

The PARAL Study

Religious Identification
Among Hispanics in the
United States

by Ariela Keysar, Barry A. Kosmin,
and Egon Mayer

The American Religious
Identification Survey (ARIS)
and

The Program for the Analysis of
Religion Among Latinas/os (PARAL)



Preface and commentary by Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo

RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION AMONG
HISPANICS IN THE UNITED STATES
2001

A social science contribution to The PARAL Study

by

Ariela Keysar, Barry A. Kosmin and Egon Mayer

The Graduate Center of the City University of New York
&
Brooklyn College

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PREFACE

This report, *RELIGIOUS IDENTIFICATION AMONG HISPANICS IN THE UNITED STATES*, is the second issued by the Program for the Analysis of Religion Among Latinos/as (PARAL) in 2002. It forms part of the PARAL Study, a coordinated research effort. The goal is to provide a comprehensive social scientific understanding of the religious lives and worldviews of more than 35 million persons of Hispanic heritage in the United States. This second report is the result of a unique collaborative effort between the social scientists of PARAL and of those who in early 2001 carried out the *American Religious Identification Survey 2001* (ARIS), produced under the general aegis of the City University of New York.

ARIS 2001, carried out by Drs. Barry A. Kosmin, Egon Mayer and Ariela Keysar, involved the single largest survey of American adults in recent years with a focus on religious self-identification. As such it has served as an invaluable scholarly resource not only with respect to major trends across the United States' population, but also as a unique resource with which to analyze sub-groups within the wider society that are normally not well represented in national surveys. ARIS itself was an outgrowth of the renowned 1990 National Survey of Religious Identification (NSRI).

Early in summer of 2002, the Lilly Endowment approved a grant to PARAL through the Office for Research in Religion In Society and Culture (RISC) at Brooklyn College for a secondary analysis of data on Hispanics found in the ARIS sample. The competence and reputation of the ARIS investigators were recognized by the Lilly Endowment as guarantees for the quality of this report. Moreover, the information provided here answers questions about religious adherence, identification and affiliation that could not be provided from more locally focused community studies and surveys in the PARAL Study that analyze church leaders and the dynamics of their faith communities. As a result of prior institutional and collaborative ties, the ARIS investigators were able to lend their efforts, resources and expertise to those of PARAL. In brief, the collaborative effort that produced the present report represents an on-going intellectual conversation among scholars who are also friendly academic colleagues.

PARAL is grateful to our ARIS colleagues for producing a report that answers new sets of questions and especially to the Lilly Endowment for providing the funds to do so. By including this valuable work as part of the overall PARAL Study, we have been able to develop a comprehensive look at religion among Latinos/as in the United States. We invite the reader to connect this report on religious identification nationwide with the rest of the PARAL Study in order to profit from this comprehensive analysis of religion among Hispanics in the United States.

Anthony Stevens-Arroyo
Director of the PARAL Study
December 12, 2002

INTRODUCTION

This report describes the patterns of religious self-identification among American Hispanic¹ adults. First, we follow the trends from 1990 to 2001. Second, we explore the demographics of this population. Third, we compare patterns in 2001 of American-born and foreign-born Hispanics. We compare the generations, the young and the old, and examine differences in their religious profiles². This report provides an extensive descriptive profile of the religious lives of American Hispanic adults at the turn of the 21st century. We hope it raises many more research questions for the religious community as well as for scholars of religion and ethnicity.

METHODOLOGY

This study is based on data from the American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2001), which was gathered by means of a random-digit-dialed telephone survey of 50,281 American households in the continental U.S. (48 states). The methodology largely replicates the widely reported and pioneering 1990 National Survey of Religious Identification (NSRI) carried out at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. ARIS 2001 thus provides a unique time series of information concerning the religious identification choices of American adults.

The data were collected over a 17-week period, from February to June 2001 at the rate of about 3,000 completed interviews a week by ICR/CENTRIS Survey Research Group of Media, PA as part of their national telephone omnibus market research (EXCEL/ACCESS) surveys. The primary question of the interview was: *What is your religion, if any?*³ The religion of the spouse/partner was also asked. If the initial answer was 'Protestant' or 'Christian,' further questions were asked to probe which particular denomination.

¹ The terms Hispanic and Latino are often used interchangeably. Hispanic is preferred here, since it is the term used in the U.S. Census. In our survey the question was: Are you of Hispanic origin or background?

² This follows our early research on the impact of religion on political preferences among US Hispanics: Barry A. Kosmin and Ariela Keysar, Party political preferences of US Hispanics: the varying impact of religion, social class and demographic factors, in *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, Volume 18 Number 2 April 1995.

³ The 2001 question wording added the phrase "if any" to the question. A subsequent validity check based on cross samples of 3,000 respondents carried out by ICR in 2002 found no statistical difference between the pattern of responses according to the two wordings. Given the small number of Hispanic respondents no separate tests are available but we can assume that there is no difference among this sub-population of respondents.

INNOVATIONS BETWEEN NSRI 1990 AND ARIS 2001

The NSRI 1990 study was a very large survey in which 113,723 persons were questioned about their religious preferences. However, it provided for no further detailed questioning of respondents regarding their religious beliefs or involvement or the religious composition of their household.

In the light of those lacunae in the 1990 survey, ARIS 2001 took steps to enhance both the range and the depth of the topics covered. For example, new questions were introduced concerning the religious identification of spouses. To be sure, budget limitations, have necessitated a reduction in the number of respondents. The current survey still covers a very large national sample (over 50,000 respondents) that provides a high level of confidence in the results and adequate coverage of most religious groups and key geographical units such as states and major metropolitan areas.

For the sake of analytic depth, additional questions about religious beliefs and affiliation as well as religious change were introduced for a smaller representative sub-sample of (17,000) households. Even this sample is about ten times greater than most typical opinion surveys of the US population. This sub-sample as well as the larger sample were weighted to reflect the total U.S. adult population

These innovations have provided a much richer data set that goes far beyond the mere question of religious preference. The new data allow for a much more sophisticated analysis than NSRI 1990. They offer a more nuanced understanding of the complex dynamics of religion in contemporary American society and especially how religious adherence relates to countervailing secularizing trends. The information collected is also potentially much more useful for the various national religious bodies.

ARIS 2001 included two questions asked only of Hispanic respondents: country of birth; and, for the foreign-born, date of arrival in the U.S. All interviews were conducted in English. Obviously, this limited responses from non-English-speaking Hispanics. Nevertheless, only 4% of the households that were contacted did not participate in the survey because of language barriers, and only perhaps half of these were Spanish-speaking households. Further analysis of this issue is treated in the appendix. Based on our experience, it is our opinion that the 18% of non-English speaking Hispanics have patterns of religious identification similar to those of Hispanics who were interviewed in ARIS. Therefore, there are no statistically valid reasons to make further adjustments at this point.

One of the key distinguishing features of this survey, as of its predecessor in 1990, is that respondents were asked to describe themselves in terms of religion with an open-ended question. Interviewers did not prompt or offer a suggested list of potential answers. Moreover, the self-description of respondents was not

based on whether established religious bodies, institutions, churches, mosques or synagogues considered them to be members. Quite the contrary, the survey sought to determine whether the respondents regarded themselves as adherents of a religious community. Subjective rather than objective standards of religious identification were tapped by the survey.

FINDINGS

Introduction - Hispanic Adult Population

The large National Survey of Religious Identification in 1990 included almost 4,900 adult respondents (18 years old and over) who identified themselves as Hispanics. The smaller American Religious Identification Survey in 2001 had almost 3,000 adult Hispanics.

As seen in Table 1, the adult Hispanic population grew considerably in the last decade of the 20th century. In 1990, according to the U.S. Census there were almost 14.6 million adult Hispanics. In 2001, according to Census 2000, they numbered 23 million.

Overall, in Census 2000, 35.3 million people were identified as Hispanics. Of these, 23 million were adults and the rest were 17 years old or younger. The first section of this report concentrates on the Hispanic adult population.

Religious Identification Among Adult Hispanics

The key question in ARIS 2001, as in NSRI 1990, concerns self-reporting of religious identification. The response to the 2001 question: "*What is your religion, if any?*" yielded over 60 different religious bodies. For analytic reasons Table 1 shows only the religious groupings which were chosen by at least 30 adult Hispanics in the 2001 sample.

Table 1 describes the religious identification of American Hispanics at two points in time, 1990 and 2001. The use of identical methodologies in the two surveys allows for the identification of trends and changes among Hispanics. Table 1 provides the most comprehensive profile of religious identification among adult American Hispanics today and compares the current pattern of religious identification with what the pattern was in 1990.

As evident from Table 1, the number of adult Hispanic Catholics rose from about 9.6 million in 1990 to over 13 million in 2001. Catholicism is still the dominant

religion among Hispanics in 2001. However, despite the sharp increase in absolute numbers, one of the most important findings is the drop in the proportion of Hispanics who are Catholic. In 1990, 66% of adult Hispanics identified themselves as Catholics. In 2001 only 57% of them do so. The proportion of non-Catholic Christians remains steady from 1990 to 2001 at around one-quarter of adult Hispanics.

It is often assumed that the decline in Catholics' share of the Hispanic population has been mirrored by an equally large increase in the share of Pentecostals. In fact, although the number of Pentecostal Hispanics doubled between 1990 and 2001, their share of the overall Hispanic population increased only modestly from 3% to 4%.

So where did all the Catholic Hispanics go?

Clearly the most rapid growth is in the no-religion group. From 926,000 adult Hispanics who self-identified as professing no religion, or as atheist, agnostic or secular in 1990, to almost 3 million opted for these self-classifications in 2001. Their proportion of the Hispanics grew from 6% to 13%.

This pattern, of growth in the no-religion group, parallels national trends. ARIS 2001 documented the great increase both in absolute numbers as well as in percentages of the adults who do not subscribe to any religion. Nationally, 14% of American adults prefer to be identified as atheist, agnostic, humanist⁴, secular or having no religion. This cluster will be referred to hereafter as the no-religion group or none.

Other patterns are the increase in the unspecified Christian population and the decrease in the unspecified Protestant population in 2001 among both Hispanics and the general population⁵. Similarly, the percentage of Hispanic Baptists has decreased in the last decade despite an increase in total numbers.

Lastly, there has been a substantial increase in the number of adults who refused to reply to the question about their religious preference. This general pattern is reflected among Hispanics as well. While less than 1% refused to reveal their religious identification in 1990, almost 3% refused to answer in 2001. It is yet below 5% refusal rate in the general adult population. Hence the increased tendency to refuse to reveal one's religious identification is similar to that of the general population.

⁴ None of American Hispanics in 2001 self-identified as Humanist.

⁵ Barry A. Kosmin, Egon Mayer and Ariela Keysar, *The American Religious Identification Survey, 2001 Report*, The Graduate Center of the University of New York.
www.gc.cuny.edu/studies/studies_index.htm

Table 1
Self-Described Religious Identification of U.S. Adult Hispanics
1990-2001
 (Weighted Estimates)

	1990		2001	
	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>	<u>Number</u>	<u>%</u>
Catholic	9,608,000	66	13,090,000	57
Baptist	1,077,000	7	1,148,000	5
Christian (unspecified)	757,000	5	1,837,000	8
Pentecostals ⁶	438,000	3	918,000	4
Protestant (unspecified)	366,000	3	230,000	1
Methodist/Wesleyan	250,000	2	229,000	1
Jehovah's Witness	244,000	2	229,000	1
Other Christian ⁷	584,000	4	1,149,000	5
No religion ⁸	926,000	6	2,985,000	13
Other religion ⁹	270,000	2	459,000	2
Don't know/Refused	124,000	<1	689,000	3
TOTAL	14,597,000¹⁰	100%	22,963,000¹¹	100%

⁶ Pentecostals Include: Holiness, Charismatic, Assemblies of God, Church of God. In 2001 they also include: Four Square Gospel, and Full Gospel

⁷ Other Christian groups include: Episcopalian/Anglican, Evangelical, Eastern Orthodox, Mormon/Latter-Day Saints, Lutheran, Nazarene, Presbyterian, Seventh Day Adventist, Church of Christ, Congregational, Apostle, Disciples of Christ, Quaker, Christian Reform, Non-denominational, and Independent Christian Church. In 2001 they also include: Brethren, and Covenant.

