

RELIGIOSITY IN URUGUAY:
A Robust Religious Economy in
Latin America's Most Secular Nation

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A thesis presented in partial fulfillment of the requirements for
completion of the Bachelor of Arts degree in International Studies
at the Croft Institute for International Studies

University of Mississippi
University, Mississippi
Spring 2010

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Religiosity in Uruguay

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Introduction:
¡Cómo Uruguay, No Hay!
(Uruguay, There's Nothing Like it!)

For nearly four hundred years, Latin America's religious identity has been intricately associated with the religious monopoly of the Roman Catholic Church. The use of economics as a metaphor for religion in Latin America represents a relatively new way of describing the religious environment¹. From such studies (Berger, 1969, Stark, Finke 1992) arise terms such as marketplace, religious economy, and marketing faith itself as a product for consumers. Anthony Gill applied the microeconomics theory to religion in Latin America in his book *Rendering Unto Caesar* from 1998². R. Andrew Chesnut's book *Competitive Spirits: Latin America's New Religious Economy* (2003) is one of the most recent texts that applies the economic model to religion in Latin America.

Religion in Latin America serves as a topic of study for theologians, sociologists, psychologists and other academics worldwide. There are many reasons why religion is necessary to study. It has the potential to play a major role in societies - through a country's system of governance, how people spend their money, infiltrating the education system and appearing in the media and press. Because so much of a people's identity and

¹ Chesnut, R. Andrew. Pg 6.

² Chesnut, R. Andrew Pg. 7 and 167.

actions can come directly or indirectly from their religion, religion is fundamental to our understanding of the world around us.

Uruguay, a very small country located in the southern cone of South America, is the object of relatively few studies. Geographically, it is about the size of Oregon in the United States and has approximately three million citizens. It sits directly south of Brazil and to the east of Argentina, with the Uruguayan capital of Montevideo located directly across the Río de la Plata from megalopolis Buenos Aires. Compared to other South American countries such as Venezuela, Bolivia, Brazil and Argentina, Uruguay rarely garners media or scholastic attention; however, the country should not be overlooked – it makes quiet advances, tries new things, and goes against the grain of regional stereotypes.

Particularly unique to Uruguay is its religious history. European imperialism contributed many parts of Latin American culture that are still visible today, particularly Catholicism. Nevertheless, Uruguay presents a different and interesting case. My thesis will focus on the Catholic Church in Uruguay, with the overarching question focusing on the longevity of the Catholic faith: How can we account for the diminishing influence of the Catholic Church in Uruguay's religious marketplace? Who represent the most capable players in the Uruguayan religious marketplace and how do they effectively compete for the faith of the Uruguayans?

This question is the product of a semester abroad I spent in Montevideo. Prior to studying in Uruguay, I was vaguely aware of the popular notion that Uruguay is “irreligious”. My Uruguayan history class included lectures on the early, weakened presence of the Catholic Church due to the government, and this sparked my initial

interest in the topic. The desire to study religions in Uruguay stemmed from a Uruguayan history class, coupled with the buzz of upcoming presidential elections and intriguing conversations and class projects.. Initially I developed the impression that Uruguay wanted freedom from religion, that Uruguayans who called themselves Catholic did so out of family tradition or habit. To reiterate, my thesis question does not ask whether the Catholic Church has diminished in Uruguay; this is already certain.

The research for this thesis shows two things. First, it shows a decline in the influence of institutional religion and of the Uruguayans' desire to be associated with or to participate in such institutions as the Catholic Church. Second, and most unexpectedly for my thesis, the research shows that Uruguay is far from being an anti-religious country; in fact, it is a highly religious country and, as I predicted, is moving away from the country's principal religion of Catholicism.

Questions to be answered along the way include: what does Uruguayan history reveal to us about the relation between Uruguayans and the Catholic Church? What part does religiosity play in the formation of a national identity in Uruguay? How do Uruguayan politicians use their religious convictions (or lack thereof) to gain constituents and votes? Hand in hand with politics, gender issues present hot-button topics such as abortion and gay rights – how does the Church go about addressing believers and non-believers about such topics? Besides Catholicism, what other religions do Uruguayans participate in, if they participate in any alternative at all?

This study is potentially significant for several reasons. Perhaps twenty or thirty years from now, we will see similar trends of religiosity from other Latin American countries, with Uruguay the front-runner of a trend away from Catholicism. Relatively

little research has been conducted about religiosity in Uruguay, and much of what has been written is in Spanish. Therefore, this study serves as a collaboration of many sources, both from English and Spanish studies, in an attempt to create the most holistic representation of religiosity in Uruguay.

Respective chapters will address these questions and more. The chapters of this thesis will cover several topics in order to explain the role religion and particularly the Catholic Church play in Uruguay today. Chapter 1 will discuss Uruguayan history and some of the events and figures that have molded the Catholic Church and other religions in Uruguay. This chapter will also include an analysis of Uruguayan politics and religions, particularly the role of the in party politics, the issues people vote on, and alliances between politicians and clergy. Chapter 2 will discuss various active and influential religions in Uruguay such as Catholicism, Protestantism, la Iglesia Evangélica, Umbanda, and Candomblé, the latter two being religions of Afro-Brazilian descent. Chapter 3 will look specifically at statistical findings based on surveys from sources such as World Values Survey and other projects on a national level. Chapter 4 will shed light on gender and religiosity in Uruguay and pay particular attention to issues such as abortion, gay rights, and female religiosity. The conclusion will summarize all findings with a bibliography to follow.

Methodologically, I will compare and contrast data gleaned from primary sources with conclusions drawn in secondary sources. Primary sources for this project include the surveys conducted by Néstor Da Costa in Montevideo in 2004. The project will include two other sets of surveys conducted by the World Values Surveys in 1996 and 2005. These surveys involved Uruguayans living in Montevideo and nine other Uruguayan

towns. An additional primary source is the Archbishop of Montevideo's letter to the Uruguayans initiating Catholic Action in 1934. Secondary sources include academic articles published in response to the survey data, material taken from textbooks and scholarly publications, interviews conducted through newspapers, and quotes from sessions in the legislature.

This thesis required multiple sources originally written in Spanish which I have translated. I accept full responsibility for any errors committed during the writing of this thesis.

Acknowledgements

I would like to sincerely thank my thesis advisor Dr. Douglass Sullivan-Gonzalez and readers Dr. William Schenck and Dr. Ryan Weimer for their many hours of assistance in this project. I would also like to thank Irene Kaufmann-Cotelo for her countless hours of conversation about all things Uruguay, and to Dr. Nancy Izelda Malugani for instilling in me a love for the Spanish language many years ago. To my dear roommates – thank you for your continuous support and encouragement! Without your support I would have most likely never finished this, and with your distractions I barely finished it! To Tyler, for always keeping me focused and caffeinated, and always prepared with the right words.

Finally, I would like to thank my parents, unwavering sources of love, encouragement and guidance. I love you both very much.

Chapter 1: History of the Church in Uruguay

While its initial constitution did not call for the separation of church and state, the union of the church and state was “more fiction than fact” during Uruguay’s first hundred years. Uruguay became a nation in 1830 in order to appease fighting over the territory between Argentina and Brazil. In the process of writing a constitution Uruguay adopted the religious policy that neighboring nation Argentina was already using: Catholicism would be the official state religion, but the exercise of dissident faiths was also permitted. The Catholic Church in Uruguay had a humble beginning; it was sorely dependent upon funding from Buenos Aires and suffered from insufficient communication, scarce Episcopal vigilance, the absence of a seminary council, very few clergy members, and limited material resources. When José Artigas unleashed his revolutionary movement prior to the country’s independence, many of the clergymen joined his ranks. Even before the independence of Uruguay in 1830, messages carried to Buenos Aires’ constitutional assembly asked for “religious and civil liberty in its greatest possible form”. The seeds for secularization and separation of church and State appeared early on (Ferrari, 106).³

In this era, two political parties emerged: the Blancos and the Colorados. The Blancos were at best “luke-warm” defenders of the church, while the Colorados were mild-natured anti-clericals. Uruguay’s first president was a Colorado named Fructuoso Rivera, who provisioned the legalization of a civil marriage ceremony for couples outside

³ Ferrari, Alejandro. “Iglesia y Estado en el Uruguay: Ayer y Hoy”. Soleriana 15. 2001. pg 105-128.

of the Catholic Church in 1837. This shows the beginning of the Church's loss of grip on society. By 1861, the Church lost control over the cemeteries. The greatest period of anticlerical measures enacted against the Church occurred in the 1880s. On June 1, 1880, the Church lost further control over legitimization of births, marriages, and deaths with the development of El Estado Civil (Civil State). On May 22, 1885, civil marriage became the only legal and compulsory form of marriage. This is still in effect today. After the declaration of a civil marriage, a religious consecration ceremony followed, but only half of all civil ceremonies received a religious one. Furthermore, any priests that conducted a religious ceremony for a marriage before a civil ceremony took place were subject to receive a penalty from the government according to constitutional law. The only noteworthy change to this concerning modern times would be absolute divorce. Political leaders also stripped religious teaching from the armed forces, penitentiaries, and medical centers (Ferrari, 120).

Prior to the historically defining moments of the Asamblea Nacional Constituyente of 1917, concern for the future of the State brewed among various Catholic organizations, such as the Club Católica and the Circulos Católicos de Obreros.

“In a realistic gesture, they tacitly accepted that they could no longer try to maintain ‘Christian civilization’ in Uruguay but instead restore it, for hardly anything remained of it.” (En un gesto de realismo se aceptó tácitamente que ya no se trataba de mantener en Uruguay la civilización cristiana, sino de restaurarla, por ya casi nada quedaba de ella) (pg. 23, Rodé)⁴.

The unity between Club Católica and the Circulos Católicos de Obreros lead to the formation of union organizations, each with a specific purpose. The Unión

⁴ Rodé, Patricio. Construcción de Ciudadanía y Fe cristiana. January CLAEH: Montevideo, Uruguay. 2007.

Económica, the Unión Social, and the Unión Cívica aimed to declare and protect the rights of the Church.

The true separation of Church and State in Uruguay became official in the Constitution of 1919. All parties present voted for separation, the only exception being the Catholic “Unión Cívica” party. The head of the Unión Cívica, Secco Illa, argued that because Uruguay was 61% Catholic, the country should oppose separation. Constitutional Nationalist Juan B. Rocca argued that religious sentiment would only gain prestige if the Church separated from the state. Interestingly enough, this reached fruition as the Church flourished after the split. Uruguayans raised over one million dollars to support the Catholic Church after the government stopped funding it. The ANC also created a burning desire within the Catholic Church to ignite twilight Catholics to return to practicing their faith with frequent participation in the sacrament and habitual piety. These actions were solidified by the Catholic Church into a movement called Acción Católica, “markedly apologetic in nature with a focus on reconciliation of the non-practicing.” (pg. 26, Rodé).

Acción Católica (AC) is a lay movement that grew to become “the largest and most dynamic ecclesial movement from Brazil to Mexico”⁵. It officially came to Uruguay in 1934⁶. AC resulted from the efforts of Pope Pius XI during the 1930s in an effort to impede Marxism and Protestantism⁷. In the Southern Cone, clergymen first planted AC in Buenos Aires, Argentina in 1931 and modeled it after the AC in Italy,

⁵ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*. Pg. 37.

⁶ Villegas, Juan S.J. “Introducción a la Acción Católica en Argentina, Uruguay y San José, Costa Rica” pg. 3.

⁷ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits* pg 36.

which apparently served as an exemplary model for other lay movements⁸. For each foundation of an AC in the Southern cone countries, an Episcopal letter was written to initiate the process; such a letter exists marking the beginning of AC in Uruguay. The magazine *Boletín Eclesiástico* published the letter in its November 1934 issue. The official name for the letter states “Pastoral Letter of the Uruguayan Bishops: Plantation of Catholic Action in Uruguay 1934”⁹ The letter mandated that “all Catholics, without exception, are to be involved in this providential movement”¹⁰ and also gave a definition of the movement from Pope Pius XI himself: “the participation of the laity in the apostolic hierarchy of the Church.”¹¹

Various effects of the separation of Church and State in Uruguay following the 1919 Constitution appeared in society. For example, there was no taxation of church property, and the Church possessed all buildings built or in the process of being built at the time with government funds. Government leaders successfully “de-Christianized” the nation, and no one attempted to alter the constitution (neither in 1934 nor 1955). Additionally, there was no mention of religion in schools and the government served as responsible for the moral teachings in the school systems. The calendar, in particular, began to reflect the decline of the Church’s power in society. Church-related holidays such as Christmas and Epiphany consequently became “Family Day”, “Children’s Day”, and what was formally known as Semana Santa or Holy Week became “Tourism Week” (Monreal, 2001, pg. 140)¹². Furthermore, the government renamed many towns in

⁸ Villegas, Juan S.J. pg. 3.

⁹ Villegas, Juan S.J. pg 17.

¹⁰ Villegas, Juan S. J. pg 20.

¹¹ Villegas, Juan S. J. 18.

¹² Monreal 2001, pg. 140

Uruguay that possessed names reflecting religious saints or other things associated with the Church¹³.

Immigration to Uruguay contributed greatly to the country's process of secularization. Immigrant populations arrived in Uruguay from Spain, Italy, France, Germany and other European countries seeking freedom from lives that were formerly controlled by the Church and the government. Immigration from Spain might have been a result of the disastrous French invasion in the 19th century and the loss of nearly all of Spain's colonies in Latin America with the exception of Cuba and Puerto Rico. Furthermore, the Spanish Inquisition did not officially end until 1834. The Spanish Inquisition has been heavily criticized throughout Spanish literature, theatre, popular expressions, and other areas of culture. Criticism of the Spanish Inquisition not only appears in Spanish works, but also in international pieces. The Brothers Karamazov by Fyodor Dostoevsky of Russia, Cornelia Bororquia (Victim of the Inquisition) by France, and La Gesta del Marrano by Marcos Aguinis of Argentina demonstrate the Inquisition's far-reaching effects globally. Immigration from Italy The small country saw enormous growth in a short period: between 1830 and 1894, the population grew from 75,000 to over 800,000¹⁴.

