AMERICAN CATHOLIC WOMEN AND ARTIFICIAL CONTRACEPTION:
AN EXPLORATION INTO BELIEFS AND PRACTICES

By Adrienne J Spillar

This paper explores the complex relationships between American Catholic women, the Roman Church, and mainstream American culture. A small sociological survey constructed and undertaken by the author provided interesting data from American Catholic women for analysis. Comparison with data from additional surveys suggests that behavioral and ideological trends may exist among American Catholic women of different generations. The author concludes that the Roman Catholic Church’s teachings on sexual morality may no longer be authoritative for some American Catholic women. Rather, for these women, mainstream American culture may be a more compelling authority and source of ideas on the use and morality of artificial contraception.
AMERICAN CATHOLIC WOMEN AND ARTIFICIAL CONTRACEPTION: 
AN EXPLORATION INTO BELIEFS AND PRACTICE

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Dedication

Aunt Susan Thornton (nee Spillar)
Wife, Sister, Daughter, Godmother, Catholic:
You Are Missed
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Introduction

My interest in American Catholicism is a personal one. I was raised Roman Catholic and actively practiced Catholicism until I went to college. My reasons for separating from the Church were grounded in my disagreements with the role of women in the Church and Catholic teaching on sexual morality—especially Church emphasis on procreation as a primary end of sexual intercourse, women’s involvement in the Church (including female ordination), and Church teaching on homosexuality. As a Eucharistic minister and lector/commentator at the Church I attended, I increasingly questioned the limited participation of women in the Mass. I felt that, as a woman, I was a secondary participant in the Catholic Church; this sense of subordination estranged me from the Church. Ultimately, I stopped practicing Catholicism for many reasons. However, I was aware that others seemed to disagree with Church teachings but still maintained their relationship with the Catholic Church, to varying degrees. This observation piqued my interest in the relationships between American Catholic women and the Roman Catholic Church. Although I no longer identify myself as Catholic, my interest in Catholicism has persisted. This thesis project developed out of an inquiry into Catholic teachings on sexuality.

Several goals guided this project. First, I aimed to create and undertake a sociological, ethnographic study to examine the opinions and behavior of American Catholic women. Informed by Clifford Geertz’s notion of religion as a cultural system, I developed the provisional hypothesis that American Catholic women are deeply influenced by multiple sources of ideological and behavioral authority. In part as a response to practical factors, individuals construct a world view and ethos comprised of elements from multiple cultural systems. As a result, a person may identify herself as Catholic but act or think in ways that conflict with official Church teaching. Further, it is possible to suggest that the official position of the Church hierarchy on sexual morality are not compelling for some American Catholic women and that mainstream American culture may be a greater source of authority regarding artificial birth control use. This hypothesis is not intended to fully explain the research problem, that is, it is one of multiple valid suggestions for the observed use of proscribed methods of birth control by American Catholic women. In this sense the study is nomothetic, not idiological. These sociological terms describe two different approaches to research. Nomothetic explanations seek
to provide one of multiple possible explanations for a given phenomenon; ideological explanations seek to fully explain a phenomenon. (Babbie, 2004: 21-23)

I focus on the issue of artificial contraception because personal observation suggests that American Catholic women often act in contradiction to papal and other official Church teachings on artificial birth control. Second, I wanted to investigate the history of the American Church hierarchy and laity in the United States and explore the experience of women in American history in an effort to better understand the relationships between the Catholic Church hierarchy, women, and American culture. The theory of Clifford Geertz and Aline Kalbian provided useful frameworks through which to interpret sociological and historical data. Geertz’s theory provides support for the view of history as a changing process: individuals participate in shaping, reinforcing, and adopting cultural ideas and beliefs (transmitted through symbols). This processual view of history may help explain different responses across generations as members of each generation were exposed to different social, cultural, political, religious, and economic conditions.

Two sociological surveys that guided this project examined American Catholic women and use of artificial contraception. Groat et al (1975) and D’Antonio et al. (1996) were informative resources; D’Antonio et al.’s *Laity, American and Catholic: Transforming the Church* (1996) was a particularly useful resource. I was able to utilize a number of survey questions from the text which allowed me to compare 2005 data with D’Antonio et al.’s 1987 and 1993 data. Such comparison is a final objective of this paper. Since both sets of data were drawn from American Catholics, it is possible to examine responses to determine if any trends in behavior or thought may be suggested. Although the size of D’Antonio et al.’s (1996) survey populations are larger than the sample population in Spillar’s (2005) survey, tentative conclusions may still be drawn that would likely be confirmed by comparing D’Antonio et al.’s data with a larger survey population. The scale of such a study was too large for the parameters of this project.

Research Design

The study assessed in this paper was constructed by Adrienne Spillar. Informed by sociological methods of data gathering and research project composition, I constructed a small deductive nomothetic study. That is, the study was designed to explore the validity of a provisional hypothesis as one of many possible legitimate explanations for the use of artificial
birth control by American Catholic women. My examination of American Catholic history and American women’s historical experience was guided by a cultural approach: the relationship of culture with organizations and individuals is emphasized. Clifford Geertz informs this perspective in his text, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973). I began by exploring literature on sexual morality in Roman Catholicism. After reviewing papal documents, the “official” perspective of the Church hierarchy on sexuality and artificial contraception became clear. Sociological studies suggested that Catholic women were using artificial contraception even though the papacy and some members of the Church hierarchy condemned its use. This project is designed to explore this disjunction between Catholic women’s behavior and beliefs and papal teachings regarding artificial contraception and to evaluate the impact of mainstream American culture on formulating American Catholic women’s perspectives.

It is important to define here how I use the term “Catholic Church” variously throughout the paper. I do not assume that “the Church” is a monolithic institution, nor do I assume that it refers solely to the Pope alone. Especially since Vatican II, “the Church” has become a broadly applied term. For instance, in Vatican II documents, “the Church” refers to Catholic laity as “the people of God,” and, although this term does not acknowledge the plurality of American Catholic beliefs, is does reveal an imagined construction of a unified Catholic Church, perhaps held by members of both Catholic laity and clergy. The Church also describes the Pope and papal documents, both as a continuous tradition of unified belief and as specific individuals and texts located in a particular historical context. Finally, it has been used to refer to the Church hierarchy—including the Pope, Cardinals, and Bishops, although conceiving of the hierarchy as a unified whole has become increasingly difficult since Vatican II because of increasing diversity among beliefs.

“The Church” may also be conceived of as a set of commonly held ideas about “Catholicism”—including assumptions about Catholic identity, ritual, and moral behaviors and beliefs. Such an imaginative construction (revealed through historical events, literature, and other “texts”) may be more authoritative for some American Catholics than for others, and may be conceived of in both positive and negative ways. That is, some lay Catholics may be influenced by Papal and other official Catholic perceptions and attempt to live their lives accordingly. However, other lay Catholics may be nominally influenced by Catholic theology and Papal documents and may even perceive such as archaic or wrong. Further, anti-Catholic
sentiment—often comprised of negative stereotyped assumptions about Catholicism—may explain the view of “the Church” held by opponents of Catholicism over time, such as that held by many 19th century American Protestants. It is important to note that such imaginative constructions of “the Church” may be based on fact and fiction—that is, such views may not be representative of reality. By acknowledging the varied references that this term suggests, it becomes a slippery and possibly vague term. As a partial corrective to the ambiguity of this term, throughout the paper I attempt to specify in what way “the Church” is being employed.

As indicated above, Clifford Geertz’s theory informs the hypothesis investigated in this study. Aline Kalbian’s observations in *Sexing the Church: Gender, Power, and Ethics in Contemporary Catholicism* (2005) that the Catholic Church may no longer be a compelling source of moral authority for women provide additional support for conclusions drawn from survey data. She contends that the Church expresses ideas regarding sexual morality and gender through metaphors (“Church as bride”) and symbols (“Mary” as virgin, mother). However, these are no longer compelling images for some Catholic women. Her discussion of Catholic symbols illustrates well Geertz’s explanation of the role of symbols in religious systems. Groat et al.’s article, “Contraceptive Non-Conformity Among Catholics” (1975) and D’Antonio et al.’s text, *Laity: American and Catholic: Transforming the Church* (1996) provide valuable insights regarding Church authority and (especially female) Catholics. The surveys in these studies also functioned as models for the construction of the Spillar 2005 survey questions.

Primary sources were derived from an anthology of Catholic documents, *Gender Identities in American Catholicism* (Kane, Kenneally, and Kennelly, eds. 2001) and the Holy See web site, www.vatican.va. This website was a particularly useful resource for obtaining papal encyclicals and other official Church documents. John Noonan, Jay Dolan, Martin Marty, and Andrew Greeley provide detailed information about American Catholic history and Church teachings and provocative insights into the relationships between American Catholics, the Roman Church, and American culture. Nancy Woloch’s *Women and the American Experience, Second ed.* (1994) was an invaluable resource for details on American women’s history and Earl Babbie’s *The Practice of Social Research, 10th ed.* (2004) was a useful source of information on sociological research and technical sociological terminology.

Informed by sociological texts and studies, and particularly by D’Antonio et al.’s work, I created a questionnaire that measured American Catholic women’s attitudes on artificial
contraception, perceived authority of the Church hierarchy, and other issues. Women were asked to evaluate several points of controversy in the Catholic Church—such as female ordination, allegations and convictions of pedophilia by priests, and the practice of abortion by Catholics—and to consider their relationship to the Church—in particular, to evaluate their level of personal commitment and their desire for more democratic decision making. The survey also asked participants to provide demographic information, such as education level, annual income, and type of employment. This information is useful to analyze for it often provides important insights into the types of people participating in the survey. For instance, a survey population comprised of primarily high-income participants may respond differently than one composed of primarily low-income participants. In such a case, class may be a mitigating factor in formulating the kinds of responses participants select in other sections of the survey. Because the survey contained identifiable information, it is confidential, not anonymous. Confidentiality consists of an agreement between a researcher and the participants that any personally identifiable information contained in data (such as name and personal stories) will not be included in any analysis of the data. The researcher ensures that all documents containing identifiable information are securely stored and then destroyed. As a confidential survey, informed consent is required; after creating consent forms, I applied for IRB approval at Miami University.

In order to obtain IRB training certification, I attended a workshop and completed a series of short tests online (through the Miami University website). The training was worthwhile and informed my construction of the IRB proposal. The proposal forced me to consider every element of the project, including possible risk to participants and methods of gathering a sample population. After obtaining approval, I began to recruit participants by posting flyers and applying the “snowball” method. In this approach, the researcher recruits several participants, who then suggest several additional participants and so on. This method is often employed when it is difficult or has proved ineffective to recruit participants in other ways. (Babbie, 2004: Chapters 7, 10) Lack of support for the project from the local Catholic Church and town population made general recruitment methods ineffective. Due to financial and time constraints, expanding my recruitment methods to the greater Cincinnati area was not feasible. I concentrated on the snowball method to recruit sufficient participants by sending survey questionnaires, consent forms, and a stamped, addressed return envelope to possible participants
known through acquaintances and through recommendation from participants. Each survey packet cost over three dollars to produce (approximate cost of envelopes, copies of the survey questionnaires and consent forms, and mailing costs contributed to this estimate). As a result, the final sample population was smaller than I had initially proposed; approximately one hundred survey packets were constructed and mailed or distributed in person to possible participants. Further, although it is less expensive to send surveys through mail than to gather research in person, fewer possible participants respond to survey mailings. By May 31, 2005, the final day surveys were collected prior to analysis, fifty-one women responded. Although I received several additional surveys in the months that followed, it was not possible to include them in the data analysis.

The difficulties experienced in recruiting participants provide instructive insights for further studies. First, the size of a survey population is a crucial factor in determining the degree to which survey data is representative of a larger population. Because the Spillar survey population was small—fifty-one women responded—the resulting data is not as representative of the larger American Catholic population as is a larger sample population. While this is a drawback in assessing data quantitatively, that is, each participant’s response is over-represented (because the sample population was so small, each participant’s response made a numerically significant difference in percentages), the data is still useful in suggesting how a larger sample population may respond. The practical experience gained in constructing a survey, recruiting (or failing to recruit) participants, analyzing and comparing data was still a useful learning exercise. By critically assessing my skills as a sociological researcher, I have learned much that will contribute to the construction of future research projects. For example, I found that participants were far less likely to respond to the short-answer questions I composed than to the survey questionnaire. Perhaps the questions were inaccessible to some participants; perhaps they did not want to take the time to write out responses. The importance of organizing a survey questionnaire according to the pertinence of each question to the research problem and including only the most relevant questions in the survey are crucial skills that will make future surveys more useful. Further, it may be useful to remind participants of the survey by sending mailings during the survey period.
Literature Review

Clifford Geertz’s text *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) discusses the notion of religion as a cultural system. As indicated above, his theory that religious systems and individuals, through the transmission and reception of symbols, construct and reinforce ideas about the world is especially useful when extended to include the relationships between individuals and other cultural/symbol systems; in other words, when it is extended to account for the multiple secular and religious cultures in the contemporary United States. Further, Geertz’s work in *Local Knowledge* (1983) provides additional theoretical support. Aline Kalbian’s *Sexing the Church* (2005) focuses on the relationship of Church authority on sexual morality and Catholics. She argues that the Church orders the world for individuals and instructs them on morality. Metaphors and symbols are used by the Church to express notions of sexual morality and female gender roles. However, women have criticized such traditional notions as oppressive. She uses David Little to support her cultural theory on Catholics and sexual ethics. Her text-based investigation is a useful supplement to Geertz. Although I did not survey American Catholic women on the influence of Catholic symbols, such investigation may yield interesting results and is further supported by the above arguments.

D’Antonio, Davidson, Hoge, and Wallace explore the data from two sociological surveys of Catholics in 1987 and 1993 in *Laity, American and Catholic: Transforming the Church* (1996). Their intriguing text explores experiences and opinions of multiple generations of American Catholics. These cohort studies probed the way Pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, and Post-Vatican II Catholics thought about sexual morality (and other issues beyond the scope of this project to explore further). Their questions served as a template for part of the Spillar survey (2005). Data from these surveys makes trend comparison with Spillar survey possible. Kane, Kenneally, and Kennelly edited *Gender Identities in American Catholicism* (2001) for the *American Catholic Identities: A Documentary History* series (Christopher J. Kauffman, general editor). This text is an excellent source of original documents spanning two hundred years of American Catholic history. Excerpts are categorized into chapter by theme (such as gender and the Church) and chapters are prefaced by the editors to provide context and explain larger relationships between the individual excerpts. The Vatican’s website, www.vatican.va, was a useful resource for gathering original Papal documents (in translation). The official site of the
Charles Morris’s text *American Catholics* (1997) is useful because he utilizes a wide range of primary and secondary sources to narrate an engaging story of the development of American Catholicism in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. His attention is focused on the history of tension in the American Church between assimilation into American culture and separation from mainstream culture. Jay Dolan also addresses the relationship between American culture and the Catholic Church in his 2002 text, *In Search of American Catholicism*. Dolan is an historian who adopts a view of history as active and changing over time, a view that is adopted in this paper. The aim of his text is to provide an “interpretive exploration in the history and meaning of Catholicism in the United States.” (Dolan, 2002: 3) He is most intrigued by the unique way American Catholics construct their identities and the impact of the “public Catholicism” of the twentieth century on American culture. Earl Babbie’s 2004 *The Practice of Social Research, 10th Edition* focuses on research design, structuring inquiry, methods of observation and theories of sociology. This is a useful reference text for technical sociological terminology and sociological theories and research approaches.

Chapter one explains the primary argument of this paper and explores the history of American Catholics. Further, this study examines the experience of American women in the 19th and 20th centuries. Chapter two addresses the data from a small sociological survey undertaken by the author. This chapter analyzes the data gathered from research in light of the hypothesis suggested in chapter one. Additionally, this chapter explores the unique historical experiences of four generations of American women: the Cold War generation, the Baby Boomer generation, Generation X, and the Millennium generation. I consider these contexts when interpreting the data from these generations. Finally, in order to determine if any responses are suggestive of a trend in thought or behavior among American Catholic women regarding use of artificial contraception, chapter three compares 2005 data from the author’s survey with data from D’Antonio et al’s 1987 and 1993 surveys.
Chapter One

Chapter one accomplishes several tasks. First, the theory and methodology employed in this project, primarily focusing on the work of interpretive anthropologist Clifford Geertz, is explained. Second, chapter one highlights several of the most significant moments in American Catholic history from 1840 through the present to illuminate the Church’s relationship with mainstream American culture. Finally, primary symbols of woman’s gender identity constructed by the American Catholic Church and mainstream American culture in the twentieth century are explained, and particular attention is paid to the ways and times in which they converge and those instances in which they are particularly divergent. As illustrated through an explication of the aforementioned symbols and events of the American Catholic Church, Catholic women have increasingly rejected the Catholic Church’s construction of female roles, primarily the ubiquitous and variously interpreted Virgin Mary—both as exemplary virgin and as model of perfect motherhood—by adopting the construction of female roles from mainstream American Culture. While the cult of domesticity’s vision of ideal wife and mother prevailed in mainstream culture as the paradigmatic women’s role for a significant amount of time, this model was joined by that of the “liberated woman” of the 60s, the “working mother” of the 70s (but present as early as the 1930s to much criticism) and, later, the “single mom” juggling work and home responsibilities. For the most part, while the Church seems to accept the changing roles of women as well as their proliferation into various fields of work—except of course, the Catholic priesthood—its current position on birth control and consistent support and promotion of the earlier mentioned symbols of Mary may suggest otherwise.

I propose that women have turned away from the Church’s suggestions of ideal womanhood for various, interrelated reasons. First, the authority of the Catholic Church in determining a female’s personal decisions and the construction of her identity has waxed and waned over the course of history. Second, in the twentieth century, the pervasiveness of mainstream culture and the rapid advancements in mass communication have provided for women other, more compelling sources of information and senses of authority regarding their identity as American females. This may be illustrated by utilizing and expanding the theory of Clifford Geertz (1973), which is explained below. Additionally, Aline Kalbian (2005) offers a useful way to consider the relationships between American women, mainstream culture, and the
Catholic Church. It is important to note that the following history and analysis is focused on the story of white Catholic women in America. This necessarily implies that I leave out the history of minorities, including African-American, Mexican-American, and Asian-American Catholics. This is not to diminish their experience of Catholicism in America. It is simply beyond the scope of this project to include the many rich and varied experiences of all but European-American Catholic women in America.

Theory and Methodology

The purpose of this thesis is two-fold. It consists primarily of a small cross-sectional sociological survey of four generations of female American Catholics from Ohio and other areas of the United States that investigates their perception of and use of proscribed and approved methods of birth control. Although recruitment methods were used to gather participants, this method proved unsuccessful. As a result, other non-probability sampling techniques, particularly the snowball method—recruiting participants through the aid of other participants—were employed and resources available were used to send questionnaires to acquaintances and possible participants. All but one participant identified herself as Caucasian. The final female identified herself as Native American. Further, the survey explores the role of the Church in these females’ lives and the authority that the Church hierarchy has in determining a woman’s position on the use of birth control. In addition to the survey, this thesis attempts to construct a brief history of significant moments in the American Catholic church, paying particular attention to the issue of birth control in Catholicism. Utilizing the theory of Clifford Geertz, some of the primary symbols from both Catholic and Protestant—and later, secular mainstream—cultures that may have influenced the construction of female gender identity in the last century are explored.

It is apparent that a disjunction between the papacy and American lay Catholics regarding the issue of contraception existed in the time immediately following the 1968 release of *Humanae Vitae* to the public. A small-scale sociological study published in 1975 in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* suggested that a discrepancy did exist between the official teaching of the Church on birth control and the use of birth control by married female Catholics. The study found that several factors, including age, religiosity, parity to the desired number of children, and socialization into the Church affected one’s use of proscribed methods of birth control. (H. Theodore Groat, et al, “Contraceptive Nonconformity Among Catholics,” 1975. 367-
In 1996, William D’Antonio, James Davidson, Dean Hoge, and Ruth Wallace investigated the use of birth control among Catholic women by analyzing survey data from 1987 and 1993 in *Laity: American and Catholic, Transforming the Church* (1996). Their text explores the hypothesis that the extent to which Catholic women perceive the Church as a moral authority may, in part, determine their use of proscribed methods of birth control. I apply this hypothesis to this project to determine whether, since 1993, Catholic women have maintained similar positions regarding the authority of the Church on various issues, concentrating especially on birth control. For the purposes of this investigation, several central questions may be raised: first, why do some American Catholic women disobey the papal teaching on contraception? That is to say, is the Church’s teaching on contraception authoritative for American Catholic women? Second, what is the range of responses by lay Catholics to Church teaching on the use of birth control and in what ways do these responses differ among successive generations of Catholic women? Finally, what influences have history and mainstream American society had in formulating lay American Catholics’ positions on appropriate methods of birth control?

I suggest that a discrepancy still exists today between the behavior and beliefs of American Catholic women in different generations and the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. By emphasizing generation as the primary variable in my analysis, I have divided the total survey population into age cohorts. While this is an intriguing variable—the differences in cultural and historical events during the time women came of age may have impacted women in varied ways—other variables may also be useful ways to explain differences of American Catholic women’s behaviors and beliefs. For example, the impact of Catholic education in socialization may be measured by separating participants by those who attended parochial elementary school and those who attended public elementary school. Differences among respondents from each group may be, in part, explained by the differences in socialization while in elementary school. However, the changes in Catholic education since Vatican II may complicate such conclusions. I offer the tentative hypothesis that generational differences may contribute to different responses among American Catholic women as one of multiple valid factors that influence American Catholic women’s behaviors and beliefs. Further studies concentrating on other variables may yield additional interesting results.

The responses of lay American Catholic women in the “Cold War” generation, the “Baby Boomer” generation, “Generation X,” and the “Millennium” generation are marked by
differences that can be attributed to influential historical events and cultural trends of the time periods during which females of each generation formulated their world view and ethos. It is possible that the secularization of American society and the increasing influence of popular culture in formulating an individual’s world view have contributed to a rise, particularly among younger generations of Catholic women, in the use of proscribed methods of birth control. However, it is also possible that members of the youngest generation, the Millennium Generation, support and adhere to traditional Catholic teaching on sexual intercourse as a response to the world views and behaviors of members belonging to the generally more liberal “Baby Boomer” generation and “Generation X”. This reversal may be a result of a general conservative trend among Christian youth during the past two decades, particularly among some conservative and fundamentalist Protestants. For instance, abstinence-only programs have been enacted by school systems around the United States and growing numbers of these Protestant youth have taken vows of chastity until marriage. It must be noted that this trend may be minor and have few, if any, long-term implications on Catholic behavior. Additional study on such an issue is needed.

It is important to begin by explaining how “generation” is used in this project. The concept of generation, as put forth by Edmunds and Turner (2002), has four distinct uses: first, generation can be used to represent a continuum of kinship descent. Second, generation can serve as a synonym for a ‘birth cohort,’ meaning a group of people born at approximately the same time; third, generation is used as a synonym for a particular life stage (i.e. youth, motherhood, old age). Finally, a cultural generation marks a particular historical period. (Edmunds, Turner (2002). Generations, Culture, and Society: 6) For the purposes of this project, generation is employed to mean individuals in a birth cohort born during a particular time period who thus experience many of the same historical and cultural circumstances when formulating their worldviews. Strauss and Howe’s Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069 (1991) is useful for its investigation in the construction of multiple generations in America over time.

This project consists of obtaining data from surveys taken by four distinct generations of American women who identify themselves as Roman Catholic, regardless of whether or not they are practicing Catholics. Because I wanted to obtain an understanding of the ways “generation” is popularly viewed, I began searching websites and journals for descriptions of four generations:
the Silent or Cold War generation, the Baby Boomer generation, Generation X, and the Millennium generation (also referred to as Generation Y). The following descriptions are based on popular, “common knowledge” conceptions of these generations; the dates used to define the years of birth for each generation are based on the average response from a number of popular level websites. Group A, the Cold War generation consists of women born between 1926 and 1945. These women entered adulthood from 1945 through 1965. Group B, the Baby Boomers, is comprised of women born from 1946 through 1964, coming of age between 1966 and 1984. Men and women in this generation number approximately seventy-six million and comprise twenty-nine percent of the population. Generation X, Group C, consists of women born between 1965 and 1980, coming of age from 1985 through 2000. Finally Group D, the Millennium generation, consists of women born from 1981 through 2000; however, for this survey only women from this generation who are at least eighteen years old were interviewed. It is important to note that the dates for these generations are generally agreed upon by scholars but discrepancies do exist. (For instance, Strauss and Howe’s dates for each generation’s birth years are slightly different from the dates I have applied in this project. (Strauss, William and Neil Howe (1991). Generations: The History of America’s Future, 1584 to 2069). One website, “Aging Hipsters: The Baby Boomer Generation” (last modified April 2003): http://boomersint.org, last accessed January 2006) was particularly useful for information on the Baby Boomer generation.) I have attempted to use the most widely accepted dates for this project.

One aim of this project is to determine whether, in general, a birth cohort’s attitudes towards contraception and sexual intercourse primarily represent those of either mainstream American culture or the Roman Catholic Church. I propose that, in younger generations, attitudes generally more closely resemble those of mainstream American culture, while in older generations they reveal the perspective of the Roman Church. Further, this thesis suggests that a range of responses to the birth control issue exists for a given generation of women and that these responses are determined, at least in part, by various historical conditions and social and cultural trends in America during the times these women came of age. I argue that the perceived authority of one cultural system compared to another contributes to the way individuals think about certain things. In the case of contraception, I assert that women are influenced by a number of cultural systems, for instance, Catholic, mainstream secular, and various Protestant
cultures; however, the extent to which a woman perceives one cultural system as being more authoritative than another affects the way she formulates a perspective on contraception.

A certain cultural system may seem most authoritative on the use of birth control for a woman because it “rings true” with her own ideas or experiences. It may seem most authoritative because it is a culture in which she is deeply involved and by which she is deeply influenced. Regardless of why one cultural system is most authoritative or influential in formulating a woman’s perspective on birth control (although this question will be explored), the fact remains that one cultural system’s stance on contraception is most authoritative. However, this perceived authority does not mean that other cultural systems hold no authority. In fact, a woman’s perspective on birth control may reflect ideas from several cultural systems. Finally, the effects that authority, historical conditions social/cultural trends have in formulating a woman’s worldview and informing her behaviors will also be explored.

The work of interpretive anthropologist Clifford Geertz provides a possible explanation for the variance in attitudes towards and practice of proscribed methods of birth control by American Catholic females. More specifically, I utilize and extend his definitions of religion, world view and ethos and his concept of symbol systems. Geertz’s ideas about the influence of local knowledge in opposition to the influence of central authority may help explain why a discrepancy exists between American Catholic women and the official teaching of the highest authority of the Roman Catholic Church, the Pope. Geertz provides a useful definition of religion that identifies symbols as the key to transmitting and reinforcing a religion’s world view and ethos:

...a religion is: (1) a system of symbols which acts to (2) establish powerful, pervasive, and long-lasting moods and motivations in men [and women] by (3) formulating conceptions of a general order of existence and (4) clothing these conceptions with such an aura of factuality that (5) the moods and motivations seem uniquely real.


