



Unity and Diversity: Frames of Catholicity Among Catholic Campus Ministers

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Abstract

Scholars have explained many of the differences within the American Catholic population in terms of political division or polarization. Although Catholics are becoming increasingly politically bifurcated, to focus only on the political misses the specifically religious differences that also distinguish Catholics from one another. There have been substantial changes in the staffing of Catholic campus ministry in the last 20 years. To better understand these shifts and their implications for ministry, the Catholic bishops commissioned a survey of Catholic campus ministers in the United States. The survey answered some questions but raised others. A qualitative study that more deeply explored these questions was recommended. Using three “windows”—vocation, prayer and spirituality, and mission—this article explores the overlap and differences in frames of Catholicity among two types of Catholic campus ministers. Forty-five campus ministers from three geographic regions of the country were interviewed. Ten of these forty-five interviewees are “missionaries,” meaning they are recent college graduates who have obtained a several-week training from their missionary organization and are contracted to serve as a campus missionary for two years. Thirty-one of these are “professional ministers,” meaning they have a graduate degree in ministry and intend to have a long-term career in this field. Missionaries’ understandings of vocation, prayer and spirituality, and mission reveal that missionary-formed campus ministers operate out of a frame that emphasizes an individualist Catholicism. The professional ministers employ a frame that amplifies the communal aspects of Catholicism. These findings contribute theoretically to ideas in the framing literature, specifically in the fields of politics, emotions and identity. The way these frames might have an impact on ministry offerings and student formation are also discussed.

Keywords Campus ministry · Catholic · Frames · Spirituality · Vocation · Mission

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Introduction

Over the last two decades, Catholic campus ministry has undergone significant changes (Starks 2018). From 1883 until the beginning of the twenty-first century, Catholic campus ministry was under the purview of Catholic campuses or—for public campuses—Newman Centers. Catholic campus ministries, at Newman Centers or Catholic campuses, may be staffed by lay or ordained Catholics, but typically these ministers share in common a graduate degree in ministry and anticipate a long-term career in professional ministry. In the last 20 years, a new type of campus minister—the missionary—has grown significantly. These missionaries are typically recent college graduates who, after a brief (several week) training with their missionary organization, commit to ministering to Catholic undergraduates for 2 years. Although the two Catholic missionary organizations in the United States began by serving just one campus in the mid-1980s and the late 1990s, they now account for roughly one-fourth of Catholic campus ministers. However, despite the scope of these changes, little has been written on either the theoretical or practical implications of these changes.

To help fill this gap, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) commissioned a survey in 2017 to better understand the ways these shifts have shaped the landscape of Catholic campus ministry (Starks and Day 2018). One of the findings this survey yielded was a disparity in the pastoral priorities among those who have a graduate-level degree in ministry compared to those who are missionary trained. When asked which activities are most important for students' growth in the faith, more than three-fourths of each group named Mass, retreats, small group Bible and faith-sharing groups, discipleship/one-on-one mentoring, leadership development, immersion trips and social events. However, there was a significant difference between these ministers for other activities. Missionaries were significantly more likely to name studying the Bible (in contrast to group sharing), evangelization, the Sacrament of Reconciliation and men's/women's groups as important activities for students. With the exception of the gender-separated groups, these all have a very individualist orientation, amplifying personal piety. Those with graduate degrees emphasized the importance of service/charitable work, social justice/advocacy, and ecumenical/interfaith activities. These activities are more other-centered, amplifying communal piety. Important for these purposes, these findings point to similarities and distinctions in ministerial priorities that, we argue, have their basis in different frames of Catholicity.

In wanting to have better insight into the 2018 report, the USCCB commissioned an interview study, which provides the data examined herein. In analyzing these data, the authors of the qualitative study recognized that three sets of questions—those surrounding vocation, prayer and spirituality, and mission—provided “windows” into the frames that undergird these different ministerial orientations. These themes were not chosen in advance with the intention of adding to the framing literature; rather, these connections emerged in later stages of analysis. The findings demonstrate the ways these two types of Catholic campus

ministers employ frames that provide them with either an individualist or communal sense of Catholicity with which to understand their world. The interviews that follow explore the theological moorings of Catholic campus ministers in greater depth and bring the elements of these frames into relief.

Catholic campus ministers provide an important locus to study frames for several reasons. First, although campus ministers are not able to shape official Catholic teaching, because of their unique leadership position, they act as important cultural producers; they promote specific aspects of Catholicism, minimize others, and can process students' experiences into a particular frame of understanding. Second, Catholic campus ministers work with a population during a life stage that is currently characterized by quests for meaning and identity formation; ministers can serve as a particularly powerful and salient agent in the formation of these students. Finally, because this particularly formative period happens at a time when the population is relatively young, the values, practices and understandings of Catholicism can have a far-reaching and lasting impact on the denomination and society.

Literature Review

Unlike many other denominations that have split into smaller groups because of theological differences (e.g., Lutherans including both the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America and the Missouri Synod), Catholics navigate a contested space in which they struggle with their coreligionists to define what is central and peripheral to the faith (Bruce 2011; Cuneo 1997; Dillon 1999; Konieczny 2013; Konieczny et al. 2016; Starks 2013). These religious negotiations can have political consequences and these political differences tend to receive more attention from scholars (e.g., Putnam and Campbell 2012; Pew 2014), but to overlook the distinctly religious aspects would be to dismiss what is critical to adherents and their ways of religiously framing their world. A frame analysis can help us see the ways two different types of Catholics understand their faith commitments, ministerial experiences and the wider world they inhabit.

