

**CULTIVATING HABITS OF FAITH: THE
POWER OF LATINA STORIES AND
PRACTICES TO EDUCATE U.S.
CATHOLICS IN THE FAITH**

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A dissertation

submitted to the Faculty of

the School of Theology and Ministry

in partial fulfillment

of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Boston College
Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences
GSAS - Religious Education and Pastoral Ministry
Graduate School

April 2021

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The Catholic Church's formal documents throughout the centuries have celebrated and affirmed the role of parents educating their children on faith matters in the context of the home. Nevertheless, the Church offers parents very little practical guidance as to how they can make their home a domestic church or what they can do to organically and consistently incorporate the faith into daily life. The physicality of the home renders it a sacramental space. It is the haven where we nurture our most important and loving relationships. It is the place where we learn to wrestle with mystery and ambiguity. This dissertation conducted an ethnographic study of a group of Miami-based Cuban American Catholic women across two generations. The study found that their success in transmitting their Catholic faith to their daughters involved four home-based practices: faith modeling including extended kin, engagement in social justice vocations, explicitly affirming the personalization of daily rituals such as prayer, and finally, ongoing intergenerational dialogues. Religious imagination is the glue that holds all of the moving pieces (home, women and socializing praxis) in this dissertation. I provide herein a midrash of Matthew 27:57-61 to illustrate how the Cuban-American home lends itself to negotiating a hermeneutic that is matriarchal, bottom-up, and interdisciplinary. This dissertation proposes that communal, home-based storytelling is a necessary and rigorous component of the faith transmission process because it nuances the development of participants' narrative identity and ultimately answers why being Catholic truly matters – specifically here, now and to us.

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Dedication:

“*Abuela Elia*” de la Gándara y de la Noval

“A damaged organism isn’t satisfied just to be what it is, merely damaged. It strives, presses, and pushes; it fights and struggles with itself in order to make itself into a unity again...it presses toward becoming a new kind of unity in which the lost capacity no longer destroys its unity. It governs itself, makes itself, re-creates itself.”

- Abraham Maslow, *The Farthest Reaches of Human Nature*

Introduction

This dissertation addresses the mechanisms and means by which one generation of religious faith can foster similar faith in the subsequent generation. Much of the academic literature refers to this as faith transmission. This is not simply a matter of introducing the new generation to the divine. Fostering religious faith also involves preparing a new generation for inclusion into a community. It is preparation for belonging and relationship on the social level as well as the spiritual. The end-goal involves a new generation which both authentically identifies with the religious community and fully participates in the religious behavior associated with that community.

As a Catholic woman studying theology at a Catholic university, it seemed only natural to make the Catholic faith the focus. Growing up in the liminality that is identifying as a Latina Catholic was what fostered and shaped my faith development.¹ Despite the institutional church being a part of our lives and walking through the formal catechetical process, it was my family, and particularly the female members of my family, who played the most prominent role in the development of my faith praxis. The institutional, hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church has remained focused primarily on formal faith transmission in the institutional setting leaving a lacuna in research focused on the informal faith transmission process.

¹ While parochial school may make for a more pronounced impact of formal institutional religious training in many American Catholics childhood religious experiences, like most Latinas in the U.S., parochial school was not a part of my childhood. While 55% of school-aged Catholic children are Latinx, only 4% of this Latinx population are enrolled in Catholic schools. Hosffman Ospino, "10 Ways Hispanics Are Redefining American Catholicism in the 21st Century," *America: The Jesuit Review*, October 30, 2017, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/10/30/10-ways-hispanics-are-redefining-american-catholicism-21st-century>.

The Latinx community, in Latin American countries as well as in the U.S., is notorious for being both strongly Catholic² and yet minimally involved in the institutional church.³ Identifying as a Catholic can prove difficult and uncomfortable for a new generation in American society where this label carries far more negative connotations than it does in many of the Latin American countries. This may be one of the reasons that Latinx immigrants constitute the primary reason the Catholic Church remains a strong presence within the US, despite a massive exodus by other ethnic groups.⁴ The idea that my own Cuban-American community might have some important insights to contribute to the discussion of informal faith transmission seemed like a reasonable working hypothesis. Not only that, but my experience as a woman had opened up the further possibility of adopting a feminist perspective in this research. Once again, the institutional Catholic Church remains quite patriarchal in its leadership structure. Nevertheless, within the home environment and in informal family contexts, it is the women who most often take the spiritual leadership role.⁵ Therefore, not only did my feminist methodological

² "...Spirituality and religiosity are interwoven with [Latino/as'] daily lives and serve as foundations of strength in coping with life's struggles." Maureen Compesino and Gary E. Schwartz, "Spirituality among Latinas/Os: Implications of Culture in Conceptualization and Measurement," *Advances in Nursing Science* 29 (2006): 69–81.

³ Speaking about the survey he conducted for a recent V Encuentro conference, in 2018 Ken Johnson-Mondragón estimated that 80-85% of Latinx Catholics don't regularly attend church. J. D. Long-García, "The Hispanic Catholic Church in the U.S. Is Growing, Survey Confirms," *America: The Jesuit Review*, May 2018, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2018/05/04/hispanic-catholic-church-us-growing-survey-confirms>. There is significant overlap between the 65% of Latinx Catholics who (as of 2014) consider religion "very important" in their lives and these 80-85% who do not attend church on a regular basis. PEW Research Center, "Religion in Latin America: Widespread Change in a Historically Catholic Region," *PEW Research Center, Religion & Public Life* (Washington, D.C., November 13, 2014), <https://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/>.

⁴ "Hispanics account for 71% of the growth of the Catholic population in the United States since 1960." Ospino, "Hispanics Are Redefining American Catholicism."

⁵ This has been true since the very beginnings of the Christian Church. Osieck and Balch make the following statements about that the gender dynamics in the home in the earliest period of the Christian church: *One aspect of women's lives that is not frequently spoken of is the intergenerational family activity whereby women in traditional societies convey wisdom and practical knowledge from mother to daughter and surrogate mother to surrogate daughter. This instruction is spread over many years during which daughters are growing up in the household... All of this wisdom constitutes an important legacy of the past and of Christian family life that has been preserved hardly at all... Three aspects of this female tradition can be discerned: household domestic instruction, instruction of women for baptism and ongoing instruction in the Christian life, and instruction in asceticism in those later ascetic circles in which women were heavily involved. House and family were the primary locus for this tradition.*

perspective drive this decision to focus on women exclusively in this dissertation, but there is a good deal of empirical evidence supporting this decision, as will become clearer in the body of this research.

I.1 Scope

The primary focus of my research for this dissertation involves how Latina Cuban-Americans pass on their Catholic faith from one generation to the next. Whenever possible, I have generalized these observations to the wider Latina community. I must, however, constrain such generalizations, recognizing the chance confluence of specific historical and sociological circumstances which have produced a unique cultural environment among Cuban-Americans. This unique cultural environment is not only absent from the forces that have stymied traditional religious socialization in the aggregate American households that sociologist Christian Smith was studying, but is often, similarly, absent from most Latinx communities.

While the generalizations I draw to the wider Latinx community from the experiences of Cuban-American Latinas are based on a perception of the shared experiences of the Latinx community as a whole, the extension to the Catholic community as a whole is generally framed as lessons for the future. The staggering attrition rates of the Catholic Church in America affects all Catholic communities.

I.2 Data Collection Model

Weighing the options for gathering data related to what faith transmission actually looks like within the home itself, conducting in-depth interviews seemed to far outweigh the

Carolyn Osieck and David L. Balch, *Families in the New Testament World: Households and House Churches*, ed. Don S. Browning and Ian S. Evison, *The Family, Religion, and Culture* (Louisville, KY: Westminster John Knox Press, 1997).

alternatives. The subjects needed to be women since they constitute the primary source of faith transmission within the home. In order to gain the multi-generational perspective that I needed, the women had to have adult daughters. Therefore, I approached women who belong to *La Legion de María* and were attending a prayer group in their respective chapter, who also had adult daughters, whom I could also interview, either in-person or over the phone. In total I interviewed 13 mothers and 14 daughters. Because not all Latinas living in Miami are from Cuba, I excluded 7 mothers and 5 daughters from the dissertation. There were also 3 interviews that were excluded because there was no opportunity to interview the women's daughters and 2 interviews (a mother and daughter) that were no longer affiliated with the Catholic Church, I eliminated from the final sample. This left 5 mothers and 5 daughters for the final dissertation.

As the interviewer, I conducted a semi-structured interview. The structure involved 6 main questions with a few follow-ups listed in figures 1 and 2.⁶ Nevertheless, as the emphasis was on the narratives of the women themselves, I gave them quite a bit of latitude with the questions based on their answers and let the interview flow as it needed to, while still ensuring that each participant related the basic contours of the information I was seeking.

Narrative Inquiry provides the methodological framework upon which I primarily relied for collecting and analyzing data in the Prologue. This is the reason for positioning the stories that arose from my interviews in the Prologue with very minimal direct critique or analysis. Narrative Inquiry gives pride of place to the narrative and the voice of the participants.

...humans, individually and socially, lead storied lives. People shape their daily lives by stories of who they and others are and as they interpret their past in terms of these stories. Story, in the current idiom, is a portal through which a person

⁶ Appendix A

*enters the world and by which his or her experience of the world is interpreted and made personally meaningful.*⁷

Relying on Narrative Inquiry has allowed me to lift up the power of story and practice among Catholic Latinas in the context of the home, without reducing their stories to simple data points as if they were a substitute for quantitative data.⁸ These stories provide the primary research data for this dissertation. While they provide important data for various observations and conclusions, the data itself is narrative in nature and must be respected as such. The narrative constitutes the phenomenon of study.

I.3 Conceptual Sociological Framework

The sociological framework that runs throughout this dissertation manifests itself in four distinct themes that appear throughout this work: intergeneration; socialization; transmission; and tradition. In order to better identify these running themes throughout this dissertation, it seems best to offer a small preface of each theme.

A. Intergenerational

One of the running themes throughout this dissertation is the intergenerational nature of handing down religious traditions from one generation to the next. Situated in different times, each carrying with it a different culture, generations carry with them distinctive experiences and values. Communication between generations requires a certain amount of translation. In order to accomplish such translation, however, it is first necessary to identify different generations.

⁷ F. Michael Connelly and D. Jean Clandinin, "Narrative Inquiry," in *Handbook of Complementary Methods in Education Research*, ed. Judith Green, Gregory Camilli, and Patricia B. Elmore (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2006), 477–88 (477).

⁸ D. Jean Clandinin and Jerry Rosiek, "Mapping a Landscape of Narrative Inquiry: Borderland Spaces and Tensions," in *Handbook of Narrative Inquiry: Mapping a Methodology*, ed. D. Jean Clandinin (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2007), 35–75 (61).

A.1 Different Axes for Understanding Generational Differences

In many intergenerational studies, the operative generations are tied to specific birth years, with labels such as “baby boomers,” “Gen(eration) X,” and “Millennials.” While this dissertation uses these traditional generational categories from time to time, because the focus of this research is an immigrant population, there is a separate generational schema that is operative and even more applicable. This schema is anchored, not to specific dates, but to the date of the family’s immigration to the U.S.

There is the first generation, which involves the family members who immigrated to the U.S. as adults. The second generation involves those children of first-generation adult immigrants, who were born in the U.S. In between the first generation and the second generation is an important group labeled the 1.5 generation. This generation immigrated to the U.S. when they were children, usually with their first-generation parents. The third generation designates those children of second-generation parents. The term third generation is rarely used as features that mark immigrants are typically imperceptible, if they are present at all. In this dissertation, the mothers all belong either the first or the 1.5 generation. The daughters all belong to the second generation and their children are then the third generation.

A.2 Home

These intergenerational relationships play out in homes. It is common in Latin American families for an *abuela* to live with one of her children and her young grandchildren. This arrangement allows the *abuela* to be an integral part of her grandchildren’s lives and provides free childcare for the mothers. Of course, this living situation certainly does not exist in every family. Nevertheless, although a given *abuela* may not live under the same roof as her children and grandchildren, such *abuelas* are generally still considered part of the immediate family—part

of the home. Home is not limited to a house and this dissertation recognizes its complex nature despite frequent references to it. For immigrants, home conjures up the homeland (Cuba), just as much, if not more, than the house in which they currently reside. It is worth exploring some of that complexity related to the home here.

In the case of first-generation Cubans in the U.S., physical geographic immigration creates a psychological feeling of being unanchored. Cuban-Americans are certainly not unique in this regard but are merely one specific cultural group living at a time in the world when the immigrant has become the norm, not the exception.⁹ Edward Said opined that “our age, with its modern warfare, imperialism and quasi-theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers—is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration.”¹⁰ For these souls, living in exile is “the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home.”¹¹

For the second generation of Cuban-Americans, the question of identity is a very fluid one. It is this generation more than any other that is in the process of acculturation, which involves navigating new territories [“rootless” places] and redefining fundamental components of one’s identity.¹² It is an experience of *living in the hyphen*. They hear stories of Cuba, as home, but have never seen it, let alone experienced it. They must navigate what home is, what it means and learn to define it for themselves and how it functions in their own lives.

Throughout this dissertation, home represents an intimate and communal space where one can put their guard down. It is a space inhabited by one’s family where one spends a great

⁹ “To be a stranger in a strange land, to be lost (in Italian *spaesato* – ‘without a country’) is perhaps the condition most typical of contemporary life.” Iain Chambers, *Migrancy, Culture, Identity* (London: Routledge, 2008), 18.

¹⁰ Edward W. Said, *Reflections on Exile: And Other Essays* (London: Granta, 2000), 174.

¹¹ Said, 173.

¹² Steven Bouma-Prediger and Brian J. Walsh, *Beyond Homelessness: Christian Faith in a Culture of Displacement* (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 2008).

deal of time. It is not a physical social location that one only visits on major holidays. For some families, home may involve two or three physical locations, and span multiple countries.

B. Socialization

Sociologists have constructed numerous theories around the socialization of children, the “development of self and identity in the context of intimate and reciprocal relations.”¹³

Religious socialization is best viewed as one aspect of that wider process. This dissertation uses Primary Socialization Theory as the primary theoretical lens through which to view the religious socialization process. I have then buttressed this theoretical perspective with the empirical research conducted by Christian Smith and his team.¹⁴ The emphasis Primary Socialization Theory places on the relative strength of the social bonds between the agents of socialization and those being socialized dovetails quite nicely with the opposition I am highlighting between the home and the church. While religious socialization has become a frequent object of study on its own, it has only been recently that such studies have acknowledged, let alone emphasized, the important role the family has to play in religious socialization.¹⁵ It is for this reason that I adopted a more general theoretical framework for socialization, because it was ahead of the curve on this regard.

Throughout this dissertation, I make repeated reference to a distinction between primary and secondary socialization. Primary socialization involves “the development of basic values, beliefs, motivations, and conceptions of the self,” whereas secondary socialization involves “the

¹³ Viktor Gecas, “Socialization,” in *Encyclopedia of Sociology. Vol. 4*, ed. Edgar F. Borgatta and Rhonda J. V. Montgomery, 2nd ed. (New York: MacMillan Reference U.S.A., 2000), 2855–2864 (2856).

¹⁴ Christian Smith and Melinda Lundquist Denton, *Soul Searching: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of American Teenagers* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Christian Smith and Patricia Snell, *Souls in Transition: The Religious and Spiritual Lives of Emerging Adults* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2009).

¹⁵ Matthew Guest, “The Reproduction and Transmission of Religion,” in *The Oxford Handbook of the Sociology of Religion* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 651–70 (661).

development of knowledge and skills.”¹⁶ In the sphere of religious socialization, the church and/or the parochial school often fill the same role as the secular school. While there is certainly overlap between the two (and possibly more so in religious socialization), the home/family primarily involves primary socialization, whereas the church/parochial school primarily involves secondary socialization.

C. Transmission

One of the terms that appears throughout this research is “faith transmission.” It is important at the outset to carefully define this term and how I will be using it throughout this dissertation. Situated within the Catholic tradition, the term “faith” as it appears herein, refers to Catholic faith. Catholic “faith” is a complex notion that is at one and the same time: credal – the acceptance of a set of propositional statements; ritualistic – performing a set of established rituals; ethical – a set of values and beliefs about the world; moral – a commitment to living according to a certain set of rules and standards; communal – a sense of belonging to a specific community.

“Faith transmission” is then the process whereby one generation who participates in the faith and all of the various areas it incorporates seeks to instill the same engagement in the faith in the subsequent generation. One could draw numerous parallels to this type of transmission. Cultural transmission is one of the most readily available parallels.

Ingrid Nelson’s observations on the practice of cultural transmission in the medieval period provides a useful operating paradigm for contrasting two different means for cultural

¹⁶ Ibid, 2858.

transmission.¹⁷ She refers to the transmission process as a “network of transmission.”¹⁸ What became exceedingly clearer in conducting the research for this dissertation was the existence of two distinct manifestations of this transmission process. A large portion of this dissertation focuses on shedding light on the existence of the second manifestation and its underestimation in this process. Within her discussion of this transmission process, Nelson provides a terminological distinction between two types of cultural mobility that I will adopt for its utility in discussing the faith transmission.

Nelson notes that scholarship on medieval texts makes frequent reference to *translatio studii et imperii*. She notes that from a medieval conception, the transfer of power, *translatio imperii*, was primarily a transfer of knowledge and culture, *translatio studii*. This Le Goff regarded as “one aspect of [medieval] historical totalitarianism.”¹⁹ This *translatio* “relies on masculine models of agency and instrumentalism...”.²⁰ The locus classicus for *translatio* is the figure of Aeneas, whose “books, objects of primarily male production and circulation, are the tools of cultural dissemination.”²¹

This type of *translatio* parallels the dominant model in the church for discussions of faith transmission and efforts to promote it. This *translatio* appears throughout the text with various terms depending upon the focus of the specific context. These include: religious education, secondary socialization, formal catechesis, the drop-off model. This is primarily the classroom, book learning that transmits Catholic theology and the formal tenets of the faith. It is primarily

¹⁷ Ingrid Nelson, “Premodern Media and Networks of Transmission in the Man of Law’s Tale,” *Exemplaria* 25, no. 3 (2013): 211–30.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 214, 227.

¹⁹ Jacques Le Goff, *Medieval Civilization 400-1500*, trans. Julia Barrow (Oxford, UK: Blackwell, 1988).

²⁰ Nelson, “Premodern Media,” 214.

²¹ *Ibid.*

institutional, generally taking place in the church, though even more recent efforts to reinstate the role of the home in faith transmission tend to be book-centered.

Nelson contrasts *translatio* with *transmissio*. *Transmissio* “acknowledges multiple agencies and subject positions” in passing on culture.²² The *locus classicus* for *transmissio* is the figure of Constance in The Man of Law’s Tale in Canterbury Tales.²³ Whereas *translatio* “tends toward linear trajectories, *transmissio* is rhizomatic and chaotic.” *Transmissio* preserves voices from the margin in traces and residues while it feminizes and distributes culture.

In terms of faith transmission, *transmissio* parallels a process that has long been acknowledged by the official church but seems to be either minimized or forgotten entirely in discussions of faith transmission. This faith transmission is based on a lived faith that is modeled and observed and primarily takes place in the home. The various terms used for this process throughout this work include: modeling; primary socialization; informal catechesis; religious praxis, and negotiation.

In the Catholic faith, both of these models for faith transmission are both useful and necessary. The authority of the Pope and the priests, which are masculine authoritative figures in the faith is an embedded feature within the Catholic faith that is unlikely to change anytime soon. Similarly, despite its minimization, the value of parents in the home as agents for faith transmission is a central feature in the Catholic faith. *Translatio* is most useful for passing on the credal aspect of the faith, whereas *transmissio* is most useful for passing on the moral aspect of the faith. The theological faith propositions require a certain formal presentation and conceptualization that is best presented in a formal classroom setting. The implementation of the moral aspect of the faith in daily living is best observed in the informal context of daily life

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

carried out primarily in the home. The remaining aspects of the faith – ritualistic, ethical and communal – can be profitably conveyed in both settings.

D. Traditio-Traditum

In addition to the juxtaposition between *translatio* and *transmissio*, I make another distinction in this dissertation between *traditio* and *traditum*.²⁴ *Traditio*, refers to both processes distinguished above as *translatio* and *transmissio*. The term incorporates all of the processes whereby one generation passes the faith on to the subsequent generation. *Traditum*, by contrast, designates the content of the faith that is being transferred between generations. This incorporates stories, theological tenets, beliefs, values, rituals and community identity.

I.4 Outline

Each chapter within this dissertation slowly builds the wider argument from various directions. I begin immediately with the raw data that informs this entire research. The overarching principle within the Narrative Inquiry methodology is that the subjects and their narratives should be allowed to speak for themselves. In deference to this important principle, I provide the stories of these women as prompted by my interviews fully without commentary or analysis, where my voice would be likely to drown out theirs. This is by no means to suggest there has been no analysis of these women's stories. Rather, the analysis, woven throughout the chapters herein, draws upon the stories of these women as they intersect with broader questions about faith transmission in the home.

²⁴ Douglas A. Knight, (*Rediscovering the Traditions of Israel: The Development of the Traditio-Historical Research of the Old Testament, with Special Consideration of Scandinavian Contributions*, SBLDS 9 (Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1975), 5) established this terminological distinction between *traditio* and *traditum*.

In Chapter One, I address the official stance the Catholic Church has taken on the role of parents and mothers in faith formation, particularly in the context of the home. I then go on to point out the disconnect between this official positive affirming position and the general lack of support and encouragement parents receive from the Church at the local level regarding this important role. I then switch gears to show how the lack of support given to the domestic church, as a space for connected knowing, has contributed to the socio-religious phenomenon of the rise of the “nones.” This exodus has been far greater from the Catholic Church than other Christian traditions. After looking at the Church’s response to this exodus and its general impotency, I suggest that the crosscurrent of growth in the Latinx Catholic population within the Church may provide a window for a fresh more effective approach to address this problem by using the Latinx community as an informative model.

My discussion in Chapter Two examines the important role the home plays in faith transmission. In this chapter, I highlight numerous features inherent within the home that make it the ideal social location for faith transmission – particularly, how these features manifest themselves within Cuban-American homes. Chapter Three marks a return to the question of the failure of faith transmission over the last several decades. Drawing primarily on the massive research study by Christian Smith and his team, I attribute that failure to a dominant reliance on the wrong social location for faith transmission: the institutional church rather than the home. Specifically, faith transmission involves a set of primary socialization processes, which the home is uniquely equipped to handle. After laying these out, I provide several suggestions for how the institutional church might come alongside parents for support in this process, rather than continually trying to usurp this role that rightly belongs to parents within the context of the home.

From here, I use Chapter Four to zoom in on what a uniquely Cuban-American hermeneutic might look like. I provide an up-close and personal example of this hermeneutic using the Matthean account of the women at the tomb and at the foot of the cross alongside *La Pietà* before tracing the contours of that hermeneutic. It seemed important to highlight in this discussion, not only the unique features of a Cuban-American hermeneutic, but how it differs from the more traditional Latinx hermeneutics, which are generally steeped in Liberation Theology.

After reviewing the overarching argument of the dissertation to begin Chapter Five, I highlight how interwoven storytelling is throughout so many aspects of the faith transmission process. Encouraging storytelling and engaging in it is a fairly easy way to support the faith transmission process within the home. So much of informal faith transmission in the home involves situations that are either part of the everyday mundane routine of the nuclear family or milestone/holiday celebrations that mark the general ebb and flow of the wider extended family. One of the best ways the institutional church can support faith transmission in the home is by ensuring that mothers are conscious of their role as faith transmitters and conscientious about it. I provide one example of what this might look like in the context of a celebration of womanhood, known as a “red tent” party, or more colloquially, as a “period party.”

Excerpts of the Interviews:

The content of the interviews is much longer, yet for the purposes of this dissertation I have extracted these sections, which will be informing the reflections. These sections focus more directly on the questions and themes that I hope to address in this dissertation work.

I.5 First Generation Cuban-Mothers

María:

I am Catholic because I come from a Catholic family. My parents come from a Catholic family. My sister and I attended Catholic school until the nuns were exiled. Regardless, my family and I continued to go to church, we never parted. At fourteen years old, I met my future husband, who was also a practicing Catholic, and belonged to the Catholic youth group, before all that was over. Despite all the loss, we continued practicing our faith, and we were married by the Catholic Church in a small chapel in Artemisa, where the priest came every fifteen days.

I taught my daughters the faith, in Cuba. In a diocese with thousands of children living in its jurisdiction; there were only four other children enrolled in the religious education program. There was so much fear, but the church was a fundamental part of our lives. And I thank God that I brought my daughters, as adults, already formed in that faith. I thank God because they were trained in that courage...they took their communion within that system, they were confirmed, and they became strong.

I didn't want to come [to Miami] because, at that time, the people in Cuba were in such great need. Every time the opportunity to leave Cuba presented itself, the committed Catholic laity left by the masses, and those who remained were further confused by the totalitarian communist system. They were unable to pass on the faith to the new generations.

I was able to go to Cuba two different times after we arrived here through Faith in Action. The priests would come from Artemisa and bring me empty suitcases with a list of medicines that the people needed but could not find. When the donations were being taken back by the priests, I was able to travel with them even though, at the time, the United States did not let you travel to Cuba directly from Miami. The chapel was so run down, it was literally falling apart on top of the people. We decided to do another collection, and we were able to rebuild the parish, and it was really beautiful.

Charito:

I spent almost three years in St. Joseph's orphanage which was run by the Sisters of Charity in Virginia. All my mom and dad could send me, during that time, were prayer cards where they would write short messages on the back. I still have them. My little brother had come with me from Cuba, but he stayed in Miami. Initially when I did contact my mother, I would tell her that we were going to mass every morning. That faith that she inculcated in us, that desire to get closer to God was already rooted in us, and I would never change my religion or stop loving God as she loved Him.

When my two daughters were younger, we would volunteer at the Catholic Home for Children. Around Christmas time, one year, they asked me, "Mommy, are you going to get us the skates we want?" And I replied, "yes, we are going to buy four pairs of skates." "But, mommy,"

they said, "They are very expensive!" And I told them, "Never mind that...the girls that are spending Christmas with us will need a pair too if you are going to skate together."

I have told my girls the story of how while I was at the orphanage, a middle-class family would take me out of the home and to their house on the weekends. On Christmas Eve when I was fifteen -the darkest time of my life- I arrived at the house, the Christmas tree lights were on, and I could see that there were three boxes under the tree. There was not one for me. I could not sleep that night, crying, thinking that when we woke up on Christmas Day, I was not going to have a gift to open. During the night, somehow, they must have gone out and bought me the same wool coat they had bought their daughters because in the morning I had one, just like the girls', waiting for me in a box.

When I speak to the children in the Catholic home, I sometimes tell them how I, too, slept on that pillow. They ask me, "my pillow?" and I say, yes, one just like that. I tell them, "I remember when they separated me from my parents, how alone I felt, and how I cried into that pillow every night. You know the teddy bear they give you when you arrive here, I had the very same one."

My daughters grew up having seen all my works of mercy. And they saw with how much love my husband and I did them. And when they asked why I bought them and the foster kids the same gifts, I'd tell them because that's what I learned at the orphanage. Just as I received the same coat as my friends, I want that for these children.

Eugenia:

My faith has largely to do with my grandmother. My grandmother always had a picture of San Juan Bosco in her room. She prayed to San Juan Bosco, and I never understood why him. After years passed and I was already here in exile, I read the story of San Juan Bosco, and I realized that San Juan Bosco is the patron saint of children. My grandmother had nine children, and she struggled with her children. I understood, then, that she was asking San Juan Bosco to protect them. At least that is what I think now after being an old woman.

When the dictatorship of Fidel Castro arrived in Cuba, my dad lost his business, everything was taken from us, and we had to move to my grandmother's house. My grandfather had suffered a stroke when he was forty-two years old, and from that point on, she had to be the man of the house. I don't have very pleasant memories of her being affectionate; no kisses or hugs, none of that, but the Catholic example was certainly there for all to see.

I would see my grandmother go to Mass every Sunday. She would grab her veil and off she went to a little chapel, which had been built by a wealthy man whose daughter was killed riding a horse. And under the altar of the chapel his daughter was buried; it was called the Santa Elena chapel. It was in that Santa Elena chapel where I became a catechist. It was me and my grandmother every Sunday. And at twenty years old, I came to this country.

Elena:

The funny thing is that my parents were not practicing Catholics, but I went to a Catholic school run by Ursulines nuns, in Cuba. My twin sister and I left Cuba when we were nineteen, and because of our parents' pleading, we got a full scholarship to a Catholic college for girls called Chestnut Hill College, in Philadelphia. But when I was twenty, I decided to join the Ursulines without my parents' permission.

The sisters sent me, as a novice, to be a missionary in the jungle, in Lima, Peru, working with Indians. I was the catechist of the whole village. There, I took my first vow, a five year vow. But I really do think that I had a temporary vocation because when I saw women with babies something inside me was pulling me that way. After completing my commitment, I moved to Cincinnati, Ohio where my mom and I rented an apartment, and I started praying for my future boyfriend. Well within eight or nine months I was married, and we had five kids. I cherished my kids; my house was a mess but I didn't care. It was very important for me to stay at home and take care of them. I remember Saturdays my husband and I would say the rosary together with the kids so they learn their prayers in Spanish right away.

When my oldest girl was in second grade and was supposed to be preparing for first communion, the school at that time did not offer Confession before First Communion. It was the time of experimentation of the Catholic Church after Vatican II. I talked to the teachers at the school, I talked to the priest, and even sent a letter to the bishop. The bishop's reply was 'that's okay what they're doing; I trust them.' Uh-uh, I said, that doesn't fly with me. You have to clean the house before you have the guests over! I decided to prepare my kids -all of them- for confession, and I would take them every month and a half, and after, I took them to eat ice cream across the street from the Church. In the car, while we were going from my house to the church we would do the examination of conscience. One day I almost got into a fight with the priest. We went to confession and the priest was not in the confessional, so I went next door to the rectory and I knocked, and said, 'father we have been waiting you for confession.' The priest had his roman collar to one side, and he was watching a football game. I said, 'I am sorry father to bother you, but just think, I cannot do what you can do, we need absolution. I brought my kids and there they are waiting for you.' The priest didn't say anything; he went into the confessional and heard their confessions.

Caridad:

We were all Catholic in Cuba. We went to mass every Sunday. My dad had a house constructed for us, and in the center of that house, he built a chapel. He sent for [a statue of the] Virgin of Charity and he placed her on the altar in our chapel. The dining room was connected to the chapel, and from where we ate, we could see the Virgin. When we gathered, we said different prayers and placed petitions before Our Lady. Because we had breakfast, lunch and dinner at home in Cuba, we would constantly get together with her.

When Fidel Castro arrived, my brother and I were taken prisoners. Then my father, shortly after. During those twelve days that we were detained, my mother sat in an armchair in front of the Virgin and did not move. It was not until after arriving in this country, years later and prior to her having an operation, that we learned that she had suffered a heart attack on that armchair and no one knew.

I came to the United States in 1962, just twenty-one years old, when my brother and I arrived. I remember how heartbroken I was because it was the first time in my life that I had ever been separated from my parents. I came to live with my sister, and then my husband came to Miami, from Mexico, and we were married. When it was time for him to return to Mexico, I went with him, and when I would come visit my family in Miami, I would stay in my sister's house. Once my husband and I started having children, I decided to raise them with my mother and my sister here in Miami. My oldest, Carmen, was raised just like us, almost even more so Catholic because she attended private Catholic schools her whole life.

My husband died young, and I became a widow with two children at 42 years of age. When he died, I said right then and there that I would never remarry. It would be Mary and the Lord who would help me. I have been a widow now for 37 years now. I started participating in the Legion of Mary; with everything that I needed...I became committed to the Legion of Mary and the Church.

Every morning I wake up at 6:30 in the morning I say my prayers, then head to Spanish mass. My granddaughter tells me, "Abuela, but its constantly," --but it's what has sustained me. It has not been easy. I saw myself so alone, with kids, working full time...but God helped me, and nothing else.

I.6 Second-Generation Cuban-American Women

Fátima:

My father was extremely devoted to the Virgin of Fátima. When my son was two years old, he had appendicitis. My dad made a promise to visit baby Jesus until my son was better. He would go to mass every Sunday where the Child of Prague was, at the church of the Virgin of Carmen. With all of the vicissitudes of Cuba, my father would take a bus, and then another, to get to nine am mass--to venerate the Child, for the sake of mine. Years later, I decided to go to Prague, to where the Infant of Prague was, just to bring my father back an image. I knew that he was never going to go, so on one of my trips, I did.

My mother is a Catholic par excellence, she made us go to Mass, nothing was more important. That is what she transmitted to us. Many of the things that I got involved with that had to do with the Virgin of Charity, I did for her. Because I knew it was very important for her that we were there. And I started for her, not to say no to her.

I migrated to Los Angeles, in 1994, and kept going to my Sunday Mass with the Dominican friars. That parish was where my son received his communion. I signed up to volunteer, but they never called me so I never served. I arrived to Miami in 1999, and joined my mother at the Hermitage of Charity. I almost had to shake those women off of me, and I felt right at home. Right now, I don't go every Sunday to mass, for one reason or another, because there is always something going on, and because unfortunately we do not make it a priority, Mass tends to fall by the wayside. I have friends who are priests, who come over to the house to eat, and I help them whenever they need me. If they call me from the Hermitage I gladly go and serve, but if they don't call me, then they don't call me.

My son married a Jehovah's Witness girl, had his kids baptized by the Catholic Church, and has not stopped being Catholic. I am very proud of him, what I taught him has not been lost. The seed is infused, and even though he does not go to mass when I see his kids and wife sit at my table to celebrate Christmas Eve I know that I transmitted the faith to my son. And the same goes for my daughter. When she told her fiancé, who was a good man but at that time, not a practicing Catholic, how important it was for her to get married by the Catholic Church, and she insisted that he needed to go through RCIA, I knew that I had transmitted the faith.

Tessie:

I essentially grew up in a bubble and that is what I'm also doing for my daughters. They go to private Catholic school, everyone around them has the same beliefs and the same morals. Like them, I really wasn't exposed to anyone that didn't go to private Catholic school. So, even though I was still going to church on Sundays, when I got to Florida International University, I felt like something was missing. And then I heard a song that my mom's music ministry had recorded, and, it just clicked. In that moment I felt that Jesus wanted me to do more with my talent and with my life. I auditioned and joined my mom's music ministry and prayer group.

I'm now doing for my girls what my mom would do when I was a child. I can only hope to be giving them the same example that my mother gave to me. I didn't understand it at the time, but eventually, everything clicks. And I followed in my mom's footsteps. For the most part...my mom has a huge Virgin Mary statue by the pool. It was supposed to be donated to a church, but the church accepted another donation instead and my parents were left with this life-size Virgin Mary that they could not return. I have told my mom, 'Mami, put it somewhere else,' but she wants to leave her there. Then my daughters invite friends over to the pool, and I ask my mom, 'well, can we...at least cover her?' The high school kids have parties and put a sheet over her. My daughters are not doing anything bad, it's just weird to have a pool party while Mary is looking at you. We all feel bad if we say, like s-h-i-t. I tell my mom, 'we need to do something about Mary.'

Lourdes:

I identify as Catholic because I was raised Catholic, but I also went through a process of reclaiming my faith. I spent time when I was in my early twenties up through probably early thirties exploring.

My mom has a little altar in her room. She had her group of saints. And so, I knew that the faith was present in our home. In my grandma's house, I have a distinct memory of my great-grandmother going into her room to pray the rosary. Faith was part of my childhood, and when I was about 12 years old, my parents ended up selling the house and separating. I don't have memories of us going to church as a family at that time. My brothers were finishing high school, they were already working. Andy and I didn't finish our confirmation. My memory of mass was that it was hard to understand because it was in Spanish. And I guess I didn't really ask my mom, which maybe I should have. Maybe I was still experiencing mass as something you have to do with your parents.

I went away to college and was really about questioning everything. I was curious about faith in the sense that I believed there was a God, but I didn't know if I really believed it the way Catholicism was presenting it. I also only went to mass, I think once, during college. When I came back from college, my mom wanted me to go to mass with her, and I remember me telling her, "I don't really know that I believe in that." And my mom panicking, "What do you mean you don't believe in that? What are you talking about?"

Around the age of 26, one of my friends was confirmed, and she really seemed to enjoy going to the church, and listening to the priest; she was getting a lot out of it. And I guess I wanted some of that spirituality. At the same time, my brother had to get confirmed to get married in the Catholic Church, and I said, "I'll do the class with you." I ended up really liking the class, and I was able to understand the mass better now that I was older. I was confirmed

and then again fell off the wagon. It wasn't even intentional, I would just forget to go, I would plan things for the weekend. I would plan brunch, a million different activities and I would forget to put mass in there.

And then around 30 I was really soul-searching and started reading all these spiritual New Age books, I read a little bit of Buddhism, and a friend of mine invited me to the Baptist church, and I became very interested. Two years later, I'm going to the Baptist church and mass. Eventually I decided that I wanted to stay with my Catholic faith because of the Eucharist, Mary and the communion of the saints.

Sofia:

My best friend is gay and I don't feel that there is anything wrong with that. And that bothers my mom. I really don't like how judgmental the Catholic faith has made her in certain ways. My daughter chose my best friend, who is extremely Catholic in her own way, as her sponsor for confirmation, and my mom has a problem with it even though my mom knows that my best friend is a great person. My children are 10 and 13, and they know that my best friend's gay because when she was over with her ex-girlfriend one day, they caught them kissing. And my daughter says to me, "You didn't tell me that she was gay." I answer, "Okay, well you found out, what's the big deal?"

Another thing that has caused a lot of tension is that I got divorced over 10 years ago and I'm remarried to somebody who's not Catholic, and is not interested. He is Christian, but he doesn't believe in organized religion and that's okay. But my mom keeps insisting that I get an annulment. Why do I need to act like this marriage never happened? I have two children that came out of it. I did reach out to a priest initially. I told him that I was really seeking an annulment, and was completely ignored. After I had reached out several times, and it was becoming more of a money thing than anything else, I was totally turned off. But my mom keeps saying it over and over again. So, at some point we started joking around calling her the church police, because she just takes it over the top. And what happens is that as a parent, if you do that, people start doing the opposite of what you want.

Around the same time, I started doing yoga. I do it several times a week. I even teach it, and while I don't agree with all of the Hindu gods, yoga has taught me how to meditate. My yoga practice has helped me to become more positive, more faithful, more hopeful. And it's strengthened my relationship with God. Even though I keep telling them it's not a religion, it has gotten to the point where one of my cousins printed out a bunch of things basically saying that when you're doing yoga, what you end up doing eventually, is worshiping Satan. This is when being super religious goes south.

Carmen:

Well, with my first child, I was young. When you're Latina, you've got abuelas and tias, and they all take care of the baby. So, in reality, my first child was more into what is our home, and our religion, because she grew up with my grandmother, my aunt, my mother and I. After my first daughter, it seemed that I wasn't going to get pregnant again.

Years later, my mother went on a mission trip to Jerusalem with the church, and she contracted a disease, while overseas. A few days after arriving, my mother was pale and could

barely move. I took her to the hospital to get checked out, and the doctor said to me, "Call your immediate family because your mother is not going to survive the night." She was in the hospital for almost two months, but she survived and she's still here 15 years later.

When my mother got sick, I decided to have another child because I thought it must be so hard to be an only child having to take care of your parents. I realized that I didn't want to do that to Nicole, my oldest. At the time, I was going out with this man, and I got pregnant on the first try. That was all I wanted; I never saw him again. I decided I was going to name her Tatiana, so they could call her Tati, like my mom.

Five months into my pregnancy, he knocked on my door and said that he had a dream where his mother told him that I was pregnant with a girl, and she was going to look just like her. There was no way he could have known I was pregnant. I never told him and didn't have a rapport with his friends. He said he wanted to be a part of her life, and I agreed that he could be part of the baby's life. Then I had her, and I'm very happy with my two girls.

1.0 CHAPTER ONE: The Current State of Family Faith Transmission in the Catholic Tradition

One of the first questions to address in examining faith transmission (*tradio*) is identifying the primary actors involved in the process. The role that parents play in the general socialization and education of their children is widely recognized and generally unquestioned including in matters of faith and religion. The church itself has celebrated this role both on paper and in papal pronouncements. However, there seems to be a disconnect between where the church focuses its attention and resources when it comes to faith formation, which is almost exclusively on *translatio*, and this rhetoric, which highlights the importance of *transmissio*. The most alarming repercussion of this imbalance in emphasis is in the attrition rates that have plagued the Catholic Church for decades now. Careful studies of this phenomenon and its underlying causes continue to point to parents as the weak link in the *tradio* process.²⁵ This makes the Church's general lack of support and encouragement for parents in this process invisible and free of accountability.

1.1 The Catholic Church's View of the Role of Parents in *Tradio*

The Church places a premium on passing on the *tradio* from one generation to the next. For centuries the continuation of the *tradio* through the family has been central to the growth of the Christian church. While evangelization has also held a prominent place within the faith tradition, once a faith community became established in any given region, the role of intergenerational *transmissio* to maintain and enlarge the faith community can hardly be overstated.

²⁵ One such example is PEW Research Center, "What Americans Know About Religion," *PEW Research Center, Religion & Public Life*, July 23, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/2019/07/23/what-americans-know-about-religion/>.

Over the past century or so, popes have returned to the subject of the *traditio* variously using the terms religious education, catechesis and faith transmission. Throughout these ecclesiastical pronouncements there is a running theme. The *traditio* is a multifaceted process that involves multiple actors spread across multiple social locations. Each is distinct and plays a distinct role in the process. Chief among these actors are the parents of the child receiving the *treditum*.

Pope Paul VI addressed this topic in two pronouncements he made in 1965, one shortly after the other. The first involved a declaration on Christian education, where his comments about the role of the parents and the family within the context of the home are worth noting at some length.

