The Devil’s Advocate and the Church: Building adaptable organizations
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An institutional field is a set of practices, beliefs, symbols and logics shared among the actors that operate in the field (J. W. Meyer and Rowan 1977; Powell and DiMaggio 1991). Where fields come from and how they change are questions that have vexed institutional scholars of organizations for quite some time (Lounsbury 2007). In the last ten years or so, a growing body of research has highlighted the importance of social movements as the mechanism through which fields change or new fields emerge (McAdam and Scott 2005). Social movements articulate claims into challenges thereby creating new fields (Armostrong 2002). This paper contributes to this body of research by studying how an organization was able to promote institutional change from the center of a field by channeling the legitimacy generated by local religious movements. The organization under scrutiny is the Catholic Church, the movements are those composed of candidates to sainthood and their circles of acolytes, the institutional change is the switch from early to modern sainthood and the period goes from the mid sixteenth century to the mid of the seventeenth century.

The Church transformed sainthood by developing rules and procedures that created a space for the articulation of the demands for change that sprung from the local social movements. These rules and procedures created new institutions and, more broadly, the possibility of a non-contentious interaction between the Church and the local activists. What is theoretically new about the transformation of sainthood is not that demands for change emerged endogenously from the field—indeed this argument has been extensively covered by recent scholarship (see next section)—but rather that the organization at the center of this field created new institutions (like the Devil’s advocate) for interacting in a non-contentious way with the local social movements and for promoting change. Indeed, modern sainthood emerged not as the result of a strategically articulated plan from Rome or as the result of threatening demands of activists; rather modern sainthood was the byproduct of a process characterized by lots of happenstance, tensions, and sudden changes of policies. Local activists and central officials from Rome both interacted to transform sainthood. This chapter treats this transformation as the prototypical example of how churches can maintain fit with their environments.

Understanding why studying a case that occurred half a millennium ago is still relevant for contemporary churches requires conceptualizing modern religious fields as dominated by multiple and competitive logics articulated around discourses of power and status (Gomez 2011). This was the religious environment that emerged for the first time in Western history in the aftermath of the Protestant Schism. In order to survive modern churches have to create institutions capable of transforming competitive claims brought forward by challengers into legitimacy building interactions. Generating new institutions (rules and procedures) therefore is a way for modern churches to maintain fit with their fields—much like the Church did during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. While contentious interactions are one avenue through which change can occur in highly stable institutional fields
(Scott 1991; Meyer, Brooks, and Goes 1990), non-contentious interactions are part and parcel of a church’s relationship with its field. Theorizing the possibility of non-contentious interactions between established religious organizations and activists implies also seeing organizational rules and procedures mainly as instruments for integrating interests rather than for expressing power (Fox Piven and Cloward 2005; Elias 1969). The integration of interests is the main way churches can use to gain legitimacy (Wilde 2007).

My decision to equate candidates to sainthood and their acolytes to social movements requires further clarification. While all the candidates in this period articulated strong demands for change, they did not directly pursue local mobilization in order to achieve their goals. Candidates were instead charismatic leaders and as such attracted people from different walks of life. Acolytes, on the other hand, directly pursue local mobilization in order to see their leaders recognized as saints. Furthermore, the activism of acolytes occurred in large part only after the candidate’s death, through post mortem miracles. The analogy of such complex reality to social movements captures what was constant across all the local contexts in which the candidates operated but it leaves out the fact that mobilization occurred as a multi-steps process with lots of local idiosyncrasies. Thus, in some cases acolytes built local mobilization rather quickly after the death of the leader (ex: Carlo Borromeo); while in other cases, acolytes were considerably slower (ex: Pasqual Baylon). Seeing both cases (and several others) as examples of local social movements highlights that the main aspect of modern sainthood is not in the fact that candidates could muster support (as it was the case for pre-Modern sainthood) but the fact that such support is organized, i.e., that it has activists nurturing and orchestrating local mobilization.

**Promoting institutional change from the center of a field**

Movements promote institutional change not exclusively from operating outside of fields (McAdam, Tarrow, and Tilly 2001) or via the state (Weber, Rao, and L. G. Thomas 2009) but also from operating within fields. As Marc Schneiberg and Michael Lounsbury put it, movements can sometimes promote change by engaging in institutional processes that “...[by] drawing on existing institutions and taken-for-granted understandings... articulate and combine new projects or practices with prevailing models and arrangements. (2008:654). From this perspective institutional transformation is not a sequence of contentious interactions between actors (Clemens 1997); rather it is the result of incremental strategies that mobilize insiders and outsiders. Neil Fligstein and Doug McAdam recently emphasized a similar point. They noticed that much of the literature on movements has suffered from an over-emphasis on seeing change as a rare event (2011). This insight is particularly relevant in the context of fields characterized by multiple and conflicting logics, like those that modern churches inhabit and that emerged in the Western world in the period here under scrutiny. In this type of environment any equilibrium is per force temporary (Knight 1921).

Fluid environments are rippled with opportunities for change that
entrepreneurs can use to support their causes. Paul DiMaggio calls activists of this type "institutional entrepreneurs", emphasizing the ideological underpinning of their actions. According to him institutional entrepreneurs engage in processes of meaning-making that use existing logics to their advantage (DiMaggio 1988). Huggy Rao and Simona Giorgi provide an example of this type of activism in their article about the emergence of private prisons in the U.S. They explain the emergence of private prison as a case of subversion, i.e., of insiders using pre-existing logics to promote the emergence of a new institution. Subversion worked in this case because it created an alignment of interests between corporations, which aimed at profiting from operating prisons, and the state, which had to manage an overgrowing prison population (Rao and Giorgi 2006).

Many have noticed that when activists promote change from within a field they often do so by using non-contentious tactics (Melucci 1985) that give rise to a piecemeal process of institutional change (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008). The coalescence of interests of the different actors operating in the field (activists, organizations and institutions) toward achieving change is fundamental for analytically capture when such a process can lead to successful outcomes, i.e., the transformation of a field or the emergence of a new field. Jennifer Lena, for example, shows how music genre evolves from the coalescence of the industry's interests with the taste of audiences, and how the solidification of this process creates new music styles like rap, bluegrass, and bebop jazz (2012).

These and other examples (Bartley 2007) make clear that endogenous change, either promoted by social movements or from institutional entrepreneurs, develops for the most part from actors located at the periphery of a field. A risk implicit in this approach is in forgetting the extent to which organizations are themselves agents of change capable of deeply altering the field in which they operate and shaping the actions of the activists (Selznick 1980; Gouldner 1965). This oversight is particularly problematic for contemporary churches because they operate in fields that have multiple conflicting logics (Thornton 2002; Friedland and Alford 1991) and are characterized by a general fluidity that requires a strong capacity for adaptation and hence change. Too often neo-institutional scholars have relegated the "activism" of organizations to the enactment of window-dressing procedures, formally complying with the requests of the movements (or of the state) but de facto resisting change (Westphal and Zajac 2001; Edelman 1992).

The argument this chapter makes is not that modern churches maintain fit with their environments by de-coupling. Neither, I argue that institutional entrepreneurs transformed sainthood, although clearly some of the actors within a special commission I investigated for this chapter could be seen from such a perspective. What this chapter shows is that in the context of fluid environments where equilibrium is always temporary, churches adapts by creating new institutions that turn challenges into legitimacy building processes. My argument about the transformation of sainthood suggests a parallel with Rao et al.'s account about the transformation of the French cuisine at the end of the 1960s (Rao, Monin, and Durand 2003). They argued that political movements external to the field of cooking were the generators of cultural frames that altered the field of French cuisine by entering the professional schools where French chefs trained. The
transformation of French cooking occurred through an identity movement that swept the field from its center.1

Similarly, this chapter highlights a unique path toward institutional change that occurred not only endogenously but also from the central actors operating in the field. Change occurred because the procedures that the Church created were able to integrate the interests of all different actors operating in the field. Local activists wanted a way to reduce competition from other activists and central officials from Rome were looking for a way to gain legitimacy. Nevertheless, it is important to emphasize that tensions existed throughout the period when sainthood was transformed. What happened historically was not a pre-determined outcome and what we learn from studying this case is that modern churches can use procedures and rules in order to promote change.

Analytical set-up of empirical case

Empirically, the chapter considers the interactions that developed between the Catholic Church and several religious movements organized around charismatic leaders in the period known as the Counter Reformation in various locales in Southern Europe. These movements articulated messages of reform that often encountered overt opposition from the Church. Yet, the central officials of the Church did also develop procedures for incorporating some of the claims emerging from these prototypical movements. This created a non-contentious interaction that generated new symbols and cultural frames through which to interpret modern saints (Papa 2001; Parigi 2006).