Given the growing political bifurcation among Catholics (D'Antonio et al. 2013; Sciupac and Smith 2018), it is understandable why many would explain differences within Catholicism solely in political terms, that is, as conservative or liberal orientations. Political difference is certainly part of American Catholicism's story, but it misses that what constitutes core versus peripheral elements of Catholicism itself is also a contested matter. The concept of "frames" is a helpful tool in exploring the different values at play among highly-committed Catholics. Erving Goffman (1974) defines frames as cognitive orientations that organize perception and interpretation. They provide a way to see meaning in an event, are applied unconsciously and enable people to respond appropriately. Mayer Zald (1996:262) defines frames as "specific metaphors, symbolic representations, and cognitive cues used to render or cast behavior and events in an evaluative mode and to suggest alternative modes of action." Both of these definitions highlight the interpretive basis and the behavioral implications of frames. Frame analysis among religious adherents can demonstrate the significance not only of beliefs and action, but also of collective identity. As

Catholics interpret their reality and act within it, they tacitly make certain elements of their faith central while they minimize others, creating a frame that is characterized by implicit notions of what is authentically Catholic.

Social movement scholars have played a central role in developing sociology's theoretical understanding of framing since Goffman, and so this literature review will draw primarily upon those works while still incorporating important framing literature from the sociology of religion. In examining the role of culture in social movements, Taylor and Wittier (1995) discuss the roles identity plays in creating a frame for activists, two of which are important for these purposes. Identity provides group boundaries, consciousness or interpretive frameworks that aid in identifying shared action and interests. It also helps in the politicization of everyday life, which uses symbols and action to resist and reshape oppressive systems. Two caveats help make these observations especially applicable to our data. First, sometimes similar groups still have boundaries that are salient to the members and their frames compete to win or mobilize supporters and resources (Jasper 1999); frames are important both culturally and materially for within-group contests. Frames help us see the boundaries of what is core and what is peripheral for these professional and missionary ministers. Second, rather than Taylor and Wittier's emphasis on the *politicization* of everyday life, we reappropriate this into the *sacralization* of everyday life; these campus ministers use symbols and action to bring religious meaning to the everyday lives of students.

Frames also structure emotion. In social movements, frames contextualize a problem as unacceptable, assign blame, illuminate a way forward and provide motivation (Nepstad 2004). In civic engagement, they can also serve to constrain people, inviting them to confine their efforts to more manageable problems (Eliasoph 1998). There are even frames that help people see their actions as "nice" and lull them into political apathy (Xu 2017). People's feelings provide an insight to the moral components of their frame. The reverse is also true: Understanding the components of a frame can illuminate people's feelings and commitments. For example, campus ministers' frames can provide affective insight and highlight what they would deem to be appropriate strategies and motivations for their goals.

Frame analysis has been useful to the sociology of religion. Frame analysis has helped scholars discover that those within the same religious tradition can take different approaches to collective action. For instance, the dominant frame among evangelical church pastors of multiracial congregations is a racial reconciliation frame—that is, seeing conversations about racial inequality as divisive and thus to be avoided for the sake of church unity—to understand and deal with racial issues (Oyakawa 2019). A smaller group of evangelical pastors draw upon a racial justice frame that emphasizes confronting racial inequality and working for change. This demonstrates that sharing a tradition does not guarantee shared frames, and there may even be dissonance among frames.

In analyzing the U.S.-Central America peace movement—a religiously inspired, nationwide social movement—Christian Smith (1996) demonstrates that one of the ways a frame imparts meaning to an event is by amplifying certain elements while disregarding others. This understanding of framing captures how two opposing camps—the Central America peace movement and the White House—can each

discuss the same event through vastly different lenses of interpretation. Using amplification and minimization, frames from one sphere can illuminate or diminish particular aspects of an issue, such as religious leaders' use of "family values" to promote a more welcoming immigration policy (Yukich 2013).

As Smith's research demonstrates, discursive analysis of an issue or constellation of issues can provide a window into a deeper cultural frame that carries with it root values, identity and more. This is also seen in Kristin Luker's (1985) research, finding that abortion activism offers a window into both prolife and prochoice activists' views on gender roles and motherhood. Applied to our study, our interviews are not *just* about practices and priorities, they provide a "window" into how these ministers impart a Catholic sense of meaning to their worlds. The windows this study uses to get at the professionals' more communitarian frame and the missionaries' more individualist frame are that of vocation, prayer and spirituality, and mission. Enabling Catholic campus ministers' diverse use of cultural tools is the vast "cultural repertoire" (Swidler 2003) of religious tools from which they have to draw, lending them the ability to minimize or make central particular elements of their faith. In regularly magnifying particular tools while marginalizing others, campus ministers narrow the scope of that which is core to Catholicism, creating a religious frame that organizes activity and colors their understanding of the world.

Again, the gap in the respective importance they place on ministerial practices is clearly documented in the survey report. While missionaries and professionals both saw importance in some activities, missionaries prioritized individualist activities for their students, activities that demonstrate a frame that amplifies personal piety. The professional ministers privileged activities that were more other-centered, illuminating a frame that elevates communal piety. These ministerial practices, in other words, point to overlap and distinctions among their frames of Catholicity. This paper will examine the frames that undergird these different ministerial practices through the windows of vocation, prayer and spirituality, and mission.