Systems of religion are collections of symbols, material or intangible, which orient humans in the world; the ideas transmitted through symbols possess the authority to seem “really real” precisely because they explain a part of the world in a way that “makes sense” to the individual. Further, “[i]t is this sense of the ‘really real’ upon which the religious perspective rests and which the symbolic activities of religion as a cultural system are devoted to producing,
intensifying, and, so far as possible, rendering inviolable by the discordant revelations of secular experience.” (Geertz (1973): 112)

Geertz identifies symbols as “tangible formations of notions, abstractions from experience fixed in perceptible forms, concrete embodiments of ideas, attitudes, judgments, longing or beliefs.” (Geertz (1973): 91) Stated differently, a symbol is “any object, act, event, quality, or relation which serves as a vehicle for conception—the conception is the symbol’s ‘meaning’…[.]” (Geertz (1973): 91) Religious systems use symbols in this way. For an adherent of a religion, the ideas, attitudes, beliefs, and judgments represented through systems of symbols should suffice to order the world for an individual such that she or he is ‘satisfied’ with the explanation. For example, the Roman Catholic Church considers the Virgin Mary to be a prominent symbol that conveys to lay Catholics the Church’s perceptions of appropriate expressions of femininity and motherhood. Geertz asserts that religious institutions, if the religious perspective has authority for an individual, transmit concepts via religious symbols and practices to the individual; she uses the concepts represented by symbols to explain the events of the world and determine her behaviors. (Geertz (1973): 123)

Aline Kalbian describes this experience similarly in *Sexing the Church* (2005). Kalbian explains that the Church acts as an ordering device for humans: the Church determines the morality of personal and public matters for Catholics. Kalbian draws upon David Little to explain this further as society’s “process of arranging itself in such a way that its institutional structures and its patterns of authority fit into an ultimate frame of meaning that commands the loyalty of its members. (Little 1969, 7).” (Kalbian (2005): 4) The idea that religion is a “process of arrangement and order” that is so pervasive as to seem true is similar to Geertz’s general notion of religion as a cultural system. Both authors assert that religious and cultural institutions provide structures or symbols which interpret the world for their adherents and convey various ideas to individuals. Kalbian suggests that the Church has conveyed ideal notions of femininity to Catholic women through metaphors and images. For example, the Church uses female metaphors to describe the Church as “the bride of Christ.” The Church also uses the image of Mary to express its notions of ideal motherhood and appropriate sexual behavior. However, Kalbian argues, since the Second Vatican Council the Church hierarchy has struggled to enforce such traditional notions. Women interpreted traditional metaphors and images as oppressive and
have criticized these traditional modes of sexual morality. (Kalbian (2005). Sexing the Church: Gender, Power, and Ethics in Contemporary Catholicism: 5-9)

After considering Geertz’s definition of religion, in the course of this study, I find that the Catholic Church is not the only “cultural system” (Geertz (1973): 112) to use symbol systems to explain and reinforce a particular world view—a person’s “picture of the way things in sheer actuality are, their concept of nature, of self, of society”—and ethos—“the tone, character, and quality of their life, its moral and aesthetic style and mood; it is the underlying attitude toward themselves and their world that life reflects.” (Geertz (1973): 127) I extend Geertz’s definition to include other cultural systems, focusing on that of mainstream American culture, clearly an authoritative and pervasive symbol system (that may not be given due respect when represented as the “common-sense” perspective—see Geertz (1973). The Interpretation of Cultures: 111). This extension necessarily requires that cultural ideas of and attitudes about femininity and women’s gender roles are transmitted from mainstream American culture to individuals through symbols and can (and do) have the same impact for American Catholics as do the corresponding symbols of the Roman Catholic Church. Of particular interest for the purposes of this study are the affects that the secular symbols of the 1950s ‘suburban housewife’ (or ‘queen of domesticity’); the ‘liberated woman’ of the late 1960s and 1970s; the ‘working mother’ most visible in American society from the 1970s—but present as early as the 1930s and a co-role for some ‘suburban housewives’ of the 1950s; and the ‘single mom’ of the 1990s have on influencing women’s ideas about birth control and sexual intercourse.

In addition to the fact that American mainstream culture functions similarly to religious systems, this perspective is supplemented by the lived realities of individuals, that is to say, what Geertz calls the “common sense” perspective. While his discussion of this perspective does not equate the veracity that lived experiences have in formulating truths of existence for individuals with the power or longevity of experiences in religious systems, I do think this perspective goes hand-in-hand with mainstream American culture as a symbol system. The religious perspective is not the only type of mindset to exist in a pluralistic society. Of course, multiple religious perspectives will exist in such a heterogeneous society as will scientific, historical, and common-sense perspectives, among others. I argue that individuals also hold a “common-sense” perspective in opposition to the Catholic perspective; this may help explain why Catholic women use—and think one can be a good person and a good Catholic while using—proscribed methods
of birth control. The common sense perspective is characterized by “the pragmatic motive, the wish to act upon that world so as to bend it to one’s practical purposes, to master it, or so far as that proves impossible, to adjust to it” (Geertz, 111). Recall Geertz’s earlier discussion of the “really real” in the religious perspective. I argue that people are drawn to the common-sense perspective for precisely the same reasons: if this perspective is characterized by pragmatic motives, then this perspective seems to explain the world as it really exists to individuals. I do not attempt to argue that an individual must possess one or the other of these multiple perspectives; rather, I think most individuals adhere to different extents—and in different realms of life—to at least some of them.

Geertz’s work on local knowledge may help to further explain this distinction. Drawing upon and modifying his work, we can explain how it is that non-conforming world views and behaviors are adopted by Roman Catholic American women. In his essay “Local Knowledge,” Geertz comments that “…legal facts are made not born, [and] are socially constructed…[.]” (Geertz (1983) Local Knowledge: 173) I use Geertz’s formulation of “law” and “legal facts” to mean the ways things ought to be and that way things actually happen, respectively. I argue that the doctrine of the Roman Catholic Church on birth control and sexual intercourse functions as law for its adherents while American cultural norms pertaining to the same are viewed by Roman Catholics as legal facts. That is to say, Catholics may be familiar with the doctrine of the Church on sexual intercourse and birth control use; they may have been instructed that it is wrong to use artificial birth control and that sexual intercourse is primarily for procreation. However, individuals may be quite unaware of such doctrine and may know instead, either from personal experience or from receiving symbols, that in contemporary America it is generally acceptable to use birth control (especially the pill) and that people engage in sexual intercourse for varied reasons. In either case, Catholic teaching on artificial contraception may not be as compelling as other sources of behavioral norms such as mainstream American culture.

For a Catholic in America then, it may very well be the case that an individual is acting according to the prescriptions of one cultural system to which they belong even though these actions may conflict with the prescriptions of another cultural system. The Catholic Church’s proscription of artificial contraception may not be practical for some Catholic women to implement. As chapter three further illustrates, practical and compelling concerns such as personal maturity, financial status, and protection from disease guide Americans from a variety
of religious traditions, including Catholicism, in their decision to use or refrain from using artificial birth control. In many cases, these practical concerns are more influential on Catholics than Church teaching on artificial contraception. Geertz implicitly supports such a contention in *The Interpretation of Cultures* when he states that, “[i]t is this air of the factual, of describing, after all, the genuinely reasonable way to live which, given the facts of life, is the primary source of such an ethic’s authoritativeness.” (Geertz (1973): 130) While the Catholic Church is still a source of moral authority for American Catholics in some ways, it no longer functions as the expansive, hegemonic cultural system that it once did. How can one explain the difficulties of successfully transmitting religious symbols, specifically Catholic symbols regarding women’s gender identity and the appropriate role of sexuality, formulating a religious perspective to be receptive to these symbols over and above the transmission of similar symbols of mainstream American culture, with the added complication of the common-sense perspective?

One part of the explanation may be found by investigating the extend to which women of particular generations feel integrated into or alienated from the Roman Catholic Church conceived of here as an institution with a commonly agreed upon set of ideas about Catholic identity, although some women may think of the Church as represented by a seemingly unified hierarchy. I suggest, informed by the results of one aforementioned survey (Groat, et al, 1975), that women who feel more alienated from or are indifferent to the Roman Catholic Church are more likely to be influenced by symbols of other culture systems. Further, depending on how pervasive the symbols from American culture are, it is possible that even a woman who does feel integrated into the Church may be influenced by them, to varying degrees.

We can understand the Roman Catholic Church as an institution imbued with sacred authority for its faithful. Institution refers to a grouping of ideas or beliefs that are expressed in various ways. An institution may be formally recognized as such, it may be organized hierarchically, or it may be a collection of commonly agreed upon values, morals, and norms. This necessitates that the doctrines and instructions of the Church, transmitted via symbols, are legitimated by this sacred authority. It would appear then that the central authority of the Church extends downward and outward from the top of the hierarchy to influence individuals’ worldviews. However, we can also view mainstream American culture as an institution with a developed set of ideas for living in the profane world. These rules may be formally stated, as in the case of laws and etiquette books, or they may be transmitted by symbols in the same way that
religious ideas are communicated; either way, they possess authority as a result of reflecting the reality of individuals’ lived experiences. Social norms are also a product of mainstream American culture. While these norms do not have the same authority as formal laws, for many people, they are perceived (consciously or subconsciously) as external influential forces. For a lay Catholic, society’s rules and instructions on how to behave may correspond, but they may also contradict one another. While the Roman Catholic Church seems to have a singular, unchanging, teaching on the appropriate understanding of sexual behavior and the use of contraception, attitudes towards and norms for sexual behavior and the use of birth control have changed over time in mainstream American culture. Further, more than one perspective on what is appropriate regarding sexual behavior and contraception exists at any one time within the larger American cultural matrix. Thus, an individual receives a variety of different, and sometimes contradictory, signals regarding what is appropriate sexual behavior and what are acceptable forms of contraception.

Geertz claims that religious symbols are freely sent and received between mainstream society, a particular religion’s symbols (including ideas, attitudes, behaviors, and norms) and individuals. (Geertz (1973). *The Interpretation of Cultures*: 87-124) It should then be the case that religious ideas are transmitted freely to and from mainstream society, individuals, and religious symbols. Given this free-flowing system of transmission, then, it follows that responses from individuals will generally conform to the beliefs of society at large. Further, ideas commonly transmitted by religious societies will most likely be understood in those terms rather than being reinterpreted by the individual or mainstream society. However, it seems that Geertz’s original formulation works only in a homogeneous society. For a pluralistic society such as America, it fails to explain how a religious individual’s beliefs and actions may contradict the official doctrines of his or her religion. Geertz does not address this issue in his *The Interpretation of Cultures* (1973) and the application of Geertz’s notion of religion as a cultural system applied in this paper is an extension of Geertz’s theory that he may take issue with. However, as indicated elsewhere in this essay, Geertz seems to reify religious symbol systems over non-religious (or, for ease of use, “secular”) cultural symbol systems, for instance, in his discussion of the “common-sense” perspective. (Geertz (1973):111) Such elevation of one symbol system over others may work well in analyzing homogeneous, religiously-based societies. For the purposes of this paper, however, the impact of other cultural symbol systems
on formulating individuals’ world views must be appreciated. Further, in locating other cultural systems as influential symbol systems, I also employ the term “secular” to indicate that the symbols transmitted by such systems are non-religious. I do not attempt to create an opposition between “secular” and “religious” or degrade the authoritativeness of such symbols by labeling them as secular. Rather, it is my intention to call attention to the influence that non-religious symbols do have on individuals.

Varied cultural systems in mainstream society transmit different symbols about appropriate gender constructions and individuals may think these symbols have the same authority and authenticity as religious symbols. The issue is complicated by the fact that, in a pluralistic society such as the United States, the transmission of religious symbols by the Catholic Church (which in turn represent religious ideas about social realities) must contend with the transmission of non-religious cultural system symbols—ideas transmitted in popular culture through many, and varied voices (that is, various subcultures), the loudest of which is mainstream American culture. Thus, the individual’s worldview is not solely reinforced by her particular religious orientation, in this case Roman Catholic; it is also influenced by mainstream American culture and other cultural systems in America. Since America is so multi-vocal, a number of subcultures transmit symbols. The religious individual must then contend with an array of different symbols (both secular and sacred) which in turn reinforce a variety of interpretations of an idea (for example, either that the use of birth control is a practical way to prevent pregnancy or that it is a grave sin). If these voices speak more clearly to an American Catholic female than does the voice of the Catholic Church, it is likely that she will be influenced by American culture. The role of the individual in reinforcing and retransmitting ideas may be diminished, or it may also be the case that an individual has formed a hybrid worldview, incorporating certain elements from a variety of symbols received. In either case, multiple, and often conflicting, symbols are sent to and received by the individual. Our next task is to investigate the varied, and at times congruent, symbols of women’s gender identity in the Catholic Church and mainstream American culture in the twentieth century. A brief review of major historical events and trends in thinking in the American Church will reveal interesting insights into the changing relationship of the Church to American culture.
American Catholicism: Major Events

Catholics were a scattered minority in colonial America, living in a strange new world where they were looked upon by the majority Protestants (of various denominations) with suspicion and skepticism. Catholics in the fledgling post-revolution United States still faced such sentiments; however, the numbers of Catholics began to increase exponentially beginning in the late 1830s and through the 1840s. (Morris (1997). American Catholics: viii) Waves of immigrants from Ireland flocked to the United States to avoid almost certain death from starvation or exposure in their native land as a result of the great potato famine. The sheer power of this influx of Catholics is evidenced by the construction of St. Patrick’s Cathedral in midtown Manhattan which began in 1858 and was eventually dedicated in May 1879. (Morris (1997): 4-5) While Catholics certainly represented all economic classes, a disproportionate number of working-class Catholics, mainly Irish, immigrated to the city during this time. Due to public transportation problems and in order to live in close proximity to work, many of these brick layers, hod carriers and teamsters were forced to call tenements home. And, “[u]nable to spend money on housing, the decent working Irish gave generously to the Church [for the building of St. Patrick’s], in sums that Protestants marveled at.” (Morris (1997): 8) However, much like the history of the Catholic Church in America, the building of St. Patrick’s cathedral was marked by a series of ‘speedbumps’ and ‘detours’; in fact, the final dedication of the finished St. Patrick’s Cathedral did not take place until 50 years after its cornerstone was laid. (Morris (1997): 3-25) During this time Catholics lived separate from mainstream American culture. While Catholics were internally divided by language lines—for instance, those who spoke English and those who did not—as a religious group, they were clearly identifiable through their various ritual events and uniquely Catholic behaviors.

Catholics continued to move west and forge for themselves new lives in the United States and, for the most part, did not participate in major American cultural activity. As the nineteenth century moved on, however, immigration levels began to soar in America. Following the Civil War, immigrants from Germany, Italy, and Eastern Europe flooded major cities—especially New York—in record numbers and, by 1900, helped make Catholicism the single largest religious denomination in America. It was during this time when the American Catholic Church began to consider its structure in the United States and its relationship with the Protestant-dominated mainstream culture. Catholic laity and clergy alike were gravely concerned with the nature of
education in the public school system. Government authorities had not yet enforced secular education in public schools and therefore schools were dominated by Protestant religious practices. As a result, the Third Plenary Council of Boston determined in 1884 to create a system of parish schools, both primary and secondary, and decided to appeal to Rome to found a Catholic University in the United States. Women religious were assigned the daunting task of setting up and maintaining these Catholic schools, which they successfully accomplished even at half the annual wage earned by male clergy. Also in 1884, Cardinal Gibbons and others took measures to ensure protection of the large Knights of Labor union by appealing to the papacy not to condemn the presently dwindling organization in the United States. (Morris (1997): 86-87) Their success in this measure ensured future generations of American Catholics of the Church’s official support of such labor unions. These and other developments in American Catholicism laid the groundwork for further ghettoization of Catholics against (then largely Protestant) mainstream American culture and the creation of a uniquely Catholic subculture.

As the twentieth century dawned on America, second and third generation Catholics became increasingly involved in the country’s public sphere. Catholics “found resources to meet social change in America and… made up new ways to meet the new situations of public life in an industrial world.” (Marty (1995). A Short History of American Catholicism: 143) Catholics, laity and clergy included, were concerned with such issues as child labor and living wages for industrial and hard laborers. Catholics, primarily Irish, also showed their support for the temperance movement and endeavored to expose the corruption of the alcohol industry. American Catholics were also focused on the family, following the general mood of mainstream culture in asserting that woman’s place was the home, and supported and reinforced traditional gender roles. Even as Catholics and Protestants converged on these matters, the more than twenty million Catholics in the United States were viewed with suspicion by a majority of non-Catholic Americans.

As tensions in Europe exploded with the start of World War I, this ‘normal’ social order was disrupted and Catholics were provided with the opportunity to assert their “Americanness”. Catholic troops numbered one million; the total number of U.S. troops stood at five million. With such a significant number of Catholics supporting the war effort abroad, Catholic women in the United States showed their support for the war by temporarily leaving their domestic lives and assuming industrial positions formerly held by males. With the declaration of Armistice in
1918, women returned “...from the dirty, demeaning work [of the outside world] back to the sane and sanitary setting of the home.” (Marty (1995): 155) With such support from American Catholics, would anti-Catholic attitudes of pre-war times persist?

American Catholics greeted post-World War I America with an air of trepidation, as anti-Catholic sentiment persisted in marginalizing the American Catholic community. As Charles Morris states, “The mood of thinking Catholics in the 1920s and 1930s was an awkward compound of swelling confidence and bitter grievance.” (Morris (1997): 158) An “American Catholic Church” was clearly emerging in the United States and parishes were flourishing but American Catholics were still viewed as “outsiders” by nativist Protestants. (Morris (1997): 133-135) Although numbers of Catholics by the 1920s reached approximately twenty million, representing almost a fifth of America’s population by 1930, anti-Catholic nativism still persisted. With such an unwelcome atmosphere for Catholics during this era, the American Church remained closed unto itself, opening its arms to parishioners through parishes and schools, and hospitals, orphanages, and asylums.

Anti-Catholic attitude is particularly well illustrated in the defeat of the Democratic candidate for president in 1928, Catholic layperson Al Smith. Protestant criticism of Smith, though well-deflected by Smith, did nothing to prevent the paranoia of members of the Protestant population who thought that Smith would seek to turn the United States of America into a Catholic nation, imposing Catholic doctrine in legislation. Smith enlisted the aid of Fr. Francis Duffy, a New York pastor to help him construct a response to such criticism. (Morris (1997): 133; 159) Emphasizing his four terms as governor of New York and the multiple oaths he had taken to uphold the constitution, Smith explained that he had never experienced conflict between his religious beliefs and corresponding duties and his political office. Although it has been suggested that Smith never had a serious chance to win the 1928 presidential election, “[t]he outcome of the Smith campaign greatly reinforced the Catholic separatist impulse, as did the perceived inequities of the educational system, the antireligiosity of mainstream secular culture, the commercial glorification of sin and sexual permissiveness. Without wavering in their patriotism or hypernationalism, Catholics executed a remarkable emotional withdrawal from secular America.” (Morris (1997): 160)

Although Catholics had lived together for over a century in America, it was during the first part of the twentieth century that the Catholic “ghetto” culture came of age. This was the
time of “cradle-to-grave Catholicism:” Catholics were born into the Church, grew up attending parish schools, married other Catholics, and spent their free time in Catholic society meetings, attending Catholic socials or watching Catholic-approved movies. The American Church hierarchy sought to create Catholic organizations to parallel those found in the mainstream Protestant culture. Men’s and women’s societies, youth organizations, and a number of groups concentrating on social issues were founded to allow Catholics the same social opportunities as non-Catholics but without having to leave the community to which they belonged. When Catholics involved themselves in mainstream culture, they were primarily concerned with social welfare and upholding perceived (Catholic) Christian morals. During this time, the Roman hierarchy was also negotiating its identity in the 20th century.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Roman Church hierarchy found itself dealing with a variety of issues: how to manage an increasingly large body of lay faithful in America; the ‘problem’ of Modernism (emerging in Germany and increasingly attractive to some American Catholic intellectuals); dealing with advances in science, such as the theory of evolution and new forms of birth control; and the secularization of ‘popular culture’ (itself largely a twentieth century construct), both in Europe and America. Pope Pius XI reaffirmed the Church hierarchy’s traditional teaching on the proper role of sexual intercourse to the Catholic worldview in his 1931 papal encyclical Casti Connubii, “On Christian Marriage”. Pius XI asserted that, in accordance with natural law, “the conjugal act is destined primarily by nature for the begetting of children.” (Pope Pius XI, Casti Connubii, 12/31/1930: www.vatican.va) Of course, it may be mere coincidence that the Anglican Church made acceptable the use of the progesterone pill the same year but, whatever the case, Pius XI condemned the use of any form of birth control and claimed that any deliberate act to prevent the possibility of birth was a “sin against nature” and “shameful and intrinsically vicious.” (Pope Pius XI (1930): Casti Connubii) Even as the world seemed to change rapidly, the Church hierarchy maintained its traditional position on the role of sexual intercourse and its perceived primary, or only, end: procreation.

It was during this era that the Church came into its own as a religious institution in the United States. As Morris articulates, the Church’s members “shared an outlook on the world that was definably ‘American Catholic’—disciplined, rule-bound, loyal to church and country, unrebellious, but upwardly mobile and achievement-oriented.” (Morris (19997): 133) As the 1930s drew to a close and the 1940s began, the United States began to invest itself in what has
later been called “the last good war”—World War II. Although the papacy remained quiet regarding the actions of the Nazi regime in Germany (Pius XI did not make an official declaration condemning the actions of the Nazis until 1945), American Catholic males entered the war with typical Catholic patriotism. World War II provided yet another opportunity for American Catholics to assert their “Americanness” by becoming actively involved in and supporting the national war effort. Again, Catholic females temporarily stepped outside their traditional role as wife and mother and joined other American women in the workforce, filling in the gaps in the labor force caused by the mobilization of males into the armed forces. The image of “Rosie the Riveter” comes to mind as a typical representation of women during this time: tough enough to pick up the slack in labor, but still feminine enough to wear red lipstick while doing so.

Following World War II, many Americans, Catholics included, moved from large urban centers to suburban areas. The Church built record numbers of new parishes and schools, especially in the west, to help accommodate the exodus of young Catholic Americans to the suburbs. This large-scale expansion to new residential areas was accompanied by a reaffirmation of women’s sphere as the home and her duties as that of wife and mother. While some women remained single and worked outside the home, for many Catholics this alternative to marriage and motherhood seemed unnatural or, at the very least, relegated to those women who were too dull, ugly, or intelligent to be married. (from Hronek, Henrietta, “The Single Woman: Her Needs” in Kane et al (2001) Gender Identities in American Catholicism: 73-75) Men were expected to provide the family’s income and protect the wife and children. Women were duly expected to support their husbands with undying docility and patience (two virtues viewed by the Catholic Church as “jewels of womanhood”). (from Rev. F.X. Lasance, “Rest Content with the Position God has Ordained” in Kane et al (2001): 57-58) College attendance increased dramatically following the end of World War II, in large part because of the GI Bill, and Catholic males took full advantage of this opportunity. Thus began the “Golden Age” of American Catholicism, culminating in the election of Catholic John F. Kennedy for president in 1960. As the Catholic ghetto culture characteristic of the earlier decades of the twentieth century dwindled, some lay and ordained Catholics increasingly embraced the norms and behaviors of contemporary, secular culture.
During this time of plenty in America, many Catholics continued the tradition of large Catholic families; however, another strand of thought was developing among Catholics in America, perhaps influenced by the practices of other Americans. A large number of Catholics began moving away from traditional Catholic notions of family and adopted the mainstream cultural norm of a smaller family (the stereotypical “American Dream” of 2.5 kids, house, and family dog). This movement, as well as the financial strain of raising and educating in Catholic schools greater numbers of children, made the Catholic norm of the large family difficult to maintain and contributed to the discussion over whether or not birth control use among married American Catholics was an acceptable option. Pope Pius XII’s 1951 statement on the acceptable use of the rhythm method in grave circumstances offered couples one option with which to control the number of births in their family. However, the rhythm method was found by many couples to be ineffective and thus did not solve the problem. The FDA approval of a synthetic progesterone oral contraceptive in 1960 seemed, for many Catholics and Americans at large, to be the solution to the problem of regulating births (Shannon, *The Lively Debate*, 1970: 25).

Unlike other prophylactics, such as condoms (which for a long time had been condemned by the Catholic Church), “the pill” did not prevent ejaculation of sperm into the vagina, which completed the sexual act according to the Church. Whereas the condom provided a physiological barrier to completion of the sexual act, the progesterone pill used hormones (found naturally in the female body) to create an atmosphere in the uterus which rendered conception impossible despite ejaculation. Thus, the pill functioned on a similar premise to that of the rhythm method; the major difference between the two methods of birth control is that the pill artificially (and temporarily) creates the same infertile conditions in the uterus that those who practice the rhythm method wait to occur naturally in the woman’s body every month.¹ In light of these issues, many Roman Catholics asked the question: is birth control, particularly the progesterone oral contraceptive, a justifiable option for Catholic couples experiencing difficulties raising large families?

These developments constituted the first phase of the debate over artificial birth control in the Catholic Church. The second phase of the debate focused on addressing two fundamental

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¹ John Noonan deftly makes this argument in *The Church and Contraception: The Issues at Stake* (1967). The most infertile time is the period after the end of a menstruation cycle but before ovulation in the next cycle. If a woman has a consistent menstrual cycle, this time is not difficult to determine. However, if a woman’s cycle is erratic, even the most careful monitoring of body temperature and counting of days may be futile. The pill has a success rating of as high as 99% if used correctly; the rhythm method can boast no such consistent results.
questions: first, “was contraception intrinsically evil?,” and second, “was it possible for the Church to change Her teaching on contraception?.” (Shannon (1970): 88-89) These questions were to be investigated by the Papal Commission on Birth Control, first convened by Pope John XXIII in the fall of 1963. The original group, consisting of six members, was enlarged first to twelve and finally to fifty-eight members, including three married couples and five lay females. (Shannon (1970): 78) This was a significant move, for the commission was initially comprised exclusively of male clergy and theologians; the final committee represented international, including American, male and female voices from a variety of professions, such as psychology, sociology, economics, and medicine. (Shannon (1970): 78) Over the course of two sessions, the commission discussed the aforementioned issues and in May 1966, two working papers expressed the views of the “conservative minority” and the “liberal majority.” The first paper, supported by four theologians, reaffirmed the teaching of Casti Connubii, asserting that contraception was intrinsically evil and to approve the use of contraception would “undermine the teaching authority of the Church.” (Shannon (1970): 92) The majority paper, on the other hand, came to the conclusion that “marriage, but not necessarily every conjugal act, must be open to life” because even acts that prevent conception (such as using birth control) “are ordered to the expression of a couple’s union in love.” (Shannon (1970): 94) Thus, all but four persons on the Papal Commission found the use of birth control as a temporary means of regulating birth to be acceptable.

Pat and Patty Crowley, two members of the commission and founders of the Christian Family Movement, reflected the attitudes of many lay Catholics in their statement to the Papal Commission. Patty Crowley emphasized that Catholic couples thought the rhythm method seemed to contradict the natural impulses of husband and wife to engage in sexual intercourse; “…almost without exception…” Catholic couples reported “…a bad psychological effect in the use of rhythm.” (from McClory, Robert, “The Papal Commission and Women on the Rhythm Method of Birth Control”, in Kane et al (2001): 194) She implored the Commission to “…redefine the moral imperatives of fertility regulation with a view of bringing them into conformity with our new and improved understanding of men and women in today’s world.” (McClory, in Kane et al (2001): 196)

The official report of the commission, written by six men of the theological section, echoed the comments of the liberal majority. The Papal Commission on Birth Control concluded
that sufficient reason existed to modify the Church’s official teaching on birth control, as expressed in *Casti Connubii*. Added support was given to this position by the Lay Congress, a group of Catholic lay faithful, who implored the Pope to allow the temporary use of birth control as a means to ensure responsible parenthood. Although this was the official report of the commission, several days prior to its receipt by Pope Paul VI, the minority paper was (falsely?) presented as the official document of the commission by Cardinal Alfredo Ottaviani, longtime friend of the pope. (Hebblethwaite, Peter (1993) *Paul VI: The First Modern Pope*)

More than two years after the end of Vatican II, in late July 1968, *Humanae Vitae* was released. While the tone of this document was markedly different from *Casti Connubii*, sympathetic rather than stern, the conclusion was the same: “each and every marital act must of necessity retain its intrinsic relationship to the procreation of human life,” and that “any action which…is specifically intended to prevent procreation” is to be condemned. (Pope Paul VI, *Humanae Vitae*, 7/25/1968: www.vatican.va, emphasis added) While some American lay Catholics fully supported the papal document, many adamantly opposed it, asserting that the psychological importance of marital intimacy was underappreciated, that the rhythm method was too ineffective to provide an alternative to other methods of birth control, and that socio-economic factors of contemporary society, different from those of the late 1920s, were not sufficiently considered as legitimate reasons for using artificial forms of birth control.

