like this one can with confidence be understood as based on solid, rigorous social scientific data representative of the population in question.

But this book does not simply report sociological research findings. Rather, the authors of the various chapters of this book bring their expertise in pastoral work with Hispanic teenagers and young adults to reflect on the theological and pastoral implications of the NSYR's research findings for effective ministry with young Hispanics in the United States. In successfully accomplishing that task, I believe this book provides many different kinds of readers with a unique and important resource. The high quality of the data on which it is based, the collaborative nature of the thinking and writing that went into this book, the rich experience of the authors who deliberated about and wrote the following chapters, the practical focus of the analyses, and the book's ecumenical scope which considers both Catholic and Protestant Hispanic youth: all of these together make this a truly exceptional and valuable publication. It is with pride that I see it published, and much gratitude to the editors and authors who brought it to completion. I commend it to readers from all backgrounds who care about the lives of American youth—particularly those who need to deepen their appreciation for the religious, spiritual, and cultural dimensions of adolescents' lives. I hope and trust that this book will find its way into the hands of many youth ministers, church leaders, seminary faculty, and parents.

Christian Smith, Ph.D.

Principle Investigator of the National Study of Youth and Religion

Introduction

You've seen the headlines in the papers. Hispanics are the largest and fastest growing "minority" group in the United States today. Their presence is changing the way America does business, education, and politics, as well as what it listens to, watches, reads, and eats. These changes can also be seen in the pews and pulpits of parishes and congregations across the country, from Miami, FL, to Anchorage, AK, and nearly everywhere in between.

In the life of the church, the most obvious change is when a Spanish-speaking congregation appears in a neighborhood, or worship services in Spanish are added in an existing faith community. Nevertheless, language is only the first of many issues that must be resolved in order to develop a comprehensive and effective outreach to Latino/a teens. Some of the questions that pastors, youth ministers, and parents may be asking themselves are:

- What is really happening in the lives of the Hispanic teens living in my community? What are the most pressing pastoral needs that I should be addressing with them?
- Why is it so hard to get some of the Latino/a teens to come to church or to participate in youth ministry programs? What knowledge and skills do I need in order to improve my outreach to them?
- What can I do to ensure that teens with different national or cultural backgrounds all feel welcome and comfortable at church, especially when there are ethnic or racial tensions in the larger communities of school, neighborhood, or town?
- How can I partner with parents and other family members in the religious formation of the Hispanic teenagers in my faith community?
- What concrete actions can I take to support and encourage leadership training for ministry with the young Hispanics in my community? And how can I support young Latino/as in their development as leaders in church and society?
- As a Latino/a parent, how can I be of greater support to my adolescent children in their religious, emotional, intellectual, moral, social, and cultural development?

The National Study of Youth and Religion

If you have asked yourself these questions, or others similar to them, this book is for you. Over the last five years, researchers for the National Study of Youth and Religion (NSYR) have been conducting a longitudinal study of the religious beliefs and practices of teens throughout the United States. Two of the goals of the NSYR are:

- To provide a nationally-representative description of the religious and spiritual practices, beliefs, experiences, histories, concerns, and involvements of American youth.
- To identify how the religious interests, concerns, and practices of American youth vary between people of different races, ages, social classes, ecological settings (rural versus urban), and between boys and girls.

Research methodology of the NSYR

The NSYR's data collection is being carried out in three waves over the course of six years, from 2002 to 2008. Each wave includes a telephone survey and personal interviews with a subset of the young people surveyed. The longitudinal telephone survey began as a nationally representative survey of 3,290 English and Spanish speaking teenagers between the ages of 13 and 17. The baseline survey was conducted, with the teen respondents and one of their parents, between July 2002 and April 2003 by researchers at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. A random-digit dial (RDD) telephone method was employed to generate numbers representative of all household telephones in the 50 United States. Among the respondents, 385 teens identified themselves as Hispanic or Latino/a. In addition, researchers recorded and transcribed personal interviews with 267 teens, 38 of whom were Hispanic.

