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Tracing Taizé: Rebuilding Global Solidarity through Religious Pilgrimage

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TRACING TAIZÉ:
REBUILDING GLOBAL SOLIDARITY THROUGH RELIGIOUS PILGRIMAGE



Dayna Tapp
Sociology Honors Thesis
Linfield College
Spring 2011

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ABSTRACT

This study explores religious pilgrimage, specifically within the Christian tradition, and the individual experience of pilgrims as they travel to a small ecumenical village in Taizé, France. Taizé is a pilgrimage site drawing many young adults from around the world to spend a week or more at the village, participating in a variety of bible study groups, volunteer work, and personal reflection. Because many young adults are experiencing a transitional phase into adulthood with crucial decisions about academics and future life plans, Taizé provides a liminal space of validation and spiritual understanding. Through interviews with pilgrims on-site and ethnographic fieldwork as a pilgrim myself, this study highlights some of the push-and-pull factors of why young adults are drawn to sacred pilgrim sites and what they experience within this intensified temporary community. The findings of this study illustrate the link between the function of Taizé as a religious institution, weekly reproducing spiritual values that establish a central value system, and pilgrims as catalysts of human agency choosing to embark on a religious pilgrimage, collaboratively learn, and carry practical human values learned at Taizé outward into the larger global sphere. The results of the study articulate the importance of religious pilgrimage as an individual journey seeking enlightenment, as well as the specific importance of Taizé fostering spiritual and global solidarity among young adults associated with various Christian denominations that have historically been fragmented because of disjunctures in ideology and practice.

“As we continue the pilgrimage of trust on earth that brings together young people from many countries, we understand more and more deeply this reality: all humanity forms a single family and God lives within every human being without exception.”

Brother Alois, Letter from Kolkata

INTRODUCTION

This analysis explores religious pilgrimage, specifically within the Christian tradition, and the individual experience of pilgrims as they encounter pilgrim sites. The aim of this relationship is understanding why pilgrims are drawn to particular sites and what they experience within the larger social institution of religious pilgrimage sites. Fundamentally, at the core of spiritual pilgrimage is a bodily process of physical endurance and movement. The pilgrim initially travels to the specific destination beginning the spiritual journey. After arriving, the pilgrim moves through prayer, positions in meditation, or more drastic extremities and physical factors, such as trekking through the mountains of Spain on foot to reach the pilgrimage destination of Santiago. This paper will deal specifically with the experiences of pilgrims, including myself, who have visited Taizé, France seeking individual spiritual understanding, yet discovering deeper knowledge about religious community and communal values than expected.

After first explaining pilgrimage in comprehensive religious study, I will further develop particular questions and perceptions regarding the pilgrim as an element of spiritual enlightenment and vehicle for achieving an active faith both individually and communally. The questions guiding the content of this paper include: How does the pilgrimage site, as a religious institution, shape the individual experience? In the context of pilgrimage, is there more of an emphasis on the individual body or community connection? Consequently, is this emphasis mutually exclusive? How does the spiritually driven institution foster identification with the individual body or community? Why do individuals find it necessary to partake in religious pilgrimages and what do they gain from doing so? The focal point of this study is the broader institutional involvement of pilgrim sites and the developed response of individuals in communal worship, as evidenced through the experiences of Taizé pilgrims.

This study comprehensively focuses on sociological aspects of religious community; first identifying how community values are instilled in pilgrims at a local and global level and secondly, interpreting the transformation occurring among pilgrims from the initial point of arrival to the resulting time of departure. Using religion and spirituality as institutional measurements for comprehending the establishment of community, the experience of Taizé pilgrims are articulated in a global context through the reinforcement of ideals and values first established in the village and subsequently carried outside by pilgrims and developed communities. Taizé begins a conversation of a communal form of social change through individual spiritual transformation.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The Basics

The work of both Phil Cousineau and John Bowen identify the essential characteristics of pilgrimage by examining how the traveler is called to and prepares for the journey, as well as the consequent steps, rituals, and rites. In combination, their knowledge depicts a text-based comprehension of pilgrimage through explicit definitions, step-by-step action, and societal implications. Bowen specifically explains the multi-varied purpose of pilgrimage as a general obligation, actualizing an individual need, fulfilling a vow, seeking a healing cure, or addressing a more diffuse set of spiritual needs (2002:226). Stimulated by this purpose, the faith seeker conceptualizes the "...pilgrimage as travel to a sacred spot for an act of religious devotion" (2002:226). This sacred space is ritualized and glorified in sites such as Taizé, France or more personalized and public places such as local walking labyrinths providing a brief spiritual escape. Bowen's fundamental definitions establish a working knowledge of how, where, and why pilgrimages take place. His principal explanations foster deeper understanding for the pilgrim and scholar alike, as they explore the intricate process of religious pilgrimage as a social action intentionally invested in and meaningfully carried out.

In an enlightening and instructive guide entitled "The Art of Pilgrimage", Phil Cousineau depicts the process and transformation of faith seekers. The sacred text of many faith traditions including the Bible, Torah, Qur'an, and holy texts of Hinduism and Buddhism collectively encourage followers to seek birthplaces and tombs of prophets, miraculous sites, and travel the same paths walked for many centuries in search of enlightenment. Cousineau argues that "Pilgrimage is the kind of journeying that marks just this move from mindless to mindful, soulless to soulful travel...It means being alert to the times when all that's needed is a trip to a

remote place to simply lose yourself, and to the times when what's needed is a journey to a sacred place, in all its glorious and fearsome masks, to find yourself" (1998:xxiii-xxiv). In this way of understanding, pilgrimages function as a sacred journey discovering individual meaning in a spiritual context.

Cousineau develops a sequence of steps that define the process of the pilgrimage: longing, the call, departure, the pilgrim's way, the labyrinth, and bringing back the boon. These features create a basic foundation for analytical purposes when the *movement* of the pilgrim is recognized as "twofold, exterior and interior, the simultaneous movement of the feet and the soul through time as well as space" (Cousineau, 1998:94). Pilgrimage combines spirituality with physical manifestations. Basic understandings of pilgrimage as a soulful, yet formulaic process lead to further implications of the role the body takes within this spiritual journey. Cousineau additionally demonstrates that by making contact with the ground and relics at the end of the journey in a formulaic method, pilgrims are "getting in touch with the holy ground that spurs...faith onward" (1998:17). Consequently, the physical ground is in dialogue with the spiritual indications of the heart. Although the body is an powerful tool for understanding pilgrimage and the physicality of spiritual connection, Taizé is a pilgrim site that reaches this spiritual connection in near opposition. This pilgrimage is located in one village, accessible only by bus from a nearby train station, so intense physical endurance is not associated with Taizé. Rather, the focus shifts from the body to communal bonds and conversations taking place among pilgrims. The importance of initially discussing pilgrimage using the body is necessary however, because it shapes the argument for why Taizé functions in opposition to physical manifestations.

Using the Body

Stimulated by these basic ideas in his study of walking as a spiritual practice, Slavin

(2003) argues that within pilgrimage the body functions as the defining focal point for the mediation between physical movement and spirituality. Slavin explains that the “walking body, which is taken as the basis for pilgrims’ reinterpretations of the self as well as something that reinterprets space and place” initiates the pilgrimage into reality (Slavin, 2003:1). He further explains that the body is in fact a cultural body that develops into a social entity through consistent social involvement. Before departing for the pilgrimage, an individual carries specific cultural ideologies that are suited to particular social roles and immediate surroundings. However, when the individual becomes a part of a pilgrimage and actively uses their body as a means of social interaction that is both spiritual and physical, the body shifts from a culturally contained framework to a socially engaged framework. The body is both a part of an immediate environment and a cultural medium of the self. The body is immediately in dialogue with the physical terrain and fellow pilgrims, yet because the pilgrimage is based in spiritual searching the culturally engrained values of the pilgrim also produce an individual experience that transcends physical movement. Through walking with the physical body, the pilgrim simultaneously advances into a social sphere and a cultural sphere.