⁸ Includes Atheist, Agnostic and Secular

⁹ Other religion groups include: Buddhist, Hindu, Jewish, Moslem, Taoist, Baha'i, Unitarian, Humanist, Spiritualist, Eckankar, Rastafarian, Scientologist, other (unclassified). In 2001 they also include: Wiccan, Pagan, Druid, Indian religion, and Santeria.

¹⁰ Total adult population is drawn from Census 1990. Number in each religion calculated from distribution of religious identification in NSRI 1990.

¹¹ Total adult population is drawn from Census 2000. Number in each religion calculated from distribution of religious identification in ARIS 2001.

Demographic Profile of Adult Hispanics

a. Distribution of Males and Females

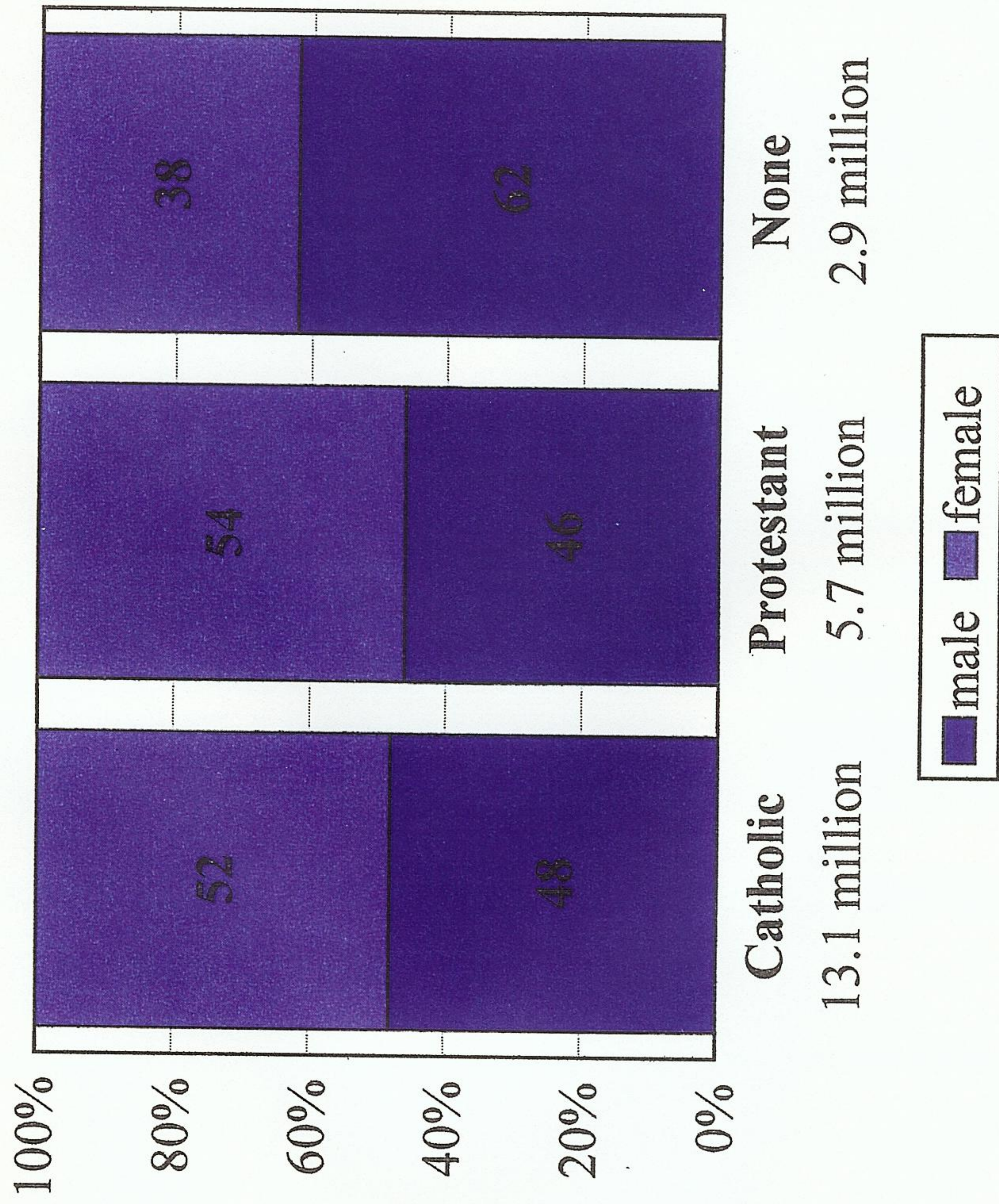
Among Hispanics the distribution of males and females is similar to that of other religious groups in the total U.S. population.

If there were no differences in religious identification by gender, one would expect each group to be composed of about half men and half women. But among adult Americans overall, men account for only 47% of Catholics. In contrast, 59% of the no-religion group are males (ARIS, 2001). These patterns also occur among American Hispanics: while only 48% of Hispanic Catholics are males, 62% of the Hispanic no-religion group are males. This fits with the well-established pattern that women are more likely than men to self-identify with a religious group and regard themselves as religious (ARIS, 2001, Exhibit 4).

The American Religious Identification Survey reveals that at the beginning of the 21st century, adult male Hispanics are more likely than females to profess no religious identification or define themselves as "none." As shown in Chart 1, the differences are quite small between adult Catholics and all other Christian denominations, labeled here as Protestants.

It is important to examine other demographic variables besides gender that differ between religious groups.

Chart 1 Distribution of Males and Females by Religious Group



American Religious Identification Survey, 2001 N=23 million Hispanic adults

b. Age

Hispanics are younger than their counterparts in the general adult population. Forty percent of Hispanic adults are under age 30 compared with 23% in the total U.S. population. And only 7% of Hispanic adults are 60 years and older, compared with almost 21% of American adults. This pattern is true for each of the major religious groups. For example, while 38% of Catholic Hispanics are 18-29 years old, only 24% of adult American Catholics are under 30 years old.

The most striking finding is the young age structure of adult Hispanics who do not subscribe to any religious identification. As shown in Chart 2, 53% of no-religion Hispanics are under age 30, 13 percentage points more than the share of all U.S. Hispanic adults under 30. In this respect, Hispanics mirror the overall population. About 35% of U.S. adults in the no-religion group are under 30. That is 12 percentage points higher than the share of all U.S. adults under 30. Youth appears to be related to a disinclination toward religious identification

c. Marital Status

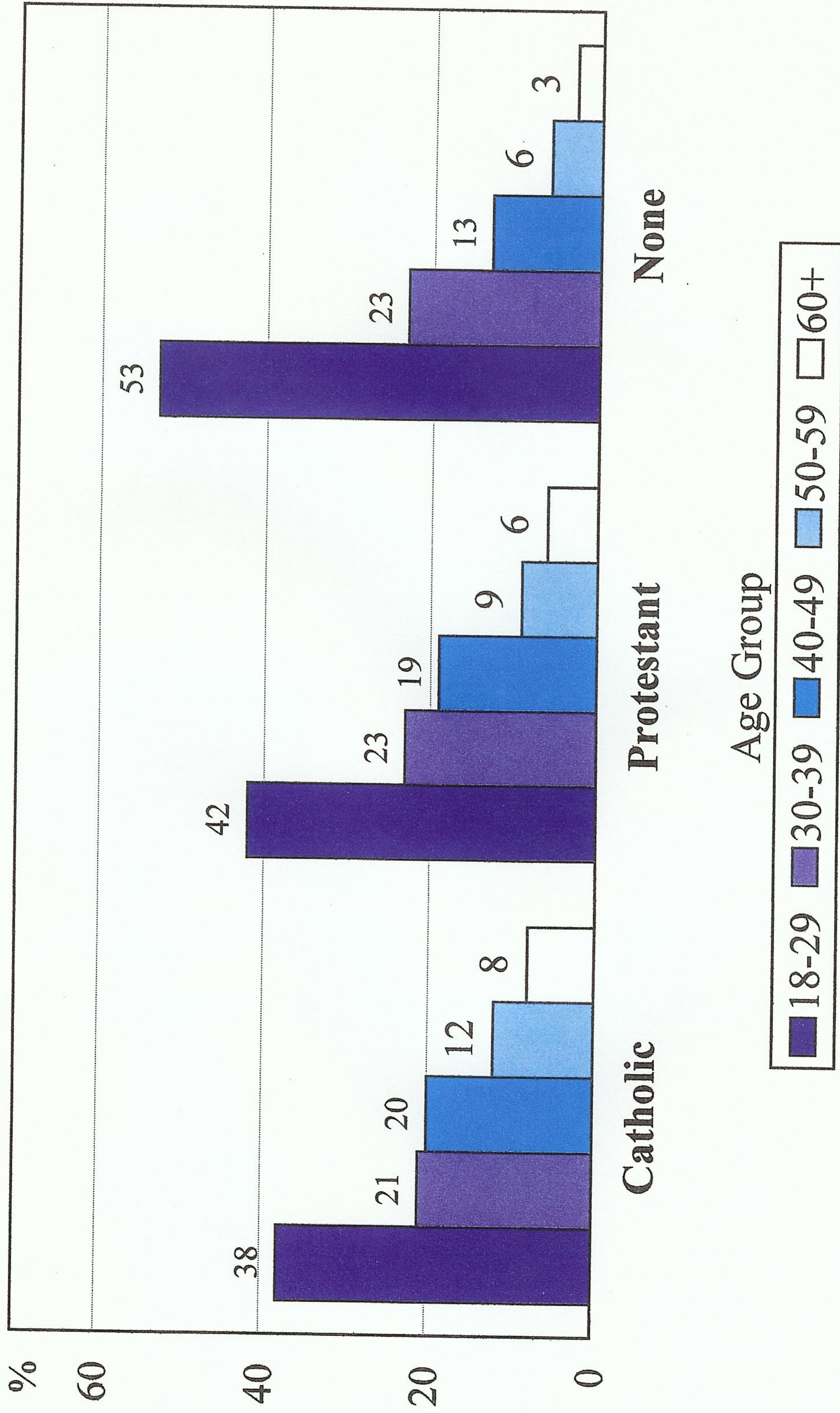
Over half of adult Hispanic Catholics and Protestants are married. Only 34% of adult Hispanics in the no-religion group are married. This is considerably lower than the 48% of Americans overall in the no-religion group who are married.

Hispanic adults who do not subscribe to any religious identification are also more likely than Hispanic Catholics and Protestants to be cohabiting or in common law marriages, 17%, 8% and 5% respectively.

A substantial proportion -- 42%-- of adult Hispanics in the no-religion and atheist group are singles who were never married. This is by far higher than the proportion for Catholic and Protestant Hispanics. (See Chart 3.) It is also far more than the 20% of single adults in the overall American population and even higher than the 29% of single adults among the general American no-religion group (ARIS 2001).