The second wave of the NSYR is a re-survey of the Wave 1 teen respondents. Like Wave 1, the Wave 2 survey was conducted by telephone using a Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing (CATI) system. The survey was conducted from June 2005 through November 2005 when the respondents were between the ages of 16 and 21. Every effort was made to contact and survey all of the original NSYR respondents, including those out of the country and in the military. Of the original respondents, 2,604 participated in the second wave of the survey resulting in an overall retention rate of 78.6%. The predominant source of attrition in the second wave was from participants who could not be found. Of the Wave 2 respondents, 242 were Hispanic, giving a retention rate of 62.9% among Latino/as. The Wave 2 interviews were conducted with 122 of the interview participants from Wave 1, 15 of whom were Hispanic or Latino/a.

Process utilized in the preparation of this book

Taken together, the NSYR survey responses and transcribed interviews provide unprecedented insight into the spiritual concerns and personal lives of teens in the United States today. The NSYR Hispanic Theological Reflection Project, of which this book is the final product, was designed to make the insights of the NSYR regarding Latino/a adolescents available to pastors, youth ministry leaders, and parents in Catholic and Protestant faith communities throughout the country.

While the NSYR surveys and interviews provide the empirical foundation for the reflections in this book, the data is only one part of the richness contained in these pages. The pastoral insights and recommendations reflect the combined wisdom of an ecumenical team of 15 pastoral theologians, pastors, and youth ministers (8 Catholic and 7 Protestant) who have spent many years serving Latino faith communities in a variety of social and pastoral settings.

These professionals gathered in the summer of 2004 to discuss the implications of the NSYR Wave 1 data for youth ministers and parents of Hispanic adolescents. Chapters 2 through 7 of this book were prepared by forming three focus groups of four professionals; each group included two designated writers and two dialog partners who worked together to select the themes for their assigned chapters. All of the participants had access to the NSYR survey data and interview transcript materials pertinent to their chapter topics, as well as an early draft of Chapter 1 of this book.

Once the writers completed the first draft of their assigned chapters, they received feedback from each of their peers in the focus group before they submitted their manuscript for final editing. Chapter 8 was added as a brief update on the insights and recommendations of the first seven chapters once the NSYR Wave 2 data became available. Finally, Chapters 9 and 10 focus on the broad implications of the insights presented in the first eight chapters for ministry with Hispanic adolescents and their families in Protestant and Catholic faith communities, respectively.

Guide to using this book

As already mentioned, this book is intended for pastors, youth ministry leaders, and parents who have Hispanic adolescents in their care. For this reason, the presentation of data from the NSYR in each chapter is generally followed by a pastoral-theological reflection on the meaning of the data for faith communities, youth ministry leaders, and parents. In some cases, theoretical models are introduced to help the reader understand the

variety of challenges faced by Latino/a teens in their daily lives. It is hoped that these features will make this an attractive volume for seminarians and sociologists of religion as well.

The presentation and discussion of the data are followed by a series of recommendations for pastors and youth ministry leaders to assist them in the development of programs that are more responsive to the needs of the Hispanic teens in their community. Each chapter ends with a series of questions that may be used for personal reflection or for discussion, either within a youth ministry team or by the parents of Hispanic adolescents. The notes and a list of additional resources for each chapter are found at the back of the book, starting on page 369.

Whenever possible, excerpts from the NSYR interview transcripts have been included to illustrate or clarify the insights from the survey data. To protect their identity, the teens interviewed are only identified by their gender, religious tradition, and the region of the country in which they live. The quotes may have been edited to remove references to particular people or places, or to remove portions of the conversation that did not relate to the topic at hand, but in every case the words are those of the teens themselves.

How to read the tables

Unless otherwise indicated, the reader should assume that all tables refer to data drawn from the NSYR teen survey. In general, the question asked of the participant is printed in boldface on the left, and the possible responses are indented underneath each question. If no question is indicated, then all of the responses relate to the topic in the title of the table (i.e. Table 2.1 on page 45). Since one of the parents of each teen was also surveyed, some tables include data from questions in the parent surveys; these results are clearly marked as such. The numbers printed to the right of each response show the percentage of the respondents in each category who gave the indicated response.

