

## ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: CLERICAL CONDUCT RELATED TO THE  
PERPETUATION OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE IN  
PENNSYLVANIA CATHOLIC DIOCESES: A  
DEVELOPING FRAMEWORK

Crystel Britto, Master of Science, 2019

Thesis Directed by: Dr. Kevin Roy, Associate Professor  
Department of Family Science

Throughout his papacy, Pope Francis reiterated that clericalism played a major role in the global Catholic sexual abuse crisis. Research has not been able to back this claim due to lack of data on cultural and structural elements that have contributed to the various crises. The present study aims to fill this gap in research by examining narratives regarding clerical sexual abuse and seeks to explore themes contributing to a framework of abuse. Qualitative data analysis was conducted by examining the 40th Statewide Investigating Grand Jury Report of Pennsylvania, focusing on correspondence between various actors regarding 12 priests in Pennsylvania and their involvement in child sexual abuse. Using grounded theory with elements of narrative analysis, the study seeks to explore themes of belief, behavior and emotion of clergy between 1930-2016. The results provide insight into the nature of the Catholic Church's involvement in the perpetuation of child sexual abuse.

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FRAMEWORK

by

Crystal Britto

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Advisory Committee:

Dr. Kevin Roy, Associate Professor

Dr. Marian Moser Jones, Associate Professor

Dr. Mona Mittal, Associate Professor

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## Introduction

In 2002, The Boston Globe exposed a scandal within the Archdiocese of Boston where 250 priests were accused of sexually abusing minors (O'Malley, 2011). Boston, a city that was 52% Catholic in 2001 (Columbia University, 2019), was the epicenter of a scandal that rocked the entire Catholic Church and became a catalyst in dwindling parish populations in the U.S. and mistrust of the Church.

The media continued to publicize various sexual abuse crises that had been uncovered, especially those involving the abuse of minors. Since then, countless victims have come forth to share their stories, forming support groups and further exposing abusive priests, which continue to have lasting effects. The John Jay College of Criminal Justice in New York conducted a study to aid the Catholic Church in understanding the extent of the abuse. This study revealed that of the 110,000 priests who had been in active ministry in the United States at any time between 1950 and 2002, four percent had been accused of sexual misconduct with a minor (O'Toole, 2010, p. 272). However, in 2004 when the study was completed, much of the abuse had yet to be exposed.

While clerical child sex abuse may be thought of as a modern-day problem, it has been documented in the Catholic Church for centuries. Circa 1051 AD, Father Peter Damian, an influential Benedictine monk and later a saint, wrote a treatise condemning clerical homosexual activities, but was particularly angered by the sexual acts between "oblates (boys) and their masters (monks)." This treatise, titled *Liber Gomorrhianus*, or "Book of Gomorrah," was praised by Pope Leo IX, who verified the truth of Damian's findings but then dismissed his calls for action to confront and purge offending clergy from the clerical state. The pope decided to remove from office only the offenders who

had repeatedly committed various “homosexual acts” over a long period of time. In addition, while Damian had focused his attention to the impact of the offending clerics on their victims, the pope ignored the impact and focused only on the “sinfulness of the clerics and their need to repent” (Doyle, 2002; Isely, 1997). Even in 1971, Drs. Conrad Baars and Anna Terruwe, who had 40 years of psychiatric practice treating 1,500 priests who had committed sexual abuse, spoke up. In the 1971 Synod of Bishops at the Vatican, they revealed their findings of why these priests would abuse young boys at higher rates than the male population at-large. However, their research seemed to have fallen on deaf ears.

The U.S. is still in the preliminary stages of understanding the extent of the abuse and what perpetuated this kind of abuse and cover-up all around the world. As recent as 2017 in the D.C. Metro Area, the Catholic Church has continued to pay off victims of abuse in exchange for their silence (Boorstein, 2019) and refrained from turning clergy accused of sexual abuse to law enforcement (Augenstein, 2018).

While the United States Council of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) has enacted policies to protect children and teens from clerical sexual abuse, these policies do not hold the weight of Canon Law and are difficult to enforce. As these policies are enforced by each diocese, each district has distinct procedures and there is a lack of cohesion and transparency when trying to understand how these national policies are enforced. As a result, victim advocacy groups have challenged the pope and U.S. bishops to create cohesive enforcement standards for their policy, as well as swift action to deal with priests accused of sexually abusing minors.



In recent decades, the Catholic Church has released increasing amounts of data about the sexual abuse within the Church. In 2002, the U.S. bishops commissioned a report by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice into the nature, scope and causes of clergy abuse. This extensive report was groundbreaking for its time but only one step in the right direction. The report provided insight on how much sexual abuse priests have been credibly accused of and other findings--but they acknowledged that this information would be underreported, as is the nature of data associated with shame (2004). After this report came out, several states and dioceses began to conduct investigations of their own, one of which was the 40th Statewide Investigating Grand Jury Report of Pennsylvania. The Grand Jury, a citizen-formed investigative entity set out to determine whether there was probable cause supporting criminal charges against priests accused of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church within Pennsylvania. This body had heard the testimony of dozens of witnesses, reviewed about 500,000 pages of internal diocesan documents containing credible allegations against over three hundred priests accused of predatory behavior. Over one thousand child victims were identifiable, from the church's own records, although the actual count of victims may be much higher, due to non-reported incidents. The Grand Jury Report called attention to the impact of the offending clerics on their victims and the transgressions of the clergy. While doing this, they also recommended legislative change, procedural change and for those throughout the ranking of the clergy to treat this topic with the utmost seriousness, urgency and respect, instead of dismissing the call to action and repeating the mistakes of the past.

