CHICANAS, HIGHER EDUCATION, AND THE CREATION OF MESTIZA SPIRITUALITY

by

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A Thesis Submitted to the Faculty of the

DEPARTMENT OF MEXICAN AMERICAN STUDIES AND RESEARCH CENTER

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
For the Degree of

MASTER OF SCIENCE

In the Graduate College

THE UNIVERSITY OF ARIZONA

2007
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am pleased to take this opportunity to thank several people who have helped and supported me through this degree program and research.

Dr. Steve Burkett, Assistant Dean of the Graduate College at Washington State University and Dr. Ramon Herrera, Coordinator of McNair Achievement Program for lighting this great path to graduate school through an excellent program and introducing me to the value of research. Dr. Carmen Lugo-Lugo who began this topic of research with me, and Marian Sciachitano in the Department of Women’s Studies. My MAS cohort for their help, support, and friendship.

I’d like to thank my husband Joe for making this journey with me both literally and figuratively.

Dr. Andrea Romero, my thesis chair for her guidance and for taking on a research project and graduate student that could not have completed this degree without her support. Mary Rojas, for her kindness and knowledge in this research area.
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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study is to examine the role and effect of higher education on Chicana’s religious beliefs and practices. It has been noted by Chicana scholars Theresa Delgadillo (2003) and Jeanette Rodriguez (2004) that Chicana students negotiate their religious and cultural ways of knowing with the new environment and ideas of a University. This thesis examines how this negotiation occurs and how Chicana students understand and create their religious identity during their college years.

Using short questionnaires and focus groups, twenty undergraduate Chicana women participated in this research. Major findings for this study indicate that Chicana students are attending church less (55%) and negotiating Catholicism to form and practice their own Mestiza spirituality. The women utilize a mestiza spirituality that incorporates prayer, as well as indigenous practices and beliefs to practice their faith.
INTRODUCTION

Religiosity and Higher Education

Religiosity and higher education are two areas that seemingly never intersect, one consists of ritual and practice and the other with scientific research and results. For Chicanas, the divide between religion and education may not be as clear cut, but instead consists of overlapping and at times conflicting tenets and ideas. Recent observations suggest that Chicanas who have acquired a post-secondary education tend to reject institutionalized religion (Rodriguez, 2002); however, the relationship between religion and higher education for Chicanas is complex and requires further investigation. In this study a qualitative method will be employed so that both religion and spirituality will be given meaning by the participants, allowing them to define these terms as they relate to their lives.

Studies of religion and spirituality among college students are limited. Recently, there has been a major survey conducted by researchers Astin & Astin (2005) to measure U.S. college student’s spirituality entitled, “Spirituality in Higher Education: A National Study of College Students’ Search for Meaning and Purpose”. The survey has been widely distributed among 90,000 students across 150 universities starting in 2003 through 2004. The results of the survey were ride ranging and hinted to the active search by college students to find faith and values that they can agree with. What is
clearly missing is an analysis of the breakdown of race and culture as an aspect effecting a student’s religiosity and spirituality.

Given current findings that during college most students reconsider their faith and the suggestion that in particular, Chicanas in higher education may reject organized religion there is a need to further analyze the impact of higher education on religiosity and spirituality among Chicanas. Chicana college students’ spirituality and religiosity are influenced by their distinct cultural traditions and history in relation to religion. Specifically, female Chicana/Mexican American undergraduates have been described as having gendered, cultural, and historical ties to the Catholic faith (Segura, 1993). For example, a multifaceted connection including Jeanette Rodriguez (2004) states, “Latino/a culture, religion, and spirituality are so integrated that to try to define spirituality separated from culture creates a false dichotomy and does a disservice to the Latina community”. The purpose of this thesis is to examine the role and effect of higher education/secular knowledge on Chicana’s religious beliefs and practices. It has been noted by Chicana scholars that Chicana students negotiate their religious and cultural ways of knowing with the new environment and ideas of a University environment. This thesis examines how this negotiation occurs and how Chicana students understand and create their religious identity during their college years. For example when Chicana students become more critical of institutionalized religion, they are active creators of their religious identity, demonstrating that their relationship to
Catholicism in education is “an ongoing negotiation, rather than blind obedience” (Delgadillo, 2003) in which they take what is useful for them and deny what does not fall within their understanding of religion and moral values. More specifically, this thesis provides, in their own voice through qualitative analysis of focus groups with Chicana college students, the perspective of Chicanas in college today.

Chicanas in Higher Education, the Numbers

Religious and cultural ways of knowing and understanding the world can become both enhanced and challenged by the scientific teachings of a university. Each individual must learn this new information and incorporate it into their base of understanding. College is a time for the student to form their opinions, and identity in a way that acknowledges both their history and their new knowledge. Though the experiences of Chicana college student’s has been studied and written about, an analysis of the relationship between higher education and religiosity has not been widely covered. For example, researcher and Professor Delgado Bernal (2001) states, “it is important to remember that Chicana students experience school from multiple dimensions, including their skin color, gender, class, and English-language
proficiency”. These dimensions also take place with cultural teachings and religious ideas.

These dimensions are important to note because as these young women enter the university system, they are faced with a number of new experiences which they may or may not have been prepared for during their early years of schooling. This access to new knowledge and ideas can allow a Chicana to make a critical evaluation of their beliefs and what they have been taught, and from there develop their own understanding of what religion and spirituality means in their lives.

The present description of Chicanas in higher education begins by identifying the conditions of the college environment. Fact sheets compiled by the University Of Arizona, Office Of Enrollment Management state that in 1983 there were 1,807 or 5.9% total Hispanic students enrolled at the University of Arizona. This includes self-reported data counting both undergraduate and graduate degree seeking students. As of September 2006, this total had risen to 5,320 or 17.3% total Hispanic students out of a total enrollment of 36,805 undergraduate and graduate students. The growing number of Hispanic students does stand out as progress, yet there is still an overwhelming disparity between the state’s Hispanic population which was 28.5% in 2005 (U.S. Census) and the representation of Hispanics in one of its state funded institutions. “There are a number of explanations for this disparity in access and representation- including
institutional racism and sexism in the public school system, class background, familial constraints, and culture” (Segura, 1993).

These numbers are also important to address as they demonstrate the context of the University culture and the difficulty that the women face entering and being successful. This does not deny the notable numerical rise of Chicana/Latina students at the university in the past twenty years; where in 1986 there were 177 female Hispanic students enrolled growing to 451 in 2005. The ‘traditional’ route of a high school student entering directly into a four-year university is not the primary way that Chicanas enter the university system, making their degree route sometimes longer and filled with separate concerns as transfer students.

Another effect of the low overall number of Hispanic students attending college is the overwhelming percentage in particular, of Chicana students that enter higher education as first-generation college students. It has been shown that there are several factors that can influence a student’s college participation such as: friends, parental support, school preparation, and perception of financial barrier (1997).

