



A Sociology of Pilgrimage: Embodiment, Identity, Transformation

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We are all on pilgrimage. On a voyage of spiritual discovery, enlightenment, self understanding, or physical mastery, we share in the search for "something more". When I had the idea of teaching a university course on the Sociology of Pilgrimage, I realized that even though I had written a book (Harman, 2009), walked two Caminos, served as hospitalera for three weeks in Spain, and immersed myself in all things pilgrimage- including the stimulating intellectual milieu of the Institute for Pilgrimage Studies at the College of William and Mary - there was no template, no curriculum, indeed no course that had ever been taught like this at my institution, King's University College in London, Canada, where I have been on faculty since 1988[1]. While supporting my dream to teach such a course, colleagues questioned whether there was enough "material" in the way of research and publications to mount one.

What is unique about this text is that practically every author and reviewer has been on pilgrimage during the birthing of the book. Some were in Spain, New Mexico and Brazil, and others were struggling with health and life/death issues back home. My mother died during the month that I had set aside to focus on the book. I am grateful to have had the opportunity to be with her in her final days, and to have had the freedom to put the book aside when I was needed. We were all away from our computers long enough for the completion of the book to take a bit longer than originally intended. Nevertheless, it has come together, and I am grateful to all of the participants for their commitment to following through with the project. It is far better as a result, just as a physical pilgrimage is deepened by the twists and turns on the road.

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