In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the position of religious leadership outside of the hierarchy of the Church implied a general capacity to perform supernatural wonders. Most of these leaders attracted supporters for themselves by operating miracles. On the basis of these miracles, the early supporters of a leader, i.e., the acolytes, made broad claims about their leader’s sanctity after his death. Acolytes waited for the death of their leader before going public with their claims in accordance with the Catholic doctrine that required alleged saints to be in Paradise in order to intercede with God. While disorganized claims about sanctity from a group of fervent believers might have been sufficient in the pre-modern period to garner public recognition of sanctity, in the aftermath of the Protestant Schism the Church developed more stringent criteria (Veraja 1988). These criteria did not squelch the claims made locally by acolytes; neither did they simply co-opt rivals for religious authority or relevance into the fold of the Church while leaving sainthood otherwise as it had been for a thousand years before. Rather, the new procedures of the Church made a well-organized local mobilization

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1 Similarly to the case of the French cousin, I see the impact of the Protestantism in Catholic countries in challenging taken-for-granted beliefs and practices, including the occurrence of miracles and the actions of miracle makers. The general skepticism toward miracles that became the norm within the commission is very well reflected in the figure of the Devil’s advocate, i.e., of somebody called to question the truth of every supernatural act.
in support of a miracle-maker a requirement for achieving sainthood. Acolytes that were able to become religious activists saw their claims recognized by Rome and the cult of their leader institutionalized. In large part, acolytes-turned-activists won the support of their local communities by creating the conditions for the occurrence of more miracles—this time, post mortem.

The material conditions of everyday life in sixteenth- and seventeenth-century Europe provide a starting point for understanding why miracles were such a powerful mobilization tool. Uncertainty shaped every aspect of individual life, and people had different strategies for coping with hardships. A miracle was a cultural product that reduced uncertainty—something unusual occurred, and a miracle explained why. Because of their power to explain the inexplicable, miracles brought comfort (Gertz 1966). Common acceptance of miracles as reducers of uncertainty constituted the necessary social context for explaining their mobilizing power. From this perspective, it is not surprising that each generation had its saints to give a sense of meaning to life’s hardships and mitigate life’s vicissitudes. The rapid succession of saints in time resulted from the inner logic of people striving for stability in an unstable world. Miracles were welcomed as long as people’s material conditions continued to be precarious, and generation after generation, charismatic individuals emerged to perform them.

The period of analysis starts in 1542, when Rome created the Santo Uffizio (or Roman Inquisition), and ends in 1642, when the procedures for canonization were consolidated and the new field of modern sainthood emerged (Decreta et ordo procedenti in causis beatificat. et canonizat. sanctorum, S.D.N. Urbani P. P. VIII iussu editus). I examine 411 miracles reported by more than a 1,000 testifiers on behalf of seven miracle-makers. These trials (called canonization trials) were held after the death of the miracle-maker to establish his sainthood. While the candidates performed some miracles during their lives (in vitam), the bulk of them occurred after their death (post mortem). Evidence was extracted from three archives—the Vatican Secret Archive (ASV), the Vatican Apostolic Library (BAV) and the Archivio della Congregazione per le Cause dei Santi (ACS)—and coded in English from the original language—Latin, Italian, or Spanish.

The paper is organized in the following way: First, I broadly survey the characteristics of pre-modern sainthood. Then, I document the type of mobilization that candidates and acolytes were building from the ground in the aftermath of Protestant Schism and what was Rome’s view on such mobilization. This is the more narrative part of the chapter and the one that relies more on secondary sources. The second part of the chapter uses instead the primary evidence I extracted from the Vatican archives mentioned above. Here I first describe my sample strategy and then I show the type of mobilization candidates were building locally and which miracles the special commission accepted to be true and why. It was the birth of modern sainthood. In the discussion I emphasize the implications of my argument about institutional transformation from the center for studying churches as organizations.
Pre-modern sainthood: a segmented model

Before 1542, Rome did not have a monopoly on adjudicating miracles and consequently two versions of sainthood existed—one high (or learned), based on formal procedures promulgated by Rome, and the other low, based on popular support (Boesch-Gajano 1999; Duby 1980; Ginzburg 1976). While Rome’s recognition lent greater prestige to a candidate’s cause, it was de facto unnecessary for becoming a saint. Support for Rome’s saints tended to come from the higher strata of European societies, although this did not exclude other kinds of support. By contrast, low saints tended to have many followers among the lower classes. The institutional structure of sainthood sustained the religious heterogeneity of Europe (Vigo 1994; Moore 2000; K. Thomas 1983; Hall 1965).

The consequence of the division of sainthood was that while Rome’s saints had prestige, people’s saints had followers (Vauchez 2000). In both cases, however, miracles were judged on the basis of their content. While Rome considered true the miracles that imitated those recounted in the Gospels (Gotor 2000), the true miracles that popular saints performed were those that contradicted common beliefs about how nature worked (Hertz 1928; Delumeau 1976; Delooz 1969). Adjudicating miracles on the basis of their fidelity to the Gospels helped Rome promote its version of sainthood as high, since these miracles ultimately imitated those that Jesus had performed. Conversely, the content of the miracles that people’s saints performed answered the needs of their audiences (Kleinberg 1994; Delooz 1983), which assured these saints a large following. In sum, pre-modern sainthood had the following characteristics: (1) it was segmented by [status line] status; (2) sanctity was easy to access as multiple authorities bestowed the title of saint; (3) miracles were adjudicated on the basis of their content.

The Protestant Schism (1517) and the printing press put an end to the segmented version of sainthood that had characterized Europe since the fall of the Western Roman Empire. On the one hand, Protestants removed the veil on the use of saint relics as instruments that the local Church and Rome used to generate money. Martin Luther in Germany, Calvin in Switzerland and several other religious reformers argued that beliefs in the power of relics were rooted in superstitious ideas and sorcery and that there was no need for the intercession of the saints to reach contact with the divine. On the other hand, the printing press quickly spread the revolutionary ideas of these thinkers at such a pace that Rome’s traditional means for controlling heresies—geographically isolating the religious movement and physically removing the leadership by confinement or death—were ineffective. Heterodox ideas about saints circulated quickly throughout the entire continent, including countries in Southern Europe that had the most active cultural centers of the continent (Evennett 1968; Bossy 1976). For instance, a peasant woman from a village in Galicia (Spain), when interviewed by an Inquisition official, expressed the following opinion about priests: "What sort of Mass should I go to? There is no priestly Mass which is not a swindle and humbug, for the whole thing merely consists of taking a lump of dough and putting it between two hot irons, and afterwards taking out a host and saying it is Our Lord" (Contreras and Henningsen 1986:11). Carlo Ginzburg documents how during the same period in Italy the circulation of books enabled the diffusion of heterodox ideas both between elites
across regions and locally across social strata (Ginzburg 1970).

Charismatic local leaders, some of whom became candidates for sainthood, harshly criticized what they perceived as Rome’s corruption (Delumeau 1976). Some, like Capuchin General Bernardino Ochino, were forced to leave Italy to escape incarceration (Adorni-Bracci 1994). As Massimo Firpo and John Tedeschi have noted, heterodox ideas fueled religious dissent that involved "common people, artisans, teachers, merchants, but also celebrated intellectuals, high-ranking preachers and prelates as well as members of the highest social classes, reigning princes and great aristocrats" (Firpo and Tedeschi 1996:335). In the span of just few decades, the religious environment of Europe had become integrated, making the inconsistencies of the old medieval sainthood apparent and, most importantly, no longer sustainable. In the aftermath of the Protestant Schism, Rome faced a political, military and economic challenge in Northern Europe\(^2\) and a crisis of religious legitimacy in the heart of its territory.

**Miracle-makers as non-contentious social movements**

Most definitions of a social movement emphasize the idea of contention (Della Porta and Diani 1999). Thus, for example, Tarrow writes that social movements are contentious networks able to sustain challenges to powerful opponents (1996). For Tilly, social movements are organized actors that use repertoires for protesting against authority that are contingent to the given historical circumstances (1985). This line of research has made contention synonymous with change.

It is precisely because movements seek to produce institutional change that the merging of social movement theory with the neo-institutional theory has been theoretically useful (Armostron 2002). Social movements operate similarly to theoretical engines that can explain the emergence of new institutional logics or the de-institutionalization of old logics (Scott 2008). However, social movements sometimes promote institutional change without using contentious repertoires of protests. Such is the case, for example, with the introduction of organic food in grocery stores in the U.K., where a kind of ideological similarity (Zald, Morrill, and Rao 2005) developed between organic-food-promoting activists and management of the stores (Schurman and Munro 2009).