The columns of numbers on the right side of each table represent the various categories of respondents whose answers are being compared in the table. The weighted number of respondents in each category is printed in small letters at the top of each column in the format “N=xyz.”¹ In some tables, the number of respondents in each category may vary from question to question within a single table; in these cases, each question is printed with its own set of Ns.

For example, the first five questions in Table 3.2 on page 89 were asked of teens who stated that they attend church “many times a year” or more. There were 190 Hispanic Catholic, 371 white Catholic, 80 Hispanic Protestant,

and 1042 white Protestant teens who met that criterion. The last two questions in the table used different criteria to select the respondents in each category; the criteria are printed at the bottom of the table, and the number of respondents in each category is listed to the right of each question.

As with any survey based on a random sample, the reliability of the responses of the teens as a representation of the beliefs and behaviors of the target population in each category depends on the number of survey respondents in the category.² In general, sociologists like to have at least 80 respondents in each category they are comparing, but they will admit that even as few as 30 may provide results that can be generalized to the larger population.

Given the limits of the data available in the NSYR survey, it was not always possible to maintain at least 30 respondents in each of the categories being compared, especially when looking at subgroups of the Hispanic Protestant population. When there were less than 30 responses in a given category, the tables include an estimate of the sampling error based on the number of responses available. The reader should interpret these results as anecdotal evidence. In these cases, although the interpretation of the data may be strengthened by the pastoral experience of the writer, further research would be necessary to confirm or refute the differences indicated in the table. When fewer than 10 responses were available in a given category, the results were not reported.

Use of “Hispanic” or “Latino/a”

The U.S. Census Bureau identifies as “Hispanic” people whose ancestral roots and cultural heritage can be traced to places where Spanish was or continues to be the dominant language, regardless of their race. As such, the term “Hispanic” includes people of many nations. The NSYR surveys utilized the same approach to race and ethnicity as the U.S. Census Bureau, asking teens and parents separate questions about their race and whether or not they consider themselves to be “Hispanic.” Thus, it is possible to be both black and Hispanic, Asian and Hispanic, etc. The racial and ethnic categories were then merged and collapsed so that comparisons between Hispanic and white teens in this book reflect the responses of Hispanic teens of any race and white teens who are not Hispanic, respectively.

It should be noted that some people object to the label “Hispanic” because their sense of ethnic identity is tied to their specific national or cultural origin. For example, some will say, “I am Cuban, not Hispanic!” They also argue that there is no “Hispanic” culture—only a collection of many national and regional cultures that happen to share language as a common element. Many of these people prefer the use of “Latino” or “Latina”

(Latino/a for short when talking about males and females together) to describe themselves because it evokes their more recent cultural ties to Latin America over and above their historic cultural roots in Spain.

On the other hand, for the descendents of Spanish-speaking peoples born in the United States, there is a growing awareness of a “pan-Hispanic” culture that is more central to their identity than the particular national origin of their ancestors. This is especially true for individuals whose parents were from different Spanish-speaking countries—for example the child of a Guatemalan mother and a Puerto Rican father. In fact, when given a chance to fill in their particular Hispanic origin in Census 2000, 12% identified themselves simply as “Hispanic,” and an additional 1.3% wrote in “Latino.” Together they represented more than any national group except Mexican.

Because individuals differ in their preference for “Hispanic” or “Latino/a” as the broad category to which they belong, these terms will be used interchangeably in this book. Whichever term is used, it does not mean that the many cultural and generational differences among particular groups of Hispanics have disappeared. On the contrary, youth ministers need to become sensitive to these differences so that they can avoid the types of generalizations and assumptions that will alienate or offend certain members of their youth group.

Use of “Protestant” and “Catholic” terminology

A similar tension exists surrounding the use of “Protestant” to describe mainline Christians, as well as Evangelicals and Pentecostals. Many Christians today are uncomfortable with being called Protestant because they do not consider their religious identity to be tied to protest against the Roman Catholic teachings and practices of the sixteenth century. In most cases, they prefer to call themselves simply “Christian.”