As Chicanas enter the University system they are confronted by a culture of its own, that is not easily accommodating to students who fall outside of the Eurocentric “college student” profile, a young white male adult. Although more and more students of color have entered higher education in the past twenty years, the institution has not changed its structure of support at a similar rate, leaving students to create support
systems of their own such as cultural centers, peer mentoring, fraternities, and sororities specifically for non-white students.

It is acknowledged that Chicanas have entered universities from various routes and undoubtedly experience it as differently as women, themselves, yet it is not my intention to gloss over the historical and existent differences between Chicanas. Instead I hope to understand the different ways these particular participants experience both higher education and religion and their potential conflicts and overlaps. Once this information is gathered, it is important to highlight a few of the similar paths and experiences that have been shared by previous Chicana authors and scholars such as Gloria Anzaldua and Ana Castillo.

Chicana Feminists

Theresa Delgadillo (1998) applies the concept of Chicanas and religion and spirituality to students in her article “Race, Sex, and Spirit: Chicana Negotiations of Catholicism”. She opens with three classroom scenes in which she describes several questions and comments from students in her class after reading specific texts such as Cherrie Moraga’s Loving in the War Years and Ana Castillo’s So Far From God. Delgadillo states that her student’s responses to the narratives “suggest a more complex relationship to Catholicism than is
perhaps commonly assumed, an ongoing negotiation rather than blind obedience” (1998). Ongoing negotiation suggests an active role in faith, thinking through ideas and teachings. This gives Chicana students the agency to create a practice that like Castillo noted is personal and reflects the woman she is becoming.

There are several important scholars who have altered the field of Chicana/o studies and have had a tremendous impact on perspectives of Chicana spirituality. The writings of Gloria Anzaldua (1999) and Ana Castillo (1995) are largely theoretical and autobiographical in nature and the parts used here come directly from their interpretation of their own personal experience. It is important to acknowledge their contribution of innovative ideas and terminology that has strongly influenced the current understanding of Chicana feminism. Today, the experiences of Chicana/os in higher education may be informed by the autobiographical experiences described by Anzaldua and others who began their educational experience as many as twenty-five years before. The current study builds on the cultural and empirical implications of their perspectives.

Anzaldua (1999) argues that the institution of religion does not honor the *mestiza consciousness* that Chicanas possess- the *mestiza* is a crossbreeding of the Indian culture, the Anglo culture, and the Mexican culture Delgado Bernal (2001) describes that the term has come to represent a new Chicana consciousness “that
straddles cultures, races, languages, nations, sexualities, and spiritualities”. “Mestiza identity is to live in the Borderlands, straddling cultures, languages, and races”. Anzaldua describes the work of mestiza consciousness “to break down the subject-object duality that keeps her prisoner” (1999). For the mestiza, Anzaldua’s mestiza identity can be enhanced to include a spirituality that can offer the solution to institutionalized religion and provide a space to develop ones’ own practice. Mestiza spirituality can combine practices and beliefs as well as images from the indigenous, Mexican and American cultures and begin to resemble something completely different from the Catholic or Protestant teachings of childhood and represent the mestiza (Delgado Bernal).

Poet/writer Gloria Anzaldua (1999) provides an overview of the choices that Chicanas have compared with previous generations when education beyond high school had not been an expected route for Chicanas from mostly working class backgrounds. “[F]or a woman of my culture there used to be only three directions she could turn: to the Church as a nun, to the streets as a prostitute, or to the home as a mother. Today some of us have a fourth choice: entering the world by way of education and career and becoming self-autonomous persons”. It is this fourth choice that is slowly being accessed by more and more young Chicanas. Chicanas today, daily, encounter the challenges and differences of college life both material and imagined. Material struggles are often simple to identify as they include monetary issues, while imagined challenges
are more difficult to identify as they are individual struggles that often include family concerns, managing stress and time, and navigating a large university.

This struggle is not new and has been described by Anzaldua (1999) who describes her relationship to religion post-education in *Borderlands/La Frontera*, “in my own life, the Catholic Church fails to give meaning to my daily acts, to my continuing encounters with the ‘other world’. It (the Catholic Church) and other institutionalized religions impoverish all life, beauty, pleasure” (1999). Like Wells & Kocher’s (1999) description of religion and spirituality as college students understand them, Anzaldua discusses the separation by western culture of the “world of the soul and of the spirit”. She argues that we have been taught that the spirit is outside of the body, somewhere above us with God. But in fact, humans have “inner knowledge” which we can use to communicate with “the god in ourselves”. Anzaldua states that institutionalized religion fears “trafficking with the spiritual world” and similar to the understanding of college students, this dichotomy creates confusion and preference for one over the other.

Anzaldua expands on Mexican philosopher, Jose Vasconcelos’ idea of *la raza cosmica*, or a cosmic race to build her concept of *mestiza consciousness*. Vasconcelos (1999) discusses the mixture of the Spanish and Indian races as providing “a hybrid progeny, a mutable, more malleable species with a rich gene pool”. In this way, la *mestiza* “is a product of the transfer of the cultural and spiritual values of one group to
another”. This transfer includes both the indigenous spiritual practices and Roman Catholic beliefs of Spain. Chicanas’ history is one of combining indigenous and Catholic practices to create a practice that is new, likewise when Chicanas enter higher education they may be more likely to build from this history and utilize spirituality to build a new practice to negotiate and make sense of higher education and religion.

Anzaldúa describes her experience of schooling and how her culture was present with her in each social location that she occupied, “it wasn’t until high school that I ‘saw’ whites. Until I worked on my master’s degree I had not gotten within an arm’s distance of them…to separate from my culture (my family) I had to feel competent enough on the outside and secure enough on the inside to live life on my own” (1999). She goes on to describe that in leaving home she did not lose touch with her origins, because like a turtle, wherever she went she carried ‘home’ on her back. In looking at Chicanas experiences in higher education, it is important to note that ‘home’ consists of religious and cultural ways of knowing which Chicanas bring with them. Things such as language, religion, culture, history, and beliefs are not left outside of campus, rather they enter the University with each student and become a part of their educational experience.

Being the first one of her family in six generations to leave the Rio Grande Valley in Texas Anzaldúa states, “[t]o this day I’m not sure where I found the strength to leave the source, the mother, disengage from my family…I had to leave home so I
could find myself, find my own intrinsic nature buried under the personality that had been imposed on me” (1999). Anzaldúa describes how books saved her sanity, how “knowledge opened the locked places in me and taught me first how to survive and then how to soar” (1999). Unlike religious teachings and customs, books provided the secular knowledge that was key to developing a critical understanding of the world around her. Books gave her the knowledge of the world through different lenses and the ability to learn about things other than through moral teachings.