Chart 2

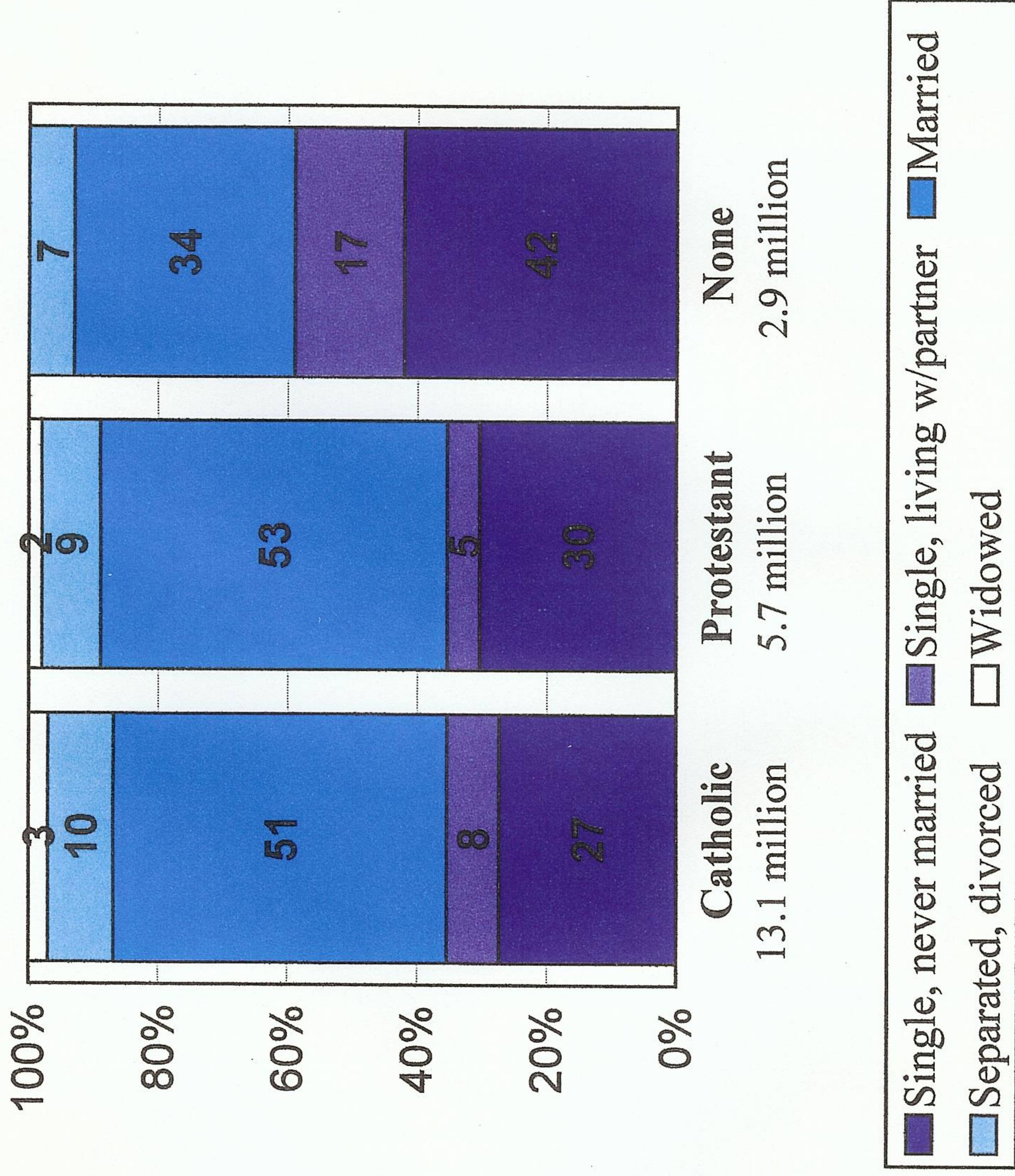
Age Distribution by Religious Group



American Religious Identification Survey, 2001 N=23 million Hispanic adults

Chart 3

Marital Status by Religious Group



American Religious Identification Survey, 2001 N=23 million Hispanic adults

d. Education

The educational attainment of adult Hispanics is below the average of American adults in general. While over 50% of Hispanics have a high school education or less, 41% of American adults in general have a high school education or less. On the other end of educational attainment, only 5% of Hispanics attended graduate or post-graduate school, compared with 9% in the general population.

The education level of adult Hispanics is independent of their religious identification. As shown in Table 2, about 16% of adult Hispanics regardless of their religious identification have not completed high school. About 5%, again regardless of religious identification, attended graduate or post-graduate school. In fact, there is an extraordinary similarity between the education profiles of the three main Hispanic religious populations.

Table 2
Education Level of U.S. Adult Hispanics by Religious Grouping

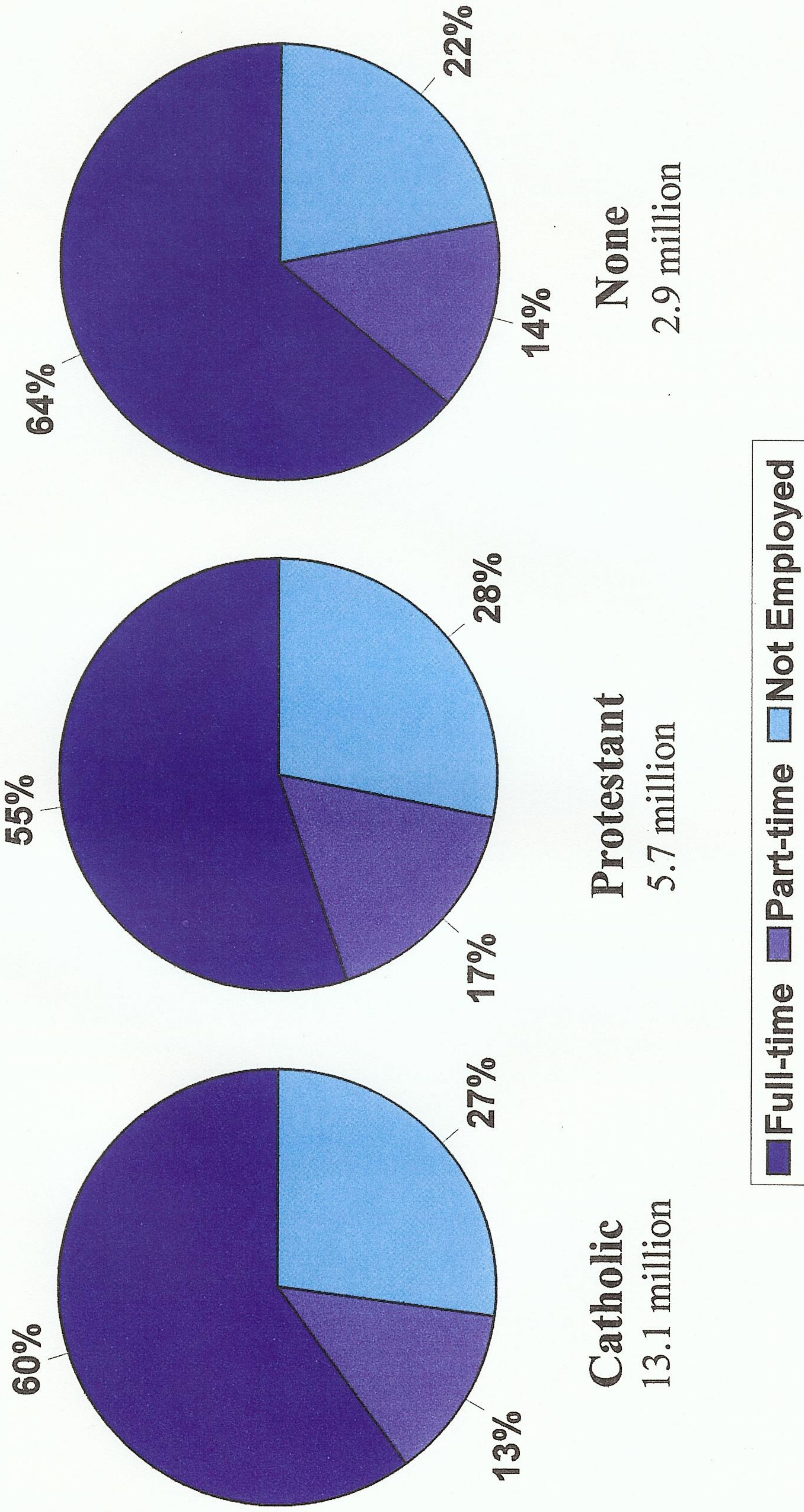
Level of education	Religious Group			Total
	Catholic	Protestant	None	
Less than high school	16%	16%	15%	16%
High school graduate	37%	36%	36%	35%
Some college	25%	22%	25%	24%
Graduated college	17%	20%	18%	18%
Graduate school or more	4%	5%	5%	5%
Other/Refused	1%	1%	1%	2%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of adults	13,100,000	5,750,000	2,990,000	23,000,000 ¹²

e. Employment Status

Hispanics who profess no religion are the most likely to be employed full-time. Sixty-four percent of Hispanics in the no-religion group, compared with only 55% of Protestants, are employed full-time. (See Chart 4.) At the same time, Hispanics who profess no religion are the least likely to be unemployed. Only 22% of no-religion Hispanics, compared with 28% of Protestants and 27% of Catholics, are not economically active. The no-religion Hispanics are younger and male, so we would expect them to be in the work force.

¹²There are additional 1.15 million adult Hispanics (5%) who self identified with other non-Christian religion don't know or refused to answer the religion question.

Chart 4 Employment Status by Religious Group



American Religious Identification Survey, 2001 N=23 million Hispanic adults

f. Household Income

Hispanic respondents were asked to estimate their total annual household income from all sources, before taxes. Members of a household may have different religious identifications, and the survey does not establish how much each member contributed to household income. But since household income is shared evenly, the survey data are presumed to apply to all members of a household.

Hispanics are slightly more willing than other Americans to disclose their household income. Some 14% of them did not respond to the question with a solid dollar figure. In comparison, 17% of US adults did not disclose their household income according to ARIS 2001 either.

Table 3
Household Income of U.S. Hispanics by Religious Grouping

Household Income	Religious Group			Total
	Catholic	Protestant	None	
Under \$10,000	7%	6%	10%	7%
\$10,000-14,999	6%	6%	8%	6%
\$15,000-19,999	7%	6%	8%	7%
\$20,000-24,999	8%	8%	7%	8%
\$25,000-29,999	9%	8%	8%	8%
\$30,000-39,999	10%	10%	15%	11%
\$40,000-49,999	9%	11%	9%	9%
\$50,000-74,999	15%	15%	11%	14%
\$75,000-99,999	8%	9%	7%	8%
\$100,000 and over	8%	8%	7%	8%
Don't Know/Refused	12%	13%	10%	14%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of adults	13,100,000	5,750,000	2,990,000	23,000,000

Median household income among U.S. Hispanics ranged about \$30,000-\$39,999 in 2000. This is compared with about \$40,000-\$49,999 among American in general. However, Hispanics tend to reside in larger households on average (mean size= 3.3 compared with 2.6 in general), so per-capita income is lower.

Overall, income patterns are quite similar across religious groups. Interestingly, respondents who profess no religion live in households with a lower income level; 10% of them, compared with only 6% of Protestants, reside in households with under \$10,000 annual income. The no-religion Hispanics tend to be younger and they might not have established themselves economically.

The income bracket with the largest number of no-religion Hispanics is \$30,000-39,000, containing 15% of them. The income bracket with the largest number of Catholic and Protestant Hispanics is \$50,000-74,999, containing 15% of each group. (See Table 3.)

i. Region

The Mid-Atlantic, East North Central and Pacific regions mirror the overall religious composition of U.S. Hispanics. About 57% are Catholics, 25% Protestants and 13% self-identify as atheist or profess no religion. These regions cover a large proportion of the Hispanic population. In contrast, only 40% of Hispanics in New England are Catholics. In both New England and the South Atlantic, 33% of Hispanics are Protestants, exceeding the national average. Interestingly, the two regions in which Catholics constitute the biggest share of Hispanics-- West South Central and Mountain—are ones where Hispanics lived in large numbers before the founding of the United States.

Table 4
Geographic Region of U.S. Adult Hispanics by Religious Group

<u>Region</u> ¹³	<u>Religious Group</u>			<u>Total</u> ¹⁴	
	<u>Catholic</u>	<u>Protestant</u>	<u>None</u>	<u>Number of adults</u> ¹⁵	
New England	40%	33%	16%	554,000	(100%)
Mid-Atlantic	57%	23%	13%	2,998,000	(100%)
East North Central	57%	24%	14%	1,571,000	(100%)
West North Central	41%	24%	30%	396,000	(100%)
South Atlantic	49%	33%	13%	3,054,000	(100%)
East South Central	22%	50%	19%	204,000	(100%)
West South Central	63%	23%	10%	4,524,000	(100%)
Mountain	60%	23%	12%	2,247,000	(100%)
Pacific	58%	25%	12%	7,347,000	(100%)
Total	57%	25%	13%		100%
Number of adults	13,100,000	5,750,000	2,990,000	22,900,000	

¹³ New England includes CT,RI,MA,NH,VT, and ME; Middle Atlantic includes NJ,PA and NY; East North Central includes OH,MI,IN,IL and WI; West North Central includes MO,IA,MN,KS,NE,SD and ND; South Atlantic includes FL,GA,SC,NC,VA,WV,DC,MD and DE; East South Central includes AL,MS,TN and KY; West South Central includes LA,TX,AR and OK; Mountain includes NM,AZ,CO,UT,NV,WY,ID and MT; Pacific includes CA,OR and WA. Hawaii and Alaska are not included in ARIS.

¹⁴ The total includes other/Don't Know/Refused which are not presented in the table.

¹⁵ Source: US Census 2000 - adult Hispanic population by region.