Education:

One of the ways the Church exerted itself in Latin American societies was by incorporating confessional teaching into the universities and educational institutions.¹⁵

¹³ Da Costa, Nestor. 1999. pg 134

¹⁴ Grace 151

¹⁵ Chesnut, R. Andrew. Competitive Spirits. Pg. 19

Education and schools served as a combat zone between the Church and State in Uruguay. Schools in Uruguay taught confessional Catholic education from 1830 until 1877¹⁶. Prior to 1877 there were already signs of a movement away from compulsory Catholic education. In 1857, the Philanthropic Society created the country's first laic school in order to help provide free education for students whose parents had fallen victim to a recent malaria outbreak¹⁷. Much of the country's progression away from religion in education traces back to the Masons present in Uruguay at the time. The Masons created the Society of Friends of Popular Education in 1868. The country possessed only one university for many years from its founding in 1849. Rationalism and positivism heavily influenced the education given by the secular university, and "the intellectuals and professionals that have graduated from the university for decades have been agnostic, positivist, believers in science, and Reason above all"¹⁸.

One Uruguayan figure of particular importance to the development of Uruguayan identity and the visible separation of Church and State educationally is José Pedro Varela. Varela inspired widespread educational reform in Uruguay in the early 20th century. According to Varela, education in Uruguay was to be "mandatory, free of charge and laic". *Laic* in this sense of the word means completely void of religious affiliation or reference. The education reforms of neighboring Argentina and travels to Europe and the United States greatly influenced Varela¹⁹. He felt very strongly that schools should not abandon other studies for catechism, as it could easily be taught outside regular class

¹⁶ Ferrari, pg. 111.

¹⁷ Ferrari, pg. 111.

¹⁸ Grace, pg. 151.

¹⁹ Grace, pg. 151.

hours. He also felt that you could not force any child outside of his own desire or without the consent of his parents to study the Catholic catechism²⁰.

Adriana Aristimuño's article "Secularization: Challenges for Catholic Schools in Uruguay" from 2007 discussed how the Catholic school systems responded to the pressure of secularization: "How can a Catholic school system make a contribution in this context of secularization, finding creative ways to spread the Gospel to children, families and society, in a way that freedom of choice is respected?"²¹. Freedom of choice is invaluable to the Uruguayans, first as a land of immigrants who came to Uruguay in pursuit of political and social freedom, and later in the 1970s as the country suffered through a decade of dictatorship that suppressed these freedoms.

Families in Uruguay must pay for their student's private education at Catholic schools. Catholic schools cannot afford to pay for the tuition of their students in part because the government does not give the schools any funding; it relieves them of paying some social security taxes and allows them to utilize "municipal benefits"²².

Perhaps one of the most telling figures about the weakening of Catholic school education in Uruguay comes from recent numbers concerning attendance in the Catholic schools at the primary education level. Catholic schools educated approximately 14% of the 460,000 primary school students in the nation. As Grace's article explains, if we index the Catholic student population at 100 in 1991, by 1995, the value had fallen to 89, and by 2005, the value of the student population was at 73. The number of schools in the country has remained the same; however, the student population attending these Catholic schools plummeted by a quarter in less than 15 years. Therefore, if public schools are

²⁰ Ferrari, pg. 112.

²¹ Aristimuno. Pg. 153

²² Aristimuno, pg. 155.

increasing in quality, and remain free for families to attend, the Catholic schools must offer something else in order to compete with a high quality, laic, free public school education.²³

We cannot assume that parents sending their students to Catholic schools do so with hope of strengthening their child's interest in faith or related topics. In fact, in a survey interviewing parents of Catholic school students, only 13% of the families with attending children were Catholic themselves. The motivation to attend a Catholic school is not necessarily religious in nature. Parents claimed other factors motivated their decision to send their children to Catholic school, including the educational culture, social values and social capital²⁴. However, the private, non-Catholic institutions are out-performing the Catholic institutions on nation-wide standardized exams. A parent's educational background can also determine where a parent sends their child to school. Historically, parents with lower levels of education opt to send their children to public school, whereas 54% of parents who send their students to Catholic school have a degree of higher learning.

The future of inner-city Catholic schools is particularly uncertain. Catholic schools have shown a rise in middle-class students, and a decrease in their lower-income student population. Aristimuño states that this could show a trend developing away from assisting the poor on behalf of Catholic schools²⁵. This could result in diminished public opinion of the Catholic school system. Inner-city Catholic schools tend to face financial troubles because they are located in low-income areas. Financial troubles, along with the decreasing number of students attending Catholic schools as opposed to public or non-

²³ Grace

²⁴ Aristimuno, pg 158.

²⁵ Aristimuno, pg. 171.

Catholic private institutions, are responsible for the decrease in Catholic schools in Uruguay and other countries²⁶.

Quality of Life in Uruguay:

Compared to other Latin American nations, Uruguay has a relatively high quality of living for its citizens. Education is accessible, public, and free of charge. According to the 2009 Human Development Index (HDI)²⁷, Uruguay received an index score between .850 and .899. A score anywhere above .80 represents a “highly developed” country. In October of 2009, the country’s unemployment was a mere 6.4%, quite low compared to that of the United States in the same month (10.2% - the highest it had been in 26 years)²⁸. Of all the Latin American countries, Uruguay attains one of the lowest scores on the corruption index produced by Transparency International. One statistic that does not match the complexion of these other facts states that one in two Uruguayan children is born into poverty. One of the main challenges facing the Catholic Church is how to respond to widespread child poverty in Uruguay, along with appealing to the “rapport of the young people’s interests”²⁹.

Politics:

Modern day Uruguayan politics stem from the country’s origins in 1830 with the aforementioned Blanco and Colorado parties. The Colorado party enjoyed uninterrupted time in office from the 1860s until 1959, controlling the presidential office for the vast

²⁶ Aristimuno, pg. 171.

²⁷ 2009 Human Development Index – Uruguay.
http://hdr.undp.org/en/media/HDR_2009_EN_Complete.pdf see page 143.

²⁸ <http://www.nasdaq.com/aspx/stock-market-news-story.aspx?storyid=200912031817dowjonesdjonline000733&title=uruguay-unemployment-falls-sharply-to-64in-october-ine>

²⁹ Grace, 2002, pg. 22.

majority of Uruguayan history. These two parties dominated the political arena in Uruguay up until the 1960s, when a new party formulated. A combination of many smaller parties such as the Communist party, the Christian Socialist party, the Marxists, and more than a dozen others, the Broad Front (Frente Amplio) party became official in 1971. The political environment during this point in time was volatile. For the past 10 years, a group of urban guerrillas called the Movimiento de Liberación Nacional Tupamaros (National Liberation Movement - Tupamaros) formed to combat the Colorado government with rebellious acts. In a sense, the Tupamaros acted as Robin Hoods for Montevideo. The public considered them to be “stealing from the rich to give to the poor”. The Tupamaros held up banks and unveiled financial corruption on behalf of the Colorado party³⁰.

At first, the public reacted positively towards the Tupamaros, most of whom were young, educated 20-somethings. But the public’s reaction soured as acts of violence committed in the name of the Tupamaros arose throughout Montevideo. Because the organization was so secretive and loosely controlled, the actual ideology of the Tupamaros over time became unclear and contaminated with the ideologies of people who claimed to be Tupamaros without fully understanding the founding members’ intentions, which according to José Pepe Mujica and other former members of the MLN, never included plans for violence³¹.

Democratic elections returned after the Colorado dictatorship in 1984, and a Colorado president won the presidency. Since then, the complexion of Uruguayan politics has changed drastically. Many prominent politicians in Uruguay today are former

³⁰ La Revolucion Imposible, pg.

³¹ La Revolucion Imposible, pg.

members of the MLN Tupamaros. In 2004 Uruguay elected Tabaré Vázquez of the Broad Front party, the first president not belonging to either of the historically traditional Blanco or Colorado parties. Uruguay holds presidential elections every five years and voting is mandatory. If Uruguayan citizens fail to vote in the elections, unless they can prove that they are outside the country when voting takes place, they receive a considerable fine, upwards of the equivalent of \$300 U.S. dollars. This is significant to the study of religiosity and politics because it means the country as a whole, not a mere 40 or 50 percent, elects the president. It is also significant particularly concerning religiosity because when party leaders discuss social and political issues and either allude to or explicitly refer to religion in relation to those issues, voters begin to associate religion or lack thereof with a particular candidate or political party. One example of a politician's actions reflecting particular religious views would be Dr. Luis Alberto Lacalle's call for a "Te Deum" on March 1, 1990 directly after his presidential ascension to power. A "Te Deum (laudaremos)", which translates from Latin to "You, God (we praise)", is a hymn sung in the Catholic tradition in celebration of thanksgiving and peace. Lacalle, who is a practicing catholic, requested the "Te Deum" in thanksgiving of "a consolidation of the democracy"³².

On October 25, 2009, several political parties and their candidates vied for the presidency, including those representing the Partido Blanco, the Partido Colorado, the Frente Amplio, the Asamblea Popular and the Partido Independiente. In Uruguay, if any one candidate does not succeed in winning 50% or more of the vote, a run-off election must take place the following month between the two most successful candidates of the initial election. In the October elections, José "Pepe" Mujica and Danilo Astori of the

³² Ferrari, Alejandro. "Iglesia y Estado en el Uruguay: Ayer y Hoy". Soleriana 15. 2001. pg 122

Frente Amplio nearly succeeded all other candidates by winning 47.96% of the total vote³³. They participated in a run-off against the Partido Blanco's candidates Dr. Luis Alberto Lacalle and Jorge Larrañaga, who earned 29.1% of the total vote in the October elections. The two candidates represented very different ideologies and plans. Lacalle had already served a term as Uruguay's president from 1994 to 1999, during which his presidency suffered from rumors of corruption, hindering his campaign this past fall.

Mujica is somewhat of a political hero for Uruguay. During his time as an MLN Tupamaro, he spent 12 years imprisoned and suffered repeatedly from torture and solitary confinement. He appeals greatly to the lower class. He conducted much of his campaigning for the October and November presidential elections using public transportation and carrying a humble backpack. He also demonstrates his simplistic lifestyle through hobbies such as gardening. Mujica's image suffers at times because of occasional lack of tact when speaking to national and international reporters, particularly those of Argentine origin. The Catholic Church and other religious groups have not necessarily given outright support in favor of Dr. Lacalle; however, they have spoken favorably of his stance on abortion issues and in doing so have shown support for his candidacy.

On November 29, 2009, Uruguay held its final presidential election for the 2010-2015 presidency. Political experts anticipated Mujica would be the next president, while the Lacalle campaign anticipated a silent revolution from its voters to overcome the expected outcome. In the end, the Mujica-Astori coalition won the election for presidency

³³ <http://www.elpais.com.uy/especial/elecciones/2009/>

with 52.6% of the vote while Lacalle-Larrañaga earned 43.3%³⁴. President Elect José Mujica assumed the presidency March 11, 2010. Mujica has explicitly stated his intentions to follow the diplomacy of the incumbent President Vázquez. This includes allowing transgender individuals to change their names on passports and national identification cards. Mujica claims that the de-penalization of abortion is the decision of the legislature, not him, but that if the house and senate discuss abortion and create a law to pass it, Mujica will not veto it.

Part of Uruguay's political history involving the church involves the laws that were passed reinforcing secularization. Apart from the well-known visible changes that occurred at the end of the 19th century, these laws ensured punishment for those who failed to obey them. On August 24, 1877, the Law of Common Education passed, stating "The teaching of catholic education is obligatory in the schools of the State, with an exception for the students that profess other faith and whose parents oppose that they receive the Catholic education"³⁵. Furthermore, in 1909, the law eliminating Catholic education from schools of the State passed, stating "Article 1: Under the promulgation of this law, all teaching and religious practices in schools of the state are abolished." According to Ferrari, Article 2 explains the punishment for teachers who oppose this law³⁶. Even further, a law passed suppressing the teaching of Latin on December 13, 1910³⁷.

³⁴ <http://www.elpais.com.uy/especial/elecciones/2009/>

³⁵ Ferrari, pg. 113.

³⁶ Ferrari, pg. 113.

³⁷ Ferrari, pg 114.

Besides laws that only pertain to education, many others passed in the last years of the 19th century and beginning of the 20th to further displace the church from power.

They include:

January 16, 1885: Prohibition of Forming New convents

May 22, 1885: Law of Obligatory civil Matrimony

September 14, 1885: Law of convents

After this first wave of secularizing laws, a second wave came in the 20th century:

April 24, 1901: Prohibition of European Religious Visitors

July 6, 1906: Prohibition of Religious Imagery in Dependents of the commission of charity

1907: Suppression to References to God and the Gospels in Parliament.

October 26, 1907: Law of Absolute Divorce

May 22, 1911: Suppression of Official Honors During Religious Acts

May 22, 1911: Laicization of the Military code.

1913: Women allowed the right to initiate absolute divorce

In a response to secularization, the Catholic Church began printing newspapers such as *El Mensajero del Pueblo*, or The Town Messenger, which had publications from 1871 to 1875. In 1873 the newspaper published an article criticizing the “obscene images” in the stained glass windows and doors of the Old Market, or Viejo Mercado³⁸.

Below is an excerpt from the publication in reference to the church’s reaction.

“The Catholic newspaper "El Mensajero del Pueblo" of Montevideo dedicated an enraged editorial attack in response to Article 59. Article 59 textually establishes that:

³⁸ Beretta, 3.