Castillo’s *Massacre of the Dreamers* (1995) is an intense look at the situation and history of Chicanas in the U.S. Castillo adapts Xicanisma to take the place of Chicana Feminism and discuss our history and culture as it is permeated by Catholicism. Castillo explains how women remain defined by religiosity and how culture upholds this fact. Castillo states that even among those who have “returned” to indigenismo to reject western culture and white supremacy, it is still difficult to eradicate Christianity from their lives as the symbols and beliefs have infiltrated indigenous practices, family and community ties remain Catholic, and many Mexican customs are tied to Catholicism (1995).

Castillo argues that the spirituality of women has been the “unspoken key to her strength and endurance” throughout all the ages. She states that a significant component of the *mestiza’s* identity is her spirituality and that for the most part, it manifests “in her life in the form of Catholicism because it is the religion she has been taught and that is
sanctified by society”.

Although Castillo finds fault with the institution of the Church she notes its place within Chicanas’ lives, “although the Catholic Church as an institution cannot, for a number of reasons, guide us as Mexican Amerindian women into the twenty-first century, we cannot make a blanket dismissal of Catholicism either. Rejecting the intolerant structure of the church does not automatically “obliterate its entrenchment in our culture”.

Similarly, though adherence to Catholicism while in college may simply demonstrate a lack of change and growth from when the student lived at home with parents/guardians, active practicing can also be a choice that the student has made, perhaps over a period of long thought and negotiation. This negotiation can take many physical and mental forms, one example is explained by Ana Castillo’s (1995) discussion of women actively determining what is appropriate for their survival by stating,

“So, if a woman decides that she still finds rewards in pursuing the rituals and mandates of the church, or simply by ‘meditating in the temple’ of her own room, or if she constructs an altar in her home, (perhaps not like the one she knew as a child of a myriad of saints and crosses, but of articles that have special meaning for her); or if one day, she discards all religious icons and can embrace herself with self-acceptance and calls that her spirituality, she is continuously doing one in the same thing: maintaining her well being” (1995).
This struggle is historic in nature, reaching back to the early days of the Chicano movement when Chicanas were confronted with fighting not only racism, but also sexism. Castillo describes these Chicanas as conflicted in their religious practices, as they are married in the church and baptize their children. She states, “because of their (Chicanas) political consciousness they struggle with their worship of the indomitable Father and the overtones of female shamefulness that are embedded in the Catholic Church’s doctrine” (1995).

An example of this comes from a more recent published autobiographical description of a Latina’s religiosity and spirituality. A recent popular culture book entitled, “The Latina’s Bible” by Sandra Guzman (2002) explores various aspects of Latinas lives today. Everything from marrying outside of raza, a professional life, and spirituality is discussed. Guzman describes her own spiritual journey from a childhood of devout Catholicism to her mother’s conversion to the Pentecostal church. During that time she describes the church’s teachings as “feeling oppressive” to her (2002). Guzman then describes when her ties to religion began to change and the role that college played in this, “when I went away to college I left behind my mother’s God-fearing, church-loving lifestyle and found a new sense of freedom” (2002). A freedom which included the self-creation of a spirituality or practice that she enjoyed. She goes on further to explain that in times of trouble or good fortune her Christian grounding would surface through short prayers before an exam or thanks upon a job interview.
Guzman’s understanding of God was practiced rather than just believed, and no single organized religion fit her practice.

Jeanette Rodriguez defines *mestiza* spirituality in her 2004 article, “*Mestiza Spirituality: Community, Ritual, and Justice*” as “a spirituality that creates a new borderland space filled with a new meaning of self-in-community which bridges and balances two or more opposing worlds”. Like Delgado Bernal, this definition utilizes Anzaldúa’s concepts of *mestiza* and borderlands in order to explain a new spirituality. In this article Rodriguez asks the questions, “How do these young *mestizas* navigate multiple cultural and epistemological venues? And what is the impact of these multiple identities or experiences and evolution of their spirituality? These questions also guide and apply to this study, seeking to define the ways in which Chicana students create unique spirituality practices.

Recent Empirical Studies on Chicana/o College Students

Wells and Kocher (2006) report on the differences between religion and spirituality, as college students understand these terms. They find that most middle class Anglo students viewed religion as ritual and practices that are part of a specific institution and take place in a organized space/s. Contrary to this, most students viewed spirituality as centered on feelings and personal experience which makes it appear to be
‘freer or liberating’ as it can occur or be practiced in any time and space, even the comfort of one’s room. There is a dichotomy in which students who practice religion are viewed as traditional and old fashioned and those who favor spirituality are viewed as liberated (Wells & Kocher, 2006). The same definitions of religion and spirituality will be used in this thesis.

In “Learning and Living Pedagogies of the Home: the Mestiza Consciousness of Chicana Students”, Delgado Bernal (2001) applies Anzaldua’s mestiza consciousness to demonstrate the ways in which Chicana students draw from what they learn in their homes to navigate their way through educational obstacles and into college. Delgado Bernal describes that these terms (mestiza, Xicanisma, Borderlands) can be important to educational research as this is how “we recognize how the experiences of Chicana students are intertwined with such things as immigration, generational status, language, gender, class, and even the contradictions of religion”. Mestiza consciousness has allowed Delgado Bernal to analyze data in “ways that are uncommon in the field of education”. From this understanding of mestiza consciousness Delgado Bernal has operationalized the term to include the way a student “balances, negotiates, and draws from her biculturalism, bilingualism, commitment to communities, and spiritualities in relationship to her education” (2001). This is an important act of taking what the student knows and utilizing it to navigate the secular knowledge they are learning.
Delgado Bernal discusses her participant’s responses and states that applying a *mestiza consciousness* in spirituality meant “incorporating very personal sources of spirituality with more formal conceptions of religion” (2001). This weaving of the personal and traditional has long been part of Chicanas’ history just as Castillo describes in her section on indigenismo. Delgado Bernal describes, “[t]he women’s spiritual practices were often a tapestry that wove together elements of Catholicism or another organized religion with other important rituals”.

Delgado Bernal’s (2001) research locates the ways in which Chicanas use personal strength and cultural knowledge to survive and succeed in higher education that is structured to serve a white student-population and society. Her research demonstrates how Chicanas draw from their *mestiza consciousness* in which their spiritual practices serve as tools/strategies for resistance that help them persist in their educational goals. Similarly, I argue that education plays an important role in Chicanas’ experiences of religion and spirituality at the University. For example, Delgado Bernal states that “their (respondents) spiritual practices, although often in conflict with their home religion, were a source of inspiration and offered them ways to take care of themselves”. Through prayer, candles, images, and ‘living an unselfish life’ the women felt that these were all ways that they expressed their spirituality and that going to church was not critical to feeding this spiritual practice.
Chicanas may become disillusioned by the rules and negative history of organized religion (Catholicism in particular) and turn to more fluid forms of spirituality to meet their needs. As these Chicanas are faced with conflicting messages, use of a *mestiza consciousness* and spirituality serve as tools for their evolving identity formation, particularly as scholars.