Pilgrims have better access to nature, relative to non-pilgrims, because of the way they travel through remote, natural spaces. By moving among this earth, along paths or through winding labyrinths, pilgrims are able to reinterpret space and place in a materially devoid and natural manner. Slavin states, “Rather than focusing on a material outcome or a concrete, spatial goal, pilgrims turned to examine the very process of the pilgrimage, the journey. This invariably involved an awareness of the embodied self in relation to the journey” (2003:5-6). According to Slavin, the journey has no longer become an experience to fulfill a physical need but rather a means to incorporate spirituality in the embodied self seeking enlightenment. The rhythm of the

walk, an active submission to control, infers that the consistency of steps is external to the body or mind and becomes involuntary. As a result of this involuntary consequence, pilgrimages demonstrate “the many complex ways in which the body, situated within specific material circumstances, helps to produce experiences that are profoundly spiritual” which neither oppose or transcend the body, but respect its materiality and presence alluding to a mystery beyond (Slavin, 2003:16). Slavin’s ethnographic work indicates that within spiritual pilgrimage, and specifically in the trek to Santiago de Compostela, the body serves as a catalyst for enlightenment as the rhythmic movement pulls the body away from material attachments allowing the individual to produce an experience profoundly spiritual. In conclusion, the repeated movement of the body channels the potential for spiritual engagement within the context of formalized pilgrimage. The important of this spiritual engagement in community bridges the initial concepts of analyzing physical body movement to theoretical work addressing communal bonds and values.

Moving through the In-Between

Victor Turner’s ethnographic work on image and pilgrimage in Christian culture established typologies and foundational knowledge for understanding these important aspects of Christian life. Turner argues that pilgrimage is characterized by a *liminoid phenomenon* that is best understood as the in-between of spirituality, the shift between physical and transcendental spheres. The Latin word for threshold is *liminal*; “the space betwixt and between” (Rohr, 2002:21f). Applying this term to religion, a liminal space is when the faith seeker has abandoned the ‘tried and true’ but has not been able to replace it with anything else (Rohr, 2002:21f). This illustrates the dualistic exchange between the body and spirituality because bodies are “things that can be in two places simultaneously, within and outside social structure” (Slavin, 2003:17).

The structure of pilgrimage manifests this liminal space which can be categorized as sacred space. In this sacred space, pilgrims are “capable of seeing something beyond self-interest, self-will, and security concerns” which allows an alternative consciousness to materialize (Rohr, 2002:21f). The liminal space neither defines or affixes pilgrims to a particular ideology or institution. Pilgrims are reincorporated and reintegrated into a new status as they pass through the liminal space.

Turner further characterizes pilgrimage as “a formulable domain in which all that is not manifest in the normal day-to-day operation of social structures can be studied objectively, despite the often bizarre and metaphorical character of its contents” (Turner, 1978:3). This claim supports the capacity to study and develop the progression of pilgrimage (as this study intends to), specifically at pilgrim sites detached from the normal day-to-day operation of social structures. Turner also argues that pilgrimages have “become an implicit critique of the life-style characteristic of the encompassing social structure” (Turner, 1978:38). In this way, religious pilgrimage serves as a mechanism for deviance from socially prescribed social roles and expectations, a journey of transcendental renewal to a remote sacred space. According to Turner, pilgrimages are a concentrated example of temporary community in contrast to the bureaucratic and rationalized social structure characteristic of modern life (Weber, 1930). Turner’s ideas speak to the necessity of understanding pilgrimage in contrast to societal norms that define individuals through labor and productive function. His concepts of liminality and social role detachment provide a foundation for analyzing the function and meaning of sacred pilgrimage sites as social roles and responsibilities are redefined.

In an earlier work entitled *Drama, Fields, and Metaphors*, Victor Turner identifies the emergence of *communitas* in pilgrimages as a “sequence of social dramas and social

enterprises and other processual units to be isolated by induction from an appropriate number of cases, in which there is a development in the nature and intensity of relationships between the members of the pilgrimage group and its subgroups” (Turner, 1974:167). *Communitas* is a collection of individual bodies united in a cooperative experience that develop into a moving social system. In the context of religious pilgrimage, this social system exists “as secular fellowship and comradeship and sacred communion” (Turner, 1974:183). Thus, Turner argues that social structure is not eliminated but rather reconfigured and radically simplified in fellowship. Pilgrims temporarily detach from ordinary social roles forming a solidified body of *communitas*, functioning as a unifier to conceptualize each pilgrim’s experience. Consequently, in the process of pilgrimage, the individual is liberated “from the obligatory everyday constraints of status and role” redefining the individual “as an integral human being with a capacity for free choice, and within the limits of his religious orthodoxy presents for him a loving model of human brotherhood and sisterhood” (Turner, 1974:207). In the specific context of this study, Taizé pilgrims are working to subvert everyday constraints of balancing education, employment, and major life decisions regarding where to live, study, and how to build a repertoire of experiences profitable to future life goals. Turner’s observation disconnects the pilgrim from normative time transcending to a completely liminal other. In this way, the pilgrim becomes a total symbol in holiness and wholeness. The body serves as a focal point for centralizing the sacred and a collection of bodies in *communitas* allows many individuals to attain this spiritual desire. Turner’s notion of *communitas* is actively demonstrated at Taizé through spiritual comradeship made possible by the pilgrim’s spiritual calling to detach from ordinary social roles and

everyday constraints and arrive at a sacred site, developing a community rooted in values of ecumenical reconciliation and trust on earth.

THEORY AND HYPOTHESIS

Theoretical ideologies of the body, as a socialized unifier and resource for orienting community, offer a greater understanding of the individual in relation to the institutional infrastructure of pilgrimages. To explain basically why individuals or groups will choose to embark on spiritual pilgrimages, structural-functionalism emphasizes the initial importance of functionality. Pilgrimages are a spiritual calling fulfilled through designated spiritual activities. Supported by the larger structure of religion, they are carried out through functions of personal devotion to God in seeking a spiritual place. Structural-functionalism is useful in an analysis of religious pilgrimages because of the theoretical bridge linking the placement and importance of religious devotion with respect to particular sacred places. Through the basics of structural-functionalism, supporting theories such as Parson's concept of systematic social systems and Merton's idea of these social systems possessing both manifest and latent functions indicate the functional value of particular aspects of religious pilgrimage.

Parsons conceptualizes society as a collection of systems within larger systems, emphasizing that social action, as a process of systematic support, is derived from individuals within a given system. Classifying a social system as "a plurality of individual actors interacting with each other in a situation which has at least a physical or environmental aspect...", Parsons further indicates that an individual's relation to their situation, including other individuals, is defined and mediated in terms of a system of culturally structured and shared symbols (Parsons, 1951:5-6). Systems can function in a circle of other systems because each system is shaped by broader social forces, which dictate individual behavior. All institutions have a particular set of functions and as a cultural sub-system religion develops, creates, and maintains a sense of order and continuity to society.

Religion, as a cultural institution, functions to provide the individual with a set of meanings (spiritual values, for example) which help the individual to make sense of society and serves to establish new ideas and categories of thought to reaffirm preconceived values (Parsons 1937). For Parsons, these beliefs and values form a central value system promoting social integration and social solidarity. Thus, religion serves as a social mechanism for manifesting solidified beliefs (Parsons 1937). Within the context of Taizé, Parsons would argue that the pilgrimage site functions as a social system because of the specific ideologies focused on rebuilding trust for a global earth and reconciling tensions among different Christian-oriented denominations. As a result, young adults that spend a week or more in this intensified community feel a strengthened social integration and solidarity because of the values that gradually become a part of their own central value system; an act of adopting the values established by the social system, creating a fluid sense of order that exists not only at the pilgrim site but is carried home by pilgrims to expand Taizé's value system to a larger, global sphere.