*Humanae Vitae* was just one in a series of documents following the period in the Catholic Church known as Vatican II. Pope John XXIII had originally convened the Second Vatican council with the intention of reinvestigating current strands of thought in the Church and bringing the church into the modern world. “When the council ended in December 1965, it had charted a new course for Roman Catholicism. Breaking with a four-hundred-year tradition, it abandoned its defensive posture toward modern society and sought engagement with the world.” (Dolan, J.P (2002) *In Search of an American Catholicism*: 193) The impact of Vatican II on the Catholic Church at large and in the American Church was great. While the hierarchy did enact substantial changes in the Catholic mass and encouraged more active involvement in the Church on the part of laity, it was the lack of change in *Humanae Vitae* that enraged many of the same Americans who supported the other innovations of the Second Vatican Council. In various responses to Vatican II, priests and laity made their dissent to the Pope’s position well-known, and a number of clergy and women religious officially left the Catholic Church, which
contributed to a growing shortage of priests and women religious that has not rebounded since. At least in America, the coincidence of Vatican II with the social turmoil of the 1960s helped to create a crisis of confidence for American laity regarding the authority of Church leaders. Most pointedly, the women’s liberation movement, accompanied by the establishment of the National Organization for Women in 1966 and the emergence of other women’s rights groups, imbued many American women with a sense of ownership over their bodies and their capabilities for achievement outside motherhood. With mainstream secular norms changing and organizations like NOW professing such ideas, it is easy to imagine a Catholic female being dubious of the injunctions placed on birth control by the celibate male Church hierarchy.

As the twentieth century continued, the Catholic Church in America experienced a time of pronounced change. In response to the documents of Vatican II, most specifically *Lumen Gentium*, “a more social and biblical idea of church emerged that described the church as the people of God. Such a description gave much greater attention to the role of the laity in the church and emphasized their responsibility for the welfare of the church.” (Dolan (2002): 205) The democratization of the American Church was represented most visibly at the parish level. Indeed, the new code of Canon Law (1983) “recommended that pastoral councils be established in the parish.” (Dolan (2002): 205) Many Catholic lay faithful saw this development as positive; however, other self-identified Catholics’ experiences of the church differed greatly. By the late 1990s, approximately twenty million people identified themselves as Catholic but did not affiliate with any particular parish. (James D. Davidson, et al (1997). *The Search for Common Ground*: 195)

While Catholic laity became increasingly involved in the Catholic Church, a number of negative issues left the Church in a period of crisis at century’s end. The continuing struggle with the authority of priests, bishops, and the pope in America has been enforced by a series of scandals in the church, specifically allegations of sexual abuse of young people by a number of priests. Parishes are experiencing financial difficulty around the country, and the lack of priests to administer to these parishes has forced some to close their doors. While the priest shortage in the United States has opened the door for greater positions of authority on the part of laity and women religious in the form of pastoral administrators, a permanent solution has yet to be found. In 1994, Pope John Paul II prohibited open discussion on the controversial issue of female ordination and the possibility that married priests may be allowed in the church is still a matter of
debate. The Church in America today may best be described as eclectic: there are nearly as many opinions on issues in the Church as there are Catholics to hold them.

Symbol Systems and the Construction of Female Gender Identity

Using the theory of Clifford Geertz we have seen that, in a pluralistic society like the United States, multiple systems of symbols transmit a variety of images and ideas about women and what is perceived in the particular cultural system to be the appropriate role of women in America. Both the Catholic Church and Protestant mainstream culture—and later, secular mainstream American culture—have constructed a number of symbols that are worth investigating. It is important to note that several symbols of female identity are the same in both Catholic and Protestant mainstream culture. Until the vast secularization of mainstream American culture, these two religious systems held many similar ideas, but also diverged in several areas, about the appropriate expression of femininity. However, following the secularization of the largely Protestant-influenced culture, a new set of symbols regarding the acceptable roles for women to use in constructing their identities emerged. It is at this point that images of women in secular mainstream culture begin to diverge from those symbols of women put forth by the Catholic Church. It is beyond the scope of this project to undertake an exhaustive investigation into every symbol of women transmitted from American cultural systems. However, by investigating several of the primary/most prominent symbols regarding women and female attributes sent from these institutions (whether a formal institution like the Church or a social “institution” like mainstream American culture), a better understanding may be attained of the influences experienced by some women as they constructed their identity and attempted to define themselves during the time they came of age.

Also, at this point, it is worth noting some of the major cultural and historical events that took place in America during the time women of the Cold War generation, the Baby Boomer generation, Generation X, and the Millennium generation were growing up to provide context for the images of women transmitted during these times. Mary’s roles as virgin and mother, which serve as primary symbols of womanhood in the Catholic Church are explored. Prominent symbols of both the Church and Protestant culture, that of the wife and mother (as one author sarcastically called it, “the Happy Little Housewife”), are discussed. Finally, conflicting images of female identities constructed in secular American culture—that contradict the ideal images of
women, the pure virgin and self-sacrificing mother, transmitted by the Catholic Church—are investigated.

Various historical, cultural, and social circumstances in America during the time women of several generations grew up and came of age certainly had an effect on the way these women viewed themselves and the world around them and, in all likelihood, contributed to changing images of women transmitted by mainstream American culture. The following cultural, legal, social, political and economic factors may not have influenced every individual in the same way or to the same extent, but these major events happened during the time period in which the Cold War generation, the Baby Boomer generation, Generation X, and the Millennium Generation came of age and provide a context in which to understand the types of ideas and behaviors typical of each generation. Further demographic data about these generations is discussed in chapter two.

The Cold War generation experienced the end of World War II, a conflict in Korea, a Communism scare, and the McCarthy trials of the early fifties. The Cold War was beginning and more men and women from this generation attended college than did preceding generations of young people. They welcomed television into their homes and witnessed a major development in birth control, the FDA approval of the progesterone oral contraceptive (1960). American culture was changing as Baby Boomers came of age, evidenced by the Supreme Court approval of contraception for healthy women in the 1965 decision, *Griswold v. Connecticut*. Baby Boomers perceived a world very different from that of their parents. The civil rights and women’s liberation movements, concerns first addressed by the Cold War generation, caught the attention of many Baby Boomers. The conflict in Vietnam was accompanied by institution of a military draft. White House scandals and the assassinations of John F. Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King Jr. disillusioned many. Widespread experimentation with illegal substances and sexual liberation movements characterize the types of questions raised about conventional values. The youngest in this generation witnessed the spread of what was then a wholly mysterious and frightening virus, HIV/AIDS, which most certainly influenced how this generation thought about sexual practices. *Roe v. Wade* was a significant court case of 1973 that legalized abortion in the first and second trimesters. While seen by many as a step forward in women’s rights, a significant number of Americans disagreed with such a decision and pointed towards the increasing secularization of American culture.
The increasing numbers of AIDS infections worldwide had reached epidemic proportions by the time Generation Xers entered the adult world. This generation was brought up on cable television, including MTV (1981), and became the first generation of children to play video games. The Reagan administration, the end of the Cold War, and the reunification of Germany were significant events of the 1980s. Innovations in computer technology introduced the internet while medical advances brought forth new kinds of birth control; the number of different types of progesterone oral contraceptive available on the market reached approximately forty different brands. The Millennium generation is the first cohort to grow up regularly using the internet. Children in this generation are less interested in political and social causes than they are with new technology and popular culture. Children typically have their own computer and cell phone and often instruct their parents on how to “surf the web.” An object of interest for Americans since the “advent of mass media in the 1920s,” Millennium generation children are particularly fascinated with the pervasive cult of the celebrity and often look to popular figures as models on which to base their own identities. This generation experienced the Gulf War in the early nineties, and is growing up during the present conflict in Iraq. Interestingly, even as this generation of children has grown up in a secular culture, many are more inclined to adopt the views of their parents rather than those of secular American culture. What images of femininity and female roles have influenced the ways women of these different generations perceive themselves?

The Catholic Church has long used the figure of Mary (traditionally believed to be the virgin mother of Jesus) as a means to convey to women the appropriate roles they have to fill, the types of personalities they ought to construct, and the realms of life over which they have dominion. The tradition of using Marian images is a long one; Mary as exemplary virgin and mother have remained, for well over a thousand years, the primary images of woman in the Catholic Church. As Marina Warner observes, “Mary has always been the paragon of virginity. …There has been little deviance from this theme over the centuries.” (Warner, Marina (1976), Alone of All Her Sex: 68) What are the components of this symbol and what implications does this symbol have for Catholic females in constructing their identities?

Mary the virgin and mother are two interrelated symbols. “…[S]ince the sixth century, when the marvelous Akathistos hymn hailed her as the one creature in whom all opposites are reconciled, her virgin motherhood has been the chief sign of her supernatural nature.” (Warner
Catholic tradition on the virginity of Mary asserts that Mary was divinely impregnated and gave birth miraculously, without labor pains or tearing the hymen. The paradoxical nature of Mary’s divine accomplishments have had important ramifications for the ways in which the Church has constructed and transmitted ideas about Mary and the ways in which women have viewed themselves and their duties. Warner contends that the myth of the Virgin Mother “…establishes the child as the destiny of women,” but Mary “…escape[d] the sexual intercourse necessary for all other women to fulfill this destiny.” (Warner (1976): 336) This puts women in an impossible position of inevitable failure: women cannot be both virgin and mother. Women are then forced to make the choice to remain chaste and thus pure but without fulfilling the role of motherhood; or embrace that role at the cost of sacrificing her purity.

Even as this paradox has been recognized, the Church hierarchy still perpetuates this image. In fact, Vatican II published an authorized prayer book in 1964 that includes a section titled, “we promise to imitate her” and contains a prayer: “Most blessed Virgin Mary…your life of faith and love and perfect unity with Christ was planned by God to show us clearly what our lives should be…you are the outstanding model of motherhood and virginity.” (Warner (1976): 68) Mary became synonymous in the Catholic Church with the ‘domestic’ virtues of purity, meekness, patience, loyalty, obedience, and love; in short, she was all that a Catholic woman could hope to be, and hoped to attain, through the institution of motherhood. To be a good Catholic girl meant protecting one’s virginity with all one’s might; being a good Catholic woman meant sacrificing one’s virginity in order to become an ideal mother: patient in all affairs, devoted to husband and children, gratified in the daily duties of housework that kept the family home functional. The Catholic hierarchy disseminated such images in a variety of ways: Catholic catechism, pamphlets (such as the one described above), and Catholic education served to enforce such images.

The image of Mary as “queen of domesticity” or ideal mother, reigned supreme in Catholic thinking from the 19th to mid-20th centuries in America. Several documents written by Catholics highlight this emphasis and reveal particularly gendered ideas about virtue. For instance, Cardinal O’Connell lamented in 1934 that “pagan” principles had replaced Christian virtues “as rules to guide woman’s conduct.” (William O’Connell, “On the Meaning of Mary” in Kane et al (2001): 83-84) No longer conveying “meekness, gentleness, and love,” women
vocalized their ire toward housework and daughters resisted parental control, craving “pleasure and excitement outside the home.” (O’Connell in Kane et al (2001): 83) O’Connell insisted that, to remedy this situation, Catholic women must heed “the lessons taught by the Holy Family in their lowly and lovely home at Nazareth. A chaste, gentle, and virtuous womanhood…must be society’s protection; …women of every rank and condition [must] cultivate the womanly virtues of Christianity’s model woman—the virtues that shone in the Virgin Mary’s life.” (O’Connell in Kane et al (2001): 84) Catholic women are responsible for maintaining a moral society, and correcting the present corruptness of society, through emulating Mary’s “chaste, gentle, and virtuous womanhood.”

Mary was idealized as the example *par excellence* of housewives in J.G. Shaw’s 1952 poem, “Our Lady of the Broom.” Maintaining cleanliness and order in a home was portrayed as the uniquely feminine way of expressing Christian virtue: “You cooked, cleaned, washed and mended[,] [s]crubbed the kitchen floor, [t]eaching a world the woman’s way [t]o worship and adore.” (J.G. Shaw, “Our Lady of the Broom” in Kane et al (2001): 8-9, emphasis added) Shaw intimates that the proper place for Catholic Christian women is the home, because Mary was a housewife: “For you who rule the angels [b]uilt up our legacy [b]y living a life of little things [t]hat we do every day.” (Shaw, in Kane et al (2001); 8) Shaw’s poem further characterizes Mary as the ideal housewife: “How beautifully you taught us [w]here all perfection lies [b]y seeing all salvation in [t]he work before your eyes.” (Shaw, in Kane et al (2001): 8) “Our Lady of the Broom” was “the most requested reprint from *Integrity* magazine” (Kane et al (2001): 8)—it justified the notion of women’s place as the home by making Mary, Virgin “Mother of God,” the ideal housewife and even sanctifying (or at least dignifying) the role of wife and stay-at-home mother, thus reinforcing domestic ideology (“the cult of womanhood”); perhaps women in the early 1950s thought their jobs, and maybe themselves, could be dignified (or sanctified) because of their relationship to Mary as “queen of domesticity.”

The Victorian-era cultural vision of the proper role of women was similar to the Catholic idea of motherhood: women’s sphere was the home, and her primary duty was to raise God-fearing, traditionally-gendered children. “For both Catholics and Protestants the appropriation of this [middle-class] domestic value system was one way to adapt to the emerging modern society. The family became the bulwark against the vices of modernity.” (Dolan, J.P (2002), *In Search of an American Catholicism*: 88) However, in mainstream American culture, primarily among
upper-middle class white women, a second strand of thinking emerged during the progressive era, one that challenged the traditional image of woman as a creature destined for motherhood.

The New Woman exuded an “enhanced sense of self, gender and mission. [She was] vigorous and energetic…” (Woloch, Nancy (1994), Women and the American Experience, 2nd ed.: 269) Women of this sort, exemplified by Jane Addams, were more likely to remain unmarried, especially if they attended college or sought a profession. For many of these upper-middle class women, attending college was a major achievement, even if they were unable to get a job in their chosen fields (or, if by virtue of being female, they were forced to take courses specifically geared towards the ‘feminine constitution’, such as domestic science). However, these women still gave up their careers and lives outside the home if they did get married, in order to keep up with increasing standards of housekeeping and child rearing. In doing so, they reinforced the dominant perspective of the time, characterized by the notions of gender complimentarity and separate spheres (although these women had fewer children than their mothers and grandmothers). (Woloch (1994): 270) Most importantly, these women challenged the status quo in important ways. By involving themselves in clubs, societies, church groups and reform movements, women bonded with each other and asserted their influence on male law-making figures on such issues as child labor, women’s right to vote, and prohibition of alcohol.

As noted above, the fertility rate among native-born, white middle-class American women decreased. This was accompanied by a change in notions of family and marriage, primarily, that marriages ought to be perceived as companionate, with couples sharing affection for each other. Accompanying these changed ideas about marriage was a changed attitude toward female sexuality. Women used sexual relations as a means to assert their power and autonomy in marriage. No longer solely the instrument of her husband’s desires, by abstaining from sexual intercourse with her husband, a woman was able exert influence over her husband. (Woloch (1994): 272) In addition to this assertion of control, the divorce rate more than tripled from 1880 to 1910. Although the majority of women during this time still adhered to the traditional model of mother and homemaker, the New Women of the progressive era did much to expand the role of women into the workforce, even if women were limited to traditionally “feminine” jobs such as librarians, settlement workers, and teachers. (Woloch (1994): 284-85) These professions allowed women to extend their sphere beyond the home, but maintained the
homelike atmosphere to which women were so inclined, reinforcing the idea of gender complimentarity and a “feminine constitution.”

The first decade of the twentieth century witnessed an increase in the number of women in the workforce; for instance, in 1910 women constituted six percent of the medical profession (although this number began to decline in the years following). (Woloch (1994): 284) The lack of males during World War I allowed women multiple opportunities for employment… temporarily. After the armistice in 1918, men resumed their positions as streetcar operators, railroad workers, and police officers, forcing women back into the home. Women also found employment in the growing field of social welfare, primarily by working or residing at settlement houses. The expanding field of domestic sciences changed the way women perceived themselves as homemakers, wives, and mothers. While the physical tasks of managing a home decreased, due to an influx of new products like pre-manufactured clothing and canned food, some women became frustrated with their new role. “Educated motherhood” meant running the house like a “trained executive”: professionals and women’s groups encouraged this by publishing lists of necessary questions self-critical homemakers must ask of themselves, raising the best children possible by vigilantly fighting germs in the house and maintaining detailed lists of products and materials needed to keep the house running efficiently (including lists of birthdays, interesting quotations, and new products to hit the consumer market). (Woloch (1994): 294-96) It was a time of transition for mothers, as their duties changed from producing to consuming goods and services.

As Margaret Sanger worked illegally to distribute contraception literature and devices in the second decade of the twentieth century, young American women continued to negotiate their identities in a changing world. Women gained the right to vote in 1920, while the image of the ideal mother keeping a perfect home was perpetuated as the major vocation for women. In the 1920s, though, the perfect housewife was both an ideal companion and informed consumer. However, the ‘modern housewife’ was not the only image of women to confront females in the 1920s. Flappers were a popular New Woman of the 1920s, pushing a new morality characterized by a concentration on self-fulfillment; a focus on private, rather than public, life; and a provocative attitude. These women were representative of a shift in middle-class sexual mores: sex was viewed as central to life—engaging in it kept an individual healthy; use of artificial birth control, primarily the diaphragm (pessary); and shifting from home visits by the
opposite sex to unsupervised, male-initiated dating. The ‘campus coed’—whose primary reason for attending college was to meet a husband—and the business/professional woman—who worked to balance marriage and career—were additional prominent images of women in the “Roaring Twenties.” (Woloch (1994): 382-388) The feminist of the progressive era fell out of popularity as the decade progressed, and mass media—primarily film, radio, and magazines—held up the flapper, campus coed and, most prominently, the married career woman as ideal images of women during the era.

Although women’s desire to be involved in politics waned by the end of the 1920s, the desire for economic independence prompted American women to seek jobs outside the home. Of course, women’s employment was still limited to those spheres which were deemed suitable, such as teachers, nurses, social workers, and secretaries. Even as women’s employment gradually became more acceptable, among Catholic circles the idea persisted that outside employment was less of a vocation than motherhood and, thus, was relegated to single women unable to find a husband. Catholics, fearing that the secularization of society would disintegrate the family unit, became a major force in promoting the “traditional domestic ideal” to the rest of the American public, beginning in the 1930s. (Dolan (2002): 174) As the Depression maintained poor economic conditions in America, women were exhorted by the press to remain in the home, leaving remaining jobs for male ‘breadwinners.’ Interestingly, even though general public sentiment discouraged wage-earning women, more women, including married women, entered the workforce during this time, although they were still limited to employment in ‘women’s fields.’ According to Woloch, “…the depression caused an erosion of feminist rhetoric and thought, one that would long outlive the 1930s.” (Woloch (1994): 441) In fact, the trends of the 1920s were reversed as thrifty homemakers who could “make ends meet” became popular, canning their own food and sewing clothes. (Woloch (1994): 441-442) One highlight of the decade, at least for supporters of birth control, was a 1936 federal court decision that allowed doctors to legally distribute contraceptive information and devices.

During the second World War, more women, single and married, entered the workforce than in any other time in history (approximately six million in America); however, these women were not intended to become a permanent fixture in the workforce. Rather, following World War II, a resurgence in the ideal of domesticity prompted many women to stay at home and run the house. The return to this domestic ideology also led to a restructuring of marriage: “[n]ot only
had the companionate model of marriage waned, but men sought spouses who had less education than they did and were less qualified to make decisions.” (Woloch (1994): 471) Even as women suffered in their limited roles as mother and wife, dealing with this suffering was elevated by the clergy and hierarchy of the Catholic Church as a virtue every good woman was able to realize. The model of the passive, self-sacrificing housewife who reveled in the accomplishments of her husband and children was popularized by the media and had a profound influence on the life choices made by young women of the Cold War generation, coming of age in the 1950s. However, while the traditional domestic ideal remained popular, a contradictory movement took place. In secular American culture, the married female wage earner had become an accepted feature, especially as it became increasingly difficult to maintain middle-class living standards on one income. In fact, “[b]y 1950, one out of two working women was married; this represented 21 percent of married women. By 1960 the number climbed to 30 percent.” (Dolan (2002): 177) Women were confronted with two contradictory cultural expectations: the first, to get married and settle into the life of suburban housewife; the second, to enter the job market and seek a career. “The dilemma became more acute in the post-1960 era when the tradition of home as the women’s shrine began to lose appeal” (Dolan (2002): 177), perhaps prompted by the publication of Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* in 1963.

As the 1960s drew on, a series of social movements transformed the way women thought about themselves, their capabilities, and their roles in family and society. The Food and Drug Administration approved the progesterone contraceptive in 1960; in 1965, the Supreme Court held that contraception was legal for married couples to use in *Griswold v. Connecticut*. The 1964 Civil Rights Act contained an amendment to section VII that prohibited discrimination on the basis of sex. Women responded by sending a barrage of complaints regarding sex discrimination to the Equal Employment Opportunities Commission although the commission, already swamped with complaints about discrimination on the basis of race, largely ignored individual women’s complaints. Women, becoming increasingly frustrated with their status, began to organize. NOW, the National Organization for Women, was founded by twenty-eight women in 1966 “to take action to bring American women into full participation in the mainstream of American society now.” (Woloch (1994): 516) Radical feminist groups began to emerge shortly after this, rising “out of the contradictions faced by young women who were active in New Left groups and in the civil rights movement.” (Woloch (1994): 517)
Concurrently, new ideas about sexuality also emerged. Men and women engaged in sexual intercourse without expectations of long-term relationships or marriage. However, with this “liberated” attitude came an ironic twist: some feminists argued that women were perceived as sexual objects to be used, not as sexually confident women. This prompted feminist groups to undertake sexual reform projects, addressing issues such as rape, sexual harassment, and spousal and child abuse. Not all women (or men, for that matter) embraced this version of the New Woman; like it or not, however, she was here to stay.

As the 1970s dawned on America, women continued their efforts at decreasing sexism and increasing their opportunities for achievement. A setback came in 1972 when Richard Nixon vetoed a comprehensive Child Development Bill that would have created a nationwide system of child day-care centers, asserting that such organizations would weaken the family unit. Many Americans supported his position, a sign that traditional attitudes towards women’s roles were still prevalent in American thinking. However, women made strides in other areas, primarily education and employment. By 1974, Women’s Studies courses were offered at 500 colleges and other academic disciplines worked to incorporate women into their curriculum. Women attended college at increasing rates; by the end of the decade, more women attended institutions of higher education than did men. Unmarried couples were granted protection to use contraception in the 1972 Supreme Court case, *Eisenstadt v. Baird*. (Pichler, [www.plannedparenthood.org](http://www.plannedparenthood.org), June 2005)

The number of married and single women in the workforce continued to climb as the decade went on and, by the 1970s, it was necessary for many families to have two working parents. Also during this time, the divorce rate among married couples continued to increase, so that by the 1980s, nearly half of all marriages ended in divorce. The era of the single working mother had begun. By the 1980s, young women expected to attend a college or university, and increasing numbers of women received advanced degrees. In 1983 Columbia University, the last all-male Ivy League school, opened its doors to women. While women were entering professional fields at increasing levels, they were still earning approximately 65% of what men earned for the same job. By the 1990s, women were involved in nearly every profession, except of course, the Catholic priesthood and, while still not earning equal pay for equal work, had broken through some of the ‘glass ceilings’ that had excluded women from upper-level career opportunities. While a significant minority of women still adhere to traditional notions of
domestic life, many women are forced, due to the cost of living, to find full-time employment outside the home. Further, many women desire to establish themselves in a career. By this time, women in two-parent households earned, on average, 41% of the total household income. (Pichler (June 2005): www.plannedparenthood.org) Popular culture portrays marriage as an option for a woman, not an obligation, and motherhood as a choice, not a mandate. This perspective may be challenged by the strange sort of longing for a return to the “good old days” romanticized in popular television and films by female characters that portray the ‘suburban housewife.’ Interestingly, this nostalgia for the past has resulted in efforts among some religious denominations, such as fundamentalist Christians and conservative Catholics, to reclaim traditional notions of femininity and traditional roles for women. The next chapter explores what the Catholic Church and its participants think regarding the use of birth control and the role of Church authority in the lives of its female participants.
Chapter 2
Data Analysis

The aim of this chapter is to analyze the data within each generation, paying particular attention to responses that suggest a challenge to the authority of the Church regarding its teachings on birth control use. To allow for uniform analysis of each generation, the survey questions are divided into three parts. First, I present general information on each generation’s participants; this provides insight into the types of women who participated in the survey. Second, I explain each generation’s responses to questions regarding Catholicism to gain a better understanding of women’s integration into and/or alienation from the Catholic Church. Issues of authority women have with the Catholic Church, specifically concerning the authority of the Church hierarchy in determining acceptable behaviors, are explored. Several of the questions in this section consist of multiple parts; it is important to note that these questions also have subparts on birth control and will make for interesting and worthwhile points of comparison. Finally, I present questions related specifically to women’s perspectives on and use of both artificial and natural forms of birth control. By exploring these questions in depth, it can be seen that generally, Catholic women across generations find the use of artificial contraception acceptable. However, women disagree regarding their level of support for particular forms of birth control. It is important to note that the total sample population size is small (51 total participants) and, as a result, the size of each age cohort’s population is even smaller. While this survey was smaller than originally intended, it is still worthwhile to analyze to determine how this particular group of self-identified American Catholic women responded and for practical experience in analysis of sociological data. Percentages used reflect the number of women in each age cohort who responded to a particular question and to allow tentative comparison with D’Antonio et al’s data (1996).

Cold War Generation

Five women born between 1926 and 1945 completed the survey and several of these women also completed the short response questionnaire. All participants identify themselves as Caucasian. Three of these women are currently married; one woman is widowed, and one woman has never been married. Women in this generation have completed different levels of formal education, although all are high school graduates. One woman has some college or
vocational education; one is a college graduate; one woman has completed some graduate or professional school and one woman has a graduate or professional degree. Three women from this generation attended Catholic grade school, Catholic high school, and a Catholic university or college while two females did not attend any Catholic schools. In this generation, three respondents are retired or not currently employed, one is employed full-time, and one chose not to respond. These women have been employed as professional workers (1 respondent, 1.96% of total population) and business owners (1 respondent); one noted that she was a full-time mother and manager of house affairs. It must be noted that one participant chose not to respond. These Cold War generation respondents come from middle-class households. While only two participants responded, their annual household income before taxes ranged from $75,000 to over $100,000. Three women chose not to respond. Of the women in this generation, four were born into Catholic households and have been practicing Catholics their entire lives; one individual converted to Catholicism for personal reasons.

The Cold War Generation: Catholic Behaviors and Authority of the Church

Several questions on the survey dealt specifically with an individual’s commitment to the Catholic Church, several dealt with issues of authority within the Catholic hierarchy, and several ask about both commitment and authority. When asked about their level of commitment to their local parish in the past five years, Cold War generation females responded variously. Two women of the Cold War generation responded that they have become more committed to their parish. One responded that she has become less committed to her parish in the past five years while two participants noted no change in their level of commitment. This level of commitment is reflected in the fact that women of this generation attend Mass regularly; three women attend Mass at least once a week, while one member of this generation attends Mass daily. Only one participant did not respond accordingly, noting that she “seldom” attends Mass. However frequently or infrequently these women attend Mass, four of the five respondents stated that they pray more than once a day, and one participant prays daily. Cold War generation women who took part in this survey reflect a strong commitment to the Catholic Church; when asked to consider the possibility of leaving the Catholic Church (on a scale from 1-7: 1=never leave, 7=might leave), three respondents located themselves at 1 on the scale, while the remaining two respondents found themselves at 2 on the scale. This commitment to the Church is further reflected in the way Cold War generation women responded to the question: How important is
the Catholic Church to you personally?. While one respondent noted that it is not terribly important to her, one woman also indicated that it is the most important thing in her life and three women determined that it is among the most important parts of their lives.

Although these women are clearly committed to the Catholic Church, certain issues have forced some women to reevaluate their commitment. For example, a series of issues were presented with the question: Has this issue strengthened or weakened your commitment to the Catholic Church or has this issue had no effect?. Regarding the Church hierarchy’s teaching that abortion is morally wrong, four out of five participants in this generation responded that this teaching has strengthened their commitment to the Church. One respondent noted no effect to her commitment based on this teaching. However, Cold War generation women are more varied in their responses to other issues.