Since parents have given children their life, they are bound by the most serious obligation to educate their offspring and therefore must be recognized as the primary and principal educators. This role in education is so important that only with difficulty can it be supplied where it is lacking. Parents are the ones who must create a family atmosphere animated by love and respect for God and man, in which the well-rounded personal and social education of children is fostered. Hence the family is the first school of the social virtues that every society needs. It is particularly in the Christian family, enriched by the grace and office of the sacrament of matrimony, that children should be taught from their early years to have a knowledge of God according to the faith received in Baptism, to worship Him, and to love their neighbor. Here, too, they find their first experience of a wholesome human society and of the Church. Finally, it is through the family that they are gradually led to a companionship with their fellowmen and with the people of God. Let parents, then, recognize the inestimable importance a truly Christian family has for the life and progress of God's own people.²⁶

Pope Paul VI begins by talking about the parents' obligation to "educate" their children. What is interesting, however, are the examples he uses to clarify what that education looks like. This is an education in a "family atmosphere" focused on "personal and social education." This does

²⁶ Pope Paul VI, *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis* (Rome: The Catholic Church, October 28, 1965).

not sound like book learning. The terminology is reminiscent of socialization as used in child development studies.

Specifically, the parents are to teach their children to worship God and love their neighbor. Once again, this is not book knowledge or theological tenets. This is a very practical and pragmatic activity, posture and attitude that is involved. It is an experiential education (*transmissio*), not an academic one (*translatio*). Moreover, the document suggests that there is a natural progression in faith development; the faith that began with the family “gradually” leads to a “companionship with their fellowmen,” implying that the faith once established and nourished in the domestic space, perseveres and innovates in the fertile ground of community.

A few months later, Pope Paul VI issued a pastoral constitution. Once again, he had a good deal to say about the special role parents should play within the education of their children.

Graced with the dignity and office of fatherhood and motherhood, parents will energetically acquit themselves of a duty which devolves primarily on them, namely education and especially religious education.

As living members of the family, children contribute in their own way to making their parents holy. For they will respond to the kindness of their parents with sentiments of gratitude, with love and trust. They will stand by them as children should when hardships overtake their parents and old age brings its loneliness. Widowhood, accepted bravely as a continuation of the marriage vocation, should be esteemed by all. Families too will share their spiritual riches generously with other families. Thus, the Christian family, which springs from marriage as a reflection of the loving covenant uniting Christ with the Church, and as a participation in that covenant, will manifest to all men Christ's living presence in the world, and the genuine nature of the Church. This the family will do by the mutual love of the spouses, by their generous fruitfulness, their solidarity and faithfulness, and by the loving way in which all members of the family assist one another.

The family is a kind of school of deeper humanity. But if it is to achieve the full flowering of its life and mission, it needs the kindly communion of minds and the joint deliberation of spouses, as well as the painstaking cooperation of parents in the education of their children. The active presence of the father is highly beneficial to their formation. The children, especially the younger among them, need the care

*of their mother at home. This domestic role of hers must be safely preserved, though the legitimate social progress of women should not be underrated on that account.*²⁷

In this constitution, Pope Paul VI highlights the role of family prayer in paving the way for “maturity, salvation and holiness.” These do not consist solely of information about creeds or dogma but speak to a lived faith manifested in daily living.

Not only does Pope Paul VI honor the role of the parents with a significant amount of respect and dignity, he does the same for the children themselves. The children, through their gratitude towards their parents and their love and trust they put in them, sanctify their parents. The love the children bear for their parents across the lifespan, manifested in caring for them in their old age, is as great a spiritual benefit to the parents as the imparting of education is by the parents to their children. It is a picture of the home as a community characterized by a lifetime of loving acts done one to another.

Pope Paul VI, however, does not place the education of the children solely on the shoulders of the parents. He finds room for other actors occupying different social locations who can supplement this primary role played by the parents.

*Finally, in a special way, the duty of educating belongs to the Church, not merely because she must be recognized as a human society capable of educating, but especially because she has the responsibility of announcing the way of salvation to all men, of communicating the life of Christ to those who believe, and, in her unfailing solicitude, of assisting men to be able to come to the fullness of this life. The Church is bound as a mother to give to these children of hers an education by which their whole life can be imbued with the spirit of Christ and at the same time do all she can to promote for all peoples the complete perfection of the human person, the good of earthly society and the building of a world that is more human.*²⁸

²⁷ Pope Paul VI, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes* (Rome: The Catholic Church, December 7, 1965).

²⁸ Pope Paul VI, *Declaration on Christian Education, Gravissimum Educationis* (Rome: The Catholic Church, October 28, 1965).

The parents, therefore, are not left alone in their responsibility to educate their children. The Church is to come alongside the parents in this education process. They are not to replace the parents in this role, but each has a distinctive role to play in the *traditio*. Notice the change in language here. It is the Church who is responsible for doing the “announcing” and “communicating.” These are instructional verbs indicating content transmission (*translatio*). The “way of salvation” and the “life of Christ” are neither actions nor practices. They constitute information and knowledge to be learned and digested. To be sure, the Church’s role is not limited to such instructional verbs, but also bears responsibility for character development that goes well beyond book learning.

Moreover, Pope Paul VI does not limit the actors in the home to parents and children. He recognizes that homes often consist of multiple generations and each of these generations share this educational responsibility. “Thus the family, in which the various generations come together and help one another grow wiser and harmonize personal rights with the other requirements of social life, is the foundation of society.”²⁹ Grandparents and aunts and uncles not only have the opportunity, but the responsibility to pass on their wisdom to subsequent generations.

The importance of family faith transmission continues with Pope John Paul II where in his 1981 post-synodal apostolic exhortation, *Familiaris Consortio*, he reminds parents that their duty to provide their children with an education is inextricably connected with the transmission of human life, “on account of the uniqueness of the loving relationship between parents and children...it is irreplaceable and inalienable, and therefore incapable of being delegated to others or usurped by others.”³⁰ *Traditio* is founded upon the “simplicity, practicality and daily witness”

²⁹ Pope Paul VI, *Pastoral Constitution on the Church in the Modern World, Gaudium et Spes* (Rome: The Catholic Church, December 7, 1965).

³⁰ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World: Familiaris Consortio* (Rome: Catholic Church, 1980), 29.

of life itself.³¹ Furthermore, the expression of parental love imbuing the everyday is “the animating principle and therefore the norm inspiring and guiding all concrete educational activity, enriching it with the values of kindness, constancy, goodness, service, disinterestedness and self-sacrifice that are the most precious fruit of love.”³² These writings remind us that the education we should be striving to provide in Christ are passionate matters of the heart that are mediated, as Paul VI conveyed, through daily acts of familial commitment by all members.

Familiaris Consortio expands the concept of religious education by pointing out that parents, as stewards, are not only to evangelize with their lives, but must help each child unearth their individual gifts for the sake of a stimulated and authentic faith. John Paul II writes, “as an educated community, the family must help man to discern his own vocation and to accept responsibility in the search for greater justice, educating him from the beginning in interpersonal relationships, rich in justice and in love.”³³ Here the Pope is pointing out a very important concept that will become an integral theme with his successor, Pope Francis. Namely, that while the family is one community with shared experiences, inclinations and values; parents must recognize religious education as an everyday task that leaves room for discovery and dynamic development based on the contribution and needs of each particular member. In *Amoris Laetitia*, this challenge of recognizing the tradition as communal as well as personal and individualistic is presented through Pope Francis’s questions: “Do we seek to understand ‘where’ our children really are in their journey? Where is their soul, do we really know? And above all, do we want to know?”³⁴ Pope Francis continues,

³¹ Ibid, 42.

³² Ibid, 30.

³³ Ibid, 2.

³⁴ Pope Francis, Catechesis (20 May 2015): L’Osservatore Romano, 21 May 2015, p. 8.

Inevitably, each child will surprise us with ideas and projects born of that freedom, which challenge us to rethink our own ideas. This is a good thing. Education includes encouraging the responsible use of freedom to face issues with good sense and intelligence. It involves forming persons who readily understand that their own lives, and the life of the community, are in their hands, and that freedom is itself a great gift.³⁵

Catechesis, as a family endeavor, is not one about control or rules. As Pope Francis poses herein, it is a lifelong, cyclical process that requires that nothing be taken for granted or accepted passively. It recognizes that each member of the family can only absorb the faith in so far as they have the maturity, freedom, discipline and autonomy to critically analyze the stories, symbols and actions of the faith. This is a radically holistic form of education that requires as much knowledge of the Gospels and the tradition as the individual children in our care.

The wise and fruitful application of our individual freedom, Pope Francis suggests, is contingent upon “the family [who] is the primary setting for socialization, since it is where we first learn to relate to others, to listen and share, to be patient and show respect, to help one another and live as one.”³⁶ Religious education, if it is to be effective, cannot be communicated in isolation nor can it be compartmentalized, stagnant or superfluous to its surroundings.

Social and cultural variables, in fact, greatly influence the condition of children and teenagers, the perception of their needs on the part of adults, the approaches to understanding and living family dynamics, the school experience, the relationship with society, and the relationship with the faith.³⁷

This is the view of the parental role in the *tradio*. It is a role that consists of parenting that constitutes a unique form of mentoring and modelling (*transmissio*). Like most parenting, this is an organic educational process. It is not one that follows a formally constructed lesson plan. Rather, it is education that takes advantage of life’s circumstances as they happen. The

³⁵ Pope Francis, Apostolic Exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, 2016, n. 261.

³⁶ *Ibid*, n. 276.

³⁷ Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization; United States Conference of Catholic Bishops. Directory for Catechesis (2020 Edition), 144. Kindle Edition.

family participates together in daily (religious) rituals, whatever those may consist of in a given home. The children both observe these rituals and participate in them fully with the family.

1.2 Catholic Parents Raising Catholic Children

Parents have significant aspirations for their children even before they are born. Above all, parents want their children to be healthy emotionally and psychologically.³⁸ A desire for their children to be successful in their education and careers is also quite common.³⁹ Religious parents generally hope that their children develop a healthy spiritual component in their lives within the parents' own faith tradition. In the Catholic tradition, the sacramental rite of baptism is designed to signal to the faith community and the world that the parents intend to raise their child a Catholic.⁴⁰ It is a deliberate objective action, which signals intent. During the ritual, the following is typical of the standard question and response which takes place:

Priest: You have asked to have your child baptized. In doing so you are accepting the responsibility of training him (her) in the practice of the faith. It will be your duty to bring him (her) up to keep God's commandments as Christ taught us, by loving God and our neighbor. Do you clearly understand what you are undertaking?

Parents: We do.

Baptism is simply the first of a series of initiation rites, which signal acceptance into and inclusion within the community. This raises the question of what the parent, who desires to raise their child a Catholic, needs to do in order to make that happen. In 1979, Pope John Paul II

³⁸ In a New Zealand study, 60% of pregnant women and 53% of their partners mentioned "physical health" as an aspiration for their child and 53% of pregnant women and 49% of their partners mentioned "emotional/psychological wellbeing" as an aspiration for their child. Elizabeth R. Peterson et al., "I Expect My Baby to Grow up to Be a Responsible and Caring Citizen," *Family Matters* 94 (2014): 35–44 (39, fig. 1).

³⁹ In the same study, 27% of the pregnant mothers and 25% of their partners listed "education" as an aspiration for their child, with 22% of the pregnant mothers and 25% of their partners mentioning "success/career (non-financial)" as hopes for their child. *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ Canon Law §868 "For an infant to be baptized licitly:...there must be a founded hope that the infant will be brought up in the Catholic religion."

beautifully described his vision of what this would or should look like, which is worth quoting at some length.

The family's catechetical activity has a special character, which is in a sense irreplaceable. This special character has been rightly stressed by the Church, particularly by the Second Vatican Council. Education in the faith by parents, which should begin from the children's tenderest age, is already being given when the members of a family help each other to grow in faith through the witness of their Christian lives, a witness that is often without words but which perseveres throughout a day-to-day life lived in accordance with the Gospel. This catechesis is more incisive when, in the course of family events (such as the reception of the sacraments, the celebration of great liturgical feasts, the birth of a child, a bereavement) care is taken to explain in the home the Christian or religious content of these events...Family catechesis therefore precedes, accompanies and enriches all other forms of catechesis... Encouragement must also be given to the individuals or institutions that, through person-to-person contacts, through meetings, and through all kinds of pedagogical means, help parents to perform their task: the service they are doing to catechesis is beyond price.⁴¹

This picture that Pope John Paul II gives, portrays parents modelling faith for their very young children through their daily lives (*transmissio*). Just as with Pope Paul VI's remarks, this is not formal instruction. It is "often without words" and is especially evident in large family gatherings for special occasions. The Church is then to do what it can to help parents perform this role. The Church is not in the driver's seat but is there as a support or a helpmate.

This dissertation is inspired by this portrait of *transmissio* at the family level. It is a natural, organic process where the adults within the home live out their faith and where the children first observe and then participate in the faith. The rhythm of the family is marked by various celebrations that inevitably include extended family. While the faith is visible in the day-to-day activities, it becomes showcased in family celebrations. This dissertation addresses Catholic faith transmission through the lens of this portrait.

⁴¹ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *Catechesi Tradendae: On Catechesis in our Time* (Rome: Catholic Church, 1979) §68.

A. Knowledge Acquisition versus Identity Formation

In this dissertation, the term *transmissio*, which will alternate with religious socialization, involves identity formation, whereas religious education (*translatio*) involves the transfer of knowledge. *Transmissio* aims towards preparing a new generation for inclusion into a community. It is preparation for belonging and relationship. The spiritual relationship involved, like any relationship, is not anything that can be learned in books. While, a certain body of knowledge is involved, but this is a small part of the overall *treditum*. The end-goal of the *treditio* is full participation in the religious community, which is only possible with the development of an authentic identification with that religious community.

It is clear from the Magisterium documents cited above that the Catholic Church places great value in the little things that parents do in the ordinary course of living that fosters the faith (*transmissio*). It seems, though, that few parents are getting this message.

Bill Smith, a veteran DRE at Sts. Peter and Paul Catholic Church in New Braunfels, Texas, starts his “welcome” sessions by thanking parents for all they have done to prepare their children for first reconciliation. As their faces register surprise, he explains that practices as simple and ordinary as “time-outs” teach children to examine their consciences, having to admit wrongdoing teaches confession, cleaning up a mess or making amends teaches penance, and having to say “I’m sorry” teaches contrition. The parents’ eyes light up as they begin to connect their efforts with the bigger picture.⁴²

There seems to be something wrong, when parents, who have committed to raising their child Catholic, are surprised by the fact that they have been doing so. It is not as if the Church does not have opportunities to communicate this information to parents. Even those parents who are the most disengaged from the parish connect with the parish in preparation for their child’s baptism. At this point the parish priest interviews the parents and there is usually some type of

⁴² Lisa Mladinich, “Reaffirming the Role of Parents in Religious Education,” *Creative Catechist: A Religion Teacher’s Journal* (September 2014).

baptism preparation class (this could be a retreat or a conference) deigned for both the parents and the godparents. The literature available describing the content of these classes focuses primarily on two things: 1) the rite of baptism itself; 2) making sure the parents know and understand the fundamentals of the Catholic faith.

There is, however, one statement contained in the Baptism Preparation literature that relates to this question of what “training [their child] in the practice of the faith” will entail in the next 6 or 7 years might look like. After providing the question in full that they will be asked during the ritual itself, the program at Saint Thomas Aquinas Catholic Church “What are some concrete ways that you can honor and fulfill this responsibility? Sacramental Life, prayer, education, community, charity, example...How can you make your home a ‘Domestic Church?’”

One of the most fascinating features of this question encouraging parents to consider their role here are the social locations most closely associated with each suggested prompt. Rather than being focused on the more immediate stage of life the parents find themselves in with their infants, the scope of these prompts seems to cover the entire childhood of their infants. There is the “sacramental life” and each of the sacraments take place within the institutional parish church. Notably there is nothing related to the sacramental life for the parents to do between baptism and communion. This also raises the important question of what the child’s relationship to the parish church looks like in those 6-7 years.

It seems clear that simply taking the child to Mass at this age is neither requested⁴³ nor encouraged.⁴⁴ Certainly doing so is not primarily for the child’s benefit. So, according to the

⁴³ “Children under the age of 7 are not obligated to attend Mass...” Msgr. William J. King, “Bring your Children to Mass?” *Simply Catholic*. <https://simplycatholic.com/children-at-mass/>

⁴⁴ Our Readers, “How parents really feel about bringing young kids to Mass” *America: The Jesuit Review* (February 4, 2019) <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2019/02/04/how-parents-really-feel-about-bringing-young-kids-mass>

resources readily available online from Catholic churches across the country, new Catholic parents should connect with their parish to baptize their newborn before she is a year old. Then, once the child is born, the parents should not bring the child with them to Mass for the first six or seven years of the child's life. This means that either parents attend Mass by themselves without the child for those half a dozen years or so or, more likely, the entire family does not attend Mass during this life stage.

Therefore, the very first prompt the pamphlet provides to parents only relates (at least in this stage of life) to something they have already done (bringing their child to be baptized). The second prompt is "prayer," and this indeed is an activity that takes place in the social location of the home among other locations. It is in fact, the only prompt that takes place in the social location of the home. The next prompt is "education." Any type of formal education that one usually thinks of does not begin until the age of 6 or 7. The most common social location for "education" is a school. The next prompt is "community," and the social location is practically any one with the exception of the home (and the parish church in this context). The final prompt is "charity," which involves giving to the "community" mentioned in the previous prompt and once again is located anywhere but the home.

This means that a set of new Catholic parents excited about the church who are committing to securing a relationship between their newborn child and the Church, has the opportunity to connect closely with the Church for a Baptismal Preparation class. The message they receive loud and clear from that class is that they should look forward to all of the things they can do with their child once they reach school age, but until then, prayer is really the only activity to be done with their child at home until they are old enough to be handed over to the

church for formal education. And so begin the ruptures that riddle the religious education system.

The final question after the series of prompts does offer some semblance of hope, “How can you make your home a ‘Domestic Church?’” This is precisely the question the parents, who desire to raise their children Catholic likely have. Unfortunately, there are no prompts that follow this question. No suggestions, no ideas. It is as if the idea of a “domestic Church” is completely intuitive and the name by itself provides the answer. Parents do not have accessible, practical resources, or spaces that assist them in this task. This question of what it means for the home to be the “Domestic Church” will constitute a significant theme throughout this dissertation.

B. The Support the Church is Giving to Parents of Primary School-aged Children

When children enter primary school, this is generally when the parish encourages parents to enroll their children in some type of religious education program. Parents generally have two options. One is to enroll their child in a private Catholic school. The second option, and the one most financially viable for most parents, is to enroll their child in a religious education class offered at the church, usually once a week. In these classes the children generally sit with an instructor, usually a lay volunteer, who works through some scheduled lesson plan covering the academic-type theological topics, which constitute the beliefs of the church. In both cases, the message being relayed to parents is that it is the classroom environment where the child will learn to be a Catholic.

It is little wonder then that parents so often equate faith transmission (*traditio*) with religious education (*translatio*). The very term *religious education* suggests that there is a close parallel between academic education and faith transmission (*traditio*). Such a parallel for this

term is apparent from some of its earliest attested uses in the language. In 1749, in a pamphlet concerned with various issues in the Church of England, John Jones used this term to describe what he believed the preparatory schools of his time should be focused upon, *religious education*, which he equates with seminary education.⁴⁵ In other words, teaching religious doctrine and precepts in the same academic setting where academic learning takes place. Here the term *religious education* as appropriate for the seminary is transferred to the secondary preparatory boarding schools of England.

As the Western world shifted the responsibility of education more and more to formal schools, the idea that these schools should also be responsible for religious education followed. Eventually, when the idea of universal schooling took hold in the minds of the populace, a shift in mindset followed in parents, who willingly transferred the responsibility of educating their children to formal educational institutions. As the idea of religious education was bound up with academic education, a similar shift followed with regard to religious education. Thomas Groome put it this way,

*With the advent of universal education, a profound shift occurred in Western consciousness that embraced schooling and schools as the primary mode and locus of education. Religious education and the Church followed suit. Soon the assumption was that education in faith belonged in a school of some kind and that it replaced more than supported the work of parents and home.*⁴⁶

In the field of religious education, the success of faith transmission, whether adults continue to identify as Catholic, is most often focused on either Catholic schools or on formal religious education programs offered within parishes.⁴⁷ The question is most often whether or

⁴⁵ John Jones, *Free and Candid Disquisitions Relating to the Church of England and the Means of Advancing Religion Therin* (London: Printed for A. Millar, 1749).

⁴⁶ Thomas H. Groome, *Will There Be Faith? A New Vision for Educating and Growing Disciples* (New York: HarperOne, 2011).

⁴⁷ See, e.g., Paul Perl and Mark M. Gray, "Catholic Schooling and Disaffiliation from Catholicism," *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 46 (2007): 269–280.

not these programs are working and whether or not they are successful. In these settings, success is often measured through a banking model. An underlying assumption is that the educational program or institution bears the responsibility for faith transmission.

This view that academic education is the school's responsibility and religious education is the church's responsibility has created what Joe Paprocki calls the "drop-off model" of Catholic education. "...we have conditioned parents to act as chauffeurs, dropping off their children at religious education so that the parish can teach the faith while the parents go shopping, get a cup of coffee, or take a much-needed nap."⁴⁸

There has been a growing recognition over the past 30 years or so that this type of "drop-off model" is inadequate. Those involved in this movement have dubbed their position "family faith formation," which focuses on the involvement of the entire family in this process. One prominent organization headquartered in Minnesota offers numerous resources to help other parishes and their families transition from this "drop-off model" to a "family faith formation" model.⁴⁹

Jonathan Schott explored the failure of the church in this regard in a short paper published in the student journal of St. John Fisher College, *Verbum*, in 2006. In this paper he critiqued this drop-off model in favor of a family faith formation model. In the process, he noted several shortcomings he identified in the church's approach to the task of catechesis and its interaction with parents on the subject. He asks the question, "Are we, as Catholic education ministers, providing the parents of our children with necessary catechesis and tools to fully

⁴⁸ Joe Paprocki, "Moving to a Family Catechesis Model," *Joe Paprocki's Catechist's Journey: Sharing the Journey of Teaching the Catholic Faith*, last modified 2018, accessed November 1, 2020, <https://catechistsjourney.loyolapress.com/2018/04/moving-to-family-catechesis-model/>.

⁴⁹ Church of St Paul in Ham Lake, "Family Formation: An Introduction," *Family Formation*, last modified 2020, accessed November 1, 2020, <https://www.familyformation.net>.

integrate and develop our young people to participate in what are known as the “master works” of God?”⁵⁰ To this question he gives a resounding “no.” Schott chalks this up to three causes: 1) parental ignorance; 2) misinformation from the parish catechetical leadership; and 3) lack of encouragement of parental involvement.⁵¹

The recognition and realization on the part of this family faith formation movement that parents need to be involved in the process is both accurate and important. The idea of providing parents resources and tools to become the catechists for their own children sounds like a big step forward. The family faith formation model assumes that the problem with the “drop-off model” of religious education is in the actors involved or the lack thereof. Incorporating parents in the schooling praxis can then solve the problem. In other words, because *translatio* is the only type of *tradio* currently valued and recognized in the Church community (on the ground and in the trenches), if parents are not involved in *translatio*, they must not be involved in *tradio* at all, completely minimizing and marginalizing the important role parents play in *transmissio*.

Accordingly, the programs and resources these organizations are now providing remain bound to the classroom model. These resources take traditional teacher’s lesson plans and give them to the parent as opposed to the teacher. In so doing, these organizations are inadvertently reinforcing the very same problem they are trying to address. This type of curriculum signals to the parents that they are now going over the same material and the same topics in the same way that the teacher would do this, with the only difference being the social location (home versus church or school) and the actors (parents and teachers). It highlights the idea that the most

⁵⁰ Jonathan Schott, “Roman Catholic Sacramental Preparation: For Kids Only?,” *Verbum* 3, no. 2 (2006): 2, <https://fisherpub.sjfc.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1045&context=verbum>.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*

important thing is the content (what they learn) rather than the process or the relationships of those involved.

Recalling the distinction between knowledge acquisition and identity formation, formal educational settings are social locations designed to optimize knowledge acquisition. Where they are weak is in identity formation. This type of formal curriculum takes the same knowledge acquisition target and moves it into a less optimal social location for knowledge acquisition (the home) and removes it from a more optimal knowledge transmitter (a teacher). This strips the home of its unique features as a social location.

Returning to Schott's paper, the primary problem with the question Schott asks is in its assumptions and perspective. The emphasis here is entirely on knowledge acquisition as the primary goal of catechesis and the education ministers as the keepers of this knowledge who leave parents solely unequipped for their task if they do not pass along to parents their expert learning in some intentional and formal manner. Once again, there is no question that education ministers handle knowledge acquisition better than parents, as they should. The role of education ministers, however, is not to be a substitute for what parents are supposed to be doing with their children, but a supplement to their role. Parents provide an invaluable contribution to the faith formation process for which education ministers are ill-equipped. This utter lack of respect for the distinctive role that parents play is astonishing and disappointing.

At the primary school age, the parents play the role of mentors for their children. They model what faith looks like in the day-to-day mundane context of everyday life. They also model what it means to thank God for the little things in life and how to incorporate God into family celebrations.

C. The Support the Church is Giving to Parents of Teenagers

If parents are serious about wanting to raise their children Catholic so that when they are adults they identify as Catholic, the teenage years are crucial for that process. A child's identity formation processes kick into full gear as the child wrestles with finding their place in the world. It is at this stage that they question their core beliefs and what their parents have taught them in order to decide what they accept as true and what defines them as an individual.

When a child completes her catechism classes and receives Confirmation, the initiation rites are complete. They are now considered full members of the Church. At this stage, however, most often, the child's faith remains that of the parents. In order for the child to own and adopt the faith as her own, she must necessarily wrestle with that faith. She must question and challenge it. She must lay it down and pick it back up culling and pruning, shaping and molding.

Unfortunately, however, because the obligations to the Church are completed at the Confirmation rite, many adolescents simply stop attending Mass or youth group activities and disengage with the church. However, this is the stage where parents once again play a special role in the lives of their children. They have now heard the dogma and the faith tenets of the Church, from theological to social issues. Whether from the wider culture or from their own critical thinking, if their faith means anything to them, they begin to have substantive questions about what they have been taught. Educational ministers are almost required to simply teach the tenets and positions of the Church in their official canonized forms. Individual believers, nevertheless, rarely, if ever, accept the teachings of the Church at face value or as proclaimed. Whether in an effort to better understand or in order to square them with other established beliefs or values, individuals inevitably put their own spin on these teachings.

If adolescents have only heard the dogma and theological tenets of the Church from official sources, rather than how they become accepted and adopted in the real world by real individuals, they will adopt an all-or-nothing approach to the faith. When they have questions or objections or doubts about these beliefs, rather than wrestling with them and thinking through them carefully as they will inevitably do with so many other philosophical and moral or ethical questions at this age, they will simply decide they do not agree with the Church from whom they are largely disengaged from at this time anyway. Because they disagree with one or two teachings, they thus disagree with the Church and believe that they cannot in good conscience identify as Catholic.

There is also a need to see the relevance that faith plays in one's daily life. People discard things that have little or no relevance to their lives. If adolescents believe that their faith is not relevant, they have little reason to cling to it. Parents with more life experience than their children play a critical role in sharing how their faith has impacted their life on a personal level.

There is a profound spiritual hunger that develops during the teenage years. This hunger is for identity formation, not for knowledge acquisition. These adolescents are in the process of building their narrative identity, which includes their most core beliefs and values. Somewhat ironically, it is precisely this spiritual hunger that leads many teenagers away from the Church where spiritual nourishment should be the most readily available.

1.3 Looking at Attrition in the Catholic Church

In the past 50 years that the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate at Georgetown University (CARA) has been conducting its survey research, the number of ex-Catholics has

risen almost 10-fold (from 3.5M in 1970 to 29.4M in 2019).⁵² For every person who joins the Catholic Church, another 6.5 leave.⁵³

Notably, parents are not sending their children out into the world as practicing Catholics and that they then walk away from the faith as adults. This would be a very atypical scenario. Rather, 74% of the 214 former Catholics interviewed for the study “Going, Going, Gone! The Dynamics of Disaffiliation in Young Catholics” said that they decided to leave the Church between the ages of 10 and 20.⁵⁴ The median age for deciding to leave the Catholic faith was approximately 13 years old.

What is fascinating here is that this age corresponds closely with the standard age of first confirmation and the completion of formal catechesis. At the very age where parents and the church are asking these children to “voluntarily” engage in a rite that signals a conscious and willing acceptance of this faith tradition, these children are not openly expressing dissent. They are quietly performing these rituals outwardly, while at the same time making an inward decision to step away from this faith tradition. John Vitek explains that

We heard young people describe the beginnings of their questioning and doubts as early as fifth grade, some even younger...many of the young people also told us that they never talked about their doubts and questions with their parents or their Church leaders.⁵⁵

In other words, this ritual that is designed to represent Catholic identity formation in a real and tangible way, has become a simple extension of baptism. As far as the children are

⁵² CARA, “Frequently Requested Church Statistics,” *Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate*, last modified 2020, accessed November 1, 2020, <https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>.

⁵³ Jamie Manson, “As U.S. ‘nones’ Increase, We Must Start Asking Different Questions,” *National Catholic Reporter*, October 19, 2019, <https://www.ncronline.org/news/opinion/grace-margins/us-nones-increase-we-must-start-asking-different-questions>.

⁵⁴ Courtney Mares, “Why Do Some Young People Leave the Church?: A New Study Investigates,” *Catholic News Agency*, January 17, 2018, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/why-do-some-young-people-leave-the-church-a-new-study-investigates-35699>.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

concerned, this is something they are participating in because their parents want them to, not because it is something that they want for themselves. Because they do not see it as a choice, there is nothing they believe needs to be discussed. To openly dissent or object to viewpoints expressed by the instructors or by the parents is a lose-lose scenario for these children.

Now it is not as if Catholics are unique in wanting to pass on their faith to their children. For all of the major historical faith traditions, parents with faith commitments want the same for their children. Evangelical Christians represent a similarly socially conservative religious group to Catholics and yet this Christian denomination gains 1.2 persons for every one person who leaves.⁵⁶ This high attrition rate is not inevitable.

Although some Catholic children flee to another religious tradition, most simply step away from organized religion altogether. In order to better understand this group of ex-Catholics and what makes them tick, it is helpful to examine them side-by-side with the wider group of those who are religiously unaffiliated.

A. Who are the Nones?

Americans who have disaffiliated or never authentically connected with a religious tradition are described by sociologists as “the nones” — and they are the fastest-growing religious demographic in the United States.⁵⁷ Before looking at the implications of what this disaffiliation means for the Church, it is important to better understand the demographics of this group. To begin with, three-quarters of *nones* were raised in families with some religious affiliation, generally in a Christian denomination. As the percentage of Americans who identify

⁵⁶ Manson, “Asking Different Questions.”

⁵⁷ Peter Jesserer Smith, “As ‘Nones’ Rise in Numbers, Catholic Church Faces Evangelization Challenge,” *National Catholic Register*, May 20, 2019, <https://www.ncregister.com/news/as-nones-rise-in-numbers-catholic-church-faces-evangelization-challenge>.

as *nones* becomes larger, the group has become more heterogeneous growing across all gender, racial, ethnic, educational, geographical, and political categories. The exorbitant growth that has taken place in the last ten years speaks to a much greater trend than simply that of one rebellious generation. Despite a stereotypical description of *nones* being young, college-educated, urban and male, because the majority (80%) of the American population is over the age of 30, the bulk of religiously unaffiliated individuals are over the age of 30.⁵⁸ Notably, many *nones* are in the parenting age-range; this matters because for well over a decade, a group of sociologists at Notre Dame led by Christian Smith have been focused on a National Study of Youth and Religion, and the major takeaway that they have been sharing with the Church's leadership in academic papers and conferences⁵⁹ is that parents are the single strongest predictor of successful faith transmission.⁶⁰ Other studies have similar findings. In households where parents said religion was "not too important" or "not at all important" to them, 82% of their teenage children answered the same.

To further complicate these descriptors, Boston University sociologist Nancy Ammerman confirms that formal church members and those whose spiritualities unfold largely outside religious institutions (the *nones*) share much in terms of their understanding of "the spiritual" as it plays out in the contexts of everyday life. Ergo, clear differentiation between the affiliated and

⁵⁸ Elizabeth Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion: The Spiritual Lives of America's Nones* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2016). This observation speaks against one of the main alternative interpretations of these statistics espoused by Jeffrey Arnett ("Suffering, Selfish Slackers? Myths and Realities about Emerging Adults," *Journal of Youth and Adolescence* 36 (2007): 23–29) and Robert Wuthnow (*After the Baby Boomers* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2007)) that these statistics along with studies like the *National Study of Youth and Religion* overrepresent adolescents and young adults, who are at a stage in their life-cycle where this type of questioning of movement between religious traditions is natural.

⁵⁹ One representative example is his lecture, "How American Youth (Mis)Understand Science and Religion," presented at the Symposium: Pastoral Issues in Science and Human Dignity, held at the University of Notre Dame, February 12-14, 2014.

⁶⁰ Two monographs represent the primary work of this long-term study. Smith and Snell, *Souls in Transition*; Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*.

the unaffiliated beyond institutional membership is oftentimes difficult to identify and measure. *Nones* “are perfectly conversant with the spiritual language of their traditions, but they also see spirituality in experiences beyond those traditions, even interpreting each in light of the other.”⁶¹ Simply put, one of the major points attracting *nones* is the ability to self-identify and create one’s own narrative.

The development of identity through narrative, philosopher Paul Ricoeur argues, means that who we are and how we live our lives are ultimately projects of imaginative self-transformation that we narrate over time. When people cannot easily translate integral components of their religious experience into other foundational aspects of their lives, such as their homes and relationships, there is a schism in their narrative coherence. Ergo, if the values found in a religion seem not to fit into everyday life, the stability and importance of religious identities can be undermined. Narrative coherence is our understanding and ability to express to others how we change while remaining the same across different stages of our lives, within various relationships, and in the diverse settings of everyday experience.

Both Catholics and unaffiliated ex-Catholics have formed personal narratives about their religious beliefs. Catholics, along with members of every other historical religious tradition, tie their narratives to their family history. Their inheritance has played a big part in forming and shaping who their identity. Nevertheless, they are unique with their own religious beliefs and divine relationships, despite their inheritance.

Nones, by contrast, start their stories anew. They do not tie their narratives to their family history. They are charting their own course and making their own path. This

⁶¹ Nancy Tatom Ammerman, *Sacred Stories, Spiritual Tribes: Finding Religion in Everyday Life* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2014), 42.

independence is a prominent value within the dominant U.S. culture, and it is little wonder that this ideology is flourishing.⁶²

CARA researchers identified patterns among the young people's personal stories and described three archetypes for their Catholic disaffiliation: the injured, the drifter, and the dissenter. The "injured" are young people who experienced a hardship or tragedy in which God seemed to be absent. The "drifter" is one who typically had trouble connecting their identity as a baptized Catholic to their concrete life experiences in the real world. They struggled to articulate why being Catholic matters, so they just drifted away from the Church. And finally, researchers encountered a more active rejection of the faith in those in the "dissenter" category. Some of these young people cited disagreement with Church teaching on birth control, same-sex marriage, and sexuality as the precipitating force for their departure.⁶³ Each of these categories are not mutually exclusive, and a "none" can fall into multiple of these categories. What they all have in common is the inability for the individual to compose a narrative whereby religious components of their identity could sync with the reality of the context.

Similar to CARA's findings, a study by Pew asked a representative sample of more than 1,300 of these *nones* why they choose not to identify with a religion and found that 60% of religiously unaffiliated Americans say the questioning of religious teachings is a very important reason for their lack of affiliation. The second most common reason (49%) is opposition to the positions taken by churches on social and political issues, and 36% consider religion irrelevant to

⁶² Robert C. Fuller (*Spiritual, but Not Religious: Understanding Unchurched America* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2001), 2-5) described the "unchurched" according to three types: (1) those who are indifferent to religion; (2) those with an ambiguous relationship to religion; and (3) those who are spiritual but not religious in the sense of being "concerned with spiritual issues but [choosing] to pursue them outside of a formal religious organization."

⁶³ Mares, "Why Do Some Young People Leave."

them.⁶⁴ What all of these reasons have in common is that *nones* today are proving that they are uninterested in participating in a faith that tells them what to believe and attempts to indoctrinate them rather than engage them in conversations about complex subjects “without the judgement/hypocritical rhetoric they increasingly reject.”⁶⁵

There are legitimate questions about whether these easily identifiable and measurable metrics actually support the narrative of attrition generally attached to them or whether they simply reflect a different approach to Catholicism. In that vein, it is important to consider the statistics that researchers are measuring. These researchers measure: identification – do these individuals identify themselves as Catholic; moral/ethical convictions – do the beliefs of these individuals regarding right and wrong behavior (“sin” in Catholic terms) align with the Catholic Church; participation/involvement: are these individuals participating regularly in the community that identifies itself as Catholic; spiritual practices: do these individuals regularly engage in devotional/spiritual practices consistent with the Catholic tradition; theological beliefs: do these individuals accept the theological tenets of the Catholic faith as true.

While secular or ecumenical researchers may see a shift away from organized religion as a possible positive, whatever label one wants to put on this group that rejects the Catholic Church along each of these axes, they are not Catholic. Chapter Three will examine more closely Christian Smith’s work on the nature of the spirituality of this group and trace the origin of this shift, but from the perspective of the Catholic Church, there is no other way to understand these demographic shifts other than attrition.

⁶⁴ PEW Research Center, “Why America’s ‘Nones’ Don’t Identify with a Religion,” *PEW Research Center, Facttank: News in the Numbers*, August 8, 2018, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2018/08/08/why-americas-nones-dont-identify-with-a-religion/>.

⁶⁵ Andrew Hess, “The Rise of the Nones,” *Focus on the Family*, October 7, 2012, <https://www.focusonthefamily.com/faith/the-rise-of-the-nones/>.

B. *How is the Church Responding to the Attrition?*

The Church has been well aware of this high attrition rate for years. In order to mitigate the hemorrhaging, the Church has largely turned to evangelism. Attempts to engage young adults have generally centered around service and social justice, creating a stronger digital strategy, and training in relational ministry.

Bishop Robert Barron, an auxiliary bishop for the Archdiocese of Los Angeles, is one of the most successful personalities who has undertaken this mission to the *nones*. He gets the appeal of social justice to the youth. “Young people,” said Barron, “seem to appreciate the Church’s teachings on social justice... We have a very powerful tradition around doing the works of justice. And young people like that. They get it.” He cited Dorothy Day, Thomas Merton, and St. Teresa of Calcutta as figures who have lived out Church teachings of social justice who should be held up as examples.⁶⁶

Bishop Barron also understands and values social media. He leans on the support of Pope Francis’ affirmation that “emails, text messages, social networks and chats” can be “fully human forms of communication.” According to Pope Francis, “communication, wherever and however it takes place, has opened up broader horizons for many people. This is a gift of God which involves a great responsibility. I like to refer to this power of communication as ‘closeness’.”⁶⁷ In late September of 2019, Barron’s “Ask Me Anything” on the website Reddit, was the second most commented-on AMA of the past year, behind Bill Gates and ahead of Bernie Sanders.⁶⁸ Bishop Barron received more than 12,000 questions in under one hour -

⁶⁶ Christine Rouselle, “Bishop Barron on How to Reach out to the ‘Nones,’” *Catholic News Agency*, November 12, 2019, <https://www.catholicnewsagency.com/news/bishop-barron-on-how-to-reach-out-to-the-nones-77274>.

⁶⁷ Pope Francis, *Message of His Holiness Pope Francis for the 50th World Communications Day: Communication and Mercy: A Fruitful Encounter*, January, 24, 2016.

⁶⁸ Don Clemmer, “Evangelizing Young ‘Nones’ Is Bishop Robert Barron’s Brand,” *National Catholic Reporter*, November 4, 2019, <https://www.ncronline.org/print/news/people/evangelizing-young-nones-bishop-robert-barrons-brand>.

proving that people want to engage with the Church; however, the Church's default position, which has proven to be a downfall, is one of absolute certainty and authority.

Bishop Barron also understands that youth crave an intellectual challenge and an elevated level of social discourse. He argues that, "we've undervalued what kids are capable of, intellectually."⁶⁹ He has a unique ability to connect ideas in the Catholic intellectual tradition with pop culture rarely seen among Catholic clergy and theologians. One of his pieces discussed *The Hunger Games* and put it into dialogue with René Girard's work on scapegoating.⁷⁰

Bishop Barron clearly fills a niche in the Church and its outreach to the community by means of his evangelistic efforts directed towards *nones*. His emphasis on intellectual argumentation through apologetics as a way to win hearts and minds seems quite limited to a very narrow swath of the population. He explains his position as follows:

*In order to evangelize the 'nones' they have to be argued back into our position through a new apologetics that focuses on the doctrine of God, the interpretation of the Bible, theodicy, and religion in relation to violence and science. The young are argued into atheism and they need to be argued back into Christianity...We who would evangelize simply have to become better theologians, that is to say, articulators of the truth about who God is.*⁷¹

As the discussion of the *nones* and their identity above highlighted, *nones* are not simply atheists. Treating "them" as such completely misses the mark. Even from the perspective of evangelism, apologetics looks pretty hollow if it is the only tool being used. Kaya Oakes, an Oakland, California, journalist, author and spiritual director, offered a pointed critique of Bishop Barron in this regard. "A lot of what he says is from a very clerical point of view, he should

⁶⁹ Ibid.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Adam Janke, "Four Keys to Train for Parish Outreach to the Unaffiliated," *United States Conference of Catholic Bishops*, last modified 2019, accessed November 1, 2020, <https://www.usccb.org/beliefs-and-teachings/how-we-teach/catechesis/catechetical-sunday/stay-with-us/four-keys-to-train-for-parish-outreach-to-the-unaffiliated>.

spend time with them rather than telling them what they should do.”⁷² Oakes continues, “rather than asking how we can lure them back, a better question might be, where do we meet them and what do they need?” For a group that perceives religion as too judgmental or has too many rules, this more relational approach has quite a bit of appeal to it.

These forays into apologetics and evangelism do not constitute the extent of the Church’s response to this attrition problem. Despite these drastic losses, what is keeping the Catholic Church in the U.S. above water is the emigration of Catholic adults into the country, primarily from Latin American countries. “Hispanics account for 71% of the growth of the Catholic population in the United States since 1960.”⁷³ This fact has not been lost on the Catholic Church, which has deployed *V Encuentro* in an effort to minister specifically to the Latinx community.⁷⁴ It is questionable, however, whether this type of church ministry focused on the Latinx community, which is largely a reiteration of a movement begun in the 1970’s,⁷⁵ is adequate for the 21st century realities.