The Catholic Church is not merely defined by its clergy, but also by its followers, together the *ecclesia*. As a fellow Catholic, I consider it important to contribute to the

cultural change in the church. The present qualitative study aims to examine the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report to understand how the primary documents reveal patterns in the communicated feelings, beliefs and actions of the actors involved in dealing with the child sexual abuse of the Catholic Church within Pennsylvania, from 1930-2010s.

Given that most of the primary documents are written to or from church officials, my central questions in looking at the Report are:

What types of clerical conduct evidenced in letters to clergy contributed to perpetuate child sexual abuse?

How did clergy perpetuate child sexual abuse through the beliefs, behaviors, and thoughts displayed in the letters?

Also, in examining the context of the documents as a whole,

How did the cultural context of Church institutional norms, language, and laws perpetuate CSA?

How does the hierarchical system respond to the perpetuation of the abuse? How does authority work in the Catholic Church?

Understanding the answers to these questions will help bring nuance to the conversation of why the abuse perpetuated. This is part of the larger work that needs to be done to process and evaluate how the Catholic Church ignored this dark history of abuse and how those that had responsibility over the priests contributed to the consequences.

### **Literature Review**

Researchers do not seem to have developed a renewed sense of interest in the Catholic Church's continually unveiling sexual abuse crises around the U.S. While the

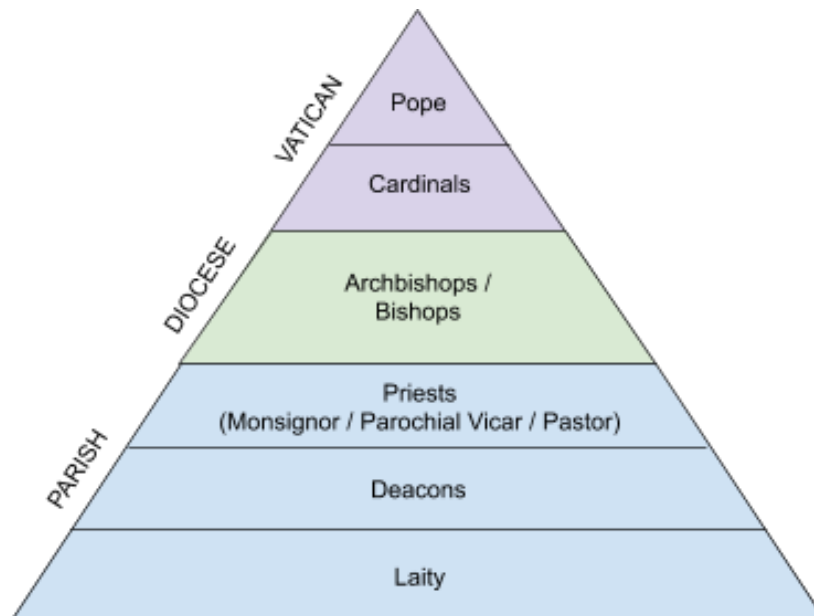
media stays abreast and publicizes the developments occurring in each of these crises, research does not seem to be keeping up at the same pace, for unknown reasons that I will not explore in this paper. As a result, you will see that I will draw from many different subject matter areas to gather data in understanding the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report--touching on the institutional nature of the Catholic Church and its relationship to outside entities; the historical and cultural influences on the Catholic Church; and what the past and current understanding is of pedophilia and ephebophilia, or sexual attraction to minors.

### **The Institution of the Catholic Church**

The Catholic Church is one of the largest institutions in the world, giving it tremendous influence in shaping the worldview and daily lives of its followers. It is able to unite followers through their common faith but also has the effect of governing their behavior and activity, enforced through moral instruction so that followers may self-regulate themselves or influence others from going astray. The nature of this institution created a Catholic culture--where a follower could go to any part of the world and experience familiarity with the way Catholicism is practiced and lived out there. This culture is important to understanding and putting in context the sexual abuse priests had committed, and the experiences of ones who suffered the abuse.

As an institution, there are many unique terms that may not be widely understood. The head of the Catholic Church is the Pope who resides in the Vatican and is given primary authority over the Church. The Pope appoints cardinals who serve as delegates and advisors to the Pope, and have the ability to elect a new pope, when the papal seat is vacant. Although the Catholic Church is a global institution, it is comprised of individual

dioceses, which are generally a specified geographical area. As an example, the Diocese of Pittsburgh covers the City of Pittsburgh, Allegheny County, and the surrounding six counties. Larger dioceses are often labeled to be archdioceses. The leader of a diocese is the bishop who is under the authority of the Pope. Each diocese is broken down further into parishes, which are smaller geographical areas. Each parish is assigned priests by the bishop. Priests in the Catholic Church are referenced by many different names, including Monsignor, Parochial Vicar, and Pastor. Deacons are ministers that are ordained to serve at a parish and with priests but do not have the authority to lead Mass. The laity are the people in a parish who are not ordained. Some groups of Catholics, such as Jesuits or Franciscans, are organized as an Order, which are under the direct authority of the Pope even though they may reside in a particular Diocese.



