

PAPAL SUPPORT FOR WOMEN UNDER UNCERTAINTY: CHANGING  
PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN IN RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE  
ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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## Abstract

### PAPAL SUPPORT FOR WOMEN UNDER UNCERTAINTY: CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF WOMEN IN RELIGIOUS LEADERSHIP POSITIONS IN THE ROMAN CATHOLIC CHURCH

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Women have historically been barred from holding positions of leadership and power. As a result, much of the literature examining women as leaders is narrow in context, focusing mainly on business and political settings (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). The current work contributes to diverse leadership research by analyzing women leaders in the context of the Roman Catholic Church - a historically gender-biased religious organization with no current leadership opportunities for women. The Church's rigid leadership stance provides an optimal setting for exploring openness to accept change in traditionalist organizations. Previous research on identity leadership has shown that prototypical leaders are influential (Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003) and that people are open to non-normative perspectives when they experience self-uncertainty (e.g., Gaffney et al., 2014; Rast et al., 2012). As a result, I hypothesized that under conditions of high uncertainty, Catholics would be most supportive of women in the priesthood when the Pope endorsed women as priests than when he did not. However, under low uncertainty, Catholics would be unsupportive of women in the priesthood regardless of the Pope's endorsement. Additionally, I hypothesized that papal support of women in the priesthood

would moderate the relationship between Catholic identification and support for women in priesthood. Two hundred forty-two Catholics participated in this experiment. Though neither hypothesis was supported, this research contributes to a lacking body of knowledge on women in diverse leadership roles, and explores how conservative organizations might ultimately accommodate change.

*Keywords:* women, leadership, social identity, uncertainty, prototypicality, stereotypes, sexism, Roman Catholic Church

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Working on this thesis has enabled me to organize my flurry of thoughts and ideas about the faith that was central to my upbringing into a formal research project. Although I am a “submarine” Catholic that only emerges from the waters of non-practicing Catholicism once in a blue moon, the Catholic faith is still deeply entrenched in my cognition and has played an immeasurable role in the development of my worldview and values. My father, who nearly became a Catholic priest, instilled in me a profound sense of respect for all who dedicate their lives to serving others. Being a man who values education, he also taught me the importance of asking questions. His support along with my family’s support are the reasons why I am able to ask the questions that I do. Traditionally, a research topic of this subject matter and trajectory would be perceived as sacrilegious and blasphemous. Perhaps it still is. But in chipping away at the rot that surrounds the heart of the Catholic faith, I hope that the true teachings emerge, unadulterated by sexism and traditions that benefit some groups and inhibit others. Working on this thesis has seen me work my way through a series of debilitating challenges. Nonetheless, the love, support, and guidance from my family, friends, and mentorship network have helped me to brush off the dirt and keep going. A special thank you to my family, for being champions of my goals, dreams, and aspirations. To my loving partner, Memo, who has been my beacon while navigating the treacherous sea of uncertainty regarding my education and the ongoing pandemic. To my close friends, especially Irene, Aaron, Nena, Matt, Ryan, and Kris, who spent countless hours with me

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## Introduction

Research on women leaders has sought to determine how personal characteristics as well as gender affect people's perceptions of women's abilities to lead. However, this literature has largely focused on leadership in the context of corporate management and in politics (Eagly & Johnson, 1990). Few leadership studies venture outside of the corporate-political paradigm and analyze perceptions of women leaders in groups that are regulated by historical and/or traditional frameworks that build on the constraints of organizational leadership norms. Religious organizations (i.e., religions and churches) are examples of groups that are infrequently analyzed for the purpose of measuring perceptions of women in leadership.

It is noteworthy for this research to consider that there are few women in religious leadership roles. A 2016 poll conducted by the Pew Research Center determined that of the nine major religions in the U.S. that both ordain women and allow them to hold leadership positions, only four have ever selected an ordained woman to hold a religious leadership role. Although these religions authorize women to hold positions of religious leadership, they primarily ordain and appoint men to positions of religious power (Sandstrom, 2016). Religions, especially older and more established ones, are often highly dogmatic, rooted in history and tradition, and are often resistant to organizational and social change (Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). The prohibition and inhibition of women as leaders in religious organizations supports the patriarchal notion that men are the most proficient religious leaders.

The current research analyzes perceptions of women's leadership in the Roman Catholic Church – a church that has historically barred women from both the priesthood and higher religious leadership. The Roman Catholic Church is an old organization, often characterized by its ardent preservation of the sanctity of tradition, its old-world mystique, and its renowned top-heavy leadership model. Under the jurisdiction of the Holy See, the Roman Catholic Church has justified its negative position on ordaining women into the priesthood by citing religious tradition that has taken precedence over the roughly 2,000 years the Church has been in existence (see Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994). However, the literature examining opposition to women in leadership may help to explain the Church's hesitancy to ordain women into positions of power. Likewise, the smaller body of work that examines perceptions of women in religious leadership supports the notion that many of the same processes that affect women in business and other leadership facets also affect women in the context of religious leadership.

The minimal research examining women in the Roman Catholic Church suggests a religious tradition of sexism throughout the course of the Church's chronology as a clue as to why there is hostility against the prospect of women as religious leaders today (see Adams, 2007; Haskins, 2003). Building on this, the social identity approach to leadership speaks to the influence that the most important group leaders hold in their groups, and the impact that they have in promoting group change (Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003). Leaders who influence and enforce the norms in their groups are considered to be group prototypical as they encompass, prescribe, and effectuate the norms and beliefs that are most characteristic of the group. The current research explores the capacity of a

prototypical leader to prescribe group change – namely, the Pope’s capacity to change standard views of women in the Catholic priesthood.

Broadly speaking, this work builds on the scope of the literature regarding women in leadership and contributes to the lacking body of knowledge on women in religious leadership. By analyzing the relationship between sexism and leader perceptions in the Roman Catholic Church, this research also examines the role of a prototypical leader in promoting more favorable views of women as religious leaders. This work adopts the social identity perspective and incorporates uncertainty identity theory to examine the conditions under which Roman Catholics might adopt the stance of the Pope even if his stance contradicts Catholic religious tradition. This research also examines how an organization as conservative as the Roman Catholic Church might accommodate core, progressive changes.

## Literature Review

### Constructing a Roman Catholic Social Identity

The Roman Catholic Church is many things, but at its fulcrum, it is a group. A group, broadly, is a collection of individuals who perceive themselves as sharing a common membership with a collective, and who are thereby able to identify others as group members or non-members (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Individuals seeking membership in a group adopt the belief and value systems of the group to become closer to the collective. This is the hallmark of social identity theory, that individuals derive their self-definitions (who they perceive themselves to be) and self-concepts (their beliefs about themselves) from the groups to which they claim membership. These self-definitions and self-concepts together form the basis of one's social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

A strong social identity enhances individuals' self-image and self-esteem; hence they actively seek ways in which they can maximize their unique, positive distinctiveness from members of relevant outgroups (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Positive distinctiveness is achieved by promoting oneself in such a way that maximizes their positive and minimizes their negative qualities, while maximizing outgroup members' negative and minimizing their positive qualities (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Social identity theory asserts that, to maintain a sense of positive distinctiveness, individuals must first categorize themselves as members of a group and be able to identify which groups are their relevant outgroups. These processes are known as self-categorization and social categorization,

respectively. By way of self-categorization and social categorization, individuals engage in ingroup bias, as they prefer to see their own group in the best light possible (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). The reverse to this is also true, in that individuals seek out the worst qualities of their outgroups to justify their ingroup favoritism (Turner, Hogg, Oakes, Reicher, & Wetherell, 1987). Ingroup favoritism via self and social categorization serve to enhance one's self-image and strengthens one's ties with their ingroup.

