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Examining The Pilgrims' Experience: Communitas Along The Camino De Santiago

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To what extent does the community formed among pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago correspond to Turner's concept of *communitas*? How might pilgrimage with significant others differ from individual pilgrimages in the sense of community? This study attempts to answer these questions based on qualitative and quantitative content analysis of 32 travelogues written by pilgrims who completed the pilgrimage alone or with relatives or friends. The findings show that pilgrims develop an egalitarian and creative community that prevails the notion of a generic bond between people, an intense comradeship and generous common friendliness. In such a community, pilgrims' behaviour is typically passive or humble, and wisdom has ontological value. Pilgrims have similar experiences of *communitas* regardless of going to Santiago alone or with significant others. However, pilgrims who join organised groups solely for the last 100 kilometres of their journey are not considered part of this community and are classified as pseudo-pilgrims.

Key Words: *communitas*, significant others, pseudo-pilgrim, liminality, transformative potential, pilgrimage, Camino de Santiago

Introduction

Collins-Kreiner (2010) argued that late modernity brought a new approach to pilgrimage research, where increasing attention is paid to individual experiences. The new paradigm has brought to the fore the pilgrim and their subjective experience, thereby focusing on the importance of what pilgrims say about their experiences. Scholars have also studied the experience from different perspectives, such as Roszak and Sereczyńska (2020) who examined the impact of the pilgrim blessing ceremony on the pilgrim experience of the Camino de Santiago or, more recently, King (2023) who attempted to define contemporary pilgrimage by analysing this pilgrim experience.

Another relatively new pattern in research, according to Collins-Kreiner (2010), is the focus on the after-effects of pilgrimage on the lives of participants after their return home. This is not surprising since pilgrimage is a liminal experience that is also supposed to be transformative (see also paper by Challenger in this volume). Likewise, Lois González and Lopez (2020) observed that liminality is the essence of the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage experience, not only during the event but largely afterward. They argue that this journey involves the search for one's self

once back home, and in such a manner, participates in the process of formation of the individual.

In line with a new paradigm Brumec *et al.* (2022) look at the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage through the lens of Exceptional Human Experiences (EHEs), whereby EHEs are understood to be combinations of exceptional (out-of-the-ordinary) experiences (EEs) during a pilgrimage and their Transformative Aftereffects (TAs) after the experience. They constructed an empirically grounded typology of EEs and TAs based on qualitative and quantitative content analyses of 32 pilgrim travelogues. They explored the experience of interconnectedness with the main effect of a higher emphasis on unity and love emerging as the most common type. As one of the rarest types of EHE, they identified the cathartic experience with the main effect of the apostolic mission. This typology was quantified by Lavrič *et al.* (2022), who conducted an online survey of 501 pilgrims to assess the frequency of EEs on pilgrimage and their transformative aftereffects (TAs) in everyday life afterward. The results showed that EHEs are widespread among Camino de Santiago pilgrims. More than 70% of the respondents reported improvement in terms of self-confidence, personal relationships, and letting go of emotional baggage.

Lopez (2013) focused on the reported transformative effects of the Camino pilgrimage by examining 63 travel diaries that Italian pilgrims published on the internet. She found that pilgrims tend to describe their pilgrimage as a cathartic experience, that is, an experience that transformed their lives and priorities.

Brumec's (2021) study of changes in values after a pilgrimage also shows that the pilgrimage to Santiago is a transformative experience. Based on Schwartz's values questionnaire, she found that the value shift reflected pro-social tendencies and implied highly internalised pro-social values. Pilgrims reported a substantial increase in the values of universalism and benevolence and a decrease in the importance of values that emphasise the pursuit of self-interest, success, and dominance over others.

In a separate studies, Brumec and Aracki Rosenfeld (2021) and Brumec (2022) explored life changes after the Camino pilgrimage. The most substantial changes involved an increase in appreciation for life; a heightened quest for meaning and sense of purpose; more concern for others; greater self-acceptance; a deeper sense of spirituality; and a decrease in concern with worldly achievement.

Pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago

Since 1987, when the Camino was proclaimed the first European Cultural Itinerary by the Council of Europe, the yearly number of pilgrims has risen from less than 3000 to over 347,000 in 2019 (Pilgrim's Reception Office 2020). This figure is the yearly number of pilgrims who reached the city¹ and obtained their Compostela Certificate, issued by the Chapter of the Metropolitan Church of Santiago. Although the majority of pilgrims were of Spanish nationality (42%), a Compostela was issued to pilgrims from 190 different countries; 94% had travelled on foot and less than 6% by bicycle.