Demographics and Methods

The 2017 survey that examined the state of Catholic campus ministry in the United States shed light on many aspects of Catholic ministry within higher education. However, it also raised further questions. As is often the case with blunt instruments like surveys, the scholars and ministers who were charged with examining the data at the 2017 Notre Dame symposium raised questions of underlying meaning, sought nuance, and wanted to better understand unexpected findings. It became clear that in order to more fully understand the survey findings, a second study that more closely examined a smaller population of Catholic campus ministers through interviews was needed.

The research team was geographically dispersed in a way that lent us access to multiple models of campus ministry as well as regions of the country: the West (Southern California); the Midwest (South Bend, Indiana and Cleveland, Ohio); and the South (Atlanta, Georgia). Further, each region is culturally different from the other, providing a more national picture. Initially the team was planning to recruit

interviewees from the pool of ministers who at the close of the 2017 survey agreed to be contacted for further questions. However, this posed several important limitations. First, many of the missionary-trained campus ministers would not be available as their two-year term would have ended by the time we began recruiting ministers. Second, we discovered that after we eliminated the respondents who were no longer in campus ministry or were no longer local, we had lost many of our potential recruits (we wanted to have face-to-face interviews whenever possible). Recognizing these limitations, we began reaching out to the campus ministers in our respective regions.

This direct solicitation was successful. We interviewed nineteen campus ministers from the Indiana/Ohio region (from twelve campuses), seventeen in Southern California (seven campuses) and nine in Georgia (five campuses). Forty-four of the forty-five interviews were face-to-face; the remaining interview took place via phone. All interviews were recorded and professionally transcribed. The principal investigator kept detailed memos on each code and coded all of the interviews using ATLAS.ti. The interviews were semi-structured and open-ended, exploring five main themes: vocation, student concerns, personal formation, language, and mission. With the exception of one interview in which the recording device stopped recording unbeknownst to the interviewer, interviews lasted 34-110 min, with a mean of 72 min.

The interview sample closely approximates the demographics of the survey respondents, indicating that the participants in this study are representative of those who took the 2017 survey. Of the forty-five interviewees, 62% were male (compared to 57% of survey respondents) and 38% were female (compared to 43% of survey respondents). Sixty-nine percent are laypersons (same as survey), 27% are religious or ordained men (compared to 26% of survey respondents) and 4% are women religious (compared to 5% of survey respondents).

Owing to the Atlanta and Southern California locations of many of the interviews, the interview sample is more ethnically diverse than the survey sample. One indication of this is that 73% of interviewees identified as white, compared to 86% of survey respondents. The bulk of non-white participants identified as Hispanic or Asian/Pacific Islander; one identified as Black, one identified as African, another identified as Native American and one identified as "other" (additionally, the respondents who identified as Black, Native American or "other" identified with multiple racial or ethnic groups).

The interview participants' educational preparation is somewhat higher than the survey sample. All had completed college and twenty-four percent (compared to 33% of survey respondents) report that their highest level of education is the bachelor's degree. Two-thirds have a master's degree (compared to 47% of survey respondents), none are in progress for a doctorate (compared to 4% of survey respondents) and seven percent have a doctoral degree (compared to 8% of survey respondents). Looking at graduate education broadly, 73% of interviewees have some sort of graduate degree (compared to almost two-thirds of survey respondents). Looking just to ministry-related degrees, sixty-nine percent possess this (compared to 60% of survey respondents). As the demographics of the interviewees approximate those who took the survey, the findings within this report provide access, elaboration and

clarification of many of the themes in the survey as well as lend important insights on their own.

The two groups examined here have very different formation experiences. The ten missionary participants come from one of two national Catholic campus missionary organizations (these are Fellowship of Catholic University Students [FOCUS] and St. Paul's Outreach) that provide them with a brief training; because of the geographic limitations of the researchers, the missionaries in this sample are all from one Catholic campus missionary organization. These missionaries are sent to campuses in small groups and are responsible to their team leader and an assigned chaplain who is often, but not always, a Catholic priest. The missionary organization we worked with for recruitment ensured that all of our contacts were in their second or later year of missionary work so that they would have more experience to draw upon for their responses.

Thirty-one of the participants are classified as degree-formed ministers, possessing a graduate degree in ministry or related field; the Master of Divinity was the most commonly named master's degree (it is required for priestly ordination, but open to others pursuing professional ministry) and two of the respondents have their doctorate. Many of them have other work experience or education that strengthens their ministry, such as chaplaincy, a one-year service program or an MBA.

Findings

None of the questions on the interview schedule asked the respondents about their frame or worldview outright. However, the ministers discuss some of their threads of meaning and value commitments through three main themes: vocation, prayer and spirituality, and mission. The responses below capture some of the most common ways each of the ministerial types discussed these three themes. Examining these three themes together yields a particular repertoire of Catholicism, a Catholic frame with specific core values that organize identity and identify priorities for Catholics in the world.

Vocation

“Vocation” has several meanings. First, there is the common understanding of one's career, as in vocational school. Second, theological contexts might emphasize the Latin root, *vocare*, meaning “to call,” elevating the idea that God invites people to particular tasks or roles. Finally, Catholic circles also tie vocation to a person's state in life, such as married life or the priesthood. These various meanings of vocation have differently weighted meanings for the interviewees. Common to both degree- and missionary-formed was the notion of vocation as a calling. In this understanding, God is active in the world and invites people to particular tasks. They felt that where they were as ministers was where God wanted them to be.

