

Introduction

This comparative-historical study examines how religious organizational responses to a shared stigmatizing scandal, arising from the sexual abuse of children by church personnel, differ across diverse locales – Ireland, South Africa, and the United States – of a single religious tradition, in this case the Roman Catholic church.

The sexual abuse of children by clergy and religious staff in the Catholic church has occurred around the globe. Most recently, Pope Francis acknowledged this by instituting a Pontifical Commission for the Protection of Minors and by personally meeting with victims in the Vatican. Earlier in 2014, during an interview with journalists on board the Papal flight travelling back from the Holy Land, Pope Francis spoke of clerical child sexual abuse as a “horrible crime” and as an act of betrayal by clergy¹. These actions show how the central Roman hierarchy, which was not very engaged with this issue until relatively recently, now takes it very seriously and is even ready to exhibit prophetic leadership.

While Catholic episcopal conferences show variation in the timing and scale of their clerical sex abuse scandals, certain commonalities bring them together and permit some general observation. The scandal² of clerical sex abuse related not just to the abuse by clergy and religious people of children but also to the response, or lack thereof, of church elites, such as bishops and religious superiors, to the behavior of some religious personnel. This abuse took place in individual parishes, as well as in a society-wide network of church-run institutions such as schools, orphanages, and hospitals, in which Catholic clergy operated as day-to-day managers of the everyday lives of large numbers of children³. Central to the disclosure of many of these scandals was the work of investigative journalists who turned a critical gaze toward the actions of church personnel (Bruce, 2011; D’Antonio, Dillon and Gautier, 2013; Keenan, 2012), resulting in a large number of media exposés of abusive clerics.

Sexual scandals involving clergy are not unique to the Catholic case, however, as other religious groups had similar experiences of sexual misconduct among their personnel (John Jay College of Criminal Justice 2004, 2011). A case in point is Southern Baptist groups in the U.S., some of whose clergy were also involved in child sex abuse. Perhaps few other religious traditions, though, experienced the degree of public probing and scrutiny of their sexual scandals as the Roman Catholic church in recent times (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004, 2011).

For the Catholic leadership, sexual scandals became a highly visible and publicized stigma – partly to do with the protracted legal trials of abusive clerics – from the 1990s onwards, necessitating a shift from a previous strategy of silencing and “covering” the past, to officially acknowledging its difficult history and performing religious expressions of atonement (Rivera, 2008). More generally, and irrespective of national geographical context, the outbreak of these scandals in the Catholic church became less about the fall from grace of individual clerics than “institutional morality tales” (Gamson, 2001), bringing into focus the apparent normative contradictions, colliding impulses, and paradoxes of this large-scale, transnational, and hierarchical religious institution.

Although the clerical child sex abuse problem spans the globe, and as central as these scandals are to the study of Roman Catholicism, relatively little attention is given to understanding variable discourses and practices in disparate local settings of the church. This is the case despite this religious institution being a global phenomenon, requiring international comparison of cases from around the world, and an institutional space as well as a set of doctrines.

Existing research tends to study the clerical child sexual abuse problem mainly in relation to one society. While such studies do make reference to dynamics in other settings, one dominant case study tends to be used with perhaps one or two points of comparison

(Dillon, 2006; Jenkins, 1996; Keenan, 2012; Shupe, 1998). Or, studies operate primarily at a descriptive level and are only implicitly comparative (Scicluna, Zollner and Ayotte, 2012). While these studies are informative and made significant progress in increasing collective understanding of the clerical child sex abuse problem, they suffer from three basic shortcomings. First, most existing studies lack a direct comparative approach. Second, few studies involve a close in-depth analysis of both the discursive form categories and institutional-organizational responses of diversely located national episcopal conferences. Third, prior studies do not explicitly conceptualize cross-national variation in the church's response to clerical child sex abuse.

In this article I attempt to carry out such an investigation by assessing cross-national variation in the church's sexual scandal-related discourse and organization. I argue that two important lessons are evident for the analysis of religious organizations in general. First, this study emphasizes the importance of place in religious institutional life by showing how church responses to scandal are conditioned by local level dynamics and contexts. It also shows that legitimacy is a key motivating factor in how institutions respond to crises at the local level. Second, this research suggests that these local-level conditions interact with exogenous global processes to create responses to scandal within particular religious traditions. This global environment may constrain or enable how religious institutions react to scandal.

I begin by discussing the cases and methods employed in the analysis. The next section describes the conceptual framework guiding the study and this is followed by a presentation of the findings. The final section summarizes the empirical and theoretical contribution and discusses directions for future research.

Cases and methods

This article investigates the variable response to scandal of the Catholic episcopal conferences in Ireland, South Africa, and the U.S., which were stigmatized by similar events. However, the time of exposure of the scandals varied across countries, occurring in Ireland on an ongoing basis from the mid-1990s, in two waves (1990s and 2000s, though some scandals came into the public domain in the 1980s) in the U.S., and in the 2000s in South Africa. Why were these three cases selected and not three others or a different mix altogether?

The case selection was influenced by a number of considerations. First, I sought locales exhibiting variation in the contextual position of the church – in Ireland the church enjoys a locally dominant monopoly position in the national community (Inglis, 1998) and in South Africa and the U.S. the church has an historic connection but occupies a visible minority position in a majority Christian country (Borer, 1998; Dillon, 1996, 2006). As a consequence of this varying cultural placement, the church in each country has a quite different relationship to the state, with a historical close association in Ireland (Whyte, 1980; Keogh, 1995) and relative autonomy and lack of political privileges in the other two cases.

Second, I sought cases reflecting variation in the degree of lay mobilization in the church in general and around clerical child sex abuse in particular – in Ireland and South Africa such lay agency is relatively weak and markedly strong in the U.S. example (Palacios, 2007).

Third, I also wanted to include cases from varying macro-regional positions of the church, ranging from Western Europe to South Africa and North America.

Fourth, I selected these three cases because they vary in one other significant way. Although the U.S. case received considerable post-scandal attention in the academic literature (Berry, 2000, Bruce, 2011; Dillon, 2006), this is less true for Ireland and even less so for

South Africa. But even in prior studies of the U.S. case (Cafardi, 2008; Jenkins, 1996), direct comparison with other contexts is lacking.

It should be pointed out that my selection was also partially influenced by the fact that with respect to some of the cases (e.g. U.S.) I already knew something, while with regard to others (e.g. South Africa) I wanted to learn more. I chose to study just three cases as it would be difficult to compress a detailed socio-historical account of other cases with available evidence, such as the two other major English-speaking countries, Australia and Canada, into a single article. Thus, the case selection is wide-ranging geographically while being both extensive (across continents) and intensive (within countries).

Of course, the three episcopal conferences under study reflect important variation in their relative size, geographical extent, and bureaucracies (see Note 4). In addition, the three cases vary in their apparent rates of sexual abuse (Murphy, 2010; John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004, 2011). At the same time, each episcopal conference fulfills a broadly similar role in pastoral ministry co-ordination and strategic direction in the national church.

The data collection phase proceeded in two steps. First, from the websites of the episcopal conferences⁴, I assembled clerical child sex abuse-related public statements, pastoral letters reflections, and charters/protocols/guidelines/policies of each episcopal conference (see Table 1). Following earlier work on Catholic episcopal conferences (Dillon, 1996; Yamane, 2005), I carried out a qualitative and quantitative analysis of their content (Krippendorf, 2013). This involved identifying basic descriptive trends with regard to the discursive form categories used in bishops' discourses and selecting representative examples of each (see Table 2).