In the fluid environment that followed the Protestant Schism, new religious movements centered on charismatic miracle-makers articulated strong messages of reform without using contentious tactics or violence. Miracle-makers conducted

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\(^2\) Although there are no reliable surveys of the European population at the time, demographers estimate that Northern Europe had perhaps as many as 10 million inhabitants (Molls 1979; Flinn 1983), the great majority of whom followed their rulers in abandoning Catholicism in the sixteenth century (according to the principle, *Cuius regio, eius religio*). Similarly devastating for Rome was the post-Schism loss of property to Protestants, including convents, monasteries, and land. Before 1517, Rome directly controlled a quarter of the land in what is roughly today’s Germany and Czech Republic, the majority of which the Church lost in the aftermath of the Schism (Streit 1929). At the same time, within Catholic territories, an explosion of heretical (Ginzburg 1976) and heterodox (Keitt 2005) ideas followed the Schism.
exemplary lives strictly in keeping with the teachings of the old fathers of the Church and of Jesus; this, along with their charismatic capacities, attracted followers and a general sympathy. In the period this chapter considers, miracle-makers of this type flourished in Southern Europe. For instance, the number of petitions for the opening of a canonization trial that reached Rome during this period grew exponentially (ASV, Index of the Congregation for the Causes of Saints). Bearing in mind that a large number of these trials did not result in any official recognition, this statistic nevertheless provides a sense of the religious fervor that characterized Catholic countries at the time. Sallmann, for instance, compared the number of petitions that reached Rome in this period to the top of a pyramid whose base was made of many more charismatic leaders that lacked either the support or the sophistication to draw the attention of Rome (1994).

Despite the lack of contentious tactics, local religious authorities and Rome were quite suspicious of miracle-makers and of their mounting support. Teresa of Avila for example was several times sent to cell confinement for her heterodox teachings and Filippo Neri was scorned by the higher Church authorities in Rome for his anti-carnival walks that attracted thousands of people. Exacerbating tensions with local authorities, the message of reform that miracle-makers put forward during their lives became very often the foundations of new religious orders. Sometimes this created tension with other existing orders operating locally, as when for example a friar of the order of the Umiliati in Milan shot Carlo Borromeo, the charismatic leader (and cardinal) who wanted to abolish the order.

If the seeds of the new religious order planted by the miracle-maker were to grow, however, acolytes would need to receive Rome's recognition. A successful recognition from Rome, either in turning the miracle-maker into a 'blessed' or a 'saint' (see below for a distinction between these two titles), would result in a stream of pilgrims visiting the saintly body. A saint, by definition, performs miracles, and so pilgrims seeking miracles would produce a steady flow of donations. Revenues were fundamental for establishing the nascent religious order on a firmer ground and for supporting new administrative positions and offices. At the time of the charismatic leader's death, acolytes had means and motives for organizing local consensus into a social movement.

A tension emerged consequently between the message of reform that the miracle-maker articulated during his life and the acolytes' attempt to routinize what had been a charisma-based structure into a more durable organizational structure once the leader died. The movements that acolytes created was similar in many respect to an identity movement in that it did not have a bureaucratic structure supporting it and articulated demands of autonomy rather than justice (Rao et al. 2003) As I will argue in the next section, the claims of the acolytes were successful in reforming sainthood because officials in Rome partially looked at them as a way to regain legitimacy. Rome wanted organized local consensus and looked favorably at religious activists capable of generating it.

The greatest obstacle acolytes faced in order to navigate the tension between building a movement capable of attracting Rome’s attention and the message of reform their leader articulated during his life was competition with other activists in the same city or in nearby villages. Indeed, religious competition was creating
havoc at all levels of Catholic hierarchy. For instance, a priest in a small village near Milan was exasperated by all the attention attracted by a crying image of the Virgin Mary in a nearby parish. During the trial held by the Church authority on the case, he told the judges explicitly that his constituency was diverting prayers and money to the other parish, creating problems for him and his church (Sangalli 1993). Competition was particularly fierce where supernatural results were perceived to be produced by a candidate’s relics. For example, the internal organs of Filippo Neri (one of the candidates considered in this paper) were secretly taken from Rome and brought to Naples, where they ended up in the hands of a noblewoman (Il primo processo). Similarly, the head of Bernardino of Santa Lucia, another candidate included in this analysis, was stolen from the Franciscan Church in Agrigento, Italy, where the whole body lay exposed (ASV 2209). Such anecdotal examples could continue for several pages.

Despite the message of reform miracle-makers pushed forward in their lives and against the background of the Protestant Schism, the interests of Rome and those of acolytes were not in conflict. Both parties stood to gain from procedures and rules capable of integrating interests and generating a reformed—i.e., more modern and systemic—version of sainthood.

Rome’s perspective on religious ferment in Southern Europe

Organizational scholars have largely seen rules and procedures as tools for protecting an organization from changing. For example, organizations often insulate themselves from the influences of the larger environment by adopting rules that only formally are in favor of change. Underlying this perspective is the assumption that rules are mostly an instrument for expressing power (Fox Piven and Cloward 2005). A different tradition in sociology has, however, highlighted the importance of rules as tools for coordinating behavior (Elias 1992) and for creating integration (Durkheim 1982). The dual function that rules can perform, either as instruments for preventing organizational change or as tools for promoting integration between actors, is consistent with the analysis of Alvin Gouldner of the behavior of three organizations during the 1950s. In order to be effective, Gouldner argued, rules have to align with the interests and the beliefs of all actors within an organization (1965). That is, rules promote integration when different groups within the organization share some common interests.

In this chapter, I applied this insight at the level of the institutional field (instead of within an organization), suggesting that organizational procedures can create integration between the claims of a social movement and the goals of an organization when the two share a common interest. Thus, while Rome looked at the competition among local activists as a potential source of further unrest (further fuelling Protestant accusation of sorcery), parts of the Curia also saw the potential advantage in channeling religious ferment: local mobilization could generate legitimacy for the Church as a whole in a time of deep crisis. Since miracles had been the leading source of local support and mobilization for a thousand years (Stark 1966; Mcmullen 1984; Stanko 2000; Bloch 1973; Caciola 1996), Rome’s resolve to incorporate and control local religious fervor converged on issues related to
miracles. Controlling the production of miracles implied controlling sainthood, that is, scrutinizing the considerable mobilization acolytes were generating locally.

Rome began adjusting its procedures so as to incorporate the religious ferment coming from the bottom up. This did not mean that Rome accepted every claim to sainthood made by acolytes in Southern Europe. Instead, it created an institutional arrangement capable of discerning the amount of local support acolytes were mobilizing around miracles, and conditioned its approval of claims to sainthood on the basis of this mobilization. The establishment of procedures for doing so took time and, most importantly, emerged into a coherent project only in 1642, following several internal struggles within the government of the Church in Rome, the Curia (Gotor 2000). While the limited space at our disposal does not allow us to reconstruct the historical details of this internal struggle, we point to the ample scholarship on the subject in order to highlight two fundamental points. The first, that the institutional field of modern sainthood emerged through a path-dependent process from the second half of the sixteenth century. The second, that the leadership of the Church in 1642 was able to seize the moment and finalize the changes to sainthood into a coherent new code.

The most important institutional change within the Church in Rome in the process of transforming sainthood was the establishment of the Congregatio Sacrorum Rituum in 1588. Pope Sixtus V charged the members of the Congregatio with cleansing the institution of sainthood from the abuses and inconsistencies of the past. In the span of 100 years, the Congregatio transformed sainthood from a local institution centered around candidate miracles to a centralized legal procedure based on candidate virtues (Vauchez 1989), all without losing popular support.

The Congregatio set out to achieve these goals by taking control of the miracles that candidates for sainthood performed. Miracles were organized in three degrees (Veraja 1992). First-degree miracles were those against nature, as when the Red Sea opened to let the Jews escape Egypt. Nature, in this case, would have had a disposition against the act of God. Second-degree miracles were exercised over nature, as when Jesus resuscitated Lazarus. In this case, nature by itself could not have produced this outcome. Third-degree miracles, finally, were thought beyond nature, as when Jesus gave sight to a blind man by touching his eyes. In this case, nature could have produced the event but not in the form and under the circumstances in which it happened. Candidates for sainthood could only perform true miracles after their death, and most of them specialized in miracles of the third degree.

This organization of miracles had existed since the early Middle Ages but it was the Congregatio that first systematized it and routinely applied it to all candidates (Papa 1988). As part of this rationalization process, the Congregatio organized the collection of evidence on miracles and on the virtues of the candidates as a legal procedure. From 1588 onward, canonization entailed a series of repeated trials during which witnesses were called to the stand to testify to the miracles and virtues of the candidate. Two paths existed—one for recently deceased candidates and one for long-deceased candidates. This paper considers only candidates who died in the sixteenth century, that is, candidates whose trials were contemporary
with the *Congregatio*’s first years. A contemporary candidate earned a new title in each of the three phases of the legal process, moving from *venerabile* (venerable), to *beato* (blessed), to saint. The crucial junction in this path toward sainthood was the state of blessed. Local authorities themselves carried out the investigations (*Processo Ordinario*) to determine whether an individual could be considered blessed, thus asserting some autonomy from the Roman Curia. The institution of blessed was, in effect, a compromise between Rome’s desire to assume direct control over matters of sainthood and the needs of local communities, which had chosen their own saints for centuries.

The canonization process that the *Congregatio* designed was lengthy and organized in steps (Papa 2001; Veraja 1988). In order to move from the position of venerable to that of blessed, a recently deceased candidate would need to have performed two true miracles if there were eyewitnesses (*de visu*) or three true miracles otherwise. The same rule applied for the next step, from blessed to saint. In each case, finding miracles true meant establishing with precision their degrees. This explains why, despite the fact that the number of required miracles for sainthood was at most six, canonization trials before 1642 report many more supernatural events. The candidates and their acolytes were, in other words, learning the rules of the *Congregatio*. Thus, for instance, the average number of miracles performed by the candidates this chapter considers was sixty-six (Sodano 1999). The *Congregatio* disregarded as false the overwhelming majority of the miracles reported during the trials before 1642.