To obtain the Compostela you must: make the pilgrimage for religious or spiritual reasons, or at least with a searching attitude; do the last 100 km on foot or horseback or the last 200 km by bicycle; and you must

collect the stamps on the *Credencial del Peregrino* from the places you pass through to certify that you have been there. Pilgrims who obtain a Compostela could be roughly divided into two groups. The first group, more numerous² than the second, represents pilgrims who travel by bus in organised groups (often with members of their religious community) for only a few days to fulfil the minimum conditions to obtain Compostela - the last 100 kilometres to Santiago. They undertake organised daily trips, walk without backpacks and usually sleep in hotels. The second group constitutes individual pilgrims who organise their trip independently and walk the entire route (or at least a considerable part). They walk with backpacks, alone, with friends or relatives for a couple of weeks. In this article, I focus on pilgrims of the second group.

Smith (2018) argues that there is tension between these two groups of pilgrims. She writes that pilgrims travelling in organised groups irritated an American priest - Codd - who labelled them 'pilgrim wannabes', 'pseudo-pilgrims', and 'day trippers' walking *sin mochilas*, that is, those walking without backpacks. Smith wonders how these pilgrims affect less spiritually trained pilgrims if they have irritated a Catholic priest.

Havard (2018) also argues that pilgrims along the Camino have been known to judge one another based on their mode of transportation. Besides, she claims there is tension between pilgrims who start before and after certain cities along the route, and between those who do and do not carry their belongings on their backs.

Communitas

Van Gennep (1960) singled out pilgrimage as a particular form of rite of passage. He distinguishes three phases of rites of passage: preliminal (separation), liminal (transition), and postliminal (incorporation). It is in the intermediate stage where transition and transformation occur. In this framework, Turner (1969) developed the concept of liminality that refers not only to the middle phase but to the whole period, in which pilgrims find themselves in the transitory stage between two established

¹ According to Olsen and Timothy (2020), visitation to sacred sites leads to challenges of pilgrimage, such as management of sacred sites, commodification, and over-tourism.

² In 2019, 189,937 pilgrims walked Camino Frances, the most popular of the route, and earned Compostela. 96,124 of them (almost 51%) start the route in Sarria, 111 km away from Santiago (Pilgrim's Reception Office 2020).

social statuses. To describe an unstructured community experience in which all members have the same social status, he coined the term 'communitas', and meant by it the liberation of human capacities of cognition (e.g., creativity) from the normative constraints incumbent upon occupying a sequence of social statuses, enacting a multiplicity of social roles, and being acutely conscious of membership in some corporate group (such as a family), or of affiliation with some pervasive social category (such as a class). On that basis, Victor and Edith Turner (1978) built an understanding of community formation during pilgrimage, where much of what is bound up by social structure is liberated, notably the sense of comradeship, the sense of generic bond between people, and creativity. They argued that pilgrims are passive or humble in their behaviour and experience the wisdom traditions of their society in a visionary, unified way.

In contrast to the Turners and their concept of *communitas*, Eade and Sallnow (1991) regard pilgrimage as an arena for competing religious and secular discourses. They argued that the liminal space provokes the individual to express internalised conflicts that they cannot do for various reasons in a structured social space. This agrees somewhat with the Turners (1978:137) who mention that the purity of *communitas* could be compromised by the sin of social structure.

According to Havard (2018), evidence indicates that along the Camino de Santiago, pilgrims experience both - a sense of mutual understanding and acceptance of their fellow pilgrims and conflict with one another. She argued that differences in personal and group identity do not necessarily fall away or become invisible during the pilgrimage. She completed a segment of the Camino Frances with a group of students with many differences between them and consequently with pretty high potential for conflict. However, they became a loving and affirming Camino family, and thus, Havard concluded that *communitas* was not born only spontaneously but also from mindfulness exercises. Since relationships between pilgrims are, to a certain extent, the key to the transformative potential, pilgrims may (and often do) pursue *communitas* to happen to them. But to achieve that, Havard argued, pilgrims must be willing to suspend judgment and see difference without allowing it to divide them.

Present Study

This study aims to examine the pilgrim and their subjective experience of a sense of community on the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage, thereby focusing on what pilgrims say about their experiences. It tries to answer two basic research questions:

1. To what extent does the community formed among the pilgrims on the Camino de Santiago correspond to Turner's notion of *communitas*?
2. How might, in this community sense, pilgrimage with family or friends differ from individual pilgrimages?

These questions were pursued on the basic assumptions of subtle ontological realism (Hammersley, 1992) and epistemological constructivism (Raskin, 2002). Accordingly, the study assumes that (a) there is a real world that exists independently of our perceptions and theories and that (b) our (including scientific) understanding of the world is inevitably a construction from our own perspectives and standpoint. Based on the second point, I opted for an interpretivist approach, according to which social reality is best approached through interpreting actors' understandings of events.