“Religious teaching may only be given outside class hours, before or after school begins; in the case that any parent of any child, subject to the resident scholar obligation of the district, solicits through writing to the District Commission that the Catholic teachings or catechism be excluded from school”.

Varela reacted with indignation to the unjust and tendentious attack to this article and wrote to the Newspaper “El Siglo” (The Century”).

There was also *El Bien Público* (The Public Good) which was less successful and only had one year of publication in 1878³⁹.

There are a few ways in which we can interpret the separation of church and state in Uruguay based on different schools of thought. It is possible to interpret the separation as one of three distinct things: a neutral or laic separation, a benevolent separation or a hostile separation (Ferrari, 117 and Vázquez, 145). Ferrari’s article claims that while the Uruguayan constitution itself holds a very laicized attitude toward secularization, it is best to examine the application of the constitution to see how the Uruguayan State acts in respect to religion and secularization. Ferrari says “We can affirm three things: first that Uruguay recognizes the existence of a religious phenomenon, second that Uruguay views the religious with a positive value, granting it tax exemption, and third that Uruguay is a State of religious freedom”⁴⁰. Also, “affirming that ‘the State does not sustain religion of any sort’ does not mean that laity becomes a negative instrument against the religious”⁴¹. These comments do not claim that Uruguay is a highly religious country, but they do help to dispel the stereotype that Uruguay is antireligious. In fact, Uruguay harbors an environment where religions of all kinds are tolerated; in the end, Uruguay creates a fairly pro-religion environment.

³⁹ Ferrari, pg. 115

⁴⁰ Ferrari, pg. 118.

⁴¹ Barbé, 1988, pg. 25

While Uruguay creates opportunity for its citizens to determine religiosity for themselves, how does the country react when religious symbols suddenly appear in the public sphere in highly noticeable forms?

Juan Pablo II

One of the most defining moments in Uruguayan history in relation to the religious and the secular revolves around the visit of the catholic pope to Uruguay in the 1980s. Pope John Paul II visited Uruguay in March of 1987 and again in May of 1988. In March of 1987, Pope John Paul's visit involved a Eucharist ceremony and a speech directed to the Uruguayans. Over 300,000 turned out for the visit, which took place in the busiest intersection of Montevideo at the corner of Bulevar General Artigas and Avenida Italia. Since the Pope's visit to Uruguay, a large, white cross that stands over 100 feet high has been placed in the exact location that Pope John Paul spoke to the Uruguayans and conducted the Eucharist. In addition to the cross, which is visible for miles down Bulevar Artigas in either direction, a 12-foot tall bronze statue of the Pope now sits directly below the cross, further commemorating the occasion. The placement of the cross generated heated discussion in both chambers of the legislature, as the symbol is not characteristic nor representative of the laic state; however, the cross and statue are still in place, with nearly 4,000 vehicles passing by the cross everyday at this intersection.

Pope John Paul II spoke on the Uruguayan secular strength to build a case for the faithful. Here are some of the words Pope John Paul II spoke to the Uruguayans as he arrived at the Carrasco Airport in Montevideo on March 31, 1987:

“Your country has highlighted its priority to encourage social progress, the participation of all toward the common good and the joint force oriented to the promotion of education and culture. In your country, you coexist in harmony with diverse social and political options, and with groups that profess different religious beliefs; all of which exist in a favorable climate of respect and tolerance. It is well known, and it pleases me to say it, that the Uruguayans are a people of heart, that know how to love and value friendship”.⁴²

An example of the discussion produced by Uruguayan legislators concerning the cross appears in the May 4th 2005 Legislative session in Montevideo. Señor Abdala contributed to the discussion: “Every day I read articles about *laicidad* that come and go like a pendulum, that seem to not understand what *laicidad* implies, that it is a determined neutrality, a combination of values, a form of freedom that I think must be understood. If we are not understanding what *laicidad* means, we are also not understanding the Uruguayan identity”⁴³. During the legislature’s discussion of the significance of Uruguayan *laicidad*, a senator mentioned the existence of other public religious symbols in addition to the Papal Cross and the statue of Pope John Paul II. In Montevideo, a statue of Buddha sits in Parque Rodó. A monument stands in recognition and memory to the Jewish community of World War II. In February of 2004 a statue of the Umbanda Goddess of the Sea Iemanjá appeared on the Rambla⁴⁴ in Montevideo; the placement of the statue received no complaints from the public. The Papal Cross, however, remains by and far the most visible symbol of religiosity in the public sphere apart from cathedrals themselves.

⁴² http://www.vatican.va/holy_father/john_paul_ii/speeches/1987/march/documents/hf_jp-ii_spe_19870331_arrivo-uruguay_sp.html

⁴³

<http://www.parlamento.gub.uy/sesiones/AccesoSesiones.asp?Url=/sesiones/diarios/camara/html/20050504d0017.htm>

⁴⁴ The Rambla is a long walkway in Montevideo that runs the length of the Rio de la Plata’s coastline for the city. The Rambla is a renown symbol of the city. Montevideans use the boardwalk for walks along the coast, exercise, and a place for socializing.

On August 9, 2000, the Uruguayan President Dr. Jorge Batlle created the *Comisión para la Paz*, or the Commission for Peace. The commission's purpose was to investigate and resolve the disappearances of Uruguayans during the years of the Colorado military dictatorship. Up until 2000, the government had only somewhat investigated into these matters. The members of the commission included the Archbishop of Montevideo Nicolas Cotugno, José Claudio Williman (lawyer and politician for the Partido Nacional), Gonzalo Fernández (criminal lawyer, Frente Amplio representative, adviser to Tabaré Vázquez) Carlos Ramela Regueles (lawyer representing the Colorado party, advisor to Jorge Batlle), Luis Pérez Aguirre (Jesuit priest who founded the Uruguayan section of SERPAJ (Servicio Paz y Justicia)), and José D'Elía (syndicalist)³. On this commission, as Ferrari's article points out, there were two clergy members who played important roles in this organization, one of whom was the archbishop. In April of 2003, the commission issued its final report with its findings during the three-year period of research. The commission represented a change in government transparency compared to the previous governments. The fact that the Catholic Church's archbishop played such a vital role in a truth commission of this caliber reflects well on the Church and its services to the Uruguayan people for social justice.

From its very first moments, Uruguay offered a different attitude toward religious institutions than was visible anywhere else in Latin America at the time. This chapter explains the church's loss of influence in the public sphere as the government claimed responsibility to cemeteries, public records, and the institution of matrimony. In Uruguayan politics, political figures and clergy members use certain topics and political power in order to communicate their interests to voters and the religious community.

Reform figures such as José Pedro Varela revolutionized the country's education system and brought certain views pertaining to confessional teaching in public schools. However, the Catholic Church remains active in pursuing the younger generations through Acción Católica and leading investigations on government transparency such as the Peace Commission. We now turn to a chapter that will address religion in Uruguay and its relation to Uruguayan identity, a fundamental part to understanding the Uruguayan equation for religiosity. Chapter Two explores possible answers to these questions: Does the glorification of the gaucho character reinforce Uruguayan masculinity, or reinforce things such as confession or other acts of humility as being not masculine? What does Uruguay's exaltation of the gaucho do for machismo and/or religiosity?

Uruguayan Identity

When European explorers first set foot into Uruguay, it acquired the nickname "La Tierra de Ningún Provecho" – in English, the Land without Benefit. While Montevideo would eventually develop into a highly coveted natural port city, and the value of the fertile Uruguayan pampas region earned appreciation much later, it was first a land that could yield no profit. Uruguay's value became clear many years after a man by the name of Hernandarias introduced cattle to the Uruguayan countryside. When it became evident how well cattle and other livestock thrived in Uruguay's temperate seasons and flat basin plains, interest in the country quickly followed.

Intricately linked with the cattle and countryside of Uruguay is the figure of the *gaucho*. The Uruguayan gaucho is central to Uruguayan identity and is a figure in which Uruguayans take great pride. The gauchos lived in solitude in the Uruguayan countryside,

lawless, homeless, and often depending upon nature and the elements for survival. They were men of few words and found little interest in money or material things. They resolved conflicts on their own terms, and if disagreements arose between two gauchos, knife fighting was a common form of resolution for they did not fear death. Gaucho museums in Montevideo glorify the gaucho figure, and after the disappearance of the gaucho in the countryside due to imperialism and land reform, a literary genre called *Literature Gauchesca* arose in which authors would write stories and poems as if the speaker of the work was indeed a gaucho. For the Uruguayans, the gaucho embodies many things, most importantly freedom, the common man, and appreciation for nature; the rejection of materialism, a “heroic conscience”, and other noble characteristics.

According to *La Construcción de la Identidad Uruguaya*⁴⁵, there are several significant periods in understanding overall Latin American regional identity. The first comes from the conquest and colonialism of the region by European imperialists, and stemming from this, the development of the figure of the Indígena as the inferior “other”. This stage applies to Uruguay as early as the 1500s with the “discovery” of Uruguay by Juan Diaz de Solís, the Portuguese foundation of the town of Colonia del Sacramento in 1680 and the eventual foundation of the capital city of Montevideo by the Spanish in 1726. Uruguay would gain its independence from Argentina and Brazil in 1830, and relatively quickly after that occurred the massacre of the Guaraníes in the department of Salsipuedes under the command of the Colorado president Fructuoso Rivera.

The second stage in understanding Latin American identity comes from the formation of independent states as the imperialism of the day crumbled. Uruguay’s population and customs reflect a heavy immigrant presence. Particularly with the

⁴⁵ Laurino, Carolina González. *La Construcción de la Identidad Uruguaya*. Taurus: Montevideo. 2001.

massacre at Salsipuedes, the population quickly took on a homogenous appearance that mirrored that of the predominantly Spanish and Italian immigrants flooding into the small country. Attached to the formation of the independent state were qualities such as “pensamiento ilustrado”, or the rise of the erudite scholar, spiritual rationalism, and “el positivismo” as means of influencing social definitions.

The third stage is born out of World War I and the Great Depression that followed. In Uruguay, an era known as El Primer Batllismo – or the First Batllism, preceded the Great Depression. José Batlle y Ordóñez was president of Uruguay 1903-1907 and again 1911-1915. He died October 20, 1929, a mere nine days before the New York stock market crash. Uruguay favorably remembers his presidential terms as eras of progress. Batlle y Ordóñez himself was agnostic, and in 1906 during his first term in office, the government banned the use of crucifixes in hospitals. They then banned the use of the word “God” or any reference to religion from government documents.

We now turn to Chapter 2 where we will examine the main religious groups who are competing for relevancy in the Uruguayan religious marketplace today.

Chapter 2: Religious Competition: The Dissolution of the Catholic Monopoly and the Emergence of Competitors

Because the monopoly of Catholicism never anchored itself in Uruguay as it did in other Latin American countries and identities, Uruguay serves as a host to many different religions and their various denominations. Rodney Stark proposes the idea that “rates of participation in religious activities are greater in unregulated spiritual economies than in monopolistic ones”⁴⁶. The greatest variation in religions exists inside Montevideo, where approximately half of the country’s population of 3 million resides. In order to paint an accurate picture of the Uruguayan religious panorama, this chapter will discuss the most dominant religions present in Montevideo, which present themselves in the form of Christianity, African Diaspora religions such as Umbanda and Candomblé, and then non-religious affiliations such as atheism.

Christianity

The majority of both the Montevidean and Uruguayan populations are followers of Christianity, over 65.6% in 2001 (Da Costa, pg.91). Inside Christianity, we will focus on three denominations: Catholicism, Evangelism and Pentecostalism, as these are the three most prominent denominations and all very visible in news about Uruguayan religiosity.

⁴⁶ Finke, Roger and Rodney Stark. *The Churching of America, 1776-1990*. New Brunswick, New Jersey. Rutgers University Press. 1992.

Catholicism

“Although Latin America is considered the world’s most Catholic region, historically not more than 15 percent of the population have been active practitioners of the faith.”⁴⁷ The majority of Christians in Uruguay identify themselves as Catholics., as do most Latin Americans; however, this identity is rapidly changing, especially in Uruguay. Catholics in Uruguay constituted 54% of the population in 2001, although this number is constantly changing, sometimes with notable differences⁴⁸. Overall, the population that calls itself Catholic has diminished 18 percent between 1964 and 2001, from 72% to 54%. If the population continues to diminish at this rate, it should be approximately 50.5% by this year, and by 2050, less than 30% of the population would claim to be Catholic. The statistic from Chesnut’s book parallels perfectly the same statistics from Da Costa’s work – on page 41 Graph 3 features data on the various degrees of practice among Catholics in Uruguay. According to this graph, less than 15% of the Uruguayan Catholic population considers themselves practicing or very practicing of Catholicism. Da Costa touches on the diversity inside the Catholic population in Montevideo. Based on the results of his surveys, he summarizes the Montevidean Catholic population as one that “prays with varied frequency, does not read the Bible or other religious books, does not attend Mass, is mainly female, and vote more often for the Encuentro Progresista than for any other political party”⁴⁹. The majority does not believe in papal infallibility nor do they believe in the existence of the devil⁵⁰.

⁴⁷ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*, pg. 9

⁴⁸ Da Costa, Néstor, pg 91.

⁴⁹ Da Costa, Nestor. Pg 169

⁵⁰ Da Costa, Nestor. Pg 169

In the case of Pentecostal Catholics or Charismatics of the CCR, the demographic shows slightly different results. According to Chesnut, there are three overarching characteristics that define the Charismatic population: solidly middle-class, female, and formerly active, not nominal, Roman Catholic⁵¹. Few Charismatics are illiterate (less than 1% in Brazil) and the majority have greater than a high school education. Whereas Protestant Pentecostals are often moved by difficult financial situations or illness towards joining the Pentecostal Church, Charismatic Catholics commonly join out of “psychological problems such as early childhood trauma”⁵². Chesnut explains that it is difficult to access information about each Latin American countries’ CCR. Outside of the archetypal Charismatic Catholic, the more impoverished Charismatic Catholic requests more direct, divine methods of alleviating their sorrows⁵³. Exorcism appears frequently at Pentecostal services, and in the lower socioeconomic portions of the Charismatic Catholic population it is not entirely absent. Sometimes lay members of the CCR perform exorcisms inside the church during the service or unofficially outside the church walls⁵⁴.