For the quantitative component, I independently coded each document. These documents were usually found in a section of each Web site dedicated to child safeguarding. In the Irish case, I also relied on the Irish Newspaper Archives and *The Irish Times*

newspaper archive to locate public statements in the mid-1990s and early 2000s and in the U.S. case I relied on two online databases of church documents⁵ for public statements in the 1980s and 1990s. I also read various internal church documents such as newsletters, reports, and other printed material available on these Web sites.

Table 1 about here

Table 2 about here

In reading these documents, I paid attention to whether strategic self-presentation was employed in the text. By this I mean (1) the extent of invocation of Catholic institutional teachings, as expressed in Papal documents, Canon Law, or Gospel texts, episcopal conference documents, or the documents of other episcopal conferences or of (2) distinctly Catholic cultural/sacramental/ritual appeals such as the Mass, prayer, and confession as a response to the sexual scandals problem. In addition, I coded the documents for direct mentions of secular categories such as social scientific research, national government or transnational nongovernmental organization documents, and the opinions of political leaders, social workers, or legal officials (Burns, 1992; Dillon, 1996; Yamane, 2005). I also paid attention to the presence or absence of mnemonic strategies such as official apologies and church-sanctioned restitution measures (see Table 3). I used paragraphs as the unit of analysis for the coding (see Table 2 for basic descriptive trends and Appendix I for illustrative examples of the discursive form categories across the three cases). Together, the data consisted of 797 paragraphs for the Irish case, 310 for the South African case, and 418 for the U.S. case.

Table 3 about here

Second, from these printed materials I gathered data about the institutional-organizational innovations of the national episcopal conference in each country in regard to the clerical sexual abuse problem, such as the establishment of various research studies,

committees, and guidelines/protocols/charters to understand or deal with the problem (see Table 3). These data were supplemented by the reports of official national or state-level government inquiries of clerical child sex abuse (Murphy, 2005; Murphy, 2009; Office of the Attorney General of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2003), reports of internal church review bodies, the Web sites of victim organizations, and the proceedings of a 2012 Vatican symposium on clerical child sex abuse (Scicluna, Zollner and Ayotte, 2012).

For this component of the study, I also relied on the extant secondary source literature on Catholic sex abuse in the three cases (Goode, McGee and O'Boyle, 2003; Nair, 2012, Cafardi, 2008; Jenkins, 1996). With regard to lay activism, the empirical indicators of this (or lack thereof) were references to lay concerns and opinions in church documents, formal constraints on lay activism, and the degree of lay participation in the implementation of post-scandal church policies. Although these indicators by no means exhaust the meaning of lay activism, they do provide a basis for estimating its degree in the different settings.

Because the South African case received far less attention and coverage post-scandal compared to Ireland and the U.S., I also conducted an online search of sexual scandal-related stories in the electronic archive of the weekly South African Catholic newspaper, *The Southern Cross*. Together, these data provided an empirical basis for assessing the propositions set forth in relation to each Catholic episcopal conference.

The time period under consideration is 1988 to 2013. This time span was chosen for study as it spanned the public emergence of the problem in the U.S. church (or the history of Catholic sex abuse disclosure) – which generally occurred in the late 1980s (though collective awareness and discussion of the problem among Catholic prelates stretches back considerably earlier) – and the maturation of the scandals in the 2000s (Jenkins, 1996). With regard to the two other cases – Ireland and South Africa – the “discovery” of clerical child sex abuse (Jenkins, 1996: 33) only occurred from the mid-1990s and 2000s respectively, and

thus took place within this timeframe. While this study includes countries from different macro-regions, a limitation is the exclusion of many other Catholic societies, which also experienced similar sexual scandals.

Conceptual framework

Why would one expect these three discrete Catholic episcopal conferences to vary in their discursive and institutional-organizational responses to scandal? I found the existing sociology of religion literature to be virtually silent on this question. True, there is research on sexual scandals in the church, but this does not provide much help for the focal interest here. Since church responses to abuse across multiple state contexts are rarely studied, I draw on three distinct bodies of research: studies of collective memory, research on religious social activism, and the literature on the relationship between religion and the media, thus providing a conceptual framework for understanding this variation in relation to the micro, meso, and macro levels.

First, theoretical work on collective memory suggests that when institutions are faced with threats to their corporate identity arising from an embarrassing past, they seek to manage this institutional identity, especially when placed in the spotlight of international opinion (Kim and Schwartz, 2010; Olick and Robbins, 1998; Rivera, 2008). This management of uncomfortable and negative collective memories can take different forms ranging from explicit acknowledgement, to redefinitions of the past, through to silencing and forgetting. One other important strategy on the part of collectivities, including churches and religious groups, in the face of stigmatizing pasts, is to engage in “strategic self-presentation” (Rivera, 2008: 616; Goffman, 1959).

Applied to the present study, this implies that top-level church elites respond to scandal in institutional terms. By this I mean that the central church leadership seeks to implement reform measures in and through the church by mobilizing its already existing

resources. In practice, this is accomplished by selectively invoking positive elements of Catholic culture and tradition at the expense of others, in order to counteract and neutralize the church's "spoiled" identity and help make the institution operate more effectively. We might think of these elements as falling into two basic categories – cultural/ritual/sacramental appeals and institutional teachings. This strategic invocation of certain symbols from the rich range of Catholic cultural forms – or "integral-church orientation" (Palacios, 2007: 155) – should be stronger in contexts where the church occupies a hegemonic monopoly position since in such settings the church can usually rely on the resonance and charge of Catholic culture and tradition in the wider society.

Conversely, this invocation will be weaker in contexts where the church faces competition from other religious traditions and where greater pluralism and reduced population share erodes the traction of exclusivist religious language. Appealing to Catholic symbolic forms is also more likely to occur in contexts where public opinion, as in the case of Ireland, lacks consensus about the burden or allocation of responsibility and diffuses blame for the church's institutional past to the state, and wider society, which legitimized the ill-treatment of children in large-scale institutions (Maguire and Ó Cinnéide, 2005; Rivera, 2008).

In pluralistic contexts, by contrast, the church is more likely to call upon or appropriate secular discourses to underwrite its public claims-making (Dillon, 1996; Yamane, 2005), as this makes it less difficult for non-believers or people alienated from organized religious bodies to "hear" the church's message and be convinced by it, especially when it is tainted and compromised by scandal. This paves the way for proposition 1:

P1 (strategic self-presentation): The three episcopal conferences should differ in the degree to which they engage in strategic self-presentation in relation to their institutional pasts based on the strength of Catholic culture in the national society.

Second, we know from the religious collective action literature that the church is dependent on its lay support base and responds to pressures and expectations from “below” (Bruce, 2011; Gill, 1998; Palacios, 2007), to varying degrees, and that the presence or absence of lay associations and organizations pushing for church reform in relation to sexual scandals can potentially influence the discourses and actions of church elites. The importance of taking account of the views, opinions, and preferences of the rank-and-file Catholic laity articulates well with the Vatican II (1962-65) concept of the church as the “People of God”. This involved a reconfiguration of past Catholic values and clergy-laity relations by giving greater weight to the role and voiced concerns of the Catholic laity and redefining its relationship to the spiritual and administrative authority of the hierarchy, even as the laity remained committed to the institutional church (Dillon, 2006; Htun, 2003).