For example, on the policy of ordaining men, but not women, to the priesthood, two women responded that this teaching strengthened their commitment. However, two women also indicated that this teaching has weakened their commitment to the Catholic Church and one woman cited no effect to her commitment. Women in the Cold War generation respond to reports indicating that a number of priests have allegedly abused children sexually in various ways. Two Cold War generation women indicate that this allegation has weakened their commitment to the Church; one claims that this allegation has strengthened her commitment to the Catholic Church; one states this charge has had no effect on her commitment and one had no response. The current financial state of American Catholic dioceses, many experiencing financial difficulties or bankruptcy, has had minimal effect on women of this generation. While one participant did note that this weakened her commitment, four members indicated that this issue has had no effect on their commitment to the Catholic Church. Regarding “the Church hierarchy’s teaching that artificial contraception is morally wrong,” (Survey Question, 2.1) two Cold War generation women responded that, indeed, this teaching has weakened their commitment to the Church. However, one woman each responded that this teaching has strengthened her commitment or had no effect on her level of commitment. One woman chose not to respond. However committed these women may be to the Catholic Church, they do challenge the authority of the Church hierarchy in different ways.

Women were asked to reflect on their confidence in American bishops and in the Pope and the Vatican in the past five years. When asked whether they have become more or less
confident, or had no change in their level of confidence, women responded variously. Regarding their confidence in American bishops, Cold War generation women primarily responded as having no change in their level of confidence, as three respondents indicated. One respondent indicated that her confidence had increased while one reported that her confidence in American bishops decreased in the past five years. Conversely, three women responded positively regarding their confidence level in the Pope and the Vatican in the past five years; that is, three women noted that their level of confidence increased while one noted a decrease in her level of confidence and one indicated no change.

Further, several questions asked women whether or not they thought more democratic decision making was needed at several levels of the church hierarchy. At the level of the local parish, all Cold War generation women responded affirmatively; at the diocesan level, women were split. Three participants indicated that they thought there should be more democratic decision making while two women thought otherwise. Finally, at the level of the Vatican, three women affirmed that more democratic decision making should take place while two women thought that the current mode of decision making was appropriate. A final question asked participants if they thought American bishops should be more or less independent from the Vatican or if the situation should remain the same. Two women responded that American bishops should be more independent from the Vatican, while one participant each thought American bishops should be less independent, that the situation should remain the same, or had no response.

A series of questions asked respondents to determine who they thought had the final word on a variety of issues. By investigating the responses of the Cold War generation to these issues, challenges to or support for the authority of the Church may be revealed. For example, in response to the issue of a divorced Catholic remarrying without first getting an annulment, three women in the Cold War generation stated that both individuals and Church leaders should make the decision on whether this behavior is acceptable for Catholics. One participant thought that individuals should make the final decision on this issue and one woman had no response. Conversely, four members of this group feel that Church leaders ought to have the final word on the issue of free choice regarding abortion. One participant disagreed, indicating that she thinks individuals should have the last word on this issue.
Participants were split on the issue of sexual relations outside of marriage; two thought that Church leaders or both leaders and individuals should make the final decision and one decided that the individual should have the final word. Respondents were also divided on determining who should have the final word regarding Catholics participating in homosexual behavior. The majority of respondents, three out of five women, did not know or chose not to respond, and one each selected Church leaders or both leaders and individuals to make the final decision. In contrast, four women in this generation thought that individuals should have the final word regarding Catholics practicing contraceptive birth control. One respondent thought that both individuals and Church leaders should make the final decision. Overall, participants thought that individuals should have at least some part in determining what behaviors are acceptable for Catholics, even if it involves collaboration on the part of laity and Church leaders to come to a decision.

Even more revealing are responses by Cold War generation participants to the question: Can one be a good Catholic without performing certain actions?. For example, four respondents determined that yes, an individual can be a good Catholic without going to church every Sunday; one woman decided that no, one cannot be a good Catholic without going to church weekly. Although women were more evenly divided on the issue of a Catholic practicing contraceptive birth control, a majority (three respondents) noted that one can still be a good Catholic without obeying the Church hierarchy’s teaching regarding birth control. Two participants disagreed, indicating that individuals need to follow Church teaching on this issue to be good Catholics. Women in this generation were not split when deciding whether or not an individual could be a good Catholic without following the Church hierarchy’s teaching regarding abortion. Four out of five women determined that no, a Catholic cannot be a good Catholic without following this teaching and one did not know or chose not to respond. However, respondents were split on whether or not an individual can be a good Catholic without following the Church’s teachings on divorce and remarriage or without believing in the infallibility of the pope; two women noted ‘yes’, one can still be a good Catholic, and two indicated ‘no’ to each question. One woman chose not to respond to each question. Interestingly, more women in this generation thought individuals must adhere to church teaching on abortion than to church teaching on artificial contraception. Perhaps the fact that the birth control pill prevents conception and, unlike abortion, does not eliminate a fetus contributes to these results. Catholic theology indicates that
a fetus is imbued with a soul at the moment of conception, making abortion an act of killing. Further study on this issue may clarify the role this belief has in formulating American Catholics’ views on abortion.

Finally, women were asked the question: Should Catholic laity participate in making certain decisions regarding Catholic behavior? Generally, women in the Cold War generation think that laity should have the right to participate, particularly in deciding how parish income should be spent, in making Church policy about divorce, and in making Church policy about birth control. In each of the aforementioned cases, all five women responded that laity should have the right to participate in decision making. Respondents were slightly divided regarding whether or not laity should help in selecting priests for their parish and in deciding whether women should be ordained to the priesthood. In each of these cases, three women responded affirmatively, while two women each thought that laity should not have the right to participate in making such decisions. In each of these cases, with the noted exception of abortion, women are adamant about allowing individuals to determine what behaviors are appropriate for themselves.

Baby Boomer Generation

The Baby Boomer Generation, composed of females born from 1946 through 1964, makes up the largest group of women in the survey, comprising 32 out of 51 total respondents. Thirty-one Baby Boomers identified themselves as Caucasian. One respondent identified herself as Native American. In this generation, nineteen women are currently married, while six are currently divorced; three are widowed; and four have never been married. The majority of Baby Boomers, 15 women, or 46.87% of the cohort, have a college degree; 3 women, 9.37%, have a high school diploma; 6 Baby Boomers, or 18.75% of the group, have completed some college or vocational school; 6.25%, or two, women have completed some graduate or professional school, and 6 (18.75%) have earned graduate or professional degrees. In this generation, 22 respondents (68.75%) attended Catholic grade school; somewhat fewer, 15 (or 46.87%) attended Catholic high school, and only 7, or 21.87%, attended a Catholic college or university.

The majority of women in the Baby Boomer generation are employed full time; twenty-five women responded accordingly. Four women are employed part-time, while slightly fewer, three respondents, are not currently employed. Women in this generation are employed in a variety of professions. Four act in managerial positions; one woman each owns her own business, works in sales, is a skilled tradesperson, and one is retired. Two participants work in
service professions, three women are full-time mothers, and four respondents noted their professions as teacher, counselor, office administrator for real-estate, and health care. Clerical work is the major profession of women in this generation, and seven Baby Boomers selected it as their profession. One participant chose not to respond. Interestingly, Baby Boomer women are primarily employed in occupations that have been traditionally perceived in mainstream American culture as “female” work, such as clerical work. It is important to note that several women selected more than one response to indicate what type of work they do; that is, there are 44 total responses for this question from 32 Baby Boomer respondents. Respondents in the Baby Boomer generation come from a variety of economic backgrounds. Nine participants noted that they (and their partner, if applicable) earned between $15,000 and $44,999 per year before taxes. Five women stated that their household earnings were between $45,000 and $74,999 per year. The largest number of participants, thirteen, claimed household earnings from $75,000 to over $100,000 per year. In this group, 27 participants noted that they were born Catholic and have practiced Catholicism throughout their lives. In contrast, only five converted to Catholicism. Although not a focus of this study, exploring the role of social and economic class and education in contributing to or deterring from artificial birth control use may provide additional insight to this issue.

Baby Boomers: Catholic Behaviors and Authority

Regarding their commitment to the Catholic Church, Baby Boomers responded in various ways. Women were almost equally split in their responses when asked whether their commitment to their local parish has changed in the past five years. Eleven women each (34.37%) stated that they were either more committed or less committed to their parish, and ten women (31.25%) noted no change in their level of commitment. However, when asked about their level of confidence in American bishops, a majority of Baby Boomers, sixteen women or 50.00% of the age cohort, indicated that their confidence in American bishops has decreased in the past five years. Slightly fewer, 12 women totaling 37.50% of the Baby Boomer population, reported no change in their confidence in American bishops and four women (12.50%) noted no change in their level of confidence. Regarding Baby Boomers’ confidence in the Pope and Vatican in the past five years, eighteen women reported no change in their level of confidence and one noted an increase in her confidence in the Pope and Vatican. Eleven Baby Boomers
determined that their confidence had decreased over the past five years and two participants chose not to respond.

Baby Boomer women generally reveal a solid commitment to the Catholic Church. In response to the question: How important is the Catholic Church to you personally?, thirteen respondents stated that it is “among the most important” things in their lives and twelve women noted that it is “quite important,” although other aspects of their lives are also important. One respondent determined that the Catholic Church is the “most important” area of her life; in contrast, three Baby Boomers noted that it is “not terribly important” and one stated that it is “not important at all.” Two participants did not respond. When asked to determine the likelihood that they would leave the Catholic Church, Baby Boomer participants responded in a variety of ways. A majority of women in this cohort, 22 participants, determined they would “most likely never” leave the Church, locating themselves at 1 or 2 on a scale from 1 to 7 where 1 represents “never leave the Church” and 7 indicates “may leave Church.” Five women, locating themselves at 3 or 4 on the scale, might consider leaving the Church and five women, finding themselves between 5 and 7 on the scale, might strongly consider leaving the Catholic Church. One participant did not know or chose not to respond. While no Baby Boomer women attend mass daily, more than half, 17 respondents, indicated that they do attend mass at least once a week. Four women state that they attend mass almost every week. Three women each attend mass about once a month, seldom, or never; two participants chose not to respond. While there is variance in how frequently Baby Boomers attend mass, the vast majority of Baby Boomers pray frequently, as evidenced by the fact that 56.25% of the cohort, 18 women, pray more than once a day and 28.12% of the group, 9 respondents pray at least daily. Two respondents pray at least once a week, two participants occasionally pray, and one woman states that she seldom prays.

Among Baby Boomers, several issues have caused women to reexamine their level of commitment to the Catholic Church. For instance, in response to the Church hierarchy’s policy of ordaining men, but not women, to the priesthood, 16 women stated that this has weakened their commitment to the Church. However, it must be noted that 11 women, claim that this policy has had no effect on their level of commitment and three women determined that this has strengthened their commitment to the Catholic Church. In contrast, 11 Baby Boomers state that their commitment has been strengthened by the Church hierarchy’s teaching that abortion is morally wrong, while only six women claim that this teaching has weakened their commitment.
A slight majority of thirteen women note no effect on their level of commitment as a result of this teaching. Two women did not know or had no response to this prompt. In response to the Church hierarchy’s teaching that contraception is morally wrong, fifteen women each claim that this has weakened or had no effect on their level of commitment to the Church. However, only one woman has determined that this teaching has strengthened her commitment and one woman did not know or chose not to respond. Baby Boomers generally feel that their commitment to the Church has been weakened as a result of reports indicating that priests have allegedly abused children sexually; in fact, twenty-two women indicated such feelings. Seven noted no change in their level of commitment to the Catholic Church, two did not respond, and one respondent claims that this allegation has strengthened her commitment to the Church.

It is worthwhile to investigate the responses of Baby Boomer participants regarding issues of authority, specifically concerning who Baby Boomers think should have the final word on various actions performed by Catholics. It is difficult to note anything generally about the responses in this group, as they are quite varied. For example, when determining who has the final word regarding a divorced Catholic looking to remarry without first obtaining an annulment sixteen women in this cohort think both individuals and Church leaders should make the final decision. Eleven women accord final determination on this issue to individuals and five would grant the final decision to Church leaders only. Women responded quite differently when considering who should have the final word regarding Catholics practicing contraceptive birth control. In this case, an overwhelming majority, 26 out of 32 women would give the final word to individuals. Only one would accord final determination solely to Church leaders, while five women think that individuals and Church leaders ought to collaborate in determining the final stance on this issue.

On the issue of a Catholic advocating free choice regarding abortion, women were much more divided when determining who should have the final word. In fact, women were almost evenly split between according final authority solely to Church leaders and solely to individuals. Twelve women would give final authority solely to Church leader, while thirteen thought individuals should have the final word; seven women would grant authority to both leaders and laity. When considering who should make the final decision regarding the acceptability of sexual relations outside of marriage (by this, I mean prior to marriage, not regarding extramarital affairs), a clear majority of women in this generation, 18 respondents, think individuals ought to
make the final decision. Nine women grant final determination to church leaders only and three opt for a collaborative effort on the part of both Church leaders and laity. Two women did not know or chose not to respond on this issue.

The above data again suggests a developing trend: American Catholic women desire at least more collaboration between lay Catholics and Church clergy in making decisions about the private behavior of Catholic laity. In the case of abortion, both Cold War generation and Baby Boomers are hesitant to support the act; overall, in this survey Baby Boomers are more divided than Cold War generation participants in their opinions on this issue. Interestingly, Cold War generation women were more uniform in assessing their level of commitment than were Baby Boomers. However, a majority of Baby Boomers still indicated a strong commitment to the Church, which, through further study, may reveal important implications about Catholic identity.

Baby Boomer participants were asked to consider several issues in light of the question: Can an individual still be a good Catholic without performing this action? Nineteen Baby Boomers think an individual can still be a good Catholic without going to church every Sunday. Twelve women disagree and responded that to be a good Catholic, one must attend weekly mass. One participant did not know or chose not to respond. Women responded similarly when determining whether an individual can be a good Catholic without getting married in the Church. Again, nineteen women decided that a good Catholic could marry outside the Church, although eleven disagree, finding that to be a good Catholic, one must get married in the Church. Two women did not respond. Women in this cohort were most divided when considering whether or not an individual can be a good Catholic without obeying the Church hierarchy’s teaching regarding abortion. In fact, while thirteen determined that one may still be a good Catholic and perform this action, fourteen Baby Boomers do not think one can still be a good Catholic and disregard this teaching. Five women did not know or chose not to respond to this question. Conversely, Baby Boomers overwhelmingly agree that one can be a good Catholic without obeying the Church hierarchy’s teaching regarding birth control, as 28 out of 32 women in this cohort responded accordingly. In contrast, only three disagreed and one did not know or had no response. Again, abortion seems to be a point of tension among Catholic women, while artificial birth control use is given solid support.

Finally, Baby Boomer participants were asked to consider, in each of several issues, whether or not laity should have the right to participate in making decisions. In every case,
respondents overwhelmingly agreed that laity should have the right to participate. For example, 31 out of 32 Baby Boomers think that laity should have the right to help decide how parish income should be spent. Only one respondent thinks otherwise. When it comes to selecting the priests for individual parishes, twenty-five Baby Boomers in this survey think that laity should be allowed to participate in the selection process. Five women do not think laity should be a part of the selection process, and one did not know or chose not to respond. Baby Boomers clearly think that laity should be involved in making church policy about divorce; 27 out of 32 women responded accordingly. Four women do not think laity should participate in making decisions regarding church policy about divorce and one did not respond. Women were asked to decide whether laity should participate in determining if women should be ordained as priests. Overall, Baby Boomers agreed that laity should participate; 23 out of 32 participants responded affirmatively. Five women do not think laity should be included and four did not know either way or chose not to respond to this question. Most striking were Baby Boomers’ responses when considering whether laity should participate in making church policy about birth control. An impressive 29 out of 32 women in this group think that laity should contribute to the decision making process. The three remaining respondents think that laity should not participate in determining church policy on birth control. Baby Boomers overwhelmingly supported more democratic decision-making regarding this issue.

Generation X

Seven women comprise the participants in Generation X and were born between 1965 and 1980. All seven respondents identified themselves as Caucasian. Almost as many participants in this generation are divorced as they are married; four respondents stated that they are currently married while three noted that they are currently divorced. In this generation, two women hold high school diplomas; one woman each has attended some college or graduate school; and three women are college graduates. Only one out of seven Generation Xers attended a Catholic grade school or high school; two out of seven attended a Catholic college or university. The vast majority of Generation X participants are employed full-time; six women responded accordingly. Only one is employed part-time. Among respondents in Generation X, four cite that they are professional workers; one each is employed in clerical work, service, and as a skilled tradesperson. One respondent noted that she is employed as a case manager in healthcare. It is necessary to note that although there are seven total respondents in Generation X, only seven women are included in the analysis.
X, there are eight total responses to this question. Five women in Generation X earn between $45,000 and $74,999 per year. One woman earns between $15,000 and $24,999 and one respondent cited earnings over $100,000 annually. All seven respondents in Generation X were born into Catholic families and currently identify themselves as Catholic.

**Generation X: Catholic Behaviors and Authority**

What do Generation X women have to say about their commitment to the Catholic Church? When asked about their level of commitment to their local parish in the past five years, respondents in this generation were split on whether they had become more or less committed or experienced no change in their level of commitment. Two women determined that they had become more committed to their local parish, two were less committed, and three women noted no change in their level of commitment. Regarding their confidence in American bishops over the past five years, the majority of Generation Xers, four women, noticed no change in their level of confidence. However, three women did determine that they had become less confident in American bishops in the past five years. No respondents found themselves to be more confident. Women in this generation felt the same way about their confidence in the Pope and Vatican over the past five years, with four women indicating no change in their confidence level and three women noting a decrease in their level of confidence in the Pope and Vatican.

When asked if they would favor or oppose more democratic decision making at various levels of the Church hierarchy, Generation Xers generally revealed that they would favor such a change, particularly at the level of the Vatican. While four out of seven women in this group responded affirmatively for more democratic decision making at both the local parish level and at the diocesan level, five women would favor this change at the level of the Vatican. Two respondents would oppose such change at the local parish level, one would oppose more democratic decision making at the diocesan level, and no respondents indicated opposition at the Vatican level. Generation X participants were split on whether they thought American bishops should be more or less independent from the Vatican, or if the current state should remain the same. While no respondents desire for less independence by American bishops, three women indicate the situation should remain the same. Two participants desire more independence for American bishops from the Vatican and two did not know or chose not to respond.

Generally, women in Generation X consider the Catholic Church to be important in their lives but they also find other areas of their lives important also. In fact, six out of seven
Generation Xers indicate this. One woman notes that the Catholic Church is among the most important parts of her life. Participants in this generation do not attend mass with the consistency that those in other generations do; while one women responded that she attends mass weekly, the rest of the population was evenly divided, with three attending mass almost every week and three noting that they seldom attend mass. When asked about how often they pray, four Generation X women responded by noting that they pray at least daily. One prays at least once a week, and two pray occasionally. Women in this generation reveal varying degrees of satisfaction with the Catholic Church. When asked to identify the likelihood of leaving the Church, respondents generally fell into two categories. Three women would “most likely never” leave the Church, while four women “might seriously consider” leaving the Catholic Church. Interestingly, a greater proportion of women in this generation might consider leaving the Church. However, women indicated that although they may not frequently attend church, they do pray regularly. It would be worthwhile to further explore the nature of the relationship between the Church and Generation X Catholics, although it is beyond the scope of this project to do so in considerable depth. What are some of the issues that have caused Generation X Catholics to reconsider their commitment to the Church?

Women were asked to reflect on several points of controversy in Catholicism. They were then asked to evaluate whether this point has strengthened or weakened their level of commitment to the Church, or whether it had no effect on their commitment. Generally, women in this generation have not been strongly affected either way by several issues, with one notable exception. For example, in response to reports indicating that a number of Catholic priests have allegedly abused children sexually, five out of seven women in this cohort stated that this has weakened their commitment to the Church. One woman noted that this had no effect on her commitment, and one claims that this has strengthened her commitment to the Church. Responding to the point that the Church hierarchy teaches that abortion is morally wrong, six out of seven respondents felt this teaching has had no effect on their commitment. The single dissenting voice opined that this has, in fact, weakened her commitment to the Catholic Church. However, on other issues, Generation X participants are more divided in their responses. After considering the Church hierarchy’s teaching that artificial contraception is morally wrong, a majority of women in the survey group, four respondents, noted that this has not had any effect on their commitment to the Church. Three women determined that this teaching has weakened
their level of commitment. On the issue of the Church’s policy of ordaining only men to the
priesthood, four participants responded that this has had no effect on their commitment to the
Church. Somewhat fewer, three women, noted that their level of commitment has been
weakened as a result of this policy.

When asked to determine who ought to have the final word in certain issues, the majority
of Generation X participants selected individuals in every instance. For example, four out of
seven women think that individuals ought to make the final decision regarding a divorced
Catholic remarrying without first getting an annulment. Three respondents accorded final
authority to both individuals and Church leaders. Four respondents also think that individuals
should have the ultimate responsibility in determining the acceptability of an individual
advocating free choice regarding abortion. However, in this instance, one woman responded by
according final determination to Church leaders and two women think leaders and laity should
collaborate in making a final statement on the issue. An even greater majority, five out of seven
respondents, think that individuals should make the final decision regarding sexual relations
outside of marriage. The remaining two participants would accord final authority to both Church
leaders and Catholic laity. Most strikingly, however, is the response to the issue of a Catholic
practicing contraceptive birth control. In this instance, all seven Generation Xers accorded final
determination on the matter to individuals.

Generation X participants were then asked to determine if an individual could still be a
good Catholic without performing certain actions or following certain teachings. Again, in every
instance, the majority of respondents in this cohort think that an individual can indeed be a good
Catholic without following some official Catholic teachings or performing certain actions. For
example, all seven Generation X survey participants noted that one does not need to attend
church weekly to remain a good Catholic and six agree that individuals can be good Catholics
without obeying Church teachings regarding birth control; one female did not know or chose not
to respond. Interestingly, six women also thought that a person may still be a good Catholic
without following Catholic teachings on divorce and remarriage; an equal number thought the
same about individuals who do not obey Catholic teachings on abortion. In all three cases, no
women thought otherwise, although one woman in each case did not respond. However, slightly
fewer thought an individual could be a good Catholic without believing in the infallibility of the
Pope or without getting married in the Church. In both cases, two women do not think
individuals can remain good Catholics without following both prescriptions and one woman did not respond in each case. Regardless, Four Generation Xers still agree that one can be a good Catholic without believing the Pope to be infallible or without getting married in the Catholic Church.

Generation Xers were asked to evaluate whether or not Catholic laity should have the right to participate in making decisions on various topics. Not surprisingly, on all but one issue, female ordination, a majority of participants in this cohort support the assertion that laity should have the right to participate. Regarding whether laity should have the right to participate in determining whether women should be ordained as priests, participants are nearly equally divided; three women responded that they did not know or had no response. Two women each thought that laity should or should not have the right to participate in discussion or decision-making on this issue. Generation X women in this survey were not nearly as divided concerning whether laity should participate in deciding how parish income should be spent; in fact, while one respondent thought otherwise, six out of seven Generation Xers opined that laity should have the right to participate in such decision-making. Regarding the selection of priests for individual parishes, six women affirmed that laity should have the right to participate in the selection process. No women dissented on this issue, although one did not know or chose not to respond. Four out of seven Generation X women agreed that laity should have the right to participate in making church policy about birth control, although two disagreed about the right of laity to participate in this case. One woman did not respond. Overall, Generation X women think individuals may remain good Catholics without obeying Church teachings on artificial birth control and abortion. However, women in this generation express less desire to participate in decision-making. Perhaps these women consider such issues to be private and determined by the individual.

Millennium Generation

Although survey questionnaires were passed out to a number of women born in or after 1981 who are over the age of 18, only seven respondents completed the surveys. None of these women has ever been married, although one noted that she is currently engaged to be married. Regarding education level completed, one is a high school graduate, two women have completed some college or vocational school (one participant is still in college), and three hold college degrees. One participant has completed some graduate or professional school. Although no
women from this generation attended a Catholic college or university, four Millennium generation respondents attended a Catholic elementary school, while three attended Catholic high schools. As in the Cold War generation and Generation X, all participants in this generation identify themselves as Caucasian.

In this survey cohort, three women are employed part-time, and three are employed full-time. One woman noted that she is both a full-time student and is employed part time. Many of these women hold multiple jobs. Two Millennium generation women are employed in professional work, three work in sales, three are full-time students, two work in the service industry, and one is employed as a clerical worker. Two respondents noted that they are employed as recreational center supervisors and one is a substitute teacher. When asked about their annual household income, nearly half of respondents in this group, three women, earn less than $15,000 per year. One respondent earns between $25,000 and $34,999 annually, one earns between $45,000 and $54,999 per year, and two women indicate that their annual household income is greater than $100,000 per year. I suspect that the latter respondents might be considered dependents of their parents. Finally, all of the women in this generation were born into Catholic households and have been raised Catholic, much like the respondents in Generation X.

Millennium Generation: Catholic Behaviors and Authority

How do Millennium Generation participants think of their commitment to the Catholic Church? In the past five years, five women in this group think their level of commitment to their local parish has waned and two indicate that they have become more committed to their parish in the past five years. Regarding confidence levels in American bishops, four women note that they have become less confident in American bishops, three determine no change in level of confidence, and no participants indicate an increase in their confidence in American bishops. Responses varied somewhat when Millennium generation participants were asked to evaluate their level of confidence in the Pope and Vatican. One woman claims her level of confidence has increased over the past five years, two find that their confidence level has decreased, and the majority of respondents, four women, experienced no change in their confidence in the Pope and Vatican. Generally, Millennium Generation women are divided over whether they favor or oppose more democratic decision making at all levels of the Church hierarchy. In fact, at the local parish level, the diocesan level, and at the level of the Vatican, three respondents each favor
more democratic decision making while three respondents oppose such a change. It must be noted that one respondent who opposed more democratic decision making stated that she does not think the Church should have any word about affairs that do not involve matters of faith, although she does not explain what these might be. One woman did not know or chose not to respond in each case. Millennium Generation respondents are also divided over whether or not American bishops should be more or less independent from the Vatican. Two women indicated that American bishops should be more independent from the Vatican, two thought they should be less independent, and two thought the situation should remain the same. One woman chose not to respond.

When asked: How important is the Catholic Church to you personally?, Millennium Generation participants had varied responses. Two women in this survey group find the Church to be among the “most important” areas of their lives; two consider it to be “quite important,” but not more important than other areas of their lives; one Millennium Generation woman, does not think it is “terribly important”; and two think the Church is “not an important part of their lives at all.” Women’s responses in this group, when asked to determine the likelihood of leaving the Catholic Church, reveal the various degrees of commitment these women have to the Church. Two women located themselves at 3 or 4 on a scale from 1 (never leave) to 7 (may leave), meaning that they may consider leaving the Church but have not seriously done so. Two women asserted that they will never leave the Church, locating themselves at point 1 on the scale while three women think they may seriously consider leaving the Church, locating themselves at point 7 on the scale. It is interesting to note that in this survey, almost as many Millennium Generation women as Baby Boomers may consider leaving the Catholic Church, even though four times as many Baby Boomers participated in the survey.

Regarding personal Catholic behaviors, Millennium Generation women respond in different ways. Although two respondents indicate that they attend Mass weekly, the majority of women in this group seldom (3 respondents) or never (2 respondents) attend Roman Catholic Mass. However, even if these women are not incorporating Mass into their daily/weekly activities, they do pray with some degree of consistency. That is, six out of seven women pray at least once a week; of this number, one prays more than once a day and two pray daily. One woman notes that she never prays. Interestingly, this pattern of consistent prayer and inconsistent mass attendance is similar to that of Generation X participants.
How have certain issues and teachings within Catholicism affected the commitment of Millennium generation participants? Women in this generation were divided when asked to respond to the Catholic teaching that abortion is morally wrong. Two noted that this teaching has strengthened their commitment to the Church; three women claim that this has weakened their commitment to the Church; and two identified no change in their commitment as a result of this teaching. Millennium generation respondents seemed less concerned with the Church’s policy of ordaining men, but not women to the priesthood. Four women in this cohort responded that this has had no effect on their commitment, while one notes that it has strengthened her commitment and two respond that this policy has weakened their commitment to the Catholic Church. A majority of women, four respondents, have not been affected by the Church’s teaching that artificial contraception is morally wrong, although three indicate that their commitment has been weakened by this policy. Conversely, Millennium generation women have been strongly affected by allegations that priests have sexually abused children; that is, four respondents have felt their commitment to the church has been weakened as a result of such allegations. Two women note no effect to their commitment, and one woman claims that these allegations have strengthened her commitment to the Church.