Evangelical Protestants

According to the surveys of Da Costa, Evangelical Protestants pray frequently and read both the Bible and other religious books. Women, as in Catholicism, represent the majority of those faithful. Evangelical Protestants are most commonly found among the

⁵¹ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*. Pg. 74

⁵² Chesnut, R. Andrew *Competitive Spirits* pg. 79.

⁵³ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*, pg. 81

⁵⁴ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits* pg. 81

middle-lower and lower socio-economic stratum. Evangelicals frequently vote for the Partido Colorado⁵⁵.

Pentecostals:

Pentecostalism enjoys “unparalleled success”⁵⁶ in comparison with other religions in Latin America. A feature that distinguishes Pentecostalism from Evangelicals is the use of *glossolalia*, or the act of speaking in tongues. The *pneuma*, Greek for spirit, is a focal point for the Pentecostal faith – pneumatics “is the branch of Christian theology that is concerned with matters of the Holy Spirit...any faith-based organization that puts direct communication with the Spirit or spirits at the center of its belief system”⁵⁷. This differs greatly with the Roman Catholic interpretation of pneumacentrism and the relationship between the believer and the Holy Spirit. There are roughly 50 million Latin American Pentecostals⁵⁸ that typically possess lower incomes and less education than the general population⁵⁹. Pentecostals in Latin America tend to possess one thing in common – similar former religious backgrounds. Many Pentecostals today were former nominal, or twilight, Catholics⁶⁰.

One reason in particular Pentecostalism continues to reign in nominal Catholics lies in its strong appeal to women and its diminished economic gap between the clergy and the believing community. Women are often responsible for spreading the faith among their families, other women, and in their community; men conversely often take up responsibilities in the church itself⁶¹. The frequent economic gap between Catholic

⁵⁵ Da Costa, Nestor. Pg. 170.

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⁵⁷ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*. Pg. 5.

⁵⁸ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*. Pg. 40.

⁵⁹ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*. Pg. 41

⁶⁰ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*. Pg. 41

⁶¹ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*. Pg. 43

clergy and their laity does not exist as often between Pentecostal leaders and their believing communities. This makes Pentecostal ministry much more likely to be successful because all involved share the same income status⁶².

Afro-Brazilian Religions

One of the movements receiving a great deal of press in religious nationalism for Uruguay is the rise of Afro-Brazilian religions such as Umbanda and Candomblé. In actuality, a very small percentage of the population practices an Afro-Brazilian religion, but the small existing population is growing quickly and attracts the attention of many.

Umbanda

Compared to the Abrahamic traditions, Umbanda is relatively new, originating in Brazil during the 18th century. It involves the syncretism of Catholicism and other Afro-Brazilian religions. Some similarities between Catholicism and Umbanda include the belief in an all-powerful creator being, God in the Catholic tradition and Orixá Olorum in the Umbanda tradition, the use of saints or “*Orixás*”, and the practice of charity. Umbandists believe they can achieve reincarnation through Karmic practice and charitable actions.

Unlike Catholicism, Umbanda incorporates the use of spiritism and séances; followers bring offerings of food, drink, cigars, and other goods to Olorum. Ritual practice is also common in Umbanda, which uses snail shells or *búzios* for divination to predict the future. Apart from Olorum, other central figures include *Preto-Velho* and *Preta-Velha* (Old Black Man and Old Black Woman), and the *pai-de-santo* and *mãe-de-santo*. Umbanda worship services take place in areas called *terreiros* (backyards) because when Umbanda worship initially began, the worshippers and *pães-de-santo* suffered

⁶² Chestnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*. Pg. 43

persecution for their beliefs, so most worship services took place inside the homes and in the backyards of the *pães* where unwanted attention would not be drawn to the service. The most important members of an Umbandan worship service are the priest, the medium, the initiates and the general lay members. The medium is a psychic that interacts with the spiritual world in order to communicate to the lay members the ideas from ancestors.

The peak of Umbanda worship numbers came in the 1970s in Brazil, with “30 million practitioners in a population of 120 million” Brazilians⁶³.

In order to understand how Umbanda is influential in Uruguay, it is necessary to understand the origins of Umbanda in Brazil where it first gained momentum and even today successfully gains converts from various religions. The elements of African religions brought to Brazil by African slaves have existed in Brazil, especially along the coastal regions, for hundreds of years. Between Africans of extremely diverse backgrounds and languages, cultures and religious beliefs, a plethora of African traditions were maintained in Brazil for many years and on top of this were tolerated by Portuguese authorities. Authorities divided up the Africans into groups called *nações* or nations upon arrival based on ethnic groups⁶⁴.

The Catholic Church in Brazil during the critical period for syncretism possessed very little influence over the Brazilian people because the amount of money and control the Portuguese crown allowed it limited its "sphere of action". Because of this, Catholics

⁶³ Brown, Diana De G.; Mario Bick. “Religion, Class, and Context: Continuities and Discontinuities in Brazilian Umbanda”. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 14, No. 1, *Frontiers of Christian Evangelism*. (Feb., 1987), pg. 74.

⁶⁴ Brown, Diana De G.; Mario Bick. “Religion, Class, and Context: Continuities and Discontinuities in Brazilian Umbanda”. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 14, No. 1, *Frontiers of Christian Evangelism*. (Feb., 1987), pg 75.

interested in incorporating African slaves into the church could not utilize a domineering attitude; rather they had to display tolerance of African traditions in order to gain their interest. In the end, tolerance of African traditions and the spread of Catholicism among the African *nações* led to a blending of the two.

It is important to point out that Umbanda is not practiced solely by practitioners of African heritage – in fact, it is quite the opposite. A wide variety of races, ethnicities, socio-economic groups and geographical backgrounds share the Umbandan faith. Especially in the 1940s some of the “early Umbandistas included small scale businessmen, government bureaucrats, military officers, journalists, teachers and lawyers. They represented the upwardly-mobile, white middle sectors”⁶⁵. It was first hypothesized that if Afro-Brazilians were educated, the appeal of Umbanda would dissipate and the appeal of Catholicism would increase⁶⁶. But what we actually see in Umbanda throughout the years is a simultaneous re-Africanizing of the religion along with the rise of a truly Brazilian entity – a religion that has incorporated elements that by themselves are not Brazilian (African religions, Catholicism) but together make up something now an integral part of Brazilian identity.

How does all this apply to Umbanda in Uruguay? For one, the population of Uruguay is vastly different from that of Brazil. The difference in population size is extreme – Brazil has upwards of 160 million inhabitants now, whereas Uruguay has just over 3 million. In addition, the complexions of the two countries are entirely different.

⁶⁵ Brown, Diana De G.; Mario Bick. “Religion, Class, and Context: Continuities and Discontinuities in Brazilian Umbanda”. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 14, No. 1, *Frontiers of Christian Evangelism*. (Feb., 1987), pg. 80

⁶⁶ Brown, Diana De G.; Mario Bick. “Religion, Class, and Context: Continuities and Discontinuities in Brazilian Umbanda”. *American Ethnologist*, Vol. 14, No. 1, *Frontiers of Christian Evangelism*. (Feb., 1987), pg.76.

Uruguay's population has a heavily Italian heritage – well over 90% of the population can trace its family ties to Italy. The African population on the other hand is miniscule in comparison with that of Brazil's – less than 5% of the population in Uruguay is African. This number can be misleading in regards to the visibility of the African community in Uruguay (particularly in Montevideo). Weekly displays of candombe, music with strong African roots, are very popular among the Montevidean community. Each barrio or neighborhood has its own candombe group that plays at sundown on Sunday evenings. The African population inside Montevideo is especially visible during these performances, and Uruguay proudly refers to itself as the candombe capital of the world outside of Africa.

Racial discrimination inside the Southern Cone is particularly relevant when discussing Umbanda. Whereas Brazil provides a heterogeneous people for the practice of all religions, Uruguay is extremely homogeneous. The percentage of Uruguayans that practice Umbanda is the greatest of the non-Christian religions – 2% of those interviewed in the Da Costa surveys practice Umbanda. While a seemingly small percentage of Montevideans practice Umbanda, a much greater percentage of the capital's population has participated at some point or another in Umbandan ceremonies, some 20.2% in 1994 and 13.3% in 2001⁶⁷. So while a significant portion of the Montevidean population has experimented with Umbanda, very few are actually associated with Umbanda. The overall reaction of Montevideans to Umbanda is negative: 54% of Montevideans have a negative or very negative impression of the religion⁶⁸. Da Costa's overall profile of Umbandistas describes them as a congregation that does not pray, that does read religious

⁶⁷ Da Costa, Nestor. Pg 153

⁶⁸ Da Costa, Nestor. Pg 153

books but not the Bible, with an average age between 30 and 39 years old. They typically comprise the middle to lower socio-economic stratum of Montevideo, and usually vote for the Encuentro Progresista. The majority are women, and Umbandists believe in reincarnation (unlike believers of other religions), in the existence of life after death, and furthermore in the existence of the devil. According to Chesnut, many Umbandistas were nominal Catholics prior to converting to Umbanda⁶⁹.

Candomblé

Candomblé differs from Umbanda in several areas. Whereas Umbanda delights in its Brazilian heritage, and many of the names of Umbandan saints and figures possess purely Brazilian names, Candomblé represents an Afrocentric religion, with no basis of national identity. Blood sacrifices very rarely present themselves in Umbandan services, with the exception of services that occur in lower income areas – Candomblé, on the other hand, readily uses blood sacrifices from fowl or goats in honor of the saints. Upper and middle-class Umbandistas view this practice as “primitive Africanism”. In Brazil, 74 percent of Candomblecistas are city dwellers, similar to the 69 percent of Umbandistas that reside in urban areas⁷⁰.

It can be difficult to determine the actual number of practicing Umbandistas and Candomblecistas considering many on paper identify themselves by their former religious selves, nominal Catholics. The social stigma that continues to surround the African Diaspora religions of Latin America causes believers to not identify themselves with Umbanda or Candomblé. The gap between surveyed numbers and the actual number of practitioners can be staggering:

⁶⁹ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*. Pg. 110

⁷⁰ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*. Pg. 112

“1990 census figures in Brazil reveal that only 1.5 percent of the population claim to belong to African-Brazilian religions...researchers tend to concur on an Umbanda population of 20 to 30 percent...In all likelihood, the African-Brazilian religions can claim roughly the same number of followers, 30 million, as Protestantism”⁷¹ This should be kept in mind when viewing statistical information about the number of believers for each religion in Uruguay in the following chapter, which we will look at shortly.

Atheism/Agnosticism

Going against the grain of most Latin American religiosity, Uruguay has a significantly large non-believing population. According to Da Costa’s surveys, atheists comprise 12% of the population, and other sources cite even higher numbers than this. The United States Department of State produced a report concerning religious freedom in Uruguay for 2007. The Department of State’s Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights and Labor cited from a survey that appeared in 2004 in the national newspaper *El Pais* (Montevideo). In this survey, 54% of the population called itself Roman Catholic, 9% believers without religious affiliation, 5% Protestant, 6% evangelical Protestant, and 26% of those surveyed claimed to be non-believers. Aforementioned, possible explanations for high rates of non-believers would include the influence of rationalism and positivism in the country’s largest and longest-standing university, the promotion of intellectualism and the value of “Reason above all”. Da Costa profiles this group as strongly anchored in the age group of 19 to 29 year olds. More men than women call themselves atheists, and a much greater percentage of the higher social stratum identifies itself as atheist than

⁷¹ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*. Pg. 107.

other socio-economic religious groups do. A great portion of the middle class identifies as atheist. They typically vote for the Encuentro Progresista⁷². Da Costa also points out that small groups of atheists believe in reincarnation, in life after death and in the existence of the devil, and it is common to find atheists attending public expressions of popular religion⁷³. An example of this might be the events that take place February 2 for followers of Umbanda in honor of the goddess *Iemanjá*. Thousands gather on the beach to pay homage to the goddess of the sea by lighting candles and placing flowers on the water and dancing and singing to her. The fact that not only Umbandistas but Uruguayans of all different religious backgrounds appear to participate in public displays of religiosity like this one shows the diversification of the religious market from its initial beginnings and perhaps suggests that Uruguayans do not feel inhibited from experimenting spiritually with other religions than their own.

Up to this point, this thesis examines the history of religion in Uruguay, different facets of Uruguayan identity, various gender-related issues pertaining to religiosity in Uruguay and the most prevalent religions in Uruguay. It will now examine primary sources in the form of national and international surveys, which examine various components of religiosity in Uruguay to see how the data contributes to Uruguay's increasing religiosity and declining institutionalism.

⁷² Da Costa, Nestor. Pg 170

⁷³ Da Costa, Nestor. pg. 170.

Chapter 3: Statistical Data and Survey Findings

The statistical data for this thesis came from both Uruguayan sources and international research databases. The first set of data comes from the results of surveys conducted by Nestor Da Costa in Montevideo. In 2004, these surveys questioned 400 individuals in Montevideo. Part 2 of his book *Religion y Sociedad en el Uruguay del siglo XXI* reveals the results of these surveys. Previous chapters discuss much of the data to these surveys. In this chapter, the survey data of Da Costa is compared with the results of other surveys conducted on religiosity in Montevideo and Uruguay.