Such ministries depend upon regular church attendance in an environment where regular church attendance is in sharp decline.⁷⁶ Believers no longer equate the frequency of their church attendance with their level of spiritual commitment. Speaking about the survey he conducted for a recent *V Encuentro* conference, in 2018 Ken Johnson-Mondragón estimated that 80-85% of

⁷² Beth Griffin, “Panel: ‘Nones’ Make up Bigger Percentage of Population than Ever Before,” *Angelus*, October 16, 2019, <https://angelusnews.com/faith/panel-nones-now-account-for-close-to-a-quarter-of-the-u-s-population/>.

⁷³ Hosffman Ospino, “10 Ways Hispanics are Redefining American Catholicism in the 21st Century,” *America: The Jesuit Review*, October 30, 2017.

⁷⁴ Catholic Church, *Proceedings and Conclusions of the V National Encuentro of Hispanic/Latino Ministry* (Washington, D.C., 2019).

⁷⁵ Catholic Church, *Proceedings of the Primer Encuentro Hispano de Pastoral, June 1972* (Washington, D.C., 1974).

⁷⁶ The percentage of Latinx adults in the U.S. who attend church once a month or more has dropped from 55% in 2009 to 51% in 2019. PEW Research Center, “Trends in Religious Service Attendance among U.S. Adults, among Hispanic Adults,” *PEW Research Center, Detailed Tables* (Washington, D.C., 2019), <https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2019/10/Detailed-Tables-v1-FOR-WEB.pdf>.

Latinx Catholics don't regularly attend church.⁷⁷ Nor have Latinx Catholics ever been big on Catholic parochial school. While 55% of school-aged Catholic children are Latinx, only 4% of this Latinx population are enrolled in Catholic schools.⁷⁸ This points to a distance between the formal church structures and the everyday lives of Latinx Catholics. Regardless, this distance does not appear to reflect an actual disconnect from the faith. There is significant overlap between the 65% of Latinx Catholics who (as of 2014) consider religion "very important" in their lives⁷⁹ and the 80-85% who do not attend church on a regular basis.

Both of these outreach evangelistic outreach efforts seem fundamentally flawed in addressing the attrition problem. The Church's targeting of the Latinx community looks peculiar because, unlike the *nones*, this community is actually identifying itself as Catholic despite the similarities in erratic Church attendance. There is a problem with the *tradio*. It is this process that needs the attention.

C. The Crux of the Problem

The title of a 2017 article in a national Catholic magazine epitomizes the conventional wisdom on this topic. It reads, "Religious education is broken. It's time to fix our Sunday school culture." The article concludes that "for the most part, religious education as presently conducted does not give these young people a compelling reason to believe."⁸⁰

Catholics are choosing to unaffiliate due to a desire to question religious teachings, intellectually engage social issues and identify the relevance of faith in everyday life. Ergo, what

⁷⁷ Long-García, "The Hispanic Catholic Church in the U.S. Is Growing, Survey Confirms."

⁷⁸ Ospino, "Redefining."

⁷⁹ PEW Research Center, "Religion in Latin America: Widespread Change in a Historically Catholic Region," *PEW Research Center, Religion & Public Life* (Washington, D.C., November 13, 2014), 41, 43 <https://www.pewforum.org/2014/11/13/religion-in-latin-america/>.

⁸⁰ The Editors, "Religious Education Is Broken: It's Time to Fix Our Sunday School Culture," *America: The Jesuit Review*, January 23, 2017, <https://www.americamagazine.org/faith/2017/01/10/religious-education-broken-its-time-fix-our-sunday-school-culture>.

the *nones* are seeking is a more level playing field where they can openly articulate and negotiate the intersection between Catholic doctrine and the pop culture that we inescapably engage daily –and oftentimes this meaning making process is outside of the Church purview.

In a recent Pivot Northwest study, millennials compiled a short list for values they found important to a fulfilling life; this list included purpose, relationships, peace, and spiritual growth.⁸¹ “Contrary to the way society often frames the church attendance issue, young adults are not pulling away from community, fulfillment, or fellowship; they simply have not found churches to be the place to provide those values. The ‘come to us first’ posture is weakening church appeal and is frankly not effective.”⁸²

Religious education fails when it hinders Catholics from tailoring an authentic, cohesive narrative of their lives. How ordinary people engage questions of meaning and value, deepen their self-understanding in relation to others, cope with suffering, ritualize life transitions and frame ethical commitments has not been the focus of either religious studies scholars.⁸³ This dichotomy of a lived religion and a formal religion has been deadly for the Church. Drescher beautifully articulates this by stating, “where ‘religion’ seemed to make individuals passive objects within a rigidly unchangeable structure ‘spirituality’ allowed for creativity, flexibility, and change by individuals situated as active agents in their own lives.”⁸⁴ As Joseph Razingger wrote, the theologian’s task is “to draw from the surrounding culture those elements which will

⁸¹ Clara Keuss, “A Church for the ‘Nones,’” *Initiative on Faith & Public Life*, March 9, 2020, <https://faithandpubliclife.com/a-church-for-the-nones/>.

⁸² Ibid.

⁸³ Robert A. Orsi, “Everyday Miracles: The Study of Lived Religion,” in *Lived Religion in America: Toward a History of Practice*, ed. David D. Hall (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), 3–21.

⁸⁴ Drescher, *Choosing Our Religion*, Ch. 2, note 55.

allow him better to illumine one or other aspect of the mysteries of faith.”⁸⁵ A theology that is not relevant is dead, and stories that exclude our faith fail to paint a full picture.

We must ask ourselves, if we -as Catholic educators- are effectively assisting our most influential assets, the parents, in faith transmission by helping them find practical ways to help their children actively relate all aspects of their lives to the religious doctrine that they are absorbing at church and through their religious education program.

1.4 Personal Observations Offering a New Perspective

The Church’s intuition to turn to the Latinx community in addressing this problem was sound. The Church sees a spiritual vibrance within this community that it wants to tap into. “...Spirituality and religiosity are interwoven with [Latino/as’] daily lives and serve as foundations of strength in coping with life's struggles.”⁸⁶ What the Latinx community has to offer the Catholic Church in the U.S. is a different concept of how to practice a lived faith.

The post-modern paradigm empowers the researcher as a constitutive element within the research and its solution rather than simply an uninterested third-party observer. Virgilio Elizondo, among other prominent Latinx theologians, remind us that in order to ground our theology, it is important to begin by recognizing our own identity. As a long-time student of the Latinx theologians, I examined my own identity closely the further I dug into this problem. The more I reflected on my own experience in relation to this evidence, the starker the contrast became.

⁸⁵ Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, *Congregation for the Doctrine of Faith: Instruction, Donum Veritatis, On the Ecclesial Vocation of the Theologian* (Rome: The Catholic Church, May 24, 1990), §10.

⁸⁶ Maureen Campesino and Gary E. Schwartz, “Spirituality Among Latinas/Os: Implications of Culture in Conceptualization and Measurement,” *Advances in Nursing Science* 29 (2006): 69–81.

The home constitutes a massive blind spot for the institutional Catholic Church in the U.S. Religious education and faith transmission are so skewed towards the social location of the parish church that there is practically no room for the home as the type of unique contributor to the process that the Magisterium has described. In my upbringing as a Cuban-American woman in Miami, there was never any question about the role of the home in shaping religious identity. It was a given. My reflections on my own Cuban-American identity revealed no less than three blind spots the institutional Catholic Church in the U.S. has regarding faith transmission, including the home. These include: 1) the prominent role of women, specifically mothers, in faith transmission; 2) the role of the home as a safe space for negotiating the faith tradition and; 3) the importance of daily life in community to faith development.

I decided to conduct in-depth interviews with five sets of mothers and daughters exploring what faith transmission actually looks like within the home itself. Since the institutional church continues to exclude women from leadership roles when women so clearly play a leadership role in faith transmission in the home, the focus on mothers and their daughters seemed both appropriate and justified. This dissertation takes the raw data of those interviews and explores the different ways in which these bear on the problem and suggest alternatives that might not otherwise be visible from within the experience of the dominant U.S. Catholic culture.

2.0 CHAPTER TWO: Home as Locus Theologicus

Social processes not only involve primary actors, but necessarily take place in defined social spaces. The standard focus regarding faith transmission (*traditio*) is as a secondary socialization process (*translatio*) located within the church or within the religious school run by the church. The home, if its role in this process is not completely ignored, is usually marginalized by relegating it to a passing reference. Far from a footnote in faith transmission (*traditio*), the home possesses all of the essential features necessary to make it the ideal social location for faith transmission (*traditio*), not as a secondary socialization process (*translatio*), but as an integral component of primary socialization (*transmissio*). This chapter explores both the church's view of the role of the home in faith transmission (*traditio*) and the intersection between the theological emphases raised by Latina theologians and the primary human needs. The home is the foundational social location where the next generation have these needs met.

2.1 Home as a Domestic Church

The Magisterium has been clear for over a century in its teaching that it is the home environment and the family (namely, the parents) who bear the chief responsibility for the education of Catholic children. “The family therefore holds directly from the Creator the mission and hence the right to educate the offspring...” (*Divini Illius Magisteri*, §32). This right (and responsibility) is enshrined in *Canon Law* (§1136), which includes within it, specifically religious education.

While many of these church documents refer to the parents as a unit when addressing this subject, Pope Pius XII recognized that the bulk of this task falls upon mothers.⁸⁷ He speaks of

⁸⁷ Allocution of Pope Pius XII, *Davanti a Questa*, AAS 33 (1941), 450-58 (450).

mothers as “a pillar...the central support of the home.”⁸⁸ Although he was speaking in the 1940’s when the family dynamic was quite different than it is today, statistical survey data indicates that this fact has remained constant. Parents actually spend more time with their children today than they did in the sixties.⁸⁹ Nevertheless, fathers still spend only half the amount of time with their children as mothers.⁹⁰ This holds just as true for working mothers. Obviously, there are exceptions, as there were in the 1940’s, but it is important to recognize that within the parental unit, the mother generally takes point when it comes to education, which includes religious education. Pope Francis recognized, as did Saint Augustine, that it is the mothers who bring their children to be baptized.⁹¹ It is the mothers who teach their children to blow a kiss to Jesus and to Our Lady.⁹²

When the church talks about the educational role of mothers in the home, it is not envisioning any type of formal homeschooling (*translatio*). Rather, these documents assume that parents will most often delegate specific, more formal, educational responsibilities (*translatio*) either to schools, the church (often in the form of Catholic schools and/or catechesis), and to various other organizations (sports, music, dance, girl scouts, etc.). The home, as a micro-community, is responsible for teaching the Catholic faith as first and foremost a lifestyle. For this reason, in many Catholic Latina families, the mother understands the child’s religious education (*traditio*) as a matriarchal communal endeavor (especially involving the *abuelas*) that is organically present within all aspects of daily life. The Latinx community is clearly one of the cultures that John Paul II envisioned when he spoke of

⁸⁸ *Davanti a Questa*, 451.

⁸⁹ Giulia M. Dotti Sani and Judith Treas, “Educational Gradients in Parents’ Child-Care Time across Countries, 1965-2012,” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 78, no. 4 (2016): 1083–96.

⁹⁰ *Ibid.*

⁹¹ Augustine, *De sancta virginitate* 7,7: PL 40, 400; *Amoris Laetitia*, §287.

⁹² *Catechism*, 2015; *Amoris Laetitia*, §287.

*cultures which manifest a unique veneration and great love for the elderly: far from being outcasts from the family or merely tolerated as a useless burden, they continue to be present and to take an active and responsible part in family life, though having to respect the autonomy of the new family; above all they carry out the important mission of being a witness to the past and a source of wisdom for the young and for the future.*⁹³

This Catholic community is responsible for the ongoing development of the child beyond her initiation sacraments. An opening statement within John Paul II's *Familiaris Consortio* states: "the Christian family, in fact, is the first community called to announce the Gospel to the human person during growth and to bring him or her, through a progressive education and catechesis, to full human and Christian maturity."⁹⁴ As a communal member, the child will therefore learn as age appropriate that the faith is not solely doctrine, but a praxis of scaffolding the narratives, relationships and experiences of daily life in order to actively engage and (re)interpret the faith through the life cycle.

Accordingly, the church envisions the home as the "first community" wherein Christian teaching occurs.⁹⁵ The home is so important that it receives the moniker "the domestic Church."⁹⁶ With this title, the Magisterium officially recognizes domestic religion as an integral part of religious development, expression and experience. This position of the church resonates deeply with Latinas who have a long history of having a deep sense of embodying the church in a way that does not specifically correlate with active and consistent participation in the institutional church.

⁹³ John Paul II, Apostolic Exhortation, *The Role of the Christian Family in the Modern World: Familiaris Consortio* (Rome: Catholic Church, 1980), §21.

⁹⁴ *Familiaris Consortio*, §1-2.

⁹⁵ *Lumen Fidei*, §52; *Amoris Laetitia*, §16, §274.

⁹⁶ *Familiaris Consortio*, §16, §41; *Amoris Laetitia*, §12.

The role of the parents in this domestic sphere is even described as priestly in nature.⁹⁷ Although it stops short of drawing this conclusion, it is clearly the mother who acts as the head and leader of the domestic Church. Pope Paul VI asked mothers,

*...do you teach your children the Christian prayers? Do you prepare them, in conjunction with the priests, for the sacraments that they receive when they are young: Confession, Communion and Confirmation? Do you encourage them when they are sick to think of Christ suffering to invoke the aid of the Blessed Virgin and the saints? Do you say the family rosary together?*⁹⁸

More recently, Pope John Paul II pictured the following contexts as examples of where religious education occurs.

*Joys and sorrows, hopes and disappointments, births and birthday celebrations, wedding anniversaries of the parents, departures, separations and homecomings, important and far-reaching decisions, the death of those who are dear, etc.—all of these mark God’s loving intervention in the family’s history. They should be seen as suitable moments for thanksgiving, for petition, for trusting abandonment of the family into the hands of their common Father in heaven.*⁹⁹

This notion is not new to Latinas who have centered relationships – in particular, the family – in daily life as the axis by which faith transmission (*traditio*) unfolds. Cuban theologian, Orlando Espín makes the point that,

*Most Christians can truthfully be said to have “caught” Christianity more successfully through the ordinary and often unawares processes of traditioning than by their having been formally “taught” it.*¹⁰⁰

He rightfully points out that the experiences we have of God are much more powerful and important than any knowledge we can possess of her.¹⁰¹ This experience, however, generally

⁹⁷ *Familiaris Consortio*, §47.

⁹⁸ General Audience Address, 11 August 1976: *Insegnamenti di Giovanni Paolo VI*, XIV (1976), 640.

⁹⁹ *Familiaris Consortio*, §46.

¹⁰⁰ Orlando O. Espín, “Traditioning: Culture, Daily Life and Popular Religion, and Their Impact on Christian Tradition,” in *Futuring Our Past: Explorations in the Theology of Tradition*, ed. Orlando O. Espín and Gary Macy, *Studies in Latino/a Catholicism* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2006), 1–22 (5).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid*, Consider Popular Christianity, par. 16.

requires that we are taught to see and made to feel the love that we may take for granted because it so wholly envelops us.

Primarily, though, the Magisterium sees this process of religious transmission (*transmissio*) from one generation to the next as taking place within daily devotions. The mother's piety (and oftentimes grandmothers by way of intergenerational homes and lifestyles) are the first religious and cultural exemplars which children witness allowing them to subsequently participate and learn to see themselves as people of faith in specific sociocultural contexts.¹⁰² For the Latinx, daily devotionals go beyond scriptures, (intergenerational) narratives, and un/structured prayers; daily practices often include a relationship to the tangible: *altarcitos*, statues, materials for veneration (such as flowers, candles, incense) and images serve to transform the physical home space into a sacramental habitat. These belong to the *traditum* just as much as the contents of traditional catechism.

All of the characteristics outlined above by the Magisterium uphold the importance of the home. Below, I examine this umbrella term more closely which includes and goes beyond a physical space. Home becomes church when it fosters healthy relationships. When this community actively works to bring the presence of God into the everyday, then it becomes worthy of the title: domestic church.

2.2 Home as a Developmental Space

Faith development is a vital component of faith transmission (*traditio*). The more children develop and mature in their religious faith within the home of their family of origin, the more likely this faith is to remain a part of their lives when they establish a home of their own.

¹⁰² María del Socorro Castañeda-Liles, *Our Lady of Everyday Life: La Virgen de Guadalupe and the Catholic Imagination of Mexican Women in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018).

Nurturing maturity requires the presence of mature individuals as role models and I will explore the details of this primary socialization (*transmissio*) in the next chapter. The question at this point, however, is where one can find such religiously mature figures. The standard models of faith transmission recognize priests and nuns, who have accepted a specifically religious vocation, as the most logical and reliable exemplars of mature faith. The implicit argument then is that faith transmission and faith development should proceed in the presence of such demonstrably religiously mature individuals, who, by definition, are not present within familial households.

This religious vocation that puts them in this unique position is, however, a double-edged sword. Many children find it difficult to look at these professional religious functionaries as models they can emulate because the religious vocation is so far removed from other secular vocations. The question then becomes whether mature religious believers exist among the laity. While the answer is most certainly, yes, some initial skepticism is warranted here. If religious education (*traditio*) takes place in the home, are there models of religious maturity that would be available not just for faith transmission, but for faith development. This requires some unpacking.

The home is a place where humans have the opportunity to see one another with their hair down. It gives individuals the opportunity to relax in a safe environment. The safety and security provided by the home encourages a level of vulnerability that is almost unparalleled in any other social context. Home is where the proverbial skeletons in the closet are known and confined to. This is typically not the case with social locations outside of the home.

This quality of home gives the members of a household a unique perspective on one another. In the Cuban-American home, the *abuela* provides a useful example for closer

examination. The following features are typical of *abuelas*, but, obviously, not universal.¹⁰³ The *abuela* is first generation Cuban.¹⁰⁴ If she speaks English, it is not a comfortable language for her. In the wider society, she is often considered both uneducated and a person of lower social status.

Within the home the perception of the *abuela* is entirely different. *Abuela* had a home and a life in Cuba. Her husband (and possibly her as well) had a career, and they may have been wealthy or middle-class, but had a decent life.¹⁰⁵ To use Maslow's hierarchy of needs as a metric,¹⁰⁶ before the revolution in Cuba, the family's *abuela* was sitting pretty on the top rung of the pyramid. Her physical needs, her safety needs, her needs for social attachment and belonging and status were all met. She was living a self-actualizing life.

When Castro's revolution took hold, however, she and her husband were faced with a tough choice. The biggest threat was a secular state. Under Castro's regime, they could no longer practice their Catholic faith nor pass it onto their children. They decided to leave Cuba and travel to America not for their own happiness, but for the future of their children. For the opportunity to preserve and pass on their Catholic faith without threat of persecution.

This meant leaving their property and most of their possessions. It meant that her husband would be required to give up a lucrative job without the possibility of continuing in that career field in the U.S. Both would be forced to initially take menial labor-intensive jobs, and be

¹⁰³ The generalities about *abuelas* drawn in the ensuing discussion stem both from the information contained in the interviews or broader statistics. It is intentionally a caricature for the ease of discussion and these generalities are in no way meant to pigeonhole *abuelas*.

¹⁰⁴ Third and subsequent generations are typically when immigrant communities stop identifying themselves with hyphenated identities and the assimilation process is more complete. See Mark Hugo Lopez, Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, and Gustavo López, "Hispanic Identity Fades Across Generations as Immigrant Connections Fall Away: 11% of American Adults with Hispanic Ancestry Do Not Identify as Hispanic," *PEW Research Center, Hispanic Trends*, December 20, 2017, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2017/12/20/hispanic-identity-fades-across-generations-as-immigrant-connections-fall-away/>.

¹⁰⁵ Those who were poor could not afford to emigrate.

¹⁰⁶ Abraham Maslow, "A Theory of Human Motivation," *Psychological Review* 50 (1943): 370–96.

separated from their family, friends, culture and lifestyles. With full recognition of these obstacles, hurdles and inconveniences, they made the move anyway.

In the academic literature, this epitomizes a mature religious faith. Late in his life, Abraham Maslow, most known for his hierarchy of needs motivational model, wrote a work entitled *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature*, which his family published posthumously. In this less well-known work, Maslow argues for a stage in human development beyond that of self-actualization. One of the primary characteristics of individuals at this stage, whom he labels “transcenders” is that they are “profoundly ‘religious’ or ‘spiritual.’”¹⁰⁷ His discussion dispenses with any of the focus on needs that is so present in his motivational theory. In his psychological work with his patients as well as his lectures about his motivational theory he began to talk with people more and more about personal growth and fulfilment. He saw his goal in his psychological practice to lead his patients towards *healthy* living, which was living a self-actualizing life.

In the process of this work, he began studying self-actualizers as a group in an effort to help others achieve that *healthy* state in life. It was in the course of this study, that he began to notice a set of distinguishing features that set these “transcenders” as a group apart from other healthy self-actualizers. These features, however, did not align with clear human needs that Maslow could identify. Nevertheless, his observations reinforced his conclusions for him more and more that in terms of human maturity there was a stage beyond self-actualization that fell outside of his hierarchy, because it was not needs-based.

Since his own model was unable to address this pattern, Maslow turned to a motivational theory that one of his close colleagues, Douglas McGregor, had laid out: *Theory X and Theory*

¹⁰⁷ Abraham Maslow, *The Farther Reaches of Human Nature* (Arkana, LA: Penguin Books, 1993), 282.

Y.¹⁰⁸ McGregor was focused on the employee-employer relationship where he noted that some percentage of employees required primarily external motivation to do their work, while the remaining segment possessed significant internal motivation that employers simply had to tap into and harness. McGregor believed these two groups called for two completely different managerial styles each with a completely different set of operating assumptions. The set of operating assumptions required for the first group of employees, who required external motivation, he labeled *Theory X*, while the set of operating assumptions for the second group, who relied primarily on internal motivation, he labeled *Theory Y*. McGregor did not consider these groups as divided along some type of personality type but considered the Theory Y group as more mature than the Theory X group. Maslow saw a clear overlap between his own self-actualization stage of his hierarchy of needs and McGregor's Theory Y.

Maslow bootstrapped McGregor's theory to help explain these "transcenders," who did not fit within his own theory. Since McGregor had argued for the *Theory Y* group as more mature than their counterparts in *Theory X* and McGregor's model did not rely upon needs as Maslow's had, this gave Maslow the opportunity to label the characteristics he found associated with this group *Theory Z*. In defining the characteristics of Theory Z, which typified the "transcenders," he identified twenty-three distinct characteristics that this group possesses, that other healthy self-actualizers, those in the Theory Y group, do not possess.

With his Theory Z, Maslow provides a solid theoretical window into what is happening with the *abuelas* in the Cuban-American home. One of the characteristics Maslow identifies of these "transcenders" is their ability to transcend their ego and self-interest.¹⁰⁹ This characteristic is the epitome of what these first-generation Cubans did for their families during Castro's

¹⁰⁸ Douglas McGregor, *The Human Side of Enterprise* (Cambridge, MA: McGraw-Hill, 1957).

¹⁰⁹ Maslow, *Farther Reaches*, 278, 282.

revolution. Their perspective was no longer about themselves, but about their children and their grandchildren after them. This perspective allows them to become the “‘heroic’ people who have overcome adversity and who have been strengthened by it rather than weakened.”¹¹⁰

Although these characteristics are most stark with the first-generation *abuelas* who came to the U.S. as middle-aged adults, these characteristics show up almost as clearly among the mothers interviewed for this dissertation who came to the U.S. as children, several of whom are now *abuelas* themselves. The most helpful way to lay out many of the characteristics Maslow identified in “transcenders” is to see these characteristics fleshed out in the interviews of the mothers.

Maslow emphasizes that “*the* most important things” in the lives of “transcenders” are their peak and plateau experiences. Carmen shared a particularly poignant peak experience in her interview.

My mother came back from Jerusalem with a disease that is not known to the United States. Her white blood cells were being eaten alive by some bacteria that she got over there. And it's in the UM journals because nobody had recognized that. She came back a week. She was here already a week and I went to see her, and my mother was white pale. She couldn't move. She couldn't breathe. So I took her to the hospital. We went to Mercy, and the doctor said to me, "Call your immediate family because your mother is not going to survive the night."

And I asked God. I said, "You took my dad. If you need her, take her. But I need her more than you." And that night, she made it through. And she was in the hospital for almost two months. Yeah. And she survived and she's still here. And that was, I don't know, about 15 years ago.

For Carmen, her mother’s brush with death was a peak experience in her life because of the miracle that she saw in it.

The heroism and grit of these “transcenders” along with their spirituality is generally visible to all who know them well. As Maslow describes it, “they are also more awe-inspiring,

¹¹⁰ Ibid, 270-71.

more ‘unearthly,’ more godlike, more ‘saintly’ in the medieval sense, more easily revered, more ‘terrible’ in the older sense.”¹¹¹ This is precisely the way these women described their mothers in their interviews. Twice during the course of the interview Charito calls her mother a “saint.” The second time she says, “*Mi mamá murió de noventa y seis años. Era una santa, los que la conocieron y están aquí presente saben eso.*”¹¹²

Another one of the characteristics in Maslow’s list is that “transcenders” are “meta-motivated.” Maslow explains this term as “That is, the values of Being, or Being itself seen both as fact and value, e.g., perfection, truth, beauty, goodness, unity, dichotomy-transcendence, B-amusement, etc. are their main or most important motivations.”¹¹³ Charito describes such metamotivation for religious practice, when she describes her mother’s role in her own faith reception. Spending several years in a Catholic orphanage in the U.S., upon arriving in the U.S. through the Pedro Pan flights, as opposed to the more comfortable (though dangerous) environment of her home in Cuba with her parents, Charito had very little contact with her mother during this period. Charito then notes

*Esa fe que ella nos inculcó, y el querer nosotros acercarnos más a Dios, y eso lo tiene uno arraiga y por nada en el mundo, ni cambiaré de religión, ni dejare de amar a Dios como ella lo amaba.*¹¹⁴

Practicing her faith is not something that Charito does simply because she has to or due to a fear of repercussions. Carrying on the religious tradition, for which she and her parents made so many sacrifices, became her primary motivation. It was not about external rewards or

¹¹¹ Ibid, 278.

¹¹² “My mother died at 96 years of age. She was a saint, those who knew her and are present know that.”

¹¹³ Ibid, 273.

¹¹⁴ *That faith that she inculcated in us, that desire to get closer to God was already rooted in us, and I would for nothing in this world ever change my religion or stop loving God as she loved Him.*

punishments, nor was it just about doing something because she was good at it; it was about a family legacy of which she was proud and with which she had fallen in love.

Another characteristic Maslow identifies is a holistic view of the world.¹¹⁵ The idea of national interests and national identities is transcended. This appears most clearly in a set of joint statements by one of the daughters, Fátima, who was joined by one of the only granddaughters included herein, Samantha. When asked “What does it mean to be Latino and Catholic? Is there a difference?” Samantha gave the following response,

For me nothing. I could have been Russian, of any nationality. I think that has nothing to do with being Latino or not being Latino. I have many friends who are Baptists. They are Latino. And I have many friends who are Cuban like me and do not practice anything. I have a great friend who is completely atheistic.

Fátima followed up with her perspective,

I don't think that has to do as a Latino or anything. That is clear, Latin America like Spain, we were all colonized by Spaniards, the faith that they brought us, is their faith. Their faith was Catholic... So I tell you, it has nothing where it comes from...I don't think that your nationality has anything to do with your church, your way of thinking, it would be the same Catholic, Baptist, Anglican or whatever religion you practice.

These women see nationality very clearly and do not ignore it and, yet, they transcend it.

Yet another of Maslow’s characteristics of the “transcenders” is that they possess a clear vision “of the ideal, of the perfect, of what ought to be.”¹¹⁶ Elena demonstrates clear vision in the type of faith transmission that she sees for her children.

When my oldest girl was in second grade and was supposed to be preparing for first communion...at that time, Catholic schools did not offer first confession before first communion. It was the time of experimentation of the Catholic Church after Vatican II...They said even though they were in a Catholic school, confession was not provided until the fourth grade. I said, No, you clean the house before you receive the guest...So, I talked to their teachers at the school, I talked to the priest, and even sent a letter to the bishop. And the bishop answer was ‘that’s okay what they’re doing, that’s okay. I trust them.’ Uh-uh, I said, that doesn’t fly with me. So,

¹¹⁵ Ibid, 278.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 279.

I prepared my kids -all of them- for confession, and I would take them every month and a half...to confession...So that was something that I installed in them. When they were preparing for confirmation...

Elena's vision for the faith practice she wanted to pass on to her children transcended the relatively new decisions by the church authorities. She had a clear vision that respected a higher authority and felt bound to that above and beyond her local authority figures.

The goal of all of this is to demonstrate clearly that the home is filled with deeply religious and spiritual people who do not have a specifically religious vocation. Because of that, the family members can and should look to their *abuelas* and mothers as models for their own spiritual faith development. Another important point to highlight from Maslow's construct is that the plateau experiences (another important characteristic of "transcenders") *can* be learned. Such learning is not possible in the short stretches of time involved in defined religious programs like catechesis. There is no way "of bypassing the necessary maturing, experiencing, living, learning" required to become a "transcender," which involve significant amounts of time and relationships. For each of these reasons, the home is not just a *possible* social location in which faith transmission can occur – it is an *ideal* social location for faith transmission.

2.3 Home as a Physical Space

Another characteristic of "transcenders" that Maslow highlighted is their ability to see the sacred within the mundane and secular. "They perceive unitively or sacrally (i.e., the sacred within the secular), or they see the sacredness in all things *at the same time* that they also see them at the practical, everyday D-level. They can sacralize everything at will" (emphasis original).¹¹⁷ The home is really the only place where children can observe this characteristic as

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 273.

one to be emulated. Sacred spaces like the church, where religious transmission might otherwise take place, rule out the possibility of such observation by their very nature.

In his article, “Finding God in All Things,” theologian Michael Himes proposes that everything that is, is rooted in grace: the self-giving of God outside of the Trinity bringing all things into being. As engraced, *everything* has the potential to call our attention to and make concrete for us the omnipresent divinity that envelops us. Thus, the world ceases to be lifeless or passive and becomes a locus, or source, where God dwells and discloses herself to and through her creation. Sacraments are signs of the way the divine is manifested in our secular world, “of how all that is of God is incarnated among us.”¹¹⁸ In other words, the world from a sacramental perspective, is the resting place of a God that chooses to make herself at home among that which is wholly other. Himes extends these signs to be “any person, place, thing or event, any sight, sound, taste, touch or smell that causes us to notice the love which supports all that exists, that undergirds your being and mine and the being of everything around us.”¹¹⁹ Sacraments, therefore, are not only the things that cause us to notice the love that upholds all that exists, but our use of and relationship with these objects helps us expand our notion of God and connect with her.

In the context of the home, our Latina matriarchs teach subsequent generations that the physical as sacramental is an invitation to action. They teach us “to behold what is always present, in the conviction that if we truly see and truly appreciate what is there, whether we use the language or not, we will be encountering grace.” Simply put, God is present all around and

¹¹⁸ Kevin W. Irwin, “A Sacramental World: Sacramentality as the Primary Language for Sacraments,” *Worship* 76, no. 3 (2002): 197–211.

¹¹⁹ Michael J. Himes, “Finding God in All Things: A Sacramental Worldview and Its Effects,” in *Becoming Beholders: Cultivating Sacramental Imagination and Actions in College Classrooms* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2014), 13.

seeking relationship with mortals. Being endowed with free will, humans choose how to respond to the evocative love that provides awakening to the glory that lies within and beyond the mundane.

Home, as a physical space, can quickly be taken for granted because its stability and comfort generally connote monotony. Like oxygen or food, home is central to our existence, but not very exciting. It is generally assumed that what makes home cozy is that it is not something that needs to be thought about and nurtured on a daily basis. However, at the introduction of her book, *Church of the Small Things*, Melanie Shankle points out that the story of Jesus feeding the five thousand does not begin with the miracle of Jesus, or even the incredulous disciples. Rather, it begins with an unnamed person (Shankle presumes is the boy's mother) who began that particular day in an ordinary way -- by preparing a lunch for her boy. Shankle notes that God also used the boy, whom "she" had presumably regularly admonished about sharing with others, and on that day this mother received tangible proof that her child had indeed been listening. Shankle concludes, "Sometimes the biggest things God does start out in the smallest, most ordinary acts of daily faithfulness."¹²⁰ Home is hallowed ground – truly the domestic church. As a locus where God is revealed, disclosed and experienced, home requires us to take seriously the "daily and domestic things." These things offer tangible ways for partaking in the life of God and to become a people willing and able to be used by her.

No discussion of the home as a physical space would be complete without mentioning the theological concept of *lo cotidiano*. *Lo cotidiano*, as place, "refers to that which occurs and recurs daily... it is not reducible to the 'domestic,' the 'private' or the 'individual.'"¹²¹ Cuban

¹²⁰ Melanie Shankle, *Church of the Small Things: The Million Little Pieces That Make up a Life* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2017), Introduction, par. 3.

¹²¹ Espín, "Traditioning," Consider *lo cotidiano*, par. 1, 3.

theologian Orlando Espín points out that *lo cotidiano* cannot be mitigated to the backdrop of society as if it is of secondary importance to larger social issues that are presumed to unfold in the public arena. “There is ultimately no real-life substance or consistency to the macro-sphere,” Espín continues, “real life exists in the concrete, the local, the familial and communal; the micro.”¹²² Too often liberation theologians have “underestimated *lo cotidiano*’s critical weight, the analytical magnitude of daily living, and its counterhegemonic political value.”¹²³ For it is there that Latinas, within webs of communities that permeate all spheres of society, are confronted with and able to examine cultural norms, economic systems and socio-political structures to determine how they affect and shape their family and communal lifestyle. Latinas are able, from within their varied positions and social roles, to contemplate the vision of the dominant U.S. society towards them and understand how these collective undercurrents become sweeping tides with the power to both activate and asphyxiate the Latinx population.

Lo cotidiano is the medium through which Latinas negotiate and connect the existential, religious and cultural in order to produce tangible commodities that bring about their family’s survival.¹²⁴ It is here in their daily lives that they reconceptualize and reframe perspectives and circumstances, on their own terms, in order to produce changes that aim to dignify their lives. Latinas interpret the ordinary to effectively redress daily struggles, social injustices and communal affronts despite oftentimes limited assets or influence. In essence, the oppressed of society find subversive ways to alter the monotonous in order to bring about the reprieve of God.

¹²² Orlando O. Espín, “An Exploration into the Theology of Grace and Sin,” in *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín and Miguel H. Díaz (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 121–52 (The “Birthing Place” of a Latino/a Theology of Grace: *Lo Cotidiano*, par. 8).

¹²³ María Pilar Aquino, “Theological Method in U.S. Latino/a Theology: Toward an Intercultural Theology for the Third Millennium,” in *From the Heart of Our People: Latino/a Explorations in Catholic Systematic Theology*, ed. Orlando O. Espín and Miguel H. Díaz (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1999), 6–48 (38-39).

¹²⁴ Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Mujerista Theology: A Theology for the Twenty-First Century* (Maryknoll, NY: Westminster John Knox Press, 2002), 66-73.

In their daily struggle, Latinas are empowered by their ability to partner with God to be providers, not solely as breadwinners, but also through improvisational and inventive management to meet the countless needs of all who depend on them.¹²⁵ This communal methodology, done daily over brief text messages and impromptu delegating oftentimes brings about imperceptible but immediate assistance to and between these women that reinforces *convivencia*, affirms a self-understanding of Latinas as *guerreras*, and substantiates hope in a God who is involved in daily and pressing concerns – a God who is rooting for these women who define the moral good as working towards the good of others.¹²⁶ They thereby embody some of the chief characteristics of “transcenders.” This *mujerista* lens ushers into Latina homes and communities an invigorated faith where Latinas recognize themselves, as united, strategic and capable subjects of their own history. In sum, Latinas are inextricably linked to the environment they inhabit. It is a space that shapes them as much as they shape it; and, it is this oftentimes hostile environment that propels Latinas to aggressively “seek, understand, and learn to trust God” in order to get things done.¹²⁷

Mujerista theologians, Ada María Isasi-Díaz and Yolanda Tarango have described this methodology as a spiral that is ongoing and open, during which other movements could happen simultaneously. The first movement is telling stories. Women claim the events of their lives by placing their stories “out there for all to see.” This exposure transforms the story into an object and separates the event from impinging on the identity of the individual. From a distance, women can then reflect, and incorporate their own moral agency into the event.¹²⁸ Moreover, a

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

¹²⁸ Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *Hispanic Women: Prophetic Voice in the Church* (Scranton, PA: University of Scranton Press, 2006), 98.

story gives Latinas a starting point from which to ask critical questions such as why and what else.

Going beyond the obvious, women are able to dissect context in order to make connections between the personal and the political. Provocative analysis -the second movement herein- will prevent Latinas from leaning on “magical solutions such as ‘we need to pray more.’”¹²⁹ The third movement, liturgizing, affirms to women the ongoing divine revelation that is taking place within and through their community, and likewise, gives them agency over their own history as they decide how best to represent the divine and narrate a hope-filled future they envision for themselves while announcing the oppressive present.¹³⁰ Lastly, Latina women strategize. Strategies have an expansive nature: they can be carried out first within the person (challenging mindsets and internalized oppressive patterns of behaviors); they can serve to restructure relationships; and they must work to implement change into the wider groups in which Latinas interact.¹³¹ As receivers grow up, this is what they witness in the everyday – Latinas reflecting, discerning and acting. With pride, future generations take up their armor, and continue the struggle.

2.4 Home as a Relational Space

Primary Socialization Theory posits close relationships or strong bonds as the primary sources for learning social behaviors. By contrast, weak social bonds tend to be ineffective at transmitting social behaviors. Educators in formal environments typically possess weak social bonds with their students. While this may be sufficient to transmit intellectual knowledge, it is

¹²⁹ Ibid, 100.

¹³⁰ Ibid, 100-101.

¹³¹ Ibid, 101-2.

insufficient for transmitting the type of behaviors of a committed religious practice. The home is typically the epicenter of the closest relational bonds a child has.

As the homes of many Latinx are “sites of struggle,” as Latina theologian, Nancy Hidalgo notes, “we find ourselves at home *en la lucha*, in an act of kneading.”¹³² Here it is possible to think of this act of kneading as a pressing together of home as a physical space (with the potential for sacramentality) in conjunction with the caregivers in these spaces who are responsible for teaching those in their charge to see the world as sacramental. In other words, finding God in all things, is not simply something one wakes up knowing how to do one day. Like all the characteristics of “transcenders,” it is learned behavior. One slowly acquires it by participating in and relating to more mature Latina “transcenders” and learning to see and confront the world as they do. In short, the physical home cannot be a *locus theologicus* outside of the relationships that encapsulate it.

Home as “sites of struggle” underscores that describing the home as sacramental, is not to paint it in a romantic light. For many Latinx the dank, gray residue of lack and depravity lingers in empty kitchen cabinets, rusty bottle caps, and worn, tattered belts. A home, as a physical space, can only be as sacramental as it is lifegiving for those who dwell in it. With all the potential beauty it holds for some, home for many – particularly in marginalized populations – is not the experience of wholesome communion, but a defiled environment that is tainted, not only by material scarcity, but by bitterness, anger and hopelessness – the symptoms of broken hearts and forcibly forsaken dreams.¹³³ Sometimes home isn’t sweet at all.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Jacqueline Hidalgo, “La Lucha for Home and La Lucha as Home: Latinx/a/o Theologies and Ecologies,” *Journal of Hispanic/Latino Theology* 21, no. 1 (2019): 1–21 (3).

Brazilian theologian Leonardo Boff articulates the fluidity of the sacramental imagination,

*...when I look inside a thing, I do not concentrate on the thing itself but on the value and meaningfulness it has for me. It ceases to be a mere thing and becomes a symbol for evoking, provoking, and convoking situations, reminiscences, and the meaning it incarnates and expresses...without ceasing to be in the world, speaks to us of another world of deeply felt experiences, unquestionable values, and the meaning that gives life richness and fullness.*¹³⁴

As Boff points out, objects in and of themselves are lifeless: inanimate. It is the stories, and interactions with items often involving relational others, that imbue upon the material a significance that goes beyond fiscal value. Likewise, a home, is transformed by the materials in them whose value – and story – is generally unknowable to outsiders of this space. This physical space, then, is sacramental not only because it is a mediator to the past, and the relationships within that past, but a house can indeed be used by God to recognize “the contradictions embedded in our own stories.”¹³⁵ Objects, in sum, can bring conscientization. The memories they trigger can be complex and fractured, like the homes in which Latinas dwell.

Relationships color the world – the homes – Latinas experience and (are) form(ed by). As the matriarchal core of the Latinx faith, Latina mothers are not responsible for merely passing on religion: they are passing on faith. A faith that the world is and can be good; that Latinx have a dignified place in it; and that Latinx are capable of changing what is not life-giving. These values will only be internalized if children trust their parents enough to believe (in) them. In speaking to a group of mothers, Pope Pius XII made the following remarks:

Surely no art is more difficult and strenuous than that of fashioning the souls of children, for those souls are so very tender, so easily disfigured through some thoughtless influence or wrong advice, so difficult to guide aright and so lightly led astray, more susceptible than wax to receive a disastrous and indelible impression through malignant influences or

¹³⁴ Leonardo Boff, *Sacraments of Life: Life of the Sacraments* (Washington, D.C.: Pastoral Press, 1987), 13.

¹³⁵ Hidalgo, “La Lucha for Home,” 5.

*culpable neglect. Fortunate the child whose mother stands by its cradle like a guardian angel to inspire and lead it in the path of goodness!*¹³⁶

According to neuro-anthropologist, John S. Allen, home is essentially about maintaining and enhancing well-being. In *Home: How Habitat Made Us Human*, he writes,

*for everyone, home begins, or should begin, in the powerful, empathy-driven social relationship between mother and child, as well as other significant relationships involving members of a shared household.*¹³⁷

Home not only serves the most fundamental physiological needs (bagged lunches included) of Latinas which require repetition and routine, but it also serves as the hub for one's most important relationships. These attachments, forged in the ordinary threads of daily life, heavily impact the formation of Latinas as individuals and community members. As Roberto Goizueta writes in *Caminemos con Jesus*, "seeking a connection to others and attempting to recover a sense of home is seeking a connection to [one's] very self."¹³⁸ Likewise, these bedrock relationships are integral to one's ability to bond with and nurture loving relationships throughout the whole of life with others outside of one's (nuclear, extended, blended, etc.) family. Moreover, these initial attachments *at the same time* facilitate learning what it means to be in relationship with God.¹³⁹

John Bowlby's attachment theory proposes that when one perceives dangers or threats (whether real or imaginary is immaterial in this context) or when one experiences distress or sorrow, one's biological attachment system activates so as to seek the proximity and protection of attachment figures – one's perceived guardians.¹⁴⁰ If the individual indeed feels protected and

¹³⁶ *Davanti a Questa*, 451.