There are two regions with relatively small population of Hispanics. Only 1% of U.S. Hispanics reside in the East South Central, which includes Kentucky, Tennessee, Mississippi and Alabama. And less than 2% of Hispanics reside in the West North Central, which includes Minnesota, North and South Dakota, Iowa, Nebraska, Missouri and Kansas. Because of small sample sizes, it is difficult to be certain about the patterns of religious affiliation. But it appears that relatively few Hispanics in the East South Central region are Catholic. A high percentage (more than double the national average) of Hispanics who live in the West North Central region professes no religion.

j. Origins -- U.S.-Born and Foreign-Born Hispanics

Chart 5 sets out the religious identification profiles of U.S. and foreign-born Hispanics. For analytical purposes, since we are dealing with cultural issues relating to majority and minority category, we classified ARIS respondents born in Puerto Rico as foreign-born. Among those Hispanics born in the Continental USA 59% identify themselves as Catholic, 26% as Protestants and 12% profess no religion. Those who are born abroad are less likely to be Catholics or Protestants and slightly more likely to profess no religion than are U.S.-born Hispanics. Foreign-born Hispanics are more likely to opt for either "other," "don't know" or "refused" when asked their religious identification. This lower rate of willingness to identify with a religious group is typical of foreign-born Americans and may be due to their unfamiliarity with survey research in the country of origin. They are generally much more suspicious of strangers asking them personal questions.

Looking within the religious group, we find quite different patterns of U.S.- vs. foreign-born Hispanics. (See Chart 6.) For instance, Protestant Hispanics are the most likely (76%) to be U.S.-born. On the other hand, the no-religion group is the most likely to include foreign-born Hispanics (30%).

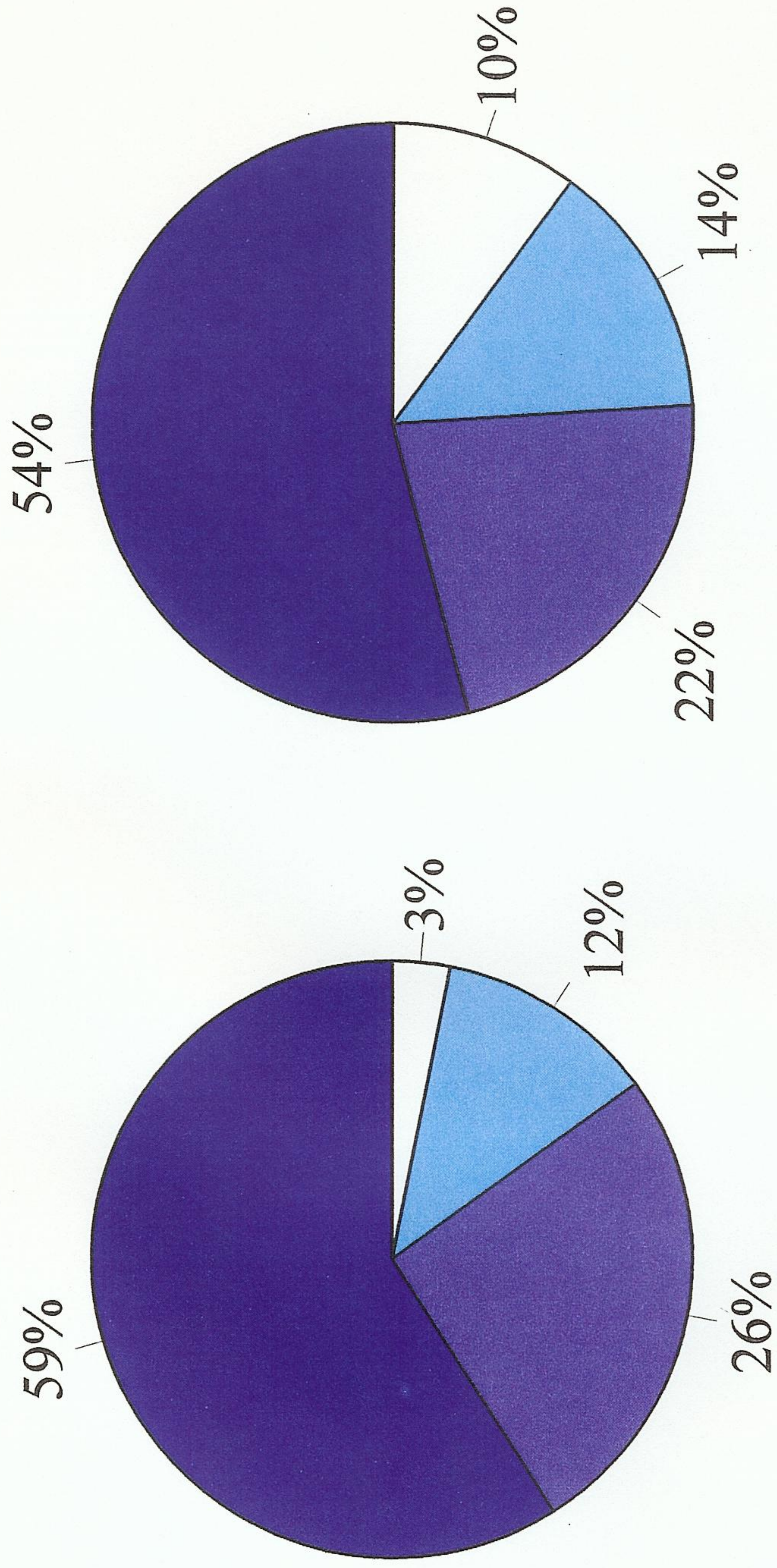
These differences may explain other socio-demographic patterns among the various religious groups of Hispanics. They also might have implications for the emerging new religious mapping of American Hispanics with new waves of migration, as more foreign-born form the Hispanic population. Thus, more and more Hispanics will adhere to no religion.

Alternatively, one might argue that as U.S.-born Hispanic children grow up and become socialized into American society, we might expect them to follow American religious patterns as well. This might be expressed with religious switching towards Protestant groups (see below).

Our data do not provide us with insights on which of the scenarios are more plausible. However, following the trends from 1990 to 2001, we have already demonstrated the substantial increase in the number of adult Hispanics who adhere to no religion.

Reported church membership is higher among U.S.-born Hispanics compared with foreign -born Hispanics, 48% and 37% respectively. This is a somewhat surprising finding, since one might expect that immigrants would join churches at even a higher rate than U.S. born to establish ties in their new home. One possible explanation is that immigrants might find it difficult to join a house of worship in unfamiliar places. Perhaps many of those who do not immediately join slowly lose their connection to the faith and never join a church at all. Clearly this issue demands further investigation.

Chart 5 Religious Groups of U.S. And Foreign-Born Hispanics



U.S.-Born

Foreign-Born

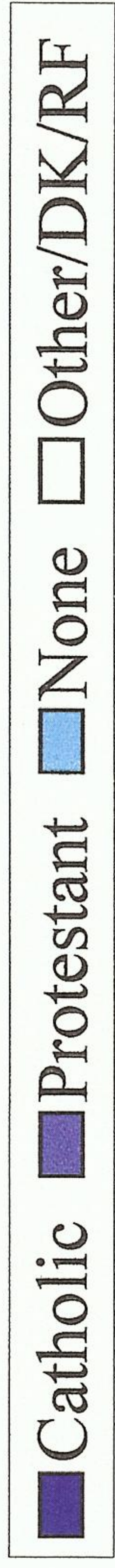
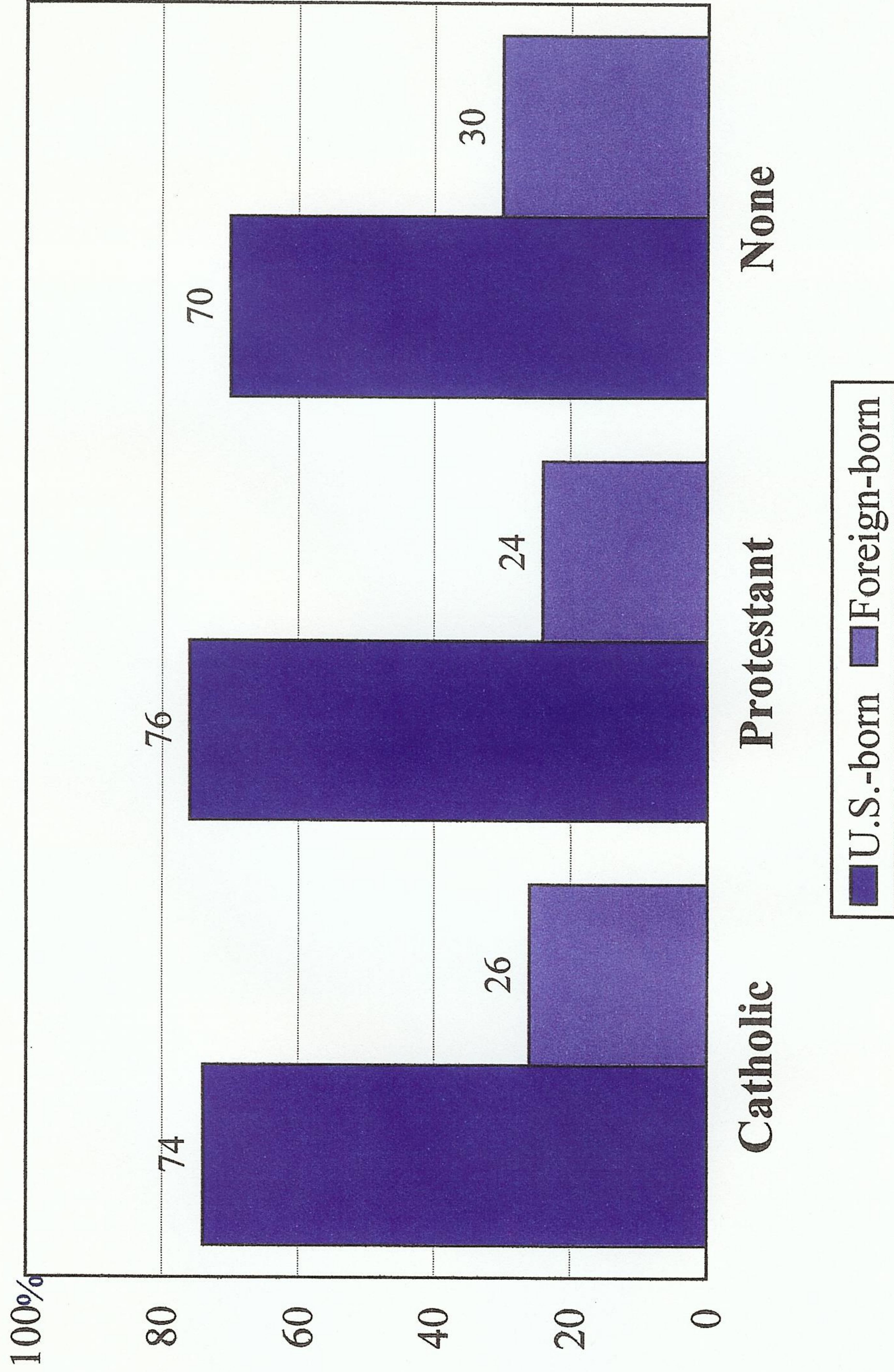


Chart 6 Origins of Religious Groups



American Religious Identification Survey, 2001 N=23 million Hispanic adults

k. The Next Generation – Children in Hispanic Households

The American Religious Identification Survey in 2001 assigns the ethnic attribute of the adult respondent to all the children who reside in the household. As shown in Table 5 below, the religious composition of the child population is quite similar to that of the adult Hispanic population. This suggests that there are no dramatic differences in fertility rates according to religious groups.

Table 5
Children in Hispanic Households
by the religious identification of the adult respondent

<u>Religion of Respondent</u>	<u>Number of Children</u>	<u>Percent of All Children</u>
Catholic	6,331,000	57%
Protestant	3,062,000	28%
None	1,167,000	11%
Other/DK/RF	464,000	4%
Total	11 million	100%

Religious Upbringing of Children in Interfaith Families

Among Hispanics, Catholics are the most likely to marry or cohabitate with people of their own faith. About 79% do so. This is not surprising, considering the sheer number of potential Catholic Hispanic partners. What is more surprising is how many Hispanics with no religion marry or cohabitate with somebody of no religion. Fully 68% do so, even though the number of potential partners with no religion is relatively small. Protestants are in the middle, with 75% in homogenous relationships.

Religious upbringing of children is of great concern to leaders of the community who wish to retain religious continuity. This is most problematic in interfaith families, where parents profess different faiths. We hypothesize that many interfaith families consist of one Catholic parent and one parent who was born Catholic but has switched to Protestantism or no religion.