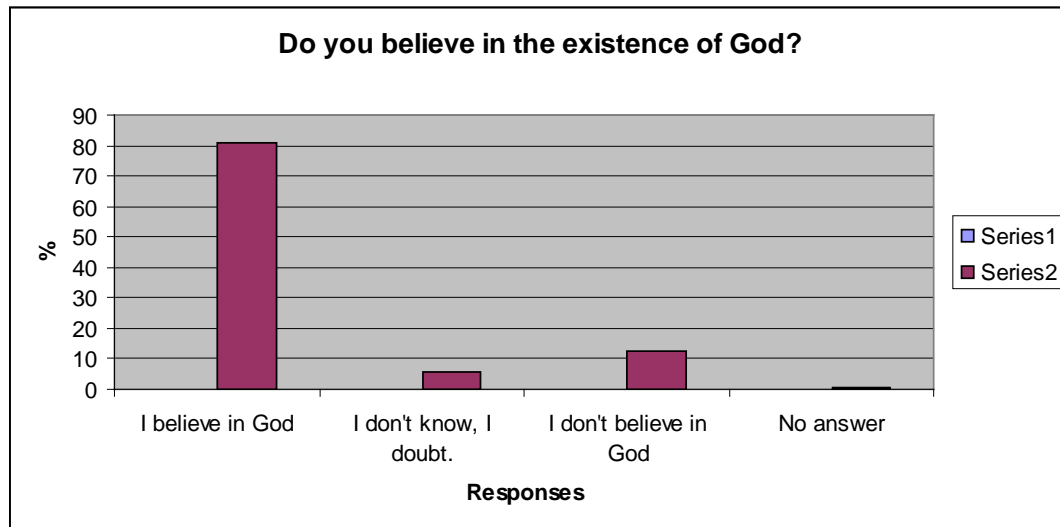
Two sources that provided information from face-to-face interview surveys are the surveys conducted by Nestor Da Costa in his national work and the World Values Survey.

Nestor Da Costa's book *Religión y Sociedad en el Uruguay del siglo XXI* provides valuable insight into the study of religious nationalism in Uruguay with his study that specifically focuses on the capital city of Montevideo in 2003. The book provides a panorama of the country's religiosity. Da Costa retrieves primary source information from surveys administered to Montevideans in 2001 and compared this information to surveys asking similar questions from 1956, 1966 and 1996. These surveys will be compared with surveys conducted by World Values Surveys and the Pew Foundation for the purpose of this thesis.

It is noteworthy that urban populations experienced low levels of religiosity in comparison with rural areas, which comprise roughly 50% of Uruguay's population. In the 2001 thesis, the survey reported that over 80% of 400 Montevideans surveyed professed belief in God (graph 1). When asked to define themselves religiously, 54% of

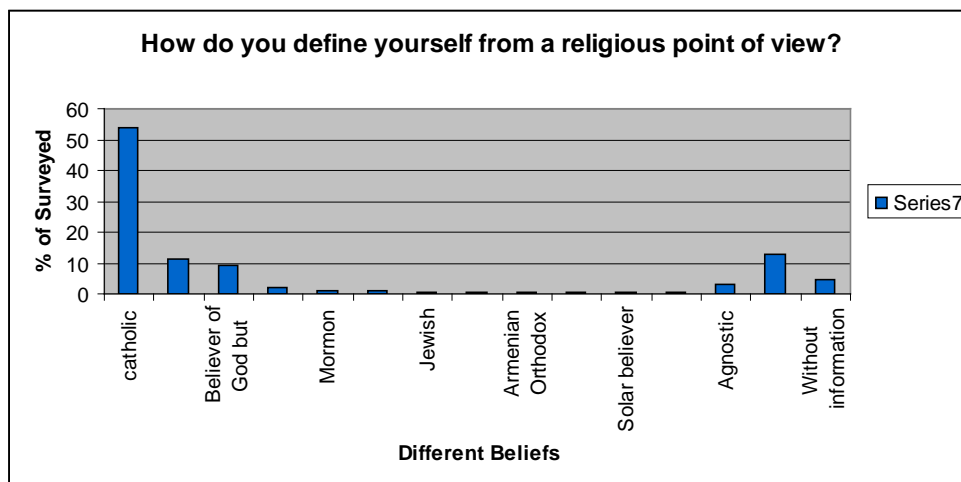
those surveyed defined themselves as Catholics (graph 2). One interest of this thesis lies in what these self-defined Montevidean Catholics believe and practice. According to Da Costa's survey, 47.7% of Catholics consider themselves non-practicing, and 36.1% consider themselves "not very practicing" (graph 3). Belief in God among Catholics in Montevideo is, as might be expected, very high (96.3%).

GRAPH 1: Do you believe in the existence of God?



Religión y Sociedad en el Uruguay del siglo XXI - Néstor Da Costa

GRAPH 2: How do you define yourself from a religious point of view?



Religión y Sociedad en el Uruguay del siglo XXI - Néstor Da Costa

GRAPH 3: Religious Definition by Level of Practice

Religious Definition by Level of Practice

	Catholic	Christian Non-Catholic	Umbanda	Mormon	Jehovah's Witness
Very Practicing	2.8	29.7	37.5	25	66.7
Practicing	11.6	21.6	25	50	
Somewhat Practicing	36.1	16.2	37.5		33.3
Not Practicing	47.7	29.7			
No Answer	1.9	2.7		25	

From *Religión y Sociedad en el Uruguay del siglo XXI* - Néstor Da Costa

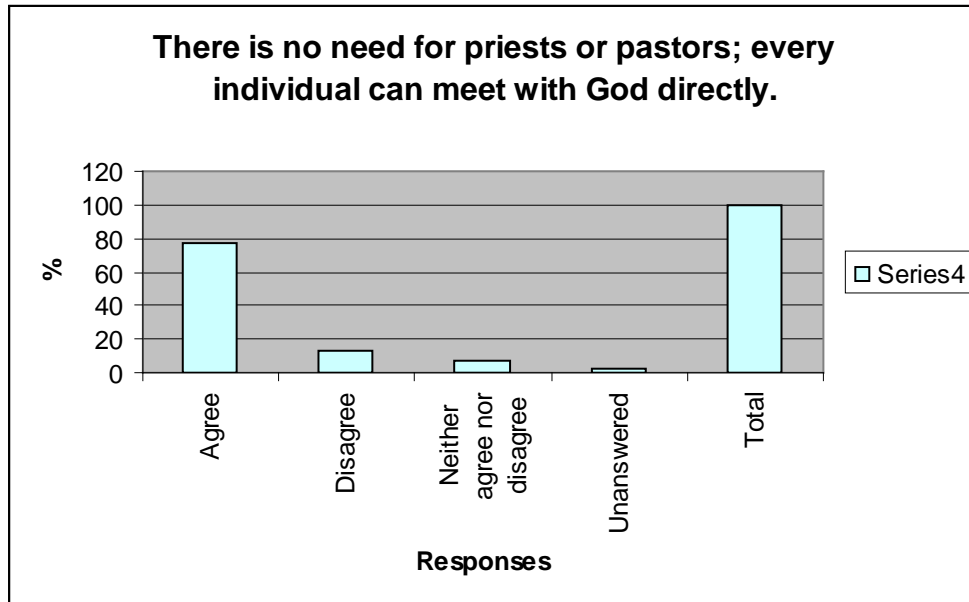
However, the Catholic population's reaction to some of the most central tenets of Catholicism produces interesting numbers. Sixty-three percent do not believe in the existence of the devil and 64% neither believe in the existence of hell nor believe in papal infallibility. Twenty-five percent do not believe in the existence of sin, and over half of Catholics do not believe in the reincarnation (graph 4). The overall reaction of Montevideans to the Catholic Church as a social institution is very positive: only 12.8% of the population has a negative view of the Catholic Church, leaving over 87% of the population surveyed feeling very positive, positive, neutral or indifferent to the church. Church attendance and the use of ecclesiastic intervention are not nearly as strongly revered. Seventy-seven percent believed that using a priest or clergy member in order to gain contact with God was unnecessary – each individual can meet with God directly on their own (graph 5). Concerning attendance, 86% who took the survey believed it was possible to be a good follower without attending church every week. For families that described themselves as very religious, over 50% did not attend confession (graph 7).

What about the overall trend of attendance for Catholics in Montevideo? Here the use of surveys dating back to 1956 will help paint the last 50 years in Montevideo. The graph (see next page) shows the numbers for those who declared themselves Catholic and Evangelical in the years 1954, 1964, 1994 and 2001. Between 1954 and 2001, the overall Catholic population has decreased by 13%. The Catholic population in Montevideo has decreased by greater amounts than this – between 1964 and 1994; the population plummeted from 72% to 47.9% (a decrease of 24.1% in 30 years time) page 107.

	Belief in God	Catholic	Practicing	Very Practicing
Soul (believe)	74	75	84	100
Soul (do not believe)	18	16	12	0
Devil (believe)	32	27	36	17
Devil (do not believe)	60	63	60	67
Hell (believe)	27	24	36	17
Hell (do not believe)	64	64	52	67
Heaven (believe)	47	48	64	83
Heaven (do not believe)	40	37	24	0
Sins (believe)	62	64	68	50
Sins (do not believe)	29	25	20	33
Reincarnation (believe)	28	28	40	33
Reincarnation (do not believe)	55	53	40	50
Papal infallibility (believe)	17	21	24	17
Papal infallibility (do not believe)	68	64	52	67

Religión y Sociedad en el Uruguay del siglo XXI - Néstor Da Costa

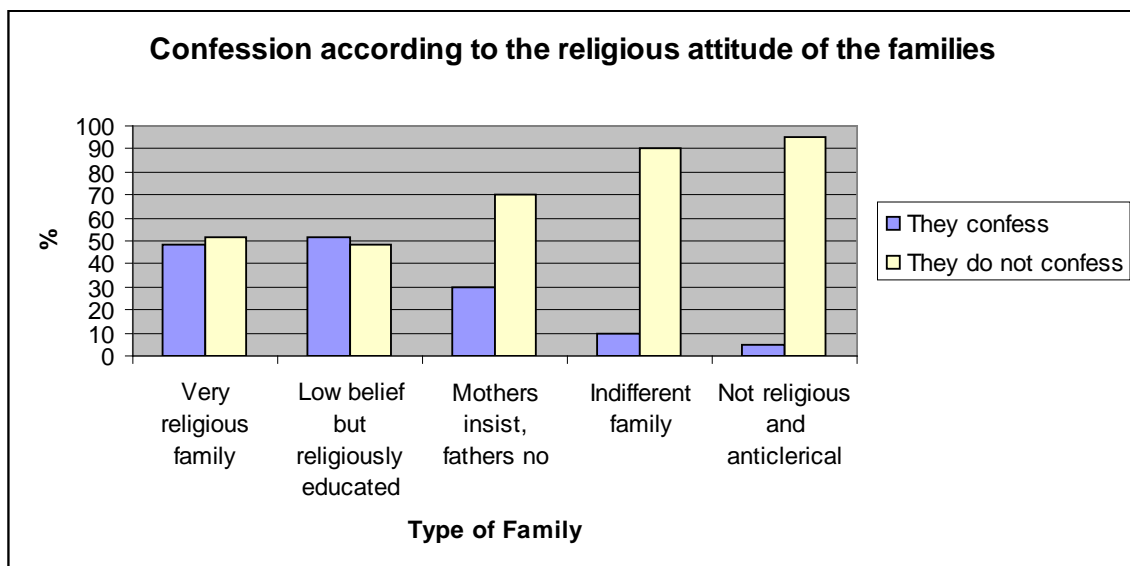
GRAPH 4: contents of faith according to grades of definition and religious ties.



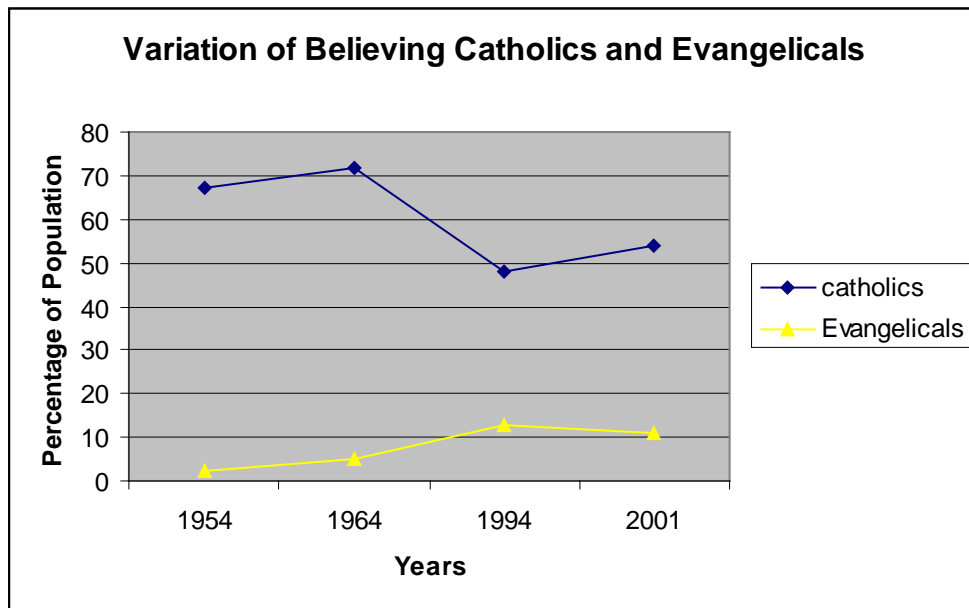
Religión y Sociedad en el Uruguay del siglo XXI - Néstor Da Costa

GRAPH 5: There is no need for priests or pastors; every individual can meet with God directly.

GRAPH 6: page 126



Religión y Sociedad en el Uruguay del siglo XXI – Néstor Da Costa



GRAPH 7: From Religión y Sociedad en el Uruguay del Siglo XXI – Néstor Da Costa

One factor that most likely affected the population's beliefs was a brutal period of dictatorship that occurred between 1973 and 1984. Prior to this period, specifically 1962 until their demise in 1973, a group of urban guerrillas known as the Movimiento de Liberacion Nacional Tupamaros was responsible for protests against the government and violent incidents that resulted from its attempts to expose unjust government actions.