A larger survey of this generation would be instructive; many of the members of this generation are still coming of age and several sociological studies may illustrate how beliefs of American Catholics change over time. Several types of longitudinal studies may be done to measure Millennium generation responses. For instance, a panel study may measure the same group of individuals from this generation at various points over an extended time period, such as ten years, and then interpret the data in relation to social, cultural, economic, and political contexts. A cohort study ensures that only members of the Millennium generation are surveyed over a pre-determined time period, although the same individuals may not participate each time. Such studies may help general conclusions to be drawn about these Catholics’ experiences in American culture over time and creates data to be compared with other studies to explore the emergence of any trends in thought or behavior across generations.

In what cases do Millennium Generation females challenge the authority of the Church hierarchy? Women were asked to reflect on the question: Who has the final say in determining the acceptability of a certain issue in Catholicism? Millennium Generation women responded in different ways to several prompts. That is, in some cases, they clearly question the authority of
Catholic leaders in determining what is appropriate behavior, yet, in other cases, they still accord final authority to the Church hierarchy. For instance, when asked who has the final say in determining the acceptability of a divorced Catholic remarrying without getting an annulment, respondents accorded authority primarily to Church leaders. That is, three women stated that Church leaders ought to have the final say; three opined that both leaders and laity have the final say, and only one accorded final authority to individuals. Conversely, on the issue of a Catholic practicing contraceptive birth control, a majority of Millennium Generation participants, four out of seven women, determined that individuals should make the final decision. The remaining three respondents thought individuals and Church leaders ought to collaborate and no respondents thought that only Church leaders should have the final word. Women in this survey cohort responded in exactly the same way regarding sexual relations outside of marriage. In contrast, women were somewhat more divided in determining who makes the final decision about a Catholic advocating free choice regarding abortion. One respondent selected Church leaders only as the ones who ought to have the final word; two think individuals ought to decide; three accorded final authority to both leaders and individuals. One woman did not know or chose not to respond. Overall, a desire for (at least) collaboration between Church leaders and laity is indicated in the above responses.

Millennium Generation participants were asked to evaluate whether or not a Catholic could be considered a good Catholic without performing certain actions. By evaluating the responses to various issues, we can better understand what women in this generation consider to be important attributes of being Catholic. Interestingly, women in this cohort overwhelmingly indicated that a person can be a good Catholic without attending church weekly, as five affirmative responses indicate. Two women disagreed, suggesting that good Catholics attend mass every week. Women also strongly supported the contention that a person can be a good Catholic without obeying the church hierarchy’s teaching on birth control, as four affirmative responses indicate. Two women think that one cannot be a good Catholic without following the Church’s teachings on birth control, and one did not know or chose not to respond. Interestingly, to the question of whether an individual can be a good Catholic without obeying the Church hierarchy’s teaching on divorce and remarriage, this cohort’s responses were quite different. Four women stated that no, one cannot be a good Catholic without following this teaching, while only two thought otherwise. One woman did not respond. Millennium generation women were
even more divided regarding the issue of not obeying the Church’s teaching regarding abortion. Two women thought that one can be a good Catholic without following Church teaching on this matter while three determined that one must follow this teaching to be a good Catholic. Two women did not respond.

An additional series of questions asked participants to determine whether Catholic laity should have the right to participate in decision making regarding certain issues. While women in this generation do not overwhelmingly support the right of laity to participate, in every instance, a majority of respondents do support this position. For example, when considering if laity should have the right to aid in deciding how parish income should be spent, five women in this survey cohort agreed that they should; the remaining two did not know or chose not to respond. Regarding laity participation in making church policy about birth control, deciding whether women should be ordained to the priesthood, and in making church policy about divorce, three respondents in each case supported the laity’s right to aid in decision making. Two women responded negatively, asserting that lay Catholics do not have the right to participate and two women did not respond. Four Millennium Generation participants agreed that laity ought to have the right to participate in selecting the priests for their parish, while one disagreed and two did not respond.

Catholic Women and Birth Control: Beliefs and Practice

What are Catholic women doing? In order to answer this question, several survey questions were composed that address types of birth control used by Catholic females and the reasons for which Catholic women use artificial birth control. Additionally, participants themselves provide further data through the answering of short response questions assessed in chapter three. The responses to these questions provide unique insight into the varied reasons why Catholic women use or have used artificial birth control. However, the questions used in the survey were concerned with addressing use of artificial contraception but did not consider duration or context of use or whether a method was a primary form of contraception. As a result, in many instances, women selected more than one type of birth control in response to the question: What types of birth control do you, or have you ever used? Therefore, it is impossible to establish an accurate percentage of women in each cohort who have used contraception. As such, this survey explores the use of various contraceptives among the total survey population.
Women were asked to respond to the following question: Do you currently, or have you ever, used any of a number of types of artificial birth control? Women were instructed to check all types that apply. 112 total responses were counted among eight different types of birth control: condoms, birth control pill, diaphragm, sponge, spermicide, IUD (inter-uterine device), Depo-Provera, and withdrawal method. Five women opted not to respond to this question, while forty-six women did respond to the question. One woman created her own category and noted that she had never used birth control. Three women noted that they had used other forms of birth control (one female explained that she had a tubal ligation while another participant revealed that her husband had a vasectomy), or did not need to use birth control for medical reasons (hysterectomy). This question, while it provides some information regarding artificial birth control use among Catholic women, fails to determine what types were used consistently (or for what length of time) and what types served as primary forms of birth control. Constructing additional questions about this issue would be useful in a later study and would provide additional detail about how birth control is used by American Catholics, particularly women.

Among the entire research population, 31 women have used condoms; this accounts for 27.68% of all responses to this question. Within each generation, two Cold War generation women used condoms; 18 Baby Boomers have used condoms; five women in Generation X and six Millennium generation women have used condoms. Thirty-four women in the entire research population responded positively regarding use of birth control pills; that is, 30.36% of all responses note use of the birth control pill. It is important to note that this is the most commonly used method of artificial birth control among participants in this survey (although this fact is less persuasive because no degree of use was established). Two women in the Cold War generation have noted using the birth control pill, as have 21 women in the Baby Boomer generation, five women in Generation X, and six females in the Millennium generation. In other words, 34 out of a total of 51 participants, or 66.67% of the total survey population, have used the birth control pill at one time in their lives.

The most common method of birth control after the pill and condoms is, interestingly enough, the withdrawal method. Fourteen women have used this method to help prevent pregnancy, although it is the least effective method in the group presented. One female in the Cold War generation has used this method; seven Baby Boomers have employed the withdrawal method; and three women in both Generation X and the Millennium generation have utilized
withdrawal as part of their contraception program. Spermicide has been used by nine individuals in the entire population, accounting for 8.03% of all responses to this question. While no women in the Cold War generation have used this method of contraception, six women in the Baby Boomer generation have, as have one female in Generation X and two women in the Millennium Generation. Five women have used Depo-Provera as a method of contraception; this accounts for 4.46% of all responses. Again, no women in the Cold War generation have used this method of birth control, although two women in both the Baby Boomer and Generation X have used this method, as well as one female in the Millennium generation. Five participants also responded positively regarding use of the diaphragm, accounting for 4.46% of all responses. No members of the Cold War generation, Generation X, or the Millennium Generation used this type of artificial birth control; five women in the Baby Boomer generation have used this method of contraception. The Inter-Uterine Device (abbr. IUD) has been used by three members of the Baby Boomer generation, although no participants from other generations have utilized this as a method of birth control. The IUD comprises 2.68% of total responses. Finally, two women have made the sponge a method of contraception; both women belong to the Baby Boomer generation. Those individuals using the sponge make up 1.78% of the entire number of responses.

Although this has been explained above (chapter one), the earlier mentioned forms of artificial birth control are not condoned for use by Catholics, according to Catholic teaching on sexuality. *Humanae Vitae* (1968) states that every act of procreation must be open to conception; this belief necessarily prohibits the use of any form of birth control that does not allow the entire sex act to run through completion, that is, through ejaculation of sperm into the vagina. Only one form of contraception is considered to be acceptable in the eyes of the Catholic Church: Natural Family Planning, commonly known as the Rhythm Method. Natural Family Planning functions as an acceptable form of birth control within Church teachings because the sex act may be completed without use of any barrier intended to prevent conception. Participants were asked if they had ever used Natural Family Planning as a means of preventing conception. Out of 51 total respondents, eleven women, or 21.57% of the entire group, affirmed that they had used the Rhythm Method at one point in time. 38 participants have never used Natural Family Planning, and one female did not respond. Two women in the Silent Generation have used this method, as well as seven Baby Boomers and two females in Generation X. No women in the Millennium Generation have used Natural Family Planning.
Those females who have used Natural Family Planning as a means of birth control were then asked to answer a follow-up question that addressed the ease of using this method of contraception. Although 11 women noted that they have used this method, thirteen women answered this follow-up question. Out of thirteen women, two did not know or chose not to respond (I assume these women are the two extra who have not used Natural Family Planning but who answered the question anyway). Of the remaining eleven women, three stated that they did find the rhythm method to be very simple to understand and employ. Five women of those who have used Natural Family Planning claim that this method was only somewhat easy to use, finding that it involved some work to keep it effective. Three women did not find Natural Family Planning to be easy to use at all; rather, they determined that it was difficult to practice and time consuming. Of the two women in the Cold War generation who employed the rhythm method, one found it easy to use and one determined that it was somewhat easy to use. In the Baby Boomer generation, two women thought the rhythm method was easy to use; three respondents found it somewhat easy to employ; three females did not think the rhythm method was easy to use at all; and one woman did not know or chose not to respond. In Generation X, one respondent thought Natural Family Planning was somewhat easy to employ and one participant did not know or chose not to respond.

Women and men use birth control for many reasons, although the primary reason is to prevent impregnation. But behind this blanket explanation are several more nuanced and, at times overlapping, reasons why preventing conception is deemed acceptable to Catholic women. Participants were asked the question: For what reasons do you use, or have ever used, artificial birth control? Respondents were provided with several choices and encouraged to check all that apply. For example, sixteen women noted that they used artificial birth control due to financial considerations, such as the cost of pregnancy care and that of rearing a child. Twenty-three women stated that they already had their desired number of children and were so prompted to use artificial birth control. Twenty participants claim that not being ready to have children motivated them to use a mode of artificial birth control to prevent impregnation until they were/are ready to conceive and six women do not desire to ever have children. Nine use artificial birth control for non-associated medical reasons and four participants cite their unique reasons for using artificial birth control. One does not use birth control because she is gay, one uses birth control for times in between children, one cites severe cramps as the primary reason she uses birth control, and
one notes that she has never used birth control as her reason for selecting “other”. One participant noted general medical reasons as her motivation for using artificial birth control. Eighty-two total responses were collected for the multiple parts of this question; this is informative in that it reveals that women have multiple, serious considerations in mind when they resolve to use artificial birth control. These considerations may weigh more heavily on their minds than does failing to adhere to Catholic teaching on sexual morality.

Overall, women in this survey agree that an individual can still be a good Catholic without obeying Church hierarchy’s teaching on birth control. How do participants respond to a question that asks them to evaluate this issue directly? Participants were asked: Do you think a Catholic can be a good Catholic and use artificial birth control?. Respondents were given four choices: “yes, regardless of type of birth control used;” “yes, depending on type of birth control used;” “no, a good Catholic does not use artificial birth control;” and don’t know/no response. Women overwhelmingly think that a person can still be a good Catholic and use artificial birth control; 47 out of 51 participants responded yes. 42 of ‘yes’ respondents think so regardless of what type of birth control a Catholic uses, while the remaining five women selected ‘yes’ depending on what type of birth control is used. Women were then asked to determine who should have the final word regarding the use of artificial contraception by a Catholic female: the individual female, the local parish priest, American bishops, or the pope. Forty-nine respondents accorded the final decision to the individual female, while only one woman each gave the final decision to the local priest or to the Pope.

Finally, women were asked about Humanae Vitae in the question: Have you ever heard of or read the papal encyclical Humanae Vitae? Participants were provided with several selections from which to answer; “yes, I’ve read it”; “yes, I’ve heard of, but not read it”; “no”; and don’t know/choose not to respond. Out of 51 total respondents, only 6, 11.76% of the entire group, have read Humanae Vitae. It is interesting to note that none of these responses came from Generation X or the Millennium generation; five were from Baby Boomers and one came from the Cold War generation. Twenty-one women claim that they have heard of, but not read the encyclical and twenty-two women state that they have never heard of or read the Humanae Vitae. Participants were asked a follow up question on this text: In the papal encyclical Humanae Vitae (1968), the church hierarchy deemed any form of artificial birth control to be unacceptable (the only approved form of birth control is Natural Family Planning). Do you think the Pope and
other church officials made the right decision in history? Respondents were given the option of selecting simply “yes” or “no”, or opting for “maybe; I think they need to reinvestigate this issue.” Three individuals responded affirmatively that they think the Church made the right decision regarding birth control for this time in history. Ten women are not convinced that this decision is right for contemporary Catholics and think the issue needs to be reinvestigated. A majority of women, 36 out of 51 total respondents, representing 70.58% of the group, think that the position taken by the Church on artificial birth control in the *Humanae Vitae* is not the right position to take for this time in history. This final question is intriguing because it suggests that Catholic women perceive “the Church” not as a static, unchanging entity but as a living group of clergy and laity responding to particular historical conditions. This may imply that they think the Church and its teachings should change and develop over time. Further inquiry into this perspective would provide interesting insights.
Chapter Three

Authority Changes Hands

As chapters one and two illustrate, American Catholic women have increasingly participated in all facets of mainstream American culture, including adopting mainstream perspectives on and behaviors regarding sexuality. Chapter one explored the ways that American Catholics strove to participate in and be identified with mainstream American culture. Over time, increasing participation in secular American culture has made the Catholic indistinguishable from other Americans. Throughout this process, American Catholic women have implicitly and explicitly rejected the Catholic Church as an authoritative source for norms of behavior and morality, often acting in opposition to Catholic teachings when thinking about and using artificial forms of birth control. In other words, some American Catholic women display typical American cultural attributes when thinking about authority and follow general American trends regarding birth control. Chapter two examined the data obtained from a small cross-sectional survey of American Catholic women from areas around the United States. Although too small to be representative, the data is suggestive in several ways. Responses suggest that American Catholic women surveyed think of birth control as a largely private matter and that individuals should make the final decision regarding artificial birth control use. Using data obtained from a variety of sources, and focusing most intently on D’Antonio et al. (1996) surveys from 1987 and 1993, the final chapter of this thesis suggests several trends among American Catholic women, primarily the decreasing influence of the Church as a moral authority for these women. I show that, as the Church hierarchy has lost its power as a source of authority, consistent and increasing numbers of women disagree, in theory and practice, with the Church’s teachings on a variety of issues, especially concerning the use of artificial contraceptives.

The decreasing influence of the Catholic Church as a source of moral authority for American Catholic women may be measured in several ways. First, an individual’s assessment of her commitment to and confidence in the Church (and hierarchy) may be measured to help determine if a general attitude exists among Catholic women. Secondly, remarks of a change in an individual’s commitment in response to issues in the Church help suggest whether a woman will be more inclined to deviate from official teachings. As noted by D’Antonio et al., it is expected that those women with the strongest commitment to and confidence in the Church will
conform to Catholic teachings on most issues. (D’Antonio et al., 1996) However, this is not necessarily the case. Alienation from the Church, which may in part explain deviance from official Church positions even when commitment to the Church is strong, can be better understood by analyzing responses to commitment questions (in conjunction with analysis of other questions). Added support to this is provided by Groat et al, who, when commenting on alienation in “Contraceptive Non-Conformity Among Catholics,” (1975) remark that “Catholics characterized by more intense levels of alienation would then appear less likely to be bound by the moral authority of the Church, especially in areas where individual deviations have low visibility, the Church has a low enforcement potential, and widespread dissent is broadly publicized and acknowledged.” (Groat, et al. The Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, December 1975, no.14 p.368) Two questions may now be addressed. First, are American Catholic women generally stable in their commitment to and confidence in the Church? And second, what factors might contribute to a Catholic female’s feelings of alienation from the Church?

In their text, Laity: American and Catholic, Transforming the Church (1996), William D’Antonio, James Davidson, Dean Hoge, and Ruth Wallace analyzed data from a series of questions to determine the extent that Catholic men and women consider the Church to be a source of moral authority. Although the total data represents both male and female responses, D’Antonio et al. also present statistics from only female respondents. Additionally, it must be noted that the total populations for the 1987 and 1993 surveys were significantly larger than the total population for the 2005 thesis survey, at 803, 802 and 51 participants, respectively. This implies that any conclusions drawn from comparing the three sets of data are necessarily tentative, or suggestive. Again, a larger survey population would provide more representative results and increase the accuracy of percentages calculated for each generation. A number of the questions used in the survey for this research project were drawn directly from D’Antonio et al.’s survey, with the express intent of comparing the 2005 survey results with those from 1987 and 1993 to determine if a trend among participants is evident. Comparison is possible because the D’Antonio et al. participants and the Spillar survey participants identify themselves as Roman Catholic. The Spillar 2005 survey participants were gathered using non-probability sampling. According to Earl Babbie (The Practice of Social Research, 10th ed 2004), non-probability sampling is “any technique in which samples are selected in some way not suggested by
probability theory” including reliance on available subjects and snowball sampling. (Babbie (2004): 182) An implication of performing a non-probability survey is that the data cannot be considered representative because no underlying population was established. However, the data may still be considered suggestive. The Spillar 2005 survey is cross-sectional; that is, data were gathered at one point in time in contrast to longitudinal studies, in which data are gathered at established points over time.

Several authors, for example, Jay P. Dolan (In Search of An American Catholicism, 2001) and Theodore Groat et al (1975), discuss the alienation felt by a large number of Catholic females, both women religious and lay Catholics. Why might female Catholics experience alienation from the institutional Church? A number of reasons have been proposed, several of which are particularly compelling. Perhaps first and foremost is the obvious fact that only males may be ordained as clergy. The practice of allowing only males to celebrate the Eucharist, perform weddings and baptisms, and administer last rites has been justified according to tradition, and, since the fifth century (and consistently from the eleventh century), it has been Church tradition. What this ultimately means for female Catholics is that their full participation in the Catholic Church is limited by the fact that they are women. As Aline Kalbian (2005) indicates, perpetuating an exclusively male clergy in the Church may have subordinated and alienated female Catholics by excluding them from participating in the “redemptive mystery” of the Eucharist. (Kalbian (2005): Sexing the Church: 5)

The continuance of such a practice has gained and lost support since the Second Vatican Council. Further compounding the tension surrounding this issue is the shortage of priests since Vatican II, especially in the United States. In the absence of adequate numbers of priests, many lay Catholics began discussing the possibility of allowing ordained deacons to function as priests, allowing priests to be married (which would theoretically increase the number of males entering the priesthood), and, as many Protestant denominations have done to fill the roles of minister and pastor since the 1970s (and earlier in several cases), ordaining women as priests. Many women religious and lay female Catholics were hopeful that the post-Vatican II Church may consider allowing women to be ordained as priests. While a significant minority of Catholics did not support such a change, a majority of Catholics (males and females) continued to discuss the possibility of female ordination until Pope John Paul II prohibited any further open discussion on the issue by Catholics in 1994, although this has certainly not silenced many lay
and ordained Catholics from exploring the issue. (Pope John Paul II (May 22, 1994): *Ordinatio Sacerdotalis*, www.vatican.va)

In the absence of a sufficient number of priests to maintain the thousands of parishes in the United States, the Church has placed more than several parishes under the care of lay administrators. While women are allowed to serve as lay administrators, and have done so in increasing numbers, their participation in the Church is still limited; for example, they may instruct engaged couples in the rights of Catholic marriages but not perform the Catholic wedding ceremony, or prepare a family of an infant child for baptism of that child, but not perform the actual baptism, and so on. When asked what they think about this situation, lay administrators and parishioners alike remark that it is sad and seemingly unfair that a woman can be so involved and devoted to her parish but not allowed to fully participate as a male pastor would. (Morris (1997): 388-90, 409-10) It must be noted that male laity who serve as lay administrators but who do not meet the criteria for entrance into the priesthood may experience similar feelings of alienation. What other issues may have caused women to rethink their commitment to the Church? It is worthwhile to investigate the data contained in table 3.1. This table is in part derived from D’Antonio et al., 1996: Table 4.9, p.80.

Table 3.1: Effects of Church teaching and recent developments on religious commitment among multiple generations of Catholics

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Issue</th>
<th>Pre-Vatican II (%)</th>
<th>Cold War Gen. (%)</th>
<th>Vatican II (%)</th>
<th>Baby Boomer Gen (%)</th>
<th>Post-Vatican II (%)</th>
<th>Generation X (%)</th>
<th>Millennium Gen. (%)</th>
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Pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, and Post-Vatican II data was obtained from D’Antonio et al., 1996: Table 4.9, 80.
Prior to interpreting the data contained in the above table, it is important to note that the population size for Pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, and Post-Vatican II groups is significantly larger than the population sizes for the other generation groups. As such, the numbers presented for the Cold War Generation, Baby Boomers, Generation X, and the Millennium Generation are best viewed in light of what they suggest, not the actual numerical percentages presented. That is to say, the data does not prove that a larger trend exists among Catholics, but is suggestive that a larger trend may exist. Further, although they are not addressed in this project, it should be noted that statistical considerations, such as standard deviation, are influenced by the size of the sample population. Additionally, the Pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, and Post-Vatican II groups (D’Antonio et al. 1996) are composed of both males and females, while those in the remaining groups (Spillar 2005) are comprised of only female participants. Taking these factors into consideration, what, then does this data suggest?

When participants were asked if the Church’s stance on the ordination of women strengthened, weakened, or had no effect on their commitment to the Catholic Church, respondents were divided. Among Pre-Vatican II, Vatican II, and Post-Vatican II Catholics, the majority in each group determined that the Church’s teaching on female ordination did not effect their commitment to the Catholic Church at all. However, 31% and 27% of Vatican II and Post-Vatican II participants indicated that this stance weakened their commitment, while 14% of Pre-Vatican II participants respond accordingly. This was accompanied by a decrease in the percent of respondents whose commitment was strengthened as a result of this teaching, with the oldest generation, Pre-Vatican II, having the highest percentage responding accordingly. Among participants in the 2005 survey, responses were markedly different than those from the 1993 D’Antonio et al. survey. Only in the Millennium generation did a majority of respondents find this teaching to have no effect on their commitment to the Church. Most interestingly, among Baby Boomers and Generation X women, the majority of respondents in each cohort indicated that their commitment had been weakened as a result of this teaching. The dramatic changes in responses from 1993 to 2005 may suggest that participants reassess their relationship to the Catholic Church over time and that female ordination, in light of accusations of pedophilia among priests and the ever-worsening priest shortage, is still an issue of concern to American Catholics.
When asked about abortion, which perhaps yielded the most clear-cut responses, women generally found that the Church’s teaching on abortion has had either no effect or in fact strengthened their commitment to the Catholic Church, with notable exceptions. Post-Vatican II Catholics were nearly evenly divided when it came to evaluating whether abortion teachings had strengthened, weakened, or had no effect on their commitment; only seven percent more respondents indicated that this teaching strengthened their commitment than did those who felt it weakened their commitment to the Church. Among Generation X respondents, the vast majority was not affected by this Church teaching, and nearly one-sixth actually felt their commitment to the Church was weakened as a result of the teaching that abortion is always morally wrong. Interestingly, Post-Vatican II Catholics, who were interviewed regarding this issue in 1993, are the same age today as the women in Generation X. It is difficult to determine with any certainty what the discrepancy between the two groups’ responses may mean, except that those women who responded in Generation X in the 2005 survey may simply have formulated a stronger opinion on abortion themselves and are not as influenced by Church teaching as they were twelve years ago. Responses from the Millennium generation deviated from the entire population; a majority responded that Church teaching on abortion actually weakened their commitment to the church.

Does the Church’s teaching on birth control effect Catholic laity’s commitment to the Church? The data in the above table suggests that generally the condemnation of artificial birth control does not effect the commitment of a majority of Catholics in multiple generations. However, it is worthwhile to investigate the data for any changes in commitment over time among similar age groupings. Pre-Vatican II participants, surveyed in 1993, and Cold War generation women, surveyed in 2005, responded very differently to the birth control issue. That is, while a clear majority, 65%, of Pre-Vatican II women did not feel the Church’s teaching on birth control effected their commitment, only 20.00% of Cold War generation women responded similarly. Further, 15% of Pre-Vatican II participants and 20.00% of Cold War generation respondents indicated that their commitment was strengthened as a result of Church teaching on artificial contraception. While the same percent of Pre-Vatican II respondents indicate a weakened commitment, twice as many Cold War women experienced a weakened commitment to the Church because of this issue.
Among Vatican II and Baby Boomer Catholics, responses were quite similar. The most notable exception between the responses was the percentage of participants who felt their commitment had been strengthened as a result of Church teaching on artificial contraception. While 13% of Vatican II participants indicated a strengthened commitment in 1993, only 3.12% of Baby Boomers surveyed in 2005 responded similarly. Almost ten percent more women in the Baby Boomer group than in the Vatican II mixed-gender cohort found that their commitment to the Church had been weakened because of Church teaching on birth control. Post-Vatican II and Generation X participants felt similarly on this issue in one respect; 42.5% and 42.86% of each group found that Church teaching on artificial contraception had weakened their commitment to the church. However, while 9% of respondents in Post-Vatican II experienced a strengthened commitment as a result of this teaching, zero women in Generation X responded similarly. In fact, in Generation X, a majority of participants found this teaching to have no effect on their level of commitment to the Church. This data seems to suggest that Catholic women, while some have maintained their level of commitment to the Church, generally felt their level of commitment to the Church decrease as a result of teaching on artificial contraception. Perhaps the different responses across generations reflect the influences of other cultural systems on birth cohorts during their formative years. Recalling the discussion in chapter one, the changing relationship of the Catholic Church to mainstream American culture over time may help explain the variance in responses across generations.

Several questions addressed American Catholic individuals’ level of commitment to their local parish, their confidence in American bishops, and their degree of confidence in the pope and Vatican over the past five years. Although the 1987 survey did not address these questions, it is instructive to examine the 1993 D’Antonio et al. survey (1996) and Spillar (2005) data for evidence of developing trends. Interestingly, while more women noted an increase in their level of commitment to their local parish in 2005 than in 1993, the percentage of women who found themselves less committed to their parish also increased from 1993 to 2005. The percent change for each is approximately 11%. The largest percentage difference from 1993 to 2005 occurred in the “no change” category, with a decrease of almost 21 percent. This is interesting because more participants were able to definitively assess their level of commitment in 2005 than in 1993. Regarding their level of confidence in American bishops over the past five years, a similar proportion of participants in both 1993 and 2005 noted less confidence in the past five years. In
both years, more participants found themselves less confident than did those who found an increase in their level of confidence.

One significant difference between the 1993 data and the 2005 results is the percent of participants who expressed no change in their level of confidence in American bishops; in 1993, the majority of respondents, 63%, found no change in their level of confidence. However, in 2005, nearly the same number of women noted less confidence or experienced no change in their level of confidence, with 47.06% and 43.14% responding accordingly. The most striking difference between the two sets of data is the dramatic increase in the percent of respondents who found they were less confident in American bishops, with a total change of 18% over twelve years. When asked about their confidence in the Pope and Vatican, the majority of respondents in both years noted no change in their level of confidence. However, in 2005, slightly fewer respondents (9.80% compared to 13%) stated that they were more confident, while significantly more participants, 33.33% in 2005 compared to 16% in 1993, found themselves to be less confident in the Pope and Vatican, for a total change of 17% over twelve years.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Level of commitment</th>
<th>1993 (%)</th>
<th>2005 (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Commitment to local parish over past five years</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>22%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>25%</td>
<td>37.25%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No change</td>
<td>50%</td>
<td>29.41%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know/No Response</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in American bishops over past five years</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>7%</td>
<td>1.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>29%</td>
<td>47.06%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>63%</td>
<td>43.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know/No Response</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>7.84%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Confidence in Pope and Vatican over past five years</td>
<td>More</td>
<td>13%</td>
<td>9.80%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less</td>
<td>16%</td>
<td>33.33%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Change</td>
<td>70%</td>
<td>52.94%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Don’t Know/No Response</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>3.92%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1993 data obtained from D’Antonio et al. 1996, Table 2.5, 40; also Table 4.8, 80 and Table 4.2, 73.