The issue of religious upbringing of the next generation is explored in the American Religious Identification Survey in families where the married couples or the cohabitating partners differ in their religious identification. We define them as interfaith families though many can be viewed as interdenominational families.

Unfortunately, only 116 such interfaith Hispanic families are represented in ARIS 2001. This is a small sample, which limits the analytical exploration¹⁵. It provides us with some broad insights on how the children are raised. For instance, almost half of interfaith Hispanic families raise their children as Catholics, about one-third as Protestants and about 13% with no religion. About 80% of Catholic parents in interfaith families raise their children as Catholics. Only about 40% of Protestant parents in interfaith families raise their children as Protestants.

These patterns of marriage and child-rearing are not major contributors to the rate of erosion in the predominantly Catholic identity of Hispanics in America. First, because only about 20% of Hispanic Catholics choose a partner who is not Catholic. Second, because of those who do, fully 80% nevertheless raise their children as Catholics.

Religious Switching

About 16% of all adult Americans report that they have changed their religious preference over the course of their life. Similarly, 17% of adult Hispanics report having ever changed their religious preference. As illustrated in Chart 7, this phenomenon of religious switching varies considerably within the Hispanic population.

Hispanics who are currently Protestant or who profess no religion are by far more likely than Catholics to have changed their religious preference. In other words, many Protestant and no-religion Hispanics used to identify with another religion but switched. Not surprisingly, most of them used to identify themselves as Catholics.

When asked: "What was your religious preference, if any, before you changed?" 76% of Protestants and 60% of no religion¹⁶ used to identify with Catholicism.

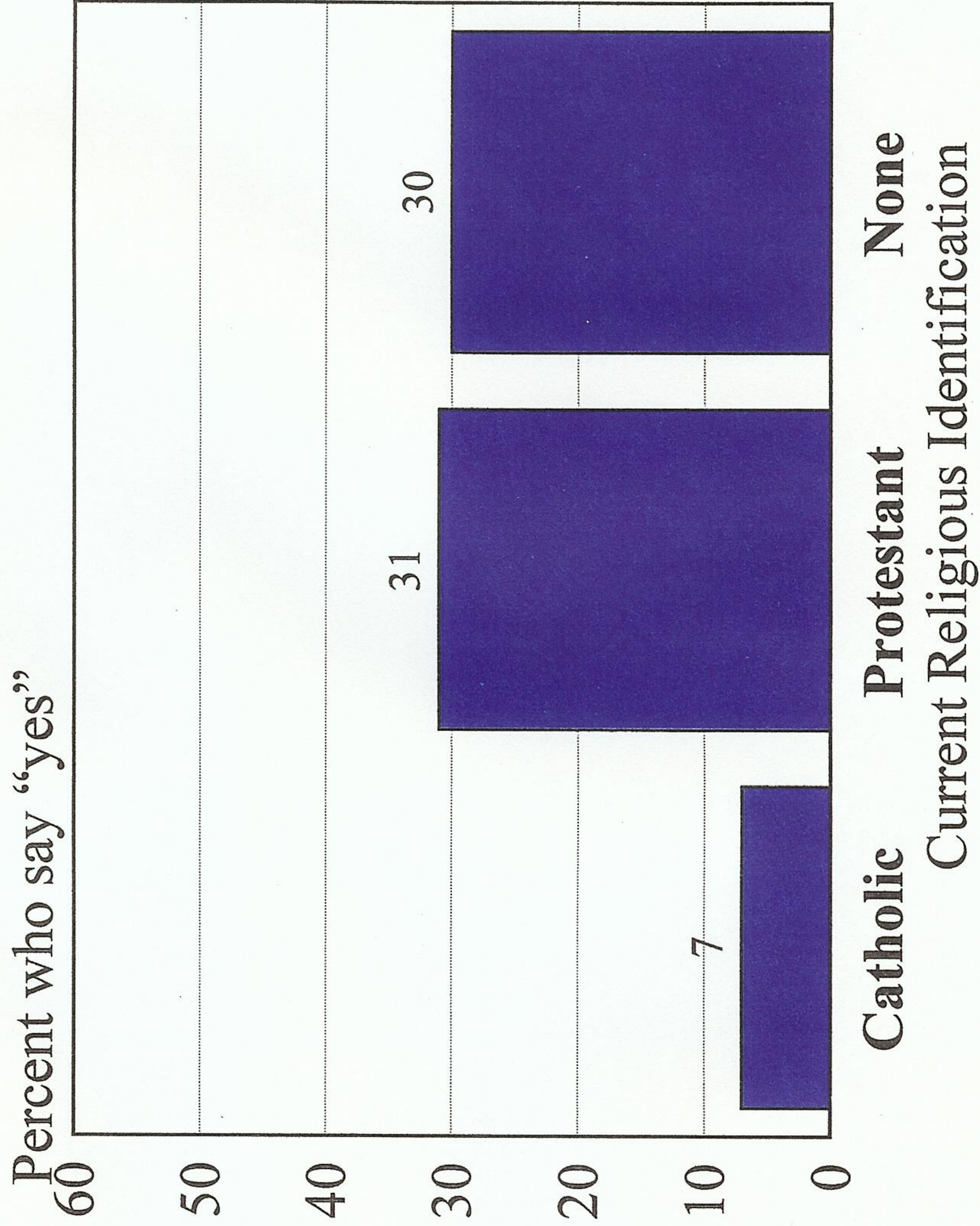
Are foreign-born Hispanics more likely to switch their religion? Though we can not relate religious switching to the timing of migration to the U.S., we might expect foreign-born more than American-born to have switched their religion. Contrary to our hypothesis, ARIS data show a reverse pattern. While 19% of U.S.-born Hispanics changed their religion, only 12% of foreign-born Hispanics did so.

¹⁵ For example, there are insufficient data to determine the influence that the gender of the parent has on the religious upbringing of children.

¹⁶ Among Hispanics switchers who currently profess no religion, 10% use the generic Christian label to identify their religious preference before they changed.

Chart 7 Religious Switching Among Hispanics

“Have you ever changed your religious preference?”



American Religious Identification Survey, 2001 N=23 million Hispanic adults

This may reflect the multi-generational nature of Americanization of U.S. Hispanics, whereby religious switching is another way of adaptation into American culture and society. American society readily accepts religious switching as individuals seek to improve and change their lives.

Religious Behavior and Attitudes

Beyond religious identification, the American Religious Identification Survey in 2001 sought to gather information on *belonging* and *belief*.

- Belonging to a religious institution
- Belief in God and religious outlook

a. Religious Belonging of American Hispanics

In the minds of most Americans religious group identification is closely associated with belonging to a church or a temple or some other house of worship. More than half (54%) of the adult population in America reside in a household where either they themselves or someone else belongs to a church, temple, synagogue or mosque.

Belonging to a religious institution is lower among Hispanics in general, only 47%. Still, membership varies greatly by denomination, just as it does in the overall American population (see ARIS 2001). Chart 8 shows the varied pattern of religious institutional membership among Hispanics. Protestants are far more likely to reside in households where somebody is a member of a church.

It may seem odd that 19% of Hispanics who profess no religion answer yes to the question about household religious affiliation. This is probably explained in most cases by the fact that someone else in the household is a church member¹⁷.

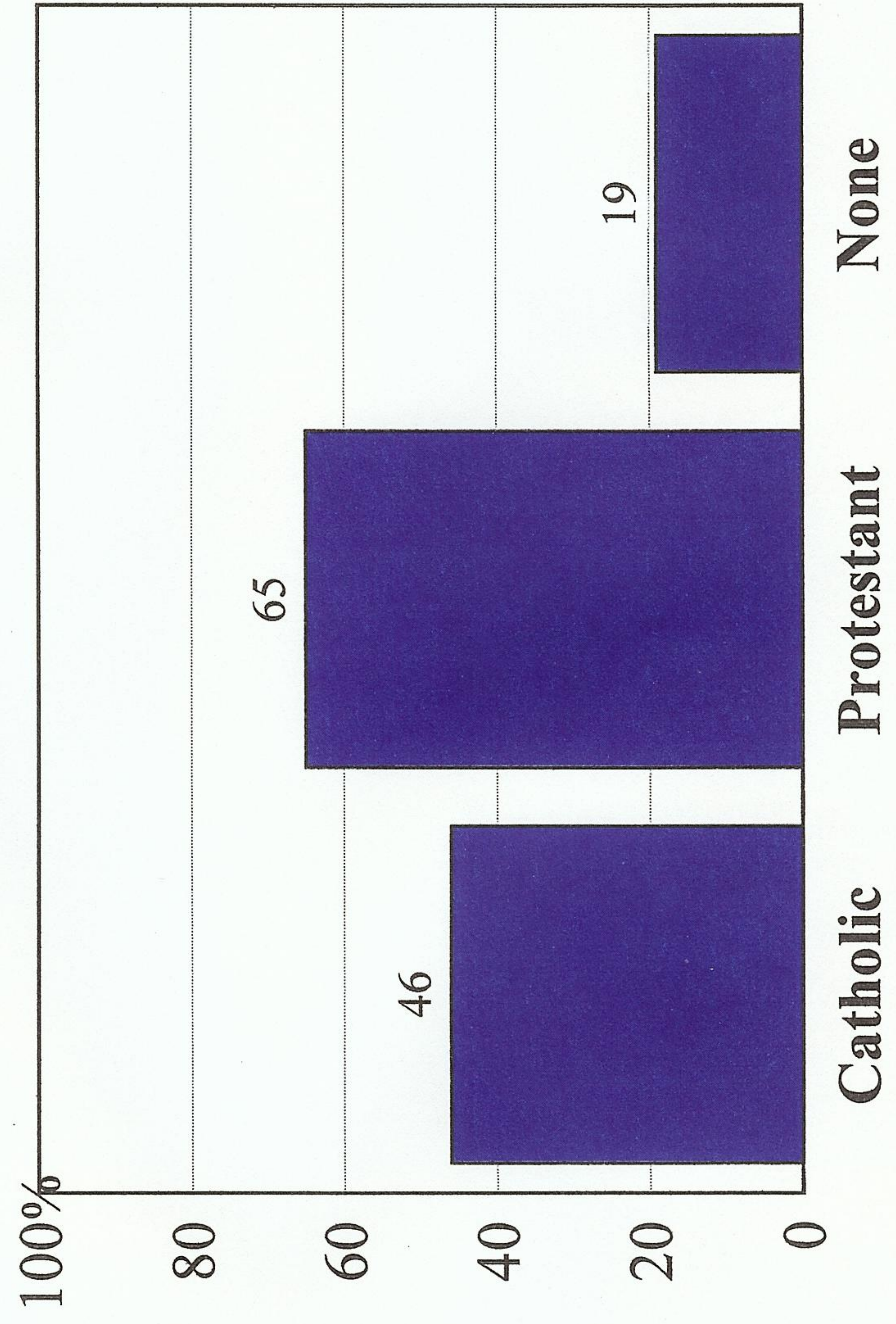
In fact, in the general population as well, 19% of people who profess no religion reported a religious institutional belonging for their household (ARIS 2001). This similarity in religious institutional membership between Hispanics and non-Hispanics does not hold for Catholics. While 59% of identifying American Catholics, in general, report household membership in a church, only 46% of identifying Hispanic Catholics do so.

¹⁷The question is phrased: "Is anyone in your household currently a member of a church, temple, synagogue, or mosque?"

Chart 8

Religious Belonging among Hispanics by Religious Group

"Is Anyone In Your Household Currently A Member of a Church, Temple, Synagogue, or Mosque?"



American Religious Identification Survey, 2001 N=23 million Hispanic adults

b. Religious or Secular Outlook of American Hispanics

When it comes to your outlook, do you regard yourself as ... (1) Secular; (2) Somewhat secular; (3) Somewhat religious, or (4) Religious?"

Do American Hispanics regard their outlook on life to be essentially religious or secular? Their answers vary along with their religious identification. Chart 9 provides a picture of the major differences between Catholic and Protestant Hispanics as well as the unique outlook of those who identify with no religion.

Three-quarters of Americans in general see themselves in some ways as religious: 37% regard themselves as "religious," and 38% as "somewhat religious." Hispanics, however, are far more likely to opt for the ambivalent category. While 30% of Hispanics regard themselves as "religious," 45% regard themselves as "somewhat religious."