The contradictions of Catholicism are noted in real ways by Delgado Bernal (2002) who finds that several women she interviews share a similar experience when they discuss the contradictions of their Catholic upbringing and the influence of education. For example, one female research participant states,

“And then from my Catholic upbringing we were taught about compassion and charity, and how Jesus healed the ill and took care of the poor, and all of that. …And I go to college and find out that every religion in the world claims the same thing, that they’re all the only true one, and that all of them have committed atrocities in the name of God, in the name of their religion, the Catholic Church tortured people and killed people in the name of God” (Delgado Bernal).

The “contradictions of Catholicism” which Delgado Bernal discusses points to the historical and political events that the Catholic Church has committed, while maintaining a traditional religious culture within the homes of many Mexican-Americans and Chicanas. One large contradiction is the role of the church in women’s personal lives. The right to control their body and reproductive rights becomes
paramount in college where young women must make decisions in regard to personal health. Contraception, abortion, HIV/AIDS, and the role of family are all important concerns for college age women.

Several other recent works point to important aspects of the spirituality of Latinas and the reality of their lives in gendered and racialized institutions. In this thesis I focus on the institution of higher education, which has a deeply entrenched culture within U.S. society. For example, Jeanette Rodriguez’s (2002) article, “Latina Activists: Toward an Inclusive Spirituality of being in the World” discusses her experience with Latinas at the National Hispanic Leadership Institute. She describes the participants as “highly motivated, well-educated women committed to service and justice”. After speaking with them, she found that they reject most kinds of institutionalized religious affiliation. However, after getting to know them she witnessed a “deep, private, intimate spiritual motivation for what they were doing”. Rodriguez writes, “As these Latina leaders grew in knowledge and confidence, they began to function as creators of their destiny, engaging in social critique and church reform”. Similarly, I propose that as Chicanas gain knowledge and confidence in academia they are simultaneously negotiating this secular knowledge with the religious and cultural ways of knowing that they learned from an early age.

college students” he finds through a longitudinal study of Chicano/a U.S. college students that they utilize many different sources of support in their negotiation of higher education, one of which is a reliance on spirituality. His article, seeks to find the benefits that students of color gain from same-race associations and the benefits (self-preservation) of particularly Chicana/o students on college campuses. Villalpando uses Critical Race Theory and LatCrit to analyze the findings of a longitudinal study of Chicana/o U.S. college students from 1989 to 1994. He notes the support provided by same-race peer groups and organizations for their role in providing a space in which they can learn from one another and get support as they share many similar hardships resulting from financial constraints and institutional racism. Villalpando finds several areas of importance emerge through a qualitative analysis of the data; the need to maintain a strong critical Chicana/o cultural consciousness, the influence of family, influence of language on student’s lives, students’ strong commitment to their communities and, students’ dependence on spirituality (2003). This dependence on spirituality is depicted through the “counter-stories” methodology offered by the students in which symbolic images, such as the Virgin of Guadalupe are used in conjunction with family traditions, prayers, and beliefs to build community. Clearly, spirituality as defined and utilized by this group of students was defined as more than just religion; rather it included shared religious imagery, family traditions, spiritual beliefs, prayers, and a spiritual community component.
What each of these studies demonstrates is a current focus on trying to understand the difficulties that Chicano college students face as well as the strengths that culture and home provides them in navigating their way through the university system. Several articles covered here note the important role of spirituality within culture that Chicana students bring to college life. The purpose of this thesis is to examine how Chicana students negotiate Catholicism and create their religious identity during their college years. Similar to the literature reviewed, the focus group in this thesis focuses on asking the participants to describe religion and spirituality in their own words, and to evaluate the impact, if any, that education has had upon their relationship to religion.
METHODS

Study Design

To study the relationship between Chicana’s religious and educational lives, I conducted focus groups with (N=20) undergraduate self-identified Chicana/Mexican-American students at the University of Arizona. In general, qualitative data includes data collected primarily through two methods, individual interviews and participant observation in groups (Morgan, 1988). Focus groups combine both of these approaches, and allowed for a group interview while distinct discussion between participants could take place highlighting similarities in background and experiences. Focus groups were chosen as a methodology because they allow the interviewer and participants to interact with one another and provide greater insights though discussion. Through a discussion of their religious upbringing and their experiences at the University, this thesis seeks to begin a dialogue of the active relationship between Chicanas, religion and spirituality. It is important to view Chicana students as “holders and creators of knowledge” (Delgado Bernal, 2002) which is actively created in this thesis through the methodology.

Using grounded theory which positions the experiences of Chicana students in the center of analysis, the words of the participants are analyzed and covered in the discussion section of thesis. Developed in 1967 by Glaser and Strauss, grounded theory is described by Thomas and James as “highly regarded as a method of social analysis in fields such as education and health studies” (2006).
Through grounded theory qualitative data is analyzed and coded. Categories emerge from the coding of data identifying relationships between categories and a main or core category. From these categories a hypothesis can also be identified which leads to the creation of theory that is grounded in the qualitative data (2006).

Participants

The sample of women participants (n=20) was drawn from the undergraduate student body at the University of Arizona located in the southwest of the United States. Participant’s ages ranged from 19 to 25 years. They were recruited through listservs of the Chicano/Hispano Student Center and various related clubs and organizations. Additionally, announcements were made in two undergraduate classes where a number of students matched the participant criteria. In the classes and through e-mail list servs, e-mails of the women who identified as Chicana or Mexican American and who were interested in participating were collected. The women were then contacted through personal e-mail and scheduled for a focus group session.

Focus Group

Approximately eight original questions were asked focusing the discussion on Chicanas relationship between education and religiosity and spirituality (see Appendix
A: Focus Group Questions. Six groups were conducted with an average of 3-4 participants per group. The questions were developed by the investigator seeking to understand general definitions of religion and spirituality for these women, as well as gain their wide perspective of the relationship between that religion and education have specific to this group. A consent form was distributed in English at the beginning of each session followed by a questionnaire. This study was approved by the University of Arizona Human Subjects Protection Program. All information was kept confidential. The discussion was audio taped and lasted approximately two hours for each group.

Questionnaire

The paper-pencil survey was self-administered at the beginning of each session, after participants read and signed an informed consent form. This instrument contained three pages of a combination of fill-in and Likert scales (See Appendix B: Questionnaire). Questions included basic demographical and educational questions such as year in school, age, and first-generation college status as well as other questions regarding religious practice/beliefs and language. Each of the following areas was measured:

Generational Status. The questionnaire contained specific questions about family background such as a list to find out generational status within the U.S. Participants were able to choose a response by checking off the members of their immediate family that were born outside of the U.S beginning with oneself, mother, father, some
grandparents, all grandparents, or all listed born in the U.S.