The *Congregatio* in a sense designed lengthy and redundant procedures in order to better control the canonization process. However, at the dawn of modernity such a controlling mechanism was no longer effective by itself. This was so for two different reasons: first, lengthy procedures intensified the amount of pressures that acolytes placed on the *Congregatio* after their leader had received the title of blessed. Indeed, in the first 50 years of its operations the time required for reaching canonization varied almost case by case (Papa 2001). This simply increased inconsistencies and potentially undermined the legitimacy of the *Congregatio*’s final decisions. Second, as doctors’ opinions about miracles became part of the evidence acolytes gathered, the length of the trial became ineffective for counter-acting this evidence. In the pre-modern period, doctors were essentially philosophers that reasoned about the ultimate causes of things. The Church could use time to build philosophical cases against claims of other experts. But modernity ushered in an experimental approach that made medical expertise autonomous from philosophy and, from the perspective of the Church, difficult to control. In this context, extra time would not directly lead to the development of a better case against the acolytes’ claims.

The *Congregatio* created a new institutional figure to control and counteract the acolytes’ claims. This figure derived from an old position within the *Congregatio* and became autonomous in 1634, when the title of *promotore fidei* was established. Key to the *promotore*’s job was authoring opinions (*animadversiones*) about the candidate’s miracles. This document, which outlined the *promotore*’s doubts about the miracles, would circulate among the members of the *Congregatio* and the pope. The *promotore* would use the best medical knowledge at his disposal to poke
“doubts” about the miracles acolytes presented on behalf of their leader. Unofficially the promotor became known as the devil’s advocate. In summary, the procedures that Congregatio introduced made possible evaluating not only how much mobilization acolytes were able to build locally, but how organized this mobilization was.

Part II

Data

Sample construction strategy

The Vatican archives provide a list of people that underwent canonization trials. Since canonization required a candidate to perform miracles, the transcripts of canonization trials contain descriptions of candidates’ miracles and serve as the source of data for my analysis. Trials were recorded in Latin and in the native language of the witnesses; that is, if a trial took place in Madrid, the questions and the proceedings of the trial would be in Latin and the witnesses’ answers in Spanish. Trials varied in length and number of witnesses—some documented in fewer than 100 pages and some taking up thousands of pages. By 1642, the Congregatio had held trials for 178 individuals.

This relatively high number of cases requires careful interpretation. The majority of the 178 candidates had weak local support and their acolytes used trials to generate broader consensus. Roughly 13% of these cases were also ancient, i.e., long-deceased individuals for whom the path to canonization was regulated differently. Thus, a large number of the trials were short, involved very few witnesses, and listed few miracles. The Congregatio either ignored or rejected these weak cases without providing a systematic rationale for its decisions. Further complicating matters, the Congregatio’s decision for each miracle can only be reconstructed for the cases of saints and blessed, because it is only for those cases that official records exist in the archives. In other words, one cannot create a list of approved and rejected miracles for all 178 cases of the period based on the Congregatio’s archives. Examining the Congregatio’s rules relating to miracles therefore implies restricting attention to cases that already had enough support to attract the Congregatio’s careful notice.

I did two things to address the problem created by the fact that the overall mobilizing capacity of acolytes positively correlated with the number of records the Congregatio kept on a case. First, I restricted the number of cases from which to sample by defining a candidate for sainthood as an individual who died in the sixteenth century for whom the Congregatio had approved at least one trial. By 1642 there were 42 candidates for sainthood according to this definition. These candidates were in three states: saints, blessed, or venerable. While I could only reconstruct the Congregatio’s miracle-by-miracle decisions for saints and blessed candidates, I could assess the amount of support any candidate had by examining

3 Some parts of this section are adapted from my book, The Rationalization of Miracles (New York: Cambridge University Press).
his trials. Therefore, despite the restriction in the number of cases, my definition of a candidate allowed enough variation for testing the research hypotheses. Second, I used sociological and historical literature to identify relevant dimensions in the production of miracles (Kleinberg 1994; Delooz 1969). I identified two dimensions.

The first key dimension was spatial—the candidate operated either in an urban or rural community. City dwellers were exposed to a wide range of ideas and had many opportunities to encounter foreigners. On the other hand, tradition governed life in the countryside. The gulf between urban and rural lifestyles widened after the invention of the printing press: large proportions of city dwellers began reading books, while peasants remained rooted in oral tradition (Zemon-Davis 1975; Moran 1973). Literacy influenced popular belief in the supernatural powers of candidates and thus the type of miracles people were willing to believe they could perform. The second key dimension was the institutional constraint that the candidate faced as a member of the Church—that is, whether he was a member of the secular or regular clergy. Secular clergy included priests, cardinals, and bishops, who lived in close contact with lay people and interacted with them frequently (Bonnet 1954). The regular clergy, on the other hand, were monks, friars, and nuns, who lived in the seclusion of monasteries or convents. With respect to the 178 cases that the Congregatio examined in this period, miracles performed by members of the regular clergy reflected this institutional constraint, in that their recipients were for the most part members of the monastery where the candidates lived.

In light of the two dimensions, four ideal typical candidates emerged:

1. **The Spiritual Priest**, characteristic of Italian commercial cities that still retained some of the ferment (and wealth) of previous periods but were headed for decline. This candidate interacted with a large and heterogeneous population whose demands, in terms of spiritual needs and miracles, reflected the disruption caused by economic and social forces. Among the 42 candidates, 15 were of this ideal type.4

2. **The Learned Monk**, typical of the Spanish cities that were still experiencing the boom of the Siglo de Oro. The characteristics of his order—Dominican, Augustinian, Franciscan, etc.—played a fundamental role in the candidate’s interaction with the population. As a consequence, requests from his audience were more segmented compared to those facing priests operating in urban areas. There were 6 candidates of this ideal type.

3. **The Folksy Friar**, operating in the countryside or small towns of Italy and Spain and dealing with a mostly peasant population. Some of the pre-Christian beliefs that still informed the culture of these areas emerged clearly in this type of candidate’s preaching and

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4 For 15 candidates the index stored in the ASV does not report where the trial occurred and it is not possible to reconstruct the location from the index. For one candidate I could not reconstruct his institutional affiliation. Finally, the category Secular includes also Chierici, i.e., lay people that devoted themselves to the religious life without officially taking the vows.
miracles. Miracles related to controlling natural elements formed an essential part of the supernatural palette of this candidate. There were 3 candidates of this ideal type.

4. *The Practical Priest*, characteristic of impoverished rural areas of Southern Europe. This type of candidate was deeply ignorant of Catholic dogma and lacked access to the resources available to rural friars and monks. His audience was mostly impoverished peasants. None of the candidates fits this ideal type.

I maximized the number of miracles included in my analysis by populating the previously constructed typology through a mix of selected and randomly chosen candidates. The table below shows the candidates included in the analysis organized by the two dimensions. Along with their names, the table reports their status in 1642 and the number of miracles described in their trials. Overall, the trials of these seven candidates include 460 miracles, of which the *Congregatio* considered 31 true.

*Table 1: The candidates*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
<th>Status in 1642</th>
<th>Miracles</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carlo Borromeo</td>
<td>Blessed</td>
<td>426</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filippo Neri</td>
<td>Venerable</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa of Jesus</td>
<td>Venerable</td>
<td>146</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pasqual Baylon</td>
<td>Blessed</td>
<td>192</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bernardino</td>
<td>Venerable</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alonzo Orozco</td>
<td>Venerable</td>
<td>21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rainiero of Borgo San Sepolcro</td>
<td>Venerable</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These candidates fall into two subcategories—a group of 15 blessed and a group of 22 venerable. I selected one candidate who had extensive trials and came from a rural environment. Pasqual Baylon (1540 - 1592) achieved the status of blessed in 1618 and that of saint in 1690. I analyzed all of the miracles described in Baylon’s trials, which were held in the village of Villa Real, Spain. I also randomly selected three candidates from the group of venerable: Alonzo Orozco (1500 - 1591), Bernardino (1545 – 1587), and Rainiero of Borgo San Sepolcro (died in 1589). These individuals performed their miracles, respectively, in Madrid, Agrigento, and the countryside around Todi, Italy. Orozco and Bernardino were urban candidates, while Rainiero was a rural candidate. These three venerable were members of the regular clergy: Rainiero and Bernardino were both Franciscan mendicant friars, while Orozco was an Augustinian monk.

Teresa of Avila is placed in the *Urban* category of Table 2 because the majority of her miracles occurred in Salamanca. I placed Baylon in the rural category because despite having defensive walls—a vestige of the *Reconquista* of the thirteenth century—Villa Real was more a village than a town; life there centered on agricultural work.