*Figure 1. Hierarchy of the Catholic Church*

### **Code of Canon Law and priest sexual abuse.**

As many institutions have, the Roman Catholic Church has its own code of law, called the Code of Canon Law, developed in the early church to govern rules of conduct

within the emerging institution. Consolidated in 1917, Canon laws govern the Catholic Church and explain the Catholic Church's understanding of its theology. The power of revising the Code lies in the hands of the presiding pope. The revised Code of Canon Law contains 84 "canons" or rules that call for or allow legislative action by episcopal conferences. The episcopal conference overseeing the United States is called the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB), which can establish particular legislation for the U.S., called Complementary Norms. Since 1983, it has re-addressed 29 canons, establishing legislation particularly for the dioceses within the United States. (US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2019). This means that there can be potential revisions of how priests' sexual abuse against minors can be addressed. Before 1983, the Code of Canon Law contained no particular penalties for child molestation, outside of a priest's solicitation of sex during the sacrament of confession, of which the consequences did not involve intervention outside the ranks of the clergy (Office of the Sacred Congregation, 1962). In November 2002, United States bishops and experts on canon law worked to submit revisions to align the Complementary Norms with the Code of Canon Law, with the following changes in procedure enacted: "All accusations against priests are to be forwarded to the Vatican, which will return most for processing by U.S. bishops, but may retain egregious cases;" "Accused priests are to be suspended from ministry immediately and will be tried by church courts to determine their permanent status;" "Review boards of clerical and lay membership set up to help bishops evaluate accusations are to work in secret;" "a statute of limitations will expire after an abuse victim turns twenty-eight, that is, ten years after majority;" and "Bishops may ask priests for exemptions allowing them to ban priests even if the statute has expired" (Sloyan, 2003). The changes to the Code

were not welcomed by everyone, particularly victims' groups, who by Sloyan's account, would have preferred the immediate dismissal of any priest or bishop found guilty of sexual abuse against a minor.

In addition, Canon Law limits the action of a diocese to carry out the laicization of a priest--severing the legal bond between bishop and priest and removing a priest from his obligations-- which puts the power in the hands of the Vatican (Maida, 1992).

### **Code of Canon Law and secrets.**

The Catholic Church has several codes governing secrecy and when it should be used. As many codes of the Canon Law are derived from scripture, the codes of secrecy can be tracked to the eighth commandment in Christian and Jewish tradition: "You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor." In regard to this precept, the Vatican states, "The eighth commandment forbids misrepresenting the truth in our relations with others. This moral prescription flows from the vocation of the holy people to bear witness to their God who is the truth and wills the truth. Offenses against the truth express by word or deed a refusal to commit oneself to moral uprightness: they are fundamental infidelities to God and, in this sense, they undermine the foundations of the covenant" (Vatican, 1992).

Through this vein, Pope Paul VI approved the "Secreta continere" or "pontifical secret" in 1974, to be enforced. This stated that "The right of privacy protects the private lives of families and individuals. There is the right of secrecy, which obtains if necessity or professional duty or the common good itself requires it" (Waters, 2016). This action codified secrecy and had a damaging impact on abuse survivors, at the height of the well-hidden priest sexual abuse crisis. The literature on this topic provides limited insight.

According to Waters, an opinion published in the Newcastle Herald in 2014 stated that "pontifical secrecy allows abuse to go unpunished," but did not make explicit the set of repercussions the pontifical secret had or could have. Waters elaborates that "in respect of secrecy, the Instruction n.11 required that all those involved in the process of trials in respect of the crime of solicitation were bound by the secret of the Holy Office. And in n.13 it stated that "the oath to maintain secrecy must always be taken in these cases also by the accusers or complainants and the witnesses." These oaths of secrecy may have had several effects on the Church--to protect the Church from crisis so it did not bring negative publicity to itself, to prevent misinformation from spreading if all the evidence was not present, to prevent followers from losing faith in the church, and to protect the accused priests from being characterized in a negative light, before the evidence was brought forward. These are my presumptions, but the lack in the data prevent understanding the true intentions or advantages of withholding information.

By the Catholic Church stating the limitations of divulging privileged information by the clergy, they could use this pontifical secret broadly to keep information from law enforcement, their followers and other entities because it was a sin and violation of Canon Law, to cause "scandal" or lead the faithful to question their faith (Waters, 2016; Frawley-O'Dea, 2007). While this reasoning is supported by a few sources, I was not able to find the text of the "pontifical secret" in any of the Vatican's resources on its Code of Canon Law, which prevented me from understanding this rule outside of the articles describing it, which did not contain its full text.

### **The vow of celibacy.**

In the process of becoming clergy, priests take public vows of “poverty (simple living), chastity (sexual continence), and obedience (to a religious superior)” (Sloyan, 2003), in addition to following the Codes of Canon Law, which govern them. Although it is documented and widely-known that teenagers would enter the seminary when they were unready for the demands of a celibate lifestyle (Doyle, 2002), I could not find any studies to understand this phenomenon or the understanding these teenagers had about their own sexuality. However, several other mental health professionals noted this effect. Drs. Conrad Baars and Anna Terruwe, shared their scholarly paper with the 1971 Synod of Bishops at the Vatican, detailing that 20 to 25 percent of priests in North America had serious psychiatric difficulties while 60 to 70 percent suffered from emotional immaturity (Doyle, 2002). They stated that, “Our clinical observations over many years have convinced us that priests in general and some to an extreme degree, possess an insufficiently developed or distorted emotional life while at the same time they must be considered to belong to a group of men whom nature has endowed with superior intelligence and sensitivity. In some, the causes... go back to childhood and remained unrecognized during the seminary years. Others enjoyed a fairly normal childhood but became emotionally disturbed through misguided ascetical practices in the seminary” (Baars, 1971, p. 57). It appears a lack of addressing sexual issues during the seminary years had led to an increase in priests who may have experienced stunted psychological and sexual growth.