### **Self-categorization**

In addition to serving as the process by which people identify themselves as members of a group, self-categorization plays an important role in maintaining group normative behavior. Through self-categorization and social categorization, group members evaluate their fit and others' fit as normative group members (Turner et al., 1987). Self-categorization is facilitated by meta-contrast, the process through which people determine ingroup prototypicality by maximizing ingroup similarities while maximizing outgroup differences (Turner, 1999). Meta-contrast is a comparative process through which ingroup members evaluate their group by comparing it with an outgroup. The process of meta-contrast helps ingroup members gather information about what is characteristic of prototypical ingroup membership, as well as what is not characteristic of prototypical ingroup membership (Turner et al., 1987).

Meta-contrast is most effective in determining the clarity of the group prototype when ingroups are clearly distinct from outgroups, lest they be confused or viewed interchangeably with one another. Most specifically, groups should seek positive

distinctiveness from outgroups, which elevates perceptions of the ingroup over perceptions of relevant outgroups (Turner et al., 1987). Positive ingroup distinctiveness serves as a buffer from intergroup threat, as well as a mechanism that validates feelings of ingroup superiority (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). Through self-categorization, Roman Catholics are able to identify themselves and others as members of the Roman Catholic Church, and gauge how well individuals as well as themselves exemplify Roman Catholics as a group. In this vein, Roman Catholics are also able to distinguish themselves from religious outgroups (e.g., Protestants and non-Christians), and maintain a sense of positive distinctiveness that justifies in-group bias.

Self-categorization can impact women aspiring to leadership in a variety of ways, but particularly in terms of group membership salience – the cognitive accessibility of group membership at a specific moment in time (Turner & Oakes, 1986). For example, if women are prompted to think about their membership in the group “women”, then their membership in that group is temporarily made more salient than their membership in other groups (e.g., membership in the groups “student”, “engineer”, “artist” etc.) If a woman’s identity as a woman is made salient and she is asked her opinion on a subject matter, her thought process may be influenced by thoughts such as “*How should a woman respond to this?*” or “*How representative am I of women?*” before offering her opinion (Turner et al., 1994). No matter what her other group memberships may be, it is likely that she will respond in terms of herself as a woman if that group membership is made most salient to her.

This should also work for perceptions of women and perceptions of women's leadership. If a Catholic is prompted to think about their membership in the group "Catholics", then their identity as a Catholic group member is what will be most salient to them, and their opinions will be impacted by the salience of this group membership. When their Catholic group membership is made salient and Catholics are asked to offer their opinions about women in Catholic leadership, the literature suggests that Catholics will respond in terms of "*How should a Catholic respond to this?*" and "*How representative am I of Catholics?*" (Turner et al., 1994). This is pertinent within the context of the Church because the meaning of "Catholic" is loaded with negative stereotypes of women, which can negatively impact perceptions of women as leaders (see Haskins, 2003). The salience of group norms and values prompts group members to think and behave in ways that are group normative. However, when group members are unsure of what the group norms and values are, group members experience conceptual self-uncertainty – a psychological state which they actively seek to reduce.

### **The Role of Uncertainty in Seeking a Roman Catholic Identity**

Group membership has the potential to reduce uncertainty about one's self-concepts and self-definitions. Identity uncertainty is a state under which people are unsure of who they are and what their belief and value systems are (Hogg, 2007). Individuals are motivated to reduce their uncertainty through group identification, which is an attractive source of uncertainty reduction as group membership provides norms, values, and belief prescriptions (Hogg, 2007). Uncertainty-identity theory posits that



identification with a group is moderated by one's perception of a group's entitativity - the degree to which group members are perceived as a bonded unit (Campbell, 1958) relative to the amount of self-uncertainty one is experiencing (Hogg et al., 2007).

Previous research has demonstrated that self-uncertainty can be manipulated to examine the impact high and low identity uncertainty has on group identification and information processing (e.g. Hogg et. al., 2007; Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010 etc.). This research has suggested that individuals who are most uncertain identify more strongly with their group than individuals who are not uncertain, as uncertain individuals seek to reduce their uncertainty by latching onto group prescriptions (Hogg, 2000). Uncertain individuals are also more likely to process group information more deeply, as they are seeking to understand what is prototypical of group membership so that they may emulate the group prototype (Hogg et. al., 2007). The process of emulating the group prototype and shaving away individual differences is known as depersonalization, which results in group members perceiving themselves as interchangeable members of the group as opposed to perceiving themselves as unique individual personalities (Hogg, 2000). Through increased group identification that encourages individuals to depersonalize to fit the group prototype, individuals can increase their sense of who they are, what their purpose is, and acquire a stronger sense of identity.

Levels of identification with a group may differ between individuals, with some individuals drawing much of their social identity from their membership in it and others drawing very little from their membership in it (Ysseldyk, Matheson, & Anisman, 2010). Levels of group identification are also subject to fluctuate depending on social identity

salience, which is the level of awareness and attentiveness an individual has to being a member of that group at a specific moment in time (Haslam et al., 1999).

As uncertainty-reducing vehicles, groups must provide a clear definition of the group prototype (Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010). This means that prescriptions for what comprises an ideal group member must be clear and cognitively accessible for all group members. One accessible source of group information is the group leader(s), who group members can turn to for clues on how to look, think, feel, and behave when they are feeling uncertain (Hogg, 2001). As they are typically the most prototypical members of groups, group leaders serve as cognitive and behavioral models for other group members to follow (Hogg, 2001).

### **The Social Identity Theory of Leadership**

The social identity theory of leadership bridges social identity theory with contemporary leadership literature. The social identity theory of leadership asserts that leaders of groups tend to be the most prototypical members of groups, as they are the ones that capture ingroup similarities and maximize outgroup differences the most. In doing this, prototypical leaders and prototypical group members reduce uncertainty about what it means to be a group member (Hogg, 2001). Prototypical group members encompass characteristics that strongly represent the group's norms, values, and beliefs – thus they are the ones that group members look to for information on how to think, feel, and behave. There is strong evidence to support that leader prototypicality is a determinant of effective leadership and of ability to exert social influence (Baretto &

Hogg, 2017). As a result, the most prototypical members of groups are the ones most likely to emerge as group leaders.

Group leaders play important roles in both influencing group norms and signaling when it is acceptable for norms to shift (Hogg, 2001; Hogg, 2005). Research on group change and leader transgression has demonstrated that group leaders are afforded much more flexibility and leeway than average group members when it comes to violating group norms, as leaders are perceived as legitimate guides for identifying when, where, and how the group must change (Hogg, 2005; Abrams, 2013).

The Pope, in theory, is the most prototypical leader of the Catholic Church. While evaluations of leader prototypicality are not synonymous with evaluations of leader support, a leader's prototypicality is predictive of support from their group (Barretto & Hogg, 2017). Despite negative evaluations of Pope Francis' reactions to Church scandal (see Jones, 2019), his prevailing approval ratings suggest that Catholics generally support him. A Gallup poll conducted in January to February 2019 reports that 40% of American Catholics support Pope Francis "*A great deal*" and 18% support him "*Quite a lot*". However, among American Catholics who attend church weekly and monthly, support for Pope Francis rises to 68% and 61% respectively (percentage values for the weekly category and monthly category add the percentages for "*A great deal*" and "*Quite a lot*" to create total percentages: Jones, 2019).