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5 Only five candidates achieved canonization before 1642 and of these, one (Francis Xavier) operated mostly outside of Europe and so is excluded from the analysis. The miracles recorded in the trials of three of these saints, Carlo Borromeo (1538 - 1584) in Milan, Filippo Neri (1515 - 1595) in Rome, and Teresa of Jesus (1515 - 1582) in Salamanca and Avila, are included. While the first two saints hailed from urban environments in Italy and Spain, Teresa of Jesus operated in a rural environment (Avila) in addition to an urban one (Alvar 1994). Both Borromeo and Neri were members of the secular clergy—the former as a priest, the latter as a bishop—while Teresa was a nun. The remaining group of 37 candidates reached canonization after 1642 or are still under evaluation. These candidates fall into two subcategories—a group of 15 blessed and a group of 22 venerable. I selected one candidate who had extensive trials and came from a rural environment. Pasqual Baylon (1540 - 1592) achieved the status of blessed in 1618 and that of saint in 1690. I analyzed all of the miracles described in Baylon’s trials, which were held in the village of Villa Real, Spain. I also randomly selected three candidates from the group of venerable: Alonzo Orozco (1500 - 1591), Bernardino (1545 – 1587), and Rainiero of Borgo San Sepolcro (died in 1589). These individuals performed their miracles, respectively, in Madrid, Agrigento, and the countryside around Todi, Italy. Orozco and Bernardino were urban candidates, while Rainiero was a rural candidate. These three venerable were members of the regular clergy: Rainiero and Bernardino were both Franciscan mendicant friars, while Orozco was an Augustinian monk.

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economic resources after the Congregatio was established. The miracles that Practical Priests performed are not represented in this research.

The database of miracles

During the trials, testifiers described in detail the circumstances under which miracles occurred. Embedded in their narratives is information relating to each miracle’s location, the year it occurred, the number of witnesses involved, whether or not one of the candidate’s relics was brought in during the healing, and the broad characteristics of the saved—age, gender, and social status. Not all of this information is available for every miracle, but each characteristic appears often enough to sustain a quantitative analysis. For the saints and blessed miracle-makers in the sample, I created a subset database of miracles’ characteristics as shown in the table below. This subset includes 245 miracles.

Table 2: The database of miracles

Connected miracles means that at least one testifier experienced more than one miracle, thereby connecting two or more miracles in a component. Conversely, a miracle is isolated if none of the testifiers has seen other miracles. Usually an isolated miracle had the shape of a network star: a saved tied to many witnesses that were not related to each other. Finally, I coded the decisions of the Congregatio on these 245 miracles.

Methods

Network building procedures

The information about miracles presented here is drawn directly from the testimony of canonization trial witnesses. I divide the "testifiers" into two groups: recipients of miracles (the saved), and witnesses of miracles. Thus for each miracle there is at least one saved and, in most cases, at least one witness. During a canonization trial, two questions dealt directly with miracles: testifiers were asked whether they knew of miracles the candidate performed in vitam, that is, while alive, and whether they knew of miracles the candidate performed post mortem, that is, after his death. I treated as a miracle, but not necessarily a "true" miracle, any event

7 With the proliferation of procedures and trials, the cost of canonization ballooned. The canonization of Carlo Borromeo, for instance, cost 26,000 julii. The candidate’s promoters had to bear these costs, paying all the cardinals in the Congregatio for their services, the copying of the documents, the promoter’s team of attorneys, the pope’s attorney, and the pope himself; they also had to pay for most of these people’s servants. Finally, the promoters would pay for the decorations of Saint Peter’s Basilica, in Rome, for the mass that led to the canonization (ASV 6866 n.13, ”Ristretto delle spese d’una Canonizzazione cominciando dal Decreto sino alla Bolla...”). By a conservative estimate, at current value the canonization expenses of Borromeo correspond to 260,000 euros (see also Ferrero 2002 for a similar figure). Local activists therefore had to attract a great deal of financial support in order to get Rome’s attention.

8 This distinction follows the Church classification of miracolati, i.e., the recipients of miracles, and testimoni, i.e., the witnesses of miracles affecting the miracolati.
testifiers described in response to either of these questions. I used only the question about the *in vitam* miracles for identifying acolytes. Since an acolyte was somebody that believed in the sanctity of the candidate before it was officially recognized, we defined an acolyte as an individual that experienced a miracle—either by witnessing or receiving—while the candidate was still alive. *In vitam* miracles turned believers into acolytes. Becoming an unofficial living saint, that is, being able to perform miracles *in vitam*, was the *sine qua non* for becoming an official candidate for sainthood and being able to perform miracles after death. The living saint was the leader of a religious group and occupied a position in the social structure as a connector of acolytes that typically had no relationship to each other prior to their encounter with the candidate.

The descriptions of the miracles and the official information recorded in the trials create a rich dataset of characteristics of the testifiers. Church officials paid particular attention to the testifiers’ social status. Nobles and merchants represented the upper class of trial testifiers. In the trial records, a title such as duke, count, or prince identifies a noble. Merchants, including wealthy traders or anyone else with a lucrative business, are identified with the title *dominus* or *domina* in the trial records. We considered commoners all the testifiers whose names lacked such titles. Finally, we again made the distinction between secular clergy (individuals such as bishops who lived in close contact with the laity) and regular clergy (who lived sequested lives in monasteries).

Combined with information about the testifiers, the Church’s official transcripts allowed me to reconstruct the network of relationships among the testifiers. For instance, in each miracle several witnesses had kinship relationships to the saved and thus to each other. Other times, the only relationship between testifiers was that of having witnessed a miracle. For each candidate, I pooled both types of relationships across time in order to create networks. For a clearer idea of what this means, consider the descriptions of the following three miracles that Carlo Borromeo performed *post mortem* in Milan. The first two miracles were healings from malaria while the third was a healing from the "disease of the ants." The table below reports the recipients of the miracles (third column) and the list of some of the witnesses (fourth column). Miracles are listed chronologically.

*Table 3: Three post mortem miracles in Milan*

The third column also gives the kinship relationship between (a) the saved and the witnesses, and (b) among the witnesses, if there is such a relationship. Because some people experienced more than one miracle, pooling miracles across time results in one component:

*Figure 1: Network building*

For example, De Filgeri, a friend of Emilia De Spadis, testified to only the miracle that saved her friend, while De Spadis testified to two miracles—one that healed her *dominus* in 1584 and one that she herself received later. Thus, De Filgeri has only one tie, while De Spadis has two. Similarly, *dominus* Ambrosio Lomazio
witnessed a miracle *dominus* Ottaviano received in 1584 (*Summarium Miracolorum Borromei*, ACS, folio 583). A few years later, he too became a recipient of a *post mortem* miracle (folio 611). Thus, in this network ties represent either kinship relations between the nodes or the witnessing of a miracle, while nodes represent either saved or witnesses. More precisely, in each miracle there are at least as many ties as there were witnesses testifying. In addition to these types of ties, kinship ties join related witnesses in each network.\(^9\)

I repeated the procedure for all the miracles the candidates in my dataset performed. That is, although the *Congregatio*'s judgments on miracles are recorded only for candidates that became saints or blessed, we created networks for all the candidates in the sample. Figure 2 (Panels A and B) gives network graphs for two of the seven candidates. Monks, friars, nuns, and their religious sisters and brothers in the same monastery are treated as members of the same family.

*Figure 2: Networks of Rainiero and Teresa of Avila*

The two networks are the most extreme cases: Teresa’s is the most dense structure, with the majority of nodes tied into one component, while Rainiero’s is the most sparse, with small components scattered in the underlying social structure. Among all the candidates analyzed, Rainiero had the lowest holy status at the conclusion of his trials—that of venerable—and his network testifies that his miracles brought together fewer people than those of the other candidates. The networks for Baylon, Borromeo, Neri, and Orozco were constructed in a similar fashion to the ones described for Teresa and Rainiero.\(^10\) The figure also shows two structural arrangements of miracles; they were either isolated or occurred in a cluster with other miracles.

*The Formal Model*

I looked at the overall connectivity of the networks and at the size of the largest components for each candidate as evidence for the type and extent of local mobilization. Both measures capture the capacity of acolytes to enroll people in support of their deceased leader. Furthermore, I considered one measure of centrality—betweenness—as a way to capture the acolytes’ role in building the networks. Betweenness centrality measures how many times a node falls in between pairs of other nodes; it captures the potential that each node has for controlling the flow of communication (De Nooy, Mrvar and Batagelj 2005). In this context, high betweenness centrality identifies those most responsible for connecting others in the cult of a candidate.

I predicted the likelihood of miracle’s approval (M = 1) with a *logit* model for the miracles of Table 3.

\(^{9}\) If the saved and the witnesses were related, that is, if they shared two ties—witnessing of the miracle and kinship—only one tie was retained.