Method

This research is based on a qualitative and quantitative content analysis of 32 travelogue testimonies about the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage (see Appendix), written by pilgrims themselves, published in book form in the Slovene language, and recorded in the Slovenian library information system COBISS (Co-operative Online Bibliographic System & Services).

Most books (23) are the work of Slovenian authors, while seven were written by authors from other countries and translated into Slovene. Foreign authors include two Frenchmen (Potdevin, 2013; Rufin, 2016), three Americans (Gray and Skeesuck, 2017; MacLaine, 2000), one Croatian (Kapetanović, 2017), and one Irishman (McManus, 2014).

Thirty authors had travelled on foot (most walked over 800 kilometres), and two (Močnik, 2009; Štuhec, 2011) by bicycle (both over 750 kilometres). Štuhec (2011) was the only one who did not sleep in the pilgrim hostels.

Seventeen of the authors pilgrimed alone and fifteen in a group: with a marriage partner (Gliha, 2018; Rigler & Rigler, 2004; Steblovnik, 2010; Steblovnik, 2012), friends (Gray & Skeesuck, 2017; Jernejčič, 2014; Kapetanović, 2017; Kvaternik, 2015), daughters (Grešak & Remškar, 2017), or spouse's family member (Brumec, 2016; Jenko Simunič & Jenko, 2014).

For almost all authors (except MacLaine, 2000 and Rufin, 2016), a book about the Camino experience is their book debut. The experience of walking or riding the Camino impressed these authors to such an extent that they wrote their first book.

I examined *communitas* along the Camino de Santiago as part of the research, aiming to provide a data-based theoretical explanation of this pilgrimage experience in late modernity. Analysis was performed using computer data processing, with QDA Miner software, where I imported and encoded the books in RTF files. Text coding was the central part of data processing. In the first step, I applied single-stage open coding to establish inductive, content-driven concepts by analysing the incidents or activities as potential indicators of the pilgrimage experience.

In the next step, I identified six main characteristics of Turner's notion of *communitas* (Turner, 1969; Turner & Turner, 1978; Turner, 2012):

- (1) the generic bond,
- (2) comradeship,
- (3) egalitarianism,
- (4) humility,
- (5) wisdom and
- (6) creativity.

These represent the theoretical framework of the research. Further, in the analysed text, I identified nine concepts that correspond to Turner's notion of the *communitas* theoretical framework. These concepts are more thoroughly presented in the implementation matrix (Table 1).

Findings

The Generic Bond

The first main characteristic of Turner's notion of *communitas* is the generic bond. According to Turner (1969), the notion of the generic bond between all humans is a product of humans in their wholeness, wholly attending. Since members of *communitas* are not segmented into roles and statuses, they confront one another rather with direct, immediate, and total confrontation of human identities, whose boundaries are ideally coterminous with those of the human species. He argued that *communitas* gives recognition to an essential and generic human bond, without which there could be no society. For Edith Turner (2012) *communitas* remains a spring of pure possibility, which finds oneness that warms people toward their fellow human beings and speaks about our interconnectedness.

In the texts analysed, the generic bond is the most common feature of *communitas*, with a frequency of 232 or 44% of all codes related to *communitas*. It refers to codes which talk about feeling interconnectedness and feeling oneness. These two identified concepts of transcendence, are two different views of wholeness. From the point of view of oneness, at the fore is undividedness:

We are all one, we are love (Udovič, 2012:4).

We were each everyone and everything, and everyone and everything was us . . . (MacLaine, 2000:35).

While from the point of view of interconnectedness, at the fore is interdependence:

You are a part of the Universe, but still Unique (Udovič, 2012:56).

It spoke to what I had learned: that we are all part of everything and vice versa (MacLaine, 2000:34).

However, for pilgrims the essential expression of a generic bond is besides the feeling of oneness and interconnectedness, also love, life energy, or life itself:

We are all one, all love, all life (Brumec, 2016:160).

We are all one, we are love, you don't search for

this, we are here and now (Udovič, 2012:4).

We are all the same entity, we are all One, we are all connected (Vranjek, 2015:189).

We are all one, one in oneness (Božič, 2018:221).

Because we are love and we are life (Artnik Knibbe, 2016:224).