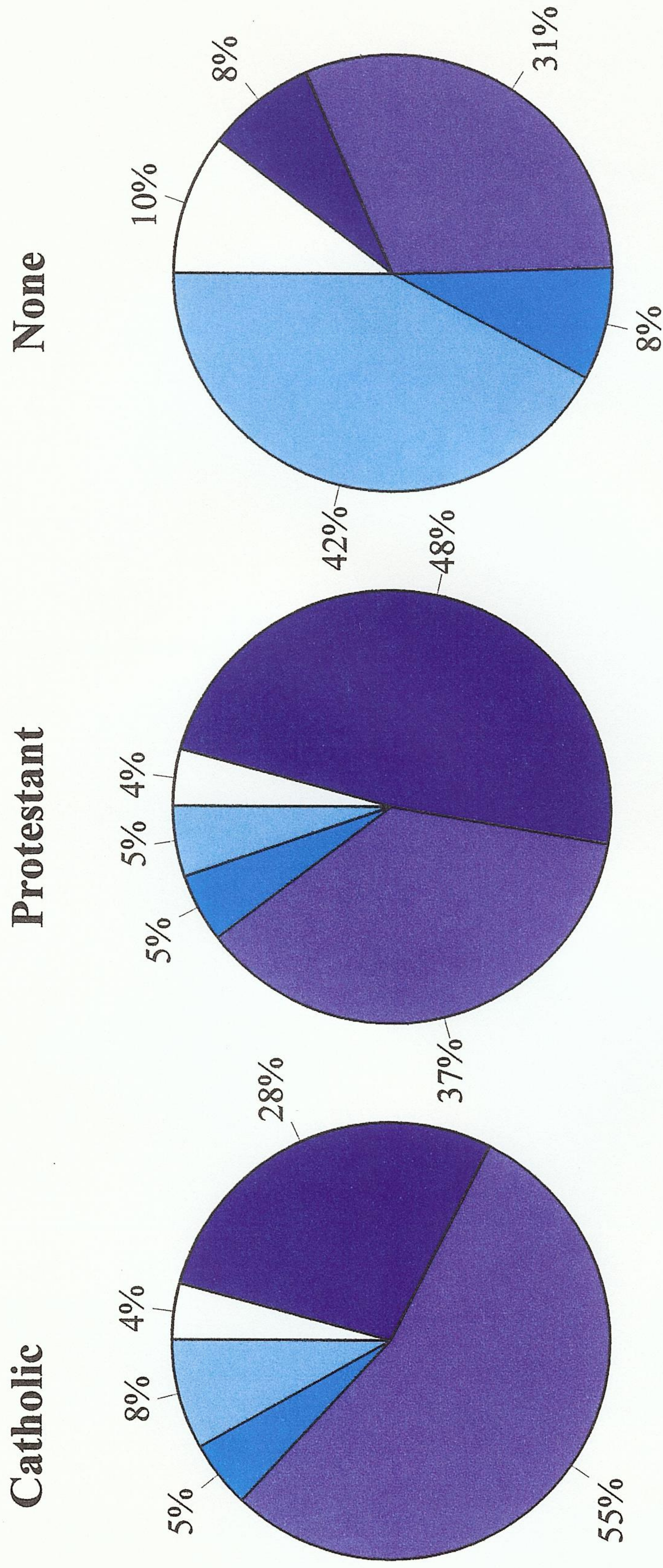
Almost half of Protestant Hispanics regard themselves as "religious." Yet only 28% of Catholic Hispanics regard themselves as "religious." Catholics are more likely to lean toward the more ambivalent term "somewhat religious." More than half of Catholics chose that category, compared with only 37% of Protestants.

True, when we combine the two categories, "somewhat religious" and "religious," there are hardly any differences between the outlooks of Catholics and Protestants. The main difference is the strong religious outlook among Protestant Hispanics.

The worldview of Hispanics who profess no religion is clearly secular. Half of them regard themselves as either "secular" or "somewhat secular." Naturally, the dominant group, 42%, consider themselves as "secular," and only 8% as "somewhat secular."

Generally American adults who profess no religion also have a secular outlook: 39% regard themselves as "secular," and 12% as "somewhat secular."

Chart 9 Outlook of Hispanics by Religious Group



“When it comes to your outlook, do you regard yourself as...”



American Religious Identification Survey, 2001 N=23 million Hispanic adults

c. Religious Attitudes -- Belief in God by American Hispanics

Do you agree or disagree that: God exists?

Apart from religious identification, belief in God is an important dimension of an individual's religious or secular outlook.

Table 6 allows us to glance at the views of American Hispanics as to whether God exists.

Table 6
Religious Attitudes of U.S. Adult Hispanics by Religious Grouping
Do you agree or disagree that God exists?

Agree/Disagree	Religious Group			Total
	Catholic	Protestant	None	
Disagree strongly	2%	2%	4%	2%
Disagree somewhat	1%	2%	5%	2%
Agree somewhat	11%	4%	32%	12%
Agree strongly	84%	91%	53%	80%
Don't Know/ Refused	2%	1%	6%	4%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of adults	13,100,000	5,750,000	2,990,000	23,000,000 ¹⁸

Catholic and Protestant Hispanics alike believe strongly that God exists. Once again Protestants are more explicit and more likely to express a more religious worldview than Catholic Hispanics.

The no-religion group, however, are more doubtful about the divine and only 53% of them "agree strongly" with the statement. Moreover, this group expresses its doubts, whereby almost a third say that they only "agree somewhat" that God exists. Although these patterns are typical among people who subscribe to no religion¹⁹, they are certainly atypical among Hispanics in general. Nevertheless, 85% agree that "God exists." This suggests that the no-religion category contains people who, although having no ties to organized religion, are not necessarily non-believers.

¹⁸ The overall figure of adult Hispanics is slightly lower due to differential weighting of the sub-sample.

¹⁹ Among Americans in general who profess no religion: 22% "agree somewhat" that God exists and 45% "agree strongly."

Those who “agree somewhat” or “agree strongly” that God exists were asked:
Do you agree or disagree that God performs miracles?

Patterns are quite similar and consistent with beliefs in the divine. Hispanic adults who think that God exists also attribute powers to God. A great majority—92%--believe that “God performs miracles.” (See Table 7.)

Again, these findings underscore the differences within the Hispanic population. There is a continuum whereby, as seen before, Protestants are the most religious. Catholics carry the middle point, and those with no religion are the most secular in their beliefs: 95%, 81% and 76% respectively agree²⁰ that “God performs miracles.”

Table 7
Beliefs of U.S. Adult Hispanics Who Believe In God
 Do you agree or disagree that God performs miracles?²¹

<u>Agree/Disagree</u>	<u>Religious Group</u>			<u>Total</u>
	<u>Catholic</u>	<u>Protestant</u>	<u>None</u>	
Disagree strongly	1%	2%	7%	2%
Disagree somewhat	3%	2%	15%	4%
Agree somewhat	20%	9%	36%	19%
Agree strongly	75%	86%	40%	73%
<u>Don't Know/ Refused</u>	<u>1%</u>	<u>1%</u>	<u>2%</u>	<u>1%</u>
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%

Large gaps, however, are apparent in the “agree somewhat” category. No-religion Hispanics are four times as likely as Protestants (and almost twice as Catholics) to express ambivalence about whether God performs miracles. Nevertheless, three out of every four agree that “God performs miracles” which verifies that they are believers in all senses of the word.

All respondents were asked to express their opinion on the proposition:
Do you agree or disagree that: God helps me?

Some 89% of all adult Hispanics believe that God helps them. These personal relationships with God are expressed almost identically by Catholics and Protestants. (See Table 8.)

²⁰ Either agree somewhat or agree strongly.

²¹ Asked only of those who agree (either somewhat or strongly) that God exists?

Table 8
Beliefs of U.S. Adult Hispanics
 Do you agree or disagree that 'God helps me'?

Agree/Disagree	Religious Group			Total
	Catholic	Protestant	None	
Disagree strongly	2%	1%	11%	3%
Disagree somewhat	3%	1%	9%	3%
Agree somewhat	10%	10%	27%	12%
Agree strongly	82%	85%	45%	77%
Don't Know/ Refused	3%	3%	7%	5%
Total	100%	100%	100%	100%
Number of adults	13,100,000	5,750,000	2,990,000	23,000,000

Once again, the no-religion group is the most skeptical. Some 45% "agree strongly" that God helps them and 27% only "agree somewhat." They are quite different from other Hispanics, both Catholic and Protestant adherents. Still, even the no-religion group is more likely to believe that God helps them than many non-Hispanics are. In general among American adults who profess no religion, only 34% agree strongly and 22% agree somewhat that God helps them.

CONCLUSION

The main finding of this report is the weakness of ties to institutional religion among Hispanics, as manifested by below-average church affiliation and the growing proportion of Hispanics in the No Religion group. Young people and new immigrants are particularly “unchurched.” Nevertheless, lack of belonging does not mean lack of belief or lack of a “religious outlook.” Hispanics who profess no religion are more likely to believe in God than members of the general public who profess no religion. Among Hispanics, Protestants most resemble the overall American population in terms of their higher level of church membership and stronger religious beliefs.

Age and gender are more important than education and income as predictors of Hispanics’ religious identification. Regional variations are also significant. Immigration does not appear to be changing the overall pattern of religious adherence as much as is commonly thought.

One of the most important findings is that many Hispanics who left the Catholic Church opted for no religion at all. It has been thought that the vast majority of ex-Catholics became Protestants, and in particular Pentecostals. ARIS 2001 shows that although the number of Pentecostal Hispanics increased in the last decade, their proportion of the Hispanic population has not changed. The fastest growth is clearly in the no-religion group, which is the second largest group among Hispanics in 2001.

It would be worthwhile to map the profile of the religious identification and outlook of the source countries for Hispanic immigration with a special emphasis on those sub-populations that are most likely to migrate to the U.S. This particular study is needed in order to confirm or refute the ARIS 2001 findings about the apparent growth of religious disaffiliation in Latin America and among U.S. Hispanics.

Appendix

Exploring the Limits of An English-Language Survey Of Hispanic Religious Identification in the U.S.

The 2001 American Religious Identification Survey (ARIS 2001) was designed to replicate, as closely as possible, the methodology used for the highly respected and widely quoted CUNY 1990 National Survey of Religious Identification (NSRI). Over 50,000 respondents were interviewed, including a large sub-sample of 3,000 self-identified Hispanic respondents. Importantly, our Hispanic respondents were less likely to refuse to answer the religious identification item in both 1990 and 2001 than other Americans (under 1 percent and under 3 percent respectively). As a result ARIS has very good coverage of religious groups for Hispanics and the standard error for the distribution of religious groups in Table 1 is only plus or minus 1 percent.

During the ARIS fieldwork, in just under 4 percent of chosen telephone numbers contacted, the interviewer reported a language barrier—that is, an inability to participate because of poor English language proficiency. In half the language-barrier cases, the interviewers reported that they recognized the preferred language of the potential respondent was Spanish. These ratios are the same as recorded in the U.S. Census in 2000. The U.S. Census has gone to great lengths to gain full participation of non-English speakers and to measure their proportion among the Hispanic population. The Census Bureau statistics show that half of Hispanics speak English “very well,” 18 percent “well,” 20 percent “not well” and 10 percent “not at all.” Since we know that Hispanic adults comprise 11 percent of the U.S. adult population and that around 2 percent of all our fieldwork calls to residential phone lines met a Spanish language barrier, we can calculate that around 18 percent (2/11ths) of the Hispanic population was unable to participate in our survey. This population obviously includes all the 10 percent who cannot speak any English as well as around half of those Hispanics who replied “not well” to the English-language Census question. In positive terms, we can conclude that more than 4 out of 5 of eligible Hispanic households had the requisite English language skills to participate in the survey.

We believe that there is no systematic bias in ARIS caused by the absence of non-English-speaking respondents. Data from the U.S. Census indicate that non-English-speaking Hispanics are more likely to be young, male, and poor than English-speaking Hispanics. At first glance it would appear that by not interviewing non-English-speaking Hispanics, ARIS would undercount such Hispanics. This is not the case. ARIS follows the well-established practice of using Census data to adjust the sample so that it matches the known characteristics of the U.S. national adult population in terms of key demographic

and social variables. There is no undercount of young, male, and poor Hispanics in the weighted data. The analysis presented here is based on this weighted data.