As prototypical leaders exert influence in groups, they are the ones that signal group change. However, this must be done under the right social conditions to be effective. In their research examining leader effectiveness, van Knippenberg and Hogg

(2003) found that the best leaders are prototypical of their group and engage in group-oriented behavior – that is, they work to serve the best interests of their group. Building on this, successful group change is contingent upon the perception that the group leader is working toward the collective good of the group. (Seyranian, 2014; van Leeuwen, van Knippenberg & Ellemers, 2003). As Pope Francis is generally well-received and appears to fit the characteristics of a prototypical leader in the Catholic Church, Catholics may be receptive to his calls for change.

### **Non-prototypical Leadership Under Uncertainty**

While Pope Francis may be perceived as prototypical, women leaders are often perceived as non-prototypical (Randsley de Moura et al., 2018). Work on support for leaders under conditions of uncertainty has demonstrated that the prototypical leader advantage weakens or even disappears when people experience elevated uncertainty (Rast et al., 2012). For a non-prototypical leader to be most successful, the perceived advantages of supporting a non-prototypical leader must outweigh the perceived advantages of supporting a prototypical leader (e.g. Rast et al., 2012; Tyler, 1997).

The current work examines levels of support for women leaders, which is a non-prototypical position in the Catholic church, under conditions of uncertainty. Recent research on support for women leaders under conditions of uncertainty has demonstrated that preferences for strong, non-prototypical women leaders increases under conditions of elevated uncertainty (Randsley de Moura et al., 2018). This helps to support the notion

that the relationship between non-prototypicality, uncertainty, and leader support remains the same when perceptions of non-prototypicality are rooted in perceptions of gender.

Bridging these findings with the literature on leadership under uncertainty, it can be predicted that if women are legitimized as leaders by the Pope (a well-supported and prototypical leader serving as a source of uncertainty reduction), then uncertain participants may demonstrate increased support for women as leaders in the Church. However, as Jones (2019) has suggested that papal support changes depending on the frequency of church attendance, it is important to take note of participant variables that may impact the likelihood of supporting women in leadership in the Catholic Church.

### **Religiosity as a Participant Variable**

Religiosity is a key variable to consider when thinking about the Roman Catholic Church. Religiosity is defined by Gallagher and Tierney (2013) as individuals' devotion, conviction, and veneration towards an existential figure. Allport and Ross (1967) broke religiosity down into two components: intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity. Intrinsic religiosity refers to the perspective of religion as a satisfactory end in and of itself. In contrast, extrinsic religiosity refers to the perspective of religion being able to provide an external service, or otherwise form of utility for an individual outside of religion as an entity (e.g. a source of friendship, a sense of belonging etc.). Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) created a revised intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity scale based off of Allport's and Ross' original religiosity research, and it is this scale that is among the most widely used measures of religiosity today.

Intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity can exist either independently of one another or synchronously, with levels of both differing on a continuum. Previous research on religiosity demonstrates that because intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity are distinct conceptually, they must be evaluated individually in order to examine people's motivations and goals for being religious (in this case, why people identify with being a Catholic in the first place: see Gallagher & Tierney, 2013, Donahue, 1985). Individuals high in intrinsic religiosity may be more resistant to religious change than individuals high in extrinsic religiosity, as religion itself is perceived to be of value. Those high in extrinsic religiosity may be willing to accommodate change so long as the change provides them with some type of utility or some form of benefit. Individuals who score highly in both facets may respond in terms of intrinsic religiosity, as the intrinsic value of religion may be perceived to take precedence over external motivations. In instances where both intrinsic and extrinsic religiosity are high, extrinsic religious gains may be perceived as accessory or selfish when compared with the value of intrinsic religious gains (Donahue, 1985).

### **Women, Prototypicality, and the Church**

Gender is also an important variable to examine in the context of the Catholic Church. In the United States, 59% of women as opposed to 47% of men consider their religion to be a very important part of their life (Pew Research, 2018). These statistics manifest into higher attendance among women at religious services as well as greater levels of participation in religious activities amongst women (Pew Research, 2018;

Hackett et al., 2016). Even though these statistics are interdenominational and include faiths that permit women leaders, there are very few women who hold top religious leadership positions in the United States (Adams, 2007). Though the Catholic Church does not ordain women as priests, its leadership diversity does not differ much from other major religions that do (see Sandstrom, 2016). As of 2018, the Roman Catholic Church in the United States is 46% men and 54% women – with all the power in hands of men, and none in the hands of women (Pew Research, 2018).

None of this is particularly surprising, considering that many people cross-denominationally think of a man rather than a woman when they are asked to think about a leader, and thus base their perceptions of what makes a good leader on a male schema (e.g. Ridgeway, 2001; Eagly & Karau, 2002; Bierema, 2016). Regardless of education, competence and capability, women are generally not perceived as being prototypical leaders in many leadership arenas solely because they are not male and do not fit into the schema of a traditional leader (Ridgeway, 2001). Research has consistently shown that members of most groups prefer to have a leader that they perceive as being prototypical (see Hains, Hogg, & Duck 1997; Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003 etc.), which limits the capacity in which women can lead as non-prototypical leaders.

Gender stereotyping in perceptions of leader efficacy and preference is not new. Considering the historical basis of the Catholic Church and the Church's tendency to adhere to tradition, women seeking leadership within the Catholic Church are stifled by negative stereotypes that are warranted by both society and by their religion (Haskins, 2003).

Gender discrimination in leadership appointment and sexism within the Catholic Church is muddled in a variety of different dimensions, including a patriarchal model of church authority, claims of God-ordered gender segregation, and perceptions of the inequality, even impurity of women compared with men (see Adams, 2007). Haskins (2003) recounts that, aside from a small number of secular congregations in the early stages of the Church, women have been completely barred from entering the priesthood. While the exclusion of women in the Church was undocumented and based on religious tradition for nearly 2,000 years, *The Declaration on the Question of Admission of Women to the Ministerial Priesthood* issued in 1977 under Pope Paul VI not only served to officiate the Church's position, but also served as a means to justify the exclusion of women in the Catholic priesthood. An excerpt from the Declaration illustrates the Church's stance on women in the priesthood:

She (The Roman Catholic Church) holds that it is not admissible to ordain women to the priesthood, for very fundamental reasons. These reasons include: the example recorded in the Sacred Scriptures of Christ choosing his Apostles only from among men; the constant practice of the Church, which has imitated Christ in choosing only men; and her living teaching authority which has consistently held that the exclusion of women from the priesthood is in accordance with God's plan for his Church" (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1994, p. 599).



Simply stated, the Church gives no clear, definitive answer as to why prejudice exists in the Church in the first place (i.e., why are women inferior to men?). The following sections attempt to break down the components of stereotypes and prejudice affecting women in a broad sense and in the context of the Roman Catholic Church in an attempt to articulate what the Church does not.