The problem with this usage is that Roman Catholics are also Christians, and parts of this study describe some significant differences and particular issues that need to be addressed in ministry with young Catholic Hispanics as distinct from other Christian Hispanics, and vice-versa. For this reason, the term Protestant should be understood to include mainline, evangelical, Pentecostal, and nondenominational Christians; the term Catholic should be understood to refer to Latin Rite Catholics, also known as Roman Catholics; and the term Christian should be understood to refer to Protestants and Catholics together. Mormons (Latter Day Saints) and Jehovah’s Witnesses are not included in the category of Protestants, and because they made up less than 2% of the Hispanics in the survey, there were not enough responses to draw any meaningful conclusions about them.

One of the consequences of the historical divisions between Catholics and Protestants is that we have developed different terms to describe the same or similar roles, processes, and elements of community life. In order to avoid confusion, this book follows the convention of using descriptive terms instead of favoring particular usages. The following table summarizes some of the key terms found in this book:

<u>Protestant Term</u>	<u>Catholic Term</u>	<u>Term Used in This Book</u>
fellowship	communion	community life
youth pastor	youth minister	youth minister
congregation or church	parish	faith community
Sunday school	catechism or CCD	religious education

By making these adjustments in terminology, it is hoped that this volume will be understandable, useful, and informative as a resource for pastors, youth ministers, parents, and anyone who is involved in preparing them for their work with Hispanic teens, irrespective of their denominational affiliation.

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Citations

During this book’s preparation, all citations, facts, figures, names, addresses, telephone numbers, Internet URLs, and other pieces of information cited within were verified for accuracy. The authors and Instituto Fe y Vida staff have made every attempt to reference current and valid sources, but we cannot guarantee the content of any source, and we are not responsible for any changes that may have occurred since our verification. If you find an error in, or have a question or concern about, any of the information or sources listed within, please contact Instituto Fe y Vida.



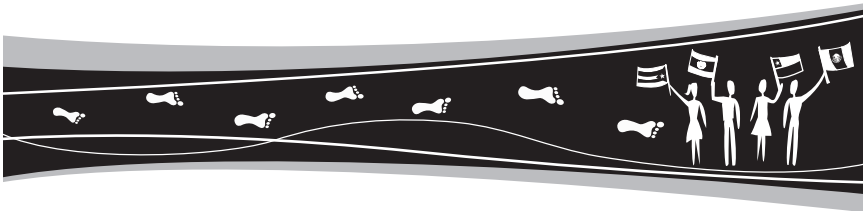
Chapter 1: Socioreligious Demographics of Hispanic Teenagers

Ken Johnson-Mondragón, D.Min. cand.



Dialog 1.1 – 17 year-old Hispanic Catholic female from the South:

- I: How do you see yourself fitting in at school?*
R: Normal, normal. A normal student. Just another student.
I: How would other people at school define your group of friends?
R: They would define me as a quiet person—a good person who does not mess around with others and studies hard.
I: You know that in high school there are groups such as the most popular ones, those who do sports, something like that. What group are you in?
R: The Hispanics.
I: The Hispanics?
R: The Latinos.
I: Are there many whites in your school?
R: Yes.
I: It is the majority—whites?
R: Yes.
I: And are all the Latinos?
R: We stick together...



Socioreligious Demographics of Hispanic Teenagers

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Chapter 2: Personal Religious Beliefs and Experiences

Pastor Tomas V. Sanabria, M.Div.



Dialog 2.1 – 15 year old non-religious Hispanic male with Catholic leanings from the South:

I: When you think about God, what do you think of? Who or what is God to you?

R: Just a greater force out there that makes things happen for a reason.

I: Okay. Do you think of God as active or removed from human affairs?

R: I think he is active in most people's lives. I mean, I think he looks down on people, has a purpose for everybody.

I: Okay. Do you think of God as more loving and forgiving, or demanding and judging?

R: Loving and forgiving.

I: And how did you get these ideas about God?

R: Ah, I guess from reading various parts of the Bible, watching all those shows on TV with the preachers and just stuff like that.

I: Okay, so you watch the televangelists?

R: Ah, I don't watch them, but ah, I'll flick through the channels and stop for like two minutes and just listen a little bit and then I'll move on.

I: What religion, if any, do you consider yourself to be?

R: Ah, Catholic, I think.