In 1999, Da Costa published an article entitled "El Catolicismo en una sociedad secularizada: El caso Uruguayo" (Catholicism in a secularized society: The Uruguayan case). In this article Da Costa focused on the relationship between the Catholic Church and Uruguayan society, along with the Catholic Church's reaction to its loss of power in society. According to Da Costa, it is important to acknowledge the many different connotations and definitions of secularization in Uruguay. Some of the connotations include:

1. the disappearance or success of religion in connection with positivism sciences.
2. the process of religion becoming increasingly "worldly".
3. the process of society becoming autonomous from religion.
4. the process of the "desecration" of the world; "the triumph of reason, science and the inexorable advance of progress."⁷⁴

More simply,

"In summary, disenchantment of the world, the loss of authority of religious institutions, the advancement of science and reason, the notion of progress, the inexorable

⁷⁴ Da Costa, Néstor. Pg. 132.

disappearance of religion, privatization of religion, desecration, appear as elements that in one form or another are associated with the term secularization”⁷⁵.

Before explaining the case of the Church in Uruguay he asserts that religion is not disappearing, rather it is appearing in other forms. What is happening is “an important restructuring of the field of religion...a continuity of the religious phenomenon...a profound social transformation...the reorganization of the presence of religion in the context of modernity”⁷⁶.

With the separation of church and state after the National Constitution in 1917, the Catholic Church reacted to the decision in a few different ways. As mentioned before, Acción Católica became part of their response to the constitution. Da Costa mentions other Catholic organizations that formed syndicates, political parties in the “fight for religious education”⁷⁷. Apart from supporting publicized figures from the Catholic Church such as the Archbishop Mariano Soler, the church also developed “Catholic congresses”⁷⁸. Designed to challenge the secularization of society, these congresses held session four times. Each time their objectives were different – in the end the work of the Catholic congress resulted in the development of the three unions (Union Social, Union Económica, and Union Cívica)⁷⁹.

The Catholic Church eventually allowed itself to become part of the private sphere of society, especially after the State gained recognition as the public’s provider of

⁷⁵ Da Costa, Néstor. Pg. 133.

⁷⁶ Da Costa, Néstor, pg 133 and, Hervieu-Leger 1986

⁷⁷ Da Costa, Néstor. Pg. 134.

⁷⁸ Da Costa, Néstor. Pg. 135

⁷⁹ Da costa, Néstor. Pg. 135

goods and services⁸⁰. This position in the shadows would not last long. As Neo-Batllismo turned into what became a national crisis economically and politically in the 1960s, the church once again moved into the foreground of society. The Second Vatican council also presented a complete overhaul of the church's role within society, and so in combination with a new apostolic administrator "who was an active participant in the Vatican council and presided over the commission of peace for the Medellín Bishops conference"⁸¹, the church ultimately had a change of heart. Instead of trying to gain converts or re-enter the public discourse in order to re-establish what had been lost, the church reached out to the poor and helped to try and stabilize those who sought freedom from the oppression of the government. In this way, the church opened up the possibility to regain their image as the provider and caretaker of Uruguay. Perhaps one of the greater testaments to the church's renewed strategy came during the coup d'état in 1973. According to Da Costa's article, "the majority of the parishes kept their doors open to citizens and generated a space for liberty to many social and political organizations"⁸².

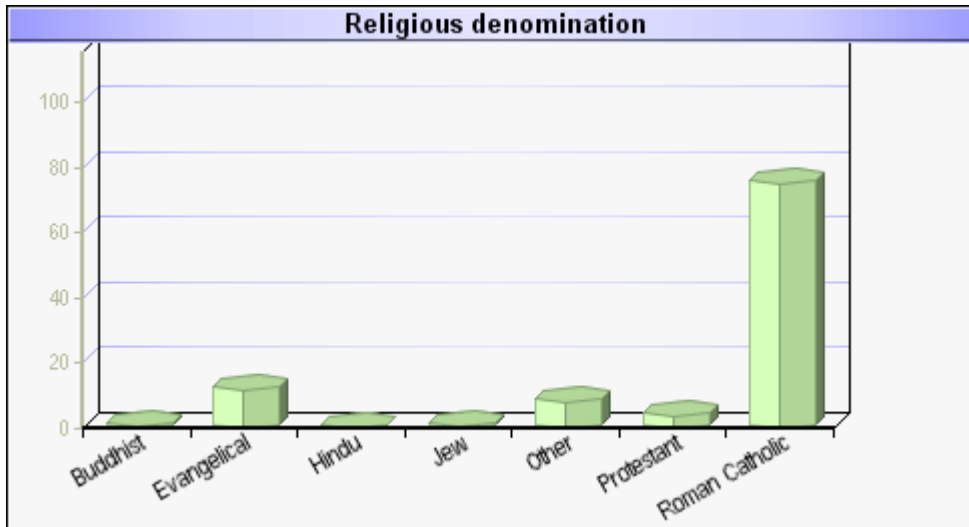
The World Values Survey for Uruguay took place between October 27th and November 21st 2006. The sample size for the survey included 1000 Uruguayans, and the interviews were conducted in Spanish. Topics discussed in the survey included religion and values, morality, family, work, politics and society, national identity, perceptions of life, and other topics. The section on religion and values has much to contribute to our panorama of Uruguayan religiosity. First, we can begin with how Uruguayans responded to identifying their religious denomination. According to the survey, 75.1% of

⁸⁰ Da costa, Néstor. Pg. 135

⁸¹ Da Costa, Pg. 137.

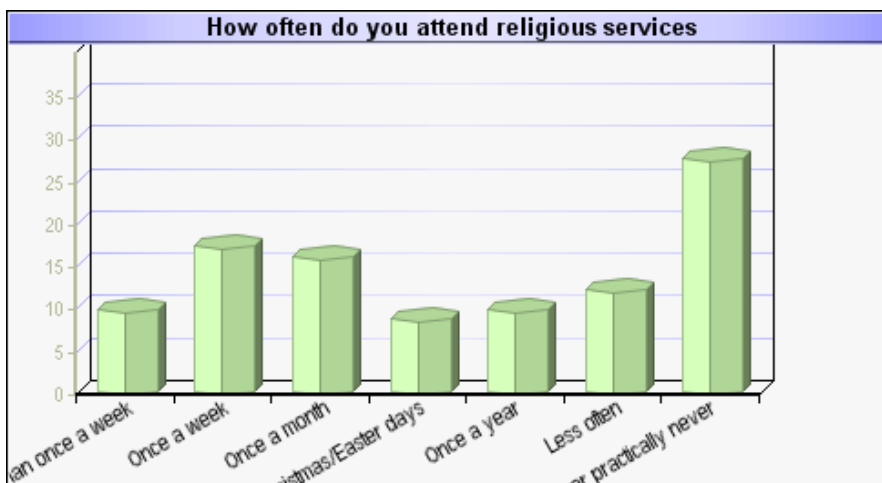
⁸² Da Costa, pg. 138.

Uruguayans call themselves Catholics, 11.8% as Evangelicals, 8.2% as Other, and 3.6% as Protestant.



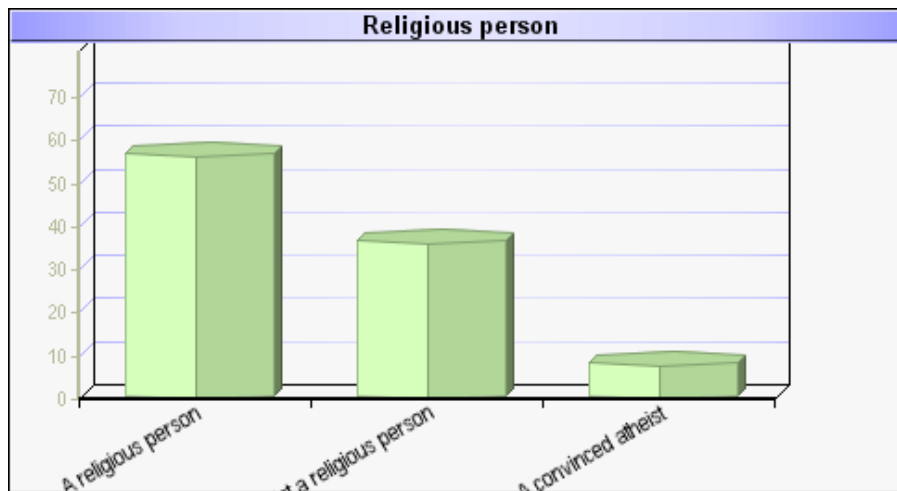
The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

When surveying Uruguayans about religious attendance, 9.6% of Uruguayans said they attended a religious service more frequently than once a week and 17.1% attend once a week. 15.8% attend a religious service once a month, and 27.4% never attend a service of any kind.



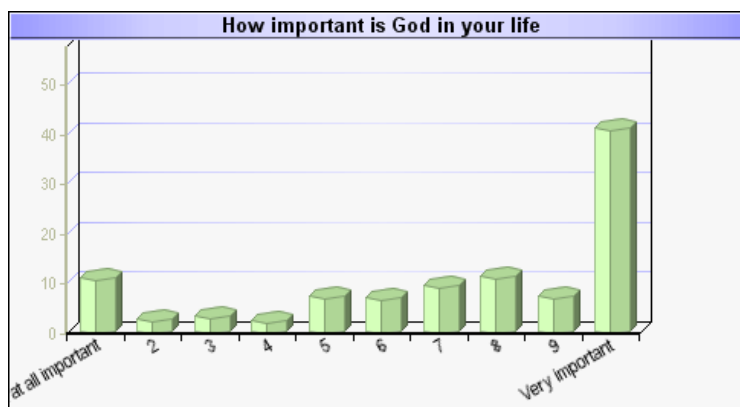
The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

Question P187 in the survey states, “Independently of whether or not you go to church, would you say that you are a 1) religious person, 2) not a religious person, or 3) atheist”. The results show that 56.4% of the 1000 surveyed identified as religious people, whereas 36% self identified as not religious, and 7.6% as convinced atheists.



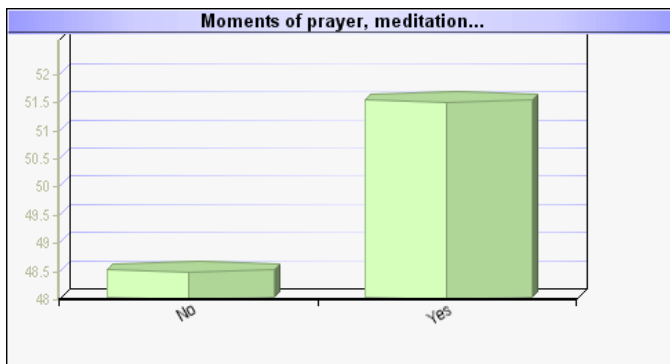
The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

When asked, “How important is God in your life? Respond on a scale of 1 to 10, 10 being very important” (P_192), 40.7% used 10 to describe God as very important in their life. 10.6% used 1 to describe the importance of God in their life. The average of all the surveys resulted in a 7.3.



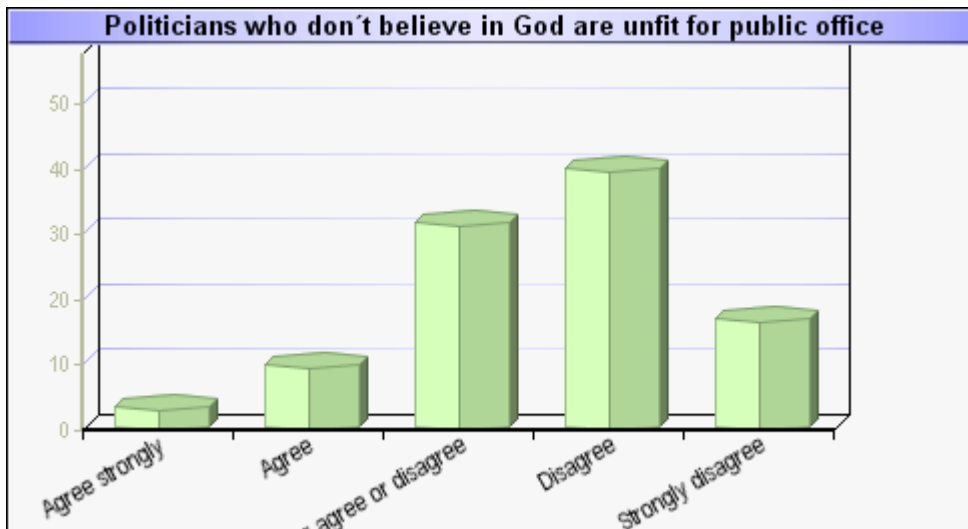
The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

Approximately 1 in 2 of those surveyed has moments of prayer or meditation. 51.5% of those surveyed utilize moments of prayer or meditation, and 48.5% do not.



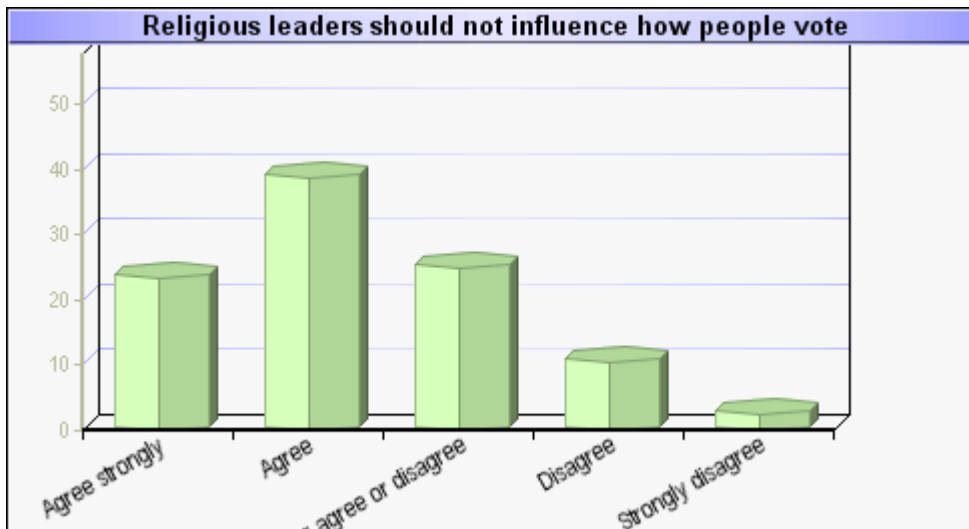
The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

“Politicians that do not believe in God are unfit for public office” The majority of those surveyed disagreed with this statement: 56% disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement. Only 12.6% agreed/strongly agreed that politicians that do not believe in God are unfit for public office. Nearly a third of those surveyed (31.4%) stayed neutral.