*Acculturation.* A total of 6 questions were asked about language both English and Spanish with 3 for each. It included a Likert scale for how often each language is spoken at home, school, with friends, and radio/television with four categories to mark from; 1=“never”, 2=“sometimes”, 3=“often” or 4=“always.

*Religion and Religious Practices.* The questionnaire contained seven questions related to the participant’s religious affiliation as well as the religious practices of their Mother and Father and friends. Six options were provided; Roman Catholic, Episcopal, Protestant, Jewish, Baptist, and Other. Participants were also asked to state how often they attend church. The options included; multiple times a week, every week/Sunday, holidays/family events, once a year (not holidays), or never.

*Prayer.* Frequency of prayer was also measured through a scale with five options including; multiple times a day, once a day, a few times a month, 1-2 times a year, and never.
RESULTS

Quantitative Results

Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 14.0 was used to carry out the study analysis. Twenty women participated in the research study; they ranged in age from 18 to 25 years, with 50% or ten of the women being either 19 or 20 years old (See Table 1) and the remaining 45% between 21 and 25 years of age. Fifteen or 75% of the twenty participants were either sophomores or seniors and were currently enrolled at the University. Only 2 freshman and 3 juniors participated. Primary state where participants were raised was Arizona (n=18) with only two of the women raised out of state, one in Texas and one woman in Chihuahua, Mexico.

Table 1 highlights the participants’ generational status varied although 60% can be classified as 2nd generation U.S. citizens, born in the States with either one or both parents emigrating from Mexico. Seven of the women lived with either one or both parents or family members while the remaining thirteen lived with a roommate/s or friend. Nineteen out of the twenty women are first-generation college students, meaning that they are the first in their families to attend college and soon earn a bachelor’s degree.
Table 1

Sample Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>N</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Age (years)</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>19-20</td>
<td>10</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>21-25</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>45.0</td>
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<td><strong>Year in School</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
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<tr>
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<td><strong>First-Generation College Student</strong></td>
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</tr>
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<td><strong>Generation</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>1\textsuperscript{st} (immigrant)</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>2\textsuperscript{nd} (student born in U.S.)</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>60.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3\textsuperscript{rd} (parent born in U.S)</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>10.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4\textsuperscript{th} (grandparent born in U.S.)</td>
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<td><strong>Chicano population in Home Community</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>0-24% Chicano/Latino</td>
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<td>10.5</td>
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<td>25-49% Chicano/Latino</td>
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<td>15.8</td>
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<td>50-74% Chicano/Latino</td>
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<td>75% and up Chicano/Latino</td>
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<td>47.4</td>
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<td><strong>Religious Identification</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Episcopal</td>
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<tr>
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<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Baptist</td>
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<tr>
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Table 2

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Variables of Interest</th>
<th>M(SD)</th>
<th>Range</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>How often student goes to Church</td>
<td>2.75(1.07)</td>
<td>1.0-4.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How often Student Prays</td>
<td>3.6(.99)</td>
<td>1.0-5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you describe yourself as:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious</td>
<td>3.05(1.39)</td>
<td>1.0-5.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spiritual</td>
<td>3.68(1.06)</td>
<td>1.0-5.0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Possible Range is 1= strongly disagree, 5= strongly agree

Table 2 highlights each participant’s response to the scale question, “do you describe yourself as religious?” as well as the question “do you describe yourself as spiritual?” For each term they rated themselves from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree in terms of how they viewed their own identification. This table also shows the mean and standard deviation of the variables of interest for this study: how often the participant’s go to church, ranging from (1) never to (5) every week/Sunday as well as how often they use prayer from (1) never to (5) multiple times a day.

The women report a higher mean for “spiritual” identification than their mean for religious identification. 20% of the participants stated that they went to church “never”, 10% stated “once a year”, 45% of the women stated they attended church on “holidays/family events” and 25% stated that they attended “every week/Sunday”. 5% of the participants stated that they prayed ‘never’, 5% stated ‘1-2 times a year’, 30% a
‘few times a year’, the largest percentage 45% stated ‘once a day’, and 15% stated ‘multiple times a day.

Qualitative Results

All focus groups were transcribed and coded using Grounded Theory in which recurring topics and themes were highlighted and numbered, and theory and discussion points were allowed to arise from participant comments. The prevalence of a specific topic was noted and included in the results section above. Throughout each group, the discussion varied based on the personality and experiences of those participating. Questions asked amongst participants were also more revealing than the structured questions provided, and gave insight into how Chicanas lives are different and how we understand one another.

The participants’ identification with Catholicism and whether or not they considered themselves to be an active or practicing Catholic is an important introduction into the focus group results. It was clear that culturally the women had a family history connected to Catholicism, but defined religion and spirituality in different ways. This is an important distinction that I will highlight here.
Religion and Spirituality

A distinction was made between organized religion and spirituality by the participants just as Wells and Kocher (2006) describe in their research with college students. Several of the women described religion as "believing in God, and going to church" religion is also concerned with others as a participant describes, "following a set of rules with other people...just all coming together under one kind of idea...", and “being a member of a church”. How religious each woman identified themselves was correlated with how often they participated in going to church and mass.

One participant describes being religious as, "organized religion is being committed to one sector and I also see religious more as the physical actions such as going to worship and reading literature the bible, studying the documented works that each religion has, I feel that it is more outward than spirituality".

All twenty women identified themselves or their parents as "Catholic" although the focus group discussion revealed more about this identification which includes participation in family holidays and celebrations such as quinceañeras, baptisms, and dia de los muertos as well as cultural religious symbols such as the Virgin de Guadalupe and several saints. Though their backgrounds were heavily influenced by the Catholic Church and family members the women felt this influence to be one sided, "...when I was younger, it was almost imposed on me what was right and what was wrong and
they all make it seem like all other religions are I don't want to say not human...it's almost like they're not right you know...".

Spirituality was described by each woman with personal descriptions. Participants stated that spirituality is separate and different from religion although it may include some of the components of religious belief. One participant describes spirituality as:

"it is more of an introverted expression of yourself, it's something that nobody else needs to hear about in order for it to be true or validated...you aren't following written works or lectures or what other people are telling you, its really your own definition of what you want to believe in".

One participant describes the distinction between spirituality and religion:

"a spiritual person does not necessarily attend church regularly, and yet they believe in God. I personally was baptized and raised as Catholic and yet the more I have learned about the religion, the more and more I disagree with it. I believe in God and I pray on a close to regular basis but I do not go to church. I consider myself a spiritual person but I do not consider myself religious".