The above data suggests that participants, especially those in the 2005 survey, remain committed to their local parish. However, while a majority of respondents in both years have experienced no change in their level of confidence in the Pope and Vatican over the past five years, increasing numbers of participants have lost confidence in the Church hierarchy. Nearly half of participants in the 2005 survey indicate a loss of confidence in American bishops. Interestingly, however, when asked if they desired American bishops to be more or less
independent from the Vatican and Pope in making decisions for the American church, a majority of these women (39.21%) thought that the situation should remain the same. Only 7.84% of respondents desired less independence on the part of American bishops while 29.41% indicated a desire for more independence from the Vatican. A large percentage of the total population, 23.53%, did not know or chose not to respond. Similarly, data from D’Antonio et al.’s surveys in 1987 and 1993 suggest that a majority of participants desire the relationship between American bishops and the Vatican to remain the same. Further, in each year, only a minority of respondents desired less independence on the part of American bishops from the Vatican. It is difficult to compare the results of this question across different years because the percentage of “don’t know” responses for the 2005 survey is so high. It is important to note that, because the 2005 data set is small, the responses each account for a significant proportion of the total population. However, the proportion of responses among the years is similar, which may suggest that American Catholics do not find the independence of American bishops to be a crucial issue. This data also suggests that a larger response set would respond similarly. What does seem to be an issue of more concern is a general desire on the part of Catholic laity for more democratic decision-making at various levels of the Church.

Table 3.3: Desirability of more democratic decision-making on Church issues

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Percent of respondents who favor more democratic decision-making on Church issues</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1987</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the parish level</td>
<td>60%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the diocesan level</td>
<td>55%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the level of the Vatican</td>
<td>51%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1987 and 1993 data obtained from D’Antonio et al. (1996), Table 2.3, 38.

As illustrated by the results in Table 3.3, participants favor more democratic decision-making at every level of the Church hierarchy. Although roughly the same number of respondents, sixty and sixty-one percent, favored such an adjustment at the parish level in 1987 and 1993, approximately ten percent more women desired an increase in collaborative decision-making in their local parishes. Similarly, when asked whether they favor more democratic decision-making at the diocesan level, over half of all participants responded affirmatively in 1987 and 1993, comprising 55% and 60% of the population in each year. The trend toward democratization continued among female participants in 2005, where more than two-thirds of women responded positively to more democratic decision-making at the diocesan level.
At the level of the Vatican, the most dramatic increase among those who favor more democratic decision-making took place between 1987 and 1993, with an increase of seven percent, from 51 to 58% responding favorably. However, in 2005, while more than half of women favor more democratic decision making at the level of the Vatican, there was no significant increase in the percent of respondents from 1993 to 2005. It is also at the level of the Vatican that, overall, women show the least amount of support for more democratic decision-making. It is my contention that, because the Pope has been traditionally viewed by Catholics as the literal and symbolic head of the Church, a change to the highest level of Church clergy is conceived as less desirable than one at lower, local levels of the Catholic Church. According to D’Antonio et al., “…Catholic laypersons believe that they deserve a hand in local, concrete issues; they are less certain about deserving a hand in broader church and moral questions,” which are usually dealt with at the highest levels of the hierarchy. (D’Antonio et al. (1996): 37) This statement is used in context to illustrate that laity would like to participate at local levels but not necessarily to determine larger moral stances and provides some insight into why individuals are more apt to leave the decision-making in the Vatican to the highest levels of the Church hierarchy and why they more strongly support increased collaborative decision-making at lower levels.

The general trend toward democratic decision-making among Catholic women was also measured with a set of questions that asked individuals to assess who they thought should have the final word on several issues. In this way, the influence of the Church as a moral authority on sex and marriage issues over several years may be measured. Participants were asked “Who should have the final say?” on a number of issues. (D’Antonio et al. 1996, Spillar 2005) They were given three options from which to respond: first, that church leaders alone ought to have the final word; second, that individuals alone should make the final decision; finally, that both individuals and church leaders should collaborate on the issues to come to a final decision.
Table 3.4: Final Say

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1987 Church Leaders %</th>
<th>1987 Individuals %</th>
<th>1987 Both %</th>
<th>1993 Church leaders %</th>
<th>1993 Individuals %</th>
<th>1993 Both %</th>
<th>2005 Church leaders %</th>
<th>2005 Individuals %</th>
<th>2005 Both %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexual relations outside of marriage</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>21.57</td>
<td>54.90</td>
<td>19.61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Catholic advocating free choice re: abortion</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>44</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>35.29</td>
<td>39.21</td>
<td>23.53</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A divorced Catholic remarrying w/o an annulment</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>15.69</td>
<td>33.33</td>
<td>49.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Catholic practicing artificial birth control</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>1.96</td>
<td>80.39</td>
<td>17.65</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Data from 1987 and 1993 obtained from D’Antonio et al. 1996, Table 2.1, 32.

The data presented in table 3.4 is particularly illuminating regarding the desire of Catholic laypersons for more democracy in making final decisions. The results also show that, generally, American Catholic individuals do not desire that Church leaders alone make the final determination on issues of sex and marriage. Interestingly, laity do not respond uniformly on who should have the final word on issues of sexual relations outside of marriage, free choice regarding abortion, divorced Catholics remarrying without first getting annulments, and Catholics practicing artificial birth control. On the issue of sexual relations outside of marriage, lay Catholics continuously decided that individuals ought to make the final decision in determining the morality of this behavior. In fact, from 1987 to 2005, there was a 12 percent point increase among respondents who think individuals ought to have the final word and a twelve percentage point decrease in the number of respondents who think Church leaders alone ought to make the final determination on this issue.

Trends over the eighteen-year period are more difficult to ascertain on the issue of Catholics advocating free choice regarding abortion. While a slim majority in each year selected individuals to have the final word, in 2005, results were nearly split between according Church leaders or individuals alone authority, with 35.29% and 39.21% responding accordingly. Conversely, regarding the use of artificial birth control by Catholics, an overwhelming majority of lay Catholics decided that individuals alone should have the final word on this issue. It is interesting to point out that, from 1993 to 2005, nearly 23% more respondents desired individuals to have the final say on this issue, with an equally dramatic reduction in the percent
of participants who chose church leaders alone to have the final say. I think that this dramatic change may in part be a result of the fact that the 1987 and 1993 survey participants were comprised of both men and women while the 2005 survey participants were entirely female. D’Antonio et al. noted that, in some questions, a “gender difference” was noticed between male and female responses. (D’Antonio et al. (1996): 102-103) Regardless of the presence of a gender difference, it is clear that lay Catholics do not perceive Church leaders to be the sole moral authorities on the use of contraceptive birth control; rather, they strongly think that individuals have the right to make the final decision regarding the use of artificial birth control. As D’Antonio et al. remark, the data that has been presented “…suggest that American Catholics are according less authority to Church teachings and more to their own consciences than in decades past.” (D’Antonio et al. (1996): 41)

Jay Dolan cogently remarks about the desire, on the part of American Catholics, for more collaboration between Church clergy and laity as the “democratic impulse.” (Dolan (2002): 204) Although this impulse has been present among American Catholics for over two hundred years, the style of leadership and the organization of dioceses has remained hierarchical and in the hands of clergy alone. However, the Church’s understanding of herself eventually began to change, and, by the 1960s, the Church was described in Lumen Gentium as “the people of God.” A spirit of collaboration between the highest levels of the Church hierarchy and Catholic laity, as well as an atmosphere of collegiality, characterized the Second Vatican Council of the 1960s. These phenomena, and the transformations in the Catholic mass that happened during Vatican II, contributed to increased participation by laity at the parish level and greater collaboration between local priests and parishioners. The 1983 addition to Canon Law that church councils were to be established in local parishes stirred up additional talk about democracy at the local level among American Catholics. However, as Dolan perceptively comments, “…[C]hurch law does not speak of democracy or endorse the idea of majority rule; rather it uses the word consultative in referring to the role of the laity in the parish council. Nonetheless, in an American environment in which democracy and the democratic process is a cultural given, the popular expectation is that consultative is very close to, if not synonymous with, democratic.” (Dolan (2002): 205; emphasis in original) Note that American Catholics are implicitly included in Dolan’s description of an “American environment;” Dolan seems to intimate that Catholics in the United States are raised in a secular mainstream culture with norms and “givens” that color
the lenses through which they understand their religion. That is, while the Church herself (through the hierarchy) has made a move towards greater collaboration between clergy and laity, “…in the United States democracy is so ingrained in the culture that it cannot but reinforce the democratic impulse emerging within the Catholic community.” (Dolan (2002): 207) In other words, lay Catholics in the United States participate in and understand their Church through both American and Catholic lenses.

A final indicator of the strength of the Church hierarchy as moral authority was measured in both 1993 and 2005 with a set of statements asking participants if they thought a Catholic could remain a good Catholic without following certain behaviors. Before analyzing the data in Table 3.4, it is important to note the differences in how generations are conceived in the D’Antonio et al. survey and in the Spillar 2005 survey. As I explained in chapter one, I apply a sociological definition of generation as a cohort of people born during a given time period that most likely experience similar cultural and social events during their formative years. (Edmunds & Turner (2000); see Chapter 1 for further elaboration) D’Antonio et al. apply a similar definition with the noted exception that their generations are defined based on a singular definitive event: the Second Vatican Council. Thus, D’Antonio et al. label those individuals who had already come of age by Vatican II as the “Pre-Vatican II” generation. This approximately corresponds to the Cold War Generation, as I have used the label. Similarly, “Vatican II” Catholics may be understood as part of the Baby Boomer generation and “Post-Vatican II” Catholics, as D’Antonio et al. apply the term, correspond to members of Generation X. One significant difference is the presence in the Spillar survey (2005) of a fourth generation, the Millennium Generation. At the time of D’Antonio et al.’s surveys, the members in this generation were very young children. Although this data was gathered from different groups at separate points in time, the common identity of “American Catholic” makes comparison a useful exercise. Comparing this data will help suggest whether a trend exists among beliefs and behavior of American Catholics (especially women).
The question: “Can an individual be a good Catholic without…?” is of particular interest for several reasons. First, this question asks individuals to determine whether or not they find behaviors and beliefs which deviate from the official teachings of the Church acceptable. This question makes assessment of the Church hierarchy as a moral authority possible—if the Church hierarchy is authoritative, participants should not find deviant behaviors acceptable. Second, the results suggest that individuals’ understanding of what it means to be a good Catholic vary and are not contingent, for everyone, on living day-to-day in accord with every official Church teaching. It is my expectation that older generations of Catholics will be less inclined than younger generations of lay Catholics to accept deviant behaviors, primarily because of the different styles of Church leadership and structure (both at the local and Vatican levels) the former generation experienced during their formative years. Indeed, among Pre-Vatican II and Cold War Generation Catholics, only one issue was overwhelmingly approved by the Cold War Generation, that of attending weekly mass. It is important to keep in mind that the total population size for this generation is very small, so that given a larger population, the acceptance rate may decrease. However, Pre-Vatican II Catholics generally agree that an individual may still be a good Catholic without attending weekly mass. I suggest that the reason for such approval is a practical one; older Catholics may experience greater difficulty in making the trip to a local parish, particularly if they no longer drive or are in poor health. Interestingly, a majority of respondents in the Pre-Vatican II and Cold War Generation groups also generally find that a Catholic may remain a good Catholic without observing Church teachings on artificial contraception, with fifty-nine and sixty percent responding accordingly. The support for such a proposition may be, for some at least, the result of their own negative experiences with natural
forms of birth control, or because this is no longer a pertinent issue for them. Support for this issue may also indicate that many Catholics think of artificial birth control use as a private matter and that, in their opinion, it does not affect the ability of an individual to be a good Catholic in other matters of faith.

While it may be surprising that Pre-Vatican II and Cold War Generation Catholics are inclined to accept deviance from official Church teachings regarding birth control use, it is not surprising that a majority of respondents in all other groups surveyed agree that an individual may still be a good Catholic without obeying Church teachings on artificial contraception. In fact, among Vatican II Catholics, nearly three-quarters of the group responded positively to the question; among Baby Boomers, 87.50% affirm that one does not necessarily need to follow Church teaching on birth control to remain a good Catholic. Participants in the Post-Vatican II and Generation X groups were remarkably similar in the way they responded to this question; in each case, slightly more than four-fifths of participants thought a person may still be a good Catholic without obeying Church teachings on birth control.

Surprisingly, one area where individuals were less inclined to support deviance was regarding belief in the infallibility of the Pope. While a majority of respondents in several groups think that one does not have to believe in the infallibility of the Pope to be a good Catholic, the highest support rate is 59.37% among Baby Boomers. Overall, approximately half of respondents in each group think that belief in the infallibility of the Pope is not a requirement for one to remain a good Catholic. However, given that approximately half of respondents in each group think otherwise, I am inclined to suggest that the uniquely Catholic tradition of Papal infallibility is a more important indicator of Catholic identity to American Catholics than what type of contraceptive method they employ. That is, this belief sets American Catholics apart from members of other religious traditions, especially other Christian denominations, in a more pronounced way than the private practice of birth control. Interestingly, the Baby Boomer figures seem to suggest that some participants hold conflicting opinions. That is, while more than four-fifths of Baby Boomers indicated that an individual may be a good Catholic without adhering to Papal teaching on contraception, nearly three-fifths thought that an individual must believe in the infallibility of the Pope to remain a good Catholic. Perhaps individuals consider birth control to be a private matter of practical concern, while Papal infallibility is a theological issue that they accept without question. Further, although it is beyond the scope of this study,
these responses may suggest that individuals are affected psychologically as a result of holding such contradictory opinions, perhaps experiencing feelings of guilt or sin.

What the above evidence suggests, on a larger scale, is that Catholicism, for many of its practitioners, has become a personal, individualized faith. American Catholics, it appears, have adopted a sort of “cafeteria” method when determining what are the essential beliefs and behaviors of good Catholics. We may attribute such an evolution to feelings of alienation or isolation from the larger Catholic community, as Groat et al (1975) suggest, or, as Kalbian (2005) proposes, from the imposition of traditional notions of sexual morality by an all-male hierarchy. Further, such ‘Cafeteria Catholics’ may simply be unresponsive to traditional conceptions of authority, such as the hierarchically ordered Catholic Church. It also seems reasonable to suggest that the Church hierarchy and its teachings do not possess the same moral authority for American Catholics that they formerly did. American Catholics may also deviate from Church teachings for practical reasons, which is intriguing because it may suggest that practical concerns weigh heavily on the minds of Catholic laity, perhaps more so than does strict adherence to the rules of the Church. I contend that all three of these reasons have one primary factor in common: mainstream American culture. D’Antonio et al. aptly state my case:

American Catholics today are more highly educated than ever, more at ease as full participants in the exercise of social and political power from Congress to boardroom, more often in contact with other Christian religious groups, and more in tune with American ideals of individual freedom, personal autonomy, and democracy. American Catholics have become American—in every way. They are now solidly in the mainstream of American society politically, socially, and economically. The situation today is the culmination of a half century of constant change. D’Antonio et al. (1996) Laity: American and Catholic, Transforming the Church: 160.

American Catholics are inclined to approach Catholicism in the same way as they approach many other facets of their lives: as Americans. Thus, “American” cultural trends such as democracy, individualism, and personal autonomy bleed over into the way that American Catholics practice their faith. For the purposes of this paper, this is most important in the way American Catholic women think about and practice contraceptive birth control. Geertz’s notion of religion as a cultural system which, when authoritative, forms and directs an individual’s world view and ethos may be applied to mainstream American culture as a cultural system. (Geertz (1973): 90) While the Catholic Church is certainly an important cultural system for American Catholics, mainstream American culture is also influential. American Catholics exist at the intersection of American and Catholic cultures.
Women who participated in the 2005 survey were given the option of responding to a number of short-answer questions. Although approximately half of the participants chose not to complete the short-answer questionnaire, it is worthwhile to investigate the responses of those women who did participate to gain insights into their personal motivations behind using birth control. Further interpretation is aided by the context provided in chapter one about American Catholic women's experience of growing up in different periods in American history.

Women from each generation were asked how they determined whether or not to use particular forms of artificial birth control. One common feature of responses regardless of generation was the tendency to approve the use of artificial contraception as long as that type was not abortive. In the Cold War generation, one respondent indicated that she had never used birth control, but that she would have used only natural family planning. Another woman did not use birth control when she and her husband first married, but was later put on the birth control pill, for health reasons, after having six children. This respondent also noted that "all six [of my children] have practiced some kind of Birth Control—although I have 20 grandchildren" (Spillar Survey response, anonymous. May 2005). What this data may suggest is that the practice of artificial contraception by American Catholics does not erase their desire to have families. Rather, the desire for a smaller family at a pre-determined time may be affected by mainstream American cultural trends toward smaller family size.

When asked who they think the proper authority is for determining appropriate types of birth control for American Catholic females, two responses diverged greatly. One female listed "God, Scripture, the Church, and the individual couple" as the proper configuration of authority, while another woman stated that birth control use is an individual decision, but if married, the couple should determine what type of contraception to use together. What these responses suggest is that American Catholic women practice an individualized Catholicism, influenced by the general moral and cultural trends of American society. It also suggests that women are variously affected by the powerful Catholic cultural system and mainstream American culture.

Women in the Baby Boomer generation provide a variety of reasons for their use of artificial birth control. For example, the majority of Baby Boomers state that health concerns, the overall response rate was small. Although approximately half of the participants chose not to complete the short-answer questionnaire, it is worthwhile to investigate the responses of those women who did participate to gain insights into their personal motivations behind using birth control. Further interpretation is aided by the context provided in chapter one about American Catholic women's experience of growing up in different periods in American history.
personal levels of maturity, desire (or lack of) to become a parent, and their financial situation have influenced their decision to use (or not to use) artificial contraception. Two women out of twenty Baby Boomers who responded to short-answer questions indicated that they used natural family planning as a primary form of birth control; however, one of these women also used the progesterone pill prior to natural family planning and, after having her third child, she explained that she then chose a permanent birth control option, tubal ligation. (Spillar Survey response, anonymous: May 2005) Women in this generation were frank about their reasons for using artificial birth control. For instance, one female commented the she “determined to use artificial birth control due to [my] desire not to get pregnant.” Another Baby Boomer stated that she used artificial contraceptives “to not have children before being ready, financially and emotionally-mature. A woman should have the right to decide when and if she is ready/wants to have children.” Yet another individual recounted her experience: “[I] did not use birth control when first married. [I] became pregnant four months after marriage. First born July 1968, second child [in] December 1969. Decided to use birth control pill after using foam—not much thought put into what type. Then stopped birth control on purpose and we had our third child in 1975. Then my husband had a vasectomy.” Although she does not state it, it is possible that this individual was simply overwhelmed with the pace of her first two pregnancies and felt the need to use contraception in order to give her body a break. These participants reflect a characteristic of all responses: participants have carefully though about this issue in relation to their own lives. Their responses indicate that thoughtfully considered assessments were made before deciding to use or not to use artificial birth control.

Overall, when asked who they think is the proper authority for determining what kinds of birth control are acceptable for use by Catholics, Baby Boomers were generally uniform in their responses. While some women listed more than one authority, which suggests a desire for more democratic decision-making on this issue, the individual was listed most frequently as the primary or only authority for determining the right kind of birth control for her own use. Women then stated that the couple together should determine what types of contraception work best for them. Two individuals remarked that the final authority for this issue is God, each making a distinction between God and the institutional Church, as this woman’s response indicates: “I believe the authority is God—not church, God”.

One woman each attributed authority to the Church, the local parish priest, and medical professionals. One female noted that, first “no
abortion producing agents. Then the married couple should decide.” (Spillar survey response, anonymous: May 2005)

Women in Generation X take an even more pragmatic approach toward determining the right kinds of birth control for their personal use. When asked how they determined whether or not to use particular types of birth control, one woman stated “ease of use” and that she was not ready to have children as her primary reasons for deciding to use the birth control pill, the diaphragm, and condoms as her major forms of contraception. Another woman responded by stating, “I started using birth control pills and condoms because I was sexually active and did not want to have children or contract a sexually transmitted disease.” She then remarked: “I believe that if a woman does NOT want to become pregnant then birth control is a necessity” (emphasis in original). A third woman did not respond to the entire questionnaire, but did make the following statement: “I believe that at a time when life threatening diseases such as AIDS is rampant in many third world countries, protection should be a priority.” Clearly, women in this generation had different concerns to consider regarding the use of contraception than their predecessors had, for example, the prevalence of sexually transmitted diseases by the time these women came of age from the late 1970s and early1980s to the mid-1990s. Further, these women place significant emphasis on the desire to control the time when they become pregnant, a possible trend that may have emerged with Baby Boomers but which, especially given the increasing numbers of single mothers in the United States during the time these women came of age, has become a major concern for women in Generation X. When asked “Who is the proper authority for determining what kinds of birth control are appropriate for American Catholics to use?,” the unanimous response was individuals.

Perhaps the most interesting set of responses came from women in the Millennium Generation, primarily because the responses are vastly different from each other. Slightly less than half of the women in this generation chose to respond to the short answer questionnaire, which indicates that the responses may not be representative of the larger population but may be viewed as suggestive. However, it is still useful to investigate these responses for the insight they provide regarding younger Catholic women. When asked how they determined what forms of birth control to use, the three participants responded differently. First, one woman stated that she sought the counsel of a medical doctor, and was additionally informed through peers and television and magazine advertisements before she decided to use the birth control pill. Another
woman indicated that she initially began using the progesterone pill to regulate her periods, but found that it did not work as well as Depo Provera, her current form of birth control. She commented that she also had to weigh her feelings on getting pregnant at a young age. “I decided I was not ready and I am 100% against abortion,” she stated, so she determined that artificial contraception was her best way to protect against unwanted pregnancy.

Finally, one woman has not yet needed to determine what type to use until recently as she is getting married in the near future. She stated: “I do not know yet what I will use—I feel natural family planning is the same as the pill—both prevent contraception [sic ‘conception’].” This response is particularly interesting because the woman equates natural family planning with the progesterone pill. This may suggest that she perceives the pill to be as acceptable as natural family planning for a Catholic to use, or it may indicate that this participant has not yet seriously considered what type of birth control to use. Interestingly, when asked who the proper authority is for determining what types of birth control are acceptable for American Catholic females to use, two out of three woman stated that physicians, in conjunction with the individual female, should make the final decision on a case by case basis. One female stated that “by being Catholic, we are subject to the Church’s rules—so, in my opinion, the Church hierarchy should determine [what types of birth control are appropriate for Catholics].” (Spillar survey response, anonymous: (May 2005))

What is most intriguing about these responses is the degree to which they vary. On the one hand, two women approach the issue quite practically, and the morality of using artificial birth control does not seem to be an obvious concern. On the other hand, one woman apparently follows Church teachings on this issue quite rigidly, and the morality of using artificial contraception greatly affects her decision on what type of birth control to use. Although responses vary slightly, it seems that the 2005 data, when viewed in conjunction with the D’Antonio et al. 1993 data suggest a consistent trend regarding birth control use among American Catholic women. A larger survey utilizing the same questions would provide additional support for such a suggestion.
Conclusion

Chapter three examines the relationships, if any, between data from two surveys. Data drawn from William V. D’Antonio, James D. Davidson, Dean R. Hoge, and Ruth A. Wallace’s 1987 and 1993 survey research, primarily concentrating on 1993 data, is compared with data from Spillar’s 2005 data. It is important to note that all conclusions drawn in this project are tentative. Because the 2005 sample population was small, the interpretations are suggestive, but not representative. However, it is highly probable that a larger sample population would yield similar results. Consistent response percentages in D’Antonio et al. (1996) and Spillar (2005) data further support such a suggestion, although it must be noted that Spillar response percentages are less accurate. Interpretive anthropologist Clifford Geertz’s notion of religion as a cultural system, as well as his description of religion and other cultural systems, provided a useful theoretical foundation. Geertz’s discussion of “law” and “legal facts” (1983) may also be applied to make a case for the influence of mainstream American culture as a source of authority. American Catholic women may know artificial contraception is prohibited and still decide to use it. Mainstream American culture approves of (or at least tolerates) birth control use and casts it in the media and other public sources of information as a private decision based on practical considerations that make lives easier and allow women to control their reproductive functions, often seen as reflecting the liberation of women. Additionally, the notion of sex for pleasure is strongly supported in mainstream American culture. Procreation is cast as a choice in opposition to an obligation. Catholic women are bombarded with such ideas through various media and other individuals. Many women think these ideas reflect “the really real” and adopt them in thought and action.

Geertz (1973) suggests that religion uses symbols to express a particular world view and ethos; these are received by individuals and mainstream culture. If a symbol system is compelling, or authoritative, an individual or culture will respond by reinforcing the world view and ethos through thought and action. For an individual, a compelling or authoritative symbol is that which orders ideas and behavior in the world and seems to reflect “the way things really are”. However, if a particular symbol is rejected, then it is likely that a different symbol will be perceived as influential.

In a heterogeneous society, many cultural systems send symbols to individuals and other cultural systems. It is useful to extend Geertz’s idea regarding the transmission and
reinforcement of symbols between individuals, religion and culture to include other cultural systems, such as mainstream American culture, and pluralistic societies. The influence of religious and non-religious cultural symbols on American Catholic women was not assessed in the survey questionnaire, primarily because of the limitations of the sociological questionnaire—surveys should be completed in fewer than twenty minutes. Further, Kalbian’s text, which presents a useful way of understanding the relationship between symbols and authority, was made available in 2005, after the survey had been completed. A culture system is constructed of a formally or informally agreed-upon set of ideas and beliefs—and symbols through which to transmit them. Applying this description to “mainstream American culture,” it is clear that such a construct exists—commonly agreed-upon notions of democracy, individualism, and nationalism as well as ideas about the morality of artificial birth control are transmitted through various media and in educational systems. Religious and secular texts, magazine and journal articles, newspapers, and later, radio, film, television, and the internet have acted as means of transmission and reception of ideas and symbols involving all facets of life.

This paper has explored the relationship between the American Church and mainstream American culture in the 19th and 20th centuries. Throughout this time period, a debate persisted among American Catholics between remaining separate from mainstream culture or assimilating into mainstream American culture. While contemporary American Catholics are virtually indistinguishable from other Americans, Catholics were formerly ghettoized into parish communities and persecuted by other Americans. It appears that several factors may have contributed to the increasing influence of mainstream American culture on American Catholics: continuing “Americanization” of the Catholic Church, internal Church issues, and lay Catholic participation in mainstream American culture. As a result, mainstream American culture may have become a source of authority for American Catholics regarding ideas and beliefs on sexual morality. Further, throughout time practical reasons for American Catholic women’s use of artificial contraception have been serious and compelling. The data presented in chapters two and three suggests that some American Catholic women do not perceive the Church as a source of authority on sexual morality, even if they identify themselves as committed Catholics.

The data also suggests that American Catholic women in the same generation are similarly influenced by the cultural norms present during the time period in which they came of age. This implies that mainstream American culture has changed over time and, generally, that
history is a continuous process. Women of different generations may thus hold conflicting views, because different factors informed their thought. Generation-related differences were explored in chapters two and three; data from 1987, 1993, and 2005 all suggest that American cultural and historical events has influenced lay Catholic beliefs. This influence is reflected by the varied answers provided among Catholic women from different generations. However, as seen in the 2005 data, the Catholic women surveyed generally agreed on the morality of artificial contraception. In each generation, a majority of participants responded affirmatively to the use of preventative artificial birth control, especially the progesterone pill, by American Catholic women. While the Catholic Church is still authoritative for American Catholic women in many respects, the data examined in chapter three suggest that its teachings on artificial contraception fail to prove authoritative for many of the same women. The D’Antonio et al (1996) and Spillar (2005) data, when viewed together, suggest that Catholics in the United States support the use of the artificial progesterone contraceptive pill.

The Spillar (2005) survey is suggestive, not representative, for several reasons. First, non-probability sampling was used to obtain a population. This type of sample population gathering is useful because some sample groups have no known underlying population. Also, the survey population was considerably smaller than the standard sample population size of 2000 participants. Even utilizing other methods of sample collection, obtaining such a large sample population was not possible. The costs and time involved in completing a large survey were too great to be further considered for this project. A larger survey would more accurately determine the level of support among different generations; statistical information is more representative when large sample populations are used. It is important to note that small surveys are useful because they strongly suggest that further study and a larger sample population would likely confirm the observations drawn from such smaller surveys. The results of the Spillar (2005) data would likely be similarly repeated using the same survey on a larger sample population.