### **Stereotypes and Status Beliefs**

Research on stereotype content supports the notion that women who are leaders are negatively stereotyped more often than men who are leaders. The stereotype content model (SCM; Fiske et al., 2002) describes the primary dimensions of stereotype content as the intersections of perceptions of group competence and warmth. As a construct, perceived competence signals agency, efficacy, and possible threat due to the perception that the group may be competitive. In turn, perceived warmth signals communality, friendliness, and the absence of competition. Women are often characterized as being high in warmth and low in competence. However, women who deviate from traditional, warm stereotypes of women and exhibit traits that are not consistent with stereotypes of women are perceived as being high in competence but low in warmth (Fiske et al., 2002).

In this vein, social role theory posits that the perception of gender-based attributes leads to the perception that women are more suitable for supportive, nurturing tasks and men are more suitable for independent, leadership tasks. For example, men are expected to go to work and serve as the primary breadwinners of the household, while women are expected to stay at home and tend to the housework and children. These two, contrasting

types of roles can be classified respectively as agentic and communal roles. Agentic roles require assertation, dominance, and control. Communal roles require caring about others' welfare, the elicitation of sympathy, affection, and the demonstration of nurturing behavior. Communality is closely related to the warmth dimension in stereotype content, whereas agency is closely related to the competence dimension (see Rudman & Glick, 2008).

Prejudices that stem from the stereotypes implied by social role perception manifest in less support for women's leadership and lower performance ratings of actual women leaders. This is largely because people who perceive the genders as having distinct social roles expect to see the genders abide by those roles, and expect them to remain role-congruent. (Eagly & Diekman, 2005).

Eagly and Karau's (2002) work on role congruity theory finds that, in stepping outside of communal roles and into agentic ones, women are perceived as behaving in a way that is incongruent with their gender (Eagly & Karau, 2002). In the context of the Roman Catholic Church, the binds of Catholic traditional norms and the binds of traditional gender norms combine to create a doubly hostile environment for women seeking leadership roles within the Church.

Research on gender status and leader emergence (e.g., Ridgeway, 2001), posits that gender stereotypes contain status beliefs that legitimize a gender hierarchy which prioritizes men over women. Status beliefs are beliefs that assume that certain groups inherently have a higher status than other groups. Gender status beliefs play a critical role in leader emergence and performance perception, which intertwine with the prescriptive

aspect of gender norms to inform emerging leaders of the congruency or incongruence of their behaviors with their gender roles (Ridgeway, 2001). For example, a woman aspiring to a leadership role might feel a sense of internal conflict when approaching the role, because she has been socialized to perceive leaders as men and leadership tasks as masculine. This elucidates that prejudice does not necessarily come from outside sources, but sometimes prejudice can arise from individuals' own self-stereotyping (Hogg & Turner, 1987).

### **Shifting Attitudes in the Church**

In the midst of Pope Francis' papacy, however, there appears to be an ideological shift occurring in the Roman Catholic Church. Recent research has suggested that Roman Catholic congregants' opinions on women's roles in the Church are shifting. A 2018 study conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate found that 6 in 10 Catholic women believe that the Catholic Church should allow women aged 35 and older to be ordained as permanent deacons. Participants in this study offered their opinion after being presented with the statement "*In 2016 Pope Francis announced a commission to study the possibility of women serving as permanent deacons*". These findings are limited, however, in that the data only includes responses from Catholic women and not from Catholic men.

Whereas Pope Francis has voiced his disapproval of the prospect of women entering the Catholic priesthood, he has spoken favorably about the possibility of women entering the diaconate (e.g., in 2016 at the Plenary Assembly of the International Union

of Superiors General) - a step down from the priesthood, but a position of leadership nonetheless. This is merely a possibility, however, and no further effort beyond the suggestion of creating a commission to study the topic of women as deacons has been executed. However, this suggests that there is some room for change within the Church, considering that the diaconate is and always has been comprised of men. If the Pope is willing to entertain the reality of women as deacons, it might be conceivable for him to have a change of heart when it comes to women entering the priesthood.

As has been the case with the Catholic Church and other religious organizations in the past, however, there is the possibility that the Catholic Church will schism when faced with drastic organizational change. Schism is defined as a break from the general consensus of a group on a fundamental ideological level warranting the creation of a new group reflecting the values and beliefs of the separating members (e.g. Sani & Reicher, 2000). If accepting women into the priesthood is perceived to be an ideological shift that is incongruent with Catholic values, some members may opt to move away from the group rather than conform to the group. This process was seen in the Church of England with its decision to ordinate women (Sani & Reicher, 2000) as well as with the Catholic Church for various reasons in the Great Schism (Oxford Reference, 2019), and in response to core changes in the Church after the meeting of the Second Vatican Council (Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 1965; Rowland, 2017). With the prospect of potential organizational change in mind, the following statement describes the hypotheses of this study based on the uncertainty, leadership, and sexism research that has been described thus far.

## Overview of the Research

Studies examining perceptions of women in leadership lack diversity in their research backdrop, often focusing on business and political contexts and neglecting other research arenas such as religions. While the information garnered by the existing studies is useful when broadly evaluating perceptions of women in leadership roles, the narrow scope makes it difficult to generalize results to groups that have been studied very minimally. This study contributes to diverse leadership and social identity research by examining a religion (i.e. the Catholic Church) as a group, and by providing an analysis and evaluation of a conservative organization's willingness to accept change when signaled by a leader. This research expands the scope of the existing body of literature to provide insight as to how positive, progressive group change can be achieved with the aid of a leader.

Previous research suggests that feeling uncertain about one's identity motivates individuals to seek out group prescriptions to become more certain about who they are. Leaders of groups are often exemplary prototypes of what it means to be a member of the group they lead. Thus, looking to these leaders is a primary source of uncertainty reduction. If uncertainty is high, group members tend to look for cues on how to think, feel, and behave. However, if uncertainty is low, group members are less likely to search for cues, as they feel secure in the information they already know. Uncertainty is something that has been successfully manipulated on countless occasions (e.g. Hogg et al., 2007; Rast et al., 2012 etc.). This study manipulates uncertainty via a fictitious speech

delivered by Pope Francis. This method of manipulating uncertainty was used by Hohman, Hogg, and Bligh (2010) and provides an authentic look into how leaders in various groups might manipulate group member uncertainty to achieve desired results in real settings.

By manipulating Pope Francis's stance towards women in the priesthood, this research makes a case for how the Church, as well as other organizations corrupted by discriminatory practices, may progress despite having been firmly rooted in tradition. Change may happen under the right circumstances, and knowing how change might occur has the potential to change organizations for the better. This experiment is a 2 (papal support of women in the priesthood vs. papal non-support of women in the priesthood) x 2 (high uncertainty vs. low uncertainty) between subjects factorial design that controls for gender in all analyses.

## Hypotheses

**Hypothesis 1:** Under conditions of high uncertainty, Catholics will be more supportive of women in the priesthood if the Pope endorses this position (than if he does not). However, under low uncertainty, Catholics will be unsupportive of women in the priesthood, regardless of the Pope's endorsement.

**Rationale:** High uncertainty might lead participants to search for cues on how to think, feel, and behave (Hogg, 2007). Pope Francis' speech will provide these cues, and participants in the high uncertainty conditions should be more likely to align with the Pope's stance. In contrast, even though the Pope is the leader of the Catholic Church, participants in the low uncertainty conditions might be more fixed in their attitudes, even if they disagree with what the Pope says because they lack the uncertainty motivation to change their attitudes (Hogg, 2000).

**Hypothesis 2:** Papal support will moderate the relationship between Catholic identification and increase support for women in priesthood.