A difference for the missionaries is that some said that they were *called* to campus ministry, but that this is not their *vocation*; this was not heard among the

degree-based ministers. Missionaries were very explicit about defining vocation as one's state in life, "My understanding, what I think of when I think of vocation is the purpose—what God created me to do. So kind of like the—it would be marriage, priesthood or consecrated single life." This looser connection of their work to their "purpose" or what they were created to do could stem from their short-term status as a missionary.

Professional ministers, on the other hand, understand their ministry work as part of their vocation more broadly:

I didn't know what kind of ministry I wanted to do, or where I was called to do, but I had a clear sense that I was called to the ministry. A mentor, spiritual guide, said, "Well, you don't have to know right away, but you probably should get some preparation or credentials, or some formation, and do that." So that's what I did, I started that course of studies without knowing where I would end up; priesthood, lay ministry, or the context?... I had this very powerful moment of prayer towards the end of the retreat, praying with the image or the story of Jesus washing the disciples' feet. This very powerful moment in the prayer of Jesus looking at me saying, "Help me wash people's feet." But what he didn't say was, become a priest or not. I had this real sense of clarity that he doesn't care. That's not important to him.

For professional ministers, their vocation included the work they do. Alluded to here and made explicit among other degree-trained ministers, was that many did not feel campus ministry specifically was their vocation, but that ministry broadly was a permanent career path or calling that constituted their vocation. Some of the professional ministers included their state in life when discussing their vocation, "Whether it's being married or being a campus minister or a mom. I bring all those things together."

Another understanding of vocation shared among the degree-formed ministers was the idea that one's vocation was the intersection of their own interests with the needs of the world, as this minister describes, "Your vocation is responding to God's invitation to use your gifts to better the world is what I want to say." Along these lines, several ministers specifically cited theological writer Frederick Buechner's (2004) *Beyond Words* in which he describes vocation as, "The place God calls you to is the place where your deep gladness and the world's deep hunger meet." The ministers share a sense that God wants them in ministry and that their service is important. The overarching difference in understandings of vocation for the missionaries and degree-based ministers was that the missionaries ultimately understood vocation as one's state in life—that was permanent and private—whereas the professional ministers embedded full-time ministry in this, with an understanding that is dynamic and public.

While they both held in common a notion of vocation as calling, for missionaries, employment was transitory and ultimately significant only if it pointed them to their state in life. This minimizes the significance of students' major and career path and directs them to questions of ordination, religious life or marriage. For the professional ministers, work and career choices require serious discernment as these are a way of partnering with God and others to bring meaning to life. This does not

diminish the importance of one's state in life, but instead invites students to contemplate the whole of who they are and where they fit into the larger world. The world and a person's career, for professional ministers, is sacralized in a way that it is not for missionaries.

Prayer and Spirituality

A theme that was common to the missionaries and the degree-based campus ministers was that there were a variety of ways to pray. Neither group insisted on a particular prayer practice—like contemplation or the rosary—as being more authentically Catholic and many expressed ministerial interest in helping students find their own way to pray, as this professional minister explains:

How does one feel that one can connect with good and know that that's the personal way that God communicates with us? Some connect a lot with nature, others just love the creative expression of journaling. Others, they feel so connected just by being with others in community. Others see it as when they are involved in social justice activity, like soup kitchen, that's when they know they pray the best. So it's finding how each person is able to understand and give voice to where they know that God is present, and where they can also connect best from who they are.

This minister illustrates that prayer can go beyond verbal communication to prayerful ways of acting in the world that connect the student to God. But even verbal or contemplative prayer alone comes in many forms, as this missionary shares, "I think a little bit of it comes from they have an idea of what prayer is ingrained in their mind, and so that's what it is to them. So with a little bit of asking them questions or just teaching them a method of prayer like Ignatian [contemplation] or *Lectio Divina* or just kind of a silent, quiet meditation." Missionaries and ministers want to help individual students find the sort of prayer that can best connect them to God.

Which is also the second point in common among these two ministerial types: Both claimed that the whole point of prayer is to grow in relationship with God or Jesus, "Because I think that's when it becomes personal to use the language of a personal relationship with Jesus, that's what gets you there is when you can see resting in God's presence or having a conversation, having an authentic conversation partner in Christ means." Prayer is not about dutifully checking a box, improving oneself or other purpose. For both ministerial types, prayer is for deepening our relationship with God in an intimate way.

There was no distinct missionary prayer theme that arose. However, conversation about prayer evoked their spiritual ideas about the world. Six interviewees in the whole sample discussed the world in urgent, combative terms, using words like, "war," "attack," "battle," "devil" or "army" to understand it; five of those six participants were missionaries, representing half of all missionaries, as one responds, "I think in a setting that is so spiritual, you're going to be spiritually attacked, because the devil knows that we are making a difference on campus. Even if it's slow. Even if it's only winning a few people at a time, we're making a difference. He's, like,

scared of that. He can't attack us outright, but one of his more sneaky ways to attack is planting that doubt that you're not good enough, or you're not called to this." Half of the missionaries drew stark boundaries between the Church and the world, similar to the high-tension outlook that Katherine Dugan (2019) found in her study of Catholic missionaries. This high-tension outlook was only seen in one degree-formed campus minister, who still used more tempered language, "It's a challenge, because of the clear tension between the life of the church and what the church provides versus what secular culture is claiming as important and significant." "Versus" is the most embattled word here, and the combative severity is diminished somewhat by the words, "challenge" and "tension," which identifies the difficulties of contemporary secular society without a serious demonization of it.