Continuing with the foundational analysis of functionalism, Merton establishes a two-fold classification involving manifest and latent functions. The distinction between manifest and latent functions was originally devised to distinguish “between conscious motivations for social behavior and its objective consequences” (Merton, 1949:304). Thus, the motive of an action is separated from its function. Using this rationale, manifest functions refer to “those objective consequences for a specified unit which contribute to its adjustment or adaptation and were so intended”, while latent functions are interpreted as “unintended and unrecognized consequences of the same order” (Merton, 1949:305). Simply put, manifest functions are those overtly and easily recognized functions which are primarily assessed as a typical consequence, yet latent functions include sociological thought because most actions have an underlying response or

unintended consequence. Latent functions require more synthesis and deeper analysis. Consequently, this classification established by Merton allows spiritual institutions to be understood on two-levels: first through structural-functionalism by observing overt religious functions and secondly, in a deeper analysis of the individual push-and-pull factors (what draws and nudges the pilgrim into the pilgrimage itself) and communal development that exists at pilgrimage sites. The individual religious experience as a latent unit of analysis is effective because it identifies deeper implications of pilgrimages; for this reason, I will focus my research on this latent level and dig into deeper sociological thought as suggested by Merton. Theoretical concepts of the body politic, habitus, and structuring structures

Scheper-Hughes and Lock (1987) argue that to fully understand discourses on the body, the body must be categorized into the individual body, social body, and body politic. Examining the individual body, Scheper-Hughes and Lock state “all humans are endowed with a self-consciousness of mind and body, with an internal body image...sense of body-self-awareness, of mind/body integration, and of being-in-the-world as separate and apart from other human beings” (1987:14). Studying the individual body in this way collapses the typified Western ideology of mind separated from body. From Scheper-Hughes and Lock’s perspective the body is not analyzed dualistically, but rather holistically. By understanding the mind and body as complementary features that mutually construct one another, Scheper-Hughes and Lock formulate an alternative method of perceiving the body. The Western concept of one individual or self “effectively disallows or rejects social, religious, and medical institutions...” (1987:16) and inevitably positions the Western individual as an entity in and of itself. I attempt to dismantle this Western concept through the experience of Taizé pilgrims as they collaborate in a sacred space, embracing social and religious institutions as the mechanism for mind/body

integration and strengthening the religious institution in return.

By collapsing this Western concept of an individualized body, Scheper-Hughes and Lock further develop a notion of one's "position and role in the technical order" through "the structure of individual and collective sentiments" (1987:23) as a social construct. This added element argues that the relationship between individual and social bodies is about power and control. Bodies are not simply manifested in mind and body cohesion, but are ascribed a relational role in the larger society. As "societies regularly reproduce and socialize the kind of bodies that they need" (1987:25), individuals are imprinted with a social skin (Turner 1978) that efficiently imprints social categories upon the body self. Therefore, socially valued ideals are embodied in the body politic because the individual exists within a certain social system. The body politic reproduces the types of individuals that a social system hopes will sustain the particular system in place. The emphasis of the body as a social construct is vital for the argument that the body spiritually engages in a social sacred space not only for enlightenment, but also to reproduce the social values and significance of communal worship and life.

Although the theoretical lens of structural-functionalism and religion as a cultural institution of power is especially effective, it is also important to analyze a different understanding of human agency within the broader institution. Bourdieu's ideas of habitus and structured structures and structuring structures specifically connect the individual spiritual experience analyzed in this study to a larger frame of thought. Bourdieu's theory of practice effectively collapses the duality of mind and body. By collapsing the apparent distinction, the basic insight that "social reality exists both inside and outside of individuals, both in our minds and in things" further develops the notion that humans exist as socialized bodies (Swartz, 1998:94). Individuals do not stand in opposition to society, but rather as "one of its forms of

existence” (Swartz, 1998:94). Socialized bodies function within the larger society and essentially structure society’s various institutions. These institutions, in return, structure the social existence of the body creating a recurrent pattern concerned with linking the relationship between mind and body, as well as body and society.

The socialized body is physically present within a particular society; dispositions and culturally accumulated knowledge are held within the body as an embodied paradigm. Bourdieu labels these “deeply internalized master dispositions” as *habitus*, or a “deeply structured cultural grammar for action” (Swartz, 1998:102-103). This grammar for action is cultural because of the accumulated knowledge an individual has gained socialized into a certain culture. Furthermore, *habitus* is the individual body stimulating society through choices granted by human agency. These choices are limited, yet not forced, through the channeling of specific norms and values back to the individual. *Habitus* is not naturally derived from a universal truth, but rather from a series of experiences and accumulated capital particular to the certain culture or larger society associated with a subset of people. As a way to structure cultural grammar for action, *habitus* is also represented by master patterns which “find expression in language, nonverbal communication, tastes, values, perceptions, and modes of reasoning” (Swartz, 1998: 108). These master patterns distinguish *habitus* as a cultural tool used in everyday life and action; a characteristic powerful in its intentional action and further exemplified by the listed means of expression. Therefore, *habitus* is not only of the body but within the world and thus maneuvers as a tool of cultural understanding. *Habitus* is a theory concerned with human agency and antithetical to Parsons understanding of social systems as institutionalized power, yet a key theoretical link of structuring structures and structured structures illustrates the dialogue between these two opposing theoretical lenses within the context of Taizé and the pilgrim experience.

Bourdieu is concerned with the relationship between an individual and an institutionalized structure. Through habitus, individual actions shape the existing structures so they are perpetuated and consistently carried out (Swartz, 1998:103). The habitus, functioning through a collection of socialized bodies unified by a common cultural understanding, creates the particular structure which creates the habitus. Bourdieu terms this recurrent pattern as *structured structures* and *structuring structures*; an individual gives meaning to the structure through social action and the structure reproduces the individual experiences through larger functions, easily passed down and among individuals. This system is explained by Bourdieu as a “system of circular relations that unite structures and practices” (Swartz, 1998:103), stressing the importance of practice into structure with the structure fostering practice in return. This theoretical approach is important for understanding how structures are essentially a human product (Berger and Luckmann 1966), reproduced and cycled back to the socialized human condition. Specifically, in this study of Taizé, France the pilgrims are entering into a pilgrim site that has institutionalized means for building community and reproducing a body politic (Scheper-Hughes and Lock 1987) that reaffirms the values of trust and reconciliation that Taizé embodies, yet the pilgrims structure their experience through human agency by making the initial decision to travel to Taizé, participate in communal worship, and consequently carry values learned and valued within the village out into a larger global sphere upon their return.

In conclusion, many theoretical ideas rooted in the basic sociological framework of structural-functionalism and postmodern thought successfully support this study on religious pilgrimages, specifically at the site of Taizé, France. I will first provide a thick description to inform the reader of what a typical week at Taizé looks like, including details from worship services to communal meals, and further analyze the important trends stemming from these

everyday interactions: prayer, community, and motivations for traveling to Taizé.

WEEKLY LIFE AT TAIZÉ

Taizé is a small rural village located in Burgundy, France, comprised of nearly one hundred monastic brothers of both Catholic and Protestant tradition, originating from thirty countries across the world. Founded by Brother Roger in 1940, Taizé began as a shelter for refugees when WWII began. The small village was located close to the demarcation line dividing France in two and therefore, well situated for refugees fleeing the war. Taizé was a place for those in need of safety (“A Bit of History”). In the fall of 1942, Brother Roger was warned that the village’s activities had been discovered and everyone should quickly flee. Until the end of the war, Brother Roger lived and began a common life with his first brothers in Geneva, France. They returned to Taizé in 1944 and created a hospitable community for children who lost their parents in the war and Sunday worship for German prisoners-of-war interned in a nearby camp. On Easter Day 1949, seven brothers committed themselves together for a whole life in celibacy and great simplicity (“A Bit of History”). From these humble beginnings, a pilgrimage site developed that currently attracts many faith seekers.

Taizé is one of the world’s most important sites of Christian pilgrimage; each year over one hundred thousand young adults make pilgrimages participating in prayer, bible studies, and communal work (“Taizé Worship”). Older adults additionally frequent Taizé but the focal audience is young adults because Brother Roger believed they need places to spiritually anchor in a time of adolescent uncertainty. Taizé is based in an ecumenical outlook; individuals are encouraged to live in the spirit of kindness, simplicity, and reconciliation. The term ecumenical is best understood as a pluralist religious ethic concerned with uniting the many denominations of Christianity, or creating one body of committed believers who can participate in active and respectful religious dialogue. Both individuals and church groups travel to Taizé from numerous

countries, but the primary bulk come from accessible countries in Western Europe (i.e. Holland, Sweden, Spain, France, and Germany). Pilgrims will typically stay one week at Taizé from a Sunday evening to Sunday afternoon, however a select few remain for months or years at a time in an effort to continually seek spiritual grounding and offer volunteer work in return.