Comradeship

The second most common feature, with a code occurrence of 155 or 29% of all codes, is comradeship. This includes two concepts: to feel genuine friendliness and to be helpful. Intense comradeship and generous common friendliness are both essential elements in *communitas*. The benefits of *communitas* are quick understanding, easy mutual help, and long-term ties with others. In a way, *communitas* also changes the pilgrim's perception of accepting help:

Today, accepting help feels different. ... My ego isn't whispering lies, telling me I should have been able to do it on my own. No pride clouds the beauty of their assistance (Gray & Skeesuck, 2017:252).

I accepted their help. I accepted their gift. I accepted their hospitality. And then something changed in me ... Before, the old pride prevented me from giving myself completely to others: I always controlled myself and never really needed other people. Whenever I accepted any help or gift, it was mostly superficial; welcome, but superficial. In principle, I did not need help, and neither did other people. That's why I didn't know how to properly appreciate what was given. It was as if I had blocked the door of my heart, which had a bad effect on all relationships, without even realizing it (Potdevin, 2013:30).

Egalitarianism

According to Turner (1969), pilgrims have nothing that may distinguish them from their fellow – they have no status, property, insignia, or clothing indicating their rank or role. Secular distinctions of rank and status disappear or are homogenised. This characteristic of *communitas* is comprised of two codes: to lose everything and to feel equality.

Turner (1969) argued that liminality implies that the high could not be high unless the low existed, and who is high must experience what it is like to be low. As one author, Rufin³ puts it:

In one day I had lost everything: my geographical bearings, the foolish dignity that titles and social status could provide. ... I understood how valuable it can be to lose everything, in order to find what is essential (Rufin, 2016, ch. 7/para 5).

Humility

According to Turner (1969), pilgrims' behaviour is normally passive or humble, and one's pride in oneself becomes irrelevant. In the text analysed, humility is captured in the concept with a code occurrence of 44, to be humble.

Wisdom

Turner (1969) argued that the wisdom imparted in liminality is not just an aggregation of words and sentences but has ontological value and transforms the very being of the neophyte. The concept to feel wisdom occurs 32 times. It is a sense of mediated wisdom, as the knowledge and wisdom of humanity are inscribed in the pilgrim.

Creativity

Communitas is a source of possibility, innovation, and creativity where the gifts of each and every person are alive to the fullest (Turner & Turner, 1978; Turner, 2012), which is confirmed by the findings of my study on pilgrims. Nevertheless, since the concept to be creative occurs only 25 times, it is the rarest feature of *communitas* in the analysed travelogues.

3 Jean-Christophe Rufin is a French doctor, diplomat, historian, globetrotter and novelist. He is the president of Action Against Hunger, one of the earliest members of Médecins Sans Frontières, and a member of the Académie Française. In Wikipedia, The Free Encyclopedia. Retrieved 11:34, September 13, 2022, from https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Jean-Christophe_Rufin&oldid=1105200480.

Table 1: Code Occurrence for Concepts of Communitas with Sample Reference Quotation from Travelogues

Character-istic	Code	Frequency (%)	Reference quotation from travelogues
Generic bond	To feel interconnect- edness	167	<i>Our hearts are filled with the love and connection shared</i> (Gray & Skeesuck, 2017:177). <i>I could almost physically feel the sameness I shared with the other hikers, our universal substance, flesh and blood imbued with the overwhelming energy of life. It's incredible. For most of us, everyday life pushes this awareness so far down that we don't even know it's there</i> (Brumec, 2016:80).
	To feel oneness	65	<i>Only once the pilgrim is truly alone and almost naked, unencumbered by liturgical glitter, can he rise towards heaven. All religions merge in this face-to-face encounter with the Fundamental Principle. Like the Aztec priest on his pyramid, the Sumerian on his ziggurat, Moses on Mount Sinai, Christ at Golgotha, the pilgrim in these high and lonely places, up among the winds and the clouds, detached from the distant world far below him, and freed from his suffering and vain cravings, can, at last, attain Oneness, the Essence, the Origin</i> (Rufin, 2016, ch.25/para.29). <i>Surrounded by the hum of voices from four different countries, we sense a feeling of oneness</i> (Gray & Skeesuck, 2017:172).
	Total	232 (44%)	
Comrade- ship	To feel genuine friendliness	79	<i>As early as the second day, we walked together and, without the slightest reservations, shared practically everything we carried with us. Never before have I experienced the motto All for one, one for all so deeply and authentically! It was beautiful. To give and receive without reservations</i> (Novak, 2004:22). <i>All of it, the beautiful and the less beautiful, cannot feel my heart with as much tenderness and warmth as the pilgrims and other people I met while walking the Camino. People with whom I shared days, hours or minutes, or just a brief glance and the buen Camino greeting</i> (Kapetanović, 2017:335). <i>It was spontaneous, and there was genuine concern for the joys and sorrows of the person one was in communication with. Pilgrims are so strongly connected that everyone's ups and downs are experienced by everyone else as their own. As Hemingway put it: 'Ask not for whom the bell tolls, it tolls for you'</i> (Brumec, 2016:122).
	To be helpful	76	<i>My mental and spiritual shift over the past week has challenged me in many ways. Time and time again, we have had the help we needed, and every time, it was help we didn't ask for. For as long as I can remember, I have struggled with asking others for assistance. But the challenge of accepting help that is freely offered opened my eyes to a deeper struggle. I haven't just struggled to ask, I have struggled to receive. Over the past few days, though, I've seen a beauty in receiving that I didn't know existed</i> (Gray & Skeesuck, 2017:250). <i>The pilgrims are interested in how you are, if the blisters have already healed, whether you still have any pain, you rested enough, you need a painkiller or a cooling cream. A pilgrim cuts his apple and a loaf of bread and offers a piece to another pilgrim passing by. Everyone is very patient, there is no impatience between them, no arguments or anger over a better bed, waiting for a shower, internet access</i> (Lepej Bašelj, 2009:21).
	Total	155 (29%)	

