(Farnham, 1961).

Religious scholar David E. Campbell and political scientist Robert D. Putnam argue that America's unique religious identity is also characterized by its resilience. Religion in the U.S. has encountered major shifts, including not only tremendous Catholic immigration, but also changes such as "personal sexual morality" (Putnam & Campbell, 2010, p. 82), and tensions between religious denominations. The nation has adapted to these challenges, however, because of its fluidity. The Constitution's guarantee of religious freedom allows multiple religions to constantly compete. This dynamic is explained well by Putnam and Campbell:

> **...the absence of a state-run religious monopoly combine[s] with a wide sphere of religious liberty [to] produce an ideal environment for a thriving religious ecosystem. Religions compete, adapt, and evolve as individual Americans freely move from one congregation to another, and even from one religion to another. (2010, p. 4)**

Since no religion has tax support or legally requires membership, religious institutions must actively recruit and retain members, resulting in a flourishing marketplace. The success of this marketplace is exemplified in the U.S.'s relatively high religiosity. The vast majority of U.S. citizens, 83%, say they belong to a religion, and 80% are absolutely certain that God exists (Putnam & Campbell, 2010). These distinctive aspects of our religious history, along with nineteenth century Catholic immigrants' experience, provide critical context to both Catholic immigrants' religious identity and the broader national identity.

Analysis

Religious identity played a crucial role in nineteenth century Catholic immigrants' transition to the U.S. The support they received from U.S. Catholic churches strengthened their Catholic religious identity. Amidst rampant anti-Catholicism from Protestants, immigrants often found "shelter" in the Church (Crews, 1994, p. 83). Also, because of the tremendous influx of Catholic immigrants, Catholic churches grew in size and influence. Accordingly, many scholars label the original U.S. Catholic church as an "immigrant church" (Crews, 1994; Wenski, 1998), because immigrants "abruptly lifted the Catholic Church from obscurity to prominence" (Farnham,

1961, p. 54). According to Catholic scholar Thomas G. Wenski (1998), this relationship was so mutually successful because the Catholic churches utilized the national parish model, which entails placing immigrants in a position of strength in the Church. Thus, instead of attempting to assimilate immigrants, the Church embraced the newcomers, allowing for effective integration. This enculturation process allowed nineteenth century Catholic immigrants to embrace their religious identity in their new, and often times unwelcoming, community.

Though anti-Catholicism is much less prevalent in modern America, Catholic immigrants' religious identity is still an important issue. Wenski argues that the Church must embrace new immigrants as it did in the nineteenth century so that they can successfully develop their religious identity. Nineteenth century Catholic immigrants both found their identity in Catholic churches and helped strengthen the U.S. Catholic Church's identity. Wenski compares the modern Catholic immigrant struggle to wounded skin that must be carefully healed, offering enculturation through the national parish model as the necessary medication. One way to apply this model is to host religious services in immigrants' native language, instead of offering English-only services. By actively trying to meeting immigrants' needs, respecting their culture, and promoting integration instead of assimilation, the U.S. Catholic Church can effectively heal the wounds from which many modern Catholic immigrants suffer. Historically, Catholic immigrants and their church are deeply connected in a positive, reciprocal manner, as each helps the other strengthen its identity. Potential for additional identity growth still exists, dependent only on modern Catholic immigrants and Catholic churches working together to overcome cultural tensions (Wenski, 1998).

Religious identity shaped Catholic immigrants' lives in the United States, and Catholic immigrants significantly impacted the religious identity of their new nation. Catholic immigrants' impact on the United States' religious identity is most clearly illustrated through the nation's response to the immigrants' arrival, which was often blatant oppression of these newcomers and their religious beliefs. This oppression took various forms, including anti-Catholic