How the women create this individual spirituality is a process that was discussed as well. When asked how she developed her spirituality one participant stated, "I just took what I felt was the strongest part of my religion and took that inward...like the morals I have I just kind of shaped that altogether".
Described as more inward and personal, the women felt that an expression of spirituality includes prayer as well as other elements. "I would describe spiritual as setting aside time for yourself to get away from any disturbances just to focus on yourself, whether it be your spirit your soul by meditating or for like me writing in a journal or just focusing on myself...get away and eliminate the everyday stress I feel as a college student and really just taking care of myself". Addressing needs of the self in a new environment separated from the old support network that they had been used to requires the creation of new support networks and strategies. For example, “Coming to college leads to some separation from their old social network…some students may react to the loss of religious social experiences by turning inward and engaging in private practices, such as increasing their frequency of prayer” (2004).

Although prayer can be a component of religious practice, it is also an important part of spirituality. Disagreeing with the church, but believing in God creates a tension where the individual must figure out how they will express their faith without being a member of the church. Although many indigenous and Mexicans do incorporate folk and popular practices of Catholicism, this separation seems to operate differently for young Chicanas in college. The separation between religion and spirituality also takes place in the form of cultural knowledge as two participants described their introduction to indigenous spiritual practices through MEChA (Movimiento Estudiante Chicano de Aztlan). A participant states, "I'm in MEChA and we focus a lot on spirituality and our indigenous roots and when you look back to indigenism it’s a lot about spirituality".
Some of the women felt as though their personal understanding of their religion grew upon coming to the University and having the time and analytical ability to truly understand what they were following. As their instructors lectured to them about various subjects, they viewed religious knowledge as something to also learn, be critical of and in their case agree with. One participant describes this experience for her own relationship to religion after enrolling in the University: “I think it’s strengthened since I got to college…when I got here I realized that I could think for myself, it’s all about me and what I wanted to believe in”.

Prayer

The focus group questions included how often the women pray, and reasons when they turn to prayer. Prayer was described in many ways by the women, as a stress reliever, a comfort in moments of loneliness or fear, a conversation to those who have passed asking for help and guidance, an expression of thanks, a moment to focus on one’s needs and wants.

One participant states, “I pray (e)very once and a while…if I’m really sad or really happy and thankful for something…I’m not a very religious person but I’m very spiritual”. Prayer is described as deeply personal and can be utilized at any moment anywhere without the constraints of religion. Using prayer in moments of stress, fear, sadness, or happiness ultimately provides balance to one’s daily emotions as these women encounter various struggles or successes they turn within and use prayer as a tool. For example a participant states, “in the morning I use prayer to pick up my mood
so like (I am) angry, and I want the anger to be taken away or just having these negative feelings it’s more like a constant for me throughout the day”. For most of the other women higher education impacted their relationship to organized religion, but not their faith, and for many their spirituality was found or increased during this time in their lives.

Higher Education and Religion

Each participant described a unique relationship with religion and spirituality and how this relationship may or may not have changed, grown, and evolved during their transition into college life. Several of the women felt that religion had no direct impact on their experience in higher education, though a few described direct influences both positive and negative between organized religion, spirituality, and their education.

Two women described their personal religious identification as having grown during their time at the university. One of them described this growth stating, “I think it has strengthened since I got to college…I went to the Newman Center and I felt very encouraged when I went back there, I felt that this was something that I was raised in and wanted to go back to, and I was confirmed through the Newman Center which was a very big deal…it felt good because it was my decision to do it, and I think that’s what has changed my view of religion, I actually go now more than I did before”.

Making the decision to be confirmed at the Catholic Newman Center was a personal choice for this participant, an experience that was positive and encouraged her to become more involved with the Church and campus. Others however, felt that organized religion was no longer an important part of their life and did not affect their success in college. One of the participants describes how her relationship changed stating,

“[M]y view of religion has drastically changed since coming to the university, before coming to the university I was a little skeptical about the Catholic religion, I was only attending church on major holidays mostly because my grandmother who is extremely religious would pressure me to go. But after I came to the university I learned more about the catholic religion and how demeaning it is and sort of still is today, I decided that the Catholic religion was not for me, I decided that you can believe in God and not have to go to church, that you can still go to heaven and not go to church, that you can still lead a good, happy life without being religious”.

This quote describes a feeling of confusion and skepticism about organized religion early on and feeling ‘pressured’ to attend mass. As this woman transitioned into higher education and began critically thinking and learning about the history of the religion she made a decision about what relationship organized religion would play in her life if any. She did not stop believing in God, but rather developed her understanding of spirituality and God as not directly connected to an organized church.

As these women are negotiating Catholicism, their religious beliefs and identity, they are also finding their space within the larger University. Several of the women
experienced struggles during their early time in college and those who have persisted toward graduation typically described a community, group, class, or mentor that has helped them stay focused on the academic path. Participants described a Greek or multicultural sorority, work with minority high school students, Chicano Hispano Student Affairs, and majors/departments as some of the ways that the women got involved in campus life and connected to others who are of their same cultural and religious background. A participant explains, "it (education) has impacted my relationship with religion because it has given me the initiative to learn more about my past, more about the Mexican culture, and more about the indigenous roots, it hasn't changed me in a negative way, it's more of a positive impact...". These groups help students manage the stress of college life, and in particular the struggle of cultures that these Chicanas are facing as well.

Core Themes

Throughout the focus groups, several core themes arose from the participant’s discussion and answers. These themes are: “Open Eyes”, Negotiating Catholicism, and Mestiza Spirituality which I will discuss below.
“Open Eyes”

Overall, the findings of this study show that the women felt that college and higher education opened their eyes to see the world in a new way, to study it and apply what they learn to their lives. Stating that college “opened my eyes” was the most common description offered by the participants as they discussed the effect that higher education had upon their lives and relationship to religion. Possessing “open eyes” was a new skill that several women felt that college provided them, the opportunity to think for themselves, question what they have been taught and be more open to learning about history and the world and their place within it. In fact, several women noted that before entering the University they had not had the opportunity to learn about their cultural or religious history. Taking classes in Mexican American Studies, and History and having access to clubs and groups that focused on their background helped them develop their identity as well. A participant states, “coming to the UA really opened my eyes I was like, hey there is more than one religion”. Another woman states, “I just opened my mind when I came here to the university and I started getting into studies and science and things that I didn’t really get in (high school) education”.

Exposure to new surroundings, people of other cultures, languages and religions created an opportunity to learn about others as well as oneself. One of the women describes the experience of arriving at a large campus and the transition that occurs,
“when I was young I was always surrounded by Mexicans, and coming here as a freshman in college I kind of went through a culture shock because it was just really overwhelming, it was a really huge campus and there was a lot of diversity. I had to find my place on campus which is why I joined a multicultural sorority, I joined MEChA I sometimes would find myself being the only Hispanic in class which sometimes did feel uncomfortable but at the same time I was willing to open myself up…it showed me more than I was used to back home”.

