Pilgrimage, Religious Institutions, and the Construction of Orthodoxy*

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In this article, I analyze support for religiously orthodox teachings among U.S. Catholic laity. I find orthodoxy to be positively correlated with religious experience. While most Catholics disagree with official teachings regarding contraception and the celibate priesthood, a significant minority endorse these orthodox positions. In analyses of a national sample of U.S. Catholics, orthodox attitudes are found to be more common among those who have been on a religious pilgrimage. The finding is interpreted using concepts from Durkheim’s sociology of religion, Stark and Finke’s claims about the relationship between religious ritual and acceptance of religious explanations, and Wildavsky’s theory that preferences are endogenous to institutions. Building on these analyses, I address a question about the structural consequences of pilgrimage, and conclude with a call for further quantitative research about pilgrims’ experiences.

During the second half of the 20th century, lay Catholic social attitudes became increasingly similar to the attitudes of the American public at large (Hoge 1986). While official church teachings counter several trends in the broader culture, support of official Church positions is clearly not universal among American Catholic laity (Granberg 1991). These changes are frequently traced to Vatican II and the Church’s elevation of the role of individual conscience regarding certain moral teachings (Hoge 1986; D’Antonio et al. 2001). For example, Catholic teaching about the use of artificial birth control stands in contrast to American public opinion, which clearly accepts artificial birth control. While the majority of U.S. Catholics do not question the use of birth control, nearly a third say that disobeying Church teaching about contraception is unacceptable (D’Antonio et al. 2001). Why do some Catholics endorse culturally marginalized religious teachings while many others express opinions that are in line with mainstream attitudes?

Motivated by this basic question, I incorporate theory about the role of religious ritual and experience in the development of religious identity. Specifically, I explore how the ritual of religious pilgrimage is related to opposition to artifi-

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cial birth control and support for a celibate priesthood, two issues about which a minority of lay Catholics agree with official Church policy. I begin with a brief review of literature about religious orthodoxy and propose measures of such an orientation among Catholics. Next, I discuss scholarly understandings of pilgrimage and consider questions about whether pilgrimage is individualistic or community centered. I also address a question about the role of pilgrimage in sustaining or resisting existing social structure. I then develop a general hypothesis about the correlation between pilgrimage and orthodoxy based on Wildavsky's (1987) theory of preference, and the role of ritual in the theories of Durkheim (1995) and Stark and Finke (2000). I conclude with a discussion of how a theory incorporating institutional histories and individual practices can help to explain cooperation and conflict within and across religious traditions.

**RELIGIOUS ORTHODOXY**

Most recent treatments of religious orthodoxy are traceable to the work of Wuthnow (1988) and Hunter (1991). Hunter (1991) fueled much research and debate over his proposition that orthodox and progressive camps would engage in heated cultural warfare (Olson and Carroll 1992; Davis and Robinson 1996b; Hunter 1996). While the degree of potential contestation has been qualified, most scholars agree that members of both camps can be found in all contemporary U.S. religious groups (Tamney, Johnson, and Burton 1992; Wuthnow 1988). The religiously orthodox are guided by an unchanging, external moral authority, while progressives subscribe to an evolving morality and vest moral authority in the individual (Hunter 1991; Davis and Robinson 1996a). For the orthodox, questions of morality are decided in reference to a transcendent standard, while for progressives the morality of action is potentially variable, and ultimately depends on the judgment of situated individuals.

Often in survey research, religious orthodoxy is operationalized with questions about Biblical literalism, human sinfulness, or punishment for disobedience (Ellison and Sherkat 1993). The utility of these and many standard survey items in the Catholic context has been questioned (Mockabee, et al; Welch and Leegle 1988), and as measures of Catholic orthodoxy they fail to account for the known role of official Church teaching and traditions. Such teachings and traditions, often outlined in Papal encyclicals, are a source of external authority for Catholics. Debates about acceptable behavior, for example eating meat on Fridays, are carried out within the hierarchy, and decisions are officially authoritative.