We also know from previous research that the uptake of – and structural possibilities for – lay organization and mobilization, not under the control of but nonetheless supported by clergy and the national hierarchy, in the church varies cross-nationally (Palacios, 2007). In some societies the Catholic laity reflect high levels of mobilization whereas in other societies such lay agency may be weak. This is mainly due to differences in the opportunity structure, sociopolitical space, and encouragement or permission for lay-initiated activism provided by national episcopal conferences, as some churches took up the complex and multi-layered reforms of Vatican II more enthusiastically than others (Palacios, 2007; Wilde, 2007).

It may also be related to the material circumstances of the laity. In contexts where societal wealth is low, as is the case in some African and Latin American countries, and it is difficult to meet immediate personal survival needs, devotees may be less motivated to volunteer their time and thus should be less likely to participate in Catholic organization (Palacios, 2007; Baggett, 2009). In addition, it is conceivable that church policies and actions may themselves stimulate lay activism. This paves the way for proposition 2:

P2 (lay religious activism): The degree of lay mobilization present in the local church should vary and thus the episcopal conferences should be more or less responsive to lay demands in relation to clerical child sex abuse.

Third, prior studies suggest that media reactions – and the public reactions to reports of abuse, more generally – may be consequential for church responses to scandal (Berry, 2000; Donnelly and Inglis, 2010; Silk, 1998). Up until the late 1950s, Catholic bishops rarely engaged in public media relations. After this, and spurred on by innovations and revisions in church doctrines following Vatican II (1962-65) (Hanson, 1987), the rising popularity of television (Thompson, 1995; Morash, 2009), and the ubiquity of media in the postwar world (Thompson, 1995), an ability to communicate in various media outlets became increasingly important to disseminating the institution’s message and shaping public discourse. Indeed, “publicity” became necessary for it to operate effectively as an institution, even as it competed for attention and access with other religious traditions and interest groups (Hoover, 1998). At the same time, the somewhat abstract nature of the church’s teachings makes it difficult for bishops to diffuse their message in a medium that places a high value on the sound-bite (Donnelly and Inglis, 2010; Hoover, 1998).

This means that Catholic leaders tend to rely on secular as well as religious categories in presenting their arguments in the public sphere, so that their message will resonate with non-adherents and devotees alike. As well as this, media professionals increasingly exert pressure on religious elites to explain their stances to the public rather than simply taking their authoritativeness for granted. No longer is it the case that religious leaders can rely on a deferential posture from news outlets in the struggle for power over the means of symbolic communication. This is reflected even in changes in church practice, such as the appointment by Catholic authorities of media spokespersons to articulate the institution’s positions on various issues (Jenkins, 1996).

But as well as subjecting the ideas of bishops to greater scrutiny than before, the media also propagates alternative cultural messages and awareness frequently at odds with church doctrine helping, in turn, to create a more critical imagination among adherents. Media professionals also increasingly pay attention to malfeasance among clergy, by writing about difficult topics such as abuse that previously received little or no attention (Hoover, 1998; Jenkins, 1996). When journalists do take up such issues, reportage tends to play a “constructive” role by following a particular template. This means that media outlets tend to construct clerical sex abuse as a national issue, as a Catholic issue, and to rely on a relatively narrow range of experts to provide analysis of the issue, with such expert opinion tending to reflect an anti-Catholic bias. Beyond the print media, often journalists “door step” Catholic bishops (Jenkins, 1996), as in the BBC’s 2001 “This World: The Shame of the Catholic Church” documentary on clerical abuse in the Irish church, when Cardinal Seán Brady was confronted by an investigative reporter while entering a church building. In addition, the media template tends to give significant attention to the voice of victims (Jenkins, 1996).

Alongside this corrective relationship between religion and media, whereby the latter may undermine or challenge religious structures of authority and bring religion and media into conflict, is a more recent legitimization role in which religious institutions may employ the publicizing role of the secular mainstream media to legitimize the church and respond to negative institutional pasts.

Yet, in some settings greater attention tends to be given by media corporations to appointing journalists to cover religious topics than in others. Coverage of religious affairs is not an isolated activity but instead exists alongside a variety of alternative forms of journalistic reportage, each vying for media time and energy for their particular subject matter, and producing important variation in the discursive space given to religious news across national contexts (Hoover, 1998). One important consequence of this is that the

morality tale of church scandal was more likely to come into the public domain in the first place in some settings than others. This paves the way for proposition 3:

P3 (church-media relations): The three episcopal conferences should differ in their responses to clerical child sex abuse according to varying media reactions to abuse.

Although these three perspectives – strategic self-presentation, lay religious activism, and church-media relations – are conceptually distinct, in practice they may not be independent of one another. For example, it may be that the strength of Catholic culture may be greater in contexts where there is little history of lay mobilization and of the church as an organization of society (as in the case of Ireland), pointing to how the strategic self-presentation and lay religious activism approaches may intersect or align with one another depending on the context in a given society.

The observation that the Catholic church across diverse settings will present variation in its discourse and organization should not be that surprising as past research shows Catholicism is characterized by significant heterogeneity and plurality (D’Antonio, Dillon and Gautier, 2013; Konieczny, 2013; Palacios, 2007). This pluralism exists at the local-level of the parish where adherents may be committed to contrasting theological orientations and worship practices, but also at the level of the civil society in the varying ways in which the church engages the public sphere in dissimilar settings (Htun, 2003; Konieczny, 2013; Palacios, 2007).

Yet, at the same time, the shared commitment of Catholic episcopal conferences to the church’s cultures and traditions, participation in international ecclesiastical networks, and commonality in bureaucratic structures, suggests that the degree of cross-national variation should be relatively small. By controlling for variation due to differences in religious tradition, this facilitates an examination of the influence of varying contextual factors across the three locales. The next section presents the findings of the study in relation to the three

propositions (P1 at the discursive level and P2 and P3 at the institutional-organizational level) in turn.

Findings

Patterns in Discursive Form Categories of Catholic Episcopal Conferences

Proposition 1

Proposition 1 posited that the church should vary in the degree to which it relies on strategic self-presentation in the management of its difficult institutional past based on the strength of Catholic culture in different settings. I found moderate support for this proposition based on representative examples of descriptive quotes from bishops' discourses. However, the frequency of mentions of each legitimacy source across the three cases went against my theoretical expectations.

Table 1 presents basic descriptive information about the number and type of public communications across national contexts, ranging from pastoral letters to charters/protocols/guidelines/policies, written and published by each episcopal conference in relation to clerical child sex abuse. These particular documents were chosen because they represent the authoritative views and actions of the national Catholic bishops as a corporate entity. It is important to note that these different materials do not all have the same symbolic weight or strategic purpose (Conway 2014). Charters and protocols tend to have greater impact and authority, for example, than pastoral letters. While not superseding the authority of individual bishops, these documents create expectations regarding how bishops should respond to abuse and serve as an important mechanism of accountability for their actions, a situation that does not apply in the case of pastoral letters. The latter tend to operate at a higher level of generality by either elaborating church teaching in broad terms or serving as sources of information and awareness-raising about church developments.

In addition, while other important means of communication and self-presentation also exist in local churches – e.g. *The Furrow* (Ireland), *Grace and Truth* (South Africa), and *America* (U.S.) periodicals and magazines – these present the opinions of individual bishops (and other church personnel as well as lay members) rather than the episcopal conference. Table 1 shows that of the various categories of communications, press statements predominate in all three contexts, with pastoral letters and other materials representing a much smaller proportion of episcopal conference publications. Of the three episcopal conferences, the largest number of scandal-related publications was, unsurprisingly, in the U.S.