Table 1: Code Occurrence for Concepts of Communitas with Sample Reference Quotation from Travelogues

Egalitarianism	To lose everything	26	<i>In the years before, I had clothed myself in a succession of socially prestigious glories but I didn't want them to become the luxurious shroud of my freedom. And now the ambassador served in his residence by fifteen people in white jackets, the academician received beneath the cupola with a roll of drums, has just been running between the tree trunks of a public park to hide the most insignificant and most disgusting of crimes (Rufin, 2016, ch.6/para.5).</i> <i>Business, profession, career, education, surname, and sometimes even first name were not important at all. Most of the time, a look, a smile, and a sincere greeting were enough (Djura Jelenko & Jelenko, 2010:51).</i>
	To feel equality	18	<i>And the people? We are all equal here. There are no business outfits, no cars, no make-up (at least there shouldn't be), no jewelry, no titles, no status positions, no competition for fame and power (Škarja, 2017:240).</i> <i>Were we different from one another? Given the hardships resolved by the Camino, I would say not at all. I would disagree that our cultural differences had any impact whatsoever on how our pain-bodies acted when they were activated, overwrought. The compassion spontaneously developed on the Camino is in essence the same, regardless of the colour of your skin, size of your eyes, length of your hair, or mother tongue (Artnik Knibbe, 2016:190).</i> <i>Men and women who find no pity in the cities, with their cruel competitiveness and their tyrannical role models which condemn the fat, the thin, the old, the ugly, the poor, the unemployed, discover in the condition of the pilgrim an equality that gives everyone a chance (Rufin, 2016, ch. 4/para 7).</i>
	Total	44 (8%)	
Humility	To be humble	44	<i>Humility and asceticism? These words sounded far from enthralling before entering the sacred space of Oneness. I used to associate these words with renunciation and hiding our power. But when this sensational renaissance occurred, this also led to the natural state of modesty and humility arising from the abundance of our own selves (Artnik Knibbe, 2016:228).</i> <i>For the first time in my life, I felt the wish to be humble. Until that moment, I had associated humility with subservience, servitude, spinelessness. Wrong! Humility does not mean bowing before someone, but rather bowing to them. Humility is acknowledgment of the truth. The humble look upon themselves honestly and objectively (Brumec, 2016:87).</i> <i>And in the next moment I realized that on El Camino, you simply are humble (Brumec 2016:87).</i> <i>The process helped with the reshaping of my faith, bringing about a new understanding. Central to it was humility (McManus, ch.8/para.19).</i>
	Total	44 (8%)	
Wisdom	To feel the wisdom	32	<i>I felt something I couldn't define . . . a kind of knowing. I knew somehow that my journey would begin at the end of this one (MacLaine, 2000:289).</i> <i>Suddenly, deep down, I felt how precious life is. I realized that it is the most valuable thing and that I am already infinitely rich with it. Well, every well-bred child already knows this, you will say, but it's one thing to talk about it and convince others about it and another to feel it (Novak:43).</i> <i>Then I had an interesting thought: Wisdom was represented by what we stood upon—our feet. That was why saints had their feet washed by others who were in the early stages of enlightenment. The feet took energy from the wisdom of Mother Earth and put us in touch with our own balance (MacLaine, 2000:129).</i> <i>I stopped listening to my soul's messages with my mind. I stopped trying to capture them in a small bottle. I also did not make any notes on the Way, because I knew. There was no time, space or need for eternalising or chasing knowledge that was a part of me (Artnik Knibbe, 2016:170).</i>
	Total	32 (6%)	