These debates are relevant to the lives of Catholics, and reversals like that of the Friday meat restriction do create moral confusion for some laity (D’Antonio et al. 2001:72). Vatican II decreased the Church’s tension with wider society on many fronts, and the results of these changes for individual morality and attitudes
are much studied (Bianchi 1970; Greeley 1976; Hoge 1986; Hornsby-Smith, et al. 1987). Of course, even as one cites examples of the Catholic Church becoming more accepting of modernity and individual Catholics increasingly relying on personal conscience rather than the hierarchy (D’Antonio, et al. 2001:76), there are a number of official Catholic positions which run counter to the U.S. mainstream status quo.

Some have referred to these as positions that mark Roman Catholicism as a distinctive religious group in the United States (Sherkat 2001). For example, while many Protestant religious groups allow married men and women to serve as pastors, the Catholic Church continues its tradition of a celibate male priesthood. While these differences may help to make Catholic identity somewhat more stable than other religious preferences (Loveland 2003), a majority of U.S. Catholics believe the church hierarchy should allow married men and women to be ordained (D’Antonio, et al. 2001:109). Catholics who support ordination of married men are applying modern values to the religious domain, while those who support a celibate priesthood endorse the long held, traditional position of the Catholic hierarchy. Among U.S. Catholics attitudes about ordination serve as an indicator of progressive or orthodox values.

Perhaps no issue captures the continued tension between Catholic teaching and popular modern morality better than that of the practice of artificial birth control. Church doctrine on artificial birth control is outlined in the 1968 Papal Encyclical, *Humanae Vitae*, and the story of the document’s inception is an example of the Vatican placing moral authority within the hierarchical structure rather than allowing for the negotiated morality indicative of progressivism. In 1963, Pope John XXIII commissioned more than 50 academics, church leaders, doctors and laity to consider the ramifications of reversing the Church’s opposition to contraceptive birth control. A strong majority agreed that the Church could reverse its position, but Pope Paul VI instead relied on the arguments of four dissenting voices to uphold the traditional teaching (D’Antonio, et al. 2001:72). Indicating that the issue remains salient today, in the fall of 2006 the U.S. Bishops restated the hierarchy’s opposition to contraception with the document *Married Love and the Gift of Life* (USCCB 2006).

However, among Catholic laity, contraception is quite commonly understood as a personal decision.Analyzing data collected in 1999, D’Antonio (2001:76) and colleagues show that 62 percent of Catholics feel that birth control decisions should be made by the individual, rather than Church leaders, and an ABC News public opinion poll in 2004 found over 80 percent of Catholics agree that the use of artificial birth control is acceptable (Langer 2004). As with a celibate priest-

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1The Pastoral Provision of 1980 does allow for the ordination of married, former Episcopal priests; however, there are fewer than 100 such priests in the U.S., a group widely unknown to Catholic laity (Sullins 2007).
hood, Catholics who maintain the immorality of contraception agree with the orthodox position of the Church hierarchy. In doing so, they are not only assuming a counter-cultural position in American society, but also a minority position within their own tradition.

PILGRIMAGE, RELIGIOUS EXPERIENCE, AND COMMUNITY

Whether the destination is Mecca, Jerusalem, or Clearwater, Florida (Swatos 2002), pilgrims can be found within most, if not all, religious traditions (Tomasi 2002:1). Tomasi (2002:3) describes pilgrimage “as a journey undertaken for religious purposes that culminates in a visit to a place considered to be the site or manifestation of the supernatural.” The place, according to Tomasi and others (Eliade 1963; Glazier 1983), is unique regarding the presence of supernatural power. In these places people are closer to God or the gods. The scholarly understanding of pilgrimage is even more complex as variations of the religious experience are observed and appreciated. For example, Glazier (1983) makes a distinction between fixed pilgrimages like those described by Turner and Turner (1978), and flexible pilgrimage, where the focus is not on a geographical place but on the social organization of the journey.