Table 2 presents the findings in relation to the distribution of invocations of Catholic and secular categories in the bishops' public communications. It shows that all three Catholic leadership conferences appealed to Catholic legitimations more than secular legitimations, especially in South Africa. In all, 61 per cent, 99 per cent, and 74 per cent of invocations fell into the Catholic category in Ireland, South Africa, and the U.S. respectively, compared to 38 per cent, 1 per cent, and 25 per cent belonging to the secular category. The greater appeal to Catholic than to secular legitimations in South Africa compared to Ireland was surprising and may reflect sensitivity to increasing religious pluralism in Irish society, which likely makes Catholic leaders reluctant to use primarily traditional Catholic discourses. It is also the case that within the Catholic category, bishops invoked institutional teachings considerably more than cultural/ritual/sacramental appeals, as the relative weight given to each was 56%/5% (Ireland), 97%/2% (South Africa), and 62%/12% (U.S.).

Variation across the Three Cases

But there was also variation across national contexts in Catholic invocation rates, with some components of Catholic culture being appealed to much more than others. For example, I found that the highest invocation rate was for Canon Law, representing 17% and 47% of

Catholic legitimations in Ireland and South Africa, compared to 9 per cent in the U.S. case. Gospel writings also represent an important source of legitimation, making up 8 per cent, 24 per cent, and 13 per cent of legitimations in Ireland, South Africa, and the U.S. respectively. A third important legitimation source was Papal writings, making up 11 per cent, 11 per cent, and 6 per cent of legitimations in Ireland, South Africa, and the U.S. respectively. Note also that the writings of other episcopal conferences were invoked the least, representing about 2 per cent of Catholic legitimations in Ireland and South Africa.

With regard to secular invocation rates, I also found some interesting variation. The secular category appealed to most by Irish bishops was national government documents – 26 per cent of invocations fell into this category – and social scientific research in the case of the U.S. bishops, representing 13 per cent of the total legitimations. The secular category with the lowest invocations in Ireland (2 per cent of legitimations) was legal, political or other expert opinion. In the U.S. example, 8 per cent of legitimations involved opinion from legal, political or other experts and 4 per cent related to national government documents, the least invoked secular category in this national context. A glance at Table 2 in the South African case shows that just 1 per cent of legitimations belonged to the secular category.

Turning to the qualitative analysis of these communications, all three episcopal conferences published a well-regarded pastoral directive or response to clerical child sex abuse – *Towards Healing and Renewal* (2011), *Integrity in Ministry* (2001), and *Walk in the Light* (1995). Notably, the U.S. bishops published theirs considerably sooner than the other two episcopal conferences, as the U.S. bishops' conference was an early reformer in relation to clerical abuse in the global church. Although each of the documents emphasized a range of options for responding to clerical child sex abuse such as counseling and financial support, they differed in the degree to which they stressed components of Catholic culture such as prayer and confession. In *Towards Healing and Renewal*, the Irish bishops emphasized

prayer, confession, and church liturgy alongside their commitment to providing therapeutic and material supports for clerical sex abuse victims (Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2011):

For the Christian community prayer is an essential part of the journey of healing and renewal. Our prayer is all the more truthful in its formulation, and healing in its effect, when it is an authentic expression of the reality in which we find ourselves (Irish Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2011: 7).

The South African bishops' *Integrity in Ministry* also mentioned prayer, but only in the context of increasing the pastoral impact of church personnel in general. In addition, this document was directed mainly at church personnel rather than the Catholic laity (Nair, 2012).

In their pastoral response, *Walk in the Light*, the U.S. bishops also appealed to elements of Catholic culture in responding to clerical child sex abuse. In contrast to the Irish bishops, the U.S. bishops also relied on data from social scientific research to provide a context and background to the problem. This was followed by an account of the impact of abuse on religious faith and the religious resources – forgiveness and repentance – available through the sacraments of the church – singling out the celebration of the Mass and the sacrament of reconciliation – and local parish life – such as information-sharing and awareness-raising in homilies, parish gatherings, liturgical events, and marriage preparation courses – in responding to abuse.

Parallels across the Three Cases

As well as documenting important sources of contrast between the three societies, I also noticed instructive parallels across the episcopal conferences under study. Most notably, I found evidence of religious institutional inspiration, diffusion, and exchange. By this I mean that one hierarchy explicitly drew on the pastoral policies of or shared information, learning, and strategies with another Catholic episcopal conference, or with regard to a Vatican

bureaucratic entity. For example, the “Safeguarding our Children” document of the South African bishops directly acknowledged the guideline document of the National Board for Safeguarding Children of the Irish bishops’ conference.

In addition, the South African bishops employed the protocols adopted by the bishops of Australia as the template for their own pastoral directives, following a careful study of documents from other episcopal conferences by a subcommittee established by the bishops (Nair, 2012). This religious learning and copying was also manifest in the invocation of the stance of Vatican-based pontifical councils in their public statements on the issue, as reflected in Cardinal Napier’s April 2002 press release. Thus, reform measures in one episcopal conference encouraged change in others experiencing shared problems.

Second, I found evidence of official acknowledgement of the church’s embarrassing past. The Irish bishops, for example, noted that ‘what has happened within the Church has to be acknowledged openly and honestly by all involved’ (Irish Catholic Bishops’ Conference, 2011: 9). Along similar lines, the South African church also openly and directly claimed its own difficult past:

With the help of modern psychology and its practitioners we have been able to deal with, and have dealt, with incidents in the past and the present with a greater compassion, care and understanding – both of the victims and of the perpetrators – and to ensure justice, moral correction, and proper and adequate assistance to all involved’ (Nair, 2012: 113).

Writing on the section of their Web site dedicated to child protection, the U.S. bishops did not say exactly the same thing, but the similarities are obvious:

The sexual abuse of children and young people by some deacons, priests, and bishops and the ways in which these crimes and sins were addressed, have caused enormous pain, anger, and confusion. As bishops, we have acknowledged our mistakes and our

roles in that suffering, and we acknowledge and take responsibility again for too often failing victims and the Catholic people in the past (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2014).

Patterns in Institutional-Organizational Innovations of Catholic Episcopal Conferences

As well as examining national Catholic bishops' "talk" about clerical child sex abuse, I am also interested in how this is "structured" in the bureaucracies of national episcopal conferences. The Catholic church is more than a discursive system; it is also an institutional apparatus. By institutional apparatus I mean that the church consists of a complex, multilayered, and diverse arrangement of bureaucratic actors, offices, and networks with transnational linkages in order to achieve its collective goals. Beginning in the early 1990s, episcopal conferences began to work out the practical arrangements of child protection reform, which usually took many years, as it involved commissioning research, establishing committees, instituting offices, organizing workshops/seminars, and revising numerous drafts of documents, as child protection became a key priority on the reform agenda of Catholic prelates. The bureaucratization of child protection did not take place in a single reform but came in fits and starts. In addition, early reforming episcopal conferences, such as in the U.S., were not just nationally oriented and instead paved the way for later reformers, as in Ireland and South Africa, by sensitizing their ecclesiastical colleagues to the time at which the scandals come to light publicly (Goode, McGee and O'Boyle, 2003). Although bishops invested significant energy and institutional resources in child safeguarding, in general, they were fairly slow in creating a counter-discourse to clerical child sex abuse.