Prayer

There are three daily services at Taizé: the morning service at eight, the second service at noon, and a later evening service at seven. Individuals are not required to attend service, but a majority will take part in all three services throughout the day. The church where service takes place is adorned in warm colors, iconic images, and subdued lighting. The structure of the church itself supports the flux in numbers throughout the year, as sections partitioned by large gates are easily closed off or opened to accommodate for more or less individuals. The front section of the church is split into two sides, allocating the middle area to the brothers who file in after the chorus of bells ring five minutes before each service. The brothers arrive individually or in small subgroups of two or three wearing long white robes, heads bowed in preparation for intentional spiritual time. Pilgrims arrive at various times before the bells ring, whether they arrive early for personal reflection or a seat near the front feeling closer to the music, the brothers, or even the warm and inviting display of candles at the forefront of the church. Upon entering, individuals grab a songbook, a half-sheet of paper inscribed with the daily scripture and prayer, and sit down individually or in small groups.

The most intriguing aspect within the church service was observing how people prepare for prayer. Frequently, pilgrims will pause to gaze at the front altar, genuflect, and remove shoes as well as stifling layers of clothing. Individuals create their own prayer space with bags, shoes, and bibles encircling the seated position. There are no chairs in the village of Taizé and within

the church this is no exception so pilgrims will sit cross-legged, upon their knees, or tuck their legs under a prayer stool typically utilized by the Taizé brothers. The prayer stool is created with three pieces of wood - the top piece slanted at a slight angle to accommodate for the contour of the body as the legs are slid under and the bottom rests on top. Most worshippers sit directly on the floor, but the stool signified a familiarity with Taizé; that the individual has returned in a continual effort to keep praying in the Taizé community with culturally embedded objects for prayer.

The structure of the service is dependent upon the day of the week, but a typical service is aligned as follows: opening song, reading of psalm, song, silence, intercessory prayers, Our Father, prayer, and a collection of songs that are sung until the last individual or Taizé brother exits the church (see appendix). Songs derive from the “Songs of Taizé” songbook published in many different languages, appealing to the collective audience of international pilgrims. At Taizé “singing is one of the most essential elements of worship” and the short songs, repeated again and again “give it a meditative character” (“Young adults and prayer at Taizé”). By using a few simple words, a common sentiment among pilgrims is that the songs convey a basic reality of faith that does not require verbose explanation. The words sung over and over become meditative in nature and consequently a way of listening to God¹. The meditative songs allow “everyone to take part in a time of prayer together and to remain together in attentive waiting on God, without having to fix the length of time too exactly” (“Young adults and prayer at Taizé”). Songs are indicated by red flashing numbers on a digital reader board located in the upper corners at the front of the church. The songs are created to sustain personal prayer. Therefore, by

¹ Personally, I often felt that the words became my own even though I was initially unsure of specific pronunciations or musical rhythms of the song. The repetition made me more comfortable with the song and its lyrics. When I could finally close my eyes and experience the text in a meditative sense, I was finally seeking God among a diverse community of believers.

singing with the physical body individuals find an inner unity with God and among other pilgrims. Preceding the initial songs, a ten-minute intercessory prayer of silence is introduced by a Taizé brother and all goes silent within the church service. When the prayer begins individuals will shift into numerous positions such as crossing the hands in the lap, placing the forehead to the ground, or tucking the head into the knees. Body movement is aligned with personal comfort and individual worship style.

In the following excerpt and subsequent analysis, a brother reflects on how young people pray at Taizé and how the monastic tradition atypically structures the spiritual searching of young adults:

This concern to make the inner experience of prayer accessible to a large number is the reason why the community developed a way of praying with simple and meditative songs. Not that everything was adapted for young people. In one sense, the Taizé chants are not in themselves songs written in the style of the music of the young. I believe that our songs are deeply rooted in the monastic tradition. By their vocabulary, which is that of the psalms, the long tradition of sung prayer that began in the earliest assemblies of Israel. By their meditative, and even repetitive, character. Basically, the community began by singing the psalms and it still does so today. But rather than singing the whole psalm, we focus on a single verse, meditating on it together, letting it echo and find in us the experiences that it will bring to light. (<http://www.taize.fr>)

The brother's reflections first emphasize the characteristic of adapting a meditative nature to the prayers of Taizé and further explain that prayer is centered around characteristics of accessibility and the capacity of silence to focus within on prayers of the heart. He asserts that the service is "an invitation to a search that draws them onwards beyond themselves, that, by placing on their lips words from another age, gently forces them to de-center themselves, to empty themselves" (para. 7). In this way of understanding, the service is not structured to sing songs, pray, and be done with it. The church serves as an intentional sacred space for individuals to enter, pray through meditative means that are simple and accessible because of the diversity of spoken

languages, and channel thoughts inward on the heart and embodied experience. The brother understands prayer as “that preparation of the heart to be attentive to the vigilance that love requires in different situations” (para. 13). The simple, repetitive songs and accessible prayers are core to the services that take place three times a day at Taizé, indicating a vital link to tradition.

Every Friday evening at Taizé, pilgrims gather for prayer around the cross. The wooden cross is placed in the middle arena where brothers typically sit each service. Inscribed with iconic images colorfully illustrating important points of Jesus’ life, the cross is placed on the ground by two brothers who pray and exit the church leaving the church of pilgrims behind. Pilgrims are invited to step into the previously sectioned off area and lay down their burdens at the cross. Hundreds of individuals stand up and join the mass in this highly esteemed sacred space. Typical of prayerful position, pilgrims remain on their knees as they wait for an opportunity to place their forehead on one of the four ends of the cross and mentally release life burdens. When four individuals break from the mass, a ripple effect flows through the remaining pilgrims intently waiting. In a wave of motion, individuals will scoot forward on their knees to rest, doing this again and again until they arrive at the front to offer their body in prayer. Pilgrims believe that by pressing the forehead to one of the four ends of the cross they are emotionally releasing burdens through the physical process of touching a holy item using the body.

The essence of meditative and self-reflective prayer is ritually carried and encouraged throughout the village. A silence garden allows individuals to walk along paths and sit by the reflection pool to contemplate specific verses discussed in bible study or simply as an act of peacefulness. A small stone church is also located among the collection of homes in the village, available to pilgrims during the daylight hours. Young adults and pilgrims of varying ages

embody the tradition of spiritual reflection throughout their time at Taizé through various outlets of prayer.

Community

Upon arriving at Taizé, individuals file through a series of tables to pay for registration fees, sign up for housing in dorm-like cabins or tents, secure personal possessions in assigned lockers, and choose a work task or daily chore. Daily chores help around the village with the following: cleaning in the kitchen, preparing and serving meals, maintaining a quiet atmosphere both within the church and silence garden, as well as cleaning communal restrooms and eating areas. On a strictly volunteer basis, individuals are asked to set aside daily time maintaining efficient upkeep of the village. After exiting the bus with new friends from Sweden, I joined their effort to clean the kitchen in the afternoons. As a team of young ladies - three Swedish, four Germans, and one American - we soaped and rinsed Styrofoam containers, scrubbed pots and pans caked with the day's meal, and mopped the tile floor every day before we left to spend our afternoons with one another. The communal work was not only beneficial for providing Taizé with volunteer labor but also functioned as a mechanism for creating connections and fostering community later developed through more ritualized spiritual means². By scrubbing kitchen floors or serving meals, volunteer work provided another access point for pilgrims to plug into the spiritual community. The work allowed pilgrims to interact on a micro-level and support the larger community in small, group-building ways.

Pilgrims also eat three meals together everyday and food is distributed in lunch line fashion. Everyone gathers under a covered shelter and sorts into six lines where a plate is filled with food particular to meal times (noodle and bean dishes were typical for lunches and dinners).

² Because I traveled to Taizé alone, the volunteer work allowed me to form friendships and create conversation with individuals outside of a spiritual context, such as the church service. The volunteer work helped me to build relationships that further developed spiritually throughout the week.

For breakfast every morning, we ate one french roll with two strips of dark chocolate and fruit. Taizé tea or hot chocolate is served into bowls that replace typically used cups. After receiving food, individuals crowd onto bench seats forming dozens of triangles. Conversation is very fruitful and stimulating during meal times; pilgrims often singing and bantering across the sheltered area. Mealtimes serve as an extension of community development, providing an opportunity for young people to engage in conversation over the simplest of needs - physical nourishment.