Recently, scholars have begun to consider how modern pilgrimage is like tourism (Tomasi 2002:17). Packaged experiences raise reasonable questions about what constitutes a “pilgrimage” and what is primarily “tourism.” Pilgrimage is seen as an authentic, communal experience, while tourism is painted in individualized, consumerist tones. In medieval times, traveling great distances through dangerous terrain was not uncommon so the pilgrim quite literally risked life during the quest (Tomasi 2002:6). While not all contemporary pilgrimages are without toil, today the convenience of transportation and the proliferation of potential destinations make many of the pilgrims’ roads smoother (Macioti 2002:85). Writing about this melding of tourism and pilgrimage in modern society, Blasi (2002) focuses his attention on the shared, general experiences of pilgrims that characterize what might otherwise be considered a fully individualistic experience. Even if undertaken as tourism, Blasi’s (2002:160) model implies that pilgrims are nonetheless aware of religious values, and sees modern pilgrimage as a personal quest for meaning that strengthens an existing identity.

Questions about pilgrimage and community motivate many scholarly debates, for example about the role of pilgrimage in sustaining or negating the existing social structure. Eade and Sallnow (2000:5) compare and contrast a Marxist understanding of pilgrimage as structure maintenance with the Turner and Turner (1978) depiction of pilgrimage as generating spontaneous, anti-structure communitas. At issue is not whether the experience of pilgrimage binds one to a larger community, but rather the position and role of the pilgrims’ imagined community within the larger social structure.
The location of a community relative to the overall cultural landscape is, of course, a variable (Alexander 1988). Some symbolic communities resonate with mainstream culture, while others stand in opposition to it. It follows that pilgrimage does not inherently maintain or abrogate structure, but rather strengthens individual bonds to a symbolic community that exists in more or less tension with wider culture (Stark and Finke 2000). It is the location of this larger community relative to wider cultural trends that would indicate whether or not the act of pilgrimage could be labeled primarily as pro- or anti-structure. Therefore, the meaning and social consequences of religious pilgrimage are unknowable without reference to the religious and mainstream cultures the pilgrim lives within.

PILGRIMAGE AND DEFENSE OF EXISTING AUTHORITY

As detailed as most accounts of pilgrimage are in describing the journey and destination, the relationships between pilgrimage and the individual’s religious and social identities are less studied. Nonetheless, theories of religious experience and identity suggest that pilgrimage should affect the pilgrim’s sense of self and institutional religious commitment. Sociologists have long argued that ritual, in general, has consequences for subsequent religious identity and commitment (Durkheim 1995; Collins 2004). According to Durkheim, without repeated religious rites, religious beliefs would fade and religious movements would lose their social force (Durkheim 1995:420)—the ability to influence attitudes and action. Durkheim argued that collective religious sentiments would quickly cede to “individual temperaments” when people were no longer “assembled, mutually influencing one another” (1995:232). Two elements are important here. First, Durkheim places ritual prior to commitment. Second, he sees religious commitment as fragile, depending on frequent ritual action and exposure to the symbols of communal life.

Other theories of identity posit more stability, especially those that rely on the concept of preference. For example, Wildavsky (1987, 1994) develops a theory of identity on the premise that preferences are best understood relative to the pre-existing social institutions that populate social life; the self being intimately connected to the institutions within which we all live. Like Durkheim, Wildavsky understands preferences as endogenous to the social context, emerging from social interaction: “People discover preferences by evaluating how their past choices have strengthened or weakened their way of life. Put plainly, people decide for or against existing authority. They construct their culture in the process of decision making” (Wildavsky 1987:5). Relative to Durkheim, Wildavsky grants more permanence to identities formed through social life—posing identity as reflective and cumulative, and importantly, expressed in choices.
Stark and Finke (2000) outline a related proposition while building a theory of religion on the premise that individuals interact with perceived supernatural beings. This basic premise lends itself to a study of pilgrimage because ethnographic data show that pilgrimage is about going to physical locations where the presence of God is thought to be particularly strong. According to Stark and Finke (2000:103), religion provides general explanations of existence, and religious organizations develop to provide believers with routine, predictable methods of communicating with a god or gods. While the primary element of religion is the relationship between a rational individual and a supernatural actor, organizations and hierarchies of religious skill supply legitimacy to religious belief. Stark and Finke (2000:107-8) hypothesize that religious ritual strengthens one’s confidence in religious explanations, and agree with Durkheim that rituals generate group solidarity. Stark and Finke do not explicitly propose that religious ritual will increase commitment to religious organizations, but it clearly follows from their work.