**Rationale:** The Pope signals what is prototypical for Catholics, thus people who highly identify as Catholics might reflect attitudes that more closely resemble those of the Pope's than other group members who do not identify as highly (Hogg, 2001). Thus, papal support will moderate the strength of the predictive value of Catholic identification of support for women in the priesthood.

## Method

### Participants and Design

The study was conducted with Roman Catholic, American adults ( $N = 242$ , 47% male, 53% female,  $M_{Age} = 35$ ,  $SD = 10.518$ ) recruited from Amazon Mechanical Turk (MTurk), an online crowdsourcing marketplace where individuals can participate in surveys for a small amount of monetary compensation. This method of sampling was chosen to increase participant data from a range of Roman Catholic age-groups, and to ensure that participants from various geographic and ethnic/cultural groups in the United States would be included in the sample. Participants were 68% White, 15% Black, 2% American Indian/Alaska Native, 6% Asian, .4% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 6% Latino/Hispanic, and 2% Biracial/Multiracial.

The study design was a 2 (papal support of women in the priesthood vs. papal non-support of women in the priesthood) x 2 (high uncertainty vs. low uncertainty) between subjects factorial design. Two fictitious papal transcripts were written for use in this study; one in which the Pope voiced support for women in the priesthood and one in which he opposed the idea of women in the priesthood. Participants were exposed to one of these two transcripts contingent upon their assignment in the papal support or papal non-support condition.

### Procedure

Upon obtaining IRB approval (IRB number: 18-135), the experiment was listed on MTurk with “*Catholic Attitudes Study*” as the title and “*Please participate in this study ONLY if you are Catholic*” in the description. Only eligible MTurk participants



were given access to the study link. MTurk workers who opted to participate in this study were directed to the study via a link that redirected to Qualtrics, an online survey-hosting service that hosted the entirety of the survey.

Prior to beginning the survey, all participants read and checked a box affirming “*Yes, I agree*” on an embedded informed consent form that notified them of their participation in a research project examining their opinions on the diversity practices of the Roman Catholic Church. Participants were then asked to confirm if they were a practicing Catholic. If participants selected “*yes*”, they were permitted to continue the survey. If participants selected “*no*”, they were promptly debriefed and thanked for their time. Participants who were non-practicing Catholics received the same \$.50 compensation as others did.

Participants began the survey by completing a revised form of the Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religiosity Scale (Gorsuch & McPherson, 1989; Allport & Ross, 1967). This measure was followed by the short-form of the Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (see Glick & Fiske, 1996) and measures of Catholic identification (adapted from Leicht, et al., 2018). Measures of self and leader prototypicality (Pope prototypicality) followed (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). Participants were then exposed to one of two Pope Francis speeches (one in support of women in the priesthood or one against women in the priesthood), and one of two levels of the uncertainty manipulation (high/low: see Hohman, Hogg & Bligh, 2010). After participating in the manipulations, participants completed measures of support for Pope Francis (Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005) and measures on his perceived levels of warmth and competence

(Fiske, et al., 2002). Participants then completed measures of schism (Sani & Reicher, 2000), support for women in leadership (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2006) and the ASI Post-test (Glick & Fiske 1996). Participants were then asked to respond to measures of their levels of support for women in the priesthood (see Yegidis & Weinbach, 2006). The final items in the survey were demographics items (age, gender, race, political party, and time spent as a member of the Roman Catholic Church). Participants were then debriefed, thanked for their time, and given the option to re-consent to experimenter use of their data, or the option to revoke their consent (data from these participants was not used in the analyses). All participants were credited \$.50 USD to their MTurk account.

### **Independent Variables**

**Uncertainty prime.** The high and low identity-uncertainty manipulation was adapted from the leader-induced uncertainty literature (e.g. Hohman, Hogg, & Bligh, 2010). The prime instructed participants to focus on aspects of Pope Francis' speech that made them feel either certain or uncertain. The high uncertainty prime asked participants to "*Please use the spaces below to write about three things in Pope Francis's speech that you just read that make you feel uncertain.*" (Appendix J), and the low uncertainty prime asked participants to "*Please use the spaces below to write about three things in Pope Francis's speech that you just read that make you feel certain.*" (Appendix K).

**Papal support manipulation.** There were two versions of a speech transcript from Pope Francis – one in which he ostensibly voiced support for women in the priesthood (Appendix H), and one in which he did not (Appendix I). The scripts were

written for the purpose of this study and did not actually reflect or emulate a prior statement made by Pope Francis.

**Measures of Identification with Catholicism.** This 9-item, 7-point identification with Catholicism scale was adapted from Leicht et al. (2018). This scale measures the extent to which participants identify with being a Catholic, and how well they perceive that they fit in with other Catholics (Appendix E). Example items from this scale include: “*I feel that I belong in the Catholic Church*” and “*Being someone who values my Catholic religious beliefs is important to me*” ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

### **Dependent Measures**

**Measures of Self-Prototypicality.** This 3-item, 7-point Likert measure of self-prototypicality was derived from previous research (e.g. van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). This scale asked participants to respond to the following items: “*I represent what is characteristic about being a Catholic*”, “*I am a good example of the typical Catholic*” and “*I am similar to most Catholics*” (Appendix F;  $\alpha = .87$ ).

**Measures of Pope Prototypicality.** A 5-item measure on a 7-point Likert scale was used to measure perceptions of the Pope’s prototypicality (Appendix G). This measure was adapted from the leader prototypicality literature (van Knippenberg & van Knippenberg, 2005). Example items from this scale included: “*Pope Francis stands for what Catholics have in common*” and “*Pope Francis is representative of what it means to be a good Catholic*” ( $\alpha = .94$ ).

**Uncertainty Check.** After participants were exposed to their respective manipulations they were checked to ensure that the manipulations were successful

(Appendix J and Appendix K) After reading their respective transcripts and responding to their level of the uncertainty prime, participants were asked to identify on a 7-point Likert scale how certain or uncertain the speech they read made them feel. The scale ranged from 1 (*Extremely certain*) to 7 (*Extremely uncertain*).

**Measures of Pope Support.** Participants were given a 12-item, 7-point Likert post-manipulation measure examining levels of support for Pope Francis' leadership (Appendix L). The measure was adapted from the social identity theory of leadership literature (e.g. Rast et al., 2012). It included items such as: "*I trust Pope Francis as my church leader*" and "*Pope Francis wants what is best for the Catholic Church*" ( $\alpha = .98$ )

**Perceptions of Women in Leadership.** Support for women in leadership was measured with an adapted version of the Leadership Perception Questionnaire Inventory (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2006). This 11-item scale measured on a 7-point Likert scale included leadership efficacy items such as "*Women leaders work towards the best interests of their groups*" and "*I am a strong supporter of women leaders*" (Appendix O;  $\alpha = .94$ ).