A common strategy of helping students pray among the degree-trained ministers was to take a more casual attitude to praying. Sometimes students who do not come from families that regularly prayed would feel out of place at ministry events, as this minister describes, "But I think there's a [set of students who say], 'I'm totally comfortable, we're gonna hold hands, close our eyes and pray to Jesus.' And then there's [another set who say], 'I don't know what's happening.' Those are two different groups of students and feeling like—yeah. A decent number fall into the second category." Campus ministers had different strategies for students new to praying, but putting less weight on "doing it right" and being more casual about praying was common among the degree-based group. Some also noted that the students for whom prayer comes more easily needed to be more easy-going with prayer, as this minister demonstrates:

I remember I was meeting on a regular basis with this male student who I just loved meeting with. He was fascinated, really full of energy. He wasn't Catholic, but a very serious Christian. I remember he said to me one time, he's like, "I'm in a real—I'm in a desert. I'm in a real dark time. I just don't feel like I've connected with God lately." I said, "Oh okay, how long has that been going on?" "You know, it's about four days now." It doesn't count, you know, but I didn't say that. I think that that expectation that when they pray it should be very powerful all the time.

Being more casual about prayer makes it more natural for students. This helps students who are uncomfortable with praying as well as those who jump to rash conclusions when their prayer life has a temporary setback.

These two populations of campus ministers hold in common that there are a variety of ways to pray and that prayer is meant to connect the students to God. Missionaries are much more likely to bifurcate reality into the Church and the world, to see these realms as spiritually embattled and to use combative language to describe the struggle between the two. Ministers with graduate degrees in ministry encourage students to be more casual in their prayer, hoping that this makes prayer more natural and less stressful.

Both types of campus ministers encourage a variety of forms of prayer and value these primarily for their ability to connect the student to God. Here, the missionaries' discussion of life as an embattled conflict between the Church and the world lends insight to the ways missionaries sacralize life. Personal piety is important not

only for the virtues and devotion it brings the person, but also because there is a clear division of the world into realms of good and evil. Missionaries sacralize the world when they view it as a battleground; people must be won to the good and fortified so they may overcome the evil in themselves and the world around them. For missionaries, prayer and spirituality are urgent. For professional ministers, prayer and spirituality can take time. They take a posture of casualness to praying, thinking this gives students new to prayer the comfort to try and students who are more experienced a more natural approach. This sacralizes the self, with students' unique personhood guiding them to God. For professional ministers, prayer is an evolving, integrative process rather than a weapon for battle.

Mission

There were several interview questions having to do with mission. There was consensus among both missionaries and degree-based campus ministers that the primary mission of campus ministry is to facilitate students' relationship with Jesus. Some events do this in a very obvious way, such as inviting students to a Bible study, but some events are more social in nature, service-oriented or supportive (like giving out "survival kits" to students during finals week). Campus ministers tended to believe that supporting all dimensions of the human person was their responsibility as faith touches each of these. Still, they underscore that their programming does, in fact, affect students' spiritual commitments, "The programs really facilitate a student's relationship with Jesus. If we're doing something [an event], there's a [spiritually-significant] purpose behind it. If we're doing something, and we recognize that there's no [spiritually-significant] purpose behind it, we cut the particular ministry." Even with the wide variety of ministries they offer, campus ministers link these back to a relationship with Jesus.¹ This was by far the most common theme to all interviews, with just under half identifying relationship with God or Jesus as the central mission of campus ministry

A thread that was remarkably consistent among the missionaries' understanding of their mission was multiplication, a person-to-person deepening of the Catholic faith and rippling beyond those students who work directly with the missionaries. They believed their main role was to form close relationships with and mentor Catholic students, teaching them parts of Catholicism and then, once the student is sufficiently formed, that student is sent into the campus to do the same. This strategy makes a very time-intensive, one-on-one ministerial model, more tenable, "My mission is simple. Right now it is trying to first of all transform student disciples into missionary disciples. Helping them to encounter Christ through Scripture, through fellowship, through the Sacrament of Reconciliation, through the liturgy, that

¹ This primacy on the "relationship with Jesus" should be qualified. Some campus ministers, most often those at Catholic colleges and universities, were responsible not just for Catholic students, but all students (and the faculty and staff, too). In these cases, "relationship with Jesus" was not an appropriate centerpiece for all ministries as they also needed to be sure to meet the needs of non-Christian and unaffiliated students.

encountering Christ becomes the basis of this discipleship that we are talking about. And that when they have had that encounter, they can go out, they are empowered to go out, to reach out, to touch one, to save one, to bring others to Christ.” In this chain reaction, Catholic enthusiasm can potentially ripple out into a student body.

Many of the degree-formed campus ministers also used missional ideas and language, including when discussing service and outreach.² Some mentioned that outreach is an effective way to attract students who might not otherwise engage campus ministry offerings, “A cool stat I don’t [precisely] know off the top of my head, but I think it was 40% of students that went on the Spring Break trips were involved in our ministries. Then, after they got back, 80% were more involved in our ministries. [Outreach opportunities are] a definite on-ramp.” Professional ministers also observed the rich conversations their less religious students were able to have during service projects or immersion experiences, “Taking somebody who’s on a softball team or a nurse or whatever to Guatemala, they might not come to church, but they’re meeting Jesus to me. And, surprisingly, have very surprising spiritual conversations in a place like that, that you wouldn’t expect somebody who really is not a church attender to be talking about, but they are.” Outreach can be an important entry point for students who are not religious in more formal or conventional ways.