Table 1: Code Occurrence for Concepts of Communitas with Sample Reference Quotation from Travelogues

Creativity	To be creative	25	<p><i>Responding creatively to problems is the most expected behavior among pilgrims. The pilgrim uses all the means available and invents those that are not. He knows how to listen to others, give snacks, plasters. Let go of equipment he doesn't need. He knows how to listen and not judge. And knows how to accept help (Grešak & Remškar, 2017:65).</i></p> <p><i>But I will always create. Create what I know and feel. Create with heart and passion (Škarja, 2017:317).</i></p> <p><i>My soul revealed the following about creativity: Live and be a mirror of the life flow that can be created through humans. It is important to be brave and flexible, and to move like a buoy on a turbulent sea, although nowadays many people live half-lives, or survive in a world that resembles a puddle of water rather than a vast sea, a small space where hardly any life can be found. Help co-create the conditions in which there is always enough wind that you are not eaten alive by mosquitoes (Artnik Knibbe, 2016:90).</i></p> <p><i>And relationships and creativity give meaning to life. We give too much importance to everything else and, as a result spend too much time and care (Škarja, 2017:38).</i></p>
	Total	25 (5%)	
Total		532 (100%)	

Crosstabulation Analysis

The crosstabulation of frequencies (Figure 1) shows that the frequencies of concepts relating to *communitas* differ greatly across analysed travelogues. However, all authors except one, Štuhec (2011), experience a sense of an unstructured community of pilgrims, which corresponds to Turner's notion of *communitas*.

It is not surprising that Štuhec (2011) is an exception. He was the only one who did not socialise with the other pilgrims and did not sleep in the pilgrim hostels:

Before going to sleep, I finally decided that because of the tiring stages, and perhaps even better sleep, I would not spend the nights in the many Camino pilgrim hostels (albergues) (26).

Figure 1: Crosstabulation of Frequencies

	Artnik Knibbe 2016	Brumec 2016	Gričnik 2014	Gričnik 2018	Lepej 2009	Novak 2004	Rufin 2015	Steblovnik 2010	Steblovnik 2012	Udovič 2012	Vranjek 2015	Sluga 2017	Potdevin 2013	Škarja 2017	Kapefanoč 2017	Močnik 2009	Jelenko 2010	Kvaternik 2015	Rigler 2004	Jelenko V. 2010	Jenko Simunič & Jenko, 2014	Jernejčič, 2014	Grešak 2017	Remškar 2017	Božič 2018	McManus 2018	Gliša 2018	Klug 2018	Gray 2018	Skeesuck 2018	MacLaine 2001
to feel interconnectedness	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
to feel oneness	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
to lose everything	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
to be humble	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
to feel genuine friendliness	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
to be helpful	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
to feel equality	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
to feel wisdom	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●
to be creative	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●	●

The title of his travelogue alone: *Over the Pyrenees to the Atlantic: A slightly different Camino*, tells us that Štuhec (2011) set out to undertake a pilgrimage differently than most of the other authors. He didn't feel like one of them:

In the morning, the pilgrims were always cheerful, the longer the day dragged on, the more relaxed and quiet they were greeted with 'buen Camino' or 'ola'. At times I had the feeling that there was quite a bit of anger and envy toward cyclists. Probably because of the big difference in mobility, fatigue, and blisters. Sometimes I felt sorry for them when I felt the sad look, slow movement, limping, 'patching blisters', cooling my sore feet in a plastic bag with water on the benches. This is also why it was good that I didn't sleep in albergues (84-85).

Štuhec also didn't feel like one of the short-distance pilgrims:

A group of incoming loud Germans positioned themselves next to the cross and asked me for a video. They made jokes and laughed while looking at things. A bus was waiting for them in the parking lot. There was silence when they drove away (Štuhec, 2011:170).

Conflict

Evidence indicates that conflict arises among pilgrims only exceptionally. In two of the analysed books, the authors mention that they witnessed an outbreak of pilgrim aggression. They both talk about exceptions:

He wanted to sleep by the window; when he failed, he angrily swept the pilgrims' staff on the other bed. Short circuit. However, I can say that this was the only unpleasant incident on the whole pilgrimage. Otherwise, all the time during the pilgrimage there was kindness, and willingness to help, we gave and received advice, exchanged experiences, and cheered each other up, all the time and everywhere, there was peace, relaxation, and joy between us, that we were given health and grace, that we may roam (Rigler & Rigler, 2000:45).