**Support for Women in the Catholic Priesthood.** Support for women in the Catholic priesthood was measured with a scale derived and modified from the Leadership Perception Questionnaire Inventory (Yegidis & Weinbach, 2006). This 12-item scale measured on a 7-point Likert scale includes leadership efficacy items such as "*I would prefer a woman as a priest over a less qualified man*" and "*Women belong in the priesthood*" (Appendix Q;  $\alpha = .96$ )

## Measures for Exploratory Analyses

**Intrinsic/Extrinsic Religiosity (Revised) Scale.** This intrinsic/extrinsic religiosity scale developed by Gorsuch and McPherson (1989) and revised from Allport and Ross's (1967) scale was modified to a 7-point Likert format (Appendix C). It targeted different domains of religiosity in an attempt to reveal what participants' motivations for being religious were. Example items included "*I go to Church because it helps me make friends*" (extrinsic item), and "*My whole approach to life is based on Catholicism*" (intrinsic item). ( $\alpha = .70$ )

**Pre-test, Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI).** The ASI, developed by Glick and Fiske (1996) is a 22-item scale that asks participants about their levels of agreement for a series of statements (e.g. "*Many women have a quality of purity that few men possess*") on a 1-7 point Likert-scale. Scale ratings range from 1 (*disagree strongly*) to 7 being (*agree strongly*). The ASI breaks down the two main domains of sexism, hostile (11-items) and benevolent sexism (11-items), to identify participants that demonstrate tendencies towards sexist beliefs across the sexism spectrum. The version of the ASI that was administered to participants was an abridged version with 8 hostile items and 7 benevolent items (Appendix D;  $\alpha = .95$ ).

**Post-test, Ambivalent Sexism Inventory (ASI).** The ASI was administered to participants after the manipulation to measure any changes since time one (Appendix P;  $\alpha = .96$ ). The same 7-point Likert scale and 22 items were used, but they were randomized (Glick & Fiske, 1996).

**Measures of Pope Warmth and Competence.** Participants were given a scale measuring the Pope’s perceived warmth and competence (Appendix M). This 8-item scale measured on a 7-point Likert scale was derived from the stereotype content literature (e.g. Fiske et al., 2002). The scale had 4 items measuring competence and 4 items measuring warmth. Example items from this scale include: “*Pope Francis is efficient*” (a competence item) and “*Pope Francis is sincere*” (a warmth item:  $\alpha = .93$ ).

**Schism.** Participants were given a measure of schism (Appendix N) adapted from Sani and Reicher (2000). This measure had 5 items and was measured on a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (*Strongly disagree*) to 7 (*Strongly agree*). Example items from this scale include: “*Because of Pope Francis I would consider creating a new faith that truly represents Catholic values*” and “*Because of Pope Francis, I desire to leave the Catholic Church and to form a new religion around true Catholic values*” ( $\alpha = .97$ ).

### **Informed Consent and Debriefing**

At the beginning of the survey participants were given a digital informed consent document with some survey details (Appendix A) and were also given a debriefing form at the end of the survey which informed participants of the full aims of the study (Appendix S). Participants were given the option of reconsenting to the use of their data, or revoking their original consent and not allowing for use of their data.

### **Data Storage**

Survey data was securely stored on Qualtrics and in a private, password-protected server. Only the principal investigator and the faculty advisor had access to the data.

## Results

### Primary Analyses

Data was collected using Qualtrics and imported into SPSS for data analysis. Hypothesis 1 was addressed through a factorial ANCOVA that tested for mean differences on the dependent variable for all levels of the independent variables, and scanned for potential covariates. Hypothesis 2 was addressed through a moderated regression using model 1 of Hayes Process Model (2019) that tested the papal support variable as a moderator between Catholic identification and support for women in the priesthood.

### Tests of Assumptions

**Random Sampling.** Several chi-square tests were run to examine political party, race, and gender in the experimental conditions. The chi square values for political party and race were not significant. However, the chi square value for gender was significant,  $\chi^2(3, N=240) = 11.55, p = .009$ . Cramer's  $V$  was used to calculate the effect size,  $\phi_c = 0.21$ . This suggests that gender was not randomly distributed in the conditions. Gender was controlled in all analyses by being included as a covariate.

**Data Normality.** Testing for data normality was conducted using histograms and skew and kurtosis testing. The variable for support for women in the priesthood was found to be non-normally distributed with a skewness of  $-0.72 (SE = 0.16)$  and kurtosis of  $0.12 (SE = 0.31)$ . The inverse, log, and square root transformations were not suitable fixes for the variable. Results for the transformed and untransformed data were both insignificant and followed the same trend. Notably, the transformed and untransformed

distributions reflected that 10% of participants scored the maximum value on the 7-point Likert scale for the variable – the largest group to obtain the same score. This suggests the presence of a ceiling effect for the variable. The untransformed data is reported for ease of interpretation.

**Homogeneity of Variance.** The homogeneity of variance assumption was examined using Levene’s test, which rendered no significant violations of the assumption.

**Homogeneity of Covariance.** The homogeneity of covariance assumption was examined using Box’s M test, which rendered no significant violations of the assumption.



## Hypothesis Tests

**Hypothesis 1:** A 2x2 Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) controlling for gender as a covariate was conducted to examine the effect of uncertainty level (high/low) and papal support (high/low) on support for women in the priesthood. Frequency and percentage of participants in each group is displayed in Table 1. Participant distribution in each group by gender is displayed in Table 2. An ANCOVA table of results is shown in Table 3. The main effect of uncertainty level on support for women in the priesthood was not significant ( $F [1, 233] = 0.904, p = .343, \eta_p^2 = .004$ ). The main effect of papal support on women in the priesthood was also nonsignificant ( $F [1,233] = 0.118, p = .731, \eta_p^2 = .001$ ). No significant interaction was found between uncertainty level and papal support on support for women in the priesthood,  $F (1, 233) = 0.510, p = .476, \eta_p^2 = .002$ . Descriptive statistics were run to screen for covariates in this analysis. As age was found to be positively correlated with high uncertainty ( $r = .134, p = .038$ ), the ANCOVA was rerun controlling for age. In the analysis controlling for age, the main effect of uncertainty level on support for women in the priesthood was not significant ( $F [1,232] = 0.843, p = .360, \eta_p^2 = .004$ ). The main effect of papal support on women in the priesthood was also nonsignificant ( $F [1,232] = 0.128, p = .721, \eta_p^2 = .001$ ). No significant interaction was found between uncertainty level and papal support on support for women in the priesthood,  $F (1, 233) = 0.510, p = .476, \eta_p^2 = .002$ .

Table 1

*Frequencies and percentages of participants in research conditions*

Condition	<i>N</i>	%
High uncertainty/Papal support	56	23.1%
Low uncertainty/Papal support	64	26.4%
High uncertainty/Papal non-support	56	23.1%
Low uncertainty/Papal non-support	66	27.3%
<b>Total</b>	<b>242</b>	

Table 2

*Participant distribution in research conditions by gender*

Condition	<i>N</i>	Male	Female
High uncertainty/Papal support	55	36	19
Low uncertainty/Papal support	64	23	41
High uncertainty/Papal non-support	56	23	33
Low uncertainty/Papal non-support	65	32	33
<b>Total</b>	<b>240</b>		

*Note.* Two participants did not report their gender.

Table 3

*Factorial ANCOVA analyzing support for women in the priesthood*

Variables	<i>F</i>	$\eta_p^2$	<i>P</i>
Uncertainty	0.904	.004	.343
Papal support	0.118	.001	.731
Uncertainty x Papal support	0.510	.002	.476

*Note.* Data presented here are untransformed. All effects have (1, 233) degrees of freedom

**Hypothesis 2:** Hypothesis 2 was examined by way of a moderated regression analysis using Model 1 of Hayes Process Model (2019) with 5,000 iterations. Controlling for gender, I hypothesized that papal support would moderate the relationship between Catholic identification and support for women in priesthood. However, no significant relationship between Catholic identification and endorsement for women in the priesthood was found  $R = .004$ ,  $F(2, 234) = 0.445$ ,  $p = .642$ , rendering analysis of the interaction also nonsignificant  $\Delta R = .000$ ,  $F(1, 233) = 0.006$ ,  $p = .828$ .