At the same time, Catholic episcopal conferences came under increasing accountability demands to adopt action strategies consistent with Vatican directives, which partly accounts for the similarity in structures and policies across the three locales. This involved seeking the official approval of Rome for certain documents developed by national

episcopal conferences (Nair, 2012). While usually not binding on individual bishops, these episcopal conference-level responses had considerable normative weight and served as instruments of awareness raising and episcopal action. Moreover, they underscored that Catholic episcopal conferences are constituted within a broader church system and are not immune to changes occurring within it. Table 3 summarizes some of the structural changes in the three conferences. As the table indicates, these developments were broadly similar across the three locales, but the U.S. case was the earliest reformer, creating its first child protection guidelines in 1992 compared to 1996 in Ireland and 1999 in South Africa.

Proposition 2

Proposition 2 posited that the three episcopal conferences should vary in their level of responsiveness to lay concerns about clerical child sex abuse based on the degree of lay activism in different settings. I found partial support for this proposition, based on reference to lay concerns in bishops' discourses but also evidence of symbolic distancing between church elites and the Catholic laity across the cases. Clearly, the exercising of "voice" – in the form of abuse victims coming forward and relating their suffering through the mass media – was a critical factor in the outbreak of the scandals and subsequent public shock, anger, and moral outrage. It also led to an important impetus for reform within the church (Bruce, 2011). It is unsurprising, therefore, that some church documents made direct references to internal institutional pressures (National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People, 2004). Evidence that the church demonstrated institutional cognizance of lay activism is provided in a 2004 report of the U.S. bishops' conference National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People, composed of members of the laity:

To put this crisis in perspective – and to understand why it has evoked such a passionate response from the laity – it is helpful to review the circumstances leading

up to the promulgation of the Charter (National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People, 2004: 30).

It is surprising, however, that despite the extent of the sexual scandals in Ireland and the U.S., only in the U.S. case did national-level, organized, grassroots lay religious movements, such as Barbara Blaine's Survivors Network for Those Abused by Priests (SNAP, founded in 1988) advocacy pressure group and the Boston-based Voice of the Faithful (VOFT, founded in 2002), emerge to challenge church governance, paradoxically by invoking Catholic doctrine (Bruce, 2011; Dillon, 2006; Jenkins, 1996). The first such group, SNAP, emerged in Chicago well before the abuse cases in Boston and acted as an important early pressure group in the U.S. church as well as developing an international network of sister organizations. Interestingly, meetings of the U.S. episcopal conference were frequently occasions of mobilization by SNAP (Jenkins, 1996). Another advocacy group, VOFT, has also become transnational, claiming a global membership of 30,000. In Boston, where the church has a local majority and lay mobilization was particularly strong, VOFT activism took different visible forms ranging from organizing meetings, to picketing church buildings, through to letter-writing (Bruce, 2011). Interestingly, VOFT developed global outposts, such as in Ireland, thereby creating a transnational advocacy network of victims of clerical child sex abuse through the mobilization influence of the Internet. In the Irish context, groups such as One in Four took on an advocacy role on behalf of victims, but did not represent a lay-led organized movement. Relative to South Africa and the U.S., the fact that Ireland is an island-nation meant abuse victims had a greater opportunity and motivation to emigrate to Britain and beyond⁶, which may, in turn, have had a dampening effect on local-level lay activism.

Bishops in all three nations showed a degree of responsiveness to lay demands by publicly acknowledging wrongdoing, holding private meetings with victim organizations and individual victims (Voice of the Faithful, 2013) and responding to victims with direct

material aid and counseling services. At the same time, important variation existed within episcopal conferences, as reflected in the divergences between Bishop Magee of Cloyne and Archbishop Martin of Dublin in 2011 (in the Irish case) and Bishop Bruskewitz of Lincoln, Nebraska and his fellow bishops in 2004 (in the U.S. case), regarding implementation of the church's child protection norms. In South Africa, Cardinal Napier's widely reported and controversial remarks in 2013 about the seemingly non-criminal nature of clerical child sex abuse did not receive endorsement from his episcopal colleagues.

Interestingly, lay involvement in structural child protection-related reforms was also promoted. I found that with regard to the U.S. church, for example, lay people were actively involved in such things as the assessment of allegations under the 2002 charter (National Review Board for the Protection of Children and Young People, 2004). A member of the Catholic laity, Oklahoma Governor Frank Keating, was appointed as chair of an important child protection advisory board, the National Review Board. As in the U.S. case, members of the Irish Catholic laity were also actively engaged in the new safeguarding infrastructures established at diocesan-level to provide child protection oversight. This involved institutionalizing training programs for lay and clerical personnel in relation to best policies and practices. In South Africa, the church's child protection monitoring committee also included some lay input.

In other ways, however, Catholic leaders were not "captured" by the laity, sometimes preferring arms-length church policies restraining their concerns and demands (Dillon, 2006). This was organizationally manifested in practices such as being non-committal with victim groups about the church's pastoral response (as in Ireland) (Voice of the Faithful Ireland, 2008) or declining meetings with the laity (as in the U.S.) (Bruce, 2011). This meant that the laity confronted different sets of constraints – especially in relation to access to material and symbolic resources – in different settings in their efforts to mobilize.

Despite its strong legitimation in the teaching and mission of the church, then, lay activism operates in practice, even in countries with a strong “public Catholic” tradition such as the U.S. (Palacios, 2007), in a quite limited way. The absence of lay activism around child protection in South Africa was not unexpected given the relatively few cases of clerical child sex abuse here compared with Ireland and the U.S., but it may also be explained by the relative lack of a tradition of Catholics, especially the growing numbers of relatively poor black Catholics in South Africa, participating in national level public life. However, one might expect greater levels of lay engagement in the church in South Africa given the relative scarcity of clergy – and absence of clerical authority – compared to Ireland. Past studies suggest that reliance on clergy may have a dampening effect on lay activism (Baggett, 2009). In the U.S., Catholics are clearly empowered by the church’s post-Vatican II stress on lay participation but, at the same time, are frequently disempowered by how the church’s discretionary authority operates in practice in implementing its pastoral directives (Palacios, 2007).

While I found relatively little variation in responsiveness to lay activism, I did find differences between the three hierarchies in relation to their support for empirical analysis by external lay experts. Of the three episcopal conferences, only the Irish and U.S. conferences commissioned empirical research to understand the scope and nature of the problem but not the South African bishops’ conference. For example, the U.S. bishops engaged researchers at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to carry out a number of empirical studies of clerical child sex abuse, which resulted in an important investigation of the nature and extent of the problem (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004, 2011). Their Irish counterparts also commissioned a study under the title *Time to Listen* to better understand the impacts of and responses to clerical child sex abuse. Based on interviews with victims and perpetrators and

non-offending clergy as well as a survey conducted among bishops, this independent study was the first of its kind in the global church (Goode, McGee and O'Boyle, 2003).

Proposition 3

In proposition 3 I posited that national episcopal conferences should vary in their responses to clerical child sex abuse based on varying media reactions to abuse. I found moderate support for this proposition, as reflected in church institutional responses directly initiated and fueled by media outlets.