Another participant states, “I also found that when you come to college you meet a lot of different people and you experience their religion as well”. “I grew up in a place where more than 90% of the population is Hispanic so religion, Catholic is very very important there and I would go to church every Sunday, and ever since I came to college I’ve been exposed to so many diverse populations and many different beliefs and it’s opened up my eyes to be more accepting of other religions”.

The women made their own decision about remaining a part of organized religion or developing their own personal spirituality. Although only two women identified their relationship to religion as strengthening since entering college and two directly stating that organized religion no longer fit into their lives and expressions of faith, the majority (n=19) of the women remained a faith in God but did not continue to practice their faith in the Catholic Church but rather expressed their faith through prayer, symbolism, and morals. They indeed did not “lose their faith” after entering the University but rather utilized critical thinking and other tools to decide in which way
they would express their faith, whether in the community of the Church or in the privacy of their room.

Negotiation of Catholicism

Higher education provided these women the opportunity to fulfill what Delgadillo (2003) stated was “Chicanas' negotiation of Catholicism, rather than blind obedience”. It is this negotiation that manifested itself through the focus group discussions with the participants, and which I will highlight here.

Each participant described specific ways in which they formed and practiced a new understanding of their religiosity or the ways in which they felt that organized Catholicism no longer fit into their lives and instead discussed their growing use of an individual spirituality created on their own. Negotiating Catholicism unlike other areas of their lives was more complicated, and those participants who were seniors described a fuller range of experience and change in their relationship to religion, they knew what they believed and why. The others who ranged in age and year from freshman to juniors demonstrated more the process of figuring out religion as they also formed their identities.

One participant described her experience “coming out” as a lesbian to her mother and family in her hometown, and how the experience was laden with religious
responses from others when she attended mass. She states,

“I have learned a lot of things that have challenged the ways I was raised, the biggest one being homosexuality something that back home was pretty much the worse thing that anyone could do…my experience has pushed me away from religion in the sense that I don’t practice it as much as I used to you know going to mass every single Sunday, but within myself I do pray a lot more like on my own, it becomes more personal…”.

Not accepted by the church, this participant feels that her homosexual identity does not and should not conflict with her religious beliefs. She described wearing a crucifix as a symbol of her faith and believing in God, but having to develop her own way of practicing her faith, or negotiating sexual identity with the beliefs of Catholicism.

*Mestiza* Spirituality

The result of this negotiation is a *mestiza* spirituality in which elements of Catholicism are blended with indigenous beliefs and practices in order to better serve the needs of the women. A strong sense of cultural identity, faith, prayer, symbolism, and incorporation of these two elements form the base of their spirituality.

One of the participants comments on her last visit to Church since coming to the university. She describes going to the San Xavier Mission and sitting inside for nearly 3
hours where she describes she ‘said everything that I needed to say for me to feel better’, she states that daily prayers include saying “thank you because I don’t take care of myself and I’m still alive” (participant has diabetes) and ends by describing that “I’m more of a spiritual person, but I’m not more of a religious person” since coming to college.

Another participant also describes taking a class where she learned “about the Nahuatl the indigenous tribe before the Spanish conquered and created Mexico” after this class she states, “that really gave me a different angle to look at spirituality as we came from the earth and we’re going to return to the earth…and so that took it out of the context of organized religion for me and put it more in a spiritual sense”.

Gaining this new indigenous knowledge also comes from Chicano/a student groups such as this participant’s experience. “My major has guided me to organizations that focus more on the Aztec/Mother Earth and I have found that it’s really stress relieving to go and talk in a circle and do the ceremony that the Aztecs used to do and you just let it all go to Mother Earth you know all your stress, it has helped me appreciate Mother Earth a lot more and I look forward to whenever we do that ceremony again just because it’s the best thing that has happened in my life and I learned it here in college”.
DISCUSSION

The purpose of this study is to examine the role and affect of higher education on Chicana’s negotiation with Catholicism, this thesis examines how this negotiation occurs and how Chicana students understand and create their religious identity (mestiza spirituality) during their college years. The major findings suggest that Chicana students are making an active negotiation with Catholicism and developing their own mestiza spirituality.

Higher education and college life overall had provided them the ability to develop various tools such as critical thinking, analytical thought, as well as time and space away from the religion that they may analyze their relationship to religion and make a conscious choice about how they viewed organized religion in their lives.

Gloria Anzaldúa’s concept of “el choque” (1999) describes a point where “la mestiza undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war”. El choque is a “cultural collision” one between the Indian, Mexican, and American. This ‘cultural collision’ this choking of cultures and expectations forces la mestiza to create her own identity, to cough up something different than the individual pieces swallowed, something new.

In reading the women’s responses about higher education and religion this way, it is clear that there is a collision between the cultural frame of their family and its
historic roots in Catholicism with the higher education’s tie to a non-Catholic dominant culture. This can be applied to Chicanas in higher education experiencing *el choque* as they not only straddle all three cultures (Mexican, American, and Indigenous) and their corresponding value systems, but higher education’s secular knowledge with organized religion as well.

Anzaldúa states, “Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages” (1999). The constant balancing between the values of higher education and cultural values and morals of home and parents/family was described as a stressful event in Chicanas’ lives. Many of the women felt that college life in general was difficult, particularly as a first-generation student and that family concerns added to their inability to fully integrate into the college campus and social life. Being the first to attend a university also added a great amount of pressure as they encounter issues that their parents do not have direct experience with. Turning this stress into a positive, several of the women expressed great pride in being the first in their families to attend college stating that they are setting an example for the younger members of their family. And many of the women found support and relief from this stress through prayer and social groups as described in previous sections above.

The purpose of this study was to examine the role of higher education on Chicana’s religious beliefs and practices particularly the ways in which Chicana
students negotiate their religious and cultural ways of knowing and create their religious identity through their college years.

Results of the current study demonstrate that Chicanas are attending church less but focusing more on a personal sense of spirituality and prayer. This finding supports previous work that demonstrates the counter-argument of the lack of religious beliefs by college students (Spilka et al., 2003). In previous studies, it has been argued that student’s become “less religious” or “lose their religion” upon entering a University and completing a college degree. However, Spilka’s research finds that students do not “lose their religion” upon entering college but in fact, believe more deeply in the values and morals that matter to them. The students’ do not become less religious, they instead believe more intently in the things that they have come to realize are their beliefs. They show a stronger level of belief in those things that matter to them.

The major findings demonstrate that 18 out of 20 participants no longer attend mass or attend less than they did before entering college. For example, one participant describes that when she lived at home she attended church every Sunday with her mother, and since she moved away and started attending college she has stopped going but finds herself ‘talking more to God’ on her own time. Anzaldua and Castillo both argue that the institution of religion, organized Catholicism does not serve Chicanas and these findings show that the Church is less and less a part of Chicanas lives during college. However, this study also demonstrates that like Delgadillo’s findings, Chicana
college students are actively negotiating Catholicism and creating a *mestiza* spirituality which contains different forms of prayer, meditation, good morals, and an open mind. These Chicanas incorporate indigenous symbols and practices into their understanding of spirituality and most of the women in this study believe that attending mass is not a crucial part of a spirituality grounded in faith.