## Discussion

As previous literature has strongly suggested that prototypical leaders wield a significant amount of influence in groups (see Hogg & van Knippenberg, 2003), and uncertainty has appeared to increase people's susceptibility to referent informational influence (see Gaffney & Hogg, 2017; Gaffney et al., 2014), this research was expected to follow the same trend. Religious organizations, even strict ones immersed in dogma such as the Roman Catholic Church, operate under the same group processes that dictate the organizational atmospheres of businesses, political parties, and governments (Hogg, Adelman, & Blagg, 2010).

Although the results of the study did not render significant results for the hypotheses, support for women in Catholic leadership is not necessarily low. Between groups analyses of support for women as priests demonstrated that support for women in the priesthood was a bit higher than mid-range on the 7-point Likert scale, regardless of research condition (papal support/high uncertainty  $M = 5.29$ ,  $Mdn = 5.50$ ; papal support/low uncertainty  $M = 5.05$ ,  $Mdn = 5.25$ , papal non-support/high uncertainty  $M = 5.11$ ,  $Mdn = 5.50$ ; papal non-support/low uncertainty  $M = 5.07$ ;  $Mdn = 5.08$ ). Furthermore, the histogram for support for women as priests suggested the presence of a ceiling effect, with 10% of participants scoring the maximum total on the measure.

While the manipulations were not fruitful, it is interesting that Catholic support for women in the priesthood does not appear to align with the stern, anti-women stance that the Church currently holds towards the prospect of women as religious leaders.

While the scope of this study does not examine this, it is possible that Catholic attitudes are changing in a way that conflicts with traditional Church values. That being said, it is possible that the dynamics of the Church are changing as well, and as it deviates from traditional positions, it may experience some structural changes down the line.

### **Limitations**

The participant pool for this study was recruited via the internet. It is possible that Catholic internet users may not be wholly representative of Catholics in the United States overall, especially considering that consistent and devout Catholics in the United States are an aging population, and Catholic identity across the board has been experiencing a swift decline over the past decade (Pew Research, 2019). The age range for participants in this study was between 19-72 ( $M_{Age} = 35$ ,  $Mdn_{Age} = 32$ ,  $SD = 10.518$ ), which is supportive of the notion that the voices of older American Catholics (55+ years of age) are not reflected well in this study. This may have been the case for a variety of reasons including but not limited to: a lack of access to the internet, reduced internet use (or use for different purposes) compared with younger Catholics, and/or a lack of internet proficiency.

The significant chi square value for gender across the research conditions is also a notable limitation of this study. Previous research on support for women in leadership positions has found differences between men and women in their levels of support for women as leaders (e.g. Eagly & Karau, 2003, Eagly & Diekman, 2005; Ridgeway, 2001 etc.). This flaw in the allocation of participants to the research groups limits our ability to examine gender differences between the groups on the dependent variable.

Additionally, the current design does not examine how perceptions of intersecting minority identities might contribute to more favorable or less favorable views towards minority women as leaders in the Church. This is a strong limitation of the current study in that participants' cognitive representations of what physical features are found in prototypical leaders may lead them to perceive prospective women aspiring to the Catholic priesthood as being white by default (e.g. Gündemir et al., 2014). Research on perceptions of women leaders who are white and women leaders who are persons of color has demonstrated that women leaders of color are frequently rated less favorably than white women leaders (Key et al., 2012). Examining perceptions of women leaders through an intersectional approach that accounts for racial, ethnic, and cultural differences is advised for future research to avoid over-generalizing results.

### **Future Directions**

The current research contributes broadly to the literature on women in leadership, and more specifically, to the literature regarding women in religious leadership. While the findings in this research rendered nonsignificant results for the hypotheses, it opens the possibility for future research on the scope and direction of current attitudes in the Catholic Church. It also accentuates the need for the individual examination of the views belonging to different subgroups of religious groups, as these subgroups may vary in terms of liberalness/conservativeness, overall knowledge of their faith, knowledge of world news about their faith, etc. These variables may impact how a subgroup perceives a woman aspiring to religious leadership.



Some of the measures were not analyzed as part of the current thesis. That said, there is much room for in-depth exploratory analyses on these constructs, which include religiosity and stereotype content.

Additionally, an intersectional analysis of the perception of women as Catholic leaders would offer a more comprehensive view of the dynamics of woman leader perception in the Catholic Church. As the Catholic Church is one of the most populous and ethnically diverse faiths in the United States and around the world, it is imperative that future research on this topic and similar topics examine the often nuanced perspectives that intersectional identities bring to our overall perceptions of women, and most pertinent to this research, of women who are leaders.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The Catholic Church is one of the largest religious organizations in the world. Despite a history rich in tradition and mystique, the Church has played an undeniable role in promoting bloodshed, subjugating minority groups to coercive labor and forced conversion, and conquering whole nations and empires. Nearly every country in the world has been altered in some way due to the influence of Catholicism, and subsequently, other Christian faiths.

This is important to keep in mind when evaluating the importance of Catholicism and Christianity on the world stage. The Church is omnipresent throughout the world, and likewise, so is its male-dominant hierarchical model that has not only influenced the way that local parishes operate, but even the way that entire countries are governed.

Old groups, such as the Church, tend to be extremely rigid. However, what we know about group change, particularly the role of leaders in promoting group change, offers insight as to how these groups may change over time. This study, and any subsequent studies on this topic contribute to a sparse, but growing body of knowledge pertaining to group change within old organizations that have been complexified by history and dogma. In the wake of calls for equality and equity throughout the world, this is an exciting time for the Church to embrace the potential of women as leaders in a faith that has long denied them the opportunity to share their gifts, strengths, and abilities. As the old Latin phrase goes “*antique colant antiquum dierum*” – “let the ancients worship the ancient of days”. The time seems ripe for change.

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## APPENDIX A

## Informed Consent

**Agreement to Participate in Catholic Attitudes Study**

You are invited to participate in a study that examines the diversity of the attitudes of Catholics in the United States.

If you decide to participate, you will respond to questions about your opinion regarding various aspects of your Catholic faith, including your perception of leadership within the Catholic church, your feelings of belongingness in the Catholic Church, and the importance that your faith has in your life. Participation in this survey will help the researchers to better identify diverse voices within the Catholic Church to better serve the Catholic community. This survey will take approximately 20-25 minutes to complete. You will receive monetary compensation of \$0.50 USD directly to your Amazon MTurk account for your participation in this survey. You are free to exit this survey at any time and still receive full compensation.

The risks associated with participating in this study are minimal and not higher than those faced in everyday life. The risk includes the possibility of thinking about things that make you feel uncomfortable. You are free to stop the study at any time without penalty. Your participation in this project is voluntary. You have the right to not participate at all or to exit out of the study at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you may otherwise be entitled. There will be no direct benefit to this study other than that you might help contribute to the understanding of the diverse opinions and interests of members of the Catholic faith.