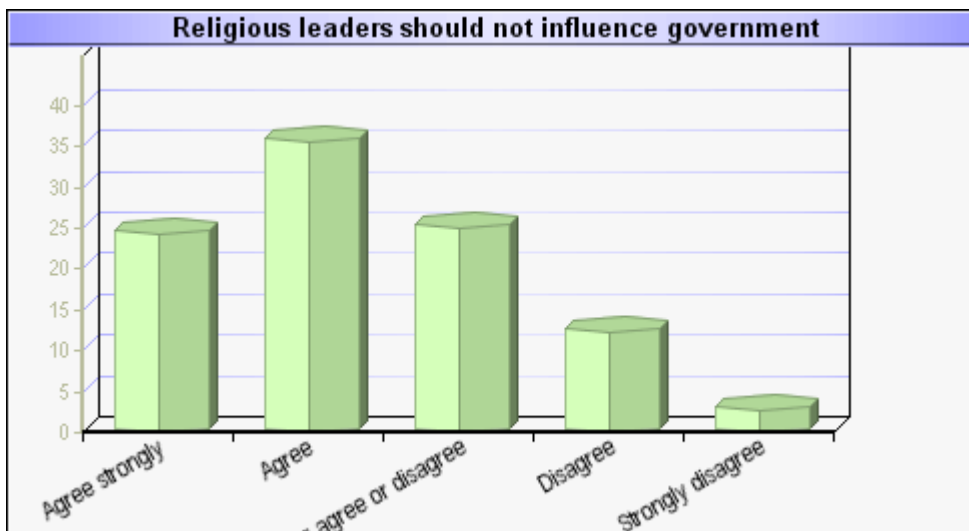
The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

“Religious leaders should not influence how people vote”. 13.1% disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement. 24.8% surveyed stayed neutral while 62% agreed/strongly agreed that religious leaders should not influence how people vote.



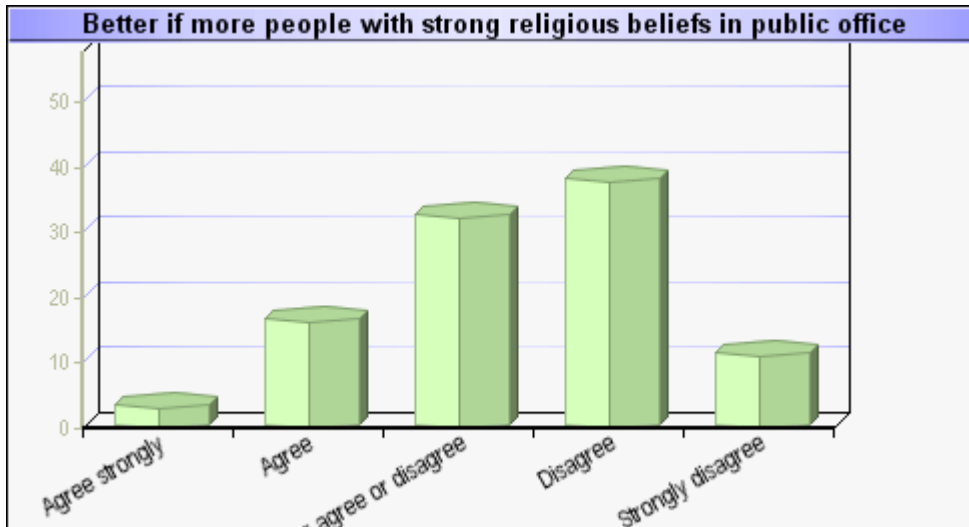
The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

“Religious leaders should not influence the government”. 60% agreed/strongly agreed with this statement. Approximately a quarter (25.1%) remained neutral while 14.8% of those surveyed disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement.



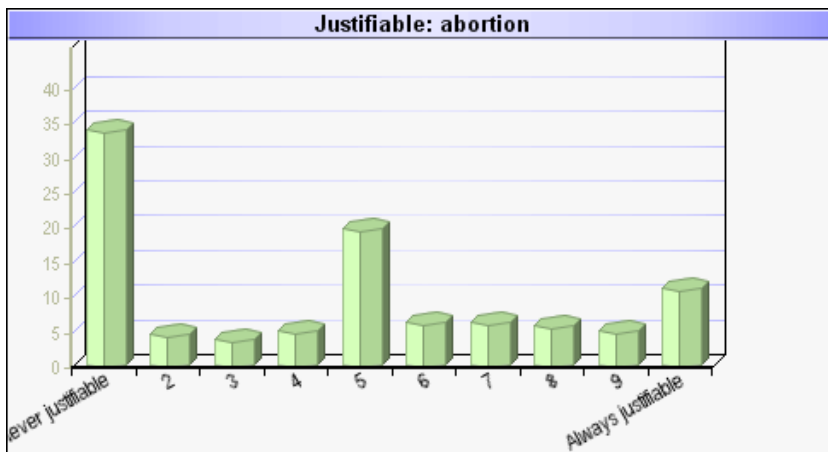
The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

“It would be better for Uruguay if there were more people with strong religious beliefs elected to public office”. 48.6% disagreed/strongly disagreed with this statement. 32.1% remained neutral to this statement while 19.3% agreed/strongly agreed.



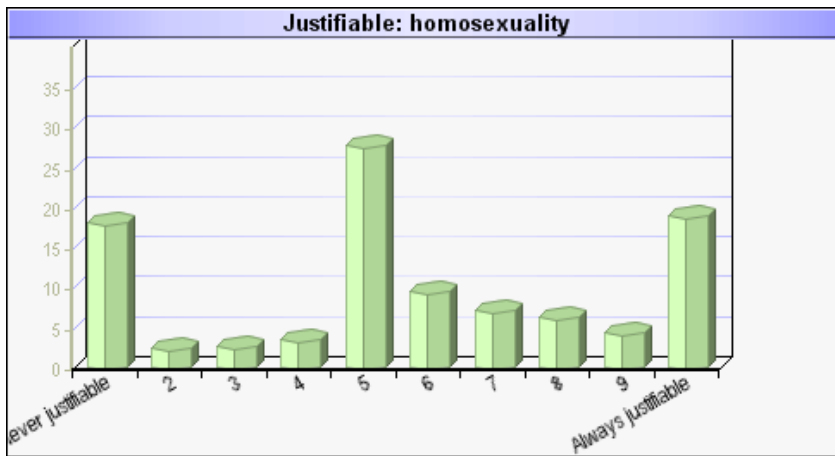
The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

“On a scale of 1 to 10, with 1 being never justifiable and 10 being always justifiable, how justifiable is abortion?” Over a third of those surveyed said abortion is never justifiable (33.8%), 19.7% put down 5 for sometimes justifiable, and 11.1% stated abortion is always justifiable.



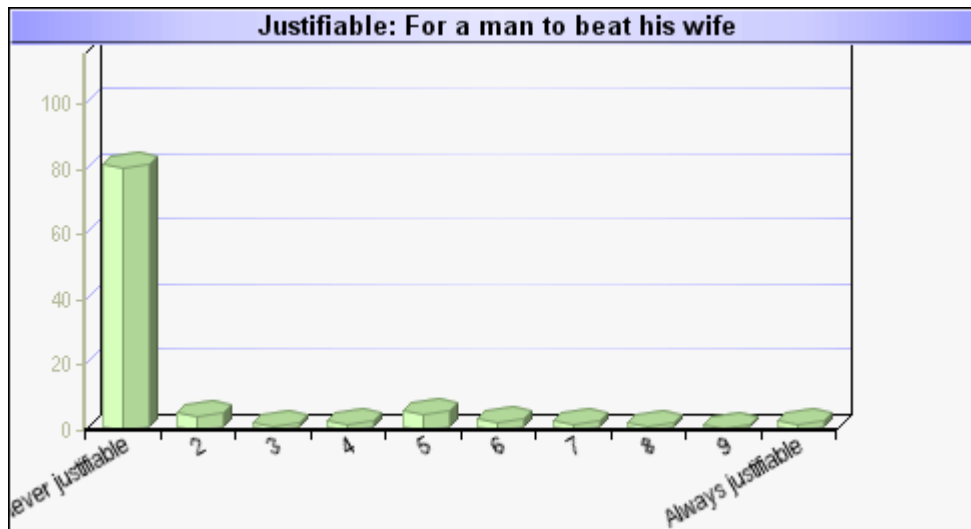
The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

“On a scale of 1 to 10, how justifiable is homosexuality?” 18.1% said homosexuality is never justifiable. 19% said homosexuality is always justifiable, and the majority (27.6%) answered 5 for sometimes justifiable.



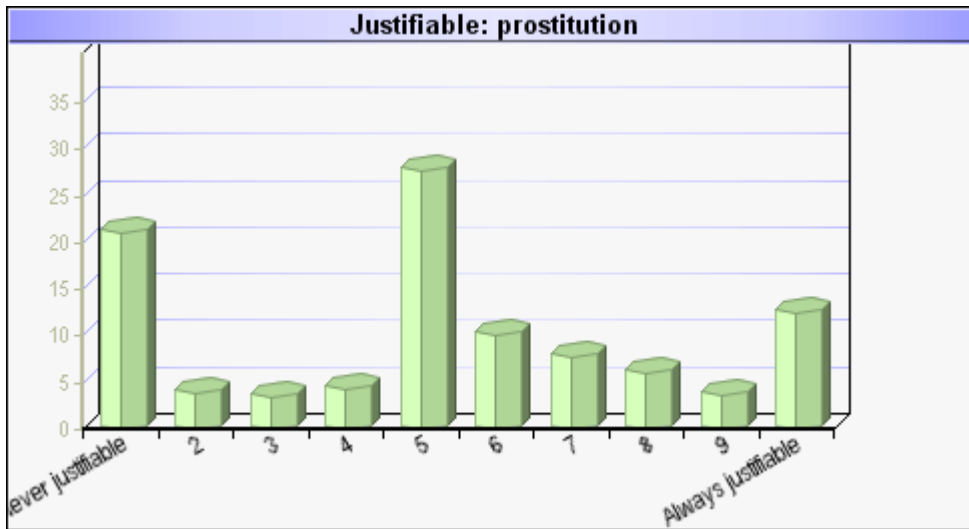
The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

Related to the topic of masculinity, the survey asks the question on a scale of 1 to 10, “How justifiable is it for a man to beat his wife?”. The overwhelming majority responded that it was never justifiable for a man to beat his wife (80.4%); however, this still leaves nearly a fifth of those surveyed that found it occasionally if not moderately acceptable for a man to beat his wife. Of those that answered between 5 and 10, 12.1% responded that it was somewhat to definitely justifiable for a man to beat his wife.



The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

While chapter 3 did not discuss prostitution, it is a topic in the same vein as some of the other gender-related issues previously mentioned. More so than any of the other issues, Uruguay goes out of its way to justify prostitution. A fifth stated that prostitution was never justifiable (21.0%); however, 67.4% answered between 5 and 10, from somewhat justifiable to always justifiable.



The World Values Survey: Uruguay 2006

This information concludes our third chapter. We have just witnessed data reflecting the values of various religious and non-religious Uruguayan populations. This data ultimately demonstrates that Uruguay possesses high belief in God and high belief that God is important in life, but feels removed from institutional religion, shown through low service attendance, low belief in central tenets, and extraordinarily varied opinions on issues such as prostitution, domestic violence, homosexuality and abortion. The latter of these two topics, homosexuality and abortion, will serve as case studies in Uruguay as we turn to Chapter 4 to examine gender-related issues in Uruguay. Issues such as these demonstrate the tension

Chapter 4: Gender Issues and Religion in Uruguay

If we are going to analyze the Uruguayan population and its religiosity, gender proposes an interesting subtopic. Some of the topics surrounding gender and religion in Uruguay include gay rights and women's right to choose abortion, both of which have made headlines in recent Uruguayan news.

Some of this information easily fits under the chapter about politics in Uruguay considering the popularity of these heavily debated topics in the Uruguayan senate and among voters. Uruguay legalized homosexuality in 1934. Most of the advances in gay rights in Uruguay came about post-2002. In 2003, a law entitled "Ley No. 17.817" passed prohibiting hate crimes committed based upon the sexual orientation of the victim. In 2004, Uruguay illegalized discrimination during the employment process based upon sexual orientation. Same-sex couples have been recognized in Uruguay and permitted civil unions since January of 2008 with the creation of the law "Ley de Unión Cívica Concubinaria". This law began to take form in 2006 when it first went through the Uruguayan legislature under the supervision of Senator Margarita Percovich, who is a member of the Frente Amplio. Gay marriage, though ultimately denied, was considered at one point. Because José "Pepe" Mujica won the presidency in November 2009, a proposed bill to legalize same-sex marriage will most likely enter the legislative house. Across the Río de la Plata, Argentina may overcome Uruguay as the first Latin American country to legalize gay marriage. In a November 2009 court ruling in Buenos Aires, a judge approved a marriage between two men, Alex Freyre and José Maria di Bello. Their marriage took place in January 2010 in Buenos Aires.