Drawing on the theories of Durkheim (1995), Wildavsky (1987), and Stark and Finke (2000), I expect that Catholic pilgrims differ from non-pilgrims in the degree to which they exhibit orthodoxy by endorsing Church teachings. If pilgrimage, as religious ritual, bonds one to the religious community (Durkheim 1995), a community that develops to routinize interaction with the supernatural (Stark and Finke 2000), we would expect pilgrims more often to “decide for” religious authority (Wildavsky 1987). For Catholicism, one way to measure accept ance of authoritative religious explanations is to observe the degree to which lay Catholics agree with the Church’s teachings on contemporary moral issues. This suggests the following hypothesis: Catholics who have been on a pilgrimage are more likely than those who have not to agree with the Church hierarchy. I test this hypothesis by examining, in particular, issues on which the official teachings of the Catholic Church are opposed to prevailing American cultural attitudes: support for a celibate priesthood and restriction on the use of artificial birth control.

In the Catholic context, attitudes about these two issues are valid measures of orthodoxy, since orthodoxy is here conceptualized as commitment to an unchanging moral standard legitimated by the Catholic hierarchy and few other institutions. It may be, however, that pilgrims are simply more traditional over a range of social issues, and that the correlation between pilgrimage and attitudes about birth control and the celibate priesthood are not unique. To account for this possibility, the following analysis examines the relationship between pilgrimage and attitudes on other contested moral issues—not only birth control and the celibate priesthood, but also abortion, stem cell research, and homosexuality. Opposition to these practices is part of orthodox Catholic teaching, but these practices are also actively opposed by the leaders of many other religious traditions in the United States. Opposition to married priests and artificial birth control is more unique to Catholicism. Therefore, I hypothesize that, for
Catholics, pilgrimage will be most strongly related to holding orthodox views on the moral issues most unique to Catholicism.

DATA AND METHODS

The data used for this study come from a national survey of U.S. Catholics. The Contemporary Catholic Trends (CCT) project is a semi-annual telephone survey conducted by Le Moyne College and Zogby International. Using a listed frame of phone numbers for which respondents have previously identified as Catholic, a random sample is drawn. The resulting data are weighted to match the parameters of the U.S. Catholic population according to gender, age, and ethnicity, and the following analyses use STATA Version 9.2 to account for the weighting. The Fall 2004 CCT survey was administered to 1,000 Catholics and included a module of questions about religious experience, including the measure of pilgrimage.

To some degree, what constitutes a pilgrimage is the pilgrim’s prerogative. A pilgrimage is any experience a pilgrim perceives to be a religiously meaningful journey. Here I follow Blasi (2002), who argues that popular understandings of pilgrimage share essential elements: journey to a sacred site and having a religiously meaningful experience along the way (also Glazier 1983; Swatos and Tomasi 2002). Therefore, operationalizing this idea for quantitative analysis is straightforward. The CCT Survey simply asks Catholics, “Have you gone on a religious pilgrimage?” Of respondents to the 2004 CCT survey, about 15 percent reported having been on a pilgrimage.

Use of cross sectional data precludes finding evidence of a causal relationship between prior pilgrimage and subsequent attitudes; it is possible that those who already agree with Church teachings are more likely to go on pilgrimage than are those who disagree. Given this study’s methodology, the direction of causality can only be addressed with recourse to theory as outlined in the preceding section.
The data do allow for an analysis of whether or not self-identified pilgrims are more likely to endorse orthodox Catholic teaching when asked choose, as Wildavsky's theory would predict. This approach conceives the interview as an exercise of identity construction; the measures of opposition to birth control and support of a celibate male priesthood representing the respondents' feelings during a social interaction (Schwarz 1995). What follows is usefully thought of as an analysis of how pilgrims and non-pilgrims constructed attitudes about Catholic teaching during a conversation about religion. I return to the issue of causality in the discussion.