This study is anonymous, so please DO NOT include any identifying comments on the survey. No identifying information about you is being collected. Survey data will be stored on Qualtrics, an online survey website (for more information see [qualtrics.com](http://qualtrics.com)). Qualtrics.com does not track emails but they do keep track of IP addresses. IP address information will not be linked to your individual responses. Moreover, all data files used for data analyses will exclude IP addresses to further protect your anonymity. All individual responses that you provide will be presented in the aggregate in any papers, books, talks, posts, or stories resulting from this study, thus your individual responses will never be displayed. We may share the data set with other researchers, but your identity will not be known.

The data obtained will be maintained in a safe location and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the study is completed. This consent form will be maintained in a safe location and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the study is completed.

If you have any questions about this research at any time, please email the primary investigator, **Stephanie Byers** at **smb1095@humboldt.edu** or the faculty advisor **Amber Gaffney** at **amber.gaffney@humboldt.edu**. If you have any concerns with this study or questions about your rights as a participant, contact the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at **irb@humboldt.edu**.

You may print this informed consent form now and retain it for your future reference. If you agree to voluntarily participate in this research as described and are at least 18 years old, please check the box below to begin the online survey. Thank you for your participation in this research.

- I agree to participate in this study.
- I do not agree to participate in this study.

## APPENDIX B

## Practicing Catholic Verification

Are you a practicing Catholic?

Yes

No

























	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
a good example of effective Catholic leadership.							



## APPENDIX H

## Pope transcript: Support for women in the priesthood

[Transcribed from Italian]

[Synod on Role of Women in the Apostolate at the August 2018 Sacred Congregation for the Divine Faith]

My Dear Brothers in Christ,

God bless you all for meeting here today as we navigate what some may call “a new era” in traditional Catholic mind and practice. The future of this era is largely unknown - but often portrayed as brooding and dark. The Lord speaks to us in Psalm 27:1, and in Isaiah 41:10, reminding us time and time again to cast away our worries and to have faith in God. Today, I ask that we cast down our worries and fears, and open up our hearts to a new path that, with God’s Will, will strengthen His church.

Let us ask ourselves what truly defines us as Catholics. Above all else, what we have in common is a mission to serve Christ and to honor Him through our works and deeds. This is something He asks of both His sons and daughters.

---

Throughout our history, we have been blessed with the generosity, talents, and love demonstrated by our Catholic women, including those blessed few who have been canonized into the sainthood, and whose miracles continue to manifest with prayers around the world. Let us not forget the saints who are alive today, and that they may be any age, and be man or woman. I ask that we ponder this idea when we consider the role of women in the faith.

Today, I ask that the cardinals, bishops, and clergyman in this room consider God’s request of the service of His sons and daughters when it comes to the integration of women into the leadership facets of our faith. It is time that we had a conversation regarding the ordination of women so that we are aware of the stances of those around us. Let us not abandon our own for the sake of continuance – let us remain alive, adaptive, and open to the Will of God that is very much alive today.

Thank you.

## APPENDIX I

## Pope transcript: Papal non-support of women in the priesthood

[Transcribed from Italian]

[Synod on Role of Women in the Apostolate at the August 2018 Sacred Congregation for the Divine Faith]

My Dear Brothers in Christ,

God bless you all for meeting here today as we navigate what some may call “a new era” in contemporary mind and practice. The Church has survived over these thousands of years because of her faithful, and it is her faithful that will ensure that she retains her traditional values throughout the eras. The unknown is often portrayed as brooding and dark, but we must have faith in God. In Psalm 27:1 and in Isaiah 41:10, the Lord reminds us to cast away our worries and to have faith in Him. Today, I ask that we cast down our worries and fears, and have faith in our all-powerful, all-loving God.

Let us ask ourselves what truly defines us as Catholics. Above all else, what we have in common is a mission to serve Christ and to honor His divine message, which speaks to us just as clearly today as it did over 2,000 years ago.

---

Throughout our history, we have been blessed with the generosity, talents, and love demonstrated by our Catholic women, including those blessed few who have been canonized into the sainthood. These women have served God in their own special way, equal to their male counterparts. Though by no means is one superior to the other, our sacred history does not permit women to enter into the priesthood. However, women do perform fundamental and integral roles in the preservation of the Church. I ask that we ponder this fact when we consider the role of women in the faith.

Today, I ask that the cardinals, bishops, and clergyman in this room remember God’s legacy to His people, and that adherence to our sacred history is fundamental in preserving the integrity and sanctity of the word of God. Let us not abandon our traditional values lest we distance ourselves from the Lord. Let the Word of the Lord remain alive in our hearts always, and let us work harmoniously in His name for the sake of our faith.

Thank you.

## APPENDIX J

## Uncertainty Manipulation: High Uncertainty Conditions

Please use the spaces below to write about three things in Pope Francis's speech that you just read that make you feel uncertain.

1. Makes me feel uncertain

---

2. Makes me feel uncertain

---

3. Makes me feel uncertain

---

How uncertain does this speech make you feel?

Extremely Certain

Certain

Somewhat Certain

Neither Certain/nor Uncertain

Somewhat Uncertain

Uncertain

Extremely Uncertain

## APPENDIX K

## Uncertainty Manipulation: Low Uncertainty Conditions

Please use the spaces below to write about three things in Pope Francis's speech that you just read that make you feel certain.

1. Makes me feel certain

---

2. Makes me feel certain

---

3. Makes me feel certain

---

How certain does this speech make you feel?

Extremely Certain

Certain

Somewhat Certain

Neither Certain/nor Uncertain

Somewhat Uncertain

Uncertain

Extremely Uncertain















	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
to abandon Pope Francis.							





	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
the best interests of their groups.							

















## APPENDIX R

## Demographics Measures

What is your age? (*Please list number e.g. 25*)

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What is your gender?

- Male
- Female
- Non-binary
- Other gender not listed

What is your race/ethnicity?

- White
- Black or African American
- American Indian or Alaska Native
- Asian
- Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander
- Latino/Hispanic
- Biracial or Multiracial
- Other

What is your political party affiliation?

- Republican
- Democrat
- Green
- Independent
- Other \_\_\_\_\_

How long have you been a member of the Catholic Church?

Years spent as member of the Church

0 10 20 30 40 50 60 70 80 90 100

Slide scale to closest number of years  
spent in the Roman Catholic Church



## APPENDIX S

## Debriefing and Option to Reconsent to Use of Data

**Debriefing**

Thank you for your participation, you have now completed the study. The purpose of this study is to examine how Catholics respond to calls for religious reform or calls to maintain religious tradition when made to feel either highly certain about their Catholic identity or highly uncertain about their Catholic identity. This study also examines any potential shifts in Catholics' perceptions of the Pope when presented with identity affirming or identity conflicting information when the topics of conversation are the roles and limitations of women in the faith. We are specifically interested in how these perceptions vary as a function of level of identity (un)certainty, leader message, and levels of sexism. The transcript you read as well as the Sacred Congregation for the Divine Faith and Synod on Role of Women in the Apostolate are fictitious. If you have any questions about the study, feel free to contact the principal investigator, **Stephanie Byers** at **smb1095@humboldt.edu** or the faculty advisor, **Dr. Amber Gaffney** at **amber.gaffney@humboldt.edu** or **707-826-4313**. Thank you for your participation!

If you have concerns regarding the ethics of this survey, please contact the Chair of the Humboldt State Institutional Review Board at: email: [irb@humboldt.edu](mailto:irb@humboldt.edu)

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Now that you understand the full aims of this study, would you like for us to use your data as part of our research?

- Yes, please use my data.
- No, please dispose of my results.