There is another reason for confidence in the ARIS estimates of religious identification of Hispanics—one which does not rely on adjustments of the sample according to the Census. That is the somewhat surprising fact that the demographic characteristics most associated with being a non-English speaker appear to have little bearing on religious identification. For example, ARIS found that there is little difference between Catholics and Protestants in age distribution, gender, and national origin. See Charts 1, 2, 5, and 6. This leads us to believe that the religious identification patterns of non-English speaking Hispanics are quite similar to the patterns of English-speaking Hispanics.

We would suggest that the English-only nature of the ARIS survey is more of a theoretical than a real problem in 2001. Thanks to the large number of cases and the weighting system, the actual results are more robust and reliable than many might imagine. It is possible, of course, that there is some unpredicted difference between English-speaking and non-English-speaking Hispanics that correlates with religious identification and that is independent of or trumps all the social and demographic factors we have calculated. This possibility could be explored with a replicate ARIS survey conducted in Spanish.

About the Authors

Ariela Keysar, Ph.D.

Study Director of the American Religious Identification Survey, 2001. She is a demographer, and a Senior Research Fellow at the Center for Jewish Studies of the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. She is co-author of *The Next Generation: American Jewish Children and Adolescents*, SUNY Press, 2000.

Barry A. Kosmin, Ph.D.

Co-Principal Investigator of the American Religious Identification Survey, 2001 and the director of the 1990 CUNY National Survey of Religious Identification. He is co-author of *One Nation Under God: Religion in Contemporary American Society*, Harmony Books, New York, 1993. He is a former member of the faculty of the Ph.D. Program in Sociology at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York. Currently he is Visiting Fellow, University of Southampton, England.

Egon Mayer, Ph.D.

Co-Principal Investigator of the American Religious Identification Survey, 2001 he is Chairman and Professor of Sociology at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. He is author of *Love & Tradition: Marriage Between Jews and Christians*, Plenum Publishing, New York, 1985.

COMMENTARY:
THE INTERSECTION OF THE ARIS/PARAL REPORT
WITH PASTORAL CONCERNS

by
Anthony M. Stevens-Arroyo

Any social science report is preferable to journalistic and anecdotal evidence for shaping pastoral policies. The ARIS/PARAL Report provides a rigorously scientific survey of how Latinos/as identify with religion in the United States today. Moreover, because it surveyed almost 3,000 self-identified Hispanics throughout the United States, the ARIS/PARAL data is more comprehensive than the various regional or selective surveys that have been issued to date concerning Latino religious identification. Written in the form of an essay exploring how these findings intersect with pastoral concerns, this commentary is intended to foster an on-going dialog of church leaders with social scientists.

The finding in this report most likely to receive public attention is that in the past ten years the percentage of Hispanics in the United States who identify Catholicism as their religion has dropped from 66% to 57%. One can expect these numbers to be challenged on methodological grounds. The standard mode of conducting a survey in the United States is through telephone interviews with the premise that every household has a phone and that at least one adult answering that phone represents a family. While that is probably true for the vast majority of persons in the United States, there is reason to suspect that it does not apply evenly to Latinos/as, especially to recently arrived immigrants from Latin America. These immigrants may reside at places where there is no phone, so when a computer generates a list of residences to be called for the survey, the recent immigrants are not included. Moreover, there may be several young men living temporarily living together in an apartment. Even if they had a phone, the one person who might answer would not represent a family group. The survey would also need Spanish-speaking interviews to get information, since recently-arrived immigrants from Latin America are among the most likely to speak only Spanish. Lastly -- an perhaps most importantly -- among the foreign-born, only Spanish-speaking population in the United States, many refuse to participate because they have reason to fear government connections to a survey.

Every survey of Hispanics, including ARIS, faces these methodological challenges of gargantuan proportions. Researchers have devised various methods to meet these challenges. ARIS accounted for this difficult-to-survey group by weighting the responses of the foreign-born Hispanics who speak English so that their attitudes are attributed to the other foreign-born who speak only Spanish. Weighting is an acceptable statistical remedy, but it does increase the familiar "plus or minus percentage range."

ARIS took a more conservative approach than another recent survey that weighted the foreign-born based on a sample of groups in the only Spanish-speaking category.¹

The researchers took different paths to the same goal. However, among Hispanics there is a very great sociological difference between those who are foreign-born but come to the United States as children and the foreign-born who immigrate as mature adults. It is only common sense that a child who entered the United States as a one-year old will have a different outlook and set of language skills than a grandmother who is over 60 when she comes into the country. The child will grow up hearing English-spoken in the neighborhood and Spanish in the home; in most ways there will be little difference between this child and another brother or sister actually born in the United States. By age 15, the fact that this person was born in another country may have no impact on their language skills or cultural behavior.

The *abuelita* on the other hand, may never learn to speak English well, and will continue to reflect the traditions and customs she had learned as a child in her native Latin America. As different as these two Hispanics will be in actual fact, they are both classified in the same category as “foreign-born.” In the ARIS survey, the child who grew up in the United States and speaks English fluently is used as the model to “weight” the foreign-born like the grandmother, who speaks only Spanish. Other surveys use the weighting vice-versa, so that the attitudes of the *abuelita* are projected onto the child raised in the United States.

It may be that surveys in the future will have to ask not only about where a person was born, but at what age they came to reside in the United States. The first generation – that is the foreign-born who have come to the United States and the second generation – that is Latinos/as born in this country have been joined by a third generation, the one-and-a-half, who are foreign-born but raised in the United States. Still, these distinctions are not always evident until after the survey is completed. Since surveys are expensive to conduct surveys, it may be some time before we can revisit this issue with methods that better capture the Hispanic differences.

Until these survey issues are readdressed, we can only recognize the different approaches in the interpretations. ARIS reports that foreign-born Hispanics are less likely to be Catholic (54%) than the US-born (59%), while the Pew Hispanic Center has a huge imbalance between foreign-born Catholics (76%) and the US-born Latinos/as who are Catholic (59%). The immediate solution is not easy. Because the questions about religious identification asked by these surveys are not alike, a Solomonic choice to divide the difference will not produce a reliable result. The ARIS numbers offer the advantage of having asked about religious identification without “steering” the respondent into the categories of “Protestant, Catholic or Jew”.

¹ The Pew Hispanic Center/Kaiser Family Foundation 2002 National Survey of Latinos used a weighting procedure that allows for a 10.11% plus or minus sampling error for Salvadorans and an even higher rate for Colombians.

PARAL accepts that the ARIS results, while needing cautious interpretation, are reliable on the important issue of Protestant/Evangelical membership. The drop of 9% in the membership of Latino Catholics does not mean that these persons joined other churches. Hispanic membership in Protestant churches barely changed from 26% in 1990 to 25% in 2001, while Pentecostal membership rose fractionally from slightly more than 3% in 1990 to 4% in 2001. These percentages are also confirmed in other surveys. Thus, even with all the limitations in these studies, there is agreement that there is no significant trend for Hispanic Catholics to leave their faith for Protestant and Pentecostal denomination.

What is unique to the ARIS/PARAL Report is its attention to persons who profess to belong to no religion at all. In the United States' Hispanic population, the fastest growing religious group over the past ten years are those who claim to have no religion, going from 6% in 1990 to 13% in 2001. Although it may seem contradictory to claim that those with no religion are a religious group, the ARIS/PARAL Report clearly shows that an overwhelming percentage of those with no religion believe in God, in miracles and heavenly concern for them and their needs. What then can be said pastorally about this change and the others described in this report? My comments below are meant to stimulate discussion and further research by posing some key issues.

Pentecostalism

While the ARIS/PARAL Report tells us that the percentage of Hispanic Pentecostals rose only fractionally in the past decade, we need to recognize that *there are many more Hispanic Pentecostals today than in 1990*. Without counting children and teenagers, ARIS/PARAL estimates that the number of Latino/a Pentecostals has skyrocketed from 438,000 to 918,000. This huge increase of Pentecostals appears linked to the rapid growth of the Latino population during the past ten years. In other words, Pentecostalism has kept pace with the dynamics of Latino demography and its increase in membership has not significantly diminished the Hispanic members of other denominations.

Many pastoral leaders are likely to question a report that there has been no percentage increase of Hispanic Pentecostals in the United States because this finding of the ARIS/PARAL Report runs counter to a common perception. Popular opinion commonly supposes that Latino Pentecostal faith communities have been growing at the expense of other denominations, particularly the Roman Catholic Church. There are some possible explanations of why such an impression had gained popular credence despite empirical evidence that principal increase of Hispanic Pentecostals comes through demographic growth rather than conversion.

- **There are more Pentecostal churches today than in 1990.** Because Pentecostal churches typically have less than 100 members in each congregation, their numbers grow at a faster rate than in denominations that prefer larger church membership. Part I of the PARAL Report showed that of those surveyed in 2001,

27% of the congregations in all other denominations were founded after 1995. The similar number for new Roman Catholic parishes was only 17%. However the growth in the number of churches is not the same as growth in the members of the churches. More than a third of Roman Catholic parishes serving Hispanics, for instance, are “mega-churches” with 1,000 or more members.² In many circumstances, there are more Latinos/as in one Roman Catholic parish than in 10 Pentecostal churches counted together. Nonetheless, the higher number of Pentecostal congregations may give the impression of greater growth than among Roman Catholics.

- **Popular opinion often assumes that trends in Latin America – such as conversions to Pentecostalism -- are automatically duplicated among Latinos/as in the United States.** Some may interpret **transnationalism** as a manifest dependence by immigrants on the society and culture of the country of origin, and in so doing deny any unique Latino reality in the United States. It is an on-going temptation to uncritically use data from journalistic sources or from case studies as substitutes for sociological analysis of Latinos/as in the United States.
- **While Latino Pentecostalism has high rates of “switching in,” it also has high rates of “switching out.”** Latino conversion to Pentecostalism must be balanced by consideration of recidivism in order to get an accurate picture of membership patterns. The general ARIS 2001 report showed that in the Assemblies of God, for instance, a full fifth (20%) of the members were converts, but another 14% had left the Assemblies for other denominations. Although there was an overall growth rate of nearly 7%, we arrive at that number by subtracting those who “switch out” from those who had “switched in.” There are high demands placed on participation in the life of the church by Latino Pentecostalism and while this fervor may attract new members via conversion, the intensity of commitment sometimes diminishes over the course of time with the result that people eventually move into another church and denomination.

Although it appears that there might have been an overestimation of the growth of Pentecostalism among Latinos/as, that is no reason to dismiss the growing importance of this faith and its modes of religious expression. As stressed above, there has been a substantial increase in the number of Hispanic Pentecostals. They have provided “a critical mass” to these congregations throughout the United States. There are now enough Pentecostal Latinos/as to support a host of congregational activities that might not have been possible ten years ago. For instance, with more than million Hispanic Pentecostal adults and children, there are increased success rates for summer camps, bible schools, revivalist crusades, and mass public concentrations of worshipping Pentecostals.

² These findings are reported by the National Survey of Leadership in Latino Parishes and Congregations, Part I – The Congregations: Brooklyn College (RISC) 2002.

The organizations of Hispanic Pentecostal ministers and pastors also have increased visibility and clout.

What might be the pastoral implications from these findings about Pentecostalism?

1. The increasing frequency of regional and national efforts from Latino/a Pentecostals generate greater visibility and influence for their churches. Such efforts are more likely to find success because the threshold number of participants to ensure success can be reached more easily. Hispanic Pentecostalism now has reached sufficient size to enjoy a "critical mass" for its activities.
2. The influence of Pentecostalism approximates a form of "popular religiosity" that is growing alongside a Roman Catholic popular religiosity which has been focused on traditional devotions and practices among Latinos/as. This development might encourage theological reflection about a concept of "Pentecostalistic" in explaining styles of worship, music and preaching.
3. There is need for more sociological study of Hispanic Pentecostals, both in congregations affiliated with denominations such as the Assemblies of God and the Church of God as well as those which are independent.

No-Religionism

The rapid growth in the numbers of Latinos/as who profess to belong to no religion is widespread and dramatic. On those terms alone, it merits description as an "ism." The ARIS/PARAL Report indicates that while half of these persons consider themselves "secular" in outlook, that still leaves at least half who consider themselves "religious" in some sense. Moreover, as recorded by this report, 85% believe in God and nearly three out of four believe in miracles and attention by God for them and their personal needs. There is reason to interpret the no religion category as "believers without an institution." Where do the non-secular Hispanic believers find God, if not in a parish or congregation? Could these include persons involved with the secret religious rites of religions like Santería? In some instances, respondents who answered "no religion" may have meant: "No particular religion, because I believe in them all." In sum, even if surveys disagree with how many Hispanics fit this description, there is strong evidence that their numbers are growing and that this group merits greater pastoral attention.