But, this does not mean that outreach is a means to an end; for many degree-trained campus ministers, service is a fundamental aspect of being Catholic, “[Outreach] is key. If we are not doing that, I think we should close up shop. If there is not a connection between the poor, we’re not worth it.” He continues, bemoaning the fact that there should be more service opportunities for students, “We are not doing—Unfortunately, and speaking from here, I’m not proud to say it, we don’t have that naturally, but we’ve gotten better. Our staff, we now go, we’ve got that homeless center each month as a staff project. Our students here, most of our RCIA [Rite of Christian Initiation for Adults] have an aspect of that, but admittedly we are lacking there.” Service is strategically as well as theologically important for degree-based ministers.

Professional ministers, because of their graduate-level preparation, are well-versed in Catholic teachings on justice and service and are ready to help students connect their political commitments to their faith:

[Students] were so involved in wanting to do the [immigration] walks and everything for the issue without realizing the spiritual components and the Catholic social teaching connected with it. So they were just like, “Well, how can

² To be clear, missional ideas were used beyond contexts of service among the degree-based ministers, with one referring to Sherry Weddell’s book, *Forming Missionary Disciples*, “So, Sherry Weddell... and I had read the book... I’ve read it a few times, now... And I attended a conference with her out in Colorado Springs, through her St. Catherine of Siena Institute. But I think that really shifted my vision of what the purpose of the Church is, what the purpose of our ministry as an extension of the Church in campus ministry, about the need and how we go about reaching people, and what the aims of our work really are, and that is that building up of disciples and what it takes to go on that journey with people. I think that really also shifted my perspective, and I read that book probably about four, 5 years ago. It was soon after I took on RCIA, and that really shifted, then, even my perspective of how I do RCIA now and really about what’s most important in how we prioritize what we do in RCIA.”

Jesus be involved with this; this is a social justice thing.” I was like, “Jesus is social justice!” And so just even talking about how they’re so in desire of wanting to speak out and to understand these issues, but introducing Catholic social teaching is important and allowing them to see that you cannot disconnect Jesus from any issue, and that he has to be the center of that.

Many of the missionaries interviewed did not have this same sort of cultural facility, “[Justice and advocacy work] is something that [my missionary organization] doesn’t take a stance on. [My organization] is very non-partisan, not super vocal about that, except in the area of being pro-life. That is definitely a strong stance that they would advocate for.” Another missionary said bluntly, “Oh wow. I don’t even touch on [justice and advocacy] at all.” Fluency in Catholic social teaching helps degree-formed ministers connect politics, civil society and Catholicism in a way most Catholics cannot.

Within their understanding of mission, ministers of both kinds believe that helping students to cultivate a relationship with God or Jesus is primary. Missionaries lift up multiplication, helping them reach more people and deepen their Catholic faith through one-on-one relationships. They have a strategic lens, looking to increase the zeal in as many Catholics as possible so that this ripples out into the world. Professional ministers connect mission to outreach in three ways. First, these campus ministers believe that there are students who would not be interested in conventionally religious campus ministry events, but who would come to a service event; outreach events attract these students. Second, beyond the practical ends of reaching new students, professional ministers believe that a sense of Christian duty and love compels Catholics to stand alongside the poor. Engagement with marginalized groups is much more than civic engagement, professional ministers contend it is also a sacred act, “It’s an entry to Jesus who says whenever you work with the least of these, you work with me, so to me that’s an introduction to Jesus.” Finally, through service projects or immersion experiences, these students expand their imagination as to what is “religious,” sacralizing new aspects of the students’ worlds.

Discussion

These three elements of vocation, spirituality and prayer, and mission reveal some elements that comprise two different Catholic frames for assigning meaning and acting in life, with the missionaries’ frame being very individual-oriented and the professional ministers’ frame as communal-oriented. The responses from these ministers, with both overlap and differences, provide insights into the frames operant for two groups of contemporary Catholic campus ministers. As the Starks and Day survey data revealed, there are points of commonality among these two types as well as distinctive ideological threads that cohere the missionary themes and other distinguishing threads that connect the professional ministers’ themes. The organizing logic of each frame is one that privileges particular Catholic experiences insofar as they are either individualist or communal.

Beginning with what is held in common, both sets of ministers discussed their vocation as a calling. Calling and the discernment that accompanies this, have both individualist and communitarian elements. A calling may be first heard individually, as a subjective feeling or a stirring within a moment of prayer, that a person is meant to pursue a particular course of action. Callings are then usually brought into conversation with trusted others, bringing them outside the individual and into the community (Pitt 2012). This could also happen in the reverse order, with a series of individuals telling a person to consider a particular path as he or she seems especially well-suited for this, then reflecting on this individually. The takeaway here is that because the concept of calling is culturally accessible through both individualist and communitarian repertoires, this element may be present in both ministerial frames.