\(^{10}\) Despite having had two trials, Bernardino of Santa Lucia had only 21 miracles to his credit, described during trials by 34 witnesses. Further, his miracles were described only during his second trial. Because of this small number of miracles and witnesses, I did not draw a graph for his case.
More formally:

\[ Pr(M_i = 1) = \logit^{-1}(X_i \beta + con_i \theta) \]

Where, \( M_i \) is miracle \( i \)
- \( X_i \) is a matrix of covariates on the miracle
- \( con_i = 1 \) if miracle \( i \) is connected and 0 otherwise

and \( \logit(x) = \frac{x}{1 - x} \)

The effect of interest is the coefficient for the dummy variable \( con \). If significant, it will suggest that Congregatio officials looked closely at the mobilizing capacity of miracles, what I refer to as their form, and focused less on their content.

I controlled for the fact that miracles were clustered around candidates by using clustered robust standard errors. Assuming that miracles were independent only across candidates produces the following robust variance estimates:

\[ \hat{V}(\hat{\beta}) = \hat{V}\left( \frac{m}{m - 1} \sum_{i=1}^{m} u_i^G u_i^C \right)^V \]

where \( m = \) number of candidates

and,

\[ u_i^C = \sum_{j \in G_i} u_j \]

i.e., the pooled contributions to the robust variance estimate by candidates.

Nevertheless, even taking into account the clustering of miracles within candidates, the results of the model are limited by the non-random nature of the sample. The typology of cases that Table 2 identifies is an attempt to increase the representativeness of my findings by showing that the Congregatio’s rules operated similarly despite the different settings and the different institutional constraints that activists faced.

The mobilizing power of miracles

Witnesses described a wide range of events as miracles. Consider the following miracle that Fabrizio Massimo reported on September 13, 1595, during Neri’s first trial. Massimo said that when Neri arrived at his house, his son Paolo was already dead. Nevertheless, Neri put his hand on the forehead of the boy, who suddenly opened his eyes and asked for a place to urinate. Within 15 minutes, Paolo died. Overall, Paolo’s brief resuscitation played a small role in Massimo’s
account of Neri’s powers and virtues. During his second deposition, on February 20, 1596, Massimo gave more details of Paolo’s fifteen-minute return from the dead. After Paolo was resuscitated, Massimo reported, he began talking with Neri, who asked the boy if he would have liked to die and go to see his sister, who had died a few days before, and his mother, Lavinia, also dead. Paolo replied that he would, and only then did Neri let him die. A few months later, Massimo commissioned the painter Cristoforo Roncalli, known as Pomarancio, to paint a representation of Paolo’s resurrection. The painting portrays the scene as described in Fabrizio’s second deposition: Neri resuscitates the boy and lets him die only after Paolo expresses his wish to go see his sister and mother. Pomarancio reproduced the scene in two paintings, one of which was lost in a fire, and the other of which is a fresco, still visible today in Rome’s Chiesa Nova.

During Teresa’s trial in Salamanca, Doña Maria Alvarez reported that his five-year-old son Antonio suddenly fell into a coma. His parents called several doctors, but no one could wake the boy. His desperate mother went to the monastery of the Discalced (barefoot) Carmelites and begged the sisters to lend her one of Teresa’s relics. The sisters gave her the oil that had dripped from Teresa’s body when it was displayed. Back at home, Antonio’s mother rubbed the oil on the boy’s head. He woke up laughing a few minutes later as if nothing had happened (ACS, Concistoro Secreto, vol. 63).

Detailed descriptions reveal that a miracle can describe a vast array of events, ranging from the trivial to the important and, sometimes, to the mean-spirited—Paolo’s fifteen-minute resuscitation could be interpreted as a cruel trick played on a little boy and his father. A miracle was a shared frame for an event that had no other explanation. It was this shared interpretation that distinguished a miracle from a personal fantasy. What people collectively believed to be inexplicable, however, changed according to the characteristics of the venue where miracles occurred. The table below summarizes both in vitam and post mortem miracles for all the candidates according to a schema proposed by André Vauchez (1989). Miracles were sorted into two groups, according to the setting where candidates operated:

Figure 3: Miracles by community

Seven of the above categories are healing miracles, while Freedom & Protection and Religious Miracles refer to the broad category of miracles of protection. A miracle of protection is one in which the recipient asks the candidate, either personally or by praying, for help in performing a task, in starting a voyage or, more generally, for protection in difficult times (for instance, [being incarcerated] [during incarceration]). Other includes all miracles that do not fall into these categories.

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11 The categories of the classification are self-explanatory. However, in order to have a firmer sense of their meaning, consider that under the definition of Resurrection fall all of those cases of children healed after falling into rivers or ponds or under wheels. Contagious Diseases are mostly fevers, and Paralysis includes the broader category of difficulty in movement. The category Wounds includes fractures and other non-fatal injuries, most of which arose during work activities. Mental Diseases include cases of possessed individuals and epileptics. The category Birth includes sterility and
such as flying. Finally the category Other Disease includes all healings that were missing details assigned to the other healing categories. The most common healing is that of Organic & Contagious Disease. This category includes the general illness "fever," a symptom rather than a disease, which was the most common ailment in the dataset. Some hints for deconstructing the broad category of fevers come from the environment in which the candidate operated. For instance, it is likely that individuals that got sick in the spring in rural communities had allergies (Delooz 1983). The content of miracles varied because the characteristics—and needs—of communities varied (chi-square = 28.485; p = .0015). For instance, urban areas were perceived to have a disproportionate number of "sad" individuals, grouped under the label Mental Diseases, compared to more rural areas; miracles related to Birth were also more common in cities than in the countryside. It is precisely because of this customization that miracles mobilized people.

Despite local specificities, the table below suggests that the three ideal typical candidates were capable of performing all sorts of wonders:

Table 4: Miracles by ideal type

The variety of wonders that each ideal type was capable of performing created an inclusive mobilization within each locale (chi-square = 56.321; p = .000). The heterogeneity of miracle content indicates thus that at the dawn of modernity candidates catered to many segments of their local society. Further, sorting the group of the witnesses by gender with respect to the urban / rural areas dichotomy shows the absence of any statistical difference: Men and women were equally likely to witness miracles regardless of the type of community in which the miracles occurred. Given the deep cleavages that organized social life 400 years ago, the evidence that candidates performed a vast array of miracles points toward a substantial break with the model of sainthood that had been common in Europe for more than a thousand years.

Local mobilization

A large proportion of miracles performed by the sample of candidates created components that connected several saved individuals and their witnesses, potentially spanning divisions of kinship and status. The existence of a large component for all the candidates but Rainiero suggests that the practices that made miracles possible had something in common despite the different contexts in which they occurred (Salamanca, Avila, Milan, and Rome) and the different institutional constraints faced by the candidates. For example, more than 70% of the nodes in Teresa’s network were connected in one large component; the next highest such proportion was in Neri’s network (.4), followed by Orozco’s, Borromeo’s, and Baylon’s (.38). Understanding how this came about requires focusing the analysis on those who experienced more than one miracle—that is, those who occupied

difficult childbirth. Finally, the category Protections includes miracles of liberation from captivity, and visions. An independent coder assigned the observed cases to the categories. The inter-code reliability with my classification was 0.93.
central positions in the networks.

Both *in vitam* and *post mortem* miracles helped produce the large component to which the above statistics refer. Yet the two types of miracles had different structural roles. *In vitam* miracles created a social structure of early believers that became the foundation for the occurrence of *post mortem* miracles. As a religious leader, a candidate attracted followers who admired his virtues and his exemplary Christian life. Seventeenth-century religious leaders were expected to have supernatural abilities. Miracles, then, were an expected expression of leadership; in other words, it was the social position of the religious leader, rather than the leader himself, that produced what people thought of as miracles. In the acolytes’ eyes, the candidate was a living saint before becoming an official saint. No candidate who was not considered a living saint before he died became an official candidate for sainthood. Before 1642, there is no candidate who only performed miracles *post mortem*.

An example will help illustrate how *in vitam* miracles created a heterogeneous but unified structure out of a highly segregated social world. When Filippo Neri was just another priest in Rome, he encountered Francesco de La Molara, a nobleman, who spent the year 1584 wandering around Rome under the impression that he was *Belzebu’* (the devil). Neri instructed him to be happy and to start singing, whereupon de La Molara started following Neri. At a certain point, Neri grabbed de La Molara’s head and started whispering incomprehensible words to him, perhaps in Latin; by the end of this exchange, de La Molara was healed and had stopped thinking of himself as *Belzebu’*. He told Neri: "I am healed, you are a saint!" The seemingly random nature of miracles of this sort, the majority of which the candidates performed *in vitam*, played a key role in creating a social structure of individuals who might have nothing in common otherwise but who shared faith in the same candidate. Thus, de La Molara became part of a group of believers that also included other priests, bricklayers, ex-prostitutes, friars, and other nobles. For the three candidates with more than 30 *in vitam* miracles reported in the trials—Neri, Orozco, and Rainiero—my analysis indicates that, on average, these miracles created sparse networks, i.e., that while alive candidates produced miracles of the structurally isolated arrangement. This type of social structure—sparsely connected and heterogeneous with respect to the status of the people involved—was well suited for diffusing the candidate’s reputation for supernatural powers after his death.