It would be a mistake, however, to lump all of these into the same socio-economic categories. In fact, one of the reasons that we can speak of "no religionism" is its crossing of various sociological boundaries. The no religionists include the foreign born, many of whom are male, single and young. But we also find persons of the second generation born in the United States to immigrant parents, and there are numbers as well of Latinos/as whose families have resided in the country from generations. The authors

of the report use the term “unchurched” to refer to persons claiming no religion, but included in this category are both those who have never formally participated in church life as well as the “lapsed”, that is persons who once were active in church but have ceased to participate. Another term used in the report is “cohabitate” for unmarried people living together. Certainly, “cohabitate” is a precise term, but in some contexts “common law marriage” may be preferred to describe long-standing and permanent family relationships that originate in social contexts where formal marriage ceremonies were not required by law. Other segments of the PARAL Study offer an opportunity to include factors such as intermarriage, residence in the suburbs, and loss of the Spanish language as important influences upon this no religion group of Hispanics. In sum, to further analyze this important group of Latinos/as it may be necessary to utilize types or sociological groupings such as have been employed by others.³

Ecological factors within regions of the United States may also be important. For instance, Hispanics living in the West South Central United States (*Louisiana, Texas, Arizona and Oklahoma*) are the least likely to belong to this no religion category (10%) and the most likely to identify as Roman Catholics (63%). On the other hand, although relatively there are relatively few Latinos in the West North Central part of the country (*Missouri, Iowa, Minnesota, Kansas, Nebraska and the Dakotas*), they appear more likely to be of no-religion (30%) than Protestant (23%). If we recognize that churches in these states have not responded at the pace of the demographic explosion, then one reason that Latinos/as in these states reported no membership in any particular religion may be that there are as yet few Latino faith communities to which they might belong.

What might be the pastoral implications from these findings about Latinos/as who profess no religion?

1. There is need for sociological examination of patterns of immigration, settlement and issues such as generational change, intermarriage with non-Hispanics and socio-economic circumstances.
2. We should not presume that all Hispanics professing no religion are lapsed or unchurched Roman Catholics. Nor is it clear that they are inclined to seek membership in Pentecostal or Protestant churches. In other words, no religionism needs to be analyzed as an important new religious identity among Latinos/as.
3. We need to consider seriously the impact on Hispanics of secularism that can be seen in the popular culture and is transmitted primarily through the public schools.
4. The concept of “no religion” merits analysis as an expression that believers feel little loyalty to any organized religion or denomination, while remaining constant in belief and

³ Consult the typology of Hispanic youth described by Kenneth Johnson Mondragón in *Hispanic Youth and Young Adult Ministry in the Catholic Church of the United States: An Overview of Recent Findings*. (2002, Instituto Fe y Vida: Stockton, CA).

perhaps even fervent in the practice of religious customs and traditions within the home. We should conduct research to see where “no religion” means “no particular religion.”

5. Christian denominations may have to consider as competition for the loyalty of Latino no religionists the various alternate faiths: Santería, Buddhism, Wican, and Native American religions.

Roman Catholics

While the drop in the percentage of Latino/a Roman Catholics may be the most discussed result in the ARIS/PARAL Report, there are other significant results that should be listed for pastoral reflection among Catholics.

First, there is no evidence of “defection” by Hispanics to Pentecostal churches. The survey shows there has been no significant increase in the percentage of Pentecostalism to the detriment of Roman Catholicism. Hispanic movement into Protestantism, which most agree was rising appreciably in the 1980s, has slowed to a trickle. The ARIS/PARAL Report confirms a finding from the 1997 survey conducted by William D’Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge and Katherine Meyer which stated:

...Latinos were not more likely to shift from Catholicism to other denominations than other Catholics. In spite of numerous reports of many Latino Catholics switching to Protestant groups today, the proportion of Latinos doing this was not greater than that of other Catholics.⁴

- **Second**, there is considerable sociological evidence that the differences between Latino Catholics and Euro-American Catholics are being reduced in terms of mass attendance, sacramental instruction, leadership roles, etc. The ARIS/PARAL Report shows that 46% of Latinos/as attend mass regularly, which compares favorably to attendance reported in 1997 by *American Catholicism* for all Catholics.
- **Third**, the ARIS/PARAL Report shows that in mixed marriages, (i.e. unions where one of the partners is Roman Catholic and the other is not), the children of Hispanics are most likely to be raised as Roman Catholics.
- **Fourth**, The ARIS/PARAL Report shows that when given an open-ended question, there is a tendency to choose “no religion.” But other surveys suggest that the foreign-born who speak only Spanish are likely to identify as Catholics when “steered” to this category. Perhaps there is a significant identification by

⁴ See D’Antonio, William et al. eds. 2001. *American Catholicism*. (Altamira Press: Walnut Creek, CA.), page 154.

immigrants from Latin America with Catholicism as a preference, which does not translate into participation.

With such clarifications, we can consider what the rapid rise of no religionists among Latinos/as means pastorally to Roman Catholicism. Clearly, it would be erroneous to suppose that all 13% of such Latinos/as declaring no religion in 2001 had been part of the 66% of Latinos/as who reported belonging to Roman Catholicism in 1990. Nonetheless, the rapid drop from 66% to 57% of Catholic Hispanics can best be explained by relating the rapid growth in the no religionists to the loss by Roman Catholicism.

Such rapid changes are seldom attributable to a single factor. The drop in the number of Roman Catholic Hispanics must be understood sociologically in the context of:

- social dislocation among some immigrants from a Latin American country
- intermarriage with Euro-Americans or persons of other faiths
- the rapid dispersal to regions which previously had few Hispanics
- new pastoral policies.

This last is an area directly controlled by church officials. As observed by Mary Beth Celio,⁵ Director of Research for the Catholic Archdiocese of Seattle, the establishment of a new Code of Canon Law that took place during the 1980s has reformed centuries-old practices that date back to the Council of Trent in the 16th century. Previously, Catholic teaching encountered the objections of the Protestant Reformation by emphasizing that the sacraments did not depend upon an individual's level of appreciation for validity. Sacraments were efficacious *ex opere operato* (upon performance) according to Trent and the catechisms that preceded the Second Vatican Council. Among the most salient of these reformed practices after the promulgation of the new Code of Canon Law is the refusal to baptize children, or administer First Holy Communion or perform church weddings unless there is a contractual form of association with the parish before conferring the sacraments. The Catholic survey conducted by Dr. Celio and her associates in 2000 reported that parishes with Hispanics are more likely to contact adults in sacramental preparation courses (21.4%) than parishes without Hispanics (14.2%). But while her report states that deferring the sacrament often becomes a means of attracting Latinos/as to more active participation, it does not tell us what happens to those Latinos/as who decline to attend the sacramental preparation classes.

These observations are not intended as a criticism of current Roman Catholic theology and sacramental practice, but as a reminder that policies often produce

⁵ In "Passing on the Faith in the Contemporary American Parish: Challenges and Models" a paper presented at the Religious Research Association/Society for the Scientific Study of Religion Conference, Salt Lake City, Utah: November 1, 2002. The paper utilized data from a stratified random sample of parishes in a survey conducted in 2000 under the umbrella of the Cooperative Congregational Studies Project, Faith in Communities Today.

unintended consequences. In this case, it seems legitimate to ask if Latinos/as always understand the reasons when they are told that baptism has been "deferred" because they have not been active members of the parish or are unwilling to take courses in religious education as preparation.

What might be the pastoral implications from these findings about Latino/a Roman Catholics?

1. Catholic theologians and pastoral leaders might examine current policies, asking the question if eliminating "cultural Catholicism" has the consequence of creating a large number of Hispanic believers with no religious affiliation.
2. Catholic leaders could to consider a coordinated pastoral approach for Latinos/as who decline an invitation to undergo extensive preparation for the sacraments.
3. More attention might be paid to the challenges to Hispanics of raising children in the Catholic faith when one of the parents belongs to another denomination or professes no religion.
4. Pastoral methods need to recognize the diversity by culture, social status, education and the like in shaping the apostolate to Hispanics. One size does not fit all.

Protestantism

At the beginning of the 1980s, it was generally thought that Protestants accounted for 15% of Hispanics in the United States, and Roman Catholics were between 80% and 85% of all Latinos/as.⁶ The results of the NSRI 1990 survey showed that Hispanic Protestants were 26% of those surveyed -- without including about 3% more of Pentecostals, who also were "non-Catholic." Some speculated that Protestantism would grow with another 9% increase between 1990 and 2000. The ARIS/PARAL for 2001, however, showed 25% of Hispanics are Protestants, which means that another pattern has developed.

Clearly, Protestantism is changing among Hispanics in the United States. While nearly a third of the Protestants (31%) report that they are converts, often from Roman Catholicism, two-thirds of those surveyed in 2001 have always been Protestants. The ARIS/PARAL Report offers empirical evidence that Protestantism among US Hispanics is professed principally by those born into the faith. Not only is it increasingly frequent that Hispanic Protestants were born into the faith, they are also more likely to be born in the United States (76%) than Hispanic Roman Catholics (59%). Perhaps most

⁶ See Roberto O. González and Michael Lavelle. 1985. *The Hispanic Catholic in the U.S.: A Socio-Cultural and Religious Profile*. New York: Northeast Hispanic Pastoral Center, pg. 151.

significantly, Hispanic Protestants (75%) overwhelmingly tend to marry other Hispanic Protestants.

Less clear in the ARIS/PARAL Report are the implications of a shift away from "Protestant" or specific denominational labels to a generic "Christian" category. The number of Latinos/as using "Christian" rose from 5% in 1990 to 8% in 2001, while "Protestant" fell from 3% to 1%. It may be that the use of the term "Christian"⁷ is supplanting both "Protestant" and "Evangelical". There was also a rise in the category "Other Christian" which includes the Church of Latter Day Saints and those who called themselves "Evangelical."⁸ Hispanics were less inclined to call themselves "Baptists" in 2001 (5%) than in 1990 (7%). Jehovah's Witnesses and Methodists also fell from 2% each in 1990 to 1% each in 2001. But do these trends have theological significance? For example, we simply do not know if Methodists who identify their religion as "Christian" are any less Methodist. Hence, while the ARIS/PARAL report tells us that "Christian" is used more frequently today, we do not yet have a clear sense if such usage has weakened denominational identities. We can be sure, however, that Hispanic Protestants maintain higher levels of religious conviction than Roman Catholics. When asked for a measure of agreement or disagreement with various religious belief, these Protestants are more likely add the descriptive "strongly" to their convictions than Roman Catholics.

What might be the pastoral implications from these findings about Hispanic Protestantism?

1. Most Latino/a Protestants are not converts. We might consider the Protestant experience among Hispanics beyond the witness narratives of conversion from Roman Catholicism that have often been considered the typical route to the faith.
2. There is reason to explore the fluid boundaries between Protestant denominations experienced by Hispanics in the United States. This exploration could combine both sociology and theology.
3. Along with Pentecostals and Roman Catholics, Hispanic Protestants might study the roles of tradition and cultural expression as they relate to religion in terms of worship, styles of preaching and prayer.

⁷ Technically speaking, Roman Catholics are Christians. In fact, some Roman Catholic publications tend to prefer the term "Christian" to "Catholic." However, when Protestants use the term they sometimes exclude Roman Catholics. They prefer to be called "Christian" rather than "non-Catholic" or "Protestant" because their religious affirmation should be described in positive terms rather than as a negative condition or as a protest against Roman Catholicism.

⁸ The national survey of leadership in the PARAL Study found that native Spanish-speakers were more likely to describe themselves as "*evangélico*" than as "*protestante*" while English-speakers among Hispanics preferred "Protestant" to "Evangelical." This suggests that "*evangélico*" does not mean the same in Spanish as "Evangelical" in English. ARIS, as suggested in the preface, did not conduct interviews in Spanish.

Conclusions

The data produced in the ARIS/PARAL Report has been reexamined in this commentary for their intersections with pastoral concerns. Through the generosity of the Lilly Endowment, we have been not only able to offer this data collected by ARIS, but also to initiate a dialog among religious leaders and social scientists. These efforts, named the Amanacer Program will be directed from the office of Religion In Society and Culture (RISC) located at Brooklyn College, where this report was edited and printed.