**Dependent Variables**

Respondents were asked how strongly they agreed or disagreed with several statements about religious and social issues. The statements included: artificial birth control is morally wrong, Catholic priests should be unmarried, stem cell research that entails destruction of human embryos is morally wrong, abortion should be legal in the United States, and homosexual behavior is against natural law. Responses of strongly agree, somewhat agree, somewhat disagree, strongly disagree, and not sure are recoded to dichotomously indicate strongly or somewhat agreeing with the Catholic Church's position on the issue: opposition to artificial birth control, opposition to stem cell research, opposition to abortion, support of a celibate priesthood, and opposition to homosexuality. Table 1 reports descriptive statistics for these variables, and shows that majorities of Catholics agree with the church hierarchy regarding abortion, stem cell research, and homosexuality, but a minority agrees with the official policies regarding a celibate priesthood and artificial birth control.

**Independent Variables**

To account for the salience of Catholic identity, I include a dichotomous measure of whether or not the respondent agrees that “there is something special about being Catholic that you cannot find in other religions” (1 = yes). This measure is meant to account for Wildavsky's proposition that identity is formed by defending ways of life. I expect that those who say the Catholic Church is unique relative to other traditions will be most likely to support the Church's most countercultural policies. This measure should be considered a strong test of the propositions about pilgrimage. If pilgrims remain more committed to the Church's countercultural teachings even when controlling for belief that Catholicism is distinctive relative to other religions, this suggests that pilgrims are among the strongest defenders of the Church.

Several control variables that may be associated with pilgrimage and orthodox attitudes are included in the analyses. Pilgrimage in the modern world is in many cases akin to tourism, and regardless of the basic motivation, those with more income are better able to travel. Income, then, is included as a possible pre-
dictor of pilgrimage. Given that several of the dependent variables are frequently debated in U.S. politics, I account for political identification using a dummy indicator of liberalism. Also included as demographic controls are dichotomous measures of education level (1 = some college or college graduate), membership in the Pre-Vatican II cohort born before 1941 (D’Antonio et al. 2001), gender

<table>
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<th>Mean</th>
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<td>Oppose Abortion</td>
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<td>Oppose Stem Cell Research</td>
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<td>Attend Weekly or More</td>
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<tr>
<td>Confession monthly or more</td>
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<tr>
<td>Always feel presence of God at Mass</td>
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5Missing data are common for survey questions regarding income, and in the fall 2004 CCT survey nearly 20 percent of respondents did not report income. Multiple imputation was used to estimate the income of these respondents, using a regression model of income on age, age squared, female, Latino ethnicity, level of education, marital status, respondent employment status, and the employment of others in the household. The survey included a module of questions about welfare policy, and respondents were asked if they received social security or means tested government benefits; these measures were also included in the imputation model. The imputation model resulted in an adjusted R-square of 0.46.
(1=female), Latino or Latina ethnicity (1=Latino/a), and marital status (1=married/cohabitating). As it may be related to attitudes about birth control, the models also include a count of the number of children the respondent has had (Renzi 1975).

To account for potentially confounding aspects of religiosity the models include a measure of self-reported frequency of attendance. It is coded 1 for those who attend weekly or more and 0 for all others. Two measures are included as indicators of engaging in traditional Catholic practices: dummy variables for monthly or more frequent participation in the Sacrament of Reconciliation and daily devotions to Mary (1 = yes for both variables). Because pilgrimage is about a connection to the supernatural, two dichotomous measures are included to account for those who report feeling close to God, either during or outside of Mass.

Logistic regression is chosen to model the dichotomous attitude measures. Tables present logit coefficients and standard errors so that readers may examine the effects of any subset of predictors not discussed below. On the advice of Long (1997), for interpretation the coefficients are translated into predicted probabilities given reasonable values of the independent variables of interest.