For the first time, I experienced some impatience among the peregrines, and I was a little horrified. Later I realize that in everyday life, one experiences such things many times, but one is not horrified at all. Here on Camino, however, a completely different view of such things opens up (Steblovnik, 2010:89).

Short-distance Pilgrims

The authors of the analysed books often mention pilgrims who travel the last 100 kilometres from Santiago in organised groups for only a few days to fulfil the minimum conditions to obtain a *Compostela*. They give them various nicknames, such as short-distance pilgrims, turigrinos, taxigrinos, bus pilgrims, and motorised pilgrims:

Pilgrims who walk the whole way like to give nicknames to those, who start pilgrimage just before Santiago, such as, for example, turigrinos, which is a kind of mixture of tourist and pilgrim, or taxigrinos, which means a pilgrim who completes part of the journey by riding with a taxi (Klug, 2018:148).

These are the so-called bus pilgrims. During the day, they walk; a bus with luggage accompanies them, and the one who hesitates can ride (Rigler and Rigler, 2000:111).

These short-distance pilgrims are not a part of the long-distance pilgrims' *communitas* - there is no mutual understanding, and the 'real' pilgrims do not accept pseudo-pilgrims as their fellows. Instead, between these two groups is tension, impatience, and irritability:

On the way, we see peregrines, who are mostly Spaniards, who follow the shortest route of the Camino. That's a hundred kilometers. They are restless, noisy, and bouncy. Their backpacks are small and half empty. Snow-white socks and white tennis shoes catch the eye the most. They look down on us 'old' peregrines because we drag ourselves like fog due to fatigue. Our clothes and shoes are not so respectable, as they show the marks of a hard journey. The behavior of these 'short-film' peregrines is also completely different. They are very egotistical, and etiquette is unknown to them. In the shelters, they slam the doors and don't close them, they fuss, they talk too loudly... (Steblovnik, 2010:76).

Drunk with solitude, the pilgrim feels dizzy amid the clamour of these bazaars. Having met hardly anyone on the Camino, he is astonished to see so many people wearing scallop shells and other Compostela signs and symbols. Of course, there are a few genuine pilgrims among them. But the great majority wear leather moccasins or

espadrilles. Their fresh faces and smart, clean clothes are hardly compatible with the rigors of the Way. As you watch them returning to their coaches you realise that they belong to the category of motorised pilgrims. Tour operators have sold them Compostela and are taking them there, stopping off briefly at places of interest (Rufin, 2016, ch.15/para.3).

Discussion and Conclusion

The findings confirm that on the Camino de Santiago pilgrimage, an unstructured community of pilgrims is formed, which corresponds to Turner's notion of *communitas*. *Communitas* consists of individual long-distance pilgrims - pilgrims who organise their trip independently for a couple of weeks, walk or ride the entire or at least a considerable part of the route, either alone or accompanied by friends or relatives, travel with backpacks, and sleep in the pilgrims' hostels. Within the context of pilgrimage liminality, their social status and roles disappear, and they start to feel equality between people. In their community prevails the notion of a generic bond between people, a strong sense of unity, intense comradeship, and generous common friendliness. It is a creative community characterised by pilgrims' often passive and humble behaviour, and wisdom has ontological value. *Communitas* indicates how pilgrimage helps create and sustain group cohesion. Relationships between pilgrims are also, to a certain extent, the key to the transformative potential. Nevertheless, occasional conflicts between pilgrims may arise, but they are the exception rather than the rule.

The findings also indicate that pilgrims have similar experiences of *communitas*, regardless of whether they travel to Santiago alone or with relatives or friends. Because *communitas* entails the joy of sharing common experiences within a group, it becomes evident that individuals cannot experience this sense of equality, mutual understanding, and acceptance of their fellow if they do not socialise with pilgrims. Long-distance pilgrims, however, do not perceive themselves as equals to the pilgrims who travel by bus in organised groups for only a few days to fulfil the minimum conditions to obtain a *Compostela*, make organised daily trips, walk without backpacks, and usually sleep in hotels. The long-distance pilgrims often regard these short-distance pilgrims as

pseudo-pilgrims. Further research into this is necessary and worthwhile, considering the significant interest in the community formed by these pilgrims.