As other studies show (Bruce, 2011; D'Antonio, Dillon and Gautier, 2013; Keenan, 2012) and this research supports, the church was spurred and directed by journalistic work exposing clerical child sex abuse and the church's response to it. In the Irish case, for example, a 1994 Ulster Television "Counterpoint" program brought the decades-long abuse of a Norbertine order priest Brendan Smyth into the public domain for the first time (Littleton and Maher, 2010). Later, a documentary entitled "Cardinal Secrets", which investigated the response of church elites in Dublin to abusive clerics, led, in turn, to church disclosures of its knowledge of, and degree of responsibility, for past abuse and, in turn, to a state investigation. In Dublin's neighboring diocese of Ferns, a 2002 award-winning documentary, *Suing the Pope*, about the abuse carried out by diocesan priest Sean Fortune, led to the resignation of the local bishop, Bishop Brendan Comiskey, and to the establishment of the Ferns inquiry (Goode, McGee and O'Boyle, 2003; Littleton and Maher, 2010). A notable feature of some of these documentaries was the mobilization of international church influence involving canon lawyers from the U.S., who took an interest in pushing for child protection reforms in other national episcopal conferences. Another was a tendency to follow a template evident in media outlets in other contexts such as the U.S., by presenting a critical viewpoint on the church. This viewpoint tended to reject traditional deference toward Catholic leaders and to expose the apparent institutional hypocrisy and self-interest of the

church, by relying on a highly predictable range of expert views and opinions (Jenkins, 1996).

In the U.S. case, journalistic investigations were also a significant component in the emerging story of the clerical abuse problem. For example, in the Boston Archdiocese media exposés by *Boston Globe* journalists in 2002 galvanized church elites to take more decisive action against abusive clergy, most notably in the case of John Geoghan (D'Antonio, Dillon and Gautier, 2013; Gautier, Perl and Fichter, 2013; Office of the Attorney General Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2003).

However, the experience of South Africa was quite different from that of either Ireland or the U.S. Interestingly, local investigative journalism was less significant in the South African case, where church actions were inspired more by media exposés in other settings and changes in child protection in other episcopal conferences (Nair, 2012). Though victims of clerical abuse also came forward in this country following media attention (though in the 2000s, later than in Ireland or the U.S.), this had more to do with international press coverage of clerical child sex abuse, especially in the U.S., than in South Africa itself. In their statement on child protection in 2002, the South African bishops explicitly recognized this external media interest as establishing the context for reforms in the domestic church:

In view of the much publicised crimes in the United States of America, involving the sexual abuse of children by clergy of the Catholic Church, the faithful of our Church in South Africa have the right to know what action their Church leaders have taken when similar abuses occur here (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2002).

However, local media reportage of clerical child sex abuse in South Africa was not entirely absent. In 2003, for example, a scandal broke out in the church when *The Sunday Times* newspaper revealed domestic cases of clerical abuse. Similarly, in 2005 the case of an abusive priest in Cape Town came to public light on national television news media. Other

stories came into the public domain in 2007 in *The Mail & Guardian* newspaper. In general, though, the South African bishops adopted a proactive stance, rather than merely reacting to local-level investigative journalism, as occurred in Ireland and the U.S. Further substantiation for the role of external conditions in shaping local church actions comes from the 2010 protocol document in which the South African bishops identified the work of other episcopal conferences in relation to clerical child sex abuse as the impetus for their own national strategizing:

Much is being done overseas as reported at the recent meeting of the Anglophone conferences in Rome. This jurisdiction should not be far behind others on this question (South African Catholic Bishops' Conference, 2013: vii).

While international influence is thus significant in creating accepted child protection norms and legitimizing change, it is also the case that local church actors seek to “customize” these norms for domestic conditions, which, in turn, can be reported back to the global level, as when national-level church officials participate in international church meetings (Nair 2012). This is achieved by integrating child protection into the local “Catholic imagination” (Palacios, 2007). The South African bishops gave a commitment to accomplish this through the Professional Conduct Committee of the bishops’ conference (Nair, 2012). Likewise, the Irish and U.S. bishops institutionalized child safeguarding in local Catholic life, including the display of awareness-raising information posters on church noticeboards and educating future priests about child sex abuse (Gautier, Perl and Fichter, 2013; National Board for Safeguarding Children in the Catholic Church, 2012).

As a result of these media exposés from the 1990s onwards (especially in Ireland and the U.S.), state-led external accountability of sexual misconduct in the church increased, thus providing a window of opportunity for the state to exercise greater governmental regulatory authority over the church in the child protection domain.

For example, I found, even in a country like Ireland, where the church historically has enjoyed harmonious relations with the state and favorable political arrangements (Whyte, 1980; Keogh, 1995), the church's presence in public space came under increasing encroachment by state authorities in the 1990s through official government inquiries of clerical child sex abuse, resulting in the subordination of the church. These inquiries implicitly linked past governmental (in)actions and its cautious stance to the historical association between church and state. The Ferns Report, for example, mentioned 'the reluctance of members of An Garda Síochána (Irish police force) to investigate allegations of wrongdoing by members of the Catholic clergy' (Murphy, 2005: ii). This suggests that the benefits state elites gained during earlier periods of close church-state interactions and the church's authority in the moral order made secular authorities hesitant to take positions that would meet opposition from Catholic bishops.

External accountability of the church also took place in the U.S., where certain dioceses and archdioceses became the subject of close-up critical investigation by legal experts. A good example of this comes from the report into the Archdiocese of Boston, in which the state's attorney general criticized the church's 'massive and prolonged mistreatment of children by priests' (Office of the Attorney General Commonwealth of Massachusetts, 2003: 1). Echoing the findings of a similar investigation in Dublin (Murphy, 2009), this report found historical cases of child sex abuse were handled by a small cadre of clerics who did not disclose the information available to them to secular authorities.

In a post-scandal environment, Catholic episcopal conferences face the erosion of their public status, authority, and legitimacy in the wider society (Dillon, 2006). Against this background, I found that church elites seek representation in the secular media in their quest for religious recovery, restoration, and transition. This can be accomplished, for example, by nationally publicizing church audits of dioceses through media outlets, as occurred in the

Irish and U.S. case, that help to restore confidence among the general populace in the church's current child safeguarding practices. In the Irish experience, Catholic bishops also relied on secular media expertise, in the form of public relations consultants, in the mid-1990s to present the church's new approach to the issue.

In general, across the three locales the church relied on the media to relay changes in its response to clerical child sex abuse and thus to help restore public trust in the institution, even if actual knowledge of these organizational reforms, and church elites in general, remains relatively low among the general public (Baggett, 2009; Goode, McGee and O'Boyle, 2003; Yamane, 2005).

Similarly, one of the express purposes of the international symposium on clerical child sex abuse held in the Vatican in 2012, which Rome used to advance its policies on the issue, was 'to collaborate with the media and make known what can be done to protect the weakest from aggression' (Scicluna, Zollner and Ayotte, 2012: vi), implying that church officials recognize the general mass mainstream media's important role in stepping in to help the church break away from its negative institutional past spawned by scandal and reconstruct its future in the public domain.

Conclusion

On 7 July 2014, Pope Francis celebrated early morning Mass in the chapel of the Domus Sanctae Marthae, his residence in the Vatican, with a group of clerical sex abuse victims from Germany, Ireland, and the UK. This was followed by a three-hour private meeting between the Pope and the victims. His homily began by addressing the personal pain of the victims, acknowledging the "deepest darkness" of abuse in their lives. He recognized the adult exploitation of childhood innocence. He honored the courageous truth-telling of victims in bringing their abuse to light in the first place. He acknowledged the destructive impact of their experiences on personal faith. But then the Pope turned to the broader

structural dimensions of clerical sex abuse by citing the need for procedures and policies in the global church to counteract abusive clerics, including reforms in priestly formation. Unsurprisingly, he also invoked the importance of Catholic religious expressions of atonement, such as forgiveness and prayer, in responding to abuse. The Pope concluded by speaking directly to bishops, remarking that “all bishops must carry out their pastoral ministry with the utmost care in order to help foster the protection of minors, and they will be held accountable”⁷. Collectively, these actions were clearly practical gestures but they were also laden with significant symbolic importance, highlighting the resolve of the church leadership in dealing with clerical sex abuse. However, it was the Pope’s singling out of bishops, and their accountability and leadership role in responding to abuse, which was especially noteworthy, a role that is far from uniform across the global church.