Priests take the vow of celibacy, which is one that particularly relates to the sex abuse crisis because it has not been kept. In an ethnographic study of celibacy in the



priesthood by Richard Sipe from 1960–2002, data collected on 2,776 active and resigned priests receiving psychotherapy found that, at any given time, “50 percent of the priesthood is living out a commitment to celibacy; their intention is to become a celibate even if they experience occasional lapses along the way. Another 28 percent of priests are sexually active with adult women; 11 percent are homosexually active with adult men; and five percent engage in other sexual pursuits like cross-dressing, pornography, masturbation, or exhibitionism[...] the remaining six percent are sexually active with minors” (Frawley-O’Dea, 2007). Contrastingly, sociologist Fr. Andrew Greeley used data from two Los Angeles Times surveys of around 2,000 active priests and estimated that 82 percent of priests remain celibate. Similarly, in 2001, sociologists Dean Hoge and Jacqueline Wenger found that in over 1,200 priests, only 11 percent of active priests cited celibacy as a serious problem in their lives (2003). Hoge found a clear difference between priests who resigned versus those who were active, with only 30 percent of resigned priests being satisfied living celibately, while 87 percent of active diocesan priests and 74 percent of active religious priests reporting satisfaction with celibate life (2002). This points to the possible interpretation that when celibacy is problematic for a priest it may be a cause for their resignation.

Before entering the seminary, prospective seminarians are now required to go through psychological testing to understand if they are emotionally and psychologically ready for the clergy. Prior to the advent of this practice, it was not unusual for young boys to be mentored to enter the priesthood. A report by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice into the nature, scope and causes of clergy abuse acknowledged David Finkelhor,

an American sociologist as one of the leading theorists on child sexual abuse and used his theory to understand the crisis they are undergoing.

Finkelhor proposed a “four-factor model” of the preconditions to committing child sexual abuse: emotional congruence, sexual arousal, blockage and disinhibition. These separate and underlying factors integrate the various theories about why individuals begin to participate in sexually deviant behavior and explain why offenders abuse, and also why the abuse continues, according to the John Jay Report (John Jay College of Criminal Justice & Catholic Church, 2004). Finkelhor described the term “emotional congruence” to compare the relationship between the adult abuser’s emotional needs and the child’s characteristics in their lack of full emotional development. He explains sexual arousal from the lens of Social Learning Theory where if a child sexual abuser was molested when he was young, he may have been conditioned and imprinted to find children arousing later in adulthood. Finkelhor describes “blockage” through the lens of attachment and psychoanalytic theory in which the adult’s sexual and emotional needs have not been met in adult relationships as a result of failing to develop appropriate social skills and self-confidence to form fulfilling intimate relations with adults and being prevented from normal sexual expression. Finally, disinhibition, refers to the factors that aid someone who engages in child sexual abuse to overcome inhibitions that allow himself to abuse a child in his care. He addresses this through cognitive-behavioral theories by explaining cognitive distortions that facilitate the child molesting behavior, while taking into account personality factors, substance abuse and stress (Finkelhor, 1984).

The Catholic Church attempted to address the concerns of child molestation through taking things into their own hands for treatment. In the Grand Jury Report, there is evidence that priests were sent to treatment facilities--one only ten minutes from University of Maryland's campus-- in order to deal with their problematic and damaging behaviors but sent back into the communities they originally offended, without much, if any, support. Because of the binds of patient-clinician confidentiality and more recently, HIPAA adherence, it seems that the documents about the actual treatment given to the offenders was not revealed, so it is unclear what kind of treatment they were receiving.

The Catholic Church, one of the largest institutions in the world, is infused with the cultures of all its followers, wherever they go. It is important to understand that while it is structured and hierarchical, it is also dynamic, adapting to the culture of each location it grows in.

### **Historical and Cultural Influences on the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania**

The understanding of sexuality and sexual acts against children also needs to be understood through a historical and cultural lens in order to grasp why we are at the point we are at today. I will begin with exploring the cultural influences of Pittsburgh and broaden my field of view to include conceptualization of sexuality in the Catholic Church historically, and how that impacted its followers.

#### **Pittsburgh demographics.**

Pittsburgh has been a shrinking city since the 1950s, reaching its peak population of about 675,000 people and consistently declining to the current population of about 300,000. I was unable to find a historical racial or ethnic breakdown of Pittsburgh but with the data available today, Caucasian was the largest racial group, at 65 percent, with

the following ethnic breakdown among those who consider themselves racially white: German (19.7 percent), Irish (15.8 percent), Italian (11.8 percent), Polish (8.4 percent) and English (4.6) (“Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania Population 2019,” 2019). While there is limited information in each of these areas, I will be sharing what I was able to find about the influence of each of these cultural groups.

### **Victorian ideals.**

While Pittsburghers of English descent only made up 4.6 percent, American Catholicism was heavily influenced by Puritan and Victorian ideals in the 20th century (Frawley-O’Dea, 2007). According to Frawley-O’Dea, over 80 percent of bishops leading dioceses between 1983 and 2003 were born before 1940; almost 50 percent before 1930. They were men raised in an era in which sex was barely spoken about openly, especially in Catholic spaces. She introduces Irish critic Fintan O’Toole, who expresses this Victorian influence as a “cocktail of do-gooder moral activism and sexual hypocrisy” which involved the dissociation of their socially normative lifestyle to sometimes off-center sexual behavior. Historian Gertrude Himmelfarb adds that, “The Victorians thought it no small virtue to maintain the appearance of good conduct even while violating some moral principle, for in their demeanor they affirmed the legitimacy of the principle itself” (1996). This ethic may have led those entering the priesthood, too timid to disclose any information about their sexuality or even understand their own sexuality before entering the priesthood, unable to be honest about any problematic concerns regarding their own sexuality and unable to address the problematic behaviors of their brothers.