Certainly, this study is not without its limitations. One of the central assumptions of this study is that pilgrims' travelogues give the researcher a credible insight into the actual experiences of the Camino de Santiago. In favour of the credibility of my results, I should emphasise that the analysed travelogues are authentic thick descriptions of the studied pilgrimage experience, which include self-reflections of pilgrims which were not limited or distorted by an interviewing process. Therefore they give the researcher a credible insight into the actual experiences of the Camino de Santiago. Nevertheless, I must not neglect that travelogues are subjective narratives and not a direct insight into objective reality. Another constraint in this regard was brought about by the time component; the travelogues are based on author memories; written narratives of earlier events that may have been influenced by the state in which the story was told. All in all, it is important to note that one of the analysed travelogues was written by the author of this article, who had a first-hand experience as a pilgrim on Camino; this had a profound impact on this analysis, for it added to both the validity of interpretation and much appreciated sincerity, which is a crucial component within qualitative research (Tracy, 2010).

To conclude, despite all the mentioned limitations, the present study brings empirically grounded new knowledge about *communitas* along the Camino de Santiago, and it seems obvious that studies examining *communitas* among the pilgrims of both groups of pilgrims are needed to validate and potentially modify the findings of this study.

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- Vranjek, B. (2015) *The Camino: The mysticism of the invisible world*. Slovenj Gradec: self-published.

Appendix: List of Analysed Travelogues

Author	Published	Walked	Title
1. Artnik Knibbe, Tjaši	2016	2014 - alone	Vulnerable: Stories from The Way (El Camino de Santiago), 850 km long path of presence, awakening, and grace
2. Božič, Saša	2018	2018 - alone	Storyteller: 365 inspirations of the citizens of the world and a story about the path to self
3. Brumec, Snežana	2016	2016 - with relative	The Camino
4. Djura Jelenko, Saša	2010	2009 - with husband	The Camino: A 800 kilometres long experience
5. Jelenko, Vinko	2010	2009 - with wife	The Camino: A 800 kilometers long experience
6. Gliha, Franc	2018	2017 - with wife	The Camino de Santiago 'In two parts' 2017-2018
7. Gray, Patrick	2018	2014 - with friend	I'll Push You: A Journey of 500 Miles, Two Best Friends, and One Wheelchair
8. Skeesuck, Justin	2018	2014 - with friend	I'll Push You: A Journey of 500 Miles, Two Best Friends, and One Wheelchair
9. Gričnik, Ivan	2014	2014 - alone	My Camino
10. Gričnik, Ivan	2018	2014 - alone	From Santiago to Assisi
11. Jenko Simunič, N. & Jenko, B.	2014	2013 - with relative	Our path
12. Jernejčič, Nataša	2014	2012 - with friend	My path: The Camino de Santiago
13. Kapetanović, Ivan	2017	2016 - alone	Camino de Santiago: The Way of St. James, Lečevica - Santiago de Compostela.
14. Klug, Mojca	2018	2015 - alone	Camino Francés: My attempt to escape the 'nonsense' of modern society
15. Kvaternik, Stanislav	2015	2011 - with friends	My pilgrimage: Along the path of St. James in Santiago de Compostela
16. Lepej Bašelj, Saša	2009	2006 - alone	Camino: My lonely path or cleansing of soul and body
17.. MacLaine, Shirley	2007	1994 - alone	The Camino: A Journey of the Spirit
18. McManus, Brendan	2018	2011 - alone	Redemption Road: Grieving on the Camino
19. Močnik, Uroš	2009	2007 - cycled alone	In 14 days to the end of the world: a journey into inner peace, The Camino
20. Novak, Nace	2004	2002 - alone	The Camino: From Nova Gorica to Compostela
21. Potdevin, Jean-Marc	2013	2008 - alone	Reset: The mystical experience of a businessman on the footpath to Compostela
22. Remškar, Eva	2017	2017 - with daughter	And here we go: Moms and daughters at the Camino
23. Grešak, Mojca	2017	2017 - with daughter	And here we go: Moms and daughters at the Camino
24. Rigler, M. & Rigler, M.	2004	1999 - with husband	You are blessed, poor man: A pilgrimage along the path of St. James to Compostela
25. Rufin, Jean-Cristophe	2013	no data - alone	The Santiago Pilgrimage: Walking the Immortal Way
26. Sluga, Rado	2017	2011 - alone	In the embrace of the trail: El Camino
27. Steblovnik, Mirjana	2010	2008 - with husband	Buen Camino, Peregrino
28. Steblovnik, Mirjana	2012	2010 - with husband	All just because of one church at the end of the world: The Camino Portugal
29. Škarja, Petra	2017	2016 - alone	The Camino: From slavery to freedom
30. Štuhec, Jožef	2011	2008 - cycled alone	Across the Pyrenees to the Atlantic: A little different Camino
31. Udovič, Vladimir	2012	2010 - alone	I am alive, I walk, and I am happy: a travelogue of a pilgrimage to the Camino
32. Vranjek, Bojana	2015	2014 - alone	The Camino: The mysticism of the invisible world