I: Okay. You said you think? You're not really...

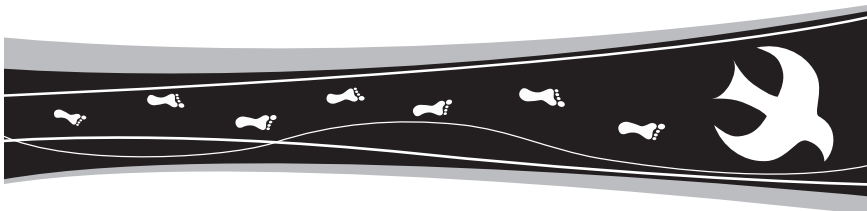
R: Well, ah, I, I don't really consider myself a Catholic. I mean, not that I consider myself anything else... 'cause I'm not really religious at all. But ah, I guess if I was anything I'd be Catholic.

I: Okay. And you definitely consider yourself Christian?

R: Yes.

I: Okay. Can you tell me the beliefs of your own personal faith? Or morality?

R: Ah, I don't really have any real beliefs. I mean, just that there is a God and we all have a purpose...



Personal Religious Beliefs and Experiences

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Chapter 3: Church and Youth Ministry Participation

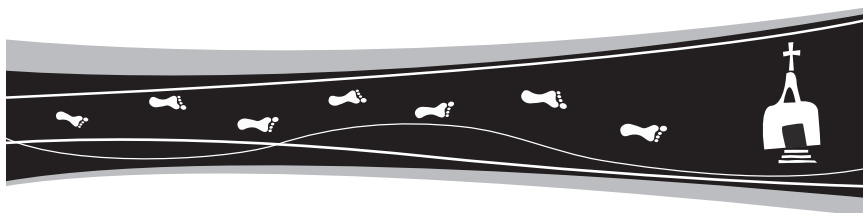
Creating a Welcoming Environment for Latino/a Teenagers

Lynette DeJesús-Sáenz, M.S.W.



Dialog 3.1 – 15 year-old Hispanic Christian female from the South

- I: So you're involved in a religious youth group, right?*
R: Yeah... I go to two youth groups...
I: What do you do there?
R: They're... I don't know, in both of them we like praise God obviously in the beginning, and like we pray, and then just like teach you like about something, anything.
I: They teach you about religious items or about God? What type of things?
R: Mostly how to deal with like things in life... Just like things that like could relate to the Scriptures and everything.
I: Do you enjoy it?
R: Yeah, I love it.
I: What do you get out of it?
R: Well, I learn more about God and everything, and I don't know... I just like praising God. It makes me feel better.
I: How important are the youth groups in your life?
R: They're very important... one of my main priorities in life.
I: What are the most important things about the youth group to you?
R: I think probably learning more about God, like when they talk and stuff.
I: So how do you think, if at all, that your life would be different if you weren't in the youth groups?
R: I probably would have found something to get myself into on those nights. And I don't know.



Church and Youth Ministry Participation

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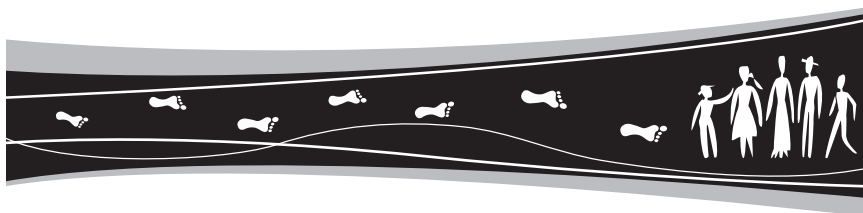
Chapter 4: Faith and Culture in Hispanic Families

Carlos Carrillo, M.Ed.