### **Irish influence.**

The second-largest ethnic group of European descent in Pittsburgh are the Irish, heavily influencing the Catholic Church in the city. While I was not able to find information specific to Pittsburgh, in 1900, 75 percent of American bishops were Irish or Irish American. Yet even in the 1990s, over half of US Bishops identified Irish heritage. As the Irish emigrated to the US, they were commonly treated as second-class citizens. One way out of this stigma was to join the priesthood, a respectable profession, which brought honor to their families and meant “spiritual and social salvation to his family and to his ethnic group, alleviating some of the cultural shame instilled by years of discrimination” (Frawley-O’Dea, 2007). With the strict sexual theology of Catholicism, Victorian social and sexual codes and Irish norms, for an Irish Catholic bishop (of which Pittsburgh had many of in the 19th and 20th century) to acknowledge and confront the shameful sexual crimes of his many Irish priests, might be extremely difficult. Given this context, it is not hard to imagine that it was easier to turn away from the situation and seek to minimize social shame and guilt. Given this social and cultural background, it left the hierarchy psychosocially unprepared to directly face the sexual abuse by priests.

### **Italian influence.**

In contrast to the Irish, the Italians emigrated in larger numbers to the US between 1880-1920, after the Irish, English and Germans, who formed the base of the Catholic Church on the U.S. East Coast (Femminella, 1964). The Italians brought a faith that was communal, deeply liturgical, and concrete--enjoying personal relationships with their priests and inviting them to become part of their family units and communities. In incorporating into the American Catholic Church, Italians tended to feel disconnected to

the English-speaking, puritanical, Victorian-influenced and activist Catholicism of the East Coast. The dichotomy of the stoicism of the English and Irish and the Italian Catholicism which emphasized personal relationships, emotional fervor, and social celebration, created dissonance for the Italians, searching for their spiritual rooting in the U.S. Meanwhile, in Italy, in an effort to improve Vatican- Italian state relation, Bishop Scalabrini in Italy founded a new religious order, the Pious Society (and later the Scalabrinians), whose mission was to serve migrants transnationally, often immigrating with the migrant populations. They founded parishes within the United States after 1887, forging a community of Italians of the diaspora within the U.S. (Smith, 2003). Concurrently, Italians also began to integrate into the historically Irish-Catholic churches and began adopting the cultural norms of the Irish and English in the US (Femminella, 1964). Given that Catholicism is historically and culturally important to Italian culture, the lack of research and data regarding the influence of Italian Catholics is surprising. I was not able to gather any information about how Italian culture influenced sexual norms of Italian immigrants to the US.

### **Polish influence.**

At the turn of the 20th century, Polish immigrants arrived in the U.S. in search of “bread and freedom” and experienced similar cultural dissonance as the Italians as their culture and language were tied to their faith (Buczek, 1976). As the number of Poles began to grow on the East Coast, they tended to concentrate in large numbers and worship at their local parish. The places where they settled in the U.S. tended to be in proximity to German neighborhoods where many of them were familiar with the German

language. So, the feeling of familiarity but also alienation within the church were held simultaneously.

Feeling this sense of disconnection, they were resistant to assimilating to the “American Church.” The Polish sense of initiative shined as these new immigrants founded societies of Polish Catholics and began using that support to build Polish parishes, with the blessing of the local bishop, including Immaculate Heart of Mary Church and Saint Stanislaus Church--some of the oldest parishes in Pittsburgh. Towards the 1920s, as the immigrant generation of Poles grew older, many in the new generation seemed to be less interested as their parents’ in linguistic and cultural preservation. They began to integrate into the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church but also formed and maintained their own communities (Buczek, 1976).

The Polish influence on Pittsburgh is strongly felt when entering the city boundaries, influencing religion, cuisine and cultural diversity celebrations. Yet again, I was unable to find any information on how Polish culture influenced the sexuality of Catholics, including clergy, in the United States, another gap in the literature.

### **The developing understanding of sexuality from the 1900-1970s.**

Summarizing the history of the understanding of sexuality in American culture is a reductionistic task. Nevertheless, I will attempt to highlight several events and developments which challenged and influenced the strict sexual mores of the Catholic Church in the United States.

The 1900’s, as described earlier, were a time of Victorian sexual ethic where the Comstock Laws had already been enforced for about thirty years, prohibiting the dissemination of information related to sexuality, including contraception and abortion.

Discussing sexuality publicly was unheard of and those that did were often attacked or had the force of law used against them (Czuczka, 1999). However, this period was also a time of reform. With the Industrial Revolution came a reform movement, wanting to deal with the issues caused by industrialization. Of particular interest to this paper was the development of a government intervention aiming to halt the spread of syphilis and gonorrhea--supported by several religious groups as well as health departments and schools. This period launched efforts to bring sexual education to the classroom-- a radical but befitting initiative that was not officially implemented in U.S. school systems until the 1920s.

The 1910s brought famed psychologist Sigmund Freud and his beliefs about sexuality into academia and mainstream society. He introduced the idea that sexuality was no longer bound to procreation but was a part of identity and life--unable to avoid its effect in our lives. As American men entered the battlefield in World War I and came into contact with the more relaxed sexuality of Europe, American women entered the workforce and no longer fit in the box of traditional gender roles, experiencing more freedom and ability to challenge the norms placed on them by society (Czuczka, 1999).

