



**Religion and Education:
The Voices of Young People in Ireland**

The Millennial Generation

Catholic identities, religious faith and moral values: An empirical enquiry among 16- to 19- year-old male students in the Republic of Ireland

Andrew McGrady, Ursula McKenna & Leslie J Francis

Abstract

Against the background of the changing religious landscape of the Republic of Ireland, this study was designed to explore the connections between Catholic identities and both religious faith and moral values at the beginning of the twenty-first century in order to provide a baseline for future studies. Catholic identities are conceptualised as comprising the intersection between religious affiliation and religious practice. Drawing on data provided by post-primary students between the ages of 16 and 19 years, collected in 2003 from 65 Catholic voluntary secondary schools, comparisons were drawn between five groups of young men: 96 who claimed affiliation with no religious group and 1,231 Roman Catholic students distinguished by four levels of mass attendance: weekly (614), at least once a month (265), several times a year (254), and never (92), leaving six who did not report on their level of attendance. The data demonstrated that the religiously unaffiliated young men retained some vestige of the religious heritage of Ireland, while weekly mass attending young men embraced a number of secular norms and values. While Catholic identities remained important, their significance was eroding.

Keywords: Republic of Ireland, Catholic young men, religious faith, moral values.

**When women cease to be more religious than men: The changing face of sex differences
in religious affect among young adult Catholics in the Republic of Ireland**

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Abstract

Empirical research studies within Christian and post-Christian cultures have consistently reported higher levels of religious practice, belief and affect among women than among men. The present study reported the responses of 1,583 16- to 17-year-old and 1,191 18- to 19-year-old Catholic students within the Republic of Ireland who completed the McGrady Religious Affect Scale (McRAS) in 2003. Among neither age group was a significant difference found between the scores recorded by males and by females. This finding is consistent with the view that young Catholic women may be losing confidence in their religious heritage more rapidly than young Catholic men.

Key words: attitudes, Christianity, young adults, Catholics, Republic of Ireland

Republic of Ireland in 2003: Exploring sex differences

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Abstract

Against the background of the changing religious, cultural and social landscape of the Republic of Ireland, this study was designed to explore the religious identity of 16- to 19-year-old school-leavers in single sex Catholic voluntary secondary schools in the early 2000s. Drawing on data provided by 1,648 young women and 1,231 young men who self-identified as Catholics, the analyses explored the themes of religious attendance, sacramental participation, self-assessed religiosity, personal religiosity, anticipated future religious engagement, influences on religiosity, and religious affect. The most important findings from the study is that both young male and young female Catholic school-leavers perceive themselves as being less religious and less institutionally affiliated than their perceptions of their parents. While, in accordance with general findings elsewhere young women are more likely to engage in prayer than young men, within the Republic of Ireland young women feel less positively about the Church than young men and are more likely to feel alienated from institutional Catholicism.

Keywords: Catholic Church, Catholic voluntary secondary schools, single sex schools, Republic of Ireland, religious identity, religious affect

**The McGrady Index of Parental Attitude toward Catholic Schools (MIPACS):
Reliability and validity among Catholic parents within the Republic of Ireland**

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Abstract

Drawing on data provided by 2,838 parents of Catholic students attending second-level Catholic schools within the Republic of Ireland in 2003, this study introduces the McGrady Index of Parental Attitude toward Catholic Schools (MIPACS). This instrument displayed good internal reliability ($\alpha = .84$) and good construct validity, assessed in terms of motivations for choosing a Catholic school, preferred choice of school, and satisfaction with the school. The individual items generate insight into Catholic parents' expectations regarding Catholic voluntary secondary schools and suggests that in 2003 parental support for the religious ethos of such schools was waning. It is recommended that replication of this original study would document the extent to which parental attitude toward Catholic schools may have undergone further change.

Keywords: Catholic schools, Republic of Ireland, Catholic parents, parental attitudes.