Most Taizé pilgrims travel in groups from local churches in respective countries. Taizé is intentionally sought after by high-school students and young adults, and many of these groups are previously engaged with youth groups and Sunday school before they attend. I met a small handful of individuals traveling to Taizé alone, but there was an interesting divide between pilgrims in high school who came primarily with small church groups and younger adults in their early to late twenties who came alone. Perhaps the divide is indicative of particular seasons of life where young adults are not attached to education or employment by choice. Karina said in response to the question of why she decided to come alone, “I knew that I wanted to stay longer as a volunteer and because of that I felt that going with a group wasn't very necessary, since I would join their work staff in the second week.” Some individuals choose to stay for longer periods of time and work on the volunteer staff for weeks or many months. Taizé collectively appeals to individuals and groups, providing both dynamics an opportunity to engage in meaningful forms of community. Pilgrims developed a strong and nearly instantaneous bond of community with fellow travelers, despite the fact they had not previously met³. Volunteer work

³ During my pilgrimage, I had an easier time connecting with individuals rather than integrating into previously established communities. However, because of the importance of a diverse community within Christ, many pilgrims were willing to break from these groups and foster international relationships outside of their immediate social circle.

actively split up these different church groups (the beginnings of institutionalized structure) and fostered comradeship among individuals that did not previously interact. This community is maintained through volunteer work, as well as other institutionalized features of Taizé which solidify the establishment of community week after week.

A bible study offered every morning for specific age groups is another institutionalized feature of community establishment at Taizé. Bible study is held in a room large enough to fit about one hundred individuals; the benches filled with young adults speaking in different languages. A selection of worksheets depicting the bible verse and message of the day were located at the front entrance, each worksheet had a different color representative of the different spoken languages. Looking across the room a sea of colors illustrated that this space was not only a mesh of individuals from vastly different backgrounds, but also a communion of spiritual human beings fostering a community within the gently crafted walls of Taizé. Young adults daily gathered in this designated room and a Taizé brother led bible discoveries and discussion. Discussions were light-hearted in nature, yet spiritually engaging as they encouraged youth to understand both the historical and moral context of bible stories. After meeting in the larger group and reading through the worksheet on the first Monday morning, the brother split the one hundred or more young adults into small discussion groups to further engage in dialogue on spiritual implications of the assigned text. The brother effectively distributed the clear diversity by initially sorting individuals into country groups⁴ and then smaller groups with a few from each country; therefore, intentionally crafting small groups with an array of experiences and diversity represented in each.

My small group was comprised of three Swedish young women, four high-school students from Holland, and one adult male from Sweden. Most of our discussions were done in

⁴ Oddly enough, I was the only American at Taizé that week.

English, although a few sub-conversations in Dutch or Swedish bounced in unfamiliar ways forcing me to pay particular attention to body language and facial expressions. We spoke of our intent in coming to Taizé, the image of God and what it means to carry this ideology in our everyday life, as well as the spiritual communities from which we originated. Those moments of group discussion served as a converging resource to connect what has individually been collecting in the heart with a means of verbal expression. This discussion is another institutionalized feature of Taizé that provides a node for community building. In the broader scope of Taizé, community thrives and is enhanced by smaller circles of community created by discussion groups and relationships that take place outside of the daily church services.

Another outlet for communal involvement and development takes place in the evening at an outdoor cafe located in the village called Oyak. The cafe serves a variety of snacks, in addition to wine and beer. Strings of lights hang from trees illuminating the communal space as new and old friends gather to share in conversation and music. The outdoor cafe seemingly served as a space for community to further develop outside of spiritual hours. In my week at Taizé I had a number of individuals ask me early in the morning if I intended to spend time at the outdoor cafe after the evening service, reiterating the strong sense of friendship and carefree conversation that took place there. These various structural elements (volunteer work, intimate bible study groups, and a less rigid outdoor cafe) reinforce the spirit of community developing weekly at Taizé. Although not actively discussed, most pilgrims asserted the shared realization that they were experiencing a sense of genuine, spiritually centered community.

Motivations

A typical topic of conversation was the question of why an individual chose to come to Taizé, how they arrived, and what the process was like along the journey. Emma, from Sweden,

had previously attended Taizé two times and stated of her experience:

I decided to go to Taizé in France. It was a place that I previously had visited twice with my home church. I enjoyed the peacefulness and the feeling of getting closer to God there. Therefore I decided that a third time to visit this place would be great. This time I made it a little different. I decided to stay longer. I had questions I wanted answers to...I had specific questions that I was looking for the answers to. I had a feeling that a pilgrimage to Taizé could help me find what I was looking for.

For Emma, Taizé was a place that could potentially allow her to answer questions. As for others, it was clear that Taizé functioned as a space for peace, a holy place to replenish spiritual thirst, and even for alternative lodging in travels through Europe. Another typical response was that Taizé provided a meaningful transition between academic studies and big life endeavors typical of young adults in their early to late twenties. At a time of uncertainty, pilgrims could seek answers at a sacred place embedded with spiritual meaning. Sofia speaks directly to this reasoning saying, “I came to Taizé because I wanted to get some time to think about myself, about my identity, and to get time to think about God. I really wanted to see what could happen in my faith if I let myself only focus on it.” Therefore as the reasonings indicate, Taizé serves a large and meaningful purpose to young adults because of its simultaneous emphasis on providing a space to sort out questions and engage in a community of faith.

What profoundly echoed through many conversations was exactly what the establishment of Taizé intended - a place of pilgrimage to re-establish trust on Earth through international and cross-cultural community. Young adults both return to and attend Taizé for the first time in an effort to develop and designate a space in their lives to seek God with their body, through their heart, and in relation to others from around the world. This thick description provides the reader with a basic understanding of the setting and institutionalized features of Taizé which enrich community life, but the sociological catch of this research first requires a brief explanation of my interest in traveling to Taizé and furthermore, a synopsis of how I methodologically approached

this research to make sense of the intensified community and spiritual values I was experiencing firsthand.

ETHNOGRAPHIC PATH AND METHODS

When I was in middle school, my pastor and his children visited Taizé embarking on a pilgrimage for cultural stimulation and spiritual renewal. I never knew what pilgrimage was or why spiritually centered individuals found this type of journey interesting, but when they returned and shared their experience during the Sunday service I was completely fascinated. The community aspect of the village bridging music, conversation, and simplicity really spoke to my heart. In my early teenage years, I felt a longing to travel to Taizé as a pilgrim. I was interested in the pilgrim's reasons for traveling to a pilgrimage site and how Taizé effectively called to many young adults from different countries. I imagined myself singing the songs, sitting in worship, and eating prepared meals with other young adults that could teach me small glimpses of what spirituality meant to them. During my time at Linfield College, I was also an active member of the Chaplain's team which put together two Taizé services each month for the student body. We Because "a voice calls to our pilgrim soul" (Cousineau 1998), the longing never dissipates despite a substantial lapse in time. In fact, the longing remained with me for many years until I was blessed with the opportunity and actively seized it.

In early May of 2010, I began my pilgrimage to Taizé, France; a journey that initially solidified the longing I had since middle school when the village was first explained to me. While studying abroad in Ireland, I decided the hop to mainland Europe was more manageable than departing from the United States so I purchased my ticket a few weeks before and mapped out the pilgrim route. I traveled on a total of three buses, one flight, and two train rides, arriving at Taizé exhausted and unsure of why I chose to come alone. Thus, as a researcher, I gained access by actively participating in the pilgrimage myself. Yet through the process of spiritual renewal and communal worship, I became a part of an experience much larger than I imagined

and worthy of sociological analysis.

I spent a total of one week at the site itself, assuming the role of active member both as a participant and observer of the village life I studied. Membership in the Taizé community allowed me to see and experience both sides of the pilgrimage, including the interactions of young adults within the church service, bible studies, and outdoor cafe as well my personal reflections and responses to Taizé life. Because of the intensified community and heightened interaction created at Taizé, non-membership focused on observation alone would be an extremely difficult methodological approach. Thus, my role as a social researcher carefully balanced between descriptive observations and personal reflections. While studying the interactional dynamics of Taizé, I collected and recorded small field observations in a journal. I interacted consistently with about a dozen individuals who became my key respondents. Had I spent more time at Taizé, the depth of sampling would have increased but I was limited to the week I had allotted for my pilgrimage. Because I initially came to Taizé as a pilgrim and not primarily as a researcher, I was able to subjectively experience Taizé life and produce analyses after returning.