¹³⁷ John S. Allen, *Home: How Habitat Made Us Human* (New York: Basic Books, 2015), 53.

¹³⁸ Roberto S. Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús: Toward a Hispanic/Latino Theology of Accompaniment* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1995), 2, as summarized by Natalia Marandiuc, *The Goodness of Home: Human and Divine Love and the Making of the Self* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2018), 4.

¹³⁹ Marandiuc, *Goodness of Home*, 74-94.

¹⁴⁰ For the main articulation of this theory, see John Bowlby, *Attachment and Loss*, vol. 1, International Psychoanalytical Library, 79 (London: Hogarth Press, 1969). For further bibliography, see also Inge Bretherton, "The

emotionally consoled in these crucial moments, the resultant state of the seeker is one of relief and security. Important here is that secure attachments establish positive mental representations for the respective people *and* one's own self. More specifically, after similar repeated experiences of need and vulnerability, the mind of the child/learner organizes these response patterns as a meaningful narrative of one as self, one's sense of efficacy, and one's value.

Therefore, significant others begin to forge upon the child a sense that the child is worthy of love and value. Attachment relationships, by their very nature link concrete social interactions – the safety and stability of the surrounding environment – with being worthy to receive empathy. In sum, the way in which significant others love, nurture and protect children in times of fear and anxiety deeply impacts how these children see, experience and interpret the surrounding physical environment. This perception of the world will, in time, alter the individual's recognition of their environment as engraced and God as benevolent self-gift.

Furthermore, research has found that human autonomy is, paradoxically enough, predicated upon strong dependence. Autonomy, or self-government, is directly proportional to the healthy dependence one has established with attachment figures.

*Attachments provide what has come to be known as a secure base from which one has the freedom and confidence to explore the world, knowing that there is a home base to return to at any moment.*¹⁴¹

Should the child/learner run into trouble, the internalized positive interactions with secure attachment figures activates the ability to self-soothe derivatively, maintaining internal mechanisms when the attachment partner is not physically available. The attachment system is in dynamic interplay with other cognitive-behavioral systems by inhibiting them when the

Origins of Attachment Theory: John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth," *Developmental Psychology* 28, no. 5 (1992): 759–75.

¹⁴¹ Marandiuc, *Goodness of Home*, 78.

individual is in distress. Only when the need for protection is met can the person access other mental resources so as to work, give, care, and in general, dedicate energy towards nonattachment activities. In short, for individuals to be contributing members of society – for Latinx to be active agents in the world – there is a need to be taught and reminded by secure attachments that one’s physical surroundings can be potentially safe spaces by making them so. Ergo, one’s homes and communities are worthy of stewardship because there is salvific value in the daily.

Markedly, there is general agreement among attachment researchers that the human self exists only in the context of other selves, and consequently, the development of the self is related to the accumulation of experiences of the self in close relationships. By virtue of these attachments, the child uses the functions of the adult mind to organize their own processes; in other words, the child “borrows” the mind of trusted others to shape their own perspectives. Relatedly, home constitutes an educational environment distinct from more formal spheres of education, reflecting a more natural place for learning and a more implicit level of teaching. Thus, spending days in close proximity with significant others transforms the home into a place where children effectively learn without effort. As receivers, children observe the matriarchs in their families carrying out an organic methodology of “storytelling, analyzing, liturgizing and strategizing” to problem solve the myriad of challenges that Latinx confront as an afflicted community. It is from them these matriarchs that the new generation learns not only what, but how, to think.

Drawing from Kierkegaard, Natalia Marandiuc, author of *The Goodness of Home*, asserts that the human need for companionship can only be satisfied within concrete, intimate

relationships that are life-giving, build up the self, and serve as a space where God personally rests. Through attachment bonds,

God holds the relation together by directing the love flow and uniting it to God's own love. Human love relationships, then, structurally include God's own self. Therefore, love attachments, I propose, co-create the self on account of how God indwells the relational space... this increase of power is the gift of divine grace bestowed on us by God's generous love in addition to the gift of our own constitutive nature...as God the Holy Spirit is present within human loves. Relationships are sacramental sites of divine grace and, in this sense, mediate our participation in God's own life of love.¹⁴²

Thus, unions of love, regardless of their nature, are a space of sanctification because the power of the Holy Spirit, which indwells in human love, heals, purifies and strengthens the communion and flourishes the individuals. However, relationships, as already noted herein, do not happen in a vacuum.

The Latinx child's meaning-making process of what it means to be Catholic is a communal, sensual, and ambiguous praxis that involves three central components or identities: the transmitter (mother or other attachment figures), the receiver (child), and the divine. This trifold structure forms a "devotional triangle," which acts as a helpful model for describing the typical process of transmitting faith, beliefs and practices.¹⁴³

The case study by María Castañeda-Liles in *Our Lady of Everyday Life: La Virgen de Guadalupe and the Catholic Imagination of Mexican Women in America*, will serve as a model to dissect the faith transmission process that typically occurs in the home mediated by the matriarchs with whom children have developed secure attachments. The transmission typically begins when the matriarch, as transmitter, teaches the child, as receiver, the religious narrative of the saint, in this case, *la Virgencita de Guadalupe*. Transmission is initiated, but does not typically center around origin narratives, but instead through the religious traditions within the

¹⁴² Ibid, 179.

¹⁴³ Castañeda-Liles, *Our Lady*.

home. By evoking emotions of joy and solidarity and relationships formed around the veneration of the saint, these traditions develop in the child a fondness for the divine as relative.¹⁴⁴ There is a heightened sense of the closeness and power of *La Virgencita* in times of difficulty within the home.¹⁴⁵ In other words, the divine becomes an asset to the receiver when the child witnesses how matriarchs invoke *la Virgencita* and how they included her amid the trials the family is experiencing. In sum, authentic faith transmission heavily relies on: (a) the consistent presence of the saint/value in the transmitter's life and home; (b) the weight placed on values undergirding the divine when the transmitter is facing times of trial; and (c) explicit recognition and gratitude given to the saint by the transmitter (and family/community) after intercession with *la Virgencita* leads to a successful resolution of the trial.¹⁴⁶ The loyalty and unconditional love that the transmitter places on the saint, regardless of the outcome of the situation, is pivotal to authentic transmission. Simply put, the relationship the transmitter has with *la Virgencita* is modelling to the receiver how to be in relationship.

Subtle, but indispensable here, is the need for the transmitter to communicate with the receiver the praxis (the interweaving of reflection and action) of daily devotions in good times and bad. While verbal exchange is fundamental to the learning processes of Latinx children, so are action and silence. Parents and all influential elders transmit all kinds of life lessons by way of daily actions and rituals. "It was the silence, the mystery, the teaching by doing that characterized my mother's style...My mother's body and everyday actions and movements were the narratives of her life."¹⁴⁷ Not only do these "performance narratives" detail explicit

¹⁴⁴ Ibid.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Ibid.

¹⁴⁷ Sofia A. Villenas, "Pedagogical Moments in the Borderland: Latina Mothers Teaching and Learning," in *Chicana/Latina Education in Everyday Life: Feminista Perspectives on Pedagogy and Epistemology*, ed. Dolores Delgado Bernal et al. (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2006), 147–59 (148).

expectations and procedures of quotidian life within the home and the surrounding community, they also expose and educate children to the Latinx experience in “remote contexts.” Such contexts involve, “the larger context of cultural and institutional relations of power and dominant language and ideologies supporting these.”¹⁴⁸ All of these are methods of transmission then serve as building blocks in the receiver’s Catholic imagination. These actions and rituals convey an intimate relationship between *la Virgencita* and the mother (as transmitter and representative of the community) and convey to the receiver familial and communal narratives and practices that are her inheritance as a valued member of the group.¹⁴⁹

As the receiver internalizes the narratives of *la Virgencita* as well as the saint’s place in the family, the receiver begins to associate the saint with the family and the practicing transmitter as a “devotional triangle.”¹⁵⁰ In accordance with attachment theory, because the transmitter (the mother) is already a secure attachment figure for the receiver, the pre-existing security with the caregiver, in addition to the validation provided by the Catholic Church (as communal attachment) serves to encourage the receiver to “accept” the divinity as a secure attachment as well.¹⁵¹ Moreover, the receiver’s attachment to the saint can be strengthened in multiple ways. Mimicking the transmitter’s reliance on the saint as a source of comfort in time of distress, the receiver may similarly perceive the saint as a stabilizing home base (a source of safety) drawing on past memories and narratives where the saint has interceded for other family members. If the transmitter is not present during moments of distress, the receiver will invoke the saint as a steadfast presence who can provide comfort in time of need. In other words, the receiver has

¹⁴⁸ Ibid, 150.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Castañeda-Liles, *Our Lady*.

¹⁵¹ This draws on Castañeda-Liles “devotional triangle” and Díaz-Estrella’s faith transmission process in “Conversation as Traditioning.”

activated self-soothing techniques learned from their secure caregiver and begins practicing rituals and devotions (prayer being one such example) on their own. As the transmitter begins to feel the presence and assistance of the divine, as she has seen her transmitter and community receive in the past; the daughter can then engage the world in bold confidence knowing that she is protected despite any distress she might encounter. At this point in the faith transmission process, the child has accepted the faith and has incorporated the received faith into her own life.

Notably, the relationship between the mother and daughter is simultaneously strengthened as they share a developing/evolving devotion to *la Virgencita*. As the receiver incorporates the saint into her own ways of knowing the world and understanding her place in *Guadalupe's* story and, reciprocally, *Lupita's* place in hers, a deeper sense of emotional attachment to both *la Virgencita* and the transmitter develops in the receiver. What's more, the bond between the transmitter, receiver, and saint do not wither once the transmitter dies. Rather, these ties mature and continue to form part of the receiver's religious narrative which they will draw on as they reinterpret and transmit the story of Guadalupe as a faithful family member to later generations. The "devotional triangle" therefore continues to replicate with every new generation, incorporating older devotional triangles into new ones.¹⁵²

Important to the idea of home as a community, notice that the aforementioned example of Guadalupe focuses on a devotion to her, instead of the rituals and practices done in her honor. These rituals cannot be minimized or dismissed, these beautiful acts highlight the home space as a domestic church and, through these rituals, one can better understand the negotiation and reinterpretation process that spans generations. Remarkably, the way the receiver imagines and relates to the saint is not fixed nor are devotional practices necessarily highly structured. In

¹⁵² Castañeda-Liles (*Our Lady*) drawing on Robert A. Orsi, *Thank You, St. Jude: Women's Devotion to the Patron Saint of Hopeless Causes* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1996).

general, receivers are (re)socialized into devotions as context allows and experiences fluctuate and influence the transmitter and receiver's understanding and perception of life change.¹⁵³ As a result, the community and the relationships that enhance faith in the divine and facilitate faith transmission, as can be seen in Castañeda-Liles's study, were most often remembered as taking place in safe spaces where conversations and story-telling narratives about critical periods in the family's history.¹⁵⁴

In sum, it is in the context of lifegiving relationships that the Catholic imagination can engage the sacred: beliefs and secure attachments create a space for engaging and experiencing a relationship with the divine. If close bonds and secure attachments are indeed vital in passing on behavior, the home is where these exist. The foregoing discussing has explored some concrete ways in which matriarchs pass on the religious behavior they practice. Formal educational settings have no way to replicate the close personal bonds and attachments that exist within the home.

2.5 Home as a Space of Negotiation

One additional characteristic of "transcenders" is their comfort level with paradoxes. They do not tend to think in black and white terms. In the context of faith transmission, there comes a crucial stage, generally in the adolescent years, where the receivers make the faith their own and the specifics of this stage will be explored in much greater detail in Chapter Three. The receivers apply their own worldview to the faith tradition they have been taught and which has been modeled for them. This process necessarily involves conflict that is apparent in every era and with every new generation. When the faith transmitters are comfortable with paradox and

¹⁵³ Castañeda-Liles, *Our Lady*.

¹⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

mystery and ambiguity as is the case with “transcenders,” the recipients feel a great deal more leeway to accept the existence of conflict between their own worldview and that of their parents.

A longitudinal study conducted by sociologists Bengton, Putney and Harris determined that the faith transmission process generally occurs between the ages of 4-14.¹⁵⁵ The adolescent brain develops the ability to think abstractly and long-term, to set goals, to compare the self with peers, and begins to yearn for independence from the control of her primary caregivers.¹⁵⁶ Ironically, her desire for autonomy is possible, as noted earlier, because of secure attachments with caregivers. Moreover, adolescent receivers intuitively are drawing on their matriarchs’ aforementioned methodology to negotiate that autonomy; to discover how the various wells of information in their lives serve to (de/re)construct their narratives.

*The parents’ ministry of evangelization and catechesis ought to play a part in their children’s lives also during adolescence and youth, when the children, as often happens, challenge or even reject the Christian faith received in earlier years...parents must face with courage and great interior serenity the difficulties that their ministry of evangelization sometimes encounters in their own children.*¹⁵⁷

As children reach adolescence, the educational task of the mother shifts in various ways. The adolescent is developing an identity independent of the parents and of the wider home in general. Critical dialogue in the home becomes essential. The receivers, formerly socialized into particular sets of religious beliefs and parameters based on context and historical narrative, are now turning their conscious faculties towards these beliefs.

It becomes important to highlight the fluid nature of the Catholic imagination, which develops and evolves over the transmitter and receiver’s lifetime, to the child who has

¹⁵⁵ Vern L. Bengtson, Norella M. Putney, and Susan Cannon Harris, *Families and Faith: How Religion Is Passed Down Across Generations* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2017).

¹⁵⁶ CHOC, “Child Development Guide: 13-18 Years (Adolescent),” *Child Development: Ages and Stages*, last modified 2020, accessed November 1, 2020, <https://www.choc.org/primary-care/ages-stages/13-to-18-years/>.

¹⁵⁷ *Familiaris Consortio*, §42.

understood faith as an inherited and fixed reality thus far. More than merely discussing the present questions and concerns of the child though is that Latinas actively engage the child in the practice of conscientization, as they have been modelling it, because the truth is, that this place of negotiation is where the Latinx child will make their home.

What is urgent to recognize here is that the praxis of negotiation happens at the individual and communal level at the same time. New and shifting contexts stimulate Latinas to see reality and themselves in new ways; questioning and being inculcated with values and worldviews from both cultures. She will inevitably become a new hybrid – a new category of identity. Anzaldúa writes,

*we are forced (or choose) to live in categories that defy binaries of gender, race, class, and sexuality. Living in intersections, in cusps, we must constantly operate in a negotiation mode...we are caught between cultures and can simultaneously be insiders, outsiders, and other-siders.*¹⁵⁸

As primary transmitters, collectively and in dialogue, Latinas must assist in the process of pruning and planting. That is, Latinas must facilitate family and community members as they process how to creatively adapt essential values that sustain and stabilize them as unique individuals and at the same time, our community as one body in transition. The Latinx family, is in a constant evolving process of creating and constructing a pedagogy that meets the needs of their particular intergenerational family – they who live in “the borderlands...learning between mothers and daughters ‘in the muddle of conflicting values, symbols and nuances’ of the past and present in the context of historicized conditions.”¹⁵⁹ This creative meaning-making process is challenging because this practice of negotiation goes beyond the arbitration of values, and furthermore, transgresses into the modification of parent-child dynamics. The breaking away of

¹⁵⁸ Gloria E. Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark = Luz En Lo Oscuro: Rewriting Identity, Spirituality, Reality*, ed. Analouse Keating (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2015), 71.

¹⁵⁹ Villenas, “Pedagogical Moments,” 151.

previous patterns requires that both, the parent and child, struggle to understand each other's position and reinvent themselves (and their relationship as a living narrative) through change and continuity.¹⁶⁰

Negotiating the spiritual and the cultural is the struggle of seeking harmony within the present environment. The flexibility that negotiation requires alongside the progress it promises enables all participating members to feel a strong sense of belonging amid the discomfort of emerging heterogeneous experiences and perspectives that leaves the Latino/a in a place that Anzaldúa calls *Nepantla*, a word meaning "the place of no place." Drawing on Victor Turner's theory of liminal space, who modified Arnold van Gennep's concept of liminality to describe a zone of impetuous transition, the point of contact between the worlds of nature and spirits, for humans and the divine, facilitates the bridging and joining of all the worlds Latinas inhabit.¹⁶¹ This is a site of transformation, on the way to "equilibrium between the outer expression of change and your inner relationship to it."¹⁶²

According to Anzaldúa, equilibrium requires that a person first be dismembered. Because the world is already constructed when one enters it, every individual must reconstruct it by way of mediating and negotiating her position between and amongst cultures that she simultaneously claims. Therefore, to create is to collaborate. This process demands the reconciliation of conflicting ideas that draw us into a higher awareness and deeper connection with ourselves, our materials, and our communities. Because these negotiations and (re)constructions are always in progress throughout our lifetimes, our world is always in a state of (de)composition.¹⁶³

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 150.

¹⁶¹ Anzaldúa, *Light in the Dark*, 28.

¹⁶² Ibid, 127.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 43.

The Latina, as matriarchal core, is able to – in partnership with God and her community of Latinas – catapult her family and community into conceiving and forging innovative and inclusive practices and beliefs that initiate lifegiving changes in our personal and collective identity and propel us into new avenues of growth. Notice the intentional verbiage here: the Latina is a leader not through coercion but through love and affirmation. All the while, she acknowledges that she and those in her care are riddled with new and old cracks, not to shame, but to remind one another of the potential these crevices hold to dismember individuals once more should the present conceptualization become a comfortable cocoon. Chaos and disintegration will lead to a re-organization – a cyclical rebirth.

Conclusion

This chapter has proposed that the home more than any other social location is the ideal place for faith transmission to occur. The home is and should be the *locus theologicus*. The argument begins by noting that even the church has historically been supportive of this position. The Magisterium underscores again and again the valuable and essential place of the home in faith transmission as the domestic church. When one understands faith transmission rightly as primarily a set of practices and behaviors that couple with beliefs, rather than simply a set of declarative beliefs, there becomes little question that the home is the ideal social location where such faith transmission should occur.

Mature religious practitioners and believers need not be limited to those with a distinctive religious vocation. Maslow's Theory Z provides the useful concept of "transcenders," who exhibit mature religious traits. The Cuban-American home, which forms the primary object of this dissertation, contains first-generation Cuban *abuelas* who so embody the characteristics of "transcenders" that there can be little argument that these figures represent mature religious

believers. In the process of faith transmission, it is important to have mature religious believers available as models for the faith receivers. Not only *abuelas*, but many of the mothers themselves exhibited such characteristics indicative of a mature faith. For faith transmission to be effective, children need to grow and develop in their faith practices and beliefs through the years prior to leaving their family of origin and the presence of mature believers in the home makes that possible.

The home possesses many other advantages as an ideal *locus theologicus*. The home is nestled in *lo cotidiano*. For years, Latina theologians have emphasized the importance of *lo cotidiano* in the Latin American Catholic tradition, which almost by definition is confined to the physical, mundane space of the home. Moreover, not only does the home possess mature religious believers who can serve as models, the home is where children most often have their closest relational bonds. If faith transmission is about practice and behaviors, it is only those with a close relational bond who are capable of transmitting behavior. When children reach adolescence, they begin to engage in a negotiation process as they make their religious faith their own. This process is much easier to do in the context of the home where each family member has gone through this process themselves and can share it openly and freely than in the context of formal religious education where official doctrine appears as inflexible.

Each of these features of the home combine to support the idea that the home is an ideal social location for faith transmission. The practical experience of this process within Cuban-American homes is further proof of its value.

3.0 CHAPTER THREE: Educating Through Witness

With the primary actors (mothers) centered in their social space (the home), a close examination of the faith formation process is warranted. Religious socialization draws on many of the same social processes involved in general socialization, which should not be surprising. This makes it possible to draw upon sociological literature and corresponding theories related to general socialization for understanding religious socialization.

There are three primary socializing processes that this chapter focuses on: faith models among secure attachment figures; active participation in faith practices; and cognitive negotiation of sensitive moral social issues. The research studies explored herein demonstrate the ways in which parents within traditional American families are struggling in each of these areas. The subject population for this dissertation involves a subset of the population (Cuban-American Latinas), who have been able to maintain these socialization processes in the religious sphere made possible by the confluence of various historical circumstances. This provides hope that this minority population may provide a type of template that the Church might encourage traditional American families to emulate.

3.1 The Failure of Religious Socialization in Caucasian American Families

Chapter One identified the shifting religious landscape that reflects a growing trend, which has youth abandoning the religious traditions of their parents at a staggering pace. Children and adolescents are not adopting and embracing the faith traditions of their parents at the levels that this took place in earlier generations. The research cited in Chapter One accounts for the meteoric rise in “nones” and “dones” in recent years, especially skewed towards the younger generations. Though the incline has only become steeper, even 15 years ago Christian

Smith argued that this statistical research only scratched the surface of the problem.¹⁶⁴ While “millions of religious Americans... still tell researchers that they believe in God,” the actual content and character of the beliefs and practices of these Americans falls far short of the historical norms established by the religious faiths themselves.¹⁶⁵

What Smith saw under the hood in 2006, appears on the surface in more recent sociological surveys. The sobering conclusion Smith draws is that “the agents of religious socialization in U.S. historical faith traditions are now generally not succeeding at their tasks...”¹⁶⁶ Classical secularization theory argued that this was inevitable.¹⁶⁷ Human society, the theory holds, will basically educate itself out of religion. However, critics of classical secularization theory argue that something else entirely is taking place.¹⁶⁸

If religious socialization is floundering, the question raises questions about the where, and how this is happening. In order to answer this question, it will be helpful to break down the process of religious socialization into two distinct levels. There is the primary socialization that happens within the context of the home and the secondary socialization that happens in the context of the institutional church, including Catholic school as an arm of the institutional church.¹⁶⁹ If there has been some type of breakdown in the socialization process, there is reason to suspect that both areas of socialization have been affected in some dramatic way.

In the realm of secondary socialization, Perl and Gray’s recent research on the effects of

¹⁶⁴ Christian Smith, “Is Moralistic Therapeutic Deism the New Religion of American Youth?: Implications for the Challenge of Religious Socialization and Reproduction,” in *Passing on the Faith: Transforming Traditions for the Next Generation of Jews, Christians, and Muslims*, ed. James Heft, Abrahamica Dialogue Series 5 (New York: Fordham University Press, 2006).

¹⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 57.

¹⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁶⁷ Thomas Luckmann, *The Invisible Religion: The Problem of Modern Society* (New York: Macmillan, 1967).

¹⁶⁸ Philip S. Gorski, “Historicizing the Secularization Debate: An Agenda for Research,” in *Handbook of the Sociology of Religion*, ed. Michele Dillon (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 110–22 (112–13).

¹⁶⁹ Gecas, “Socialization,” 2856–60.

Catholic schooling on religious commitment point toward social networks and peer associations as the key factors.¹⁷⁰ In their research, children who have built a social network with strong ties to the Catholic faith are the most likely to continue with high levels of faith commitment.¹⁷¹ If there have been disruptions to the ability of children to develop social networks rooted in their faith tradition, this would be another potential explanation for the current crisis. However, because this secondary socialization takes place outside of the home, it falls outside of the scope of this present dissertation and constitutes a potential topic for future research that will not be explored herein.

Returning to primary socialization, it is this domain where Smith has focused his attention.¹⁷² He identifies two clear ruptures in the primary socialization process which he argues may constitute the source of the problem: 1) the level of religious commitment and religious involvement of the parents,¹⁷³ and 2) the level of substantive communication between the children and the parents.¹⁷⁴ In other words, Smith identified subtle but pivotal differences between twenty-first century parenting requirements in relation to the socializing of children compared to earlier twentieth century parents when religiosity was a communal commitment.

In conducting the qualitative research on two generations of Cuban-American Latinas for this dissertation, it has become apparent that the chance confluence of specific historical and sociological circumstances has produced a unique cultural environment absent from the forces that have stymied traditional religious socialization in the aggregate American households that Smith was studying.¹⁷⁵ The upshot of this observation is that the pain and struggle that has

¹⁷⁰ Perl and Gray, "Catholic Schooling."

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 278.

¹⁷² Smith, "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism."

¹⁷³ Ibid, 69.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid, 70-71.

¹⁷⁵ This is not to say that the *National Study of Youth and Religion* upon which Smith based his research ignored minority groups. The study's methodology went above and beyond in an effort to include minority groups in the

characterized the Cuban American experience, from the religious persecution and oppression in Cuba, to the experience of immigration and inhabiting a liminal space in the U.S. offers hope and healing for the Catholic Church as a whole.

This chapter explores the primary socialization process and the faith transmission that accompanies it noting essential differences between the aggregate American and Cuban American experiences of Catholic socialization.¹⁷⁶ The evaluative lens throughout is the level of success that the religious socialization achieves. The point is in no way to say that Cuban Americans do things better and so everyone else should follow their lead. Rather, that a set of unforeseen external circumstances coalesced within the Cuban American community that has had such a positive effect upon primary religious socialization that affords an opportunity for the Catholic Church to learn possibilities for a new model of primary religious socialization.

3.1.1 The Religious Socialization Process Under a Microscope

These factors that Smith has identified as problematic in the faith transmission process fit squarely with Primary Socialization Theory as articulated by Oetting and Donnermeyer and its conceptualization of how socialization processes like faith transmission occur.¹⁷⁷ Within this model, faith practice is primarily a normative social behavior that is learned through interactions with family, peers and school, with the focus, in the context of this dissertation, being on the

study. But while there was no shortage of Latinx representation in the study, zeroing in on the cultural differences within the Latinx community itself would have been beyond the scope of that study.

¹⁷⁶ As mentioned above, the focus here is on the primary socialization that takes place in the home rather than on the secondary religious socialization which is done by the institutional church or the Catholic schools. That secondary socialization process is just as important but will be handicapped if the primary religious socialization process is stunted. While this latter process falls outside the scope of this dissertation, an essential part of the argument of this dissertation presented in chapters 1 and 2 was that the role of primary religious socialization has been downplayed in the Catholic Church in the U.S. in favor of the secondary religious socialization process, over which the institutional church has more direct control.

¹⁷⁷ Eugene R. Oetting and Joseph F. Donnermeyer, "Primary Socialization Theory: The Etiology of Drug Use and Deviance. I," *Substance Use & Misuse* 33 (1998): 995–1026.

family. Within this theory the strength of the bonds between the mother as the faith transmitter and the daughter as the faith receiver constitute a crucial factor in the effectiveness of the transmission. Weak family bonds increase the likelihood that peer groups will dominate the socialization process. When the local community is fairly homogeneous in its faith commitments (as was the case in many Latin American countries in the 1950's where Catholics constituted over 90% of the population), such peer groups may reinforce rather than override the faith transmission process begun in the family. In the religiously diverse communities in the U.S. in the 21st century, however, such reinforcement becomes less and less likely. A closer look at the social bonds between daughters and their older family members is warranted.

A. Secure Attachments and Family Types

The socialization process begins with the secure attachment between mother and daughter who share a negotiable emotional bond and a network of responsibilities.¹⁷⁸ However, in their seminal study on the topic, Schaffer and Emerson have noted that secure attachment to one single person is not a necessary first step in a child's development and that 29% of one study's sample made secure attachments to more than one individual with 10% making secure attachments to more than five caregivers whether they be parents, grandparents, older siblings or even neighbors.¹⁷⁹ By 18-months of age, 87% of children have formed secure attachments to more than one individual.¹⁸⁰ The literature is filled with researchers correcting the unsupported notion that attachment is primarily to one single object.¹⁸¹ The much later *identification process*,

¹⁷⁸ Heidi Keller, "Universality Claim of Attachment Theory: Children's Socioemotional Development Across Cultures," *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences* 115, no. 45 (2018): 11414–11419.

¹⁷⁹ Heinz Rudolph Schaffer and Peggy E. Emerson, *The Development of Social Attachments in Infancy*, Monographs of the Society for Research in Child Development Vol. 29, No. 3 (New York: Kraus, 1976), 30.

¹⁸⁰ *Ibid*, 30.

¹⁸¹ Michael Lewis, "Does Attachment Imply a Relationship or Multiple Relationships," *Psychological Inquiry* 5 (1994): 47–51.

where the child internalizes and adopts the beliefs, values, and behaviors of others, is not limited in its focus to the parents, but applies to attachment figures in general.¹⁸²

When it comes to the process of socialization, researchers have had a blind spot with regards to the family dynamics. Park and Ecklund have pointed out that in most sociological studies, the term “family” has focused only on the mother and father which constitute the traditional “nuclear family” in American society.¹⁸³ Many cultural groups, however, fall outside of this industrialized societal norm that operates in much of the U.S. Asian and Latinx families have an entirely different family structure that constitutes the norm. In these cultural groups, which fit the wider pattern of agricultural societies, extended kin members often live under the same roof and show economic interdependence among one another.¹⁸⁴ In such family structures, the grandmother (*abuela*) or the aunt (*tía*) commonly helps in raising the children, which makes them frequent attachment figures for children as well. One of the interviewees, Carmen, made the following relevant comment at one point in the interview, “As a Latina, you should know that when you're a woman and you've had a child and they're young and you've got *abuelas* and *tías*, they all take care of the baby.”¹⁸⁵

Christian Smith had argued that one of the problems in religious socialization lay in the weaker levels of religious commitment of the parents themselves. In every era there has always been a sort of ebb and flow in levels of faith commitment. Just because some members of the

¹⁸² Viktor Gecas and Peter Burke, “Self and Identity,” in *Sociological Perspectives on Social Psychology*, ed. S. James House, Gary Alan Fine, and Karen S. Cook (New York: Allyn and Bacon, 1995), 41–67.

¹⁸³ Jerry Z. Park and Elaine Howard Ecklund, “Negotiating Continuity: Family and Religious Socialization for Second-Generation Asian Americans,” *The Sociological Quarterly* 48 (2007): 93–118 (94).

¹⁸⁴ Betty Yorburg, “The Nuclear and the Extended Family: An Area of Conceptual Confusion,” *Journal of Comparative Family Studies* 6 (1975): 5–14 (9).

¹⁸⁵ María makes a similar comment contrasting the norm in Cuba with that in America. “But in Cuba you live, with the situation that exists, you live a lot with the parents.”

faith community who still desire to pass on that faith to the next generation have a low level of faith commitment themselves, does that necessarily disrupt the entire process.

In the aggregate American nuclear family, that would certainly be the case. If the child engages in the identification process on the religious level, adopting the values, beliefs and behaviors of the weakly committed parents will result in a failed religious socialization process. In a nuclear family in a typical agricultural society, such as a Cuban-American family, the options for identification are much more numerous. The child has exposure not only to the devotional life of the parents, but to that of the grandparents and the aunts and uncles. More importantly, it is not just that these children have exposure to these practices, but the secure attachments they have developed to these individuals make them desired objects of identification for the child.

Once again, it is the interviewee Carmen who provides clarification in this regard. She makes this point in contrasting the experience of her first-born child, who grew up with this type of agricultural nuclear family, with her second child, who grew up in an industrialized nuclear family.

So, in reality, my first child was more into what is our home, our religion, and our faith, because she grew up with my grandmother and my aunt and my mother and I. It's been different for my 18-year-old because by the time my 18-year-old came, my grandmother had passed away. My mother worked full time and yeah, she got a little bit of what family is, but not as much as the first one.

This point came through most clearly in the interview with Eugenia. There is no doubt the parents of all of the mothers whom I interviewed wanted to pass on the Catholic faith to their children. It seems doubtful they would have sent them to Catholic school otherwise and all five attended Catholic school. Eugenia describes her mother as non-practicing, but that fact did not really matter to Eugenia when asked about her faith identity, "... desde niña mi mamá nunca fue

*muy activa en la religión católica. Fue más bien mi abuela, mi abuela tenía un cuadro de San Juan Bosco siempre en su cuarto...*¹⁸⁶

Religious behavior and experience often seem to provide the same type of comfort and safety for some as an attachment figure. Some have even gone so far as to argue for God as a substitute attachment figure.¹⁸⁷ The discussion of devotional triangles in Chapter Two goes into detail about how saints can act as substitute attachment figures in the absence of the mother. When life confronts Eugenia in threatening and discomfoting ways, turning to her mother she finds no type of religious practice there to emulate. Eugenia's grandmother acts as a substitute model for religious identity, to whom Eugenia can look for guidance. Were Eugenia part of family without such a social dynamic, she would have no model for religious practice and behavior.

When speaking of her mother, Eugenia says, "*Yo no recuerdo haber ido con mi mamá a una misa, o una iglesia.*"¹⁸⁸ However, this was just an afterthought in her description of her faith identity. The focus was almost entirely on the role her grandmother played in shaping her current faith identity. Eugenia spoke of a picture of San Juan Bosco that her grandmother always had in her room and her constant daily practice of placing flowers before his image and praying to San Juan Bosco. When it came to her religious identification, it was clear that Eugenia's mother played a very minor role, whereas her grandmother played an outsized role. Among the mothers interviewed for this dissertation, the only thing unique about Eugenia's experience with

¹⁸⁶ "...since I was a child my mother was never very active in the Catholic religion. It was rather my grandmother; my grandmother always had a painting of Saint John Bosco in her room..."

¹⁸⁷ Lee A. Kirkpatrick, *Attachment, Evolution, and the Psychology of Religion* (New York: The Guilford Press, 2005).

¹⁸⁸ "I do not remember having gone with my mother to mass or church."

her grandmother was how stark the contrast was between the faith of her mother and her grandmother.

In cases where the parents are devout and committed to their faith, the extended kin do not act as a substitute model for the child but play the role of reinforcers of the models' observable in the parents.¹⁸⁹ This is in no way to minimize the role parents play in the religious socialization of their children. It remains true that "by far and away the best social predictor of the religious identities, commitments, and involvements of youth is the religious identities, commitments, and involvements of their parents."¹⁹⁰ But this supplementary and reinforcement role played by these extended kin members has been documented in the Asian American community and this dissertation highlights the wider applicability of those results to other ethnic groups with similar family structures rooted in agrarian societies.¹⁹¹

When the subject of Catholic identity came up in Charito's interview, her very first statements began with her grandmother. She started by saying,

*Yo soy católica, porque desde mi abuelita la única que conocí, Mexicana, ella iba de visita a Cuba y tenía tan arraigado el deseo... porque era muy católica, extremadamente católica. Nos hacía arrodillar para rezar con ella.*¹⁹²

What is interesting is that in Charito's case, both her father and her mother were practicing Catholics. She talks about kneeling down in front of the church altar next to her father and the inspiration that her mother was to her in her love and devotion for the Virgin. Nevertheless, the first and last memories that Charito describes in discussing her Catholic identity are those of her grandmother.

¹⁸⁹ Park and Ecklund, "Negotiating Continuity," 99.

¹⁹⁰ Smith, "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism," 69.

¹⁹¹ Park and Ecklund, "Negotiating Continuity."

¹⁹² "I am Catholic, because my grandmother, the only one I have known, a Mexican, she was visiting Cuba and had such a deep-rooted desire ... because she was very Catholic, extremely Catholic. She made us kneel to pray with her."

Since the selection process targeted mothers based primarily upon their high level of commitment to the faith, it may be even more interesting that this pattern is not exclusive to the mothers but appears with their daughters as well. Caridad's daughter, Carmen, initially reflexively credited her Catholic school as the primary transmitter of faith for her. As she had the opportunity to articulate and reflect upon this process, she quickly corrected any misperception in this regard. "More important was the faith that I was taught at home, which had to do with my grandmother, my aunt, and my mother. The three most important components in my life." Carmen sees the women in her life, her caregivers, her attachment figures as the object of her faith identification. When she identifies herself with her faith, she identifies with these three women and their respective faiths. She speaks admiringly of how "...no matter what the trials or tribulations that they faced in life they always saw the best side of it because of the faith they had." When she speaks of her aunt's death, she notes that she "was a very, very important person in my life." Likewise, Fátima states that her faith is directly connected to her mother, María,

Mi madre es una católica por excelencia, de los que van a misa y...se conectaba con todos los muchachos. Porque había que ir a misa, nada era más importante. O sea para ella eso era lo que nos transmitió a nosotros. Llegó a este país, y había que ir a misa. Muchas de las cosas que yo me involucraba con la Virgen de la Caridad, lo hice por ella. Porque sabía que para ella era algo muy importante que nosotros estuviéramos ahí. Y yo empecé por ella, para no decirle que no.¹⁹³

In these stories and these examples that these women related of their grandmothers and aunts, they do not describe them as sitting them down and teaching them how to pray or how to

¹⁹³ "My mother is a Catholic par excellence, one of those who goes to mass and... she connected with all the kids. Because you had to go to mass, nothing was more important. That was what she transmitted to us. I came to this country, and had to go to mass. Many of the things that I got involved with, such as the Virgin of Charity, I did for her. Because I knew that it was very important to her that we were there. I started for her, so as not to say no to her."

build an altar or pray to a saint. These attachment figures simply engage in behaviors that the children observe and want to emulate. This behavioral modeling is precisely the key element Primary Socialization Theory argues is central to the socialization process. No formal teaching or even informal instruction is taking place in this initial stage of the faith transmission process.

One particularly clear example of this appears in the interview with Lourdes, the daughter of Eugenia. She recalled,

And then my mom, she had a..., a little altar. I remember also an old, very old that we still have it to this day, picture frame that she had in her bedroom that said, 'Where there is faith, there is God. Where there is God, there is love and where there is love... Or where there is faith, there is love, where there is love, there is God, and where there is God, there's no need for anything else.' It was in Spanish. And that frame hung in my parents' bedroom when I was a kid. And to this day I remember it, because I remember lying in bed, lying in my mom's bed, watching her put on makeup and looking over and reading the frame that says, 'Where there's God, there's...'

In the course of interviewing these Cuban-American women it became abundantly clear that the type of behavioral modeling that Primary Socialization Theory highlights was how these women viewed the process of religious socialization. Fátima provides the clearest description of this position.

Yo creo que la fe no se enseña. Tú transmites la fe, la transmites en tus actos, en la iglesia, en el que amanece diariamente y das gracias a Dios por lo que tienes, o cuando estas en un problema o dificultad, le pides a Dios ayuda. La fe tú no puedes enseñar, tú enseñas que dos más dos es cuatro pero no puedes decirle este es Dios. Tú no puedes decirle este muñequito que está aquí es Dios, porque no es así. Es algo espiritual, Dios está en espíritu, tienes que creer o no va a creer. La fe es la fe. Como tú le transmites tu misma, en tu manera de ser, yo creo que en los casos de apuro, donde más problemas tienes es donde más tienes la fe. Con esa presión no pierdes la esperanza, no pierdes la alegría a pesar de todos los problemas, tú dices 'Dios, yo sé que cuando más estoy...tú me llevas de la mano'. No es algo que tú puedas decir, tienes que transmitirla de otra manera.¹⁹⁴

¹⁹⁴ "I believe that faith is not taught. You transmit the faith, you transmit it in your actions, in the church, in waking up daily and thanking God for what you have, or when you are in a problem or difficulty, you ask God for help. You cannot teach faith; you teach that two plus two is four, but you cannot tell a child that 'this doll' here is God because it's not like that. It is something spiritual, God is in spirit, you have to believe or you will not believe. Faith is faith. As you transmit yourself, in your way of being, I believe that in times of trouble, when you have the most problems,

María makes a similar comment, "...bueno tienen fe porque lo tienen pero es porque ellas han vivido en ese ambiente... Ellas han vivido en ese ambiente."¹⁹⁵ At first Tessie speaks as if her mom taught her the faith, "I have continued to teach [my children] just like my mom taught me everything about being a good Catholic and a good person overall." Then it appears she realizes what this might imply and clarifies, "But my mom taught more even through her actions than through talking. My parents weren't big speech people that would give lectures, per se. My mom taught me through action, like what's right and what's wrong and giving some examples..."

This observation about the different conceptualizations of a nuclear family highlights the fact that the forces that undermine successful religious socialization need not be as nefarious as the "culture of therapeutic individualism" or the "mass-consumer capitalism" that Smith and Denton highlight.¹⁹⁶ Something as simple as an underlying structural shift in the make-up of the nuclear family marked by the shift from an agrarian to an industrialized society can have a profound impact on the success of religious socialization. This is just one of numerous external sociological factors that the church can now identify as a piece in the larger puzzle that can serve to weaken or strengthen the primary religious socialization process.

B. A Vibrant Faith Worth Emulating

One of the points that Christian Smith makes in explaining the failure of religious socialization is that many of the parents who were attempting to pass on their own faith tradition had very low levels of commitment themselves to their faith traditions. This inconsistency between a high view of the importance of religion and a low commitment to religion is much

it is then when you have the most faith. Under pressure you don't lose hope, you don't lose joy despite all the problems, you say 'God, I know that when I am most ... you take me by the hand.' It is not something you can say, you have to transmit it another way."

¹⁹⁵ "...well, they have faith because they have it but it is because they have lived in that environment ... They have lived in that environment."

¹⁹⁶ Smith and Denton, *Soul Searching*, 172-79.

more common than one might think. In a 2006 study focused on the effects of such consistency in the religious socialization process, a full 30% of the parents showed low levels of religious commitment coupled with the view that religion is “very important.”¹⁹⁷ This study demonstrated that this type of inconsistency in beliefs and behaviors seriously undermines the religious socialization process.

Such inconsistency appeared in the case of Eugenia’s mother, where Eugenia noted the lack of religious devotion on the part of her mother despite the fact that she specifically identifies her mother as the parent who enrolled her in Catholic school. Smith explains this apparent dichotomy by a utilitarian view of religious faith on the part of the parents.¹⁹⁸ The parents recognize the value of religion in producing moral, upstanding and contributing members of society. The parents desire these positive results for their children and refer to their loose connection to the religion of their childhood. But these parents, who see value in a spiritual life for their children, do not value that same spiritual life for themselves.¹⁹⁹

One of Smith’s colleagues at Notre Dame, Brandon Vaidyanathan, put Smith’s hypothesis to the test in another way in 2011.²⁰⁰ Using the *National Study of Youth and Religion*’s data, he tested whether parental religiosity had a primary effect on their children’s religiosity or whether this was just an indirect effect that could be accounted for by other mediating agents of socialization. Vaidyanathan’s study concluded that parental religiosity has a persistent direct effect on the religiosity of their children and not an indirect effect as some have

¹⁹⁷ Christopher D. Bader and Scott A. Desmond, “Do as I Say and as I Do: The Effects of Consistent Parental Beliefs and Behaviors upon Religious Transmission,” *Sociology of Religion* 67 (2006): 313–329.