In the 1920s and 30s, sexual education was introduced into U.S. public schools, with the U.S. Public Health Services holding regional conferences on sexuality in high schools and colleges and schools offering courses on “marriage, family and sexual hygiene” (Czuczka, 1999, p. 16). Sexual behaviors and attitudes began to change, much to the dismay of the strict morality of the Catholic Church. The Victorian mores that parents had grown up with were no longer the reality in this sexually saturated culture, with sexuality openly discussed in advertisements, in schools and newspaper advice



columns. Condoms were readily available in the 30s, with the opening of birth control clinics and the issuing of condoms to members of the U.S. military (Collier, 2007). At the same time, the Pope Pius XI's response was *Casti Connubii*, an encyclical affirming the Catholic Church's opposition to all forms of contraception ("Casti Connubii," 1930).

In the 1940s, Alfred Kinsey released his New York Times best sellers, *Sexual Behavior in the Human Male* and *Sexual Behavior in the Human Female*, which influenced the public discourse but also had an influence on Catholic views on pedophilia (Czuczka, 1999). In the 1950s, the famed sex researcher stated that an adult's sexual advances were "not likely to do the child any appreciable harm if the child's parents do not become disturbed by the abuse" (Rosetti, 1996, p. 3). This observation was also reported by Gagnon and Simon, two fellow sex researchers who stated that the long-term consequences of victimization are quite mild." Further Kinsey et al. noted that 80% of children who had sexual contacts with adults "had been frightened or upset and in most instances the reported fright was near the level that children will show when they see insects, spiders" (Rosetti, 1996, p. 3). In hindsight, this statement from several respected authorities on sexuality seems woefully uninformed and under-researched. As Kinsey's sentiment on the lack of damage of child sexual abuse was reflected in the Grand Jury Report as a reason for clergy inaction and dismissal of the seriousness of the crimes, this had a damaging impact on the child sexual abuse survivors and their families.

In the 1960s, scientific research advanced and "the pill" was created and approved by the Food and Drug Administration, which allowed women to have greater control over their reproduction and pursue sex with lower rates of pregnancy than previous forms of contraception. The Catholic Church was divided but needed to respond to these

advancements and shifting cultural norms. So, from 1963-1966, The Papal Commission on Population, the Family, and Birth-rate met and recommended that the teaching of *Casti Connubii* on the immorality of contraception be changed (Norris, 2013). Pope Paul VI responded by reinforcing the Vatican opposition to retracting its statements on the ban on contraception through his 1968 encyclical, *Humanae Vitae* (O'Toole, 2010).

The 1970s saw institutions responding to the push for greater individual rights in American society. In 1973, the U.S. Supreme Court legalized abortion, in 1974, the American Psychological Association removed homosexuality from the list of mental illnesses and in 1979, Pope John Paul II began to issue a series of addresses which were compiled into what is now widely known as "Theology of the Body." This landmark piece tried to bring Catholics who were trying to make sense of the cultural and sexual liberation back to the understanding of the Catholic theological stance on sexuality, including the topics of sexual complementarity of man and woman, the nature of marriage, celibacy, virginity, and contraception (West, 2003).

The rapidly changing landscape of cultural and sexual norms made it necessary for the Catholic Church to respond to not just the shifting reality within the U.S., but to the rest of the world, as well. For those growing up in the U.S. during these years, there may have been disconnect between each generation. The reality in any of the 20-year time spans presented, reveal there are significant shifts in how the American public at large interacted in the spheres of sexuality and culture.

## **Understanding Adult Sexual Behavior Towards Minors in the United States and the Catholic Church**

One thing that ties the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report together with the Catholic sex abuse crisis in Pennsylvania, but also around the world, is the problem of an adult's sexual behaviors and urges towards children in their care. Thus, I have decided that it is important to address the concepts of pedophilia and ephebophilia in order to understand them and understand how others understood these concepts while they were happening. All instances of child sexual abuse may not be diagnosed as pedophilia, but can be considered a pedophilic or ephebophilic interest, compulsion or something entirely separate--such as unclear relational boundaries. In addition, For the sake of understanding background behind most of the situations presented in the Grand Jury Report, I will explore the two concepts of pedophilia and ephebophilia.

### **History.**

Before the first DSM Manual was developed in 1952 (American Psychiatric Association, n.d.), pedophilia was already identified as a maladaptation and a crime against children. Around the 7th century, penitential literature, or handbooks compiled by priests which were used to aid them in recommending penances for members of the Church, came into use (Doyle, 2002). In particular, the Penitential of Bede, an 8th century guide from England, advises that clergy who “commit sodomy with children be given increasingly severe penances commensurate with their rank” (p. 194) The recommended penance for laity who committed these crimes of sexual abuse were to fast and be excommunicated for three years, while deacons and priests were given seven and ten years respectively and bishops who sexually abused children were given 12 years.

In the 11th century AD, accounts of sexual abuse had been documented by Father Peter Damian, an influential Benedictine monk, as mentioned in the introduction. In his treatise, titled *Liber Gomorrhianus*, or "Book of Gomorrah," he seemed particularly angered by the sexual acts between "oblates (boys) and their masters (monks)" and believed the masters should be punished for this abuse of power and sexuality.

One of the first instances when pedophilia was codified in the United States was when the DSM-1 listed pedophilia as a "Sexual Deviation" in 1952 (Shorter, 2014, p. 932). At this time, there was no diagnostic criteria until the DSM-3 came out in 1980.

### **Defining pedophilia.**

Our understanding of pedophilia, I believe, will continue to develop and evolve, as it has over the past decades. As a note, estimating child sexual abuse or any other form of deviance in the general population is difficult work and often not perfectly reliable for many reasons, probably boiling down to the fact that it elicits shame and fear to reveal to anyone, including oneself, that they are "deviant" from the norm.