The most recent events in the advancement of gay rights in Uruguay came about in the past few months. In May of 2009, the military announced that it would permit people who were openly gay to serve in the military and that the military would not recruit for or against people using sexual orientation discrimination. In September of 2009, the legislature passed two laws. The first allows Uruguayans ages 18 and over to change the names that appear on their identification documents such as passports, driver's license and the cédula in order to align with their "gender identity". The second law made Uruguay the first Latin American country to allow the adoption of children by same-sex couples. It is not yet determined when the second law will pass.

Abortion nearly achieved legalization in Uruguay in November of 2008. It passed through both houses but President Tabaré Vázquez ultimately vetoed the bill; he disagreed with the bill "philosophically and biologically". Vazquez is quoted as saying "Our laws cannot ignore the reality of the existence of human life in the gestation period, as scientific evidence clearly shows", furthermore stating "It's more appropriate to make a decision based on solidarity, giving a woman the freedom to make other choices and thereby save both her and her baby"⁸³.

Where does the Catholic Church stand on these issues and how has it reacted to the historic advance of gay rights in Uruguay? Nicolas Cotugno is the archbishop of Montevideo and often speaks on behalf of the Catholic Church concerning morally conflicting issues such as gay rights and abortion. Archbishop Cotugno condemns the adoption of children by same-sex couples, and believes that "it goes against human nature

⁸³ CNN News: Uruguay Passes Same-Sex Adoption Law". September 10th, 2009. <<http://www.cnn.com/2009/WORLD/americas/09/10/uruguay.gays/index.html>>

itself, and consequently, it is to go against the fundamental rights of the human being as a person”².

Diario El País - Uruguay’s largest and most widely read newspaper published an article on November 23, 2009, entitled “Marcha en contra de la legalización del aborto” – or March against Legalizing Abortion. An anti-abortion group called Mesa Coordinada Nacional por la Vida (National Coordinated Table for Life) organized the march in Montevideo that ended with the reading of a proclamation “In Defense of Life”⁵. The Mesa Coordinada aligns with the stance of the Catholic Church and the Evangelistic church on issues such as abortion. One of the largest evangelistic churches in Montevideo is Misión Vida, and its pastor Jorge Márquez was quoted in the article stating “This campaign has brought to light that neutrality doesn’t exist for questions of philosophy or faith...we have come to discuss politics because politicians have intervened with our convictions”⁴. Márquez is openly backing Dr. Luis Lacalle of the Partido Nacional for the presidency, and the Pro-Life march urged its participants and witnesses to vote against a candidate who would usher in abortion, and to instead support a candidate (Lacalle) who would “guarantee the right to life”⁵.

Perhaps the most interesting of the November articles by El País is the November 9 article, which explained Jorge Marquez’ seething remarks about José “Pepe” Mujica’s attitude towards God and his way of speaking “sarcastically” about Divine Providence and the Holy Spirit. The article’s title translates more or less to “The Church Accuses Mujica of ‘Picking a Fight’ with God”.

“People believe that just because the country is laic God has disappeared, but that’s not true. It’s a question of conscience – if there are Catholics that want a president

that makes fun of God, and that laugh in our face about our own faith, they should vote for Mujica” said in an interview with Radio Carve in Uruguay⁶. He wrapped up the interview by stating that he was not meddling with politics or economics, simply “If you believe in God, assume your responsibility”⁶.

Explicitly pertaining to the Catholic Church in Montevideo, El País ran an article less than two months ago on October 9, 2009, that explains how the Church is indirectly showing its opposition to the Frente Amplio. The Church itself cannot directly support or oppose any one party or candidate; however, the Catholic Church’s “Bioethical Committee John Paul II” has come up with some alternative routes to get their point across to voters in a way that conveys a sense of urgency.

“These principles are not truths of faith, even though from faith they receive a new light and confirmation. They are written in the same human nature, and overall, are common to all humanity. The church’s action in its promotion is not, after all, confessional behavior, rather directed to all people, disregarding its religious affiliation. On the contrary, this action is ever more necessary while more deny or distort these principles, because that constitutes an offense against the truth of human beings, a grave wound caused by justice itself”⁷.

The Catholic Church, through statements such as this and others, attempts to clarify that the fight against abortion in Uruguay is not by any means the Church vs. Outsiders; rather it is those voting for humanity versus those voting against humanity. It particularly tries to incorporate those who “even without sharing the faith of the church are still sensible towards the natural dignity and rights of human beings”⁷.

While the Catholic Church warmly welcomes any and every vote against presidential candidates that support abortion, Archbishop Cotugno had less than welcoming words for the Catholic senators that voted in favor of decriminalizing abortion. In fact, Cotugno explicitly condemned all such senators and attempted to have them ex-communicated from the Church.

The “Black Sheep”, better known as the Ovejas Negras in Montevideo, is a community that works to raise awareness for Lesbian-Gay-Bisexual-Transsexual and Transvestite rights. The black sheep as an image has historically symbolized something not quite like the others, often carrying a negative connotation. Nevertheless, the Ovejas Negras community aims to take the ostracism, the discrimination, and the indifference and turn it into a platform. Through marches, a website, and advertisements, which have earned lots of attention in the city, the group continues to gain popularity. The group states on its website that it was founded December 23 of 2004 as El Colectivo Ovejas Negras (The Black Sheep Community). The community is self-described as people of all difference professional backgrounds and aging from 18 to “fifty-somethings”. One advertisement in particular, which first aired in 2008, was plastered on the sides of public buses and eventually developed into a TV commercial. It featured the Ovejas Negras slogan “Un beso es un beso” – “a kiss is a kiss”, with photographs of three separate couples kissing, one of the couples heterosexual, the two other couples being lesbian and gay. The slogans garnered negative attention, not only from people who outwardly oppose advancements in gay rights, but also from people who support gay rights but did not appreciate the proximity of the advertisements in relation to small children.

The American Journal of Sociology published an article in its November 2006 issue that dissects the widely held and popularly tested belief that women are “more religious” than men. In his article “Gender and Religion: Deconstructing Universality, Constructing Complexity”, D. Paul Sullins of Catholic University of America analyzes the relationship between gender and religion by testing four different past explanations for higher female religiousness. The four explanations are women’s structural location compared to men’s in a gendered social division of labor, patterns of socialization, personality resulting in one’s religious involvement, and finally, physiological essentialism. The first explanation emphasizes that men’s commitment to work keeps them from participating in religious activities fully that women do. The second explanation is called socialization, which implies that any gender differences that come about in religion are due to “broad cultural mechanisms of differential socialization” which results in “different sets of values, roles and norms for behavior”⁸⁴.

An example featured in the article mentioned men being expected to take on “secular” qualities such as “aggressiveness and accomplishment” whereas women are expected to take on “religiously compatible ideals of nurturance and conflict resolution”⁸⁴. The third explanation looks for correlation between gender and personality (personality here is gender-linked personality, meaning a subject would have a personality classified as being more feminine or more masculine based on “personality dimensions”). The fourth explanation seeks to use biology and physiology as reasoning for why males are less religious and females more religious, or to say, women are “naturally” more religious than men are. Stark’s study (2002) proposes that male

⁸⁴ Sullins, D. Paul. “Gender and Religion: Deconstructing Universality, Constructing Complexity”. AJS Volume 112 Number 3. November 2006, pg. 839.

possession of testosterone leads to greater risk-taking traits in men and lower religiousness. This study in particular assumes that if sociobiology is right, then socialization (or other explanations) must be wrong. In response to all of these explanations, Sullins writes “It may well be that physiology, culture, and society all affects these gender differences to some degrees”⁸⁵.

To summarize Sullins’ study, he does three things: he compares religions and not nations in order to reveal counterexamples to the “universal gender gap” that is so widely assumed to be true. He distinguishes “affective religiousness” (prayer, personal piety, belief in God) from “active religiousness” (church attendance, involvement in church and charity activities). Finally, he uses a combined multivariate model in order to display how, when combined, “social factors explain most and in some contexts all of the gender differences in religiousness”⁸⁶.

How does studying female religiosity apply to our discussion about religiosity in Uruguay? The manner in which religions spread (or cease to spread) determines the success or failure of each religion. Catholicism does not condone women as preachers, and it is men that occupy the hierarchy of the Catholic Church. But among the popular classes, women act as the vessels by which religion spreads. In Umbanda and Candomblé, women can serve as priestesses⁸⁷. The faith healing often associated with Pentecostalism often moves women whose deepest concern is caring for their families and their wellness. The successful religious competitors in Uruguay effectively utilize higher female religiosity as a means to promote their religions. Because Catholicism has

⁸⁵ Sullins, D. Paul. “Gender and Religion: Deconstructing Universality, Constructing Complexity”. *AJS* Volume 112 Number 3. November 2006 pg. 841

⁸⁶ Sullins, D. Paul. “Gender and Religion: Deconstructing Universality, Constructing Complexity”. *AJS* Volume 112 Number 3. November 2006 pg. 842.

⁸⁷ Chesnut, R. Andrew. *Competitive Spirits*. Pg 108.

not adapted in this way, it cannot take advantage of the way women promote and spread their religion among the popular classes.

Conclusion

Uruguay's secular history from its foundations set it apart from its fellow Latin American countries; however, our exploration of religiosity in Uruguay does not lead us to conclude that their secular history ultimately leads to an antireligious population. With the diminished influence of the Catholic Church and an increasingly diverse religious marketplace, Uruguay promotes a rich environment for religious exploration. Regardless of their secular history, Uruguayans are a highly religious people.

Chapter 1 addressed the history of the Catholic Church in Uruguay. Here we see that while Catholicism remains the religion Uruguayans most readily identify with, the Catholic Church has been forced to take action with *Acción Católica* and the Catholic Charismatic Renewal in order to maintain followers. We see the roots of the weakening of the Catholic Church through numerous laws passed by congress ensuring the secularism of the public sphere, resulting in the loss of former church properties and the secularization of religious holidays. Catholic education in Uruguay is losing ground as an effective way to spread confessional education – the attendance of Uruguayan students to Catholic schools is plummeting and now very few of the students who are attending Catholic schools are actually Catholic. In the political arena, the leftist party *El Frente Amplio* captured a second presidential election in November 2009. These politicians often support policies that the catholic church does not.

Chapter 2 introduced the religious competitors in the Uruguayan religious marketplace. Catholicism can compete only by adapting to the religious desires of the marketplace, which now include various Protestant characteristics such as faith healing and direct interaction with God. The Catholic Church is having to rework its identity in

order to appeal to religious consumers. This is visible in the form of AC and its attempt to move away from a hierarchy-driven, unapproachable form of Catholicism and toward a lay-driven, grass-roots effort to revitalize Catholics.

Uruguay's neighbor Brazil provides heavy religious influences in the forms of Pentecostalism and Afro-Brazilian religions such as Umbanda and Candomblé. Pentecostalism's success in Uruguay is due to its rapid-fire spread through the popular classes, its great accessibility, and the religious products it promotes – pneumacentrism, faith healing (*cura divina*), direct contact with God, and clergy who are more relatable than their Catholic counterparts in terms of socioeconomic status. Umbanda and Candomblé also provide religious consumers with a pneumacentrism experience that is often syncretized with the Catholicism experience via the use of saints and spirits. Racial stigma against African Diasporan religions make it difficult to know for sure exactly how many people actually practice these religions. Conversely, if Umbandistas or Candomblecistas identify themselves as Catholics, the actual practicing Catholics population results in being increasingly diminished than it appears on the surface through surveys.

Chapter 3 shed light on statistical data related to religiosity specific to Uruguay.

Chapter 4 opened up contemporary gender-related case studies in Uruguay in the form of homosexuality and abortion. These two topics in particular generate public displays of religion on behalf of the Church, the believing populations, the media and politicians. Whereas in the previous chapters we have seen how Uruguayans are highly religious, it is in contemporary issues like these that the secular nature of Uruguay appears in full force. It is on these exact issues that cause Uruguay to be labeled as

“modern”, “liberal”, and above all “secular” or “antireligious” because of the progression of gay rights and abortion.

As we have seen all along, Uruguay’s population is not antireligious but in fact very religious and promotes an environment that allows for an increasing number of religious faiths, fluidity within the religious market as believers of one faith convert to the one that appeals to them the most, all the while providing a dynamic public discussion on issues that generate emotions such as seen in Chapter 4.

Complications:

Any complications for this thesis arose from difficulty in obtaining information specifically on religiosity in Uruguay. While some material exists on applying the economic model to the Latin American religious marketplace, and small amounts of other material exists for the study of religiosity in Uruguay, I found none that exists in which the two are combined. A great majority of the research concerning religiosity in Uruguay has been conducted in Spanish; relatively little exists in English. Furthermore, when articles published in English focus on labeling Uruguay as *laico* in the Uruguayan sense of the word, poorly informed stereotypes about the country arise.

Future Research:

It will be interesting to see in the future how the Uruguayan Catholic Church fights to make up for lost ground in the Uruguayan religious marketplace. In order to regain the interests of nominal Catholics, it must provide for the spiritual needs and desires, in other words it must create a desirable product to market, against its main religious competitors: Pentecostalism, African Diaspora religions, and atheism. Conducting research on Uruguay without being able to be on the ground and conduct

interviews with Uruguayans, follow the movements of the Catholic Church and other religions and overall study the topic from a close-up standpoint creates certain complications. At the time this thesis was written, Uruguayan President José “Pepe” Mujica will have not yet spent two months in office. Will Mujica help Uruguay to become the first Latin American country to legalize gay marriage? Or assist Uruguay in becoming the first Latin American country to legalize abortion? And how will Uruguay’s religious population react if these events occur?

Regardless of future events, Uruguay is sure to provide for scholars of Latin America and religious studies alike a captivating blend of religious competition, secular political action, and fluid religious national identity.

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