¹⁹⁸ Smith, “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism,” 61.

¹⁹⁹ By way of contrast, the Cuban-American mothers who participated in the interviews considered a high level of faith commitment to be essential to the success of the religious socialization of their children. María expressed how important it is that the children see for themselves that their parents are in love with the faith.

²⁰⁰ Brandon Vaidyanathan, “Religious Resources or Differential Returns?: Early Religious Socialization and Declining Attendance in Emerging Adulthood,” *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* 50 (2011): 366–87.

argued.²⁰¹

Another factor that Vaidyanathan was studying was the differential rates of declining religious service attendance across different faith traditions. One feature that stood out immediately to Vaidyanathan was that both measures that he used for parental religiosity, parental religious participation and parental religious environment, were at the lowest levels for Catholics across the Christian traditions studied. Accordingly, the Catholic tradition had the highest levels of attrition, for the most part. The important exception will be discussed further below. One of the daughters interviewed for this dissertation, Fátima, expressed the problem of religious socialization by a member of the faith community with a low level of commitment quite well.

Como tú vas a transmitirle a un hijo tu fe en María si tú aunque sea no vas ni una vez al año a darle las gracias. Es muy difícil, como tú vas a transmitir la fe si a ti no te ven ni aunque sea una vez arrodillarte para pedir perdón o a dar gracias. Es un poco difícil transmitir la fe sin practicarla. Como el médico que quiere ver al paciente por teléfono, que ahora está muy de moda. Como va a haber esa empatía, la confianza que tú tengas con el médico, se pierde, esos lazos se rompen.²⁰²

By contrast, the level of religious commitment in the Cuban-American mothers interviewed for this dissertation was extreme. Admittedly, the selection process specifically selected participants with higher than normal levels of religious commitment, but that only accounts for a small portion of the levels of commitment of these women. Elena describes her involvement in the church as follows.

I am very active in my church. So as I told you, I think, I believe that I'm three things: disciple, missionary and soldier. I teach CCD, I prepare teens, adolescents for confirmation and I have to be the same thing that I am asking them to become.

²⁰¹ Ibid, 384.

²⁰² "How are you going to transmit to a child your faith in Mary if you don't even go once a year to thank her. It is very difficult, how are you going to transmit the faith if they do not see you kneel down to ask for forgiveness or give thanks even once. It is a bit difficult to pass on the faith without practicing it. Like the doctor who wants to see the patient over the phone, which is now very fashionable. How can there be that empathy? The trust that you have with the doctor is lost; those ties are broken."

So I'm a dynamic catholic, always active, I do a lot of praying, studying the word, I think I am full of the Holy Spirit. I belong to a charismatic group. I'm a CCD teacher, I belong to the Legion of Mary. And I go to mass every day.

María is also extremely active in the church.

Y hoy en la actualidad soy legionaria de María, participo en San Kieran's, si hay necesidad de tocar el piano lo toco sino estoy en el coro siempre, leo cuando hace falta. Hasta soy ministro de la eucaristía cuando hace falta. Porque yo, en realidad, lo principal mío es el coro, es donde más falta hace que yo ayude. Y como legionaria de María, en el edificio tenemos un rosario que lo hacemos todas las semanas. Y cada vez que puedo voy a la Ermita, ayude en la colecta del día de la Virgen de la Caridad que había una cantidad de personas ahí en la Universidad de Miami, donde se dio la misa.²⁰³

In addition to her service at the church, María maintains an active home devotional life.

El rosario, hacemos siempre, cada uno hace el rosario en su casa si puede. Si no puede rezar el rosario porque no pudiste, no importa. A la hora de acostarte por la noche reza un Padre Nuestro, un Ave María, no tienes que rezar el rosario. El rosario me gusta rezarlo siempre con otras personas. Porque donde hay dos o tres rezando ahí está el Espíritu Santo en medio.²⁰⁴

Caridad describes her bedroom in the following way, “*El cuarto mío es una capilla. Yo tengo la Virgen de la Caridad, tengo el Sagrado Corazón, tengo la Milagrosa, todos los santos están en mi cuarto...ese es mi rinconcito, ahí me levanto y ahí rezo.*”²⁰⁵

Their involvement was in no way limited to the parish church and the home. Each has their unique religious vocation, which often takes them outside the church proper. Charito was heavily involved in a local Catholic orphanage, where she herself had spent several years.

²⁰³ “And today I am a Legionary of Mary, I participate in San Kieran's, if there is a need to play the piano I play it but I am always in the choir, I read when necessary. I am even a minister of the Eucharist when necessary. In reality my main thing is the choir, it is where they need help the most. And as a Legionary of Mary, in the building [where I reside] we have a rosary that we do every week. And every time I can, I go to the hermitage. I helped with the collection on the day of the Virgin of Charity since there were many people there at the University of Miami, where the mass was celebrated.”

²⁰⁴ “We always do the Rosary, each one of us prays the Rosary at home if they can. If you don't pray the rosary because you couldn't, it doesn't matter. At bedtime, pray an Our Father, a Hail Mary; you don't have to pray the Rosary. I always like to pray the rosary with other people. Because where there are two or three praying there is the Holy Spirit in between.”

²⁰⁵ “My room is a chapel. I have the Virgin of Charity, I have the Sacred Heart, I have the Miraculous, all the saints are in my room ... that's my little corner, there I get up and there I pray.”

Desde [que mis] niñas [eran] chiquitas ellas iban conmigo, al catholic home for children donde yo era voluntaria, y todos los sábados les llevábamos pizza. Íbamos a compartir hasta el punto que mi esposo se envolvió de la misma manera y también sacábamos a niños [y los traíamos] a la casa.²⁰⁶

These mothers exhibited levels of faith commitment that far surpass that of their contemporary American mothers. It is even fairly distinctive among the Latina population in general. The key factor in this case that forms the independent variable which helps to explain the anomaly lies in the distinctive historical Cuban experience of exile. Unlike other Latinx communities, however, who are also in exiled in the U.S., the Cuban experience is one of exile from religious persecution. Vaidyanathan anticipated the presence of this independent variable in his concluding observations about his results, noting in hindsight that he had not accounted for it.

Aside from these factors [that Vaidyanathan accounted for], distinct cultural effects could be at work...Being Catholic...is for some the equivalent of an ethnic or cultural category, making it unlikely that they would disaffiliate altogether...Consider some Hispanic immigrants, for example, and also descendants of immigrants from countries such as Poland or Italy, whose forebears endured persecution and ridicule as they tried to maintain their ethnic and cultural traditions during their years of assimilation. In such cases, agents of socialization might facilitate commitment to cultural and ethnic perceptions of one's tradition, which in turn sustain religious affiliation and at least occasional attendance.²⁰⁷

The majority of the Cuban-American mothers interviewed for this dissertation fall into the age range of the baby boomers in the U.S. Compared with those of their Silent Generation parents, these baby boomers exhibited a general decline in their levels of religious commitment. The Silent Generation was one that experienced great existential hardship, experiencing both the Great Depression and World War II through the eyes of children. The early battles they fought

²⁰⁶ “Since [my] girls [were] little they went with me to the Catholic home for children where I was a volunteer, and every Saturday we brought them pizza. We were spending so much time there that my husband got wrapped up in the same way and we also would pick up children and bring them to the house.”

²⁰⁷ Ibid, 384.

in their lives were for survival. The baby boomers, on the other hand, grew up in prosperous times. Their battles more often involved pursuing the respect and dignity of others since survival was no longer at issue.

By contrast, in their formative years, these Cuban women faced the imminent threat of the institutional Catholic Church being taken away from them. From a psychological perspective, forbidding behaviors leads to an increased desire to engage in those behaviors. The human brain is designed to protect against scarcity. In the face of scarcity of resources (or more importantly, the threat of scarcity), the brain makes a run on those resources.²⁰⁸ Although the mechanism developed with food, the human brain now applies this device to many other areas of life.

In this context, this threat both to the Church in general and to Catholic education specifically in Cuba led this generation to prize and cling tightly to this religious community that could have been taken away from them much more than their parents did.²⁰⁹ Moreover, this persecution was the very reason for their exile and immigration. Distancing themselves from the Catholic Church would have made the sacrifice they faced in moving to the U.S. meaningless. María describes the persecution in the most graphic terms with her description of the lengths the Cubans would go to in order to procure a Mass for the dead.

Los cubanos han practicado muchas cosas fuera de la iglesia católica, con santería y muchas cosas. Y eso ha costado mucho y cuesta mucho trabajo, pero eso es producto del sistema. Del sistema, entonces del miedo, por ejemplo, una de las cosas que nunca pudo acabar, por eso la semilla de la fe de la persona está dentro a veces. Por ejemplo, una de las cosas que nunca pudo acabar la revolución, fue las misas de difunto. Como no podías estar presente en la iglesia para darte una misa de difuntos, tú veías como ellos buscaban gente de fuera, y te daban una donación para que paguen la iglesia y pusieras al difunto en la misa. Eso es algo

²⁰⁸ Esther Jansen, Sandra Mulken, and Anita Jansen, “Do Not Eat the Red Food!: Prohibition of Snacks Leads to Their Relatively Higher Consumption in Children,” *Appetite* 49, no. 3 (2007): 572–77.

²⁰⁹ Yimi Omofuma, “Religious Persecution, Religious Coping, and Emotional Distress in a Treatment-Seeking Refugee Sample” (Ph.D. diss., Palo Alto University, 2019).

*que siempre llamó mucho la atención los sacerdotes, como las personas, inclusive las personas que eran comunistas, tenían algo que querían que su difunto tuviera una misa católica.*²¹⁰

There is no other Latinx community that suffered a similar targeted religious persecution of the Catholic Church. This gave the Cuban exile a religious fervor that is not present in the exile experiences of any other Latinx community. The Cuban American diaspora experience in the U.S. is one filled with hope.

María is even grateful that her children spent years growing up in Cuba, because she saw firsthand the strengthening of faith that resulted from persecution.

*Porque ellas pudieron en Cuba hacerse fuertes y valiente con el sistema que ellas estaba viviendo. Porque ellas salieron en un momento que todavía era difícil practicar la fe...Por eso que yo le doy a gracias a dios, porque ellas ya vinieron formadas en eso en esa valentía...El que de verdad quiere comprometerse, ellas tomaron su comunión ya en el sistema, se confirmaron se hicieron fuertes... Por eso le digo, le doy gracias a Dios, yo las traje ya formadas, ellas no se formaron aquí para nada.*²¹¹

María's daughter, Fátima, knows exactly what her mother was talking about when she said that.

La iglesia que uno creció fue una iglesia con muchas restricciones. Tú eras mal mirado, si ibas a la iglesia estabas marcado, de una carrera olvídate eso te iba a ser muy difícil estudiarla y si la estudiabas era a través de mucho esfuerzo, muchos pasos que subir, muchas escaleras que tenías que hacer...Entonces la iglesia tuvo que cambiar. Porque eran personas que no sabían rezar, no sabían lo que era una

²¹⁰ “Cubans have practiced many things outside of the Catholic Church, with Santería and many things. And that has cost us so much and it takes a lot of work, but that is a product of the system. Then from fear, for example one of the things that could never end, that is why the seed of the person's faith is sometimes inside. For example, one of the things that the revolution could never do away with was masses for the deceased. Because you could not be spotted at the church to give a mass for your dead, you saw how they [the Communists] were looking for outsiders, and they gave you a donation to pay the church and put the names of the deceased in the mass. That is something that always attracted a lot of attention to the priests...even people who were communists wanted their deceased to have a Catholic mass.”

²¹¹ Because they were able to become strong in Cuba and brave because of the system that they were living under. They came out at a time when it was still difficult to practice faith ... That is why I thank God, because they have already been formed in that courage ... They had to really want to commit themselves, they took their communion already in the system, they were confirmed, they became strong ... That is why I say, I thank God, I brought them already formed, they were not formed here at all.”

*misa, los que tuvieron que empezar a enseñar. Pasamos de ser catecúmenas a ser catequistas, con la edad que fuera.*²¹²

Charito received cards from her parents while she was living in the orphanage in the U.S. The cards came with a constant message, which was to keep the faith. Doing so was her charge and her responsibility in the U.S.

*Porque yo estuve casi tres años en un orfelinato, mi mamá y mi papá todo lo que me mandaban eran estampitas, escribían por atrás. Todavía las tengo. Tengo estampitas que ellos me mandaban a Virginia, donde estaba en un orfelinato en Saint Joseph, de las hermanitas de la caridad. Todas las estampitas que me mandaban y todo era, no dejes al Señor, está contigo, la Virgen te acompaña, y eso era algo que lo machacaba y lo machacaba.*²¹³

Like their daughters would in the subsequent generation, each of these women had to negotiate their faith experience. They had to decide what traditions were important to them and what traditions to discard. This helps to explain why within this immigrant generation, even women whose parents were not really practicing Catholics embraced the faith wholeheartedly. Elena had explained that her parents were not practicing Catholics and yet she emerged as an ardent believer. Eugenia describes it as a battle. It is her job to fight to keep Christians and Catholicism alive. “*Pero hay que seguir luchando para que se mantenga y para que no nos maten a nosotros los cristianos.*”²¹⁴

It is obviously not possible to reproduce the historical peculiarities of religious persecution that had such a profound impact on the faith of these women, nor would anyone

²¹² “The church that one grew up was a church with many restrictions. You were looked down on, if you went to church you were marked, if you wanted a career, forget it, it would be very difficult to study, and if you did get to study, it was through a lot of effort, many steps to climb... Then the church had to change. Because they were people who did not know how to pray, did not know what a mass was, those who were there had to start teaching. We went from being catechumens to being catechists, regardless of age.”

²¹³ “Because I spent almost three years in an orphanage, all my mom and dad could send me were stamps, which they would write on the back. I still have them. I have little stamps that they sent me to Virginia, where I was in an orphanage in Saint Joseph, from the [little] sisters of charity. All the little stamps they sent me and everything was, ‘don’t leave the Lord, he’s with you, the Virgin is with you,’ and that was something that they impressed upon me and impressed upon me.”

²¹⁴ “But we must continue fighting so that the faith is maintained and so that they do not kill us Christians.”

want to do so. The point is to highlight in a fresh way the primacy of parental religious commitment in the religious socialization process. In light of this, one of the most efficient ways for the church to improve the success of the religious socialization process in its families is to increase the level of religious commitment of parents and future parents by engaging and mediating the historical narratives (physical and geographical emplacement) to reinforce relevance, legacy, hope and fluidity of the Catholic imagination.

3.2 Metacognition and Becoming an Active Participant in the Third Space

To this point, the focus of this chapter has been on the child as a recipient of the faith tradition. The passive posture of recipient, however, does not encompass the socialization process. As Primary Socialization Theory articulates, it is the interaction with family members (the socialization source in his study) that transmits behavioral patterns. Such interaction is rarely confined to an observational role but is much more often an active process. It is this active process which produces metacognition. Learning always involves active participation and religious devotion is no different. One common theme in the Christian tradition of religious socialization is teaching children to pray.

A. Active Participation in Prayer

Many of interviews contain accounts of experiences of learning how to pray and the process by which the interviewees adopted the practice. Samantha, the granddaughter of María, sat in on the interview with her mother Fátima. In the dynamics of the interview process, Samantha answered one of the questions recalling how her mom, Fátima, incorporated prayer in their daily routines, and how she is choosing to do the same with her daughter:

One of the things is during the dinner table. We all have dinner together...and we would say grace. And that to this day I've brought back to my family what I have seen...My husband was born catholic but he wasn't a practicing catholic [when we

began dating]...And I brought him back to it. You know, going to church on Sundays and praying every night.

Similarly, Tessie, Charito's daughter, describes her experience praying growing up. She notes that "I would pray in the morning and pray before we eat, pray before... And then I just thought like everyone did that, you know?" Once again, this was a practice modeled for her and taught to her by her mom. Charito in turn learned it from her mom.

Y creo que se lleva, ese ejemplo en el hogar de la fe, 'vamos a rezarle un Ave María para que tu esposo pueda'...mi mamá era una alcahueta de mi esposo, Oh my God! Yo decía mira mami..., ella decía 'él tiene la razón, vamos a rezar juntas'. Íbamos para el cuarto, yo te quería enseñar el cuarto de mi mamá, lo tengo idéntico. Rezaba, "Con Dios me acuesto, con Dios me levanto, la gracia de Dios y el Espíritu Santo." Y cuando yo estaba de carrera que tenía que ir a preparar algo para la compañía, sabes que tenía que trabajar, me decía, 'Charito ven acá, lo hiciste a la carrera y no rezamos.' Y me hacía rezar otra oración más. Y eso es muy lindo porque a mis hijos y a mis nietas siempre se los enseñé.²¹⁵

Generation after generation is tied together through a common thread of prayer. Actively practiced by the children, prayer becomes a regular part of the adult lives of these Latinas.

The children also revise their practice of and beliefs about prayer. Lourdes, the daughter of Eugenia, talks about using apps to pray and meditate so that she can do so in a more imaginative way. This demonstrates how her primary religious socialization is then further developed by secondary religious socialization. Lourdes states,

But yeah, once I started really taking Mary more into my devotional practices when I did a retreat in Boston at the Campion center and the spiritual director told me to picture Jesus and talk to him in my prayer. And I did. And then I'm like, I had thought of picturing Mary too. And so, I had imagination of Mary being with me in that prayer. And ever since then, I started...I got Mary. In that moment I understood what Mary's role was because I hadn't understood it until that moment.

²¹⁵ "And I think that example in the home -of faith- is what you take. 'We are going to pray a Hail Mary so that your husband can ... my mother was my husband's advocate, Oh my God! I said look mommy...she would say, 'he is right, let's pray together.' We would go to the room, I wanted to show you my mother's room, I have it exactly as she had it. We prayed, 'With God I lie down, with God I rise, the grace of God and the Holy Spirit.' And when I was racing because I had to go and prepare something for the company, you know I had to work, she would tell me, 'Charito come here, you are rushing and we didn't really pray.' And she made me say another prayer. And that is beautiful, I always taught my children and my grandchildren in the same way."

I was like, "Why do we need Mary if we have Jesus? We can pray directly to God, so why do we need Mary as an intercessor?" I didn't really get it until I had that prayer with Mary. [I would describe praying with Mary] like a consoling motherly presence. It's, yeah, like supportive, consoling, maternal. Not like, God, not God. It's not a divine presence. It's like a mom. Yeah.

Lourdes' mother, Eugenia, describes how the regular practice of prayer passed in her family from one generation to the next.

Siempre rezaron, yo les enseñé a rezar, siempre rezaban todas sus oraciones antes de acostarse, el Padrenuestro, el Ave María, el Guardian Angel, todo eso ellos rezaban todas las noches...Todavía lo hacen. Hoy son hombres, mujeres y todavía rezan antes de acostarse...Yo me sentaba alrededor de la cama, y vamos a rezar. Ellos no lo aprendieron solo, había que enseñarle que había que rezar. Y hoy en día los nietos también rezan.²¹⁶

This same pattern appears with Sophia, Elena's daughter. She notes,

What my parents passed onto me and I do all the time, is we pray every single night together, my children and I, all the time. We do an Our Father, a Hail Mary, and then we each take turns talking about what we're thankful for, and who or what we want to pray for. So, we do that every single night, which I think is a great way to end the day, obviously, and I'm trying to get them in the habit of recognizing God, not just at school with their morning prayer, but at home with me.

Here Sophia notes that is just following the example she received from her parents.

Elena, Sophia's mom, described herself in this way, "So I'm a dynamic catholic, always active, I do a lot of praying, studying the word, I think I am full of the Holy Spirit." The first comment she makes about how she practices her Catholic faith is her practice of prayer.

Each of the mother-daughter pairs I interviewed echoed the same intergenerational practice of regular, daily prayer. Carmen, Caridad's daughter, carries on her family tradition, "I pray. I pray at night. I pray in the morning. In fact, it's very important for me to say, 'Thank you God for today.'" She learned it from her mother and has passed the practice on to her own

²¹⁶ "They always prayed, I taught them to pray, they always said all their prayers before going to bed, the Lord's Prayer, the Hail Mary, the Guardian Angel prayer, they prayed all that every night... They still do. Today they are men, women and they still pray before going to bed ... I used to sit around their bed, and we would pray. They did not learn it alone, they had to be taught that they had to pray. And today the grandchildren also pray."

daughters. “I think the fact that I was taught to pray in the morning and at night is a big factor, because I'm sure my girls go to sleep, and they pray.”

Caridad, in turn, explains her experiences with prayer as a child.

Allí no éramos católicos de ir todos los domingos a misa. Entonces mi papá fabricó una casa y en esa casa hizo una capilla en medio de la casa y mandó a buscar una Virgen de la Caridad y la puso en esa ermita que teníamos. Era una capillita que estaba frente al comedor, comíamos y veíamos a la Virgen... En la capillita lo que hacíamos era, en si no hacíamos rosario, en Cuba no se rezaba tanto el rosario. Si no que le rezábamos a la Virgen, hacíamos oraciones a la Virgen y nos reuníamos, como da la casualidad que teníamos la capillita aquí y teníamos el comedor, entonces nos dirigíamos a la Virgen. Y estábamos todos, mi papá bien devoto de la Virgen.²¹⁷

Prayer is a ritual practice the children engage in and practice at a very young age. This active learning process helps to solidify the practice in the child's life in a way that becomes part of her identity. She becomes a woman who prays. In this way, the cognition gained from observing her mother pray turns into metacognition gained by praying herself.

B. Active Participation in Veneration of the Saints

The veneration of the saints is an important practice in the Catholic faith which appears again and again in the interviews. Each saint has a central story connected to them, which draws their devotees to them. As the interviewees unpacked their religious lives, most of them shared stories about how their family members, or they themselves, venerated particular saints.

The most interesting in this regard was a story that both Eugenia and her daughter Lourdes related independently. It involved the saint San Juan Bosco (also anglicized to Saint John Bosco). A prominent church in Havana was dedicated to this saint, which another one of

²¹⁷ “There we were not Catholics that went to mass every Sunday. So my dad built a house and in that house he built a chapel in the middle of the house and sent for a [statue of the] Virgin of Charity and put her in that chapel. The little chapel was in front of the dining room, and as we ate we would look at the Virgin ... In the little chapel what we did was, we didn't say the rosary, in Cuba the rosary was not prayed so much . We spoke to the Virgin, we prayed prayers to the Virgin and we always faced the Virgin from the dining room. And we were all together with her, my father was very devoted to the Virgin.”

the interviewees, Charito, mentioned. Lourdes relates an ordinary task, sitting with her mom, going through her grandmother's jewelry—*lo cotidiano*.

And when we were looking through, we found a little...pendant. And we couldn't...It was so small that we couldn't see even who it was. We saw a little face and we knew it was a saint, but it was like, "Is this Jesus? Who is this?" And so we took a picture of it and then expanded the picture, blew up the picture. And it said Don Juan Bosco.

And so I think what's interesting about that is that my mom knew that my great-grandmother had a devotion to Saint Juan Bosco and my grandmother had inherited a picture that my great-grandmother had of him. And my grandmother had that picture displayed at her house. And then now here the medal shows up with Saint Juan Bosco. And my mom was saying that she...that picture of him of Saint Juan Bosco made an impression on her when she was seven years old because that was my great-grandmother's, for whatever reason, a particular devotion to the saint. So, I think now my mom sees it as my grandmother praying for her, my great-grandmother praying for her and her children. And my mom has like a better understanding of it.

In this story from the daughter, Lourdes, it becomes apparent how this menial task of going through memorable jewelry leads Eugenia to share with her daughter, Lourdes, a story from her past in Cuba. She talks about seeing a picture of Saint John Bosco in her grandmother's house, which left a lasting impression on her. Remember that Eugenia's own mother was not a practicing Catholic and it is her grandmother whom Eugenia credits with her primary religious socialization. This appears to be the same story she shared with me during the interview.

...mi abuela tenía un cuadro de San Juan Bosco siempre en su cuarto. Y ella siempre le ponía velitas a San Juan Bosco, y le ponía flores y todo. Y le rezaba a San Juan Bosco. Nunca entendí por qué San Juan Bosco. Y cuando pasaron los años y ya estoy aquí en el exilio después de tantos años, leí la historia de San Juan Bosco y me di cuenta que San Juan Bosco es el santo de los niños, de los muchachos. Y mi abuela tuvo nueve hijos. Y pasó mucho trabajo con sus hijos. Y ahí entendí que la razón por la que era devota de San Juan Bosco era porque ella estaba pidiendo a San Juan Bosco, a lo mejor, que protegiera a sus hijos.²¹⁸

²¹⁸ "... My grandmother always had a painting of Saint John Bosco in her room. And she always put candles for Saint John Bosco, and put flowers and everything. And she prayed to Saint John Bosco. I never understood why

This memory of Saint John Bosco and his significance was fresh in Eugenia's mind because she had just worked through it and shared it with her daughter, Lourdes.

What is remarkable about the saints is that neither Eugenia nor Lourdes described any devotion to Saint John Bosco. In fact, Eugenia did not initially understand, and only speculated later in life, why her grandmother had attached herself to Saint John Bosco in particular. When Eugenia describes her devotions she mentions, "*Bueno, yo siempre tenía mi altarcito, siempre con mis figuritas. Toda la vida la he tenido, mira para allá. Yo tengo la Virgencita en mi cuarto. Y tengo todas las Virgencitas y prendía mis velitas y rezamos por la noche.*"²¹⁹

The idea with the saints is that each individual selects their own saint or set of sets, whom they venerate. In the case of Lourdes, she talks about Theresa of Avila and the apostle Paul as the saints she is most connected with. With this active learning model, which makes the practice personal, it helps lead to the internalization of the practice.

C. Negotiation Learned in the Liminal Space Produces Motivation

So far, this chapter has focused mostly on the first rupture in primary religious socialization that Christian Smith noted, which is the level of religious commitment of the parents, or the lack thereof. This section shifts to focus on the breakdown in meaningful communication about religion between parents and teenagers stemming from confusion over identity and discourse appropriate to a pluralistic society.²²⁰ With piercing insight, Smith notes that most teenagers make no distinction between three types of speech that adults in previous

Saint John Bosco. And when the years passed and I'm already here in exile after so many years, I read the story of Saint John Bosco and I realized that Saint John Bosco is the saint of children. And my grandmother had nine children. And she struggled to raise her children. And then I understood that the reason she was a devotee of Saint John Bosco was because she was asking Saint John Bosco, perhaps, to protect her children."

²¹⁹ "Well, I always had my little altar, always with my statues. All my life I have had, look over there. I have the Virgin in my room. And I have all the little Virgins and I lit my candles and we prayed at night."

²²⁰ Smith, "Moralistic Therapeutic Deism," 60.

generations readily and easily distinguish. There is: 1) “serious, articulate, confident personal and congregational discourse of faith;” 2) “respectful, civil discourse in the pluralistic public sphere;” and 3) “obnoxious, offensive faith talk that merely offends other people.”²²¹

Through a concerted effort not to engage in the last category, teenagers actively resist and avoid the most profitable and important conversations for religious socialization that fall into the first category. This leaves them without any ownership of their religious beliefs and ideas imparted to them during the religious socialization process. As a result, when finally confronted with challenging questions about the content of their faith as adults, they found themselves floundering, most often outside of the social milieu of their respective religious community. “...it is hard to be educated into a religious tradition about which its adherents have difficulty even talking seriously and with confidence.”²²²

This situation markedly contrasts with that of the Cuban-American women interviewed for this dissertation. These women inhabit the same pluralistic world as their aggregate American counterparts in the NSYR survey. But their external circumstances forced these women to develop skills in critical communication that was not the case with the aggregate American teenagers. Religious socialization forms just one aspect of the much wider socialization process. Second-generation immigrants, including those from Cuba, experience socialization in a different way from second-generation and beyond American children. These second-generation immigrants inhabit a liminal space that has profound effects on the child. Inhabiting this liminal space requires parents and their children to engage in critical dialogue during the socialization process.

²²¹ Ibid.

²²² Ibid, 61.

The complexities of the socialization process begin with a hallmark of the liminal space: bilingualism.²²³ Parent and child must both decide when to speak English and when to speak Spanish. Ann Castillo notes that “language can add to the trauma of the Chicana’s schizophrenic-like existence. She was educated in English and learned it is the only acceptable language in society, but Spanish was the language of her childhood, family, and community...”²²⁴ To avoid this some mothers decide to minimize Spanish with their children as much as possible. In Philip Roth’s novel, *The Dying Animal*, the Cuban-American protagonist, Consuela, explains to her American boyfriend that she never learned Spanish from her parents because she “did not want all their sadness.”²²⁵ Another Cuban-American mother put it this way in an interview,

*It’s strange to have a child who doesn’t speak your first language. Nevertheless, the lullaby I sang my daughter was the same one my mother sang to me, and when Susana was little, English speaker though she is, she could sing the lullaby word for word with my same accent.*²²⁶

The child who may be used to speaking Spanish at home will experience problems outside the home trying to communicate in Spanish. One college student whom Delores Bernal was studying recalled “I know that I would be embarrassed once in a while if I spoke Spanish.”²²⁷ So, at a very young age, the Latina child learns to actively negotiate their new liminal space.

In a more general sense, this same pattern takes place with biculturalism. As Latinx children get older and begin to collect and analyze their own first-hand experiences they develop

²²³ Dolores Delgado Bernal, “Learning and Living Pedagogies of the Home: The Mestiza Consciousness of Chicana Students,” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 14 (2001): 623–39 (628-30).

²²⁴ Ann Castillo, *Massacre of the Dreamers: Essays on Xicanisma* (New York: Plume, 1995).

²²⁵ Philip Roth, *The Dying Animal* (London: Vintage, 2016).

²²⁶ Andrea O’Reilly Herrera, *ReMembering Cuba: Legacy of a Diaspora* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2001), 97.

²²⁷ Bernal, “Pedagogies of the Home,” 628.

their own unique insights and bicultural identity that draws from the different aspects of their lives. Latinas learn to question why they might do such-and-such, and not only that, but why they do it in this-or-that way.

*Unlike acculturation or transculturation, biculturation implies an equilibrium, however tense, precarious, or short-lived, between the two contributing cultures. Cuban-American culture is a balancing act... Their hyphen is a see-saw: it tilts first one way, then the other.*²²⁸

For the second-generation this critical communication with their parents is a survival skill they cannot do without. By using this skill, they actively decide, often in dialogue with their parents, what distinctively Cuban practices they will adopt, what they will discard and what they will practice with discretion in certain settings but not in others.

Andrea O'Reilly Herrera's study on the Cuban-American experience contains statements from various Cuban-Americans which support this reality apparent in the interviews conducted for this dissertation. One of her interviewees, Adela Betancourt Jabine made the following observation,

What Cubans did do, as near as I could tell, was talk. Despite the no-talking-back rule, my parents encouraged us to think independently, so that if I disagreed with them – and I often did – I felt free to speak up. Every night we would linger after dinner, and the whole family will talk about everything from politics to what went on at school and work to the adults' childhood reminiscences.

This skill transitions seamlessly into the religious socialization process.²²⁹ This type of critical dialogue between child and parent is exactly what is needed for the internalization of religious beliefs, values and practices. As Christian Smith puts it, "Youth should be able to learn and embrace the particularities of their own faith traditions and understand why they matter, without having to be fearful that this will inevitably cause conflict and uncomfortable

²²⁸ Gustavo Pérez Firmat, *Life on the Hyphen: The Cuban-American Way* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2014), 5.

²²⁹ Bernal, "Pedagogies of the Home."

situations.”²³⁰ Second-generation immigrants naturally “bounce around, digest, question, struggle over, and eventually personally embrace, revise or reject” the belief content and identity boundaries taught to them.²³¹

C.1 Theological Reconciliation

It is understood that some will embrace the faith, others will revise it and still others will reject it altogether. Some degree of revising is almost inevitable and unavoidable. This process is evident in the respective stories of Fátima and her mother María.

María describes her own devotional practice with the patron saint of Cuba.

*Con María, mi fe con María. La Virgen de la Caridad es la patrona de Cuba. Si algo no pudieron nunca terminar es con la Virgen. A Virgen de la Caridad, el que va al Santuario del Cobre se está dando cuenta de la cantidad de promesas que llegan ahí, inclusive gente que son devotas hasta ateas, le dedican algo a la Virgen de la Caridad en el Santuario del Cobre. Siempre fui el día 8. Antiguamente era un día festivo, antes de que hubiera la revolución, el 8 de septiembre porque es la patrona de Cuba. Y en todas las iglesias se celebraba la Virgen de la Caridad. Llego aquí a este país y la identificación que cojo es de este Santuario de la Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre. Pero es la misma María, María tiene muchas advocaciones, Guadalupe, La Inmaculada que es la patrona de aquí de los Estados Unidos igual que es patrona en Nicaragua. Y la Guadalupe es la patrona de México y ya te digo, soy muy devota, porque María es la que intercede ante Jesús, ante Dios; ella es el puente para llegar nosotros a eso. No hay Jesús sin María, no hay María sin Jesús.*²³²

But María’s daughter Fátima chooses not to venerate the saints.

Déjame decirte algo, curiosamente, yo soy católica, pero no soy de todos los santicos y la Virgencita. No me educué así. Yo voy a la iglesia desde niña. Nací en

²³⁰ Smith, “Moralistic Therapeutic Deism,” 60-61.

²³¹ Ibid, 70-71.

²³² “With Mary, my faith with Mary. The Virgin of Charity is the patron saint of Cuba. If there was anything they [the Communists] could never do away with was the virgin. Whoever goes to the Sanctuary of El Cobre realizes immediately the number of promises that arrive there. People who are devout, even atheists, dedicate something to the Virgin of Charity in the Sanctuary of El Cobre. I was always there on the 8th. Formerly it was a public holiday, before the revolution. And in all the churches, the Virgin of Charity, was celebrated. I arrive here in this country and the first thing I identify with is the Sanctuary of the Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre. But it is the same Mary; Mary has many invocations, Guadalupe, La Inmaculada who is the patron of the United States here as she is patron of Nicaragua. And Guadalupe is the patron saint of Mexico and I already told you, I am very devout, because Mary is the one who intercedes before Jesus, before God; she is the bridge to get us to that. There is no Jesus without Mary, there is no Mary without Jesus.

*una familia católica, iba a la iglesia. A pesar de que fui criada en Cuba, y me vine para aquí con veinticinco años. Nosotros íbamos a la iglesia, perseguidos o no perseguidos, íbamos a la iglesia. Entonces donde me crié, los sacerdotes de mi pueblo eran canadienses. Entonces ellos tienen una forma un poquito más como la anglosajona que no es tanto de los santos de esa fiebre popular que tiene Latinoamérica.*²³³

In her explanation it is evident that there was tension between her secondary religious socialization process and her primary religious socialization process. A conflict between the domestic church and the institutional church. Her father had a very strong devotion to the Virgin of Fátima, and her mother explicitly mentions the Virgin of Charity in her interview. Thus, while she mentions that her Catholic education did not emphasize or explicitly teach the popular piety that the community observed, it is interesting that when Fátima is asked why she is Catholic, her answer begins with Mary. *“Porque yo creo que lo principal es por el amor a María... Y lo segundo, porque para nosotros los católicos Cristo está presente en el pan y el vino. Eso para mí es lo importante de porqué ser católico.”*²³⁴

This highlights another area in which Fátima’s faith and her perspective differs from that of her Mother, María. María sees the priests as reverential representatives of an infallible church whereas Fátima has a more casual and relational perception. Fátima has come to see the priests as everyday individuals who appear in casual settings. She has priests over for dinner at her house on a regular basis. But Fátima immediately recognizes that her mom puts priests into a different category and does not think of them as everyday people. Fátima says,

A lo mejor que para mi mamá un sacerdote pueda andar en short y T-shirt y tomarse dos cervezas, a lo mejor a mi mamá le hace guau; para mí es normal

²³³ “Let me tell you something, curiously, I am a Catholic, but I am not about all the little saints and the Virgin. I wasn’t educated like that. I have gone to church since I was a child. I was born in a Catholic family, I went to church. I was raised in Cuba, and I came here when I was 25 years old. We went to church, persecuted or not, we went to church. Where I grew up, the priests of my town were Canadians. So they are a little more like the Anglo-Saxons in that their practice is not so much of the saints, of that popular fever, that Latin America has.”

²³⁴ “Because I think the main thing is the love for Mary ... And the second, because for us Catholics, Christ is present in the bread and wine. That for me is the important thing about why be a Catholic.”

*porque es un hombre igual que yo lleno de problemas, lleno de tormentos, me imagino más que los míos, como es lógico porque tiene una vida soltero y a una comunidad que responder.*²³⁵

C.2 Social Reconciliation

Social issues were a very common area where the children greatly revised the beliefs their parents had tried to pass on to them. Elena describes her daughter Sophia's faith as that of a "cafeteria Catholic." "Like she believes in contraception, she says it's okay to be homosexual, or gay, her best friend is gay." Sophia, on the other hand, views her mom's attitude as judgmental and inconsistent with the Christian message.

For example, my daughter chose my best friend, who was extremely Catholic in her own way, as her sponsor for confirmation, and my mom had a problem with it, and I'm like, "It's not your confirmation, it's not your sponsor, and you cannot judge because she is an amazing person" and she knows it, and she knows it. And she's like the best friend that I've had in my whole life, and just because she chooses to be with a different gender, that's nobody's freaking business. Or it doesn't give us the right to judge.

A very similar situation is observable between Lourdes and her mother Eugenia. During the interview Lourdes was contrasting her own faith with that of her mom.

I do think my mom is more conservative theologically in the sense that my mom does accept everything pretty much that the church teaches without much question. And she does condemn homosexuality. She doesn't condemn it in the sense... she doesn't condemn the people, but she doesn't... she's not in agreement with it. And she does think that it's immoral.

Later in the interview she then begins to describe her own take on that subject.

The other thing is I think the homosexuality thing, I think the church needs to take a more pastoral approach than it does currently. I don't think we're ever going to get to the point where we will accept homosexual marriage within the church because it is very far off from the theology of like male and female, God made them male and female and all of that. But I do think we need to be careful with what we say about gay people and how we treat gay people in pastoral.

²³⁵ "Maybe for my mom a priest can wear shorts and a T-shirt and have two beers, and my mom will be like 'wow;' for me it is normal because he is a person like me, full of problems, full of tormentos, I imagine more than mine, of course because he has a celibate life and a community to respond to."

What is particularly interesting with this topic is that the generational difference in attitude and perspective is universal. Across the board in the U.S., the younger generations of Christians across the denominational spectrum are much more accepting of homosexuality and of gay marriage, whereas the older generations tend to be much more opposed to it. The tension is a common one. Moreover, these kind of intergenerational differences of attitude and opinion are prevalent in many areas of life, not just limited to religion. Fátima sums up the teenage experience in her own words, “*Es como un tormento que tú tienes como adolescente, esto es correcto, esto no, esto no sirve, lo que mi mama quiere yo no lo quiero, yo soy yo, yo quiero hacer mi vida, entonces van buscando como otro rumbo y hay quien retorna.*”²³⁶ But while the tension looks the same, the resolution seems to have a different character.

For many of the “dones,” their disaffiliation with Christianity is specifically in order to distance themselves from the negative association between the Catholic Church and gay marriage.²³⁷ In fact, 41% of former Catholics cite the Church’s teaching on abortion or same-sex relations as their reason for leaving the church.²³⁸ Another 33% cite birth control, while 28% mentioned divorce and remarriage as their respective reasons for leaving.²³⁹ But for these Latinas, their disagreement with their mothers (and with the institutional church) on this issue does not seem to have led them to step away from the Catholic Church or to stop identifying themselves as Catholic. They know the position their mothers (and the church) take, and their mothers know the position that they take. There is open dialogue and disagreement on both

²³⁶ “It is like a torment that you have as a teenager, ‘this is correct, this is not, this does not work, what my mother wants I do not want, I am me, I want to make my life,’ so they are looking for direction and there are those who return.”

²³⁷ Michele Dillon, “Christian Affiliation and Disaffiliation in the United States: Generational and Cultural Change,” in *Handbook of Global Contemporary Christianity*, Brill Handbooks on Religion Vol. 10 (Leiden: Brill, 2005), 346–65 (361-62).

²³⁸ William V. D’Antonio, Michele Dillon, and Mary L. Gautier, *American Catholics in Transition* (Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield, 2013), 95.

²³⁹ *Ibid.*

sides. This process of negotiation as regards socialization is what they have been actively doing their whole lives.

What Christian Smith describes as happening in the aggregate American teenagers he has been studying is a general lack of skill in this area. What the Latina women have experienced in their hybrid socialization has strengthened them and prepared them for this necessary stage of negotiation in religious internalization. Moreover, they do not view their religious disagreements with their mothers as simply rejecting the faith and what it teaches. They see themselves as having a deeper understanding and appreciation of it than their mothers, while at the same time being very careful not to criticize their mothers' faith. This is evident in Lourdes' comment.

She has maybe a little bit more pious, but not completely. Sometimes she tells me, "Oh, it's more proper to receive the Eucharist in the mouth than in your hands." And I tell her, "Mom, that's not true." She'll go, "But that's what they say on the radio." Like, you know.... And I'm like, "Yeah, but that doesn't necessarily mean that it's true. It's an accepted practice within the church to accept the Eucharist in your hands."... I would like to say that my ideology is a lot more open than my mom's, but I don't know that it is.

Another common intergenerational difference in the wider Christian community besides social issues is a theological shift from an emphasis on the righteousness of God to an emphasis on the love of God. For many of the mothers in this dissertation, their focus was on expressing approval or disapproval of behaviors, whereas the focus of the daughters was on expressing loving or unloving attitudes towards others. This intergenerational shift is well documented in the wider Christian community and from the Pope to the parish priests to the Protestant ministers, there is a marked shift in emphasis from the clergy themselves toward taking actions of love and away from condemning specific behaviors.

Sophia typifies the viewpoint of the second generation in this regard. In her interview, her biggest disagreements with the church and with her mother relate to judgmental attitudes. At one point, she clearly blames the church as the cause of this character trait that has created a

great deal of tension between herself and her mom. “Because I really don't like how judgmental the Catholic faith has made her in certain ways. That bothers me.” Sophia clearly sees the source and origin of this judgmental attitude as the Catholic church. “So that's the problem, that's the only issue that I've had in terms of religion, with all their rules and regulations and judgements on people, I don't like that.”