Given this understanding, persistent sexual fantasies, urges or contact involving prepubescent children occur in three to nine percent of the male population (Seto, 2009) with an estimated lifetime prevalence of around .5 percent (Mokros et al., 2012). Currently in the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) 5, Pedophilia is listed under "Paraphilic Disorders" and is characterized by the following criteria:

*Diagnostic Criteria 302.2 (F65.4)*

A. *Over a period of at least 6 months, recurrent, intense sexually arousing fantasies, sexual urges, or behaviors involving sexual activity with a prepubescent child or children (generally age 13 years or younger).*

B. *The individual has acted on these sexual urges, or the sexual urges or fantasies cause marked distress or interpersonal difficulty.*

C. *The individual is at least age 16 years and at least 5 years older than the child or children in Criterion A.*

*Note: Do not include an individual in late adolescence involved in an ongoing sexual relationship with a 12- or 13-year-old.*

This expanded diagnostic criteria was not available to clinicians and professionals, particularly those who were treating priests with problematic behaviors, until 2013, with the DSM-V. Before that, the diagnostic criteria were more limited and did not include as comprehensive of a narrative text to expound on the specific criteria (Merrick, 2016).

In addition to the emerging definition of pedophilia, there is also emerging research of brain differences of those experiencing pedophilic interests. Compared to controls researchers found, “structural changes of prefrontal, parietal, insular and limbic brain areas in pedophilic offenders,” and “pedosexual interest and sexual recidivism were correlated with gray matter decrease in the left dorsolateral prefrontal cortex” (Poepl et al., 2013). Yet information on this topic is limited and needs further research.

### **Defining ephebophilia.**

Unlike pedophilia, researchers have had a limited understanding ephebophilia and the issues surrounding it (Robinson, 1994). This term is not well defined in the research,

however the John Jay Report defines ephebophilia (also called hebephilia) as “a clinical term (though not included in the DSM-IV) that denotes one who is sexually attracted to adolescent or post-pubescent children” (John Jay College of Criminal Justice & Catholic Church, 2004). As the definition says, there is no clinical diagnosis for this sexual attraction in the DSM-5 and there has been limited research on this subject.

In the literature, Rossetti describes ephebophiles as more psychosexually mature and as having a better prognosis for treatment in comparison to pedophiles (1990). In Danni and Hampe’s work on predictors of child sexual offenders, they also found that ephebophiles were more likely to take responsibility for their behavior and more likely to have a better prognosis for treatment (Danni & Hampe, 2000).

#### **Dealing with child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church.**

In 2002, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) created the *Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* and the *Essential Norms for Diocesan/Eparchial Policies Dealing with Allegations of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests or Deacons*, adopted to provide a comprehensive set of procedures to address sexual abuse allegations by Catholic clergy. The charter aimed to address the following: “Creating a safe environment for children and young people; Healing and reconciliation of victims and survivors; Making prompt and effective response to allegations; Cooperating with civil authorities; Disciplining offenders; Providing for means of accountability for the future to ensure the problem continues to be effectively dealt with through the Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection and the National Review Board” (US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011).

Part of the responsibility of this charter was to create the National Review Board, of which one of the objectives was to commission a descriptive study of “the nature and scope of the problem of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church” (John Jay College, 2004). Thus, the US bishops contacted the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to conduct the study, which they agreed to. From this commissioning is the produced report: *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States 1950-2002* (hereafter referred to as the John Jay Report).

Another responsibility of the *Charter and Norms* were to provide policy on what to do when there is an allegation of abuse, moving forward. The policies require dioceses to screen clergy, staff and volunteers who work with children under their purview, mandate reporting of any abuse allegation (unless revealed during the sacrament of Confession) to civil authorities and to Catholic Church leadership, provide “safe environment” training, integrate these teachings into clergy formation curriculum and outreach to survivors of sexual abuse (US Conference of Catholic Bishops, 2011). While these policies are in place, just like government policies, they may not always be enforced with the power of law. In addition, they are entrusted to be enforced by each diocese, who create definitions and procedures for enforcing the policies, at their discretion, with varying degrees of transparency (Keane, 2018).

### **Information about the victims of child sexual abuse.**

In understanding the extent of child abuse that occurred within the Catholic Church, the most extensive document in existence is the John Jay Report (2004). As a reminder, estimating child sexual abuse is often not reliable for many reasons, so this data must be understood with that in mind, because these statistics are most often under-

reported. According to the report, 80.9 percent of the children abused by Catholic clergy between 1950 and 2002 were boys (versus girls) and 85 percent of the male victims were between 11 and 17 years old (John Jay College, 2004, p. 5). The report did not specify information regarding how many of these boys had reached puberty, understandably, as this would be difficult to determine. Nevertheless, given current averages for puberty onset for boys, Cartor, Cimboic and Tallon state that it is likely that “the majority of cleric victims were likely post-pubescent male minors,” which supports the need for further study of ephedophile offenders (2008).

Of all the child sexual abuse cases that were reported to authorities, about half of all allegations of sexual abuse were reported by the victim, 20 percent were made by the alleged victim’s attorney and 13.6 percent of the abuse reported was by the parent or guardian of the victim. All other allegations (made by police officers, siblings, or another priest) accounted for about three percent of the rest of the cases (John Jay College, 2004). The Catholic Church, while institutional, thrives on relationships between people, especially through the relationship between the priest and parishioners.

With the publicity drawn to the various sex abuse scandals within the U.S., including the #MeToo movement, and the various organizations that emerged to support victims of abuse in the Catholic Church, such as Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (SNAP) and Voice of the Faithful, these organizations found a drastic increase in the number of people speaking out about crimes committed to them (MacKinnon, 2019). Once victims felt empowered to report their abuse, allegations were most commonly reported by calling the diocese (30.2 percent), in a signed letter to the diocese (22.8 percent), or in a legal filing (10.5 percent). Other methods, including by telling a trusted



priest in person, or through the media, occurred in less than 10 percent of cases (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004, p. 7).