This research project was worthwhile for several reasons. First, the data, while addressing several questions and drawing tentative conclusions, left many more research questions to be asked. This is encouraging, because it suggests that the issue of Catholics and sexual morality is still in need of examination. The relationship of Catholic teachings on sexual morality and male imagery, and the roles that guilt and sin (about behavioral and belief difference or deviance?) play in psychologically affecting American Catholics are still left
largely unexamined. Second, the data is supported by other texts on Catholicism and American culture that point to the relationship between these two religious and cultural systems and the tensions surrounding conflicting notions and symbols of sexual morality, for example, Jay Dolan’s *In Search of an American Catholicism* (2001). Finally, this project provided an opportunity for me to learn about sociological research and add a new method to my “tool box” approach to the study of religion. Sociological methods provide another means of collecting raw data that aids in interpretation. By combining quantitative and qualitative approaches, I hope to develop a method that is useful in both explaining and interpreting phenomena. In a graduate level Sociological Methods course at the University of Pittsburgh, I have learned that Sociology is a diverse field of study with a range of approaches and epistemologies. Research design was further explored in this class, and technical terms were used, fleshing out my vocabulary of sociological concepts. This project has further piqued my interest in female Catholic’s experiences in America and the relationship between religious traditions, women, and American cultures.
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Books


APPENDIX A: IRB proposal
Application for Research Project Approval: Adrienne J Spillar

1. Purpose
   It is apparent that a disjunction between the Roman Catholic Papacy and American lay Catholic females regarding the issue of contraception existed in the time immediately following the release of the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* to the public. A small-scale sociological study published in 1975 in the *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion* suggested that a discrepancy did exist between the official teaching of the Church on birth control and the use of birth control by married female Catholics. This study found that several factors, including age, religiosity, parity to the desired number of children, and socialization contributed to one’s use of proscribed methods of birth control (H. Theodore Groat, et.al “Contraceptive Nonconformity Among Catholics,” 1975, 367-377). Several questions thus can be raised: first, what is the nature of the disjunction between the Papal teaching on birth control and the methods of birth control used by American Catholic females? Second, what is the range of responses by lay Catholics to Church teaching on contraception and in what ways do these responses differ among successive generations of Catholic women? Finally, what influences have history and mainstream American society had in formulating lay American Catholic women’s positions on appropriate methods of birth control?

Purpose: This study proposes that such a discrepancy exists today between the behavior and beliefs of American Catholic women in different generations and the official teaching of the Roman Catholic Church. I suggest that the responses of women within generations and among different generations are marked by differences that can be attributed to influential historical events and cultural trends of the time periods during which females of each generation formulated their worldview and ethos. Questions concerning the influences that different symbols and ideas regarding femininity and women’s roles in society have in shaping a woman’s response to the issue of birth control will be assessed. Further, I will analyze the effects that age, religiosity, perceptions of authority, and socialization have on a woman’s perspective on and use of birth control. I put forth that the secularization of American society and the increasing impact of popular culture in formulating an individual’s worldview have contributed to a rise, among younger generations of Catholic women, in the approval of and/or use of proscribed methods of birth control. Thus, the purpose of this thesis is two-fold. First, it will consist of a small-scale survey of Oxford area self-identified Catholic women from several generations. Second, this project will conduct interviews of willing participants to determine, if possible, how American Catholic women perceive the issue of birth control, and will investigate the impact of mainstream American culture on formulating such a perception.

Aims: One aim of this project is to determine whether, in general, a birth cohort’s attitudes toward contraception and sexual intercourse primarily represent those of either mainstream American culture or the Roman Catholic Church. I suggest that in younger generations, attitudes more closely resemble those of mainstream American society, while in older generations they more closely reflect the perspective of the Roman Catholic Church. I assume that exceptions are present among individuals in the generations that are the focus of this project. A second aim of this project is to attempt to define and analyze the various historical, cultural, and social circumstances that may influence a Catholic woman’s perception on birth control. Data has been gathered from various history and cultural studies texts which suggest
certain key influences; the purpose of conducting interviews is to see whether or not Catholic women actually find these historical events and cultural trends to be influential and, if they do not, to ascertain what events/trends did influence their thinking.

Expected Outcomes: Since I am asking similar questions to Groat et.al.’s survey as well as D’Antonio et.al.’s survey from 1993, I expect similar results (D’Antonio, et.al: Laity: American & Catholic. Kansas City: Sheed & Ward, 1996.). That is to say, approximately 65%+ of respondents affirmed the use of birth control, specifically the Pill. I expect that an even larger percentage of women will respond positively to the use of artificial birth control, particularly in the Baby Boomer generation and Generations X and Y.

2. Subject Population.

This project consists of obtaining data from surveys and interviews with several distinct generations of American women who identify themselves as Roman Catholic. Group A, known as the Silent generation and also labeled “Beat” generation, consists of women born between 1926 and 1945. These women entered adulthood from 1945 through 1965. Group B, the Baby Boomer generation, is comprised of women born from 1946 through 1964, coming of age between 1966 and 1984. Men and women in this generation number approximately seventy-six million and make up twenty-nine percent of America’s population (Wikipedia: The Free Encyclopedia, www.en.wikipedia.org). Generation X, which comprises Group C, consists of women born between 1965 and 1980, coming of age from 1985 through 2000. Finally, Group D, part of the still-forming Generation Y, is comprised of women born from 1981 through 2000. It is important to note that only women 18 years and older will be interviewed. Also, it must be stated that the dates for these generations are generally agreed upon by scholars but discrepancies do exist. I have attempted to use the most widely accepted dates for this project. I do not have minimum education or economic requirements for survey and interview participants. I intend to interview ten women from each generation; I plan to survey approximately 50 women from each generation. Although these numbers are small, they provide sufficient data and a reasonable scope for this project. I do not intend this data to be representative of all women from these generations; rather, my goal is to investigate the varied responses of individual females. For purposes of comparison with other sociological surveys on this general topic, Fifty survey responses from each generation will provide sufficient data (approximately two hundred total responses). Participants for this project will be gathered primarily from the Oxford, Ohio area, with some exceptions assumed. (By this, I mean that women from Hamilton (Ohio), Liberty (Indiana), and surrounding townships may be participants; I am not limiting myself strictly to the city of Oxford or Oxford Township.)

3. Recruitment and Selection of Subjects.

I intend to recruit participants in three primary ways. First, I plan to place an ad in the Oxford Press (this ad will also appear in Hamilton, Middletown, and Dayton newspapers). This ad will be in the paper for 14 days, at an approximate total cost of eighty dollars. A copy of the proposed “call for participants” ad is attached to this proposal (see Appendix A). Second, I will place flyers in Oxford area stores calling for research participants (two proposed styles are attached, see Appendix A). Of course, I will limit myself to stores that have designated areas for posting flyers. Finally, I plan to contact several Catholic churches in the Oxford area to ask permission to put flyers calling for participants in the church and/or present the research project to parishioners at a service and provide contact information for interested Catholic women. Two churches that I plan to contact are St. Mary Catholic Church in Oxford, Ohio and St. Bridget
Catholic Church in Liberty, Indiana. A copy of my request to present is attached (see Appendix F).

Subjects will be recruited on an entirely volunteer basis. The only selection that will take place is self-selection by tentative volunteers. If any woman feels uncomfortable with the subject matter that will be covered in the survey and interview, she may freely withdraw from the survey or interview at any time.

4. Potential Risks and Discomforts

Regarding the potential risk of distress for participants in this project, the only type of distress that may possibly occur is psychological distress. Therefore, according to section III.B under Notes, I would apply a low to medium level of risk for participation in this research project. That is to say, it is possible that an individual participant may feel uncomfortable with the subject matter being addressed in the survey and/or interview. However, the precise level of risk involved for an individual is largely dependent upon the individual’s own psychological state and their level of comfort with the material that will be covered in the research. I have attempted to reduce or eliminate this risk in several ways: first, all participants will be informed of the exact nature of the study prior to taking part in either the survey or the interview. Second, participants will be informed that they may refuse to answer any question on the survey or in the interview to which they do not want to respond, without needing to justify why they choose not to answer. Further, no participant will be asked under any circumstance to justify their decision to use artificial birth control, if they do so. Finally, all data obtained from surveys and interviews will be kept strictly confidential and will not be made available to the public under any conditions, in an effort to eliminate any concern on the part of participants that their answers may be viewed by people outside of the research project.

5. Potential Benefits

There are several possible benefits of participating in this research project. A primary benefit is to individual Catholic women. While this project at no time attempts to provide definitive answers to questions of birth control in the Catholic Church, it does attempt to ascertain a general sense of how various American Catholic women view the issue of artificial birth control. This information may be helpful for individual Catholic females who are curious to know what other Catholic women think regarding the use of artificial birth control. An additional benefit of participating in this survey is that some Catholic women may desire to speak on such an issue but have not found a forum in which such discussion is possible. Therefore, they may use this project as a means for them to express their perspective on this issue in a confidential manner.

6. Informed Consent

Informed consent for this study will be obtained in writing by using an INFORMED CONSENT FORM, attached (see Appendix C). I will read the informed consent form with interested volunteers and make myself available to answer any questions to ensure that participants fully understand the nature of the study and their rights as participants. I will keep a record of informed consent in a locked file cabinet such that the identity of participants will be kept confidential during the period of research and analysis. Informed Consent records will be destroyed no later than one year after completion of the research project.

7. Exempt Status Request: Not Applicable

8. Research Methods/Procedures

A. Nature of Activities in which subjects will be engaged: Subjects will complete three short questionnaires, which require responding to a series of questions and prompts. If subject is
unable to read the questionnaire, I will read the questions aloud so the participant may respond. Subjects who choose to do so will also participate in a short interview. The interview questions are general in nature, and subjects are simply asked to provide their opinion about the questions asked. As participation in this survey is entirely voluntary, subjects may refuse to answer any questions that make them uncomfortable. Subjects will not be asked to do anything beyond the scope of ordinary activities. No physical activity is required.

B. Data gathering instruments: Subjects will be asked to complete three short questionnaires, attached (see Appendix B). Subjects will read questions from a master sheet and then circle their answer(s) on a corresponding answer sheet. Subject’s names will not appear on either data gathering document. Further, subjects will be asked to verbally respond to several interview style questions. Their responses will be tape recorded and immediately transcribed. All used tapes will be destroyed immediately following the data gathering process to ensure confidentiality (no subject will be identified by voice). Copies of interview questions are attached (see Appendix D).

C. Frequency and length of time involved: Completion of questionnaires should take approximately 30 minutes, depending on the speed of subject reading and response. Subjects will be informed of the approximate duration of the survey in the Informed Consent form (see Appendix C). Interviews should take approximately 15 minutes to complete; however, this time is variable depending on the participation of the subject. If subject desires to speak at length about any/all of the questions, duration of the interview will be longer. If the interview is not complete after 15 minutes, I will inform subjects and allow them to decide if they wish to complete the interview questions. The entire data gathering process per person should take approximately 45 minutes, allowing an additional 5 minutes to obtain informed consent prior to participating in the survey, for a total length of participation of approximately 50 minutes.

d. Training of persons involved: Adrienne J. Spillar is the only individual administering surveys and conducting interviews, as well as obtaining informed consent. Human Subject Research training was completed October 2004 at Miami University.

e. Compensation to subjects for their participation: To encourage subjects to participate and to compensate them for their time, all subjects will be entered in a drawing, to take place (tentatively) May 30, 2005 at 12pm. All participants, including those who withdraw from the survey, will be entered for a chance to win one of three total gift certificates, worth $20.00 each, to a local restaurant in Oxford, Ohio. Gift certificates will be purchased by Adrienne J. Spillar, from personal finances. While every participant will not win, it is the researcher’s perception that the chance to win a sizable gift certificate is sufficient compensation for approximately one hour of participation.

9. Research Location

Prior to the survey and/or interview with the research participant, recruitment of participants must take place. To do this effectively, I will post standard letter-size flyers at designated locations in stores that explicitly support local advertising. Further, I will advertise in area newspapers (see Appendix A) in an attempt to recruit participants. Finally, I will contact two area churches, St. Mary Catholic Church (Oxford, Ohio) and St. Bridget (Liberty, Indiana), to obtain permission to speak at weekend masses. Attached is a letter requesting such permission (Appendix F). After participants have been recruited, surveys and interviews will be held in two primary locations. I plan to reserve individual study rooms at King Library, Miami University (Oxford, Ohio) in which to conduct surveys and interviews. Reserving two rooms will allow two participants to complete surveys at a single time, thus making the research gathering more
efficient. Secondly, I plan to conduct interviews as well as surveys in Old Manse, Comparative Religion Dept., Miami University (Oxford, Ohio). I am able to reserve room 110. A primary factor when determining location was cost. I have no outside funding for this research, and must pay for aspects of this research project such as location, compensation/incentives, refreshments, or assistants. As such, I have attempted to find practical ways to manage the problem of research location. Research will be conducted primarily between 3:00pm and 7:00pm on Mondays, Wednesdays, Thursdays, and Fridays; research will also be conducted between 11am and 6pm on Sundays; appointments to conduct individual surveys or interviews will be made if the research participant is not available during the aforementioned times.

10. Procedures for Safeguarding Confidentiality of Information

This project is confidential. To meet standards of confidentiality, I will prepare a ‘key’ that includes participant’s name, telephone number, email address and age. An ID number, starting with 0001 and progressing chronologically, will be attached to each participant’s name. The participant’s ID number will be the only means to identify each participant. However, this project requires each participant to identify what age range they are in, for the express purpose of locating a response within a particular generation. Each age range covers at least five years, with the majority covering 19 years. I think this enables the researcher to gather the necessary information (generation) without sacrificing a respondent’s confidentiality. No other means of identifying a particular respondent exist in this survey. If, and only if, a respondent provides clearly identifiable information in an interview and voluntarily agrees to allow that information to be used in the thesis project (in response to a simple question: My I use this information, which may identify you, in the final paper which analyzes this data?) will any such information be used. An additional consent form, attached (Appendix E), protects both the researcher and respondents by illustrating the voluntary consent of the respondent in allowing personally identifiable information to be used (or to refuse consent).

Further, the ‘key’ will be stored during research and for a period of no more than one year following completion of research and analyzing, in a locked file cabinet in the researcher’s possession. The dataset will be transferred from paper copy to electronic copy following completion of the project; all interviews will be conducted using tape recorders which will be immediately transcribed in an electronic file, at which time the cassette tapes will be destroyed. The dataset will be maintained for a period of five years after project completion, on computer discs in the researcher’s possession. After one year, or at such time as the IRB requests, this information will be prepared for review and made entirely confidential. The purpose of maintaining the dataset beyond one year after completion of the project is to allow for comparison with datasets from possible future studies. The ‘key’ will be destroyed immediately following the first IRB annual review, thus leaving the dataset unidentifiable. All consent forms will be stored in a locked filing cabinet with the ‘key’ and will be destroyed with the ‘key’ when such time arises.

11. Deception

One justification for temporary deception is made. To recruit participants, I am not including explicit information about the subject matter covered in the survey. However, to avoid any distress on the part of possible participants, all interested volunteers will be informed of the exact nature of the subject matter covered in the survey and interview prior to signing a consent form or formally agreeing to participate in the survey. Further, if at any time during the survey and/or interview a participant does not wish to respond to a question, she is free to refuse to respond. The express nature of the survey and interview subject matter is explained in the body
of the consent form. I withhold this information on flyers, newspaper ads, and in recruitment presentations in order to encourage interested Catholic women, primarily those recruited at churches, to participate without fear of being arbitrarily labeled by other members of her community. That is to say, interested individuals may gather contact information without fear of judgment from individuals who may judge her if the explicit subject matter of the study was made known. If that individual chooses to participate in the survey and/or interview, it is then left for her to determine whether or not she chooses to share this information with other members of her family and community.
Call For Research Participants!

Needed: Catholic Women, ages 18-80
Do you have 45 minutes of your day to spare?
Please consider participating
in a survey, interview, or both
For a Miami University Graduate Student
Research Project!

All participants will be entered in a drawing for
the chance to
WIN FREE DINNER FOR TWO
at a local restaurant!*

For more information, or to sign up, please contact:
ajsmiamiu@yahoo.com
Adrienne J. Spillar
Graduate Assistant
Dept. of Comparative Religion
Miami University

Three total prizes will be awarded, one each to the first three names drawn in a random drawing. Only participants in this survey are eligible.
APPENDIX C: Survey Questions

Instructions: Please circle your response unless indicated otherwise. Please respond to these answers as honestly as possible, accurately reflecting what you think about the questions asked. You may choose not to respond to any question that makes you uncomfortable. Thank you for your participation!

These questions are more general in nature and are used for statistical purposes:

1. To what generation do you belong?
   a. Silent/Beat generation (60-79 years old)
   b. Baby Boomer generation (41-59 years old)
   c. Generation X (25-40 years old)
   d. Generation Y (18-24 years old)

2. Are you currently married, divorced, widowed, separated, or have you never been married?
   a. currently married
   b. currently divorced
   c. widowed
   d. currently separated
   e. never been married
   f. choose not to respond

3. What was the last grade or class you completed in school?
   a. some high school or less
   b. high school graduate
   c. some college or vocational school
   d. college graduate
   e. some graduate or professional school
   f. graduate or professional degree
   g. don’t know/choose not to respond

4. Did you ever attend:
   I. Catholic grade school?
      a. yes
      b. no
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   II. Catholic high school?
      a. yes
      b. no
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   III. Catholic college or university?
      a. yes
      b. no
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond

5. How would you identify your race or ethnicity?
   a. Caucasian/European
   b. African-American
   c. Hispanic/Latin-American
   d. Pacific Islander
   e. Asian
   f. Native American
   g. Middle Eastern
   h. don’t know/choose not to respond
6. Are you now employed full-time, part-time, or not currently employed?
   a. employed full-time
   b. employed part-time
   c. not currently employed
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

7. Could you please tell me what kind of work you do? (Please check all that apply)
   a. Professional worker
   b. Manager, executive, or official
   c. Business owner
   d. Clerical
   e. Sales
   f. Service
   g. skilled tradesperson
   h. semi-skilled
   i. laborer
   j. full-time student
   k. retired
   l. full-time mom/manager of house affairs
   m. other (please specify)_________________________________________________________
   n. don’t know/choose not to respond

8. Is your annual household income before taxes:
   a. under $15000
   b. $15000 to $24999
   c. $25000 to $34999
   d. $35000 to $44999
   e. $45000 to $54999
   f. $55000 to $64999
   g. $65000 to $74999
   h. $75000 to $100000
   i. over $100000
   j. don’t know/choose not to respond

9. Approximately how many hours of television do you watch per week?
   a. less than five hours
   b. five to nine hours
   c. ten to fourteen hours
   d. fifteen to twenty hours
   e. more than twenty hours

10. What types of television shows do you like to watch (please check all that apply)?
    a. reality shows
    b. news
    c. sitcoms
    d. soap operas
    e. cartoons
    f. home shopping shows
    g. sports programs
    h. tv dramas
    i. action shows
    j. religious programs
    k. other (please specify all that apply):__________________________________________
1. don’t know/choose not to respond

11. How often do you read a local newspaper?
   a. daily
   b. at least once a week
   c. once a month
   d. seldom
   e. never
   f. don’t know/choose not to respond

12. How often do you read a national newspaper?
   a. daily
   b. at least once a week
   c. once a month
   d. seldom
   e. never
   f. don’t know/choose not to respond

13. Do you read any monthly/weekly magazines?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. don’t know/choose not to respond

14. If you answered YES to 13., what magazines do you read most consistently?
    ________________________________________________________________
    ________________________________________________________________
    ________________________________________________________________

The following questions deal generally with your perception of the Catholic Church and are adapted from “Nationwide Survey by Gallup Organization” for National Catholic Reporter, May 1993 (172).

15. How did you become associated with the Roman Catholic Church?
   a. I was born into a Catholic family and have practiced Catholicism my entire life.
   b. I converted to Catholicism for personal reasons.

16. For the statements below, please tell me if it has strengthened your commitment to the Catholic Church, weakened your commitment to the Catholic Church, or had no effect one way or the other. If you don’t know or choose not to respond, tell me that.

I. The Church hierarchy’s teaching that artificial contraception is morally wrong.
   a. strengthened
   b. weakened
   c. no effect
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

II. The Church hierarchy’s teaching that abortion is morally wrong.
   a. strengthened
   b. weakened
   c. no effect
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

III. The policy of ordaining men, but not women, to the priesthood.
   a. strengthened
   b. weakened
   c. no effect
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond
IV. Reports indicating that a number of priests have allegedly abused children sexually.
   a. strengthened
   b. weakened
   c. no effect
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

V. The current financial state of American Catholic dioceses, many experiencing financial difficulties or bankruptcy.
   a. strengthened
   b. weakened
   c. no effect
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

17. Next, I would like your opinion on several issues that involve the moral authority in the Catholic Church. In each case I would like to know who you think should have the final say about what is right or wrong. The choices are 1) The Church Leaders: the pope and Bishops; 2) Individuals taking church teachings into account and deciding for themselves; 3) Individuals and leaders working together.

I. A divorced Catholic remarrying without getting an annulment.
   a. Church leaders
   b. Individuals
   c. Both
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

II. A Catholic practicing contraceptive birth control
   a. Church leaders
   b. Individuals
   c. Both
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

III. A Catholic advocating free choice regarding abortion
   a. Church leaders
   b. Individuals
   c. Both
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

IV. Sexual relations outside of marriage
   a. Church leaders
   b. Individuals
   c. Both
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

18. In the last five years, has your commitment to your local parish changed? Have you become more committed, less committed, or has there been no change?
   a. More committed
   b. Less committed
   c. No change
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

19. In the last five years, has your confidence in the American bishops changed? Have you become more confident, less confident, or has there been no change?
   a. More confident
   b. Less confident
   c. No change
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

20. In the last five years, has your confidence in the Pope and the Vatican changed? Have you become more confident, less confident, or has there been no change?
a. More confident
b. Less confident
c. No change
d. don’t know/choose not to respond

21. The following statements deal with what you think it takes to be a good Catholic. Please tell me if you think a person can be a good Catholic *without* performing these actions. “Yes” indicates that you think a person can be a good Catholic *without* performing these actions. “No” indicates that you do not think a person can be a good Catholic *without* performing these actions.

I. Without going to church every Sunday
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. don’t know/choose not to respond

II. Without obeying the Church hierarchy’s teaching regarding birth control.
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. don’t know/choose not to respond

III. Without obeying the Church hierarchy’s teaching regarding divorce and remarriage.
     a. Yes
     b. No
     c. don’t know/choose not to respond

IV. Without obeying the Church hierarchy’s teaching regarding abortion
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. don’t know/choose not to respond

V. Without believing in the infallibility of the Pope.
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. don’t know/choose not to respond

VI. Without getting married in the Church.
    a. Yes
    b. No
    c. don’t know/choose not to respond

VII. Without donating time or money to help the poor.
     a. Yes
     b. No
     c. don’t know/choose not to respond

VIII. Without donating time or money to your parish.
      a. Yes
      b. No
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond

22. Some people think the Catholic Church should have more democratic decision-making in church affairs that do not involve matters of faith than it has at present. Do you favor or oppose this idea…

I. at the local parish level?
   a. Favor
   b. Oppose
   c. don’t know/choose not to respond

II. at the diocesan level?
    a. Favor
    b. Oppose
    c. don’t know/choose not to respond

III. at the level of the Vatican?
     a. Favor
     b. Oppose
23. Here is a question about the American Catholic bishops. Should the American bishops become more independent or less independent from the Vatican and the Pope, in the way they run the Catholic Church in America? Or should the situation remain as it is now?
   a. More independent
   b. Less independent
   c. Remain the same
   d. not sure/choose not to respond

24. How important is the Catholic Church to you personally?
   a. It is the most important part of my life.
   b. It is among the most important parts of my life.
   c. It is quite important to me, but so are many other areas of my life.
   d. It is not terribly important to me.
   e. It is not important to me at all.
   f. not sure/choose not to respond

25. How often do you attend Mass?
   a. daily
   b. at least once a week
   c. almost every week
   d. about once a month
   e. seldom
   f. never
   g. choose not to respond

26. How regularly do you pray, apart from Mass?
   a. more than once a day
   b. daily
   c. at least once a week
   d. occasionally
   e. seldom
   f. never
   g. choose not to respond

27. For each of the following areas of church life, please tell me if you think the Catholic laity should have the right to participate, or should not have the right to participate:
   I. Deciding how parish income should be spent.
      a. Laity should have right to participate
      b. Laity should not have right to participate
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   II. Selecting the priests for their parish.
       a. Laity should have right to participate
       b. Laity should not have right to participate
       c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   III. Making church policy about divorce.
        a. Laity should have right to participate
        b. Laity should not have right to participate
        c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   IV. Making church policy about birth control.
       a. Laity should have right to participate
       b. Laity should not have right to participate
       c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   V. Deciding whether women should be ordained to the priesthood.
       a. Laity should have right to participate
b. Laity should not have right to participate
c. don’t know/choose not to respond

28. Imagine a scale from 1 to 7. At point 1 is the statement: “I would never leave the Catholic Church.” At point 7 is the statement: “Yes, I might leave the Catholic Church.” Where would you place yourself on that scale?
   a. 1
   b. 2
   c. 3
   d. 4
   e. 5
   f. 6
   g. 7
   h. don’t know/choose not to respond

The next set of questions deal specifically with the use of birth control.

29. Do you currently, or have you ever, used any of the following types of artificial birth control? (please check all that apply)
   a. Condom
   b. Birth control pill
   c. Diaphragm
   d. Sponge
   e. Spermicide
   f. IUD (inter uterine device)
   g. Depo provera
   h. withdrawal method
   i. choose not to respond

30A. Do you currently, or have you ever, used Natural Family Planning as a means of birth control?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. don’t know/choose not to respond

30B. (Answer this if you responded YES to 30A; if you responded NO, move to 31)
   Did you find Natural Family Planning an easy method of birth control to practice?
   a. Yes; I found it to be very simple to understand and employ.
   b. Somewhat; I thought it involved some work to keep it effective.
   c. No; I found it to be difficult to practice and time consuming.
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond.