Dialog 4.1 – 14 year-old Hispanic Catholic male from the West:

- I:* Can you tell me about how you were raised religiously?
- R:* Um, I was raised a Catholic, they taught me to believe in God and Mary and Jesus...
- I:* Are you still a practicing Catholic?
- R:* Mm-hmm (yes).
- I:* Okay... How similar or different are your religious beliefs from your mother and father?
- R:* We're all the same. My, well my mother, she's the one that's really into being Catholic. She goes to church every Sunday and all that. She's really the more religious one in our family.
- I:* Is religion a source of conflict or of sharing, solidarity, with your parents?
- R:* No.
- I:* Um, not a source of conflict. Is it a source of sharing?
- R:* Mm-mm (no).
- I:* It's neither?
- R:* Yeah.
- I:* Okay. Do you think your family relationships are affected by religion or faith?
- R:* Well, yeah. God taught us to love everybody and everything, so I guess we're just supposed to love each other... That's why we're so happy.



Faith and Culture in Hispanic Families

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Chapter 5: The Moral Imperative of Latino/a Educational Investment

The Future is Now!

David Ramos, M.Div., M.S.W.



Dialog 5.1 – 17 year-old Hispanic Catholic male from the West:

I: How much do you think about your future?

R: A lot.

I: What do you think about?

R: How am I going to survive, you know, what kind of job am I going to get.

I: What do you imagine you will do with your life when you are an adult?

R: Um...you know go to a two-year community college and then a two-year university, and you know just get a good job. Get an apartment or house or something.

I: How do you think your life is going to turn out?

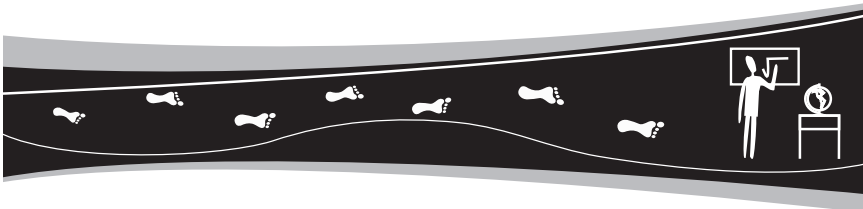
R: Good.

I: Do you look to the future with hope or fear or?

R: Both.

I: Like in what ways, in what ways for hope and in what ways for fear?

R: Hope like, you know, I hope I do good and I, you know, I graduate school and everything. And fear it's just like, you know, I don't know what might happen. I might get in trouble or I might not do as good as I think I'm going to do.



The Moral Imperative of Latino/a Educational Investment

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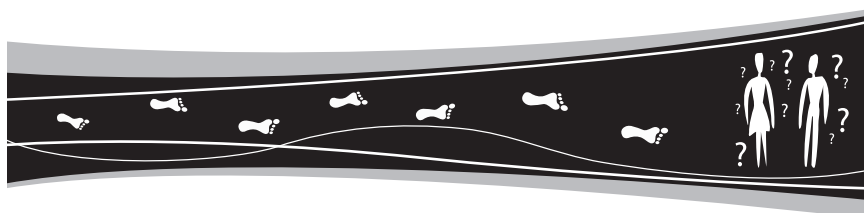
Chapter 6: Insights into the Moral Life of Hispanic Youth

Elizabeth Conde-Frazier, Ph.D.



Dialog 6.1 – 17 year-old Hispanic Catholic male from the West

- I: Would you say that, in general, people these days have lost a sense of right and wrong, or do you think what is right and wrong is still pretty clear today?*
- R: I'm, I think it's more, not as clear.*
- I: How do you think? In what ways?*
- R: In the ways that society has bent right and wrong. Too many wrongs are right and more wrongs are seen as right, whereas it doesn't really matter.*
- I: So people think that it doesn't matter what they really do?*
- R: Yeah, and it's their lives so they can do what they want...*
- I: How do you know what's right and what's wrong?*
- R: For me, just my conscience and my parents.*
- I: Your conscience. Is there any sort of thing that makes something, besides your parents might be disappointed or whatever, but that makes something right or wrong or?*
- R: Yes. If they found out, what they would think about it—what, I guess, society would think about it.*
- I: Where do your own views of right and wrong come from?*
- R: My parents.*
- I: Your parents?*
- R: School.*
- I: School? And one more time, what do you think it is that makes something right or wrong?*
- R: It's what I usually think about it.*
- I: How do you decide or know what is good and bad, right and wrong in life? What your parents think or what other people think?*
- R: My parents or my conscience.*



Insights into the Moral Life of Hispanic Youth

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Chapter 7: The Social and Political Involvement of Latino/a Youth

Arturo Chávez, Ph.D.