The most common *post mortem* miracles recorded in the trials were healings performed by acolytes. These healings followed a predictable pattern. Upon his arrival at the sick person’s house, the acolyte would invite everyone present to pray, often instructing them to kneel and pray aloud together. During the prayer, the acolyte would ask his candidate for grace for the sick person and at that point usually took out one of the candidate’s relics, which he applied to the invalid while the others in attendance continued to kneel in prayer. The acolyte would then depart, and the invalid’s friends and relatives would notice a sudden improvement in his condition. Immediately or within a few days, the sick person would be perfectly healed, having become a saved.

For example, on April 28, 1620, Maria Jaraz de Arraya had nearly completed
her pregnancy when she suddenly fell ill. Her eyes rolled back in her head and she began to experience seizures. Antonio Gutierrez, de Arraya’s husband, enlisted a surgeon to help deliver the baby and a doctor to save his wife. A priest accompanied the surgeon and the doctor, and while the latter two were practicing their art, the priest placed several relics on de Arraya’s body. Nothing worked, however, and Maria lay there, rigid and cold, on the verge of death. Juan de Herrera, Orozco’s most active acolyte, meanwhile found out what was happening at the Gutierezes’ house. He rushed over, asked the priest to remove the relics from de Arraya’s body, and invited everyone to pray while he fastened Orozco’s belt around de Arraya’s stomach. Half an hour later, de Arraya recovered her strength and delivered a stillborn baby. All those present hailed this event as a miracle, even though the baby did not survive it (ASV 3033).

Yet miracles took place that did not involve acolytes. Healings that occurred without acolytes took the general form of private exchanges between two individuals, a client (the saved) and a patron (the dead candidate). This private agreement, known as ex voto (Cousin 1983), was common in Catholic countries during the seventeenth century. These exchanges produced miracles similar to those that acolytes produced. Indeed, all candidates for sainthood engaged in private exchanges of the sort after their death. Sometimes a detailed list of ex voto was included as extra evidence in the canonization trials. This was the case for Carlo Borromeo. The list of every ex voto that occurred from his death to the time of his first trial was brought in to support the claim of Borromeo’s long-lasting saintly fame. Private exchanges helped the reputation of a candidate, but were not by themselves sufficient to organize popular consensus into a social movement.

The ex voto bound only the two individuals included in the exchange. In contrast, by virtue of their access to the relics of the candidate, acolytes moved from household to household, adding people of different families and social statuses into the network of their candidate’s supporters. The table below reports the proportion of individuals who had experienced an in vitam miracle and had a higher than average betweenness centrality. The proportion is taken over the total number of nodes in the giant component. The expectation is that if acolytes used relics to build mobilization, they would occupy central positions within the networks of believers because they would become witnesses to multiple miracles. Most of the nodes in the giant component with the highest betweenness correspond to individuals that experienced a miracle performed by the living candidate. In Orozco’s graph, for instance, almost 90% of the nodes with a high betweenness represent people who interacted personally with the candidate. Recall that acolytes are defined as people who experienced in vitam miracles. Thus, the table provides evidence that the acolytes bore the most responsibility for holding the large component together. With respect to the networks of Figure 2, clusters of miracles represent the

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12 The proportion for Borromeo could not be calculated because there were fewer than five in vitam miracles recorded in his trials. Such a small number would produce unreliable calculations. This does not mean that Borromeo performed only five miracles in vitam. Rather, it shows that the local authorities where Borromeo operated complied more fully with the rule that established only post mortem miracles as valid for canonization.
structural images of the acolyte’s [acolytes’?] activity. Any component with at least two saved individuals highlights the role of the acolytes in attracting new members to their candidate’s cult.

Table 5: Proportion of acolytes (largest component)

But acolytes appear to have played a different role in Teresa’s case—for her, only 40% of the nodes with the highest betweenness centrality were acolytes. Teresa’s cult diffused mostly within the boundaries of the monasteries and convents that she founded. Opening a new convent was an intense experience for the participants; convents were often founded in very poor areas, yet the women there relied on charity and donations for their survival (Il libro della mia vita). In a sense, fewer miracles were necessary to convince Teresa’s spiritual sisters of her sanctity, since surviving the most adverse circumstances with Teresa’s guidance was itself a miracle. This type of sainthood, physically centered within the walls of monasteries and convents, would become dominant after 1642.

Modern sainthood

Direct evidence of the importance that the Church placed on the social structure that acolytes created independently of the practices they used can be found in the size of the largest component. Candidates with the largest components saw their cases advance faster within the Congregatio, controlling for the number of witnesses and miracles. For instance, Friar Rainiero had the smallest large component of the candidates examined here, and his case took the longest time to advance. A ranking of candidates according to the sluggishness of their progression to blessed from the time of their death (the dies natalis) puts Friar Rainiero in first place, followed by Orozco, Baylon, Borromeo, Teresa of Jesus, and Neri. This ranking correlates highly with the ranking of candidates according to the size of their largest component, from smallest to largest—the observed Spearman coefficient ($) is .78.14

These statistics suggest that the Church paid little attention to the content of miracles, introducing a significant difference with pre-modern sainthood. The table below presents the results of a logit model tested on the miracles performed by the candidates with enough local mobilization supporting them (N=245). It is only for these candidates—Neri, Borromeo, Teresa, and Baylon—that a list of approved miracles exists. A miracle is considered connected if it belongs to a component of more than one miracle. In Figure 2, two or more saved make a component. Clustered robust standard errors are reported, along with their respective probabilities. The coefficients of the logit model refer to the odds ratio.

13 For instance, Teresa of Jesus had only 40 witnesses but was canonized in almost the same amount of time as Filippo Neri, who had 119 people testifying about his miracles. Orozco, instead, had almost the same number of witnesses (125) as Baylon (126). Yet, while Baylon became a blessed in 1618, Orozco remained a venerable for 250 more years.

14 The ratio is calculated by counting the nodes in the largest component over the total number of nodes in the graph. The rankings of the candidates from the day of their death to the attainment of the status of blessed were measured in years.
The table above shows support for the hypothesis that the structure of local mobilization mattered for a miracle’s approval. The variable connected miracle is significant above the 90% confidence level (p=.06). The odds that a connected miracle would receive approval (versus an isolated miracle) increased by a factor of more than three, controlling for other factors. This suggests that the Congregatio’s officials paid particular attention to the structure of local mobilization, since acolytes were the ones responsible for connecting miracles. The importance of the acolytes is reinforced by the significant effect of relics in increasing the likelihood of approval—acolytes were relevant net of their access to relics. The logit model also provides support for the claim that the Congregatio paid attention to the amount of local mobilization, not just its form: each additional witness increased the odds of a miracle’s approval by a factor of almost 1.5. Miracles with a larger number of witnesses were therefore more likely to receive approval. ¹⁵

Together with the structural finding, Table 7 suggests that a large and structured mobilization increased the chances of miracle’s approval and thus of the candidate’s reaching sainthood. This implies that instead of exclusively considering the amount of local support, the Congregatio also investigated the structural characteristics of this support. Although verbatim records of the Congregatio’s decisions do not exist, the attention given to components of miracles along with the drastic reduction of miracles that each candidate put forward after 1642 suggests that the Church at once channeled legitimacy and transformed the local mobilization that sustained this legitimacy.

This finding can be further refined by considering the status of the miracle’s recipient. If the saved was a commoner (the reference category in the model), the likelihood of a miracle’s approval decreased. If the saved was a nobleman, by contrast, the likelihood of the miracle’s approval increased. Considering the historical argument that during the Counter-Reformation sainthood increasingly excluded women (Zarri 1991), the non-significant effect of a female being saved is somewhat surprising. This indirectly suggests that the Congregatio preserved part of the spirit of inclusive mobilization the candidate and his acolytes created locally.

The figure below represents the complete set of miracles that Filippo Neri performed in Rome during his life and after his death. Approved miracles, the circled nodes in the network, disproportionately occurred in the largest component or in a component of at least two miracles.

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¹⁵ The findings of Table 7 may be an artifact of pooling miracles together across time. Despite being approved all at once, post mortem miracles occurred for the greater part during the period of trials. Since there were several trials held in the same location, miracles distributed in time. Thus, it might have been the case that the approval of a miracle depended on how many miracles had already occurred in particular location, a kind of information readily available to the Congregatio at the time of its decision. For a subset of miracles that had a clear time reference recorded (N=84) we estimated first an empirical cumulative distribution of miracles for each candidate and then we used the estimated cumulative distribution in the model. Controlling for the number of miracles already occurred, miracles that had acolytes involved remained highly significant (con = 1.784, p=.000).
The Church certified as true miracles those that bridged social cleavages, uniting people across differences of status and kinship. This form of miracle corresponds structurally to the components of saved and witnesses. The cornerstone of the Congregatio’s logic, codified in the new rules, operated by disregarding the content of miracles.