While at Taizé, I conducted informal interviews with the dozen individuals I regularly volunteered and ate meals with. From these informal conversations, I would jot down general themes and observation among my own spiritual prayers and thoughts. In Fall 2010, after returning from Taizé and my semester abroad in Ireland, I conducted five formal interviews through skype (all correspondents resided in different countries) and asked follow-up questions through e-mail and letters. I recorded the interviews and transcribed them shortly after using common themes and vocabularies for coding. I started each interview asking participants to describe why they decided to make the pilgrimage to Taizé and proceeded to ask them to explain

their preconceived expectations and resulting experiences while at the village. From these introductory questions, I further developed questions addressing the aspects of community at Taizé, spiritual values learned while on-site, and the individual's experience returning home. With each interview, I gained individual consent to use particular quotes and observations for my research purposes and reminded respondents that anonymity would be respected.

These observations and formal interviews give life to the reoccurring themes that take place daily at the pilgrim site in Taizé, France. In the sections that follow, I develop the concept of institutional spiritual community through three lenses of analysis - liminality, *communitas*, and *habitus* - to explain pilgrims' experiences within a social system while simultaneously nurturing human agency.

ANALYSIS

The Structuring-Structures of Taizé: Liminality, Communitas, and Habitus

The structuring-structures of Taizé create a “system of circular relations that unite structures and practices” (Swartz:103). When structures and practice unite, the pilgrim has conceptualized the experience as something to not only remain at the site itself, but as an experience graciously carried out into the larger global sphere. These structures act as cultural guides for pilgrims who learn Taizé values of reconciliation, peace, and rebuilding trust on earth. Therefore, in the system of circular relations, pilgrims instill these values outside of the Taizé community fostering global solidarity through the very act of religious pilgrimage.

A primary classification of the broader social functions of Taizé into manifest and latent categories gives more meaning and importance to what is created and restored in the village. The primary and conscious functions of Taizé date back to the establishment of the village by Brother Roger, forming the community in an attempt to live a simple life of poverty and abstinence. In the following seventy years, Taizé has developed into a sacred place tucked away in the remote hills of France to offer Christians, and specifically questioning youth, an example of reconciliation and peaceful reflection. With regard to manifest functions, Taizé serves as a quiet place of worship, a site of reconciled denominations, and most importantly a setting to regularly involve the heart and body in manners of worship.

Latent functions, or unintended consequences of the institutional measurement of Taizé, are seen in the active and sustained social bonds created among individuals to groups, groups to groups, and individuals to individuals. Taizé was primarily established as a monastic order for a collection of brothers to fashion a pilgrimage site for trust on earth. However, as an institution created by and for humans Taizé accordingly developed as a social product concerned with

progressive spirituality that unintentionally triggered latent functions.

At Taizé latent functions are also noted in the social bonds derived as a result of the initial creation of a place of peaceful living. Spiritual needs are addressed as pilgrims first arrive and throughout the week, but the undistinguished latent component of establishing personal relations that exist both temporarily at Taizé and in experiences beyond Taizé reiterates the primary meaning for pilgrims. Taizé exists because of the people and pilgrims derive the most meaning from their experience through people; for example, as Lora states:

Sharing time in Taizé with other people is something very nice and valuable...Many of the people I met I worked with during days. It made the bonds between us very special. The jobs took us back to the here and now. We really lived in the moment and took action after that. There was so much joy in what we did together and I think it was the joy that was my biggest inspiration in the searching.

While this pilgrim's focus in traveling to Taizé was finding isolated answers to big spiritual questions, it was through the unintended consequences of social bonds in spiritual community that gave this pilgrim a meaningful life experience. The latent function of creating active, enriching social bonds essentially gives meaning to the Taizé experience and adds depth to that which is primarily manifested.

Through a basic sociological framework of structural functionalism, Taizé is also evaluated as an institution concerned with cultural functions. Religion serves as a cultural phenomena; a social outlet without cultural obligations, but valued for its added depth to the life experience. Consequently, Taizé functions as a religious site and in effect creates, maintains, and develops a sense of order and continuous assertion to society. Individuals that travel to Taizé in return contribute to society by carrying forth the set of values and new ideas they experienced at Taizé, embodied in a common habitus, and adding these learned ideals to the structural function of religion as a cultural institution. A central value system is reproduced both within the

institution and outside when pilgrims carry what they have learned back to their typical lives.

With respect to an experience that is seemingly personal in nature, individual pilgrims become integrated in Taizé and their experiences are defined in relation to others. This dynamic dictates that most experiences are catered by the institution itself. The pilgrim is primarily influenced by the structured activities and obligations that take place within a week at Taizé. Thus, Taizé can be seen as an institution which shapes the individual pilgrim experience.

Bourdieu's concept of structured-structures and structuring structures (1977), or the cultural guides which shape collective sentiments, offers deeper understanding for the way in which the individual relates to the institution by being a product of its enculturation. The body politic, as argued by Schepers-Hughes and Lock, makes sense of an individual's position and role in the technicality of an institution by way of the structure of individual and collective sentiments (Schepers-Hughes and Lock 1987). Thus, the institution uses power and control to shape and reproduce the kind of bodies, and spiritual experiences pulled from those bodies, that are needed to continue the existence of a community integrated in simplicity, peacefulness, and hope.

As pilgrims to Taizé intentionally seek a place of sacred unity and quiet, the ebb and flow of thousands of individuals maintains the structure. Yet, as represented through the physical description and ritualized proceedings of Taizé, a place that stays put and encourages pilgrims to do the same, the structure of the pilgrimage experience itself structures the individual experience. Pilgrims would not have a collective experience if volunteer work, familial meals, and small discussion groups were not strongly encouraged and reproduced again and again. Due to the intensified structure within a condensed period of time, in an attempt to meet the needs of both self-reflection and participatory bonding, the individual spiritual experience is manifested through the cultural institution of Taizé which regularly reproduces and socializes "the kind of

bodies that they need” (Scheper-Hughes and Lock, 1987:25). Taizé needs bodies, or pilgrims, who understand the importance of ecumenical ministry and cultural diversity to create global solidarity. Through the designed and developed institutional structures, Taizé reproduces exactly what they need.

In accordance with Bourdieu’s argument of the circuit of structure and practice (1977), Taizé is a type of pilgrimage by which the structure itself first structures the pilgrim’s experience. Because Taizé is an institution with a certain locale, unmoving and remote, its appeal comes from the spiritual structure which designs the pilgrim’s experience, in contrast to a variety of other pilgrimages in which the individual arguably creates the religious experience. This structure-agency tension highlights the free will of pilgrims within a structured experience. Consequently, the structured-structures are the most important factors to examine, looking at why pilgrims are drawn to Taizé and how the structures in place inspire pilgrims to take what they have learned and live in a way that fosters global solidarity. Structures of liminality, *communitas*, and *habitus* collaborate in the link between this local to global relationship.

Liminality

Taizé, as an active pilgrimage site, serves a spiritual purpose by its formation of communal bonds through an engaging faith community. Yet, the simple process of first arriving to Taizé indicates that individuals come from various conjunctures and experiences in life - an Australian filmmaker hoping for rejuvenation and a formal break from intensive work or a Swedish woman seeking spiritual depth after being in New Zealand for a year on a work VISA. Conversations focused on the theme of Taizé as a place individuals sought for rejuvenation and understanding. As young adults, the pressure of adjusting into adulthood and making weighted decisions about where to study, volunteer, and develop a solidified resume of work experience is

commonly felt. Taizé pilgrims share a common thread in this pressured feeling and therefore, demonstrate Taizé's existence as a place to sort through these outside forces which continually fragment a young adult's transition into adulthood where employment, bills, and taxes become common stresses. Individuals repeatedly traveled to Taizé in hope to find answers to troublesome questions and seek contentment in community with God. Still, others left study abroad programs or broke from intensive travel to seek a place of ritualized rest. Many young adults traveled from larger church groups, yet again to experience a place of contemplation and spiritual rest. Collectively, no matter the specific push factor, young adults generally seek out and return to Taizé because of the unique focus on spiritual community and celebration of various denominations peacefully sharing in comradeship. Taizé serves as a bridge for pilgrims experiencing liminality in their own ordinary lives to a place that encourages this spiritual liminality in an effort to find answers and support. Perhaps the very draw to initially come for pilgrims is this correlation between liminal life experiences and liminal spiritual development. The detachment from one allows for potential growth in another.