RESULTS

Table 2 presents models for five different variables. Few clear patterns across dependent variables emerge among the control variables, but political liberals are less likely than others to agree with the Catholic Church’s position on all issues except the celibate priesthood. When measures of religiosity are statistically significant, the relationships are in the expected directions: those who score higher on the measure are more likely to support the Church’s position. Those who came of age before Vatican II are less likely to oppose stem cell research that destroys human embryos, perhaps perceiving that they have the most to gain by potential medical advances, and they are also less likely than younger generations to support the celibate priesthood. Increased income is related to lower support for the Church’s position on stem cell research, and higher education reduces opposition to homosexuality and abortion. Women are less likely than men to oppose artificial birth control and homosexuality, while married Catholics are more likely than the unmarried to oppose homosexuality. What is striking about these findings is how they mirror what would be expected if looking at a general population.

As expected, agreement that the Church is special is a significant predictor of agreement with the Church position for all five issues. Pilgrimage, on the other hand, is only significantly related to agreeing with the Church about contraception and the celibate priesthood. In each case, pilgrims are more likely than non-pilgrims to agree with the Church, holding all else constant. To illustrate, I gen-
<table>
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<th>Support Celibate Priesthood</th>
<th>Oppose Stem Cell Research</th>
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<td>(0.31)</td>
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<td>(0.34)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>-0.50*</td>
<td>-0.25</td>
<td>0.13</td>
<td>-0.49*</td>
<td>-0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td>(0.24)</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td>(0.23)</td>
<td>(0.22)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of Children</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>-0.07</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
<td>(0.06)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Married</td>
<td>-0.19</td>
<td>-0.37</td>
<td>0.44</td>
<td>0.57*</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>(0.28)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.27)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political Liberal</td>
<td>-1.49**</td>
<td>-0.56</td>
<td>-1.22**</td>
<td>-1.26**</td>
<td>-1.21**</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.31)</td>
<td>(0.30)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.26)</td>
<td>(0.25)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Constant</td>
<td>-0.84</td>
<td>-0.39</td>
<td>0.67</td>
<td>0.14</td>
<td>0.32</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(0.57)</td>
<td>(0.47)</td>
<td>(0.46)</td>
<td>(0.54)</td>
<td>(0.51)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>F</td>
<td>6.743**</td>
<td>2.750**</td>
<td>5.146**</td>
<td>8.499**</td>
<td>5.270**</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*p < 0.05 ** p < 0.01 (two-tailed tests)
TABLE 3
Wald Tests for Equality of Coefficients, Pilgrim versus Catholic Church is Special

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable</th>
<th>Pilgrim</th>
<th>Catholic Church is Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Artificial Birth Control</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>1.09</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Celibate Priesthood</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>0.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Stem Cell Research</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>1.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Homosexuality</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>1.20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Abortion</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.71</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

F for Wald test of equality of coefficients (p-value)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Pilgrim</th>
<th>Catholic Church is Special</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Artificial Birth Control</td>
<td>0.18 (0.67)</td>
<td>5.24 (0.02)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Celibate Priesthood</td>
<td>0.00 (0.98)</td>
<td>12.12 (0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Stem Cell Research</td>
<td>0.20 (0.19)</td>
<td>1.72 (0.19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Homosexuality</td>
<td>0.20 (0.19)</td>
<td>0.71 (0.98)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Abortion</td>
<td>0.20 (0.19)</td>
<td>0.71 (0.98)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Estimates from Table 2, includes all controls.