The changes introduced by the Congregatio in the 50 years or so following its creation were formalized in 1642 and became the basis of modern sainthood. After 1642, true miracles all had the same form—a sort of exportable good, so to speak, dis-embedded from the local contexts that produced them (Bearman 1993). Acolytes had learned how to reproduce the form of a true miracle and, therefore, they introduced only the required number of miracles during the trials (six at the most). For example, in the trial of Freymont that took place in 1730 in France, half of the proceedings involved just the one miracle that she performed post mortem on Maria Dronier (ASV 875). This miracle had several witnesses from all social strata of Lyon, where the trial took place.

Canonization trials called for fewer witnesses with the overall result of making the trials shorter. Thus, of the 738 canonization trials held in Western Europe in the period between 1588 and 1751 (ASV, Index of the Congregatio Sacrorum Rituum), those that took place before 1642 were significantly shorter than those that followed (F=13.95, p=.0002). Trials before 1642 lasted on average almost 7 years while trials in the latter period lasted an average of 4 years. The same dynamic obtained in countries with the largest number of trials—Italy, Spain, Portugal. In Italy, trials shortened in duration from 7.75 years to 4.4 (F=87, p=.0018); in Spain and Portugal the average decreased from 6.13 years to 3.4 (F=5.75, p=.0182); in France the figures were 3.6 before 1642 and 3.5 afterwards (F=0, p=.982).16 Consider also that the average number of trials per year did not change before and after 1642 (4.36 to 4.48). By the second half of the seventeenth century, a new and more modern sainthood was well in place. In this version of sainthood, the post mortem miracles that Rome attributed to miracle-makers were like souvenirs, not of places, but of the lives of these people.

A transformation of the institutional environment of sainthood came into being because all relevant actors saw an advantage in establishing a positive relationship against the backdrop of the Protestant Schism and local competition.

Discussion

This chapter highlights how an endogenous transformation could be achieved from the center of a field through rules that integrate the interests of the several actors operating within the field. I think this is of key importance for understanding how churches are able to endure in fluid environments characterized by power rifts and fractured narratives. A main goal of churches as organizations is the pursuing of legitimacy, as Melissa Wilde suggested in her case study of the changes that occurred during Vatican II (2007). Legitimacy comes from the ground

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16This difference is not significant, of course.
and the way to channel it—my analysis shows—is through the building of procedures and rules that address the problems of the activists (Selznick 1979) and those of the organization(s) promoting the rules. A new rule is effective in promoting institutional change not because is backed by force but because it has legitimacy.

For religious organizations, the main implication to be drawn from this chapter is that procedures and rules can become effective tools for promoting change in fractured environments populated by movements. Modern religious fields are similar to cultural fields dominated by multiple and conflicting logics that give rise to diverse communities (Lena 2012). In order for a church to receive legitimacy from challengers, the organization has to have the capacity, or be perceived to have the capacity, to increase the challenger’s control of the environment (Dalton 1964; Gouldner 1965). The experience of the Catholic Church shows that its rules were successful because they created a version of sainthood that solved the competition problems of the activists and the legitimacy crisis that Rome was facing in the aftermath of the Protestant Schism. This integration of interests is what transformed sainthood.

When institutional change is achieved in the way describe in this chapter the tensions between the central organization and the peripheral movements do not explode in full fledged conflicts. That is, another key characteristic of change that originates from the center of a field is that it creates a commitment between the organization and the challengers (Thompson 1967; Kraatz and Zajac 2001). For the case at hand, acolytes gave legitimacy to the Church and received control of their local institution from the Church. My argument is consistent with researchers that have studied institutional change from an endogenous perspective and have highlighted the roles of either activists or institutional entrepreneurs (Schneiberg and Lounsbury 2008; Rao and Giorgi 2006). For example, Tim Bartley described the transformation occurring in two industries—forest and apparel—in the 1990s (2007). According to him, institutional entrepreneurs involved to different degrees within the two industries started a political process of institution building that reached an equilibrium between the conflicting interests of different parts. Endogenous change generates more of a piecemeal process than an outburst (Fligstein and McAdam 2011).

Seeing institutional change as emanating from the center rediscovers the power of organizations and, more specifically, of actors operating within organizations. For too long neo-institutionalists have relegated change to occur only at the hands of social movements and have conceptualized organizations mainly as defenders of the status quo (Thornton 2002). Such a perspective misses the point for understanding how churches operate in their environments. More importantly, it frames the actions of organizations either as resistance or as window-dressing. This picture does not really change even when the state is brought in as the main actor promoting change (Greenwood, Suddaby, and Hinings 2002). This chapter shows instead that the power of churches to maintain a fit with their environments rests in designing rules and procedures for channeling legitimacy. The transformation of sainthood was a prototypical case for how organizations can promote change from the center of a field.
Bibliography


Sangalli, Marco. 1993. *I miracoli a Milano. I processi informativi per eventi miracolosi nel milanese in età spagnola*. Milano: NED.


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Secular Clergy</th>
<th>Regular Clergy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban</strong></td>
<td>“The Spiritual Priest” Carlo Borromeo (Saint, 71) Filippo Neri (Saint, 74)</td>
<td>“The Learned Monk” Bernardino of Agrigento (Venerabile, 21) Alfonso Orozco (Venerabile, 82) Teresa of Avila (Saint, 40)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rural</strong></td>
<td>“The Practical Priest” (Structural zero)</td>
<td>“The Folksy Friar” Pasqual Baylon (Blessed, 97) Rainiero of San Sepolcro (Venerabile, 75)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
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Table 2: The database of miracles

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Variable</th>
<th>Male: 104</th>
<th>Female: 141</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Gender of the saved</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Status of the saved</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nobles &amp; Merchants:</td>
<td>55</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regular &amp; Secular Clergy:</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commoners &amp; Peasants:</td>
<td>115</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>8</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>When did the miracle occur?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>in vitam:</td>
<td>66</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>post mortem:</td>
<td>179</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How many witnesses?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Min:</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Max:</td>
<td>14</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Median:</td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was a relic present?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td>99</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Missing</td>
<td>19</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the miracle connected?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td>118</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
<td>127</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Was the miracle approved?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yes:</td>
<td>31</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No:</td>
<td>214</td>
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Table 3: Three post mortem miracles in Milan

<table>
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<th>Time Order</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Saved</th>
<th>Witnesses</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td><em>Febre terzana</em></td>
<td>Ottaviano</td>
<td><em>Domina</em> Antea (Ottaviano’s wife)*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Dominus</em> Ambrosio Lomazio*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Curato</em> Francesco*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Emilia De Spadis*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td><em>Febre quartana</em></td>
<td>Emilia De Spadis</td>
<td>Giovanna De Filgeri*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Laura Coira</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td><em>Morbum formicalem</em></td>
<td>Ambrosio Lomazio</td>
<td>Isabella Cernuscola*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><em>Domina</em> Stefania (Lomazio’s daughter)*</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 4: Miracles by ideal type (proportions)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Folksy Friar</th>
<th>Learned Monk</th>
<th>Spiritual Priest</th>
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<tr>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>0.05</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.07</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Blind &amp; Deaf</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.05</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Freedom &amp; Protection</td>
<td>0.01</td>
<td>0.02</td>
<td>0.01</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Disease</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organic &amp; Contagious Disease</td>
<td>0.24</td>
<td>0.16</td>
<td>0.25</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.00</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Dis.</td>
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<td>0.20</td>
<td>0.21</td>
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<td>Paralyses</td>
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<td>0.13</td>
<td>0.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religious Mir.</td>
<td>0.10</td>
<td>0.08</td>
<td>0.02</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resurrection</td>
<td>0.03</td>
<td>0.04</td>
<td>0.04</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wounds &amp; Fractures</td>
<td>0.11</td>
<td>0.06</td>
<td>0.03</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>N</td>
<td>172</td>
<td>143</td>
<td>145</td>
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Figure 1: Network building
Figure 2: The two most extreme networks

(a) The most connected network

(b) The most sparse network
Figure 3: Miracles by community (percentages)

Table 5: Proportion of acolytes (largest component)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Candidate</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Rural</strong></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Baylon</td>
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<td>Rainierio</td>
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<td>Neri</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teresa</td>
<td>.4</td>
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Table 6: Likelihood of miracles approval (Clustered Robust Logit Model)

|                        | coef | robust clst. s.e. | robust clst. z | P>|z| |
|------------------------|------|-------------------|----------------|-----|
| (Intercept)            | .013 | 1.29              | -3.37          | .00 |
| Saved Female           | .86  | .45               | -.33           | .74 |
| Saved Noble            | .571 | .20               | 2.80           | .01 |
| Saved Clergy           | .618 | .43               | -1.12          | .26 |
| # Witnesses            | 1.462| .11               | 3.31           | .00 |
| Relic                  | 2.61 | .28               | 3.44           | .00 |
| Connected Miracle      | 3.12 | .61               | 1.87           | .06 |
Figure 4: The approved miracles (circled nodes) for Filippo Neri. Complete network.

NOTE – White nodes indicate saved; dark nodes indicate witnesses. Thick edges indicate kinship relationships exclusively; thin edges indicate witnessing relationships.