Turner's idea of the liminoid phenomena within religious life further applies to the process of individuals traveling to Taizé. The liminoid phenomena precisely juxtaposes the experiences of Taizé pilgrims before they arrive to the pilgrimage site and during their actual experience. Perhaps the aim to call young adults to Taizé speaks directly to Victor Turner's notion of the liminal experience - that which transcends from a physical, day-to-day familiarity to a more enlightened and transcended space. Young adults are able to actively identify with the liminoid phenomena because they are essentially experiencing this similar notion in everyday life; a sort of in-between which neither defines or affixes them to an ideology or institution in particular. As a result, Taizé pilgrims embody the liminoid phenomena before arriving and

continue to work through the implications of this theoretical transcendence while at Taizé. The liminoid phenomena is not a spiritual transformation experienced alone, but rather the structured structures of habitus and communitas (both associated with the relationship to other pilgrims) solidify the importance and development of this liminal experience. It is in these key elements that the liminal experience is defined and the important values of Taizé taught, learned, and embodied.

Communitas

Turner explains the existence of community at Taizé through two key components: liminality and communitas. Most pilgrims travel from familiar places fulfilling status roles predictably carried out in schools, the workplace, and at home, yet Taizé provides a liminal space for individuals to arrive as they never have before. Individuals are expected to follow the rules and regulations of the village, but in comparison to expectations at home they do not have academic obligations or co-worker relationships to maintain. Pilgrims abandon commitments “from the obligatory everyday constraints of status and role” (Turner 1974) and this movement “out of ordinary physical and personal space provides a social marker readily noted by others” (Dubisch 2005:xx). The social marker allows a pilgrim, abandoning ordinary space, to enter into community with pilgrims acknowledging a similar sentiment. Pilgrims abandon previous status roles and arrive with no socially attained status in the context of Taizé community; this is visually apparent as first time pilgrims bounce between the registration tables and know neither what will happen in the next few days nor where they fit into this spiritually engaged congregation. As the week develops, pilgrims develop a deep experience of liminality and community life in the daily worship services through ascribed songs, for example. These musical rituals provide pilgrims a meditative experience as well as moments of unity with God that pull

them from the physical world into a transcendental, spiritual experience. Through consistent engagement, pilgrims transform these experiences into ritualized daily practices. Each day at Taizé is structured identically to the previous day to reinforce the separation from everyday life and make integration into Taizé life more accessible⁵. Accessibility is crucial to community development because the ease creates comfort and space for spiritual regeneration without strings attached.

In depicting qualities of *communitas*, Turner provides a lens to analyze spiritual communion of Christians through brotherhood and sisterhood. This social bond is not understood as a direct kinship association, but rather a connection through spiritual experience and conversation. *Communitas* is fostered by many activities, places, and religious traditions within the worship service. Upon first arriving at Taizé, individuals are channeled into the beginnings of community life as they sign up for volunteer work and are placed in dormitory style cabins. By intentionally facilitating these connections it is clear that Taizé is focused on integrating the individual experience into community life. Furthermore, Taizé staff encourage active engagement in bible discoveries, small group discussions, and organized workshops on specific spiritual topics. Daily, individuals are encouraged in community-building as they wake up in a room crammed with bunk beds, and proceed to church where even more people quietly sit in small groupings or in their own spiritual sphere, followed by a breakfast of french rolls and butter eaten in packed corridors of benches tucked under an outside shelter. Through these experiences, pilgrims experience daily reminders that Taizé is a place of unity intent on breaking the divide between cultures, languages, and the historical contention among Christian

⁵ The music was a prime initiator for my own liminal experience . Through the collective repetition of lyrics in a variety of languages, the music became my own when I could finally remove my eyes from the songbook and feel the spiritual connection, apart from physical manifestations of the room. As I sang without restriction I felt a unique interdependence and my spiritual experience suddenly became more than the church I was in, but rather an embodied sense of religious unity and community.

denominations. The simple fact that typically everyone at Taizé is experiencing this cultural integration without previous participation from the particular assortment of pilgrims in a given week, without regard to previous status or role, reinforces the availability for *communitas* to mature.

Thus, *communitas* is continually developed through institutionally established activities and way of life at Taizé; these activities are the structured structures giving rise to collective sentiments that as a result, circulate outside of Taizé by pilgrims themselves. Activities within the daily worship services and outside its walls advance “development in the nature and intensity of relationships between the members of the pilgrimage group and its subgroups” (Turner, 1974:167). The structures put in place within a social system define *communitas* as “as secular fellowship and comradeship and sacred communion” (Turner, 1974:183).

The morning worship service integrates spiritual brotherhood and sisterhood by partaking in the holy sacrament of communion. Individuals file to the center, receive a wafer from a brother, symbolizing the body of Christ, and continue to the left, dipping the wafer into a goblet of wine, or the metaphorical blood shed by Christ for those willing to come to the table. By taking part in communion, a *communitas* is established through this sacred experience and collectively unifies all of those present in the body of Christ. The breaking of bread, a symbol of Christ’s body, illustrates the common metaphorical thread shared among pilgrims

The existence of *communitas* both within the church and outside the sacred building reinforces the institutional intent to build temporary community in every aspect of a pilgrim’s day. Whether the pilgrim invests in this communal characteristic or not, the persistence effort of community life thrives because of the embedded structures which define the experience. While observing village life with newly acquainted pilgrims connected by “human brotherhood and

sisterhood” (Turner 1974), the spiritual bonds thrive and are most often apparent in conversations using English as the common language, a vernacular connecting different languages and international backgrounds in a certain conversational space. Other structures cementing community relations among pilgrims include bible studies, volunteer work, and shared meals.

These established structures secure community because of their consistency and efficacy for spiritual development. Consequently, Taizé effectively fosters a clearly classified solidarity both within and outside the sacred church space through daily volunteer work, family-style meals, and organized bible explorations within specific age groups. Additionally in the church itself, spiritual bonds are fostered through morning communion and traditional Christian values of prayer, intercessory silence, and active self-reflection. Although this connection is not built on years of experience with one another, the implications of a manifested brotherhood or sisterhood is triggered by the void of established social roles in everyday life, developing intense relationships between the members of a pilgrimage group and its subgroups. This collection of individual bodies, moving through each contributing factor of *communitas*, essentially develops a spiritual social system of secular fellowship, comradeship, and sacred communion (Turner 1974).

The *communitas* arguably taking place at Taizé reaches much farther than its initial centralized means. Brother Roger established Taizé as a pilgrimage site to bring together young people from many countries in a centralized locale, yet its expansion has served a purpose of sharing Taizé worship and values cross-culturally. In Brother Roger’s ideology, it was critical not to organize a global movement of cross-denominational reconciliation in the community at Taizé alone. Rather, “after taking part in one of the stages of the pilgrimage of trust, each person is

invited to go home and live out what he or she has grasped of the Gospel; and to do this with an increased awareness of the life that dwells within them and of the practical gestures of solidarity they can put into practice in their own immediate environment” (“A pilgrimage of trust on Earth”). Consequently, the *communitas* established through characteristics readily observed by Victor Turner is intentionally carried back by the pilgrims themselves and through specific meetings and relations formed between Taizé brothers and various countries.

In 2011 alone, the brothers of Taizé have planned various meetings around the world to reaffirm the core belief of a “pilgrimage of trust on earth”. Meetings in Switzerland, Austria, Sarajevo, Chile, and France have taken place since the beginning of the 2011 year. In preparation for the Lenten season, a forty day period dedicated to refocusing and preparing for the Christian miracle of Easter, a meeting was held at the Church of Saint Eustach in France. The following reflection from a young woman particularly indicates the continuing *communitas* that stems from Taizé; a process designed to integrate distinct aspects of Taizé and the common *habitus* into communities outside of the Taizé village:

After a stay in Taizé, going back to Paris seems hard sometimes. God seems to me to be quite far away, when I’m in the metro, at university or in the street. And the season of Lent, which invites us to turn towards God, is sometimes hard to live when you feel isolated; lost in the anonymous hubbub of the city. That is why to my mind this evening for the beginning of Lent is so important. Hearing the songs of Taizé resounding under the breathtaking ceiling of Saint Eustache, while feeling the metro vibrate under your feet, is a kind of way of telling yourself that God is also present in Paris.