TABLE 4
Wald Tests for Equality of Coefficients, Pilgrim across Models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Dependent Variable (DV)</th>
<th>Coefficient for Pilgrim</th>
<th>F for Wald Test of equality, pilgrim regressed on birth control versus pilgrim regressed on DV (p-value)</th>
<th>F for Wald Test of equality, pilgrim regressed on celibacy versus pilgrim regressed on DV (p-value)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Artificial Birth Control</td>
<td>0.93</td>
<td>0.25 (0.62)</td>
<td>2.85 (0.09)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support Celibate Priesthood</td>
<td>0.76</td>
<td>4.60 (0.03)</td>
<td>7.82 (0.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Stem Cell Research</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>9.14 (0.00)</td>
<td>3.20 (0.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Homosexuality</td>
<td>-0.18</td>
<td>4.94 (0.03)</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Oppose Abortion</td>
<td>0.20</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Notes: Estimates from Table 2, includes all controls
erate predicted probabilities based on reasonable values for the model’s predic-
tors. In the case of opposition to birth control, setting all predictors to their sam-
ple mean produces a predicted probability of opposition of 0.29. For non-pilgrims, 
the predicted probability is 0.26, while for pilgrims the predicted probability of 
opposition is 0.47. For support of the celibate priesthood, setting all predictors to 
sample means produces a predicted probability of 0.42. For non-pilgrims the pre-
dicted probability of support is 0.40, and for pilgrims the predicted probability of 
support is 0.59. These results confirm the expectations based on Wildavsky’s the-
ory of identity formation and are evidence that pilgrims are stronger defenders of 
the Catholic Church’s culturally marginalized social teachings than are non-pil-
grims.

Wald tests were performed to examine the hypothesis that the estimated 
effects of pilgrimage and feeling the Church is special were equivalent (see Table 
3). In only two cases did the difference in effect sizes between feeling the 
Catholic Church is special and pilgrimage reach standard levels of statistical sig-
ificance. In the models of opposition to stem cell research and opposition to 
homosexuality the effect of pilgrimage is statistically weaker than the effect of 
believing the Church is special.

Further, while the estimated effect of pilgrimage on attitudes about stem cell 
research, homosexuality, and abortion is not significant, the size of the pilgrim-
age effect on attitudes about birth control and celibacy may not be statistically 
larger than those estimates. To examine this possibility I conducted Wald tests for 
the equivalence of the effect of pilgrimage between each pair of models (see Table 
4). The effect of pilgrimage on attitude about birth control is statistically larger 
in each comparison, except when compared to the estimated effect of pilgrimage 
on support for a celibate priesthood. This is evidence that pilgrimage does in fact 
have a similar effect on these two orthodox Catholic teachings, while the effect 
of pilgrimage is weaker on social attitudes that are less distinctively Catholic.

The same method was used to examine the effect of pilgrimage on support for 
a celibate priesthood versus pilgrimage’s effect on opposition to stem cell 
research, opposition to homosexuality, and opposition to abortion. In this case, 
the effect of pilgrimage on support for celibacy is only stronger than the effect of 
pilgrimage on opposition to homosexuality. The estimated effect of pilgrimage is 
statistically equivalent in the models predicting support for celibacy, opposition 
to stem cell research, and opposition to abortion (see Table 4).

DISCUSSION

Some scholars argue that pilgrimage has been commodified, or that the expe-
rience is individualistic and not about community to the degree that it once was. 
However, the finding that Catholic pilgrims are more likely to support a coun-
tercultural morality promoted by the Vatican and few other established institu-
tions is evidence of an affinity between pilgrims and the authority of the hierarchy. Theorists contend that ritual generates and solidifies group identities (Blasi 2002; Durkheim 1995; Collins 2004), and that religious identities rely quite heavily on existing institutionalized forms of religiosity (Stark and Finke 2000). Regardless of the motivations of pilgrims, pilgrimage has consequences for individuals and institutions that sociologists should explore.

Because the method employed in this study does not allow for claims about causality, I rely on the theoretical insights of Durkheim (1995) and Stark and Finke (2000) about the relationship between ritual participation and organizational commitment. Durkheim claims that ritual precedes shared belief and Stark and Finke argue that religious ritual strengthens belief in religious explanations—the explanations legitimated by religious organizations. Next, I employed Wildavsky’s (1987, 1994) claim that preferences are expressed in choices to defend or oppose social institutions. Viewing the survey interview as an exercise in identity construction, I found that pilgrims were in fact more likely to endorse the Catholic Church’s teachings regarding two issues that receive little ideological support from other well-established institutions. While I cannot claim that the experience of pilgrimage changed attitudes about birth control or the unmarried priesthood, the affinity between pilgrims and orthodox Catholic teachings may help address questions about the structural consequences of the religious ritual.