Overall, the unique elements of this study and focus group themes were the women’s use of prayer, in times of stress, loneliness, etc. had developed further upon their entrance into college. Their move away from institutionalized religion and toward an individual spirituality had also reached a turning point where they were able to make the decision to either stop attending church or remain an active member. The continuation of cultural traditions tied to religion whether or not they have chosen to leave the church. For example, one participant explains how important Catholicism is to her family stating, “[I]t is a family culture thing that is just really big, it’s kind of like tamales. I used to not like tamales and everyone (in my family) said ‘you’re not Mexican’ if you don’t like tamales”, as well as the women’s addition of indigenous elements into their spirituality.

Limitations of Study

There is a limited amount of research that focuses on Chicana Students’ Religious Identity and Spirituality particularly the relationship between higher
education and organized religion that was studied here. This limited the background findings that would have better framed this study particularly methodology. A sample size of only twenty participants also limited the extent of this research. More participants would have greatly enhanced group discussion and interaction, as well as had more of the participants been enrolled as freshman or first-year students.

Suggestions for Further Study

Further analysis on the religious and spiritual identity of Chicana undergraduate students is needed in order to better understand the distinct characteristics and issues. Although not covered in this study, looking further at the idea of ancestral inheritance (Mesa-Bains, 1993) would add depth to the discussion of indigenous elements of mestiza spirituality. Ancestral inheritance would also allow for a discussion of the embeddedness of indigenous practices within Catholic traditions for example, la quinceañera. Methodological suggestions include developing a longitudinal case study of Chicana undergraduate students’ religious identity creation through four years of college, serving to follow the process of a mestiza spirituality creation. A longer period of interviews with the same women over four years would enhance the accuracy and address areas that arose in focus group discussion but could not be discussed further due to time constraint. Another area for further study is to analyze if the meanings
attributed to the terms ‘faith’ and a ‘belief in God’ may be different from religion and spirituality and also if the meanings change through the process of higher education.

It can be concluded that Chicana students are “less religious” but in fact are can become more spiritual upon entering college. They have opened their eyes to new experiences and ways of understanding the world. Through this process of learning they have also made active decisions about the role of religion in their lives and many have developed a mestiza spirituality which incorporates elements of Catholicism with indigenous practices, symbols, and beliefs. This way of expressing one’s faith is unique and is a result of the learning and tools they have gained from higher education as well as a bridging of their culture and past.
APPENDIX A- FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

Focus Group Agenda:

I. Welcome and Introduction

Script: Hello, my name is Lisa Rubio and you have been asked to participate in a small group discussion about Chicanas in higher education and the relationship between education and religiosity. The results of this discussion will be used to complete my master’s thesis, if you would like to read the completed thesis I will give my contact information later in the discussion.

II. Confidentiality explanation and consent form

Please take a minute to read over the consent form and if you agree to participate please sign and date the bottom. Your participation is voluntary and can be stopped at any time without penalty, and will not affect your class standing in any way. The discussion should take about 2 hours and will be audiotaped for accuracy; no personal information will be used at any time.

III. Focus Group questions* and open discussion

IV. De-briefing and questionnaire

I will provide you with my contact information for any questions you may have regarding this thesis project and your participation.

*All groups were asked these questions:

Focus Group Questions

1.) How would you describe religious?
2.) How would you describe spiritual?
3.) How often do you pray, and what are some reasons or times when you use prayer.
4.) Has your view of religion changed since coming to the university?
5.) How has your education impacted your relationship to religion?
6.) Have you learned things in class that challenge the ways you were raised?
7.) How do you express spirituality or religion in your life? Give specific examples of ways that you feel are important expressions in your daily life as well as larger goals.

8.) Is being part (member) of an organized religion important in your daily life? Is it important to your success or comfort in college?
APPENDIX B - QUESTIONNAIRE

Questionnaire:
1.) Age: ___________years

2.) Year in school:
   i. Freshman____
   ii. Sophomore____
   iii. Junior_______
   iv. Senior_________
   v. Other__________

3.) With whom do you live?
   i. Mother______
   ii. Father_______
   iii. Both Parents______
   iv. Other Relative______, (relationship)
   v. Other_____________

4.) Are you a first-generation college student?
   Yes______
   No_______

5.) Do you describe yourself as: Strongly Disagree Strongly Agree
   
   Religious
<table>
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<tr>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>5</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
   Spiritual
   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |

6.) How often do you go to church?
   
   Multiple times a week Every Week/Sunday Holidays/Family Events Once a Year (Not Holidays) Never
   |   |   |   |   |   |

7.) How often do you pray?
   
   Multiple Times a Day Once a Day A few times a Month 1-2 times a year Never
   |   |   |   |   |   |

8.) Which organized religion do you identify with?
9.) Which religion do you practice?
   i. Roman Catholic
   ii. Episcopal
   iii. Protestant
   iv. Jewish
   v. Baptist
   vi. Other

10.) Which religion do the majority of your friends identify with?
    i. Roman Catholic
    ii. Episcopal
    iii. Protestant
    iv. Jewish
    v. Baptist
    vi. Other

11.) Which religion do/did your parents practice?
Mother:
    vii. Roman Catholic
    viii. Episcopal
    ix. Protestant
    x. Jewish
    xi. Baptist
    xii. Other

Father:
    xiii. Roman Catholic
    xiv. Episcopal
    xv. Protestant
    xvi. Jewish
    xvii. Baptist
    xviii. Other
12.) Many people speak or listen to more than one language. How often do you…

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Activity</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>Sometimes</th>
<th>Often</th>
<th>Always</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Speak English?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak English with your Family?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak English at School?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak English with your friends?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch television programs in English?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music or the radio in English?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak Spanish?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speak Spanish with your friends?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watch television programs in Spanish?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listen to music or the radio in Spanish?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13.) As far as you know, which of these people in your family was born outside of the United States (U.S.)?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Person</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>You</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Mother</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your Father</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of your grandparents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Some of your grandparents</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>All of these people were born in the U.S.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

14.) In what kind of community were you raised?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentage</th>
<th>Type of Community</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>75% - 100%</td>
<td>75 percent and up Chicano/Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50% - 74%</td>
<td>50-74 percent Chicano/Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25% - 49%</td>
<td>25-49 percent Chicano/Latino</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>0% - 24%</td>
<td>0-24 percent Chicano/Latino</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

15.) Was that community in a:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of Area</th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rural area?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urban area?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Suburban area?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

16.) In what state did you mostly grow up? ___________________
Or: In what country did you mostly grow up?_________________

Thank you for your time!
REFERENCES


*Qualitative Studies in Education.* 16(5), 619-646.