And so Paris becomes no longer the deafening and stifling city in which you feel jostled from every side, but a city full of life, which brings together people from all over. One image that will remain in my memory is that of the young woman from Estonia and her little daughter, singing the Estonian version of *Nada te turbe*. This prayer invites us to turn towards Christ, to prepare ourselves for the joy of Easter, but also to turn towards our neighbour. Seeing so many people from such different backgrounds gathered together, kneeling on a big carpet, and seeing a queue of people waiting to lay down their burdens on the Cross, that comforts me: I am not alone in Paris.

This young woman's sentiments speak directly to the renewal of *communitas* fostered outside of Taizé. In the transition from rural, village life to urban sprawl where quiet moments of reflection and integration are seemingly difficult to encounter, specific Taizé meetings allows individuals to remain connected to the core of what they experienced while at Taizé. The young woman stated, "I am not alone..." because of the established *habitus* formed at Taizé - the active repetition of short, prayerful music and the ideology of building reconciliation among various denominations through the connections of young adults worldwide. The Taizé meetings taking place outside of the village evoke collective sentiments and values experienced by those pilgrims who have traveled to Taizé. In this way, the shared experience is stimulated outside of its original context affirming the progressive work of Taizé brothers to continue the "pilgrimage of trust on earth". By making connections outside of the village, the brothers are not only creating places of worship, but also investing in the reproduction of conversations and values that are stimulated by pilgrims while at Taizé. This investment reproduces the ideologies and types of bodies or individuals that Taizé hopes to invest in, reaffirming the theoretical link to Schepers-Hughes and Lock's ideology of the body politic. In this process, Taizé continues to exist because of the experiences stimulated both within the village and outside through collective sentiments and spiritual comradeship. Consequently, Taizé initially structures the individual experience through a mediation of enculturation and reproduction of village values in a context that takes place outside of its original origin. These values are first embedded through shared cultural understandings which Bourdieu termed as *habitus*.

Habitus

Through an actively engaged *communitas*, Taizé evokes a "deeply structured cultural grammar for action" (Swartz, 1998:102-103) resulting in a common *habitus* shared exclusively

between the brothers and, most importantly, the pilgrims who attend weekly. This habitus socializes the seemingly distinct individuals who seek Taizé as a pilgrimage site. Bourdieu argues that habitus is structured by master cultural patterns which are learned and enacted in a collective setting through a series of experiences, accumulating social capital (Bourdieu 1977). At Taizé, habitus is specifically generated within the three daily church services as exemplified through music, developed cultural knowledge, and group involvement⁶.

Habitus is carried out through expressions of language, nonverbal communication, tastes, values, perceptions, and modes of reasoning (Swartz, 1998:108), and Taizé reinforces the use of language, nonverbal communication, and modes of reasoning to foster socialized bodies in habitus. The songbook is a prime example of a tool for creating common cultural connections because everyone who enters the church uses the book as a musical guide for the chanting typical of Taizé style worship. The concise and easily learned songs allow an individual to move from feeling separated from the experience into full integration of the cultural body by repeating lines of musical worship to God in a variety of languages. This transition to full integration is key to the formation of habitus as a tool for cultural understanding as it functions to channel different experiences with respect to one cultural focal point and value - worship to God. Habitus was also cultivated in the Friday evening church service when the brother laid down the iconic cross for pilgrims to release burdens, touching the head to the cross in a process of prayer. I remember a friend who had been to Taizé two times before leaned in and explained in whispers what people were doing and why they did it, as swarms of pilgrims congregated in the middle to have their chance at touching the holy. This was an inherited social knowledge that came before my time, but as I sat in the church I was incorporated into this aspect through observation and gaining of

⁶ Of importance to note is that Taizé is visited by both pilgrims who have come numerous times before or have arrived for the first time with little knowledge of the structure or typical flow of the week

cultural knowledge. As a result of actively engaged community, habitus develops through cultural norms that are continually practiced throughout the week. This continual act of reproduction through unfaltering cultural guides allows habitus to resurface and readjust for the current allotment of pilgrims during a specific week at Taizé. By the end of the Taizé experience, an embodied habitus has been created as a tool for understanding cultural conditions both within and outside of the church space.

CONCLUSION

This study explores religious pilgrimage, specifically within the Christian tradition, and the individual experience of pilgrims as they travel to a small ecumenical village in Taizé, France. Taizé is a pilgrimage site drawing many young adults from around the world to spend a week or more at the village, participating in a variety of bible study groups, volunteer work, and personal reflection. Because many young adults are experiencing a transitional phase into adulthood with crucial decisions about academics and future life plans, Taizé provides a liminal space of validation and spiritual understanding. This study analyzed the push-and-pull factors of why young adults are drawn to sacred pilgrim sites and what they experience within this intensified temporary community. The findings of this study illustrate the link between the function of Taizé as a religious institution, weekly reproducing spiritual values that establish a central value system, and pilgrims as catalysts of human agency choosing to embark on a religious pilgrimage, collaboratively learn, and carry practical human values learned at Taizé outward into the larger global sphere. The results of the study articulate the importance of religious pilgrimage as an individual journey seeking enlightenment, as well as the specific importance of Taizé fostering spiritual and global solidarity among young adults associated with various Christian denominations that have historically been fragmented because of disjunctures in ideology and practice.

It is clear that this pilgrimage site is continually justified to pilgrims through their experience in community. Taizé exists because of the people. If thousands did not travel to the small village every week of the year, the monastic brothers would simply operate in a place of their own - a place devoid of the original intent to develop a sacred space for pilgrims to find spiritual rest through self-reflection and temporary community.

Taizé functions through its institutional structures and resulting spiritual experiences, drawn from pilgrims as they reproduce the types of values and collective sentiments embodied in the pilgrim site itself. Taizé, as a widely accessed and spiritually engaged pilgrimage site, fosters a collective spiritual experience through specific structures of liminality, *communitas*, and *habitus*. Taizé is arguably not about the individual experience, but more importantly about the connections created in relation to and in close proximity with other pilgrims.

This study was effective because of its descriptive content and personal experience. Within additional time in the field, I could have deepened my level of analysis. If I were to continue this research and further develop my ideas, I would spend months at Taizé and make many return trips to analyze the consistency and development of this pilgrim site.

By reading this, I hope the reader has a better understanding of the depth involved in religious pilgrimages and the incredible community that stems from the village of Taizé, originated by a desire to connect individuals of faith from all over the world. After all, global solidarity can only be rebuilt through the experiences and commitment of young adults that see the value in spiritual connections across countries, nations, and the very globe under their wandering feet.

APPENDIX

(1) Taizé worship format:

Song

Psalm

How great is your name, O Lord our God, through all the earth! Your majesty is praised above the heavens; on the lips of children and of babes.

When I see the heavens, the work of your hands, the moon and the stars which you arranged, what are we that you should keep us in mind, mere mortals that you care for us?

You gave us power over the work of your hands, put all things under our feet. All of them, sheep and cattle, yes, even the savage beasts, birds of the air, and fish that make their way through the waters.

How great is your name, O Lord our God, through all the earth!

Reading from Psalm 8

Now the LORD said to Abram, "Go from your country and your kindred and your father's house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you (...) and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed." So Abram went, as the LORD had told him; and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he departed from Haran.

Song

Silence

Intercessions

May your peace shine among us and your love set us free, Lord, we pray.

Keep us persevering in faith and set in our hearts the desire for your Kingdom...

Guide your Church along the way of the Gospel; may your Holy Spirit keep her welcoming...

We pray for the leaders of the nations; may they have the will to promote justice and freedom...

O Christ, you have take our weaknesses upon yourself and taken charge of our illnesses; support those who are going through trials...

For those who work with the oppressed, with foreigners and with the lonely...

We entrust to you our families and friends, all who have asked for our prayers and who pray for us...

For our country, our region (village, town...), that the Christians there may be witnesses to truth and creators of unity, Lord, we pray.

Our Father

Prayer

Jesus our joy, you want us to have hearts that are simple, a kind of springtime of the heart. And then the complications of existence do not paralyze us so much. You tell us: don't worry; even if you have very little faith, I, Christ, am with you always.

or

Bless us, Christ Jesus; in you alone our hearts find rest and peace.

Songs

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