This article has sought to examine cross-national variation in this religious institution, with regard to its meaning and action responses arising from clerical child sex abuse by its workforce personnel. Despite differences between the three settings, the church confronted the same stigmatizing event in strikingly similar ways, but there were also some noteworthy and interesting contrasts. Varying reactions of Catholic leaders were grounded in local contextual factors as well as processes operating at a global level. As such, I hope this article underscores the value of comparative investigations of scandal response by religious institutions.

How, then, does this article contribute to wider sociological debates about religion and/or societal institutions/organizations in general?.

First, I elaborate a theoretical approach for understanding cross-national variation in scandal response measures in religious institutions, paying particular attention to the role of factors from “within” (strategic self-presentation), “below” (lay religious activism), and “above” (church-media relations). This approach shows that both internal and external factors

– and operating across multiple levels of analysis – influence the Catholic church’s response to crises, though varying cross-culturally in different episcopal conferences.

Second, I bring together needed empirical data about the Catholic Church’s response to sexual scandal in three locales and broaden the comparative scope of previous studies. In this analysis South Africa emerges as something of an outlier, which can partly be accounted for by the timing of the exposure of the scandals there (later than the two other cases), but also by the quite different histories of lay activism and church-media relations in this society.

Third, this study highlights the importance of local place in religious institutional life by showing how varying contextual realities inform and shape how scandals are responded to locally. Thus, by being informed about and sensitive to the histories of the three cases it argues for the importance of taking account of individuality and contingency in understanding large-scale religious change. But it is also the case that these on-the-ground socio-historical realities interact with global dynamics to shape institutional life. I showed that local strategies of action respond to cross-cultural events and happenings such as Vatican directives and media reportage of Catholic sex scandal in other settings. Significantly, the global religious environment may constrain or enable local church action responses by regulating and limiting the practices of episcopal conferences or by sharing learning, knowledge, and information across national boundaries.

In addition, this article suggests that concerns about legitimacy predominate in how institutions respond to crisis on the local level. This may have to do with an ability to mobilize and extract resources and support from rank-and-file members and to shore up its authority in general among members, but also with regard to external influences – such as media outlets – capable of influencing wider public opinion. Furthermore, it is evident in the church’s invocation of certain “bright” symbolic representations in the face of “dark” aspects of its own collective past. Without this legitimacy it is difficult for institutions to prolong

their influence in society and underwrite their organizational survival, by attracting new workforce personnel and maintaining lay commitment. At the same time, structural inertia and entrenched power arrangements make it difficult for traditional religious groups to implement sudden institutional change. But this article shows that institutions – including the Catholic church (Dillon, 2006) – can be remarkably adaptive and flexible in the wake of scandal by altering long-standing organizational practices. Such accommodation and innovation is important for restoring institutional reputation after scandal, but it also helps explain the church’s continuity and longevity as a religious tradition over 2,000 years.

Although this article helps to increase understanding of cross-national variation in how religious institutions respond to crisis, it invites at least four challenges. First, future research could profitably test the generalizability of the findings by examining how the Catholic church responds to sexual scandals in non-Western contexts that vary along other dimensions such as the presence or absence of a culture of honor and shame, as opposed to a culture of dignity and guilt familiar in the collective memory dynamics of western societies (Kim and Schwartz, 2010), which may raise the threshold of difficulty encountered by clerical sex abuse victims in seeking to come forward and potentially influence the scandal response of religious institutions.

Second, additional research is needed to better understand the role of lay religious activism in influencing the abuse response strategies of the church. What is the relative importance of lay mobilization and Roman influences in shaping the response of Catholic bishops to sexual scandals? Such an analysis of episcopal bureaucratic cultures would require in-depth interviews with Catholic prelates to determine the degree of decision-making influence of the Catholic laity in regard to church management of sexual scandals and the unity of strategy religious officials encountered in meeting lay expectations.

Third, future research could examine variation in media organization and political economy across different national settings and how this may potentially impact local media templates on church scandals and, in turn, external accountability through journalistic writings as well as the state system.

Finally, the approach adopted here is primarily sociological rather than historical and thus an investigation of how the three factors – strategic self-presentation, religious lay activism, and church-media relations – change over time in each of the three locales, allowing for a more thorough and nuanced analysis, is a topic worthy of greater study.

Clerical sex scandals – which began as priest scandals and developed into leadership scandals – have had long-lasting and far-reaching consequences for the Catholic church. While there is much more to this religious institution than scandal – including an impressive record of activism in worldwide social development through a vast network of staff and volunteers – it has become associated in the public imagination in recent times with decades of sexual abuse (Calderisi, 2013). However, offices now exist in episcopal conferences, which did not exist even fifteen years ago, promoting and monitoring child protection, sometimes surpassing safeguards in place in many contemporary secular agencies. Even in the far corners of the global church, child protection policies have entered local church life. These innovations will likely provide significant leverage in the future as Catholic authorities seek to reenter the public sphere alongside other religious traditions and interest groups and struggle for post-scandal recognition, trust, and legitimacy within it.

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Notes

1. The full text of Pope Francis's interview is available at <http://w2.vatican.va/content/francesco/en/travels/2014/outside/index.html>
2. A brief note on the definition of scandal is required. By scandal I mean the public exposure of some violation of a society's moral code, in this case with regard to sexual ethics (Gamson, 2001). This article is primarily concerned with measuring religious institutional responses to scandal rather than scandal per se.
3. There is an extant literature on the rhetoric of "childhood", especially as it relates to sexual abuse. This suggests that childhood as a cultural category may either expand or contract, depending on how one represents victims of abuse. For more detail, see Mintz, 2012. See also The Immanent Frame essays on Catholic sex abuse available at: <http://blogs.ssrc.org/tif/sex-abuse-in-the-catholic-church/> (accessed 20 June 2014). My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this point.
4. The Web sites of the respective Catholic episcopal conferences are <http://www.catholicbishops.ie> (Ireland, established in 1969), <http://www.sacbc.org.za> (South Africa, established in 1947), and <http://www.usccb.org/> (U.S., established in 1966). Notably, the Web sites of individual dioceses in Ireland and the U.S. include a section dedicated to child protection issues but not in the case of South Africa. For the Irish and U.S. cases, I relied on www.archive.org to retrieve precursors of the current episcopal conference Web site (www.catholiccommunications.ie for Ireland and www.usccb.org for the U.S.) and thereby assemble public statements for the 1990s and 2000s. For the South African case, I also relied on an online database of documents relating to the Catholic Church in Africa (<http://www.emi.it/AfricanEnchiridion/ae/credits/credits.htm>) and the website of the Archdiocese of Cape Town (<http://www.catholic-ct.org.za/news/news.htm>). These episcopal conferences vary in their geographical extent and bureaucratic organization. For example, the number of dioceses in the respective episcopal conferences is 26 (Ireland), 27 (South Africa),

and 197 (U.S). Of the three, the U.S. bishops' conference has, unsurprisingly, the most expansive bureaucracy. They also vary in regard to their apparent rates of clerical sex abuse. Although exact numbers are difficult to pin down, according to the Cloyne Report in Ireland, about 7% of priests in the diocese of Cloyne faced allegations of child abuse. Other Irish studies suggest the figure is closer to 4% for the total clerical population (Keenan, 2012). Research by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice found that about 4% of U.S. clergy had allegations against them (Murphy, 2010; John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004, 2011). To my knowledge, no reliable data exist about the number of accused priests in South Africa, but it is fairly safe to assume that it is somewhat lower than in Ireland and the U.S.