In order to deal with this source of conflict between herself and her mother, Sophia uses humor and gives her mother a joking title of “the church police.”

So, at some point, we started joking around and calling her the church police, because she just takes it over the top... I'm 42. At age 42, and my mom's like, “Did you wear that off the shoulder dress? You are showing your shoulders, that is so wrong, you can't...” And I'm like, “Oh my God, here we go. Church police again.”

It is clear that rather than seeing this as an essential component of the Catholic faith, Sophia sees it as a distortion of that faith. In her negotiation process, she did not reject the faith entirely. She reoriented it and wrestled with it to make it her own.

But I tried to grab the best of it, which is the Virgin Mary, I talk to Jesus a lot. I didn't have this great relationship with Jesus until a couple of years ago, I think, and that was on my own doing. So, a lot of the things that she's taught me and the importance of connecting every day with God is what supersedes all of the church police and all the negative stuff she does and all the judgments. And every time she comes with that reminder of Jesus, I'm like, “Jesus hung out with the people that were different, that were sinners, that were whatever. And He was the one that kind of told everybody that this is not the way that you see it, you don't judge people, you don't do that.” So that's my spiel.

These types of disagreements have been a part of the religious internalization process since time immemorial. New generations have been dealing with new social environments and how to make the faith their own since the New Testament church. The anomaly here is not the situation of these Cuban American women, but the situation in modern aggregate American families. Being able to articulate one's religious beliefs, values and practices and discuss these with others has been the norm historically. But in this case, the experiences of exile and diaspora

have created a micro-environment that has allowed this recently lost skill to flourish. With this skill, this second generation has been able to work through substantive disagreements with their inherited religious tradition in a way that allows them to claim it as their own rather than abandon it.

3.3 The Process of Healing

In a strange twist of fate, the Catholic Church seems to be restricted by a contraceptive that is preventing the reproduction of faithful believers for the next generation. If its reproductive power dries up, the church will fade away. As was outlined in the first chapter, as a work of pragmatic theology, this dissertation is not simply focused on analyzing the problem but is committed to outlining one possible solution. The Cuban-American Catholic experience in the U.S. provides a light in the darkness. There is a direction the church can take to heal the religious socialization process, but it will require humility and innovation.

Healing is possible. The current trajectory that threatens the very life of the Catholic Church need not continue. The first step that is needed is for the Catholic Church to shift its focus from secondary religious socialization that takes place in the confines of the institutional church to primary religious socialization that takes place in the home.

The church has always recognized the complementary roles of the institutional church as a wider community and the domestic church as a micro community, which together serve as instruments in the religious socialization of the next generation. Nevertheless, various factors have contributed to a bloated view of the role of the institutional church in this process. Chapter Two explored various ways in which the Magisterium has emphasized the role of the home for primary religious socialization and the important role the parents, and particularly the mother, play therein. But since the practices and beliefs maintained and promulgated in the domestic

church stand largely outside the control of the institutional church, the Catholic Church has long struggled with stressing the use of secondary religious socialization environments like Catholic schooling and CCD while minimizing the role of the home in this process. As parents have deemed religion less important for themselves and more important for their children, this perspective has been perpetuated from within the home as well.

Children do not enter religious education programs as a *tabula rasa*. In homes where the Catholic faith is valued and practiced, children receive a massive amount of exposure to faith practices before they can even speak. In their mothers' arms, they hear their mothers praying softly for them where they hear the names of God and Jesus, Mary and various saints spoken repeatedly. Children feel and handle the beads of the rosary and its cross in the hands of their *abuelas* and *tías*. Countless statues and portraits of a man's nearly naked dead body hanging by nails on a cross have held their gaze in the living rooms and bedrooms of their own homes and those of other family members—not to mention the number of statues and images they have seen of Mary. Bedtime stories are filled with characters from the Bible.

Religious education programs should be designed to build upon this foundation. To reinforce and to shape and hone a faith that is already being practiced to one extent or another. Unfortunately, what the interviews with these Cuban-American women and the analysis in this chapter demonstrate is that when children enter the secondary religious socialization process without the tools necessary, the battle is over before it has even begun. If the parents are not actively participating in a life a religious faith that the children can observe as real and tangible and living, the religious lessons at the level of secondary socialization remain objects on a page. While what happens inside the home is outside of the institutional church's hands, it can encourage parents in this process and empower them to do this vitally important work.

Religious education conducted by the institutional church, if done in isolation from a vibrant, thriving domestic church fosters a compartmentalized, once-in-a-while-, one-and-done-view of faith practice. Faith becomes confined to the institutional church and faith practice is relegated to that sacred space. When parents do not view the home as a sacred space, as the domestic church, going to church becomes equated with a social club. It is something to fill time on the weekends but is disconnected from daily life.

One indirect way to bolster this process that will have the most direct impact is to find ways to increase the level of commitments of the adult parents. This is not to increase how much they involve their children, but to increase their own involvement completely apart from the involvement of their children. The parents need to value their own spiritual practice as an end in and of itself and not just as a means to getting their children engaged in spiritual practice. Once again, these practices need not involve the institutional church directly. If the church can find ways to increase the frequency with which the adult parents pray this will have direct impacts on the primary socialization process taking place inside these homes. When faith practice has become an integral, organic part of rhythm of family life, it is then that secondary religious socialization has something upon which to build.

A child may hear the same story in a classroom or at home. Yet a month later, in most cases, the child who heard the story at home will remember it far better and longer than the child who heard it in class. A story told at home is integral to the context in which it comes up. A mother may be telling a story from the Bible related to a festival at a party, an *abuelita* may be telling the story of the saint honored in her altar to her granddaughter. The story has significance to the child not simply because of its content, but because of who shares it and why they are sharing it. Often times, the stories leave unintended physical prompts and cues in the mind of

the child. The child thinks about *abuelita's* saint and the story connected with that saint every time she sees the altar. The prompt serves to repeat the story in the child's mind and the repetition prolongs the memory.

Another way the institutional church can support this process is by empowering the women in their role as leaders of the domestic church. The women are already fulfilling this role in the home and the Magisterium has acknowledged it to some degree. But what is needed is a full endorsement of women (mothers and grandmothers) as spiritual leaders in the home. This endorsement should show no equivocation and no wavering. There should be little fear that such an endorsement would somehow undermine those few fathers who have actually taken the role of spiritual leader in their homes. Such an endorsement would both give those mothers who have been tentative to lead in this area the permission they may have been looking for to embrace this role and may allow husbands to feel comfortable encouraging their wives in such a spiritual leadership role without feeling guilty for neglecting it themselves.

One additional way that the institutional church can support this primary religious socialization process is by normalizing the religious negotiation and questioning process that happens in the teenage years and early adulthood. Open dialogue between parents and their children is such a crucial factor at this stage to enable the teen or young adult to identify with the religious community, its values and beliefs. The teen needs to know that within the Catholic Church there are legitimate theological disagreements. Not every Catholic accepts the same theological tenets. Nevertheless, it is also important for the teen to know the core tenets of Catholic belief and practice. It is important to wrestle with the questions of "Do I belong to this faith tradition?" and "Am I a Catholic?" They need to know that they can be a Catholic without their faith being a carbon copy of their mother's faith. Furthermore, agreeing with the Catholic

Church on certain counter-cultural moral issues does not involve offending or judging the majority of their friends who may hold views closer to the cultural norm.

The religious reproductive process is broken. It is in need of repair. It is in need of healing. Fortunately, the pain of exile and diaspora the Cuban American community has experienced provides some insight into this healing process. Exiles need not make either/or decisions, “Am I Cuban or American?” Exiles have learned to learn to live in the tension. Exiles have learned the art of reconciliation. The Catholic Church only need avail itself of these hard-earned lessons.

The following chapter provides a hermeneutic that allows a glimpse at how Cuban American view themselves in the process of living in the hyphen, but furthermore how this physical and social reality has provided a lens by which they read the Gospels.

4.0 CHAPTER FOUR: Latina Shared Intergenerational Hermeneutics (Third Space Religious Identity Formation) in the Context of the Home

Is this the darkness of the tomb, or of the womb? I don't know. All I know is that the only way we will endure is if each of us shows up to the labor. – Valerie Kaur

Since one of the key features of religious socialization involves “negotiation,” it is often times difficult for some people to understand what this entails and what it looks like in real life. Negotiation is a type of tightrope walk or a threading the needle that both accepts the religious tradition as handed down by the previous generation, but also engages critically with it. It neither rejects the inherited faith outright, nor does it swallow the inherited faith whole. It wrestles with it and chews on it in order to absorb it and identify with it.

This chapter is an effort to show this “negotiation” at work in a meditative interpretive reading from a Biblical passage. It is not an academic interpretation. It is an exercise providing a window into devotional practice that is both distinctly Cuban and distinctly personal. It represents a type of reading of the text that Biblical scholars call ‘midrashic’ in reference to a style of Jewish pre-critical exegesis. Midrashic exegetical traditions, like this one, rely a great deal on religious imagination, the contours of which I will treat at length below.

4.1 The Religious Imagination as *Traditum*

In this discussion of the process of passing on *the faith* – faith transmission – (the *traditio*), an important consideration involves establishing what constitutes *the faith* (the *traditum*) that these Cuban-American women are passing on to the next generation.²⁴⁰ The *traditum* under consideration here are not specific theological tenets or a set of religious practices. While there has been a strong emphasis on ritual practices throughout this dissertation

²⁴⁰ Knight (*Traditions of Israel*, 5) established this terminological distinction between *traditio* and *traditum*.

and these are certainly a big part of what these women pass on, they are not the heart of this *traditum*.

The heart of the *traditum* is a type of *religious imagination* that infuses a hermeneutic.²⁴¹ The idea that it is an imagination at the heart of this faith underscores its dynamic nature. It “helps counter the presumption that religion is a set of religious beliefs about some other time, some other reality.”²⁴² Imagination is what brings reality to ideas by taking them from remote and abstract concepts to likely images that can occupy the center of one’s field of consciousness.²⁴³ As a *hermeneutic*, it involves a way of viewing the world and a way of viewing God.

This focus on religious imagination as an operational and legitimate hermeneutic is what makes the home a possible *locus theologicus*. Struck by the harm caused by the professionalization of theology, where specialists simply speak to other specialists, Philip Clayton sought to wrest the authority from academic theologians and return it to the ordinary believer.²⁴⁴ Clayton’s solution, however, which involved migrating the *locus theologicus* from the academy to the Church, had a Protestant framework in mind. In the Catholic tradition, this simply moves the *locus theologicus* from one group of authority figures, whose primary dialogue is amongst one another, to another such group. What is needed, as this dissertation argues, is

²⁴¹ The tradition of a religious imagination in the academic literature spans the likes of John Dewey (*A Common Faith* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1934)), Ludwig Feuerbach (*The Essence of Christianity*, trans. George Eliot (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2012)) and William James (*The Varieties of Religious Experience: A Study in Human Nature: Being the Gifford Lectures on Religion Delivered at Edinburgh in 1901-1902* (London: Longman, 1902)), but is freely referenced in numerous modern theological studies. See e.g., Mark Johnson and Pnina Werbner, “Diasporic Encounters, Sacred Journeys: Ritual, Normativity and the Religious Imagination among International Asian Migrant Women,” *The Asia Pacific Journal of Anthropology* 11 (2010): 205–18.

²⁴² Linell E. Cady, “Religious Imagination in a Late Secular Age: Extending Liberal Traditions in the Twenty-First Century,” *American Journal of Theology & Philosophy* 32 (2011): 23–42 (40).

²⁴³ Romain Mollard, “The Role of Imagination in James’s and Dewey’s Understanding of Religious Experience,” *European Journal of Pragmatism and American Philosophy* 1 (2013), <https://journals.openedition.org/ejppap/576>.

²⁴⁴ Philip Clayton, *Transforming Christian Theology: For Church and Society* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2010).

moving the *locus theologicus* back to the home. Religious imagination is a democratized tool that is available to mothers and daughters throughout the world and is not restricted to a select few.

This reliance on the religious imagination has been a hallmark of Catholic popular religion for centuries. The religious imagination of these Cuban-American Latinas that governs how they view God, and the Catholic tradition, is distinctive, even from the wider Latina hermeneutical tradition. Before trying to further articulate the nature of this Cuban-American Latina hermeneutic infused by religious imagination, it was deemed best to offer a glimpse of it in action. The following first-person narrative invites the reader to step into the world of this hermeneutic and experience it in its richness in a way that is impossible to capture with traditional academic prose and jargon. This will then be followed by a more formal analysis of this midrashic-style narrative and the processes that animate it.

4.2 *La Pietá* Through Cuban-American Latina Eyes

When it was evening, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who was also a disciple of Jesus. He went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus; then Pilate ordered it to be given to him. So Joseph took the body and wrapped it in a clean linen cloth and laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn in the rock. He then rolled a great stone to the door of the tomb and went away. Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb. (Matt. 27:57-61)²⁴⁵

I continuously glance at the bronze statue of Michelangelo's *La Pietà* in my room and then back at the Scripture before me, baffled with verse 61 – “Mary Magdalene and the other Mary were there, sitting opposite the tomb” – I keep getting stuck on the word *sitting*...

“opposite the tomb.” Perhaps my problem is with what precedes the stale statement: the portrayal of a busy Joseph of Arimathea hard at work. Not only is he claiming, wrapping, and laying the

²⁴⁵ All scriptural quotations come from the NRSVCE, unless otherwise noted.

body of Jesus in a tomb he himself has hewn, at an unknown time, he then proceeds to roll a stone over the entrance of the cave. All the while, the women “sit” paralyzed at a close distance: including the mother of Jesus, “the other Mary.”²⁴⁶

Staring at *La Pietà*, my religious imagination has already filled in the details of these events passed over in the scripture before me. I know full well that women do not sit idly by when there is work that needs to be done. And they certainly do not remain “at a distance” from members of their family: not when they are sick, not when they are dying, and not even after they are dead.

The hours that have led up to this moment have been utter chaos. Mary, the mother of Jesus, and Mary Magdalene heard that Jesus was arrested in the middle of the night, and although Mary may not have been allowed in the areas where Jesus was religiously and criminally tried, as soon as he was in a public space where women were allowed, she would have been right there. Each excruciating step Jesus’ mother takes keeps her heart wrenchingly close to her son on his way to Golgotha.

Mary Magdalene is a beacon of fortitude to the other women that have been following Jesus since Galilee, “ministering to him” (Matt. 27:55). The women currently obscured by the crowds are generally powerful and influential members in Jewish society. Women like Joanna, Chuza and Susanna, who joined Mary Magdalene in providing for Jesus and his disciples from their resources (Luke 8:1-3) and will later “prepare[d] spices and ointments” for Jesus’ body (Luke 23:55-56) are surely not just looking on “from a distance.”

Veronica, having only hours before approached Jesus to wipe the blood and sweat out of his eyes as he stumbled along carrying that heavy cross, is also here holding in her hands a

²⁴⁶ While most hermeneutics would not allow for this interpretation of “the other Mary” as being the mother of Jesus, such a reading, likely heavily influenced by *La Pietà*, is completely consistent within this hermeneutic.

bloodied shroud. Without anything else to use, she had taken the veil from her own face to wipe his. The gratitude and admiration these other women have for Veronica, who was brave enough to risk the wrath of the guards to help *their* accused convict, is palpable.

These women are connected to each other because of their respective relationships with Jesus. Conversations among them include the comforting word of Martha to someone who grieves, and the mercy that the woman caught in adultery shows to another. These women are not merely gathered at the cross, but rather, because of it. Together, in anguish, they are in a “common struggle against suffering.”²⁴⁷

The women at a distance do not suffer any less nor are they isolated individuals, rather all are part of a constellation of women variably connected by what has brought them here: their own relationship with the Savior. Each is both an individual and part of a collective moved by what they have witnessed and what has perhaps even been done for them by the Messiah.

After a few hours of Jesus being crucified, the dwindling crowd only makes the quietness of the scene more haunting. Wailing is what one would expect. Just seeing the body of this man, executed as a criminal would have brought tears to the most stoic of individuals. However, it is quiet; here there are no professional mourners or torn garments. There is only the silence of fear and paralysis: the trauma of witnessing an injustice. The women gathered at the cross—several of whom are mothers and disciples themselves—only hear the heartbreaking cries of an abandoned Jesus, and the muffled weeping of his mother.

The adult-child condemned to death before them is not only the child and the responsibility of his mother. Each of these women consciously chooses to bear the burden of mothering their beloved Jesus. These women spread across the hill, devastated by their loss,

²⁴⁷ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús*, The Preferential Option for the Poor: Rationale and Implications, par. 27.

understand and anticipate that together they must find their own solution to his next need, his burial.

Nevertheless, even in grief tasks need to be performed. Along with these women, I am certainly grateful that Joseph of Arimathea has used his considerable resources and has exerted his influence to do an honorable, and remarkable deed by reclaiming the body of Jesus from Pontius Pilate and providing a space to lay the body. I must not overlook, however, the pivotal role of the Savior's mother in this event. As I reflect on Mary, this mother who could not find any vacancy at the inns of Bethlehem, once more -this time at the foot of the cross- finds herself trusting that God will make room for her son in an unexpected place. Mary simply waits, trusting that the same God that asked her to carry Jesus, will now carry her.

Hours later, the women enter the dark space of the tomb—a cave—fully understanding that they are not there (solely) to grieve, but rather to serve. Mary, with these women around her offering her love and support, must convert this cave into an adequate burial site—regardless of how brief his stay in it will be. This is not a solo effort, but a task the community is required to perform. The community must reconcile itself to the displacement of a borrowed tomb. Jesus is out of place here in this wealthy man's tomb. These living women are out of place in this home for the dead. Their presence in this cave, performing these thankless tasks, which must be done, but which no one wants to do, is a sacrifice—a gift of themselves to God. Not only that, but reciprocally, in this place that is not their own they are being healed, affirmed and prepared for their (continuing) discipleship.

There is no moment more intimate between Jesus and his disciples as this one. As the women prepare Jesus, they are simultaneously learning more about their own love and loyalty to him. Lying before them is not a ministering Jesus that will heal or teach, this is a bloodied Jesus

who has disillusioned and broken the hearts of all present at the tomb. How could this possibly be the promised messiah? Yet still, there appears in these women a willingness and desire to be present—physically close to him. This common desire to partake in the chores needing to be done, makes everyone in this tomb a metaphorical mother of Jesus. In this moment mothering is not glorious, it requires a “self-giving that is not easy, that is not glamorous, and that offers few immediate rewards...and little satisfaction.”²⁴⁸

The power and beauty of this tomb cannot be missed here. Like the “domestic church” this grave in the next few hours will be a place of giving birth, struggling, hoping, journeying, suffering, and praying.²⁴⁹ All at once, in this small space, the disciples will be experiencing, expressing and confronting a wide variety of feelings, doubts, and hopes.

Even this small group, united in the cave though they are, is not homogenous. Some are likely coping with their grief by focusing on the task at hand, some may still be present at the cross even from within this cave, while still others were, perhaps, seeking answers. There would, of course, also be those few who do not know the man at all but are there because of a connection to one of the women tending to the body.

As the women begin to wash the body, they are confronted with the depravity of the crucifixion. A cleansing ritual that defiles them, not only because they have touched a dead body, but it is the body of an ex-communicated Jew; an isolated individual, with no humanity or identity, “no-thing, a no-body.”²⁵⁰ The washing of this forsaken body allows the women to see closely what Jesus has endured. As the women begin to gently rinse the blood, tenderly brush

²⁴⁸ Jeannine Hill Fletcher, *Motherhood as Metaphor: Engendering Interreligious Dialogue* (New York: Fordham University Press, 2014), 68.

²⁴⁹ Claudia H. Herrera, “Motherhood as a Metaphor for Contemporary Latina Theology and Spirituality,” in *Making Sense of Motherhood: Biblical and Theological Perspectives* (Eugene, OR: Wipf & Stock, 2016), 153–65 (163).

²⁵⁰ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús*, The Person as Sacrament, par. 9.

Jesus' knotted hair, cover his gashes with ointments, and softly smear his body with perfumes and oils, these women are transforming the grave into a space of healing and restoration.

Mary especially knows what to do with Jesus in this cave because this is not the first time that she has washed and dressed her child – bloodied and helpless. After giving birth, and surely having learned from watching Elizabeth, Mary washed her newborn and used bands of cloth to wrap him tightly. Swaddling, she knew, would help her son transition from her womb to the outside world. Swaddling would soothe her newborn and promote sleep. The burial shroud, much like his swaddling clothes, this long cloth that will cover Jesus from his feet up to his head, prepares her son for yet one more transition: from Jesus to Christ. Jesus will be raised because that is the will of his Father. I suspect the will of his mother, on the other hand, was that when he opens his eyes, he would know by the condition of his body and the cloth covering his face that he was tended to and loved – unconditionally – even in death.

Once the dreadful shock wore off and the work began, there must have certainly been periods of respectful silence along with moments of reflection and reminiscing. In this cave, the women have the opportunity to share intimate moments they shared with Jesus that allow others to know him better; to understand why he is so loved. At the same time, the conversation has a more communal focus: what does it mean that the Son of Man has died; how to continue to submit to the leadership of the religious and political authorities that have committed this heinous crime; how to forgive and console the disciples that ran and hid. Omitting or avoiding these conversations is no more a real possibility than is ignoring the corpse before them. These very conversations are a liberating process for all involved.²⁵¹

²⁵¹ Diana L. Hayes, *Hagar's Daughters: Womanist Ways of Being in the World* (New York: Paulist Press, 1995), 44.

My mind returns to the Stations of the Cross. The three times that Jesus falls within these stations, it is the women at a distance who appear at his side: the first time is his mother, the second involves the woman who filled with pity for this figure buckling under the weight of his cross attempts to comfort him by wiping his face clean of blood, sweat and tears. The third time that Jesus falls (the ninth station) it is the wailing of distraught women (described in the eighth station) that catches the attention of an exhausted Jesus. The women in the distance – those who go the distance with Jesus – are the women my community celebrates. It is they with whom the entire Catholic community is in solidarity, every Friday during Lent. These women have come together for a Jesus who has never been so vulnerable as now.

Mary, the mother of God, looks at her son one last time covered in linen, and inspects his body. She gives her son one last kiss before she walks out of the cave and the stone is rolled behind her. This kiss overrides that of Judas. As Mary, Mary Magdalene and these other women emerge out of the cave together, their faces look different – changed by choosing to confront death and having overcome it with love, work, cooperation, and dialogue. The emergence from the tomb is a rebirth. In this tomb, all of these women had come together to restore, but in the process they themselves are renewed by their relationships with each other. They do not leave here a blank slate, but in their grieving, there is an anxious hope – a waiting for the fulfillment of a promise.

4.3 A Cuban-American Latina Hermeneutic

As is true for the entire Catholic tradition, Mary looms large in the Cuban-American Catholic tradition. It seems fitting then to use a story about Mary in the Gospels as an example of different elements of a Cuban-American hermeneutic and how it operates. This is part of the Passion story that describes the transfer of Jesus from the cross into the tomb for his burial.

While the story appears in all four Gospels, the interpretation above focuses on Matthew 27:57-61.

This passage is significant because of the common representation of this scene in art—Michelangelo's *La Pietà* being the most famous example. *La Pietà* is a striking marble sculpture of Mary holding the lifeless body of her son, Jesus, after he has been taken down from the cross. One example of the significance that this sculpture holds for Cubans appears in *La Necrópolis de Cristóbal Colón*, a prominent cemetery in the Vedado neighborhood in Havana. Located in this iconic cemetery are not one, but two pietàs. There is the replica of Michelangelo's *La Pietà*, but in addition, there a similar pietà in art deco style in white marble that stands as a grave monument carved by one of Cuba's most famous sculptors, Rita Longa (1912-2000). For Cuban-Americans living in Miami, it is Ivan Mestrovic's pietà which stands in the Archbishop Joseph P. Hurley Garden of Memories in the archdiocesan Pastoral Center that takes center stage. This type of artwork fills and spurs the Cuban-American Latina religious imagination.

There is also an indirect connection made through the women in the story between this text and the Stations of the Cross, which functions as a corporate ritual procession in Catholic churches during Lent. This ritual incorporates elements that do not appear in this story, nor in any of the gospels. They constitute church tradition that enlivens the story and captures the religious imagination.

Obviously, the particulars of this interpretation of the transfer of Jesus' body from the cross to the tomb in Matthew 27:57-61 will not resonate with all Cuban-American Latinas. Nevertheless, the specifics are not the point here—but the wider hermeneutic. The description of this hermeneutic, seen in action above, takes into account the context of the hermeneutic; the sources of the hermeneutic; and finally, the hermeneutical process itself.

4.3.1 *The Hermeneutical Context*

The Catholic religious tradition typically encourages a hermeneutical process from the top down. The ecclesiastical leadership consisting ultimately of the Pope, but always informed by the bishops, typically in a synod, provides the authoritative theological interpretation that is then disseminated to the church at large.²⁵² This interpretation becomes official church canon, unless or until it is superseded by a later interpretation by a subsequent Pope. This patriarchal, institutional hermeneutic is enshrined in official church doctrine itself. Women, excluded from the leadership by church doctrine, have no voice in this hermeneutic controlled by the institutional Catholic church.

Chapter two of this dissertation highlighted the legitimation of the home as the domestic church by the institutional church. The outcome of that discussion was a clear identification of the logical conclusion of the various official teachings on the domestic church—that the mother is the default priest of the home as the domestic church. Within the home, Catholic Cuban women not only have a voice in the hermeneutical process; they have an authoritative voice. The authority of that voice comes from their religious imagination as it plays on the different sources of Catholic tradition.

This matriarchal authority is, by its nature, different in kind from the patriarchal authority. The matriarchal authority empowers and supports the individual roles and expressions within the domestic community. For instance, the patriarchal system of the institutional church imposes its hermeneutic on the individual members of the church body. By contrast, the matriarchal system of the domestic church celebrates and encourages the hermeneutic contributions of individual members of the domestic church body.

²⁵² Werner G. Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics: Development and Significance* (New York: Crossroad, 1991), 170.

In so doing, the community of the home is no less homogeneous than the community of the institutional church. As the Apostle Paul said to the church at Corinth,

But God has so arranged the body, giving the greater honor to the inferior member, that there may be no dissension within the body, but the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. (1 Cor. 12:12,14-26)

This hermeneutic honors the disadvantaged and “weaker” members.²⁵³ Catholic Cuban mothers frequently grant the *abuelas* in the home pride of place in spiritual matters, despite real differences of opinion. This dynamic was highlighted empirically in the discussion of the interviews in chapter three. As a result of their experiences with their own mothers, often ever-present as a reminder within the home itself, these mothers encourage their daughters to develop their own interpretations using this broader hermeneutic process modelled for them in the home.

With all this in mind, the context of this Catholic Cuban-American Latina hermeneutic is the home. The home is the *locus theologicus* where interpretation takes place. The interpretation outlined above shows this domestic context in action. The interpretation above begins “I continuously glance at the bronze statue of Michelangelo’s *Pieta in my room* and then back at the Scripture before me, particularly annoyed with verse 61...” It is not in the parish church or religious education classes or Catholic school where I, as the interpreter, view this image that prompts the interpretive process. In the confines of the home is where this interpretive process, this hermeneutic, plays itself out.

It is bottom up and matriarchal at its core. The Catholic Cuban domestic church in which Latinas reside has given them implicit permission and encouragement to engage in this hermeneutical process *in their room*. It can happen without explicit oversight. A Latina, as an

²⁵³ On this, see the extended discussion of the role of “Liberation Theology” in this hermeneutic in the “Dislocation” section below.

eye of the body, has the right and ability to observe the limp body of Jesus, the Savior, held in Mary's arms and interpret that image, along with a text as she sees it, knowing full well that another member of her domestic church family, a hand perhaps, may reach out and feel different things than she does. Nevertheless, they both approach the process in the context of the home. The home is where the Catholic Cuban-American Latina interprets the sources of religious tradition. The home is the *locus theologicus*.

4.3.2 Revisiting the Question of Hermeneutical Sources

At the Council of Trent, the Roman Catholic Church affirmed the Bible and Christian Tradition together as the two authoritative sources for faith and theology.²⁵⁴ For this reason, it is unproblematic that Cuban-American Latinas rarely encounter the Bible directly but, rather, mediated through multiple other sources that constitute Christian Tradition. Regular reading of the Bible is just not a big part of the Cuban-American Latina religious experience. This comes through clearly in Elena's interview.

I teach Bible in my house, at home every Wednesday...And these are all women who are retired...They're all Catholic, very devout Catholic. They need a little boost in learning their Bible...Because unfortunately our church has not emphasized too much the Holy Scripture...We have forgot about that.

The institutional Catholic Church recognizes a rather complex hermeneutical process involved in interpreting the Bible written in ancient foreign languages set in cultures removed from us by thousands of miles and dozens of centuries. It has generally maintained that the task of perceiving and relaying its relevance for the faith of the twenty-first century believer is best reserved for the professional clergy who have been formally trained in the process.

²⁵⁴ Jeanrond, *Theological Hermeneutics*, 35.

As a result, Catholic Cuban Latinas most often interact with the Bible as it is mediated through art or ritual. This coincides with the insistence of Cuban-American theologians that all knowledge of the faith is knowledge mediated, communicated or transmitted by culture. This heavy reliance on art and ritual has been a central feature of “popular Catholicism” for years, spanning many ethnic cultures where the Catholic faith is practiced. Portraits and statuary of Mary and Jesus are a common feature within Cuban Latina homes. “These religious statues or figures are not mere representations of a reality completely external to them, rather they are the concrete embodiment, in time and space, of Jesus and Mary.”²⁵⁵ The art, however, is not limited to scenes from the Bible. Saints from throughout history form the subject of such artistic works and their stories are just as authoritative as images drawn directly from the Bible.

For the Catholic Cuban Latinas, the artistic expressions adorning their homes mediate the tradition passed along not only by the institutional church, but by the domestic church as well. This tradition begins with scripture but runs seamlessly through history from the beginnings of the church to the traditions as formed in Cuba itself on down to the present day. As Catholic Cuban Latinas, we experience the divine presence in the art that daily surrounds us and in the rituals in which we seasonally participate.

These rituals acted out in the wider community, whether that be at the local parish church or in community religious festival celebrations, are another important mediator of religious truth for Latinas. The lengthy description of Jesus’ final day in the four gospels is not how Catholic Cuban Latinas most often reflect upon this event. Rather, the liturgical tradition of the Stations of the Cross provides one example of a memorable experience that allows for Latinas to reflect deeply on this event, so central to faith.²⁵⁶ Like the art, these stations include additional

²⁵⁵ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús*, 48.

²⁵⁶ Ida Miranda, “Faith Formation with Hispanic/Latino Families,” *Lifelong Faith* 1 (2007): 21–29 (24).

narratives foreign to the gospels themselves, but which Latinas view no less authoritatively than the narratives explicitly depicted in the gospel accounts.

How this plays out is evident in the extended example above. The journey there begins with, “I continuously glance at *the bronze statue of Michelangelo’s Pieta* in my room and then back at the Scripture before me, particularly annoyed with verse 61...”. As the interpretation moves on it becomes clear that the sanctified imagination, the religious imagination, takes a certain pride of place in the interpretive tradition alongside reason.²⁵⁷ This general recognition of multiple sources of Christian truth is not limited to “popular Catholicism” or even Catholicism in general. Within Protestantism, the Wesleyan tradition adds two more sources to those officially recognized by the Catholic Church—reason and experience.²⁵⁸

These two additional sources warrant some consideration as to how this Cuban-American Latina hermeneutic uses (or does not use) them. Roberto Goizueta addresses the use that philosophers have made of reason and experience in the hermeneutic process.²⁵⁹ In doing so, he systematically dismantles the philosophical reliance on reason as a “disembodied intellect” as it appears in the work of Descartes and other proponents of the hermeneutic of suspicion.²⁶⁰ These philosophers take a reductionistic approach that fails to account for the lived experience, which is embodied in a whole, concrete, historical person. Isasi-Díaz makes a similar attack on the disembodiment of reason.

Until recently emotions have been thought to be at odds with reason. The psychological model of human functioning most prevalent even today insists ‘first, that reasoning can be thoroughly detached from emotion; second, that only

²⁵⁷ James M. Farrell, “Rhetoric and the Catholic Imagination,” *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 7 (2004): 499–511.

²⁵⁸ Albert C. Outler, “The Wesleyan Quadrilateral - in John Wesley,” *Wesleyan Theological Journal* 20 (1985): 7–18.

²⁵⁹ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús*, 132-134.

²⁶⁰ Garrett Green, *Theology, Hermeneutics and Imagination: The Crisis of Interpretation at the End of Modernity* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 2004).

*detached reasoning will be reliably objective; and third, that emotions will only bias, cloud, and impede moral decision-making.*²⁶¹

It is clear meditating on images and rituals like this relies upon personal experience to draw meaning from them. The interpretive tension that begins the interpretation above stems from a perceived conflict between personal experience reflected in and affirmed by the *Pieta* and the gospel narrative. This conflict leads to a short journey prompted by experience into historical questions – the answers to which allow for further imaginative meditation on the subject. Throughout the interviews, the daughters, especially, apply their God-given experience to disagree with certain theological positions of the institutional church. The love that Sophia experiences in her close friendship with her best friend who is gay and “extremely Catholic” convinces her that the church’s position on homosexuality is wrong. While their mothers often affirm the historical tradition of the church on such matters and deem it authoritative, the daughters emphasize their experience above the tradition of the Church in these cases.²⁶²

To summarize, this interchange between the text of Scripture and the visual arts, like religious pictures and statuary, is an integral part of this Cuban-American Latina hermeneutic. Spiritual practice in this tradition is active and present. Cuban-American Latinas pray with images and statuary before them. This is just as true in the domestic church of our homes as it is in the institutional church. These visual representations spur the imagination. There is sacramental reflection on the symbols associated with saints and with different manifestations of the virgin.²⁶³ That symbolism is tied to rituals and to stories. In prayer and meditation, Cuban-American Latinas turn to these stories and then return to them time and time again.

²⁶¹ Ada María Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues: Mujerista Theology* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 2004), 206.

²⁶² Whether or not this feature of the hermeneutic is recognized by the Magisterium of the Catholic Church, it is what appears in popular practice, nonetheless.

²⁶³ Goizueta, *Caminemos con Jesús*, 70-76.

Within one's religious imagination, it is impossible for these stories to remain stagnant and lifeless. The mind adorns these stories filling in the gaps. The scripture is not something Cuban-American Latinas read in isolation. Stories contained in scripture are read out in religious settings – these may involve Mass or religious holiday celebrations. The portraits and statuary in Cuban-American homes is a reminder of the stories and the people they depict. In those reminders, however, there is never a sense of being bound to the stories as they are told in the scriptures or from the altar during Mass.

4.3.3 Toward a Cuban-American Latina Theological Hermeneutic

It may seem odd to differentiate a Cuban-American theological hermeneutic from a more general Latina theological hermeneutic. In many cases, Latina is an appropriate broad category, but for various historical reasons, their theological proclivities land in a different place on the continuum than most of their Latina counterparts. These realities and the corresponding theological proclivities warrant sketching out in a little more detail in this context.

A. The Socio-Economic Distinctiveness of Cuban Latina Theological Hermeneutics

In terms of the theological continuum in post-colonial studies, there are a few considerations. Borrowing a dichotomy articulated by Schreiter,²⁶⁴ Doyle contrasts “liberation theologies” with “inculturation theologies.”²⁶⁵ In the late sixties, the emergence of liberation theologies influenced theological studies and popular movements throughout Latin America and elsewhere in the world. As the name implies, liberation theologies place their focus on the idea

²⁶⁴ Robert J. Schreiter, *Constructing Local Theologies* (Maryknoll, NY: Orbis Books, 1985), 12-16.

²⁶⁵ Dennis M. Doyle, “The Concept of Inculturation in Roman Catholicism: A Theological Consideration,” *U.S. Catholic Historian* 30 (2012): 1–13.

of human liberation—liberation from socio-economic and political forms of oppression as well as other forms related to race, culture, and gender.

During the same period, theologies of Inculturation theologies, by contrast, focuses on a toleration that also emerged. Their focus, however, was on the role and significance of culture in the local appropriation and expression of the Catholic faith.²⁶⁶ Their emphasis was not on Catholic Social Teachings regarding social justice and human rights, but rather, on allowing local cultures and traditions to give authentic and meaningful expression to the Gospel message of Jesus Christ as well as Christian faith and practice. Inculturation theologies, by contrast, focuses on a toleration for the local expression of the Catholic faith.²⁶⁷ The emphasis is not on revolution and cultural change, but on allowing the gospel message to be expressed in the local cultural medium. Inculturation theologies start from the conviction that, like the woman at the well, Jesus meets the believer and the believing community where they are at, which means that their expression of faith may be substantially different from the traditional expressions found in Rome (or in Western Europe or in the U.S.).

Prior to the Revolution, sectors of the Cuban Catholic community were influenced, as were many countries in Latin America and elsewhere, by faith-based movements identified with *Acción Católica* (Catholic Action), a precursor to liberation theologies. They embraced the “see-judge-act” method advanced by Catholic Action as a way of reading the Word in the world, As

²⁶⁶ David Lehmann, *Struggle for the Spirit: Religious Transformation and Popular Culture in Brazil and Latin America* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1996).

²⁶⁷ David Lehmann, *Struggle for the Spirit: Religious Transformation and Popular Culture in Brazil and Latin America* (Cambridge, U.K.: Polity Press, 1996).

such, they were wholly in support of the revolution,²⁶⁸ only to be burned in the process.²⁶⁹ In a personal interview, the curator of the Cuban-American Museum, described it as follows: “the biggest betrayal was the Castro revolution, which the people wanted and helped; and then he became a communist and sold us out too.” Facing the economic hardships imposed by the fascist dictator, Batista, the masses understandably revolted, longing for liberation from their oppression and oppressors. Some of the promises of communism and socialism converged with the liberating hopes for social change advanced by student and worker movements identified with Catholic Action. However, under the post-revolution realities of the Castro regime, many socially engaged Catholics found themselves under assault and persecuted.

Then, after substituting one problematic, oppressive government for another, Cubans were proud to reject the communism enforced by Castro with an iron hand, in favor of the democracy, capitalism and freedom of religion found in the U.S.²⁷⁰ Because of their real-life experiences, Cubans no longer flirt with socialism as freely as do most other Latinx populations. These have become “dangerous memories” that make the past present in order to prevent a repeat of those crimes.²⁷¹ Capitalism is now ingrained in the Cuban-American community reflected in the fact that “Cubans more than most Latin American immigrants have lived the

²⁶⁸ “The view of progressive Catholicism as expressed in *La Quincena*, was clearly anti-capitalist and sympathetic to the Cuban Revolution.” Margaret E. Crahan, “Catholicism in Cuba,” *Cuban Studies* 19 (1989): 3–24. See also Joseph Holbrook, “The Church in Cuba: Ambivalence between Regime and Revolution 1952-1962,” A Paper delivered at the Congress of the Latin American Studies association, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, June 11-14, 2009.

²⁶⁹ Although the official Catholic Church criticized both sides, rebuking the use of violence by the Castro forces and Batista for suppressing democracy, the Cuban populace overwhelmingly supported Castro in his effort to oust Batista. *Ibid*, 5.

²⁷⁰ This pride is reflected in the large number of Cuban-Americans who have become naturalized citizens. As of 2016, 58% of Cuban immigrants had become naturalized citizens as compared with 42% of Mexican immigrants. Ana Gonzalez-Barrera, “Mexican Lawful Immigrants Among the Least Likely to Become U.S. Citizens,” *PEW Research Center, Hispanic Trends* (Washington, D.C., June 29, 2017), <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/2017/06/29/mexican-lawful-immigrants-among-least-likely-to-become-u-s-citizens/>; Luis Noe-Bustamante, Antonio Flores, and Sono Shah, “Facts on Hispanics of Cuban Origin in the United States, 2017,” *PEW Research Center, Hispanic Trends*, September 16, 2019, <https://www.pewresearch.org/hispanic/fact-sheet/u-s-hispanics-facts-on-cuban-origin-latinos/#immigration-status>.

²⁷¹ Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues*, 47.

American Dream.”²⁷² The liberation that Cuban-American Latinas envision by and large does not draw mainly from Marxist ideals that once formed the bedrock of much of Latin American liberation theological reflection.

The new American context has been one that has only further fostered socio-economic prosperity for Cuban-Americans. The overall prosperity of Hispanics as a whole has been on the rise in the U.S. for decades. Since 1990, the percentage of Latinx who have earned a bachelor’s degree has about doubled. The median income of Latinx households in 2017 (\$49,010) represents a 3.7% increase compared to the 1.8% increase for all households. Latinx-owned companies have grown 31.6 percent since 2012, more than double the growth rate of all businesses across America (13.8 percent), the USHCC reports.

Within this wider Latinx population, the Cuban-American subpopulation outperforms the rest of the Latinx community on virtually all metrics. Whereas about 16% of Hispanics overall in 2017 obtained a bachelor’s degree or higher, 27% of Cubans did so.²⁷³ When this group is broken down between foreign-born immigrants and U.S.-born Cuban-Americans (their children and grandchildren), however, the contrast becomes even more stark. Whereas only 21% of foreign-born Cuban-Americans have earned a Bachelor’s degree or higher, 36% of U.S.-born Cuban-Americans have done so,²⁷⁴ which is on par with the overall average for White, non-Hispanics (37% as of 2017).²⁷⁵ The Median income of Cubans (\$49,200) at first glance looks to

²⁷² Susan Eckstein, “Cuban Émigrés and the American Dream,” *Perspectives on Politics* 4 (2006): 297–307 (297). Despite Eckstein’s characterization of the situation, Isasi-Díaz is quick to point out that these enticing benefits and privileges of American society make us susceptible to the powerful myth that anyone who wants to prosper in this country can do so. Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues*. It would appear, however, that much of the Cuban populace has accepted this “myth” as reality based on their own lived experience.

²⁷³ Noe-Bustamante, Flores, and Shah, “Hispanics of Cuban Origin.”

²⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁷⁵ Reid Wilson, “Census: More Americans Have College Degrees than Ever Before,” *The Hill*, April 3, 2017, <https://thehill.com/homenews/state-watch/326995-census-more-americans-have-college-degrees-than-ever-before>.

be on par with the numbers for Hispanics in general (\$49,010).²⁷⁶ Once the generational difference is accounted for, U.S.-born Cuban households make considerably more (\$71,000) than do U.S.-born Hispanics in general (\$53,000),²⁷⁷ even outpacing the numbers for White, non-Latinx households (\$68,145).²⁷⁸ While 47% of the overall Latinx population in the U.S. own their homes, 51% of Cubans own their homes.²⁷⁹ In addition, while Cuban-Americans only account for 4% of the total Latinx population, they made up 8.5% of the total number of Latinx owned businesses in 2012.²⁸⁰

All in all, Cuban-Americans do not share the sense of socio-economic hardship that other Latinx communities feel, nor do they share the sentiment that “we did not cross the border, the border crossed us.”²⁸¹ The Cubans made a conscious decision to come to the U.S. for political and religious freedom and have actively chosen to make it their new home. They share the same pride in their new country as they had in their native Cuba. This pride comes through clearly in the interview with the curator of the Cuban-American Diaspora Museum. She describes her national pride in the following way.

The greatest thing in my life is being able to be both Cuban and American. I am so proud to be an American – and it’s by choice. And it’s the greatest country in the whole wide world... We know that we’re not here because we wanted to make it economically, we left everything behind... we left paradise and we built a paradise here, and this is our children’s heritage – and they know that they have to take it a step further.

²⁷⁶ Noe-Bustamante, Flores, and Shah, “Hispanics of Cuban Origin.”

²⁷⁷ Ibid.

²⁷⁸ U.S. Census Bureau, “Current Population Survey: 1968 to 2018 Annual Social and Economic Supplements,” 2018, Figure 1, Real Median Household Income by Race and Hispanic Origin: 1967 to 2017.

²⁷⁹ Noe-Bustamante, Flores, and Shah, “Hispanics of Cuban Origin.”

²⁸⁰ This figure is a calculation of the number of Cuban owned businesses in the U.S. in 2012 (Leonardo Rodriguez, “Statistics about the Cuban American Community,” Facts about Cuban Exiles, 2019, <https://www.facecuba.org/blank-page-1>) as a proportion of the number of Hispanic-owned businesses in the U.S. overall (Robert Bernstein, “Hispanic-Owned Businesses on the Upswing,” 2016, https://www.census.gov/newsroom/blogs/random-samplings/2016/12/hispanic-owned_busin.html).

²⁸¹ Sofia A. Villenas, “Diaspora and the Anthropology of Latino Education: Challenges, Affinities, and Intersections,” *Counterpoints* 369 (2009): 55–63 (55).

B. The Distinctiveness of a Cuban Latina Theological Hermeneutics

Likely as a result of the historical circumstances and demographic characteristics mentioned above, the women I interviewed have a very different concept of a just and humane society than do many Latin American theologians. Capitalism with its resulting unequal distribution of wealth does not bother the women. Having lived under socialist and communist regimes, they are quite familiar with the alternatives and take a hard pass. The interpretive tradition exemplified above adopts a constructive stance that carefully weaves in tradition, experience and reason into the mix alongside the text, gently correcting it without demonizing or destroying it.

From the context of the home, where women maintain a prominent position in the group hierarchy, the Cuban-American women interviewed point out an ideological clash between the individualism that pervades the dominant culture and the community, and push for a more communal focus. Furthermore, their hermeneutical praxis is a critique of the pervasive divisiveness of the dominant culture. There is an emphasis on reconciliation as the path forward to a more just and humane society. The third feature is the need for emotional, affective knowledge alongside the analytical knowledge that tends to drown out any other in the dominant culture. Each of these critiques become three pillars upon which this Cuban Latina hermeneutic process stands.

a. In the Midst of Dislocation, Individualism Looks Empty

The first correction to the dominant culture a Cuban Latina hermeneutic offers is the value of community. Community offers much needed support and comfort to confront the bewildering experience of dislocation. As much as Cubans have made their home in the U.S., there remains a Cuban identity and pride. Regardless of their economic prosperity in the U.S., as

of 2013 only 19% of Hispanics of Cuban origin most often describe themselves simply as “American.”²⁸² Even fewer Hispanics of Dominican origin identify simply as “American” (16%), whereas a larger percentage of Hispanics of Mexican origin do so (21%). This contrasts with the 23% of the larger Hispanic American population who normally describe themselves as “American.”

Susan Eckstein described this situation in detail in her 2006 study of the Cuban immigrant population.²⁸³ Like some other ethnic immigrant populations, the Cuban immigrants continue to speak Spanish,²⁸⁴ remain Catholic,²⁸⁵ live in close geographic proximity to one another²⁸⁶ and tend to marry within their cultural group.²⁸⁷ The interviews conducted for this dissertation highlight each of these four characteristics.²⁸⁸

For the interview of María’s daughter, Fátima, her own daughter, Samantha was present during the interview. Samantha, even two generations removed from the immigrant generation, still speaks Spanish fluently.

*Actually, I speak English and Spanish perfectly, but I go to mass in Spanish. Even though I did my CCD in English, I grew up going to mass on Sundays. And I went to a Catholic school and I would get lost in English and I had to repeat stuff in Spanish.*²⁸⁹

²⁸² Gustavo López, *Hispanics of Cuban Origin in the United States, 2013* (Washington, D.C., 2015), 4-5.

²⁸³ Eckstein, “Cuban Émigrés.”

²⁸⁴ In a 2013 Pew Research study 51% of Cuban-Americans are Spanish dominant, 36% are bilingual and 13% are English dominant. In addition, 79% of Cuban-Americans speak Spanish in their homes. López, “Hispanics of Cuban Origin,” 2-3.

²⁸⁵ According to the Pew Research study conducted in 2013, 49% of Cuban-Americans identify as Catholic. Ibid, 5.

²⁸⁶ Based on the data from the 2010 Census, 68% of the estimated number of Cuban-Americans in the U.S. live in Florida and most of these (55%) are concentrated in the Miami-Fort Lauderdale-West Palm Beach metro area. Sharon R. Ennis, Merarys Ríos-Vargas, and Nora G. Albert, *The Hispanic Population: 2010* (Washington, D.C., 2011), <https://www.census.gov/prod/cen2010/briefs/c2010br-04.pdf>.

²⁸⁷ Eckstein, “Cuban Émigrés,” 297-98. She noted that a 2004 survey conducted by Florida International University reported that 79% of respondents had Cuban spouses. Florida International University (FIU) Institute for Public Opinion Research (IPOR), *FIU/Cuba Poll*, 2004.

²⁸⁸ Notably, all of the interviewees were Catholic, but this was by design, so quotes related to this specific characteristic did not seem relevant.

²⁸⁹ Bilingual speakers often learn technical language (like for science or, in this case, theology) in one language or the other and experience difficulty translating these technical terms into the other language, which has nothing to do with their relative level of proficiency in either language.

Eugenia spoke about the ethnic make-up of the church she currently attends.

Look there in Saint Timothy the church that we are going, you have seen the number of families from other countries that are leading, from Mexicans, Central Americans, Argentines, Brazilians, that are taking their children to receive their sacraments. But you hardly see Americans, very few. I think I have seen one or two Americans. And there is a community of children almost four hundred, almost all are from other countries.

Elena shared a conversation she had with a Sephardic Jew who would go on to set her up with her husband.

The old man asked me, "Would you like to get married?"

"Of course I would like to get married."

"Do you like American guys?"

"No they are too fast. I like respect."

And he said, "okay."

But at the same time he was asking this young man who had been a brother and was still teaching as a LaSalle High School, he had been a Christian brother. He had been teaching in Cincinnati, Spanish and history.

He asked him, "Would you like to get married?"

"Of course I would like to be married."

"Do you like American girls?"

"No, they are too fast."

Cubans often talk about being in exile. That feeling of displacement, produced by the exile, is palpable throughout much of the Old Testament. The curator of the Cuban-American Diaspora Museum made the observation that "we are like the Jews...we'll always be Cuban. It's like my granddaughter: she's never been to Cuba and probably never will, but she is *Cubanita*."

This sense of dislocation is what prompts the identification with the women at a distance in the interpretation above. That sense of existing in a liminal space serves to heighten Cuban-American's perceptions of others who inhabit such a liminal space. In this space the women

recognize the need for community and the accompanying value it holds in providing a sense of solidarity.

To combat this sense of dislocation, the first generation Cuban-American women critique the individualism they find in the U.S. This individualism stems from a dualistic and fragmentary worldview. In the U.S., the idea of liberation is one of the individual. It is the absolute autonomy of the “I” against all external influences—among these, the community ties that exert their influence on the autonomous individual.²⁹⁰ Such community ties become constraints from which one must free oneself. By contrast, in Latin American culture, freedom has no meaning apart from that solidarity that creates unity. For these first-generation Cuban-Americans, the word “individual” carries a pejorative connotation.²⁹¹

The exegetical encounter depicted above clearly focuses on the communal aspects of the scene. The community is what is important, especially in times of turmoil, chaos and grief. When the scene looks individualistic, a Cuban Latina hermeneutic corrects the scene just as it corrects the dominant culture.

This communal approach that emphasizes community results in communion, which is the ultimate goal of liberation. The community working together in harmony, united in purpose is what liberation is all about. This feeling of dislocation that produces an emphasis on community is clearly evident in the interviews of the mothers. Much more than their daughters, they cling to the institutional church community as a source of refuge and strength. They are also much more accepting of the official church doctrines than their daughters. The communion offered in community is more important than individual views. This is not to say that the mothers do not

²⁹⁰ Goizueta, *Caminemos Con Jesús*, 173.

²⁹¹ *Ibid.*

find disagreements with the church on occasion, but it is the scope and frequency of these disagreements that is markedly different.

In reviewing this pillar of “dislocation” in Cuban Latina hermeneutics, it becomes evident that this pillar is much more foundational for the first generation of Cuban immigrants. In the interviews, it is the first generation, immigrant mothers who express this pillar most clearly, whereas it is less present in the second-generation daughters. This dissertation has repeatedly highlighted the broad generational differences apparent between the first generation of immigrants and the second and following generations of exiles. Among this immigrant generation, the concept and feeling of “dislocation” is an ever-present reality. For the second and subsequent generations, a different pillar becomes more foundational in the hermeneutic process.

b. Divisiveness Requires Reconciliation: Land and Geography as Imaginary

Second-generation Cuban-Americans identify with this critique the strongest because they have an internal sense of division that needs reconciliation. When it comes to the second generation, this country, the U.S., is all they have known in their lived experience. Cuba becomes a reality only in the stories they hear from their family members, but this reality is always at a distance. This produces a type of imaginary longing for the home country they have never known – a longing for reconciliation. This longing is fostered by the idealization of Cuba as represented in romanticized tall tales shared by the first generation.²⁹²

In the exegetical exercise above, the distance in space and time between first-century Palestine and twenty-first century Miami, parallels the distance between Cuba and the U.S. In that sense, the activities of the women in the tomb are as imaginary as Cuba is to second-

²⁹² Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues*, 48.

generation Cuban Latinas. It is possible to picture what it was like using one's (sanctified) imagination, all the while knowing that this is different from lived experience. Once again, the curator of the Cuban-American Diaspora Museum explained that this image of what Cuba could be is really what drives the museum. She explained that "the museum does not aim to preserve the Cuba that I left or the present one: it's the one that I brought in my mind...in my heart. That is the Cuba I want to save; the one that we lost." This imagination that Cuban Latinas foster with regard to an ancestral country spills over into the religious imagination. The two feed one another.

This imagination brings along with it a certain individualism that the second generation has likely absorbed and adopted from the dominant culture. Imagining this home country takes place in the individual after the stories have been told. It is a process whereby the second generation must reconcile the foreign country they hear about with their own identity. The preservation tactics that the first generation put in place that have allowed this second generation to know Spanish, to be raised Catholic, to grow up in a broader Cuban community where marriage partners can be found grounds them in their Cuban heritage. It is then the imaginative process which must bring it to life within each individual.

In this way, the second generation of Cuban-Americans provides a needed correction to the disparaging view of individuality that the first-generation Cuban-American theologians articulated. The emphasis on community championed by the first-generation Cubans serves to stifle legitimate dissent and critique. This is why the daughters in the interviews are much more willing to critique and challenge the official positions of the church. They very much value the wider church community and consider themselves a part of it, but this belonging does not prevent them from disagreeing with beliefs and practices. In relation to the primary sources for

theology, the community focus emphasizes Christian tradition, whereas the individual focus emphasizes experience.

c. Emotional Expression as a Prerequisite for Identity Reconstruction

The third critique a Cuban Latina hermeneutic offers goes to the prioritizing of the analytical over the emotional in the dominant culture. There is a pervasive sense that emotional expression shows weakness, and that decision-making should be free of emotion. This is foreign to the Cuban experience and the Latina experience as a whole. Emotion is a crucial component of human existence. If emotion is suppressed and disregarded as illegitimate, one can never fully know their true identity.

In this liminal space, in the context of the home, Cuban-Americans must reconstruct their identity and it is through that reconstruction where one finds true liberation. There is a need to die and be reborn in order to experience liberation. This is a process that mothers in general experience, just like Jesus' mother.

To be someone's mother is to die again and again. Die to who you thought you were and who you hoped you would become. Die to your cherished notions of what a child of yours should look like, sound like, behave like. Die to your illusions of control. Control of your own emotions, control of your child's experiences. And in proportion to all your deaths you will be blessed with endless resurrections. You will rise, radiant, from the flames of what you thought was the end of the world. And your child will rise, luminous, from the ashes of your errors.²⁹³

For the first-generation immigrants, their life in Cuba must die in order to give way to a new life in the U.S. Only after that death takes place is true liberation possible. The museum curator described this process in the life of the Cuban-American painter Rafael Soriano.

As you can see with Soriano, he changed because of exile. He had a style, and then he suffered for two years, and then had a dream, and then he decided wait, and he became better than he ever was. That experience of exile makes you better. Unless

²⁹³ Mirabai Starr, *Wild Mercy: Living the Fierce and Tender Wisdom of the Women Mystics* (Boulder, CO: Sounds True, 2019), 116-17.

you become bitter, and you can always do that. But if you decide, "I'm a survivor-not a victim-and I'm going to make the most of out of this." Then life becomes better than it was before...even if you lost everything. Even if you lost your country...turn that experience into something positive.

This characteristic stands in stark contrast to the dominant culture, which is quite guarded about expressing emotion. Ada María Isasi-Díaz says,

*We Cubans wear our emotions on our sleeves, we say laughing loudly. It is very clear for us that we need to show our love way beyond words. For us, demonstrating our love is part of the love itself: showing love helps to bring it about. This is the sacramental nature of the expressions of love, of what Farley calls 'the deeds of love.'*²⁹⁴

After living in the U.S. for a number of years she began to realize that she had become much more guarded with her emotions than she was in Cuba. This was not an issue of age or maturity as she realized she was mirroring the social norms of her new environment in the U.S. In this social environment, showing emotion was a negative. For Isasi-Díaz, entirely outside of her awareness she had changed...and she was not pleased with who she had become as a result.²⁹⁵ In this case, unlike Rafael Soriano, who had to die to who he had been in Cuba, Isasi-Díaz, had to die to who she had become in the U.S. Nevertheless, in both cases, these individuals succeeded in reconstructing their identity in an authentic way.

The identification with the women at the foot of the cross in the interpretation above hones in on the emotional aspect of the scene. It is that raw emotion with which we as Cubans identify. Not surprisingly, the raw emotion in this case surrounds a death. A Cuban Latina hermeneutic relies on the identity of the reader and that identity is continually being reconstructed in the *locus theologicus* of the home in life in the hyphen.

²⁹⁴ Isasi-Díaz, *La Lucha Continues*, 189-190.

²⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

This window into the power of religious imagination and the impact of hermeneutics on narrative and storytelling, leads into the final chapter of this dissertation where I propose practical implications for a home-based catechesis.

5.0 Chapter Five: Toward Empowering Models of Intergenerational Faith Formation for U.S. Born Latinas and Other Young Catholic Women

At this point in this dissertation, it should be beneficial to step back and take stock of the argument development thus far. Chapter One highlighted the steep attrition rate in the institutional Catholic Church and the threat that poses to the future of healthy communities of faith. The first independent variable contributing to the problem has been a widespread misperception among both educators and parents that formal religious instruction in a communal social location (school or church) is the primary means for faith transmission, just as formal educational instruction is the primary means for knowledge transmission. Chapter Two pointed towards the home as a more viable alternative for faith transmission than formal religious education. By giving the home the attention it deserves in this process, Chapter Three honed in on the second variable contributing to this problem. Faith transmission suffers when it is solely in the hands of secondary religious education instructors, and while the home is a powerful locus, it also has significant weaknesses. Namely, few parents are actively practicing their faith in committed ways visible to their children, and, even when they are doing so, the communication skills required to talk about faith thoughtfully and deeply are all too often absent.

The upshot is that, paradoxically, the solution to the problems of disaffiliation facing the Catholic Church lies in a social location completely outside of the institutional church's control or influence: the home. This certainly makes it difficult to give religious educators in secondary religious education roles any type of clear pedagogical direction. This has been part of the problematic cycle. The church observes a problem and marshals resources to directly address the problem. Because of the unique nature of this problem, lying as it does outside of the church's direct control, building up faith formation programs reinforced the notion that

secondary religious education was the best process for religious transmission, thereby exacerbating the problem into a full-blown crisis. The last thing this dissertation seeks to do is to add to that crisis by recommending more formal programs as solutions. As with any weighty problem of sizeable social dimensions, solutions must be dynamic and multi-faceted and will not be one-size-fits-all as appealing as such neat and tidy solutions might seem. Therefore, this concluding chapter will once again walk the reader through the argumentation presented in this dissertation with an eye specifically on pedagogical solutions.

5.1 The Overarching Concern

The first chapter of this dissertation provided numerous metrics from social scientific research highlighting the steep attrition rates within the Catholic Church noting that they are only getting steeper. One notable example comes from The Pew Research Center's October 2019 study which noted that the percentage of Catholics in the United States has fallen from nearly one-in-four to one-in-five, with the added news that Hispanics in America are no longer majority-Catholic.²⁹⁶ The numbers look dire and breaking the statistics out across age ranges only further demonstrates that the attrition rate is just getting steeper over time.

More than eight-in-ten members of the Silent Generation (those born between 1928 and 1945) describe themselves as Christians (84 percent), as do three-quarters of baby boomers (76 percent). In stark contrast, only half of Millennials (49 percent) describe themselves as Christians; four-in-ten are religious 'nones,' and one-in-ten Millennials identify with non-Christian faiths.²⁹⁷

²⁹⁶ PEW Research Center, "In U.S., Decline of Christianity Continues at a Rapid Pace: An Update on America's Changing Religious Landscape," *PEW Research Center, Religion & Public Life*, October 17, 2019, <https://www.pewforum.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/7/2019/10/Trends-in-Religious-Identity-and-Attendance-FOR-WEB-1.pdf>.

²⁹⁷ Ibid.

Pew concluded, as have researchers conducting similar studies, that the trends of the data show that a “real and significant change” is underway in the U.S. religious landscape.²⁹⁸

While it has not garnered a great deal of attention in this dissertation, the underlying cause of this institutional attrition is directly tied to repercussions addressed at length in Chapter Three. Therefore, it is worthwhile to identify it at this point. In the course of this research, it became clear that a paradigm shift, which began a century and a half ago or so that institutionalized both primary and secondary schooling in the U.S. and elsewhere, has occurred bringing with it a shift in the primary social location for religious socialization.²⁹⁹ Religious socialization, which was for centuries centered in the home³⁰⁰ – identified by the institutional church as the domestic church – shifted to the formal setting of either the institutional church or the formal institutional religious schools that had formed in conjunction with the institutionalized secular schools. Parents and church leaders from one generation to the next gradually shifted their expectations about where religious socialization should primarily take place from an emphasis on the home to an emphasis on educational institutions within the institutional church or run by it.

The predominance of this perspective within the church comes across clearly in the following story. Thomas Groome, who has taught Religious Education courses at Boston College since 1976, relates a story of a seminar classroom discussion he was having one morning with his students. The course of the discussion steered towards the sorry state of the home, where primarily Christian students listed the many problems and proposed better religious

²⁹⁸ Ibid.

²⁹⁹ “With the advent of universal education, a profound shift occurred in Western consciousness that embraced schooling and schools as the primary mode and locus of education. Religious education and the Church followed suit. Soon the assumption was that education in faith belonged in a school of some kind and that it replaced more than supported the work of parents and home.” Groome, *Will There Be Faith?*, 203.

³⁰⁰ “For most of its history and for the vast majority of its members, the Church entrusted the faith formation of children to the home and village.” Ibid.

education by the church as a solution. A Jewish student who was sitting in on the class from another university chimed in with

I'm so amazed at how you Christians mistrust your families. You assume that they can't do faith formation and that you have to do it for them. In my tradition, whether families are observant or not, keep kosher or not, are orthodox, conservative, or reformed, we tell them that they have first responsibility for the Jewish identity of their children, and then we give them the help they need to fulfill their role as parents. Sure, our Sabbath school is important, but it is a far second to our families.³⁰¹

The Jewish community, more familiar with exile than possibly any other ethnic religious group, while freely sending their children to formal educational institutions, never transferred this to their faith transmission in the way that Christians have done.

The academic learning and head knowledge that the formal primary and secondary schools transmitted quite well constitutes a very minor portion of faith transmission, which is primarily behavioral in nature. Counterintuitive as it may be on its face, moving the social location of faith transmission from the home to the institutional church is producing adults who desire very little connection with that institutional church. With this shift to the institution as the primary educator, the family became lax with this responsibility undermining the importance of a faith that was practical, organic, and integral to identity rather than a simple body of knowledge to be memorized and digested.

Research on faith development among homeschooled children also corroborates a view of the shift to an institutional formal social location as the primary center for religious socialization as one key root of this problem. Parents who homeschool their children by definition have not accepted the paradigm shift that has affected the majority of the population. They constitute only about 2% of the population. A 2015 study of spiritual status of 10,000

³⁰¹ Groome, *Will There Be Faith?*, 203.

young adults, which intentionally oversampled homeschoolers in an effort to obtain more valid information about this small subgroup of the population found that homeschoolers were 223% more likely to identify with their faith as those who attended private religious schools and were 171% more likely to exhibit strong faith behavior.³⁰² The point being made here is that these parents clearly still believe in the primary value of the home as the social location for religious socialization. The ability to focus specifically on religious socialization in the home is the primary reason given by 82% of the parents who chose homeschooling.

Returning to the data on religiously unaffiliated individuals, one promising feature of these statistics lies in the specific religious beliefs and attitudes they espouse. The number of people identifying themselves as atheists in this country remains at 4%. By contrast, the number of people identifying themselves as religiously unaffiliated, which has been the cause of such alarm, has risen to 21%. Nevertheless, according to Frank Newport, the Editor in Chief of Gallup Poll, this much larger group maintains strong religious beliefs, with 10% of this population attending formal religious services at least six times a year.³⁰³

³⁰² Brian D. Ray, “Gen2 Survey: A Spiritual and Educational Survey on Christian Millennials” (Generations with Vision and National Home Education Research Institute, 2015), <https://www.nheri.org/Gen2SurveyASpiritualandEducationalSurveyonChristianMillennials.pdf>. Notably, Harvard Law Professor Elizabeth Bartholet has summarized a large body of research noting methodological flaws in Ray’s other published research on homeschooling. Elizabeth Bartholet, “Homeschooling: Parents Rights Absolutism vs. Child Rights to Education and Protection,” *Arizona Law Review* 62 (2020): Rev 1, <http://nrs.harvard.edu/urn-3:HUL.InstRepos:40108859>. The primary critique is that educational tools and metrics measuring academic performance are entirely different for homeschool children invalidating the comparisons. Such a methodological critiques, however, are not possible with a study comparing faith beliefs and behaviors, which are easily accessible by survey research and the critiques Bartholet gathered do not address this study. Another critique, that comes a close second, is that this research is somehow tainted because it has a political agenda of advocating for the value of homeschooling. The same argument, however, could be made against Bartholet’s research, which is trying to prohibit home school education as an option. Bartholet clearly indicates “this article... recommends a presumptive ban on homeschooling, with the burden on parents to demonstrate justification for permission to homeschool.”

³⁰³ Aidan Connaughton, “Religiously Unaffiliated People More Likely than Those with a Religion to Lean Left, Accept Homosexuality,” *PEW Research Center, Facttank: News in the Numbers*, September 28, 2020, <https://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2020/09/28/religiously-unaffiliated-people-more-likely-than-those-with-a-religion-to-lean-left-accept-homosexuality/>.

The in-depth interviews of the women in this dissertation provides a close-up example of what this looks like in some Catholic households. Although it was not quantitative in nature, the significant drop off in church attendance amongst the second-generation mirrored closely the results from the quantitative studies examined in Chapter One and reviewed again above. Despite the lack of consistent involvement with the institutional Church, which was such a large part of the lives of this first generation of women, it was evident that faith remains an intrinsic component of the daily lives of the second generation, with visible evidence in their homes. This latter group continues to uphold, transmit and celebrate spiritual ideologies because faith is central to their individual and social identities and development. Therefore, zooming in on the phenomenon provides a needed correction to the picture. There is hope and that hope lies in the home with primary religious socialization before secondary religious socialization even begins.

Chapter Two made reference to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. Spirituality may have a similar hierarchy where the needs at one level must be satisfied before moving on to the next level. Just as there is no point in working with someone on finding what they can meaningfully contribute to society when they are struggling to get enough food to eat, there is little point in trying to get those who have walked away from the church to become active participants once again. The fact is that the majority of the people who left the Church have no reason or incentive to return to it. Many of those who have left the church, began to feel disconnected long before they actually left. The Church had failed these individuals long before they left. They do not feel fed in any way by the Church.

If this analogy with the hierarchy of needs holds, individuals first need to experience their faith and own it. It needs to become a part of them and truly theirs. Once this happens the need for connection with a wider spiritual community is a natural outgrowth. Taking the focus away

from the church in faith transmission is not for the sake of abandoning it – just the opposite. Only when individuals have the opportunity to grow and mature in their faith with the small loving and supportive community of the home do they then experience the natural need and longing for participation in a larger faith community. Being a Catholic and identifying as Catholic requires a connection with the institutional Church at some level and that fact is not being undermined here. The focus this dissertation places on the home is not rooted in any desire to neglect or marginalize the institutional Church but, rather, comes from a sincere desire to see the church thrive, possibly in a way it never has before.

5.2 The Hope the Home Offers for Faith Transmission

The first part of the argument highlighted above only focuses on the historical precedent the home possesses as the primary social location for religious socialization. What Chapter Two articulates is the inherent value the home possesses for the faith transmission process. This argument has two components. The first component focuses on the value the Church sees in the home as a location of primary religious socialization based on the Magisterium. The second component identifies three distinctive features of the home that both set it apart as a social location and which provide necessary and perhaps even ideal conditions for faith transmission.

Official pronouncements from the Church time and again have affirmed the primary place of the home in faith transmission. These pronouncements do not rest on any attempt to validate some ancient scripture or rule that modern believers are finding irrelevant. There is hardly a reference to the authority of either scripture or past ecclesial law in these statements about the home. Moreover, the Church places a special emphasis on the role of the mother in passing on her faith to her children. There is an acknowledgement of the father's role, but it is the mother's role which is in the spotlight. In the patriarchal structure of the Catholic Church,

including established scriptures and rules about the man being the “head of the household,” these pronouncements stand out as unique.

It is clear that the church looks to the home as the seat of primary religious socialization because it sees value there --but has it really done so? Were secondary religious socialization sufficient, the church would happily assume that role entirely. The Catholic Church, however, reluctantly recognizes that the best chance for its secondary religious socialization to succeed is when the parents, and the mothers in particular have prepared a solid foundation. A recognition of the inherent value of the home and mothers in this process is the only explanation for the Church’s position in this matter.

The Church, however, only affirms and supports the home’s value in faith transmission, it makes no attempt to understand or articulate the specific reasons the home constitutes such an ideal location for faith transmission. Chapter Two goes on to identify three distinctive features of the home that set it apart as a social location particularly well-suited to the purposes of religious socialization: 1) the home is the context for many ordinary daily tasks of living; 2) the home encompasses the closest relationships individuals possess; and 3) the home involves constant negotiation between its inhabitants.

The first distinctive feature is physiological. The Christian tradition emphasizes that God is not confined to an ark or to a temple or only present in special ceremonies. The tradition affirms that God is a constant presence. It asserts that God is present in the everyday. The concept of *lo cotidiano*, as articulated by Mujerista theologians, simply particularizes one instantiation of this broad Christian theological tenet. In doing so, it emphasizes the importance and sacral nature of the mundane quotidian tasks that women, the world over, perform within the

home every day. This concept facilitates seeing God in all things, not just in the spectacular or life-changing moments in life.

Within the home, families can incorporate faith into daily routines. Catholic homes are filled with physical and tangible reminders of faith from wall décor and statues to rosaries kept in one's pocket to be thumbed throughout the day. It is in the everyday where the opportunities arise to internalize faith practices and perspectives. It is through daily intentional and practical application that it becomes part of one's identity. Storytelling surrounding daily mundane routines reinforces their sacred character.

The second distinctive feature is sociological. Socialization processes in general rely on the levels of trust and admiration the child has for the individual displaying the social behavior they are modeling. The more trust and admiration the child has for the individual, the more effective the socialization. Mothers are far and away the most trusted and admired figures in a child's life. While children trust and admire educators and clergy, the trust a mother inherently develops with her children is impossible to replicate.

Homes are also unique places where family members share stories with one another. A myriad of events occurring outside the home become the subjects of stories within it. These stories further develop trust and intimacy between family members as they become vulnerable with one another sharing embarrassing stories about themselves or explain why they lost or why they failed. These are spontaneous and organic. They also are rarely stratified so that the young child is just as free to share stories as the parent.

The third distinctive feature is psychological. In adolescence, teenagers begin a complex internal process of negotiation as they form their own identity. In this process they begin deciding which of the key values, beliefs and behaviors they learned in their homes they want to

accept as their own and which they want to reject and abandon. Teenagers are doing this with many facets of their lives and religion happens to be a big component in this negotiation process.

When it comes to the common faith rituals and practices, there is a personalization of these that happens within homes. Interestingly, it is this personalization of, and intimacy with, the faith that makes it attractive and inviting to others. The home, as the space of the ordinary and mundane as highlighted in the first distinctive feature of homes, is where common practices become personalized and authentic. In the home teenagers have the chance to see firsthand the uniqueness of the faith practices within their own home. There is a natural carryover from teenagers asking their parents why their parents require them to do certain tasks in certain ways to asking why questions about faith practices.

Once again storytelling plays an integral role in this process. When they see teenagers wrestling with tough issues from everything to breaking up with boyfriends to questions about their faith, this often prompts parents and other extended family members to share stories of their own experiences. These stories are targeted to the specific situation, which can make them more relevant and timelier than the same story shared for the sake of the story.

Seeing the home as a safe space for faith to evolve allows adolescents to move away from the all-or-nothing thinking that becomes common in these scenarios. The home becomes a place for questioning, doubting, and pruning various ideas including religious beliefs and practices. It is a space where individuals can determine the varied implications of spirituality in their lives and the demands it makes upon them as members of a living community.

These three features of the home together distinguish it as the ideal social location for religious socialization. It might be tempting at this point to think that solutions must be now at hand. The Catholic Church has a high attrition rate and the problem seems to have begun and

tracked with shifting the responsibility for religious socialization from a primary focus on the home to a primary focus on religious education in formal educational settings. Not only has the home worked well in the past for this process it has all the components that suggest it will continue to work well. So, all that needs to happen is transferring the responsibility for primary religious socialization back to the parents and case closed.

Using Christian Smith's research in this area, Chapter Three highlights two recent changes that have arisen which have ruptured this process in the home itself. The upshot of this piece of data is that even if the church were to hand the process back over to the parents, the process would still be failing. After looking at these two rupturing changes, the chapter goes on to demonstrate how and why one community, Cuban-Americans, has avoided the rupturing changes that have affected the dominant society. The idea here being that a close study of a subset of the population who is successfully engaging in faith transmission in the U.S. in the twenty-first century should shed light on how Catholic parents from all racial and ethnic backgrounds might be able to reengage in the type of primary religious socialization that Catholic families have been doing for centuries.

The first issue Smith hones in on involves parents no longer practicing their faith or considering it important for themselves, though they consider it important for their children. This problem looks to be a direct result of the shift in responsibility for religious socialization from the home to the church or religious school. When parents see themselves as the sole, or at least the primary, vehicle for faith transmission, they cannot talk about their faith as unimportant for themselves but important for their children. The only way their children will learn the *traditum* is by their teaching and their example. They, thus, have to practice the faith in order to pass it along. Not practicing the faith simply results in their children not receiving that faith.

But once religious socialization becomes the responsibility of other institutions, the parents are “off the hook.” Whether their children learn the *traditum* begins and ends with the institution and they can wash their hands of it.

The second issue Smith identifies is more complex. The problem relates to teenagers not knowing how to talk about religion and religious beliefs in any deep and meaningful way. The inability to discuss religious beliefs prevents teenagers from being able to process these ideas, critique and challenge them and eventually accept them as their own or reject them. What this means then is that when teenagers in the twenty-first century are negotiating their world with its morals and values, religious beliefs get set on the sidelines. They are not challenged nor questioned nor critiqued because they are not considered appropriate topics of conversation. This prevents these teenagers from ever making the faith their own. It always remains that of their parents. When they eventually leave the house, the faith gets left behind because it was never personalized or internalized.

The research in Chapter Three highlighted another factor in the actual breakdown in this primary socialization process within the home. It happens along the same timeline as the shift to universal education. This factor is the shift from multigenerational homes that constituted the norm in agricultural societies to homes limited to nuclear families, which has constituted the norm in industrialized societies and has been the norm in the U.S. since the 1920’s. While the make-up of such nuclear families has changed significantly since the 1920’s, what is significant here is the loss of the multigenerational nature of homes. Homes no longer consist of the grandparents and aunts and uncles and cousins that used to be a common living arrangement in one house. This change had a significant impact on religious socialization.

In multigenerational households, if one member of the family was not particularly religious, this was not a death knell for religious socialization. The child would still be exposed to and learn the faith, which would then be challenged and critiqued in her teenage years to determine whether she wanted to maintain a faith like grandma or live without faith like mom. The nuclear family, however, removes that safety net. Without extended family members there is no back-up when one family member steps away from the faith. In nuclear families, such a move generally stops religious socialization dead in its tracks.

Once again even when the Catholic Church returns the religious socialization process to the parents, the lack of religious participation on the part of the parents, the lack of communication skills on the part of the children combined with the lack of extended family members are hindering successful faith transmission. There is no turning back the clock. The social realities in families are now part of the equation. The key question is how to address the underlying problems these cause for religious socialization. Chapter Three closely examines several Catholic, Cuban-American intergenerational households where these factors are mitigated for ideas of how parents in the dominant American culture might approach this process differently and more fruitfully.

The external features of these Cuban-American families highlighted in Chapter Three that give them a leg up on the dominant culture in this process are non-transferable features. The religious persecution in Cuba that steeled the religious commitment of the first generation of immigrants is confined to one point in history. The cultural negotiation that the second generation had to navigate between their family and the dominant culture is characteristic of all second-generation immigrants, but still remains a small portion of the population. The

multigenerational families of these Cuban-American Latinas are household configurations that expand even further.

According to an article published in *USA Today* in July of 2020, 51.4 million Americans now live in multigenerational households, which, while a 10% increase since 2007, still only accounts for about 15% of the population.³⁰⁴ Stratifying the data by age group, millennials have led the movement toward multigenerational households, with the Census finding about one in three people between the ages of 18 to 34 lived with their parents in 2015.³⁰⁵ This may indicate a trend in this direction, but that still would leave a majority of the population out in the cold to rely on this external characteristic.

The common theme throughout this dissertation, that crops up again and again is storytelling – more specifically, intergenerational storytelling. This method of faith transmission traces back to the very foundations of the faith. At the end of his life, at the end of their 40-year journey in the wilderness, Moses gave a speech to the Israelites in the wilderness, where he said,

But take care and watch yourselves closely, so as neither to forget the things that your eyes have seen nor to let them slip from your mind all the days of your life; make them known to your children and your children's children” (Deut. 4:9)

Then on Mount Horeb, when he addressed the people, once again he reiterated, “Remember the days of old, consider the years long past; ask your father, and he will inform you; your elders, and they will tell you” (Deut. 32:7). This tool is certainly one that is transferable and touches on all of the issues highlighted in this dissertation.

³⁰⁴ Aimee Picchi, “Modern Families: Multigenerational Households Are on the Rise, Thanks to Financial and Emotional Benefits,” *USA Today*, July 17, 2020, <https://www.usatoday.com/story/money/columnist/2020/07/16/multigenerational-households-rise-prepare-pros-and-cons/5447028002/>.

³⁰⁵ Ibid.

5.3 Why Storytelling Matters

The themes analyzed in the previous section not only serve to highlight important points about authentic faith transmission and primary socialization: namely, the importance of mothers imparting their ('her') stories, actively incorporating, and negotiating with their children in the context of the home. What's more the deep reflections, (re)constructing of identities, and meaning-making that organically happens through the praxis of storytelling by these women suggests that this pedagogical tool – as a mode of knowing – warrants further attention.

Stories are an intrinsic part of our everyday. They serve to connect us and shape our identities. They are a repository of shared knowledge, emotional stability, and group coherence.³⁰⁶ Even though storytelling is an “enduring form of communication” which educators consistently make use of, even educators do not consider them integral to daily learning and achieving learning objectives.³⁰⁷ Researchers have discovered, however, that this is primarily because, when a good story engages both hemispheres of the brain simultaneously, it can feel so natural that even trained educators fail to fully recognize the rigor embedded within a story. Moreover, Paul Zak, director of the Center for Neuroeconomic Studies at Claremont, states, “we attend to stories because we intuitively understand that we, too, may have to face difficult tasks and we need to learn how to develop our own deep resolve.”³⁰⁸

Stories have formed a unifying thread throughout this entire dissertation. Focusing on three integral themes related to storytelling should highlight how this thread appears interspersed

³⁰⁶ Louis J. Cozolino, *Attachment-Based Teaching: Creating a Tribal Classroom*, Norton Books in Education (New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 2014), 179.

³⁰⁷ Diann C. Moorman, “This Is Not a Fable: Using Storytelling in a College Classroom to Enhance Student Learning,” *SoTL Commons Conference*. 144, (2015), <https://digitalcommons.georgiasouthern.edu/sotlcommons/SoTL/2015/144/>.

³⁰⁸ Paul Zak, “How Stories Change the Brain,” *Greater Good Magazine*, December 17, 2013, https://greatergood.berkeley.edu/article/item/how_stories_change_brain.

through the preceding chapters. First, storytelling in the home produces an “intergenerational self” and facilitates encounter. Second, a redemptive sequence exists that gives unity and purpose to the constructed (individual and communal) identities that exist within the home. Then, third, storytelling in the home provides a safe space for questioning and negotiating to develop a ‘democratic’ interpretive lens.

A. Borrowing the Mind of the Other: Forming the Intergenerational Self

While identity formation often focuses on finding one’s role within individual social interactions and relationships and within society as a whole, these roles, for better or worse, are most often rooted in history. While there is certainly a place for the more macro-level history, which traces national and communal interests, the family history is both the starting point and generally the most impactful, since it feels the most relevant. “Because our families are among the most important social groups we belong to and identify with, stories about our family tell us who we are in the world, and who we should be.”³⁰⁹ Children and adolescents want to know who their family is in order to better understand who they are. It is an important component to their well-being. Family stories serve to provide a sense of belonging and create a core identity.

In accordance with recent trends towards positive psychology, a group of psychologists at Emory University conducted a study of sixty-six adolescents in 2010 in an effort to measure the effects knowledge of one’s history has upon one’s well-being.³¹⁰ The study found that students who know a lot about their families tend to do better when they face challenges. Extensive knowledge about family history correlated with strong sense of control in students’ lives, higher

³⁰⁹ Rachael Rifkin, “We’re Losing Generations of Family History Because We Don’t Share Our Stories,” *Good Housekeeping*, November 13, 2019, <https://www.goodhousekeeping.com/life/a29610101/preserve-family-history-storytelling/>.

³¹⁰ Robyn Fivush, Marshall Duke, and Jennifer G. Bohanek, “‘Do You Know...’: The Power of Family History in Adolescent Identity and Well-Being,” *Journal of Family Life*, February 23, 2010, <https://ncph.org/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/The-power-of-family-history-in-adolescent-identity.pdf>.

self-esteem, better at moderating the effects of stress, and the more successfully they believed their families functioned, the happier and more resilient they were in general.³¹¹ The study concluded that knowing our own family story means knowing that we belong to something greater than ourselves.

Hearing stories of others is one way in which her caregivers have passed on their values and beliefs to her as their child. Stories of actions and events generally form the starting point. Narratives begin to be co-constructed in parent-to-child talk early in a child's life. As she hears stories, she learns to put herself in the place of her caregivers. This process continues in an ever-broadening array of social situations throughout the child's adolescence. Listening to stories allows her to weave together all the stories she has shared in order to understand new experiences. This web of stories becomes an interpretive lens that allows her to make meaning out of life and the world around her.

Actions are not the only available subjects for stories. Putting feelings into words and sharing them with others provide an important layer to stories that can either be superimposed over actions and events or can stand alone. Articulating one's own feelings and emotions is a learned ability that is based on the skill and encouragement of others. Parents who lack this ability or do not talk to their children about feelings deprive them of a valuable source of emotional regulation. When caretakers are unable to verbalize and analyze certain emotions, these emotions will be excluded or distorted. Whatever is excluded from the narrative will be more difficult for children to process and comprehend in the years to come. "At the extreme, parents can be so overwhelmed by unresolved trauma that their narratives become disjointed and incoherent. This will be reflected in the way their children describe their own experiences."³¹²

³¹¹ Ibid.

³¹² Ibid.