Dialog 7.1 – 17 year-old Hispanic Christian female from the West

I: Are you involved in any volunteer work or community service?

R: No.

I: Do you think teenagers should have to do volunteer work or community service?

R: No.

I: Why not?

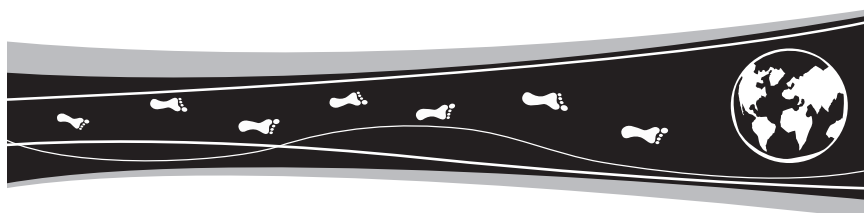
R: Why should they? If they want to do it then they should do it. If they don't, they shouldn't. My sister wanted to volunteer at the hospital. She did. I don't. So I didn't.

I: Do you think you have an obligation to just—you know if you saw somebody who needed help on the street—do you think you should help them?

R: Yeah.

I: Why?

R: Why not? That one person you help could be an angel. It could be God, you know.



The Social and Political Involvement of Latino/a Youth

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Chapter 8:

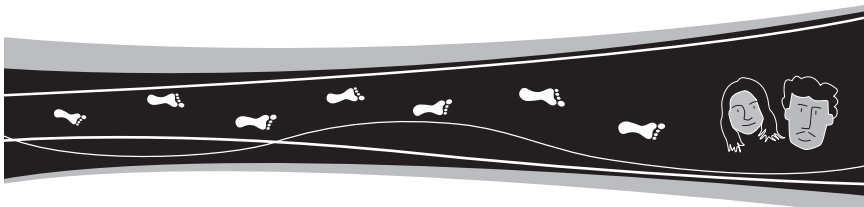
The Second Wave of the National Study of Youth and Religion

Ken Johnson-Mondragón, D.Min. cand.



Dialog 8.1 – 18 year-old Hispanic Catholic female from the West

- I: How would you describe yourself to me in terms of your religion?*
- R: How would I describe myself? Um I do believe, I do believe in God, and I'm a Catholic, but like I said I'm leaning more towards my dad's perspective—where you can believe and everything but um, it doesn't mean that you have to go to church every Sunday. And um, that's where I'm leaning more towards now. I mean I still go to church but not as often.
- I: That makes sense... And how often do you go?*
- R: Uh, like I said not as often as I used to, so maybe once or twice a month... If that sometimes.
- I: Are you involved in any youth group or other religious groups?*
- R: Not at the moment. Um, well I mean I haven't really looked into any college group or anything like that. But like I said, I used to work with the youth, but that ended for the summer, so.
- I: How often do you pray?*
- R: Every night. At least I try to [giggling].
- I: Do you read the Bible?*
- R: No, not very often. I mean I used to when I was in youth, but now I don't.
- I: How much would you say religion is a part of your everyday life?*
- R: Um, I would say a lot, because you know, during the day um... You know, if I pass a cross I do the sign of the cross. If I see something um, sometimes I'll say "God please this," or "God please that."
- I: Over the past couple of years, do you think you've become more religious, less religious, or stayed about the same?*
- R: Um, I don't know if you'd call not going to church less religious or...
- I: Do you consider it less religious?*
- R: No I don't... Yeah, I think I'm the same religious, but I just don't go to church. I think I've stayed as religious as I was, but I don't know. Like according to the church I would be less religious, but...



The Second Wave of the National Study of Youth and Religion

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Chapter 9:

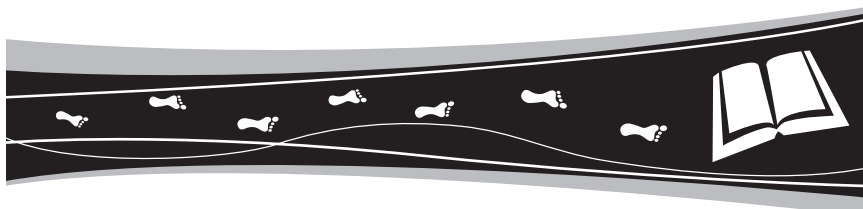
The Religious Experience of Latino/a Protestant Youth

Edwin I. Hernández, Ph.D.