This individualist and communitarian overlap is likewise present in their points of commonality on prayer and spirituality as well as mission. With the variety of ways to pray, there are some styles and practices that are more individual and others that are more communal. This also allows students to encounter God—according to the ministers, the primary purpose of prayer—in both public and private contexts. Ministers also agreed that the primary mission of campus ministry was to help students cultivate a relationship with God. Looking deeply at the details of these responses reveals the communal and individualist elements in this, “[The students] need to feel safe and feel a place of trust and home before we can even dive into a deep prayer life because most students aren’t there yet. Having those social events are important [for cultivating a relationship with Jesus].” Friendship with others paves the way for a relationship with God. Another shares, “What we really desire is for our students to encounter Christ, our students to have a transformation in their heart, and then for them to go make a difference in the world.” Religiously mature individuals make for more generous human beings. Still another says, “We bring them to these [events] so that they encounter Christ and then once they encounter Christ it’s like, ‘Okay, now what do you want to do that you’ve encountered Christ? Do you want to start praying? Do you want to start a Bible study? Do you want to do discipleship together? Where I’ll teach you, hopefully, how to lead a Bible study, how to disciple others.’” Relationship with Jesus inspires students to reach out to others. For these areas of commonality between the ministerial types, there are also clear overlaps with the communal and individualist frames.

There were also important differences in their frames, typically dividing into frames that reinforced individualist or communal orientations. When the missionaries emphasize a person’s state in life, such as married life, without incorporating the work that person does, they are emphasizing the private sphere. Although family was once a very public institution, it has become a very private and affective unit (Coontz 2005). The professional ministers include their marriage or religious state in their vocation, but also do not hesitate to include their employment as having vocational significance. This spiritual understanding of their career causes them to frame students’ career choices as such, also sacralizing these.

The two types of ministers also part ways when it comes to their understanding of the Church in the world. The missionaries have a high-tension outlook, draw stark boundaries between the Church and the world, and see prayer as something that gives them strength to conquer forces of evil in the world (see Dugan 2019 and

Smith 1998 for other examples of this high-tension outlook among religious groups). The degree-formed ministers have a low-tension outlook. This comes through in their attitudes toward prayer, claiming that it is more effective when it becomes a natural, organic pattern of one's life. They also demonstrate this in discussing vocation, with work being a place where students can bring light into a world that already has some good of its own, believing there are places for community "out there." Although these both have communitarian aspects to them, the missionaries are more insular and do battle with the world while the professional ministers are embedded in the world and have a more expansive and inclusive notion of community.

The final aspect of the frame centers on mission. The missionaries focus on discipling, that is, befriending students and then forming and preparing those who are more active for their own ministry. This intense honing of very few students in the interest of reaching more illustrates the quantitative interest of the missionaries. However, this quantitative strategy should not be understood as crass numbers. Rather, this pragmatism complements the frame of urgency. In an ongoing battle between good and evil, it is important to realize that the missionary perspective has eternity and the salvation of souls in mind; this sacralizes their urgency.³ They believe strong, Christ-centered relationship is the best way to heal this world. The degree-based ministers also draw on the pragmatic quantitative element when they talk about service opportunities as a strategy to attract a certain type of student. But the central focus of mission for professional ministers—aside from relationship with Jesus—is to create community with marginalized groups. This, in turn, expands the moral and theological imagination of the students, sacralizing their everyday lives.

Sociologist of Catholicism Andrew Greeley (1989) noted that the Catholic imagination is communitarian and sees reality as analogical or sacramental, that is, as revealing some aspect of God to creation, and so is fundamentally good. In contrast, he noted that the Protestant imagination is individualist and sees reality as dialectical, that is, as primarily absent of God, with a God who only rarely reveals the divine nature to creation, rendering reality as different from God and even as "God-for-saken." Greeley is careful to note that these are tendencies, that both analogical and dialectical imaginations exist in both Protestants and Catholics, but that these are important leanings that distinguish and shape these two groups. However, 30 years later, it appears that missionaries are bringing elements that are traditionally part of the Protestant imagination into Catholicism. This could expand, re-center or cause contestation within Catholicism as ministers seek to define what is central to the Catholic frame.

Limitations

Although these interviewees are articulate and thoughtful as they plumb their religious tradition, it is important to keep in mind that these respondents come from a particularly active and engaged segment of American Catholics. Ministers, rather

³ It has been noted elsewhere that the missionaries' fervor wanes after their missionary experience (Dugan 2019).

than ordinary faithful, were intentionally chosen as interview subjects because of the greater fluency and awareness they have of Catholicism and its traditions. What this data cannot tell us is whether or not the students they work with actually embrace the frames the ministers and missionaries offer them. And even if they do while they are undergraduates, does this frame persist beyond their graduation? Or is it readily replaced by frames provided by friends, family, work, and leaders in their new religious contexts? These methods do not answer these longitudinal questions.

This study also does not indicate the extent to which campus ministers and missionaries are similar to and different from other church leaders who likewise construct their own frames of meaning. Focusing on a specific ministerial context helped keep some things constant so that similarities and differences were more readily discernible. But broadening the sample to include Catholic chaplains, retreat leaders, those who coordinate services for low-income or marginalized groups and more would help expand the relevance of these findings. Likewise, going beyond Catholicism and exploring the key elements and themes within the frames of other religious leaders would be fruitful.