5. For more detail, see http://www.bishop-accountability.org/AtAGlance/church_docs.htm and the online archive of the journal *Origins*.

6. My thanks to an anonymous reviewer for this point.

7. The full text of Pope Francis's homily is available at http://m2.vatican.va/content/francescomobile/en/homilies/2014/documents/papa-francesco_20140707_omelia-vittime-abusi.html.

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Table 1. Publications of Catholic Episcopal Conferences with regard to Clerical Child Sex Abuse, 1988-2013.

	Pastoral letters	Public statements	Reflections	Protocol/Charter/Guidelines/Policies	# Total
Ireland	1	26	1	2	30
South Africa		10		3	13
United States	1	34		2	37

Apart from public statements, the publications of each episcopal conference are: Ireland: *Child Sexual Abuse: Framework for a Church Response* (1996), *Towards Healing* (2005), *Our Children, Our Church* (2005), and *Towards Healing and Renewal* (2011); South Africa: *Protocol for the Investigation of Complaints against Clerics and Religious in Regard to the Sexual Abuse of Minors* (2013), which underwent earlier revisions in 1999, 2004, 2007, and 2010 (I omitted this document's appendix from the study), *Integrity in Ministry* (2001), and *Safeguarding Our Children* (2011). In the South African case, I also included the Catholic bishops' submission to the national parliament hearings on child sex abuse in March 2002; U.S.: *Walk In The Light* (1995), *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons* (2002) and *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (2011), which underwent earlier revisions in 2002 and 2005. With regard to public statements, only those of the episcopal conference rather than individual bishops were included in the study.

Table 2. Discursive Form Categories of Catholic Episcopal Conferences with regard to Clerical Child Sex Abuse, 1988-2013.

	Ireland		South Africa		United States	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
Catholic discursive forms						
<i>Institutional teachings</i>						
Gospel writings	14	8	29	24	16	13
Papal documents	19	11	13	11	8	6
Vatican documents	9	5	5	4	5	4
Canon Law	30	17	56	47	12	9
Writings of other episcopal						

conferences	4	2	2	2		
National church documents	23	13	11	9	38	30
<i>Cultural/ritual/sacramental appeals</i>						
Ritual practices	9	5	2	2	16	12
% of Total		(61)		(99)		(74)
Secular discursive forms						
Social scientific research	10	5			17	13
Legal, political, or expert opinion	8	5	1	1	10	8
National government document	45	26			4	4
Intergovernmental organization document	2	2				
% of Total		(38)		(1)		(25)

The data presented in this table are based on the coding of the various categories of church documents of each episcopal conference. The total percentages for Catholic and secular legitimations are reported in parentheses. Because of rounding off, not all of the percentages sum to 100.

Table 3. Institutional-Organizational Responses and Structures of Catholic Episcopal Conferences with regard to Clerical Child Sex Abuse, 1990-2013.

	Establishment of committee	Development of first guidelines	Official apology	Development of norms/standards	Establishment of protection office
Ireland	1994	1996	Yes	2005	2001
South Africa	1994/5	1999 ^a	Yes	2001 ^b	No
United States	1993	1992	Yes	2002	2002

The data presented in this table are based on information provided in various written materials published by each episcopal conference. ^aThe first guidelines – called a protocol – of the South African bishops underwent various revisions from 1999 to 2010 (Nair, 2012). ^bThis refers to the document *Integrity in Ministry* (2001).

Appendix I. Illustrative Examples of Discursive Form Categories used by Catholic Episcopal Conferences with regard to Clerical Child Sex Abuse, 1988-2013.

Ireland

Catholic

Institutional teachings

Gospel writings

Papal documents

Vatican documents

Canon Law

Writings of other episcopal conferences

National church documents

Cultural/ritual/sacramental appeals

Ritual practice

Secular

Social scientific research

Legal, political or expert opinion

National government document

Intergovernmental organization document

“This is a Gospel value as well as a core principle of safeguarding policy”

“In his *Pastoral Letter* to the Catholics of Ireland, Pope Benedict XI said...”

“Congregation for Institutes of Consecrated Life and Societies of Apostolic Life, *Directives on Formation in Religious Institutes*, Rome: Vatican Polyglot Press, 1990, n. 34”

“The Ordinary can proceed by taking disciplinary action (canons 192-193)”

“It considered...the policies of the Catholic Church in other jurisdictions”

“Irish Catholic Bishops’ Advisory Committee on Child Sexual Abuse”

“For the Christian community prayer is an essential part of the journey to healing”

“John Jay College Research Team, *Child Sexual Abuse, A Review of the Literature*”

“This definition...is quoted in The Law Reform Commission, *Report on Child Sexual Abuse*”

“Further guidelines...were issued by the Department of Health and the Garda in 1995”

“The Preamble to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.”

South Africa

Catholic

Institutional teachings

Gospel writings

“In Mark 9:36-37 we read ‘Jesus took a little child’”

Papal documents	“The Holy Father called child abuse ‘an appalling sin in the eyes of God’”
Vatican documents	“Archbishop Foley, the President of the Pontifical Council for Social Communications, said...”
Canon Law	“Code of Canon Law, c.964.2”
Writings of other episcopal conferences	“cf. Australian Catholic Bishops’ Conference, <i>Towards Healing</i> ”
National church documents	“The Catholic Bishops of South Africa have published a document called “Integrity in Ministry”
<i>Cultural/ritual/sacramental appeals</i>	
Ritual practice	“We bless you and pray for you”
Secular	
Social scientific research	
Legal, political or expert opinion	“Our Deputy President, Jacob Zuma told us at the Launch of the Moral Regeneration Movement”
National government document	
Intergovernmental organization document	
United States	
Catholic	
<i>Institutional teachings</i>	
Gospel writings	“Recall, for example, the story of Jairus’s daughter, whom Jesus restored to life (Lk 8:41-56)”
Papal documents	“Our Holy Father has said “How important children are in the eyes of Jesus!”
Vatican documents	“cf. Letter from the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, May 18, 2001”
Canon Law	“The Code of Canon Law stipulates that the first steps after receipt of an allegation...”
Writings of other episcopal conferences	
National church documents	“Statement of the General Counsel of the National Conference of Catholic Bishops”
<i>Cultural/ritual/sacramental appeals</i>	
Ritual practice	“Today, Jesus continues to restore the human spirit through the prayer and sacramental life of the church”
Secular	
Social scientific research	“According to the Fifty-State Survey of Child Abuse and Neglect, an aggregation of...”
Legal, political or expert opinion	“‘children will therefore always be at risk,’ cautioned Ms. Knight, a social worker”
National government document	“Fact sheet No. 19, National Committee for the Prevention of Child Abuse, 1992”
Intergovernmental organization document	

The data presented in this table are representative examples of the 11 discursive form categories used in 80 public communications by Catholic bishops across the 3 cases.