Dialog 9.1 – 16 year-old Hispanic Baptist female from the West

- I: Can you tell me what God is like? Or who God is?
- R: He's everything... He's a father... Even though you may not have a dad, He still is a father. He disciplines like a father... He's a provider, He cares.
- I: Do you tend to think of God as more loving and forgiving, or demanding and judging?
- R: Um... I know He's a balance of both. He, He is a merciful God, but He is also justice.
- I: Okay, where do you think you learned this about God?
- R: Um, because I grew up in a Christian home and my parents... they taught me this... They live it out every day to me in their lives, and so I see it through them. And then, then church, and Sunday School, and seeing other people there... listening to the pastor's message...
- I: Okay. Can you tell me more about your own religious beliefs? I mean, what are some more important things you believe in?
- R: Like I believe that Jesus is God's son and that he came and he died for me and for everyone else because we're all sinners. And that he didn't stay dead but he rose again, and he wants us to come live with him. And we just need to admit that we're sinners, and believe that he came and died on the cross and rose again, and just choose to follow him...
- I: And who goes to heaven?
- R: Those who trust in Jesus as their personal Lord and savior will go to heaven when they die, and those who don't will go to hell.
- I: What do you think have been the most important influences on the development of your faith?
- R: Um, watching how God has worked in other people's lives... reading his Word, being in it daily... stuff like that.
- I: So you read the Bible every day?
- R: Mm-hmm [yes].



The Religious Experience of Latino/a Protestant Youth

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Chapter 10: Passing the Faith to Latino/a Catholic Teens in the U.S.

Carmen M. Cervantes, Ed.D.
with
Ken Johnson-Mondragón, D.Min. cand.



Dialog 10.1 – 18 year-old Hispanic Catholic female from the West

I: Can you tell me about how you were raised religiously? Do your parents believe in religion?

R: Yeah, both my parents are Catholic and they raised us to be Catholic... I don't know, I guess like, we all used to go to church as a family when we were younger. I remember when I was like ten, we used to go to church like every Sunday morning, like 6:00 in the morning, every, you know, every Sunday. And we'd all wear little dresses and stuff like that. You know, everything was nice, but then like all of the sudden, it's like once I entered junior high, I remember, we just stopped going, like I don't know why.

I: You don't remember why?

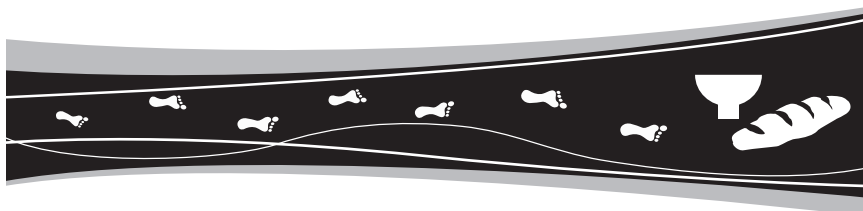
R: I don't remember why. I just think like my dad, he never really went because he supposedly was claustrophobic. [laughs] He couldn't be around many people, you know. He hated it, you know. I don't like the standing up, but he forced us to go. "You better go. You guys better go."

I: So you went with your mom?

R: Yeah, I would go with my mom... The whole family would go, except for my dad. He would go and like relax at home, because you know he couldn't be there with like the crowds. So he'd just stay home and we would go, and um... I don't know, I guess we started getting older, like when I was like 13 or something like that, we just stopped going...

I: So... does religion have any thing to do now in your family life?

R: The only one that's really religious still is my mother. She's still like, she still lights her candles and things like that, you know. I mean I've never really learned why. I don't know what the Catholic religion is about and stuff like that. I don't really know... I mean I wish I did, but I don't, you know.



Passing the Faith to Latino/a Catholic Teens in the U.S.

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