Conclusions and Implications

Although the literature review above relied heavily on social movement theory to contextualize frames, this article generates theoretical contributions to the existing literature from within the sociology of religion. To begin with, these frames implicitly tap larger theological teachings within Catholicism. Catholicism has a vast and expansive theological history that is filled with elements that are in tension with one another; these ministers' frames weigh in on this debate in ways that will be at odds with one other. To briefly examine a few of these, there are ways of understanding the place of this mortal life in the context of one's eternal life. A view that claims this world is insignificant, that the whole purpose of this life is to get to the next one is "other-worldly." To claim that this world is important in and of itself apart from the afterlife is to be "this-worldly"; missionaries are more other-worldly and the professionals are more this-worldly. It is worth noting that Weber (1930/1998) claimed that the Protestant Reformation introduced a this-worldly valence to Christianity, with the Catholicism of the time being other-worldly. Today, evangelical Protestants and Catholic campus missionaries are, typically, more other-worldly and mainline Protestants and degree-formed campus ministers tend to be more this-worldly. The boundaries are no longer frames shared among co-religionists. Instead, frames can build bridges across denominations even while they might increase distance within their respective traditions.

Turning to eschatology, or the coming of the Kingdom of God, some say we live in the "not yet," characterized by pain, evil and fallenness. Others claim we are living in the "already," that the Kingdom erupts in ways large and small into reality; missionaries are more of the first type and the degree-formed ministers are of the second school. There are also considerations of anthropology, or human nature. Missionaries have a more negative anthropology, that humans are broken in this world and will follow sinful desires without God's grace. The professional ministers have a

more positive anthropology, undergirded by an understanding that people are made good and in the image of God. To be clear, these are theological binaries and ministers of both types certainly draw from elements of both sides of the above, reflecting the U.S. Catholic population at large in believing human nature is both “good and sinful”⁴ (Starks 2014), but they will tend to lean heavily on their respective side of the spectrum.

These differences matter. Differences in this- or other-worldly orientation, eschatology or anthropology are not merely theological questions that only affect adherents and their communities. These individualist and communitarian frames can have implications well beyond campus ministry and *into the political realm*. Other research has found that differences in individualist and communitarian worldviews are linked to differing political attitudes and practices. For example, research conducted in the 1990s by political scientists Legee and Kellstedt (1993) found that religious worldview (operationalized by a individualism-communitarian measure) was useful in predicting several political attitudes and behaviors among American Catholics, including party identification. However, we are mindful that religious worldview cannot account for all variation on political outcomes, and there were not any questions in either the survey or the qualitative study of campus ministry that asked about political attitudes. Whether these individualist frames begin in the political and influence religious attitudes, vice versa, or they stem from somewhere else entirely is unclear, but it reveals the connection of this work to the research on political polarization.

These differences in frames can lead to different emotional responses to their reality. What is seen as urgent to the missionaries—the saving of souls—does not evoke the same sort of emotional response from the degree-based campus ministers. Likewise, the connection of mission to outreach, and then to politics, was a quick one for the degree-formed ministers; it was compelling and central for many. But was a wholly new affective—if not foreign—affective response for the missionaries. They saw the sacred in distinct places; different frames demand different responses. Their emotions, constrained and enabled by their respective frames, shapes their convictions, strategies and commitments.

These individualist and communitarian frames can also impact Catholic identity. As the literature review demonstrates, frames draw group boundaries. These boundaries not only name who belongs, but also help to identify shared interests. With divergent interests, groups may need to compete for members and resources. Will these groups be able to see the ways they each amplify particular aspects of Catholicism while minimizing others? Will they have the ability to see the Catholicity of the other and appreciate the complementarity and tension? Or will they view the other as less Catholic?

The above differences in frames also matter for those who care about effective ministry. When these two forms of ministry have been asked to collaborate, it is sometimes

⁴ Starks found that 55% of Catholics described human nature as both good and sinful, 43% said basically good (more than the 31% of non-Catholics who described human nature this way) and only 2% said basically sinful.

very difficult (Day and Kawentel 2020). With two very different frames for approaching ministry, there have been conflicts about programmatic strategies, content, audience and more. The sense of there being types of ministers with greater or less overlap in shared vision was expressed by this professional minister:

I find my peer institutions are those that I call when I have new ideas or want to understand how they do it. I'm always going to the Catholic universities or, specifically, the Jesuit universities because I feel like they speak the same language more than those at public schools or, like, a lot of times, I find their formation and training to look different and usually their staff to look so different too. So that's just more of a curious thing with like CCMA [Catholic Campus Ministry Association, the national body for Catholic campus ministers], it seems like it has this— It bites off a lot by trying to encompass all of that because I know there's so much different styles, but we can learn so much from the different ways of doing it.

Note that this minister acknowledges both the importance of knowing colleagues who share common frames, but also closes by stating that “we can learn so much from the different ways of doing it.” There are definitely conflicts between these frames, and resource scarcity in ministry only exacerbates this.

As we noted early in the article, campus ministers offer an important place to study frames because of the long-term impact they might have on the denomination as a whole. Campus ministers are key cultural producers for young adults who are not only receptive to new frames—being at a phase in their life that is characterized by meaning and identity formation (Clydesdale and Garces-Foley 2019)—but are also quite young and potentially have many years ahead in which to shape their denomination and world. Considering that these students will graduate, are likely upwardly-mobile, and may assume leadership in churches, businesses and communities, having a sense of this individualist/communal division reach and impact on the students, especially the long-term effects, is important for the future. As we noted above, we did not interview students and so cannot say for sure, but we can imagine that if students encounter only one of these frames, they will hone their familiarity in that frame and lose their facility in the other. However, exposing students to both frames (and others not discovered by this study) could lend students fluency in each, leading to Catholics who *understand* particular theological emphases even while they do not embrace them personally. This could lead to greater appreciation and sense of community, even amid contested frames.

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