The finding that orthodox attitudes are more common among pilgrims may suggest that religious pilgrimage is socially conservative in the sense it is correlated with traditional religious beliefs and social structures. Eade and Sallnow (2000:4) might classify this interpretation as simultaneously Durkheimian and Marxist as it means that pilgrimage serves to maintain a traditional social organization—the Roman Catholic Church. However, from a sociological perspective that takes macro level religious discourse as rich and varied and sees diversity within religious groups at the level of individual values (Wuthnow 1988), a religious act that fosters commitment to an existing organization does not inherently maintain or abrogate social structure. Instead, an analyst would need to consider the location of the religious organization relative to mainstream culture, and then determine whether or not the individual’s social act or attitude corresponds with the cultural status quo. Certainly, relative to the U.S. mainstream, Catholic opposition to artificial birth control is countercultural, and a religious act that serves to incubate a countercultural attitude may well be interpreted as corrosive to the status quo.

What the sociological perspective reveals is that the social relevance of religious ritual and institutional commitment are potentially quite complex. The Catholic who opposes artificial birth control is marginal within her own religious tradition, so it may be that Catholic pilgrimage sustains the imagined, ideological communitas Turner and Turner (1978) describe, but does so within populations that might otherwise look unitary. Wuthnow (1988) drew attention to spe-
cial interest groups that would draw support from those whose religious affiliations were different, but whose moral commitments were similar. Following this model, a Catholic pilgrim who defends the orthodox teachings of the Vatican regarding contraception may find ideological brethren among conservative Protestants who also strongly oppose contraception based on a literal interpretation of the Bible.

On an issue by issue basis, then, social movements like the anti-contraception movement Quiverfull may find potential recruits worshipping in Bible-based community churches and at Catholic Masses. At the same time, however, from the perspective of a conservative Protestant who literally interprets the Bible’s message to be fruitful and multiply, advocating for a celibate priesthood would appear a contradiction.

Wildavsky’s theory of preferences is helpful in making sense of such potentially contradictory personal preferences and social cleavages. The history and tradition of the Catholic Church serves as the bedrock on which to build a coherent sense of self for those who defend its teachings. Attitudes need not be defended on a case by case basis, but instead are sanctioned by the Church hierarchy which some lay Catholics understand as having a legitimate claim on truth.

This analysis is of course preliminary, but it demonstrates one way to make sense of the intricate connections between ritual, commitment, and identity. That Wildavsky’s theory has been rarely used by sociologists of religion is surprising. It smoothly incorporates the primary role that organizations play in religious life, while leaving room for an active individual operating in a modern, voluntary, pluralistic religious environment. It allows for the cooperation and conflict studied by theorists like Alexander (1988), Wuthnow (1988), and Hunter (1991), and posits that institutions are stable even if personal preferences may vary. In this way it allows for theorists to study stability and change in the religious sphere from a single perspective.

CONCLUSION

By way of conclusion, some practical drawbacks of this study may reveal room for future research. First, other studies could examine whether or not the findings of this study robust for other, not exclusively Catholic, samples. Second, interviews of pilgrims before and after the experience would allow for a more concise answer to causal questions about the consequences of pilgrimage. Do pilgrims report a greater degree of institutional commitment or orthodoxy after the religious experience? Third, the specific measures of the pilgrim’s journey and emotional experience would allow an analyst to account for the subjective meaning of the pilgrimage. The development of such questions, and their inclusion on surveys of religious identity would be a significant step toward improving contemporary understandings of the relationship between the personal and public
spheres of religiosity. How is the experience of pilgrimage related to common scales of religious identity (see Seidlitz et. al. 2002; Ladd and Spilka 2006)? Do pilgrims subjectively recognize the trip as a life changing, community building experience? Further research is necessary, but the potential of quantitative research to address theoretical questions about pilgrimage should be explored.

REFERENCES