All the while, the child is constructing her own stories. But one need not think of these stories as being confined to oracular narratives shared with others. Stories lie at the heart of imagination. She quickly learns that constructing stories within her own mind (engaging her imagination) provides a means for her to structure and reflect on her own experiences (Bruner, 1988). It enables her to process the overwhelming influx of information she constantly receives. By using her imagination, she learns to consider the consequences of her decisions and actions. This type of imaginative storying covers many different mental processes constituting a primary mode of knowing as Barbara Hardy notes,

*For we dream, remember, anticipate, hope, despair, believe, doubt, plan, revise, criticize, construct, gossip, learn, hate, and love by narrative. In order to really live, we make up stories about ourselves and others, about the personal as well as a social past and future.*³¹³

Eventually she begins telling stories to others. The more secure these early attachment relationships and the higher her self-esteem and capacity for emotional regulation, the more coherent and understandable will be the personal narratives she generates.³¹⁴

It also matters how one tells her stories. Jody Koenig Kellas, PhD., professor of communication studies at the University of Nebraska Lincoln who does research on family identity and storytelling notes, “families who engage in storytelling by being present and warm, who share the floor and build on each other’s contributions, who seek out and honor each other’s perspectives on how things happened or the meaning of the story, and who work together to create the meaning or moral of the story...report higher levels of health and happiness than families who are distant, disengaged, do not take each other’s perspectives into account and do

³¹³ Barbara Hardy, “Towards a Poetics of Fiction: 3) An Approach through Narrative,” *Novel: A Forum on Fiction* 2, no. 1 (1968): 5–14.

³¹⁴ Cozolino, *Attachment-Based Teaching*, 182.

not work together to build story meaning.”³¹⁵ In sum, knowing one’s family history is important, but the process of telling it which allows for subtle analysis, re(construction) and communal meaning-making is just as valuable to the learning process. Encounter happens not only through the narrative, but in the creation of the story and the relationship-building aspect of story meaning.

Returning to the stories these women shared in their interviews, every single woman began her narrative by referencing her family and giving specific examples from her childhood. Three of the five immigrant mothers (María, Elena, Eugenia) made mention of significant mentors in their Catholic schools, while two (Charito and Caridad) explicitly stated that their families, namely their mothers, were important role models in their initial faith development process. The second-generation daughters, only one (Fátima) mentioned Catholic school as a significant influence, but all five women noted that their mothers were fundamental components of their initiation into the faith.

All of these women’s stories made clear that humans need an ‘other’ in order to have a foundational faith identity. Attachment theory, along with identity and developmental theories, all agree that children learn to see the world through significant others (and other significant reinforcers) by “borrowing” the mind of the other in order to make sense of the world. The term “borrowing” connotes a temporal action, but what the stories herein suggest is that keeping that which one learns involves negotiating and appropriating what has been acquired from the other. Notably, in the borrowing – needing – the other, not only does one develop a foundational identity from which to begin developing lifelong perspectives and values, the two become inextricably linked so that in seeing the world through one set of eyes, the same events result in

³¹⁵ Rifkin, ““Losing Generations of Family History.””

similar experiences. Thus, the stories of the other become the stories of the self. Home is where one hears these stories, becomes physically located and lives out these narratives.

One clear example that demonstrates the adaptation of foundational perspectives appear in stories shared by María and her daughter Fátima. When María shares her story of the difficulties she faced in Cuba, she clearly notes her pride in her daughters' faith. She points out that she is glad that she raised her daughters in Cuba and within the Communist regime because it fostered steadfast conviction within her daughters. Similarly, Fátima's stories tell of how her daughter insisted on having a Catholic wedding despite her fiancée being a 'done' at the time of their engagement. Similarly, she shares how her son, despite being married to an active Jehovah's Witness still attends (with his wife and children) Christmas Eve dinners and important masses such as her twenty-fifth wedding anniversary celebration. Despite sharing their stories apart from the other and not knowing what the other has recounted, both women story their faith as events where their children persevere in faith by way of overcoming social pressures. Moreover, both women explicitly state being 'proud' of their children for their conviction in hostile or tense social surroundings, which they view as more significant than daily, convenient commitments.

It is important not to miss the intergenerational component here. Chapter three expands the notion of 'borrowing' the mind of the other by pointing out that the secure attachments can be made with more than one significant caretaker. Consistent exposure allows a child to create secure attachments with multiple others. The power of multiple secure attachments in faith development is that it provides contact with multiple narratives, rituals, ideologies, each with the potential to encourage a richer, more dynamic faith.

One example of this would be that of Eugenia and her daughter Lourdes. In her story, Eugenia speaks of her devotion to San Juan Bosco that started through her observing her grandmother praying in front of her home altar, and her devotion to San Judas Tadeo, one of the most venerated saints in Cuba due to his intercession on migratory matters. These stories give insight into Eugenia's childhood and one of the biggest challenges she has ever faced: migrating to the United States. Likewise, when sharing her story, Lourdes mentions her affinity for St. Theresa of Avila. This story allows the listener to learn more about Lourdes' passion for her theological studies and feminism – two very different priorities from her mother.

Both women mention in their story their strong devotion to the Virgin Mary and the pilgrimage they took together to Portugal (Fátima) and France (Lourdes) the previous year. As a result, Eugenia's grandchildren [and Lourdes' nieces and nephews], who visit these women, at their home, at least once a week, have the opportunity to hear multiple stories of different saints whom each of these women value, as well as the insightful background stories that have led to these attachments. In sum, significant life events have led to fundamental values and core identity development which help the next generation better know and understand these women as well as their Catholic saints. Storytelling facilitates an encounter that encourages an active faith.

B. Becoming: The Importance of Narrative Sequences in our Narrative Identity

Encounter through storytelling not only speaks to the active component of this praxis, but also brings to light the becoming that is happening in the telling. Narrative identity is an individual's internalized and evolving life story, integrating the reconstructed past and imagining the future in order to provide life with some degree of unity and purpose. Through narrative identity, individuals convey to themselves and to others who they are now, how they came to be,

and where they think their lives may be going in the future.³¹⁶ Researchers have shown that middle age adults who score high on self-report measures of generativity, indicating a strong commitment to improving society and promoting the well-being of future generations, tend to construct life stories that showcase many instances of redemptive sequences. A redemption sequence marks a transition in a life narrative account from an emotionally negative scene to a positive outcome or attribution about the self. By conceptualizing their own lives as tales of redemption, adults are able to sustain the hope or confidence that is needed to weather short-term setbacks while reinforcing long-term commitments.³¹⁷

A redemption sequence is a two-part process. First, the individual explores the negative experience in depth, thinking long and hard about what the experience felt like, how it came to be, what it may lead to, and what role the negative event may play in the individual's overall life story. Secondly, the individual articulates and commits the self to a positive resolution of the event. Research suggests that the first step is associated with personal growth, and the second, with happiness. Narrators who managed to articulate details and thoughtful accounts of loss and struggle in their lives tended to score higher on independent in disease of psychological maturity. Psychological maturity emphasizes (and is associated with) learning, growth, and positive personal transformation. Positive resolution of negative events is associated with higher levels of happiness and well-being.

The impact of stories on the formation of self-identity make for some powerful tools in the creation and maintenance of the self (Bruner, 1990) wherein stories become organizing principles that serve to perpetuate self-identity [we become the stories of our experiences and

³¹⁶ Dan P. McAdams and Kate C. McLean, "Narrative Identity," *Current Directions in Psychological Science* 22, no. 3 (2013): 233–38.

³¹⁷ Ibid.

aspirations]. In other words, self-narratives become a blueprint for thoughts, feelings, and behaviors that turn into self-fulfilling prophecies. Cozolino found that personal narratives of success reduce anxiety and enhance neuroplasticity.³¹⁸ Such success stories often involve redemptive sequences.

Chapter two of this dissertation introduces Castañeda-Liles's devotional triangles. One of the examples of such triangles highlighted in the chapter involved a story with a typical redemptive sequence. Eugenia's son, who is Lourdes' brother is quite sick. This constitutes a valley in their family narrative. In the midst of this valley, the women host *La Virgencita* at their home. A group of religious women bring *La Virgencita* into their home and hold a celebration/rosary for him. After this, he recovers from his illness. Subsequently, recognizing their shared Marian devotion, Eugenia and Lourdes take a pilgrimage together to Europe to visit Fátima and Lourdes.

Charito's daughters provide another example where redemptive sequences end in lifelong vocations. Charito's experience at an orphanage in her teens after arriving to the United States through Operation Pedro Pan was clearly a watershed valley moment in her life. Nevertheless, not only does this difficult circumstance lead to her lifelong passion for welcoming orphans into her home; in her story, she relates that her oldest daughter is so profoundly affected by her mother's corporal works of mercy that she eventually adopts a child.

Her second daughter provides another example of a redemptive sequence. Tessie describes her time in college as a period where she was not engaged with the Church and a felt a sense of inexplicable longing. Then, while listening to her mother's recently recorded music, she has an epiphany wherein she receives a clear invitation from God to use her vocal talent and

³¹⁸ Cozolino, *Attachment-Based Teaching*, 182.

passion for the music ministry in her local parish. After auditioning to be involved in this program, she eventually becomes the leader of this choir group.

C. Storytelling as a Safe Space for Negotiating Identity

The last theme that emerged through the women's storytelling is that the women's faith became an authentic component of their identity through negotiating and wrestling with the Catholic doctrine. They made it relevant in their lives by incorporating it daily and making it present in the home. Chapter Two addressed Gloria Anzaldúa's extremely challenging process of dismemberment, reconstruction and reconciliation. Her proposal is that in order for individuals to be their most authentic selves, they must take apart the narratives that have been inherited and the structures into which they have been in order to negotiate and collaborate and enter into deeper connection with the present. This negotiation along with collaboration does not always lead to the type of clear path that Catholicism often tends to portray. The stories herein, as dynamic and living narratives, raise more questions than answers. But this wrestling is precisely what leads to a prolific, enduring faith.

One example of negotiation is Carmen's story that she calls a miracle: the birth of her second child. Carmen's story begins by pointing out that her first pregnancy led her to feel pressured into a failed marriage sanctioned by her family and the Catholic Church. Throughout her life she had tried multiple times to have a second child, but to no avail. She wound up eventually giving up because of her inability to get pregnant. During one of the hardest moments of her life, her mother's unknown illness, Carmen decides that she does not want to leave her oldest daughter alone to cope with Carmen's eventual passing. Carmen notes what a gift having a web of secure attachments (her grandmother, aunt and mother) throughout her life has been,

and decides that she must do everything possible to provide her daughter that same stability, unconditional love and support system.

She beautifully and powerfully articulates her desire for a second child which she is finally able to conceive through a one-night stand. She makes it clear that she has no interest in another unhealthy marriage, and her story conveys a very loving and close-knit home environment where she has been the provider for upwards of twenty years. Interestingly, both her and her mother's story point out that neither women desire to be remarried. Each wanted instead to focus on devoting all of her energy to her family. What is an undeniable contour is the different ways the women negotiate sexuality. Hidden in the subtext of the story, very different perceptions exist. Caridad is widowed and decides to dedicate her life to raising her children and leaning on the love and support of Mary and her Son. Whereas her daughter, Carmen, does not see sex and/or having another child as a reason to upend her life. The fact that she was able to get pregnant on her first try serves as a confirmation that her second daughter is a gift.

On a different note, one of the biggest points of contention between Sofia and Elena is the fact that Sofia never had her first marriage annulled through the Catholic Church. When reminiscing about the situation, Sofia points out that the marriage – for better or worse – produced her two children. Moreover, Sofia insightfully points out that she forced her first husband to get married by the Church, against his will, and that was her mistake. She goes on to say that she has no interest in repeating the error with her current partner. Her approach to faith, by way of experience, has become a gentler approach. It is now one in which she highly values and respects individual freedom even when these choices do not line up with the expectations of the institutional Church.

Negotiation is not limited to finding one's individual voice. Louise Rosenblatt proposes considering storytelling to be a democratic exercise. "Democracy is equitable social relationships in which people choose to live together by valuing individual voices within recognition of responsibility to the group."³¹⁹ Rosenblatt believes that people need to have conviction and enthusiasm about their own cultural perspectives, while remaining open to alternative views and becoming aware of others' needs. Storytelling provides a significant context within which students can learn to live in the tension of recognizing and respecting the perspectives of others. From this perspective, negotiating also involves adopting collective responsibility.

Fátima's story provides a clear example of accepting and owning collective responsibility. When Fátima arrives in Miami from Los Angeles, she is barely able to 'shake the women off of her' when she joins her mother's hermitage. Nevertheless, she must erect clear boundaries with her new church, based on her current demanding work schedule and familial responsibilities. In order to still bear the collective responsibility that she feels for her faith community, Fátima finds a compromise. She attends when they call, and she has priests over at her home for dinner regularly. This respects her work and family obligations while at the same time carrying her weight with the collective responsibility for her new faith community.

Elena similarly negotiates her faith identity by bearing collective responsibility. She proposes to the president of the Legion of Mary that the group could benefit from their own bible study – and further learning of their Catholic faith – but is turned down in the process. While praying before the statue of the Virgin in the church, the Virgin orders her to 'insist.' She concludes her narrative by pointing out that in the years that she has held the group in her house,

³¹⁹ Louise M. Rosenblatt, *Literature as Exploration*, 5th ed. (New York: Modern Language Association of America, 2005).

it has never been without attendance. This she considers proof that her initial desire to start the group was indeed divinely inspired and not simply a product of her own whim and fancy.

Recognizing storytelling as a pedagogical tool allows individuals to locate themselves in something greater than themselves. By means of the redemption sequence, stories can take negative events and transform them into positive resolutions. They often serve to stabilize us, providing a balance between imagination and reason. Stories provide the means for an individual voice, which ideally shares in responsibility for the larger group.

5.4 Catechizing about Identity and Faith at a “Red Tent” Party

It would seem contradictory to the entire thrust and aim of this work to emphasize throughout the importance of parent-centered religious socialization and then to prescribe a solution that puts religious educators back in the driver’s seat. Nevertheless, there must be some way for religious educators in the institutional church to partner with and support parents in their role as faith transmitters. Rather than speaking in generalities a particular case study would likely be helpful. Milestone celebrations have appeared repeatedly as typical settings within the ebb and flow of family life where authentic home-based catechesis frequently occurs.

As I have approached this study from a feminist perspective and kept women the central focus throughout, a distinctively feminine milestone celebration seems warranted as a case study. Drawing on a movement that is springing up organically in the U.S. that celebrates this transition into womanhood is the celebrating of a girl’s menarche and is being called a “Red Tent” party or simply a period party. The overt connections to Biblical themes inherent within the label “Red Tent” party itself make this an ideal case study. This case study takes the form of a sample activity demonstrating different ways Catholic mothers can actively draw on secular trends and begin to think about incorporating theological tenets into family events in the home in a way that

is practical, relevant and customizable for families. This is how we help our children see God in all things! In an effort to always keep the parents in the driver's seat, I have addressed what follows directly to mothers who have been the protagonists throughout this work.

A. Seeing God in the Mundane Event of Menstruation

How American women approach menstruation is called the “modern period,” according to historian Lara Freidenfelds, who notes, “it’s the idea that your body does not undermine your ability to be productive at school or at work...It’s a body that doesn’t smell or have cramps.”³²⁰ It should come as no surprise then that when Diva International Inc. partnered with One Poll to conduct a survey in 2018 of 2000 women 18 and older, the findings showed that 52% of women felt embarrassed during their first periods and 53% claimed that they weren’t educated on the symptoms associated or what the experience would be like. Another 43% of the women said the experience scared them, and 61% were “shocked” at how much cramps hurt. Furthermore, 25% of respondents said they had absolutely no idea what to do when their first period arrived.³²¹

Though a lot of families struggle in talking with their girls about menstruation, the biggest resource for girls menstruating for the first time is their mothers, according to Margaret L. Stubbs, a professor at Chatham University who has studied girls’ development for over 30 years. Stubbs states, “We know that girls who have more positive attitudes about periods tend to do better. What we hope for girls is that they see having periods as sign of health.”³²² One attempt to cut through the awkwardness involves celebrating the event. Tyra Banks wrote in her

³²⁰ Rachel Hatzipanagos, “Why We’re Taught to Hide Our Periods: Confronting the Stigma around Menstruation,” *The Lily*, June 14, 2017, <https://www.thelily.com/why-were-taught-to-hide-our-periods/>.

³²¹ Zoya Gervis, “One in Four American Women Were Unprepared for Their First Period, Survey Finds,” *SWNS Digital*, July 10, 2018, <https://www.swnsdigital.com/2018/07/one-in-four-american-women-were-unprepared-for-their-first-period-survey-finds/>.

³²² Hatzipanagos, “Taught to Hide.”

book *Perfect Is Boring* that her mother Carolyn London threw her a period party when she was 15, sharing,

*I appreciate that my mother never wanted me to be ashamed of anything, or to think that there was something bad or dirty about my body...Most of [the girls there] had never talked about their periods so openly before, and in between the ‘yucks’ and giggles, they asked questions about everything from whether using tampons takes away your virginity to wanting to know if other people can tell if you’re on your period.*³²³

Period parties are becoming popular in the U.S. – with the intent of getting girls to love their bodies and understand their reproductive health – and are intended to subvert the tension around menstruation with red edible items (e.g., a red velvet cake) and instructional games (e.g., reproduction bingo). Such parties provide an opportunity to lace into the celebration catechetical conversations that can be lifegiving and add even more depth to the stigma-breaking conversations taking place. Having a gathering allows for what social work researcher, Brené Brown, articulated in her TedTalk about vulnerability, “shame is really easily understood as the fear of disconnection: is there something about me that, if other people know it or see it, but I won’t be worthy of connection?”³²⁴ For women, whose status as a member of a subordinate group and historical experience with social inequalities relative to men in most societies which render them powerless and exposed, community and belonging is of ultimate importance to mental and emotional health. When women speak honestly about supposedly shameful topics, and are able to connect through their experiences, they render the shame powerless. To have a period party where Catholic women directly address common social stigmas and concerns by

³²³ Tyra Banks and Carolyn London, *Perfect Is Boring: 10 Things My Crazy, Fierce Mama Taught Me about Beauty, Booty, and Being a Boss* (New York: TarcherPerigee, 2018).

³²⁴ Brené Brown, “The Power of Vulnerability,” *TEDxHouston*, June 2010, https://www.ted.com/talks/brene_brown_the_power_of_vulnerability/discussion?can_id=438ed52e98143da8b11bf844b1bb9cbf&email_referrer=&email_subject=cone-of-shame&language=en&link_id=6&source=email-cone-of-shame.

connecting it with Scripture or theological tenants or both, two stigmas get addressed: the shame of menstruating along with the shame of being a menstruating Catholic.

B. Planning the Party

As you begin thinking about planning the gathering, I recommend considering your daughter's personality, and what she might enjoy. This may determine how you decide to frame and plan the creative elements. Some fun activities that can be executed during the span of the party are having the older generations give the younger generations manicures to create a nostalgic feeling that can bring up family memories and childhood stories. Another option that can stimulate creativity and conversation is a simple paint bar where each woman (or teams) are encouraged to paint what they consider a symbol of femininity. A meditative component can be an educational piece to incorporate at your party as research published in the journal *Clinical Obstetrics and Gynecology*, finding ways to relax your body (via things like meditation) is "an effective treatment for physical and emotional premenstrual symptoms," and in fact, this may be "most effective in women with severe symptoms."³²⁵ One last option that can be a fun activity to incorporate to your period party would be karaoke where the women pair up and/or sing altogether familiar songs that span several decades of music. Of course, you can choose to carry out any or none of the aforementioned components of in your period party. However, keep in mind that the goal is to create a comfortable, natural ambience for storytelling and great conversation that builds community, encourages reflection and negotiates – reclaims – a pivotal but stigmatized aspect of the female experience. So, keep it fun and light where possible!

³²⁵ Georgina Berbari, "Meditating on Your Period Could Be a Game Changer for Painful PMS, According to Experts," *Elite Daily*, May 7, 2018, <https://www.elitedaily.com/p/meditating-on-your-period-could-be-a-game-changer-for-painful-pms-according-to-experts-9011260>.

C. Who's Invited?

A key component to effective faith transmission is having a network of secure attachments that provides the child exposure to a myriad of stories. The party, therefore, would ideally be a female-only event. You are encouraged to invite close extended kin and trusted family friends that your child feels comfortable having “grown-up” conversations with. Keep in mind that the gathering should be intimate enough to remain a safe space conducive for intimate conversations.

Two points that I want to raise herein. There are girls living in single-parent homes being raised by their fathers or a male relative. In this case, I encourage holding such an event even more, and the presence of the male parent or guardian. The event aims to open communication and this is something that the relationship can benefit from. Nevertheless, I would highly recommend inviting a close group of women who can help answer questions and share stories. The second point I want to bring up here is that while conversations with male family members on the subject of menstruation is very important and should be had, it is important that men understand more than the biological aspect of menstruation, but the actual female experience – the challenges, how menstruation impacts perspective and hermeneutic, etc. – but this is outside of the scope of this sample activity. I simply aim to point out that men need to be part of the conversation—just not at this particular gathering.

D. Catechetical Activities and Conversation Starters to Consider Incorporating into your Period Party

D.1 A Red Tent Party & The Voiceless Dinah

One of the themes being used for period parties that provides a little more obscurity is the term “Red Tent party” which can be traced back to the best-selling novel by Anita Diamant,

entitled, *The Red Tent*.³²⁶ Diamant described her inspiration for writing the book with the following story:

Some years prior to starting the book, I heard a lecture by a Jewish writer...who suggested rethinking a biblical law that required separation of a woman from the community for 60 days after the birth of a girl compared to 30 days after the birth of a boy.... This could be seen as a reflection of the notion that girl babies made mothers more “unclean” than boys. The lecturer asked us to consider a different theory, which was far more interesting to me. Perhaps, he said, this was an acknowledgment that giving birth to a birth-giver was a more sacred, a more powerful experience. The extra month could be seen not as a punishment, but as a reward.³²⁷

Much like the Cuban-American hermeneutic pictured in Chapter Four, Diamant took the invitation presented at this lecture and several passages of scripture along with historical records from other regions and periods and using her religious imagination conjured up the idea of a female space in ancient Israel she deemed the *red tent*. In Diamant’s imagination, Israelite women, who were considered defiled during the menstrual cycle, were relegated to a specific tent during the prescribed period of time for ritual uncleanness.³²⁸ Alongside one another, the tent became a magical space where women learn songs, the stories of their grandmothers, and how to forge life-long female bonds.

Similarly, the red tent movement, a form of women’s circle, is a growing global phenomenon across the U.S., UK and Europe that highlights the social relevance of this party. Women’s circles are typically defined as non-hierarchical gatherings that center around women’s experiences and celebrate womanhood. The red tent movement in particular focuses on

³²⁶ Anita Diamant, *The Red Tent* (New York: Picador, 1997).

³²⁷ Isadora Gabrielle Leidenfrost and Alisa Starkweather, “The Red Tent Has a History, but What Is It,” *The Happy Womb: Empowering Resources for Women*, 2015, https://thehappywomb.com/2015/02/13/the-red-tent-has-a-history-but-what-is-it/#_edn1.

³²⁸ Even though, Diamant acknowledges that there is no historical evidence to support that the women in the Bible used a red tent, these structures did exist in pre-modern cultures and it is plausible that the women may have had one. According to Ralph Ellis, “Jewish men were not allowed to touch a woman who was menstruating, so there could have been a place where the women stayed together.” Zahra Mulroy, “Top Historian Reveals the Truth Behind 2,700-Year-Old Bible Story of Dinah and the Red Tent,” *WalesOnline*, May 11, 2017, <https://www.walesonline.co.uk/special-features/top-historian-reveals-truth-behind-13021715>.

supporting and reclaiming menstruation and women's bodies as contested locations of shame, taboo, or inferiority. Madeleine Castro, a social researcher at Leeds Beckett University in the UK posits that red tents "present as opportunities for self-care in community with other women and that the relations between women are being positively transformed."³²⁹ Other researchers have pointed out that the space builds community, empowers healing and renewal, and is a platform for sharing stories.³³⁰

Those familiar with the book and the movement might consider the red tent a fitting theme for a period party. This loose connection between the Bible and popular culture, might prove helpful in incorporating religious discussions alongside the personal stories that will inevitably come up in this setting. The Clue app, an online menstrual ovulation tracker, asked women to share the stories about their first periods. "The main commonality we noticed was the feeling of anxiety when it came to sharing the news of menarche with family members - all around the world."³³¹ The consequences of silence are wide-ranging from girls missing school due to a lack of access to sanitation supplies, misconceptions about biological functions, and increased shame and stigma of the female body that deeply impacts self-esteem.

An even more powerful layer comes into play when one recognizes that the subject of Diamant's novel is the rape of Dinah told in Genesis 34. Through that lens, the parallel between the silence and shame that girls around the world experience and the silence of Dinah in Genesis 34 is powerful. It is important to remember, as Latinxtheologians have pointed out, that the personal is political. The leading lady is not even the protagonist of her own story because she is voiceless.

³²⁹ Ibid.

³³⁰ Leidenfrost and Starkweather, "Red Tent Has a History."

³³¹ Shari Mahrdt, "Do You Remember Your First Period?," *Clue*, June 6, 2016, <https://helloclue.com/articles/life-stages/do-you-remember-your-first-period>.

D.1.B. Menstruation Kit Activity

This is an excellent opportunity to discuss why it is important that we tell and share our stories as women and discuss the dangers of being rendered invisible. Our silence makes us complicit and contributes to the social shaming and stigma placed on our very own bodies.

Combat this lack of communication between women about women's issues by encouraging those present to share the stories of their first periods or what they remember about their initial (adolescent) experiences with their menstruation. Also, ask each of the women invited to bring a special gift to contribute to the girl's "menstruation kit." Each woman is encouraged to share why this item is valuable or significant to them during their period and the memories that they have associated with it. The goal here is not only for the community of women to welcome the girl into womanhood with gifts that prepare her for her transition into womanhood, but furthermore, the symbolism serves to solidify her place in the community.

D.2 "A Period Poem": Shedding the Shame

In order to give variety to our party, I invite the group to watch the YouTube video "Period Poem" by Dominique Christina who is an award-winning writer, performer, educator, and activist who holds five national poetry slam titles, including the 2014 & 2012 Women of the World Slam Champion and 2011 National Poetry Slam Champion.³³²

On the video, she prefaces the poem at a university reading by sharing the following statement:

So, let me be very clear. I wrote this poem with a very specific intent. I have a 13-year-old daughter. It is important to me that I throw every part of my experience, whatever wisdom I've gleaned from that, every part of my backbone, toward her, to sustain her, to offer her language that lifts her up and keeps her up.

³³² Link to Christina Dominique's "Period Poem": <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4vu2BsePvoI>

This is the goal of our period party gathering!

Christina's poem reframes menstruation as having a multiplicity of functions far beyond reproduction which tends to be what makes bleeding an uncomfortable conversation. She notes its power of regeneration, its role as a communal force, and establishes the female body as the creative origin for man's existence. Moreover, Christina points out that to be blessed is to make bleed. While I do not aim to analyze at length the poem herein as it does take away from initial insights and takeaways of your particular community, I do wish to point out one scriptural reference that Christina makes mention of twice in the poem – Eve in the garden of Eden.

One way to show our daughters how we negotiate our religious tradition is to bring up the negative statements surrounding menstruation in the Bible. Even if one does not go as far as Pope Gregory did, who, “viewed the Levitical menstrual prohibitions as divine punishment for the sinful nature of woman, which, through the actions of Eve, effected the fall of humankind,” these Levitical prohibitions do not put women's menstruation in a positive light.³³³ There are still many in the church who view menstruation as a curse associated with the book of Genesis where first woman, Eve, “disobeyed” God by eating a forbidden apple.³³⁴ The response most of us women feel to statements like this is visceral. This might be juxtaposed with Jesus' healing of the woman whose irregular menstrual cycle was severe a medical problem that kept her ostracized from society for the twelve years she suffered with this. Rather than condemning the woman for touching him and making him ritually unclean, he congratulated her on her faith, restoring both her dignity, her health and her ability to enter the community again. Some women

³³³ Kathleen A. O'Grady et al., “The Semantics of Taboo: Menstrual Prohibitions in the Hebrew Bible,” in *Wholly Woman Holy Blood: A Feminist Critique of Purity and Impurity*, ed. Kristin De Troyer, Studies in Antiquity and Christianity (Harrisburg, PA: Trinity Press International, 2003), 1–28.

³³⁴ Alma Gottlieb, “Menstrual Taboos: Moving Beyond the Curse,” in *The Palgrave Handbook of Critical Menstruation Studies*, ed. Chris Bobel et al. (Singapore: Palgrave Macmillan, 2020), 143–62.

may refer to Jesus' actions as representing a subtle nod towards a radical vision for the equality and dignity of women.

This is not meant in any way to turn such a gathering into a traditional Bible study, but to demonstrate how such regular and natural experiences as a period can open up opportunities for discussions about faith. Most importantly, such discussions need not be teaching and lecturing but stories. These stories involve wrestling with religious ideas in our traditions that often make us uncomfortable and require us to find a solution with which we are comfortable. Such stories offer the next generation a picture of the negotiation process.

Returning to Christina's poem, her challenge to have her daughter name her period after Eve's "first rebellion" in the garden suggests a revisiting of the narrative that deems her action a sin, her period a curse by empowering her daughter through the very act of naming. To name is to subvert the patriarchal right and a privilege given to Adam in the garden.

D.2.A Girl Faith: Vision Board Activity

After discussing the poem and its clear intention to undermine the social stigma placed on women through no fault of their own, invite the women present to share stories of embarrassing period moments and the lessons that were learned from these experiences. This works not only to build intimate connections across the generations, but also encourages resilience through practical solutions and valuable redemption sequences that the girls can take with them. As the women share their final takeaways from their experience – modeling how storytelling is an active verb wherein we (re)negotiate key moments in our narrative identities; invite each woman to come up to write on a (poster) board, the helpful and empowering lesson they want to impart on the guest of honor. In the end, the girl should be left with a beautiful memento that she can

hang in her room that not only celebrates the event, but leaves her with the words, in their own handwriting, of the loving and influential women in her life.

These two activities – along with the period party in general – serve to address the two most detrimental aspects of menstruation: silencing and shame. The question stems for the activities will organically come up in the gathering, which is ideal. What the hosts should be trying to do here is to build from what will organically happen. They should encourage the incorporation of theological tenants into conversations that already present them: i.e., Genesis 34 and Eve in the “period poem.” Yet, if hosts are not careful, they can overlook these references and miss opportunities for conversations that allow their girls to negotiate their faith (and identity through conversations in safe spaces. Both activities tap into cultural markers (the red tent movement and slam poetry) to enter into hard conversations about how biblical women have been victimized through these very same issues – this allows the women to enter into the generational self, alongside their biblical mothers. These activities aim to call our attention to harmful aspects of our faith and show that conversations among women, grounded in (ancient and current) stories, work as correctives to dangerous social stigma and religious inaccuracies and imposed seclusion.

Through these activities the women are forming the intergenerational self of the girl in which their struggle and solutions become relevant and helpful to the girl. As she weaves all of these stories, items and advice together, she not only incorporates all of this into her narrative identity, but also uses the redemptive sequences offered by the women to assist her as she confronts and overcomes similar challenges in her own context. The goal of the period party is to revise the narrative of our religious history, but also to take communal accountability for our younger women and renegotiate with them their narratives as Catholic women who bleed. Soon

enough, she will be one of the “women” gathered sharing her own experiences with younger girls at another period party.

5.5 Returning Home

As I end this dissertation, I think about the most essential takeaways that I have learned throughout this project; namely, that parents are the biggest influence in passing on the faith to their children. While religious educators, whether they be parochial school teachers or catechists associated with the church, often play a pivotal role in faith development, especially when it comes to doctrinal questions, it is the love and warmth of significant others in the minute and mundane context of the home that conveys the enveloping presence of God. This is what we remember years later.

Rather than continuing to allow parents to believe that the religious development of their children is the Church’s responsibility, it is the Church itself, along with its religious educators, who are in the best position to dispel this misperception. The Church should be instilling in and reminding parents that they not only bear the responsibility for transmitting their faith to their own children, but they are the most likely means for successfully doing so. It is their nuancing of the faith that gives it its unique flavor and fondness.

Unfortunately, despite its own documents, that emphasize the importance of the domestic church in this process, the local churches rarely seem to communicate this message. Women, especially, need to be affirmed in their priestly responsibilities in the home. They must be anointed and affirmed by an institution that has historically minimized them as religious figureheads. We must address mothers as fellow priests. These mothers already possess the training they need to be catechists and mentors.

The praxis of the Cuban American women in this dissertation have presented the Church, as one body of educators and parents, with practical challenges to develop the domestic church:

- Are our Catholic values and spiritual beliefs practical and fundamental to all aspects of our life so that our personal narratives have a sense of purpose and significance or are we compartmentalizing and delegating our faith?
- Do the objects in our home convey the sacramentality and accompaniment of God in all things?
- Are we providing our children consistent access to multiple Catholic role models who are willing to share their stories and values as well as their practices in informal comfortable settings?
- Are our homes safe-spaces that facilitate sophisticated conversations where our children are met with humility and empowerment in their own discernment?
- Are we providing our children an example of a committed holistic Catholic lifestyle; not only as people who fulfill a duty by attending mass on Sundays, but rather as individuals with unique God-given interests and skills that serve the holistic betterment of all members of the community?
- Are we finding creative ways to integrate the realities of the world into our faith practices – to reconcile our weaknesses and differences – into our narrative identities so that our stories are not neat, but redemptive and complex, so they may actually serve others in their faith journey?
- Is our home a space where Latinx biculturalism as a lifelong process of embracing living and thriving in a liminal space that is not reductive but rather cumulative and heightening? It is only from within the liminal that we can be our most authentic selves.

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APPENDIX A: General Questions for Semi-Structured Interviews

I. (Mother) Member of Prayer Group in the Catholic Church:

1. What is your current faith identity/praxis? How do you identify yourself?
 - How / Why did you become a member of the prayer group?
 - What does it mean to be a Catholic Latina to you?
2. How did you learn to be a Catholic Latina woman?
 - As you were growing up what were some practices that you saw/experienced/participated in (home, Church and community) that have significantly influenced your life and your current religious identity/praxis?
 - How did you become involved in the Catholic Church?
3. How have you taught your daughters what it means to be a Catholic Latina in the United States?
 - Can you give me examples of practices, devotions, ideologies that you cultivated and repeated in your home?
 - How did you actively involve your daughters in the Catholic Church when they were growing up?
4. How do you understand your daughter's current faith practices?
5. How is their faith identity and praxis different from your own?
 - Do you believe that these changes are conducive to your daughter's (and your grandchildren's) Catholic identity?
6. Do you believe that your grandchildren and great grandchildren will be Catholic? Why and how so?

II. Adult Daughters of Members of Prayer Group in the Catholic Church:

1. How do you identify yourself? What is your current faith identity/praxis?
 - What does it mean to be a Catholic Latina to you?
 - How has this evolved for you?
2. How did you learn to be a Latina Catholic woman?
 - As you were growing up what were some practices that you saw/experienced/participated in (home, Church and community) that have significantly influenced your life and your current religious identity/praxis?
 - How has this evolved for you?
3. How do you understand your mother's Catholic faith ideology/practices?
 - How did your mother's faith impact you as you were growing up?
 - What are some Catholic practices, devotions, ideologies that you admire and would like to preserve from her faith praxis? Are there any in particular that were done at home?
 - What are some Catholic practices, devotions, ideologies that you perceive as outdated or that do not have a place in your current life? Why?
4. What are some differences between your current faith and the one you were raised with?
 - What is the reason(s) for these differences?
5. What, if any, are some Catholic practices, devotions, ideologies that you are intentionally instilling in your children? Why?
 - Have your children received any of their Sacraments? Why did you choose to initiate them into the Church?

6. Will there be faith? Do you see/believe that your grandchildren and great grandchildren will be Catholic? Why and how so?

MASLOW'S HIERARCHY OF NEEDS

TRANSCENDERS

↑

"I have recently found it more and more useful to differentiate between two kinds (or better, degrees) of self-actualizing people, those who were clearly healthy, but with little or no experiences of transcendence, and those in whom transcendent experiencing was important and even central."

—Maslow

CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SELF-ACTUALIZING TRANSCENDER

1. Peak experiences and plateau experiences become the most important things in their lives
2. Speak easily, normally, naturally, and unconsciously the language of Being (B-language)
3. Perceive unively or sacrally (i.e., the sacred within the secular)
4. Much more consciously and deliberately metamotivated
5. Recognize each other, and to come to almost instant intimacy and mutual understanding even upon first meeting
6. More responsive to beauty...a tendency to beautify all things, including all the B-Values, or to see the beautiful more easily
7. More holistic about the world...Mankind is one and the cosmos is one...think this way more easily, more reflexively, more naturally
8. Natural tendency to synergy—intrapyschic, interpersonal, intraculturally and internationally...transcends the dichotomy between selfishness and unselfishness
9. More and easier transcendence of the ego, the Self, the identity
10. Lovable...more awe-inspiring
11. More apt to be innovators...clearer vision of the B-Values
12. Less 'happy' than the healthy ones...cosmic-sadness or B-sadness...Perhaps this comes from the contrast between what actually is and the ideal world that the transcendents can see so easily and so vividly

13. More easily live in both the D- and B-realms simultaneously...sacredness of every person and even of every living thing
14. Show more strongly a positive correlation—rather than the more usual inverse one—between increasing knowledge and increasing mystery and awe
15. Less afraid of 'nuts' and 'kooks' than are other self-actualizers, and thus are more likely to be good selectors of creators (who sometimes look nutty or kooky)
16. More 'reconciled with evil' in the sense of understanding its occasional inevitability and necessity in the larger holistic sense
17. More apt to regard themselves as carriers of talent, instruments of the transpersonal, temporary custodians so to speak of a greater intelligence
18. More apt to be profoundly 'religious' or 'spiritual' in either the theistic or nontheistic sense
19. Find it easier to transcend the ego, the self, the identity, to go beyond self-actualization
20. More end experiences (of suchness)
21. More Taoistic...B-cognition makes everything look more miraculous, more perfect, just as it should be
22. 'Postambivalent'...Total wholehearted and unconflicted love, acceptance, expressiveness
23. Money recedes in importance...higher forms of pay and metapay steadily increase in importance
24. More apt to be Sheldonian ectomorphs

³³⁵ Kyle Kowalski, "24 Characteristics of the Self-Actualizing Transcender (Maslow Theory Z Summary)," <https://www.sloww.co/maslow-theory-z-transcender/#maslowtranscenders>.

APPENDIX C: Transcript of “The Period Poem” by Dominique Christina³³⁶

So, let me be very clear. I wrote this poem with a very specific intent. I have a 13 year old daughter. It is important to me that I throw every part of my experience, whatever wisdom I've gleaned from that, every part of my backbone, toward her, to sustain her, to offer her language that lifts her up and keeps her up.

That said, there is for me, a necessary conversation that seeks to undermine the shaming that happens to some girls around menstruation. I had that experience of starting my period in 7th grade, boys, finding out that I had started my period. And then it was some shit, like I've been to class with the frantic, “I've got to go to the bathroom now,” waved and they're like, “You're on your period, aren't you?” You know, that dumb shit.

And so then my daughter, like she starts her period and she's stricken and walks out the bathroom looking like she's died or something, and I wanted to undermine that. So I threw her a period party, my home is red up, dressed in red, and there was red food and red drinks. It was great.

[Applause]

It was great. So all red, everything. I loved it. So, that's what it was and it was wonderful. And then, when I was in Austin, Texas for Women of the World this year, she sent me a screenshot of a tweet and in 140 characters, this dummy, damn their, undermined my legacy. This is my response to the aforementioned today. You're welcome.

The dude on Twitter says: “I was having sex with my girlfriend when she started her period, I dumped that bitch immediately.”

Dear nameless dummy on Twitter: You're the reason my daughter cried funeral tears when she started her period. The sudden grief all young girls feel after the matriculation from childhood, and the induction into a reality that they don't have to negotiate, you and your disdain for what a woman's body can do. Herein begins an anatomy lesson infused with feminist politics because I hate you.

There is a thing called the uterus. It sheds itself every 28 days or so, or in my case every 23 days, I've always been a rule breaker. That's the anatomy part of it, I digress.

The feminist politic part, is that women know how to let things go, how to let a dying thing leave the body, how to become new, how to regenerate, how to wax and wane, not unlike the moon and tides, both of which influence how you behave, I digress. [laughter]

³³⁶ Radical Notion, “‘The Period Poem’ by Dominique Christina,” July 23, 2014
<https://radicalnotionblog.wordpress.com/2014/07/23/the-period-poem-by-dominique-christina/>.

Women have vaginas that can speak to each other and by this I mean, when we're with our friends, our sisters, our mothers, our menstrual cycles will actually sync the fuck up. My own cervix is mad influential, everybody I love knows how to bleed with me. Hold on to that, there's a metaphor in it. [applause]

Hold on to that. But when your mother carried you, the ocean in her belly is what made you buoyant, made you possible. You had it under your tongue when you burst through her skin, wet and panting from the heat of her body, the body whose machinery you now mock on social media, that body, wrapped you in everything that was miraculous about, and then sung you lullabies laced in platelets, without which you wouldn't have no Twitter account at all motherfucker. I digress.

See, it's possible that we know the world better because of the blood that visits some of us. It interrupts our favorite white skirts, and shows up at dinner parties unannounced, blood will do that, period. It will come when you are not prepared for it; blood does that, period. Blood is the biggest siren, and we understand that blood misbehaves, it does not wait for a hand signal, or a welcome sign above the door. And when you deal in blood over and over again like we do, when it keeps returning to you, well, that makes you a warrior.

And while all good generals know not to discuss battle plans with the enemy, let me say this to you, dummy on Twitter, If there's any balance in the universe at all, you're going to be blessed with daughters. Blessed.

Etymologically, bless means to make bleed. See, now it's a lesson in linguistics. In other words, blood speaks, that's the message, stay with me. See, your daughters will teach you what all men must one day come to know, that women, made of moonlight magic and macabre, will make you know the blood. We're going to get it all over the sheets and car seats, we're going to do that. We're going to introduce you to our insides, period and if you are as unprepared as we sometimes are, it will get all over you and leave a forever stain.

So to my daughter: Should any fool mishandle that wild geography of your body, how it rides a red running current like any good wolf or witch, well then just bleed, boo. Give that blood a biblical name, something of stone and mortar. Name it after Eve's first rebellion in that garden, name it after the last little girl to have her genitals mutilated in Kinshasa, that was this morning. Give it as many syllables as there are unreported rape cases.

Name the blood something holy, something mighty, something unlanguageable, something in hieroglyphs, something that sounds like the end of the world. Name it for the war between your legs, and for the women who will not be nameless here. Just bleed anyhow, spill your impossible scripture all over the good furniture. Bleed, and bleed, and bleed on everything he loves, period.