31. Have you heard of or read the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae*?
   a. Yes, I’ve read it.
   b. Yes, I’ve heard of it but have not read it
   c. No, I have not heard of or read this encyclical.
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

32. Do you think a Catholic person can still be a good Catholic and use artificial birth control?
   a. Yes, regardless of what type of birth control is used.
   b. Yes, depending on what type of birth control is used.
   c. No, artificial birth control should not be used by good Catholics.
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

33. Imagine a scale from 1 to 5. At point 1 is the statement: “This form of artificial birth control is totally acceptable for a Catholic to use.” At point 5 is the statement: “This form of artificial birth control is completely unacceptable for a Catholic to use.” For each type of artificial birth control listed below, please locate your response on the abovementioned scale.
I. Condoms
a. 1  
b. 2  
c. 3  
d. 4  
e. 5  
f. don’t know/choose not to respond

II. Progesterone Oral Contraceptive (Birth Control Pills)  
a. 1  
b. 2  
c. 3  
d. 4  
e. 5  
f. don’t know/choose not to respond

III. Diaphragm  
a. 1  
b. 2  
c. 3  
d. 4  
e. 5  
f. don’t know/choose not to respond

IV. Sponge  
a. 1  
b. 2  
c. 3  
d. 4  
e. 5  
f. don’t know/choose not to respond

V. Spermicide (in any form)  
a. 1  
b. 2  
c. 3  
d. 4  
e. 5  
f. don’t know/choose not to respond

VI. IUD (placed in the uterus to prevent pregnancy)  
a. 1  
b. 2  
c. 3  
d. 4  
e. 5  
f. don’t know/choose not to respond

VII. Depo Provera (shots to control hormones and prevent pregnancy)  
a. 1  
b. 2  
c. 3  
d. 4  
e. 5  
f. don’t know/choose not to respond

VIII. Withdrawal Method (when male pulls penis out of the female’s vagina prior to ejaculation)  
a. 1  
b. 2  
c. 3  
d. 4  
e. 5
34. For what reasons do you currently use, or have ever used, artificial birth control? (Please check all that apply)
   a. Financial considerations
   b. Already have desired number of children
   c. Not ready to have children
   d. Do not want to have children
   e. Non-associated medical reasons (for example, using oral contraceptives like the birth control pill to control acne)
   f. Other (please specify):______________________________
   g. don’t know/choose not to respond

35. If a Catholic female considers using a form of artificial birth control, who do you think should have the final say on what is acceptable for her to use?
   a. the Individual female
   b. the local parish priest
   c. American bishops
   d. the Pope
   e. don’t know/choose not to respond

36. Do you think that the church hierarchy should make any of the following forms of artificial birth control acceptable to use by lay Catholics?
   I. Condoms
      a. Yes
      b. No
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   II. Birth Control Pills
      a. Yes
      b. No
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   III. Diaphragm
      a. Yes
      b. No
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   IV. Sponge
      a. Yes
      b. No
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   V. Spermicide
      a. Yes
      b. No
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   VI. IUD
      a. Yes
      b. No
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   VII. Depo Provera
      a. Yes
      b. No
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond
   VIII. Withdrawal Method
      a. Yes
      b. No
      c. don’t know/choose not to respond
37. In the papal encyclical *Humanae Vitae* (1967), the church hierarchy deemed any form of artificial birth control to be unacceptable (the only approved form of birth control is Natural Family Planning). Do you think the Pope and other church officials made the right decision for this time in history?
   a. Yes
   b. No
   c. Maybe; I think they need to investigate this issue again.
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond

38. What do you think about premarital sex?
   a. Premarital sex is unacceptable for good Catholics to practice.
   b. Premarital sex practiced by Catholics is acceptable, as long as they are engaged/plan to become engaged to their sexual partner.
   c. Premarital sex practiced by Catholics is acceptable regardless of whether they plan to marry their sexual partner.
   d. don’t know/choose not to respond
APPENDIX D: Participation and Informed Consent

Dear Interested Volunteer:

My name is Adrienne J. Spillar and I am a second year Master's student in Comparative Religion at Miami University in Oxford, Ohio. Under the direction of my advisor, Dr. Lisa Poirier, I am currently working on my Master's Thesis project, which investigates the use of birth control by Catholic females as well as the impact of American mainstream culture on female Catholics.

You are invited to participate in a study that investigates American Catholic females' ideas about birth control and the Catholic Church in general. I will ask you to complete a few short questionnaires that ask you what you think about the Catholic Church and different forms of birth control. One questionnaire covers general information for statistical purposes. These surveys will be entirely confidential, and your name will not be associated with them in any way. Your name will only be known by primary researcher, Adrienne J. Spillar, and is used only for contact purposes. If you choose, I will then ask you several questions in person to further investigate what you think about American mainstream culture, the Roman Catholic Church, and the use of different forms of birth control. The entire session should take approximately 45 minutes; if you choose to participate only in the survey, this session should take approximately 30 minutes. Your participation is entirely voluntary, and you may withdraw from the session at any time or refuse to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You will not be asked to do anything that exposes you to risks beyond those of everyday life. Every participant (even if you withdraw from the survey) will be entered in a random drawing with the chance to win one of three gift certificates valued at $20.00 each to a local restaurant. The benefit of the study, scientifically, is that it will help us understand more about what American Catholic women think about the use of birth control.

If you have further questions about the study, please contact Adrienne J. Spillar at 513-664-6925, or by email at ajsmiamiu@yahoo.com. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Office of Advancement of Research and Scholarship at 529-3734 or email at: humansubjects@muohio.edu

Thank you for your participation. We are very grateful for your help and hope that this will be an interesting session for you. You may keep this portion of the page.

Please cut at the line, keep the top section for your records and return the bottom section.

I agree to participate in the study about American Catholic women, birth control, and the Catholic Church. I understand my participation is voluntary and that I may refuse to answer any question on the questionnaires or in the interview. Further, I understand that my name will only be known by the primary researcher, Adrienne J. Spillar, and will not be associated with my responses whatsoever in the final paper analyzing the results of this survey. My name and contact information will only be used for the purpose of contacting me regarding the survey (such as making appointments or to inform me if I have won a gift certificate in the random drawing). I understand that I may withdraw from the survey at any time and that my participation is entirely voluntary.

________ I agree to participate in the questionnaire part of this survey.

________ I agree to participate in the interview part of this survey.

Participant's Name (printed):________________________________________________
Participant's Contact number or email: ______________________________________
Participant's signature:_____________________________________________________
Date:________________________________
APPENDIX E: Interview Questions

Instructions: Please respond as honestly as possible to the following questions. You are not expected to go into any depth in your answers, unless you freely choose to do so. You may refuse to answer any question that makes you uncomfortable.

1. How did you determine whether or not to use particular forms of artificial birth control? If you do use birth control, what kinds do you use? If you haven’t used any forms of artificial birth control, how would you go about determining what type to use? What were/are the most important factors to you in determining whether one should use birth control or not, regardless or whether or not you use birth control or if these factors affect you?

2. Do you feel that mainstream American media (including television, films, popular magazines and newspapers) is an important influence to American women? Do you think the portrayal of sex and sexuality (including the portrayal of birth control) in the media affects a Catholic woman’s perspective on sex and sexuality (and the use of birth control)? Do you think that there is too much, too little, or an appropriate amount of emphasis placed on sex and sexuality in the media today? Is this different from when you were growing up?

3. When you were growing up, what do you think were the most important influences on shaping who you are today? As a child, what did you want to be when you grew up? What historical events or major cultural trends do you remember as being very important or prominent during the time you were growing up?

4. Who do you think is the proper authority for determining what kind of birth control is appropriate for an American Catholic female (and male) to use?

5. From what source(s) do you get most of your information on current world/American events and cultural trends? (Do you use the internet, watch tv news (local or national or cable), do you watch entertainment channel shows, read newspapers/magazines?) Is there a particular reason that you get your information from the specific source(s) you mentioned?

6. What do you think is an appropriate career for a female, especially an American Catholic female, to have in 2005? Is this different from when you were growing up? What do you remember being the typical career/role for a woman when you were growing up?
APPENDIX F: Informed Consent for Use of Short Answer and Interview Responses

Voluntary Participant:

You have agreed to participate in a research project conducted by Adrienne J. Spillar, second year Master’s student in Comparative Religion at Miami University (Oxford Ohio). Thank you for your participation.

In the course of your interview, you provided information that may be considered personally identifiable or too personal to use without your explicit permission. By signing this form, you agree to allow Adrienne J. Spillar to use the content of your interview, including stories and opinions that may or may not be personally identifiable, in the final research paper which assesses the outcome of these interviews. The researcher ensures you that your name will never be associated with the contents of the interview and any names that are used in the course of your interview will be changed to protect your identity. If there is any part of your interview that you do not want to be used in the research paper (such as any answer you feel uncomfortable about), you may make that explicit below (for example, “answer to question 5”), and such portions will absolutely not be included in the research paper associated with this survey.

If you have further questions about the study, please contact Adrienne J. Spillar at 513-664-6925 or by email at ajsmiamiu@yahoo.com. If you have questions about your rights as a research participant, please call the Office of Advancement of Research and Scholarship at 529-3734 or email: humansubjects@muohio.edu.

Thank you for your participation. We are very grateful for your help and hope this has been an interesting session for you. You may keep this portion of the page.

************************************************************************

Cut at the line, keep the top section and return the bottom section. Please read each choice carefully.

________ Yes, I agree to allow the entire contents of my answers to be used in the research paper associated with this survey, with the full understanding that any directly identifiable information (such as my name/family members’ names) will be changed to protect my identity.

________ Yes, I agree to allow the content from some of my answers to be used in the research paper associated with this survey, with the exception of answers to question(s) __________________________, and with the full understanding that any directly identifiable information from questions I allow to be used will be changed to protect my identity.

Participant’s signature:_____________________________________________________

Date:____________________
### APPENDIX G: Survey Tabulations

Sample: percentages are tabulated for each generation and stored on a hard copy; this is a sample of the tabulations and contains percentages for the total number of responses across each generation.

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#### 2. I: The Church hierarchy’s teaching that artificial contraception is morally wrong.

- a. strengthened: 2; 3.92%
- b. weakened: 23; 45.10%
- c. no effect: 24; 47.06%
- d. don’t know/NR: 2; 3.92%

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#### 2. II: The Church hierarchy’s teaching that abortion is morally wrong.

- a. 17; 33.33%
- b. 10; 19.61%
- c. 22; 43.14%
- d. 2; 3.92%

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#### 2. III: The policy of ordaining men, but not women, to the priesthood.

- a. 6; 11.76%
- b. 22; 43.14%
- c. 20; 39.21%
- d. 3; 5.88%

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#### 2. IV: Reports indicating that a number of priests have allegedly abused children sexually.

- a. 4; 7.84%
- b. 33; 64.71%
- c. 9; 17.65%
- d. 0; 0.00%

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#### 2. V: The current financial state of American Catholic dioceses, many exp. financial difficulties or bankruptcy.

- a. 2; 3.92%
- b. 10; 19.61%
- c. 34; 66.67%
- d. 5; 9.80%

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#### 3. I: Who has final say?
A divorced Catholic remarrying without getting an annulment.

- a. Church leaders: 8; 15.69%
- b. Individuals: 17; 33.33%
- c. Both: 25; 49.02%
- d. Don’t know/NR: 1; 1.96%

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#### 3. II: A Catholic practicing contraceptive birth control.

- a. 1: 1.96%
- b. 41; 80.39%
- c. 9; 17.65%
- d. 0.00%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>TOTAL # RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>11111111111111111111111111 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>11111111111111111111111111 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>11111111111111111111111111 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>11111111111111111111111111 (32)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 3. III: Who has final say?
A Catholic advocating free choice regarding abortion.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Options</th>
<th>TOTAL # RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>11111111111111111111111111 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>11111111111111111111111111 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>11111111111111111111111111 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D</td>
<td>11111111111111111111111111 (32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. IV: Sexual relations outside of marriage.</td>
<td>11;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>21.57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.V: A Catholic who engages in homosexual behavior.</td>
<td>10;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>18.61%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. In the last five years, has your commitment to your local parish</td>
<td>11;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>changed?</td>
<td>12%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. In the last five years, has your confidence in the American bishops</td>
<td>1;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>changed?</td>
<td>96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. In the last five years, has your confidence in the Pope and the</td>
<td>11;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vatican changed?</td>
<td>1.96%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. I: Good Catholic without performing actions: Without going to church</td>
<td>a.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>every Sunday.</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.68%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(4)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. II: Without obeying the Church hierarchy's teaching regarding birth</td>
<td>41;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>control.</td>
<td>80.39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(3)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. III: Without obeying the Church hierarchy's teaching regarding</td>
<td>33;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>divorce and remarriage.</td>
<td>64.70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. IV: Without obeying the Church hierarchy's teaching regarding</td>
<td>21;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>abortion.</td>
<td>41.18%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. V: Without believing in the infallibility of the Pope.</td>
<td>28;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>54.90%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. VI: Without getting married in the Church.</td>
<td>29;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>56.86%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. VII: Without donating time or money to help the poor.</td>
<td>18;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>35.29%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(2)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. VII: Without donating time or money to your parish.</td>
<td>22;</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>43.14%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>(1)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. More democratic decision making...
I: at the local parish level?

- a. favor: 36; 70.59%
- b. oppose: 8; 15.69%
- c. don’t know/NR: 7; 13.72%

10. How important is the Catholic Church to you personally?

- a. it is the most important: 2; 3.92%
- b. it is among the most important: 19; 37.25%
- c. it is quite important, but so are other areas: 20; 39.21%
- d. it is not terribly important: 5; 9.80%
- e. it is not important at all: 3; 5.88%
- f. not sure/NR: 2; 3.92%

11. How often do you attend Mass?

- a. daily: 1; 1.96%
- b. at least once a week: 23; 45.10%
- c. almost every week: 7; 13.72%
- d. about once a month: 3; 5.88%
- e. seldom: 10; 19.61%
- f. never: 5; 9.80%
- g. choose not to respond: 2; 3.92%

12. How regularly do you pray, apart from Mass?

- a. more than once a day: 25; 49.01%
- b. daily: 14; 27.45%
- c. almost every week: 6; 11.76%
- d. occasionally: 4; 7.84%
- e. seldom: 1; 1.96%
## 13. Should Catholic laity participate?

I: Deciding how parish income should be spent.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. laity should have right to participate: 47;92.16%</th>
<th>b. (0)</th>
<th>c. (0)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>b. laity should not have right to part.: 2;3.92%</td>
<td>a. (1111)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. don't know/NR: 2;3.92%</td>
<td>a. (11111111111111111111111111111111)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>f. never: 1; 1.96%</td>
<td>a. (111111)</td>
<td>b. (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. choose not to respond: 0; 0.00%</td>
<td>a. (0)</td>
<td>b. (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

II: Selecting the priests for their parish.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.38; 74.51%</th>
<th>b.8; 15.69%</th>
<th>c.5; 9.80%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. (111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. (1111)</td>
<td>b. (111)</td>
<td>c. (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. (11111111111111111111111111111111)</td>
<td>b. (111)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. (11111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. (1111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

III: Making church policy about divorce.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.31; 60.78%</th>
<th>b.11; 21.56%</th>
<th>c.9; 17.64%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. (111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. (1111)</td>
<td>b. (111)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. (0)</td>
<td>a. (11111111111111111111111111111111)</td>
<td>b. (111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. (0)</td>
<td>a. (11111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. (1111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

IV: Making church policy about birth control.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.41; 80.39%</th>
<th>b.7; 13.72%</th>
<th>c.3; 5.88%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. (1111)</td>
<td>b. (111)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. (11111)</td>
<td>b. (111)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. (0)</td>
<td>a. (11111111111111111111111111111111)</td>
<td>b. (111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. (0)</td>
<td>a. (11111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. (1111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

V: Deciding whether women should be ordained to the priesthood.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a.31; 60.78%</th>
<th>b.11; 21.56%</th>
<th>c.9; 17.64%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>a. (111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. (1111)</td>
<td>b. (111)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. (0)</td>
<td>a. (11111111111111111111111111111111)</td>
<td>b. (111)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. (0)</td>
<td>a. (11111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. (1111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a:1; 17; 33.33%</th>
<th>b:2; 14; 27.45%</th>
<th>c:3; 7.84%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d:4; 5.88%</td>
<td>e:5; 3.58%</td>
<td>f:6; 0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g:7; 13.72%</td>
<td>h: don't know/NR: 1; 1.96%</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. (111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. (0)</td>
<td>e. (0)</td>
<td>f. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. (0)</td>
<td>h. (0)</td>
<td>a. (1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b. (11)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
<td>d. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. (0)</td>
<td>f. (0)</td>
<td>g. (11)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 15. Are you currently...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. currently married: 26; 50.98%</th>
<th>b. currently divorced: 9; 17.65%</th>
<th>c. widowed: 4; 7.84%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d. currently separated: 0; 0.00%</td>
<td>e. never been married: 12; 23.53%</td>
<td>f. choose not to respond: 0; 0.00%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. (111)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. (0)</td>
<td>e. (0)</td>
<td>f. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. (11111111111111111111111111111111)</td>
<td>b. (1111)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>e. (11114)</td>
<td>f. (0)</td>
<td>g. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. (0)</td>
<td>b. (0)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## 16. What was the last grade or class you completed in school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>a. some high school/less: 0; 0.00%</th>
<th>b. high school graduate: 7; 13.72%</th>
<th>c. some college or vocation:10; 19.61%</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>d. college graduate: 22;43.14%</td>
<td>e. some grad/prof:5; 9.80%</td>
<td>f. grad/prof degree: 7; 13.72%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. don't know/NR: 0; 0.00%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------</td>
<td>--------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. (0)</td>
<td>b. (11)</td>
<td>c. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>d. (0)</td>
<td>e. (11)</td>
<td>f. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>g. (0)</td>
<td>a. (0)</td>
<td>b. (0)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>c. (0)</td>
<td>d. (0)</td>
<td>e. (0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| a. (0) | b. (11) | c. (0) | d. (0) | e. (11) | f. (0) |
| g. (0) | a. (0) | b. (0) | c. (0) |
| d. (0) | e. (0) | f. (0) | g. (0) |
17. Did you ever attend:
I: Catholic grade school?
- Yes: 30; 58.82%
- No: 21; 41.18%
- Don't know/NR: 0; 0.00%

II: Catholic high school?
- Yes: 22; 43.14%
- No: 29; 56.86%
- Don't know/NR: 0; 0.00%

III: Catholic college or university?
- Yes: 12; 23.53%
- No: 39; 76.47%
- Don't know/NR: 0; 0.00%

18. How would you identify race or ethnicity?
- Caucasian: 50; 98.04%
- African-American: 0; 0.00%
- Hispanic: 0; 0.00%
- Pacific Islander: 0; 0.00%
- Asian: 0; 0.00%
- Native American: 1; 1.96%
- Don't know/NR: 0; 0.00%

19. Are you now...
- Employed full-time: 36; 69.23%
- Employed part-time: 9; 17.31%
- Not currently employed: 6; 11.54%
- Don't know/NR: 0; 0.00%

20. Could you tell me what kind of work you do? Check all that apply.
- Professional worker: 26; 50.98%
- Manager, executive: 4; 7.84%
- Business owner: 2; 3.92%
- Clerical: 9; 17.65%
- Sales: 4; 7.84%
- Service: 5; 9.80%
- Skilled tradesperson: 2; 3.92%
- Semi-skilled: 0; 0.00%
- Laborer: 0; 0.00%
- Full-time student: 3; 5.88%
- Full or part-time: 4; 7.84%
- Retired: 3; 5.88%
- Full-time mom/MHA: 4; 7.84%
- Other: 7; 13.72%
- Don't know/NR: 2; 3.92%

21. Is your annual household income before taxes:
- Under $15,000: 3; 5.88%
- $15,000-$24,999: 3; 5.88%
- $25,000-$34,999: 4; 7.84%
- $35,000-$44,999: 5; 9.80%
- $45,000-$54,999: 5; 9.80%
- $55,000-$64,999: 4; 7.84%
- $65,000-$74,999: 2; 3.92%
- $75,000-$100,000: 9; 17.65%
- Over $100,000: 3; 5.88%
- Don't know/NR: 7; 13.72%

Silent Generation
Baby Boomers
Generation X
Millennium Generation

18. How would you identify race or ethnicity?
- Caucasian: 50; 98.04%
- African-American: 0; 0.00%
- Hispanic: 0; 0.00%
- Pacific Islander: 0; 0.00%
- Asian: 0; 0.00%
- Native American: 1; 1.96%
- Don't know/NR: 0; 0.00%

19. Are you now...
- Employed full-time: 36; 69.23%
- Employed part-time: 9; 17.31%
- Not currently employed: 6; 11.54%
- Don't know/NR: 0; 0.00%

20. Could you tell me what kind of work you do? Check all that apply.
- Professional worker: 26; 50.98%
- Manager, executive: 4; 7.84%
- Business owner: 2; 3.92%
- Clerical: 9; 17.65%
- Sales: 4; 7.84%
- Service: 5; 9.80%
- Skilled tradesperson: 2; 3.92%
- Semi-skilled: 0; 0.00%
- Laborer: 0; 0.00%
- Full-time student: 3; 5.88%
- Full or part-time: 4; 7.84%
- Retired: 3; 5.88%
- Full-time mom/MHA: 4; 7.84%
- Other: 7; 13.72%
- Don't know/NR: 2; 3.92%

21. Is your annual household income before taxes:
- Under $15,000: 3; 5.88%
- $15,000-$24,999: 3; 5.88%
- $25,000-$34,999: 4; 7.84%
- $35,000-$44,999: 5; 9.80%
- $45,000-$54,999: 5; 9.80%
- $55,000-$64,999: 4; 7.84%
- $65,000-$74,999: 2; 3.92%
- $75,000-$100,000: 9; 17.65%
- Over $100,000: 3; 5.88%
- Don't know/NR: 7; 13.72%
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>Silent Generation</th>
<th>Baby Boomers</th>
<th>Generation X</th>
<th>Millennium Generation</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>22. Do you currently, or have you ever, used the following:</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>112 total responses</td>
<td>31;60.78%,</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percent tabulated rep. n/51 and n/112, resp.</td>
<td>27.68%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Condoms</td>
<td>31;1(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Birth control pill</td>
<td>3;1(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diaphragm</td>
<td>5;1(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sponge</td>
<td>23;9.80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Depo provera</td>
<td>2;9.80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Methotrexet</td>
<td>1;9.80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Withdrawal</td>
<td>14;27.45%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I choose not to respond</td>
<td>5;1(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never responded</td>
<td>3;1(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No one else available</td>
<td>2;9.80%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time taken to comply</td>
<td>5;13.72%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/Not relevant</td>
<td>3;1(2)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there another contraceptive you're familiar with?</td>
<td>5;13.72%</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>23. Do you currently, or have you ever used Natural Family planning?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>11;2</td>
<td></td>
<td>a.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>34;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>b.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/Not relevant</td>
<td>19;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>c.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>1;2</td>
<td></td>
<td>d.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Never responded</td>
<td>22;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>e.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time taken to comply</td>
<td>22;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Is there another contraceptive you're familiar with?</td>
<td>22;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>g.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>24. Have you heard of or read the papal encyclical Humanae Vitae?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>a.1(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>b.1(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't know/Not relevant</td>
<td>22;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>c.1(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>1;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>d.1(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never responded</td>
<td>22;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>e.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time taken to comply</td>
<td>22;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
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<td>25. Do you think a Catholic can be a good Catholic and use art. Birth</td>
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<tr>
<td>control?</td>
<td>3;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>a.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>1;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>b.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>22;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>c.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/Not relevant</td>
<td>22;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>d.1(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>1;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>e.1(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never responded</td>
<td>22;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time taken to comply</td>
<td>22;1(1)</td>
<td></td>
<td>g.1(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. II: Progesterone Oral Contraceptive (birth control pills)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>36;70.59%</td>
<td></td>
<td>a.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23;9.82%</td>
<td></td>
<td>b.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Don't know/Not relevant</td>
<td>23;9.82%</td>
<td></td>
<td>c.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>13;13.72%</td>
<td></td>
<td>d.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Never responded</td>
<td>23;9.82%</td>
<td></td>
<td>e.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time taken to comply</td>
<td>23;9.82%</td>
<td></td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26. III: Diaphragm</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Yes</td>
<td>33;64.70%</td>
<td></td>
<td>a.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>No</td>
<td>23;9.82%</td>
<td></td>
<td>b.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Don't know/Not relevant</td>
<td>23;9.82%</td>
<td></td>
<td>c.1(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Somewhat</td>
<td>13;13.72%</td>
<td></td>
<td>d.1(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Never responded</td>
<td>23;9.82%</td>
<td></td>
<td>e.1(1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Time taken to comply</td>
<td>23;9.82%</td>
<td></td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. IV: Sponge</td>
<td>f.5; 9.80%</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
<td>f.1111(3)</td>
<td>f.(0)</td>
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<tr>
<td>a.30: 58.82% b.1: 1.96% c.3: 5.88% d.2: 3.92% e.6: 11.76% f.9: 17.65%</td>
<td>a.1(1) b.(0) c.1(1) d.(0) e.1(1) f.11(2)</td>
<td>a.11111111111111111111 (20)</td>
<td>a.111111(6) b.(0) c.(0) d.(0) e.1(1) f.(0)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.33: 64.70% b.0: 0.00% c.3: 5.88% d.2: 3.92% e.8: 15.69% f.5: 9.80%</td>
<td>a.1(1) b.(0) c.1(1) d.(0) e.11(2) f.1(1)</td>
<td>a.1111111111111111111111 (23)</td>
<td>a.111111(6) b.(0) c.(0) d.(0) e.1(1) f.(0)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26. V: Spermicide</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
<td>f.1111(3)</td>
<td>f.(0)</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
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<tr>
<td>(any form)</td>
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<tr>
<td>a.26: 50.98% b.3: 5.88% c.5: 9.80% d.3: 5.88% e.11: 21.57% f.5: 9.80%</td>
<td>a.1(1) b.11(2) c.1(1) d.(0) e.111(3) f.(0)</td>
<td>a.11111111111111111111111111111 (17)</td>
<td>a.111111(5) b.(0) c.1(1) d.(0) e.1(1) f.(0)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a.27: 52.94% b.3: 5.88% c.5: 9.80% d.1: 1.96% e.10: 19.61% f.5: 9.80%</td>
<td>a.11(2) b.(0) c.(0) d.(0) e.11(2) f.1(1)</td>
<td>a.11111111111111111111111111111 (17)</td>
<td>a.111111(5) b.(0) c.1(1) d.(0) e.1(1) f.(0)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>26. VI: IUD</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
<td>f.1111(3)</td>
<td>f.(0)</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.25: 49.02% b.3: 5.88% c.3: 5.88% d.3: 5.88% e.15: 29.41% f.2: 3.92%</td>
<td>a.1(1) b.(0) c.1(1) d.(0) e.111(3) f.(0)</td>
<td>a.11111111111111111111111111111111 (15)</td>
<td>a.11111111111111111111111111111111 (15)</td>
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<tr>
<td>a.26: 50.98% b.3: 5.88% c.5: 9.80% d.3: 5.88% e.11: 21.57% f.5: 9.80%</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (17)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (17)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (17)</td>
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<tr>
<td>a.33: 64.70% b.0: 0.00% c.3: 5.88% d.2: 3.92% e.8: 15.69% f.5: 9.80%</td>
<td>a.1(1) b.(0) c.1(1) d.(0) e.111(2) f.1(1)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (17)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (17)</td>
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<tr>
<td>26. VII: Depo</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
<td>f.1111(3)</td>
<td>f.(0)</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
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<td>Provera</td>
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<td>26. VIII: Withdrawal</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
<td>f.1111(3)</td>
<td>f.(0)</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>method</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a.30: 58.82% b.1: 1.96% c.3: 5.88% d.2: 3.92% e.6: 11.76% f.9: 17.65%</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (20)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (20)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (20)</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>a.33: 64.70% b.0: 0.00% c.3: 5.88% d.2: 3.92% e.8: 15.69% f.5: 9.80%</td>
<td>a.1(1) b.(0) c.1(1) d.(0) e.11(2) f.1(1)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (23)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (23)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>26. For what what</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
<td>f.1111(3)</td>
<td>f.(0)</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>reasons do you use, or have ever used, artificial birth control? (check all that apply)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. financial considerations: 16; 31.37% b. already desired # of children: 23: 45.10% c. not ready to have kids: 20: 39.21% d. don't want to have kids: 6: 11.76% e. non-ass. Medical reasons: 9: 17.64 f. other: 5: 9.80% g. don't know/NR: 3: 5.88%</td>
<td>a.111(3) b.111(2) c.(0) d.(0) e.1(1) f.1(0)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (15)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (15)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. Individual female:49; 96.08% b. the local parish priest: 1; 1.96% c. American bishops: 0; 0.00% d. the pope: 1; 1.96%</td>
<td>a.111111(5) b.(0) c.(0) d.(0)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (30)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (30)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>28. Final say on birth control use by Catholic female…Right decision?</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
<td>f.1111(3)</td>
<td>f.(0)</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a. yes: 3: 5.88% b. no: 36: 70.59% c. maybe; reinvestigate: 7: 13.72% d. don't know/NR: 2: 3.92%</td>
<td>a.0 b.11(2) c.11(2) d.1(1)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (24)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (24)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>29. In <em>Humanae Vitae</em>, the Church deemed art. Birth control unacceptable…Right decision?</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
<td>f.1111(3)</td>
<td>f.(0)</td>
<td>f.1(1)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.0 b.11(2) c.11(2) d.1(1)</td>
<td>a.11 (2)—not enough background to judge appropriate for all Catholics a.11 (2)—not enough background to judge appropriate for all Catholics b.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (24)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (24)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111111 (24)</td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
30. How did you become associated with Roman Catholic Church?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>a. I was born into Catholic family; practiced all my life: 45, 88.23%</th>
<th>b. I converted for personal reasons: 8, 11.76%</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a.11111(4) b.1(1)</td>
<td>a.111111111111111111111111111111111111 (27) (1- until recently) b.111111(5)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>a.1111111(7) b.(0)</td>
<td>a.11111111(7) b.(0)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>