**Information about the perpetrators of child sexual abuse.**

Researchers have begun to develop a psychological profile of Roman Catholic clergy sex offenders over the past two decades (Montana et al., 2012). These studies which compare results between clergy and non-clergy sex offenders suggest priest pedophiles and ephebophiles are:

“(a) likely to be older at first reported offense; (b) better educated; (c) more sexually conflicted; (d) likely to show less antisocial and criminal behavior disorders; (e) likely to have fewer victims overall but have a greater number of male pubescent victims; (f) less likely to report psychopathology; (g) less likely to exhibit hypersexuality; and (h) likely to have fewer additional paraphilic behaviors” (p. 576).

As mentioned above, the John Jay Report determined that over 80 percent of all clergy sexual abuse involved primarily adolescents and males. This rate of same-sex activity and targeting of minors stands out as something that needs to be explored and understood more. These priests were first reported to have abused a child while under 30 (20 percent), between 40 and 49 (23 percent) and over 50 years old (17 percent). In addition, the majority of priests with allegations of sexual abuse were ordained between 1950 and 1979 (68%), followed by those ordained before 1950 (21.3%) of the allegations, while priests ordained after 1979 accounted for 10.7% of sexual abuse allegations (John Jay College, 2004).

There is more to be learned about the conditions that lead to increased rates of priests abusing children and hopefully research will advance in the upcoming years.

### **Understanding the perception of abuse in context of Catholic values.**

In Catholic history, there is one story that comes to mind when discussing child sexual abuse--that of St. Maria Goretti--a 12-year-old child that grew up in Italy at the turn of the 20th century (Franciscan Media, 2016). Alessandro Serenelli, her 18-year-old neighbor went to her and attempted to rape her. As she attempted to escape her assailant, she told him "It is a sin. You would go to hell for it." Alessandro continued his attack and stabbed her with a dagger, and she died a day after the attack.

For the murder of Maria Goretti, Alessandro was sentenced to 30 years in prison. During this time, he had a dream or vision of Maria offering him flowers and forgiveness. After his release, he begged the forgiveness of Maria's mother and received it. Almost 50 years after the attack, after numerous miracles attributed to her intercession, the 66-year-old Serenelli attended her canonization as a saint. While St. Peter Damian expressed the just anger against child sexual abusers, St. Maria Goretti's story reflects a core belief of the Catholic Church-- the forgiveness of those who sin against you--even with sexual assault.

The Catholic Church has struggled with its own cultural values--balancing the call for reform and justice with the command of forgiveness of sin. Culture change does not happen quickly for this transnational organization and the Catholic Church across time has been conservative with the change it allows for--more often taking the side of discretion over transparency in its task of mediating the conversation between clergy and hierarchy with the laity and public-at-large.

### **Dealing with child sexual abuse in the U.S.**

Research shows that only three to five percent of the U.S. population meets DSM-5 criteria for pedophilic disorder, although these diagnostic criteria excludes some individuals with pedophilic interests (Seto, 2008). The proposed likelihood of anyone committing a first-time sexual offense of any type is one to three percent (Hanson, Harris, Helmus, & Thornton, 2014). These individuals with pedophilic interests may not have the internal or external resources to restrain themselves from acting on these sexual interests. Lasher and Stinson say that in the U.S., rather than helping those struggling with pedophilic sexual behavior, most efforts to reduce child sexual abuse focus on efforts to restrain already known abusers from committing future offenses (2017, p.660). It is often more difficult to find resources for non-offending individuals with pedophilic or ephebophilic interests than those who have already offended. In addition, those employed in the fields of healthcare, education, law enforcement and social work (as well as clergy), are often labeled “mandated reporters,” requiring them to report any suspicion of child abuse--leaving the potential perpetrators fate in the hands of law enforcement or the judicial system. The U.S. has also adopted practices of incarceration, notification laws, and limitations to where someone convicted of child sexual abuse may live. These restrictive practices can be considered reactive--caused by societal fear of what that person has already done. These laws and practices lie on the assumption that they will help prevent future child victimization, although among convicted offenders, Lasher and Stinson say that empirical research has not found a consistent reduction in recidivism that can be attributed to those efforts (Socia & Stamatel, 2010; Veysey & Zgoba, 2010; Welchans, 2005). Very few, if any, measures are put into place for non-offenders who show pedophilic interest to receive help through preventative measures. This evolving

conversation about how to understand those with pedophilic and ephebophilic interests and how to reduce the potential for them to re-offend is complex and has implications for the Catholic Church.

Understanding the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report and the implications it has for reform to prevent child sexual abuse requires extensive background knowledge, of which I have attempted to provide an overview of. In review, I have discussed the institutional nature of the Catholic Church and its relationship to outside entities; the historical and cultural influences on the Catholic Church; and the past and current understanding is of pedophilia, or sexual attraction to minors. This will provide some contextual knowledge in understanding the communications between clergy, families, law enforcement and other entities in the Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report.

### **Methods**

The public release of Pennsylvania's Grand Jury Report, which includes documents of communications throughout the hierarchy of actors surrounding the sexual abuse, allowed me to use a qualitative methodological approach in the study of the perpetuation of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church, in Pennsylvania. I used a grounded theory approach to analyze the narrative textual data, exploring themes that reflected the actions taken by each actor in the situation, the cognitive and behavioral processes and the cognitive coping strategies of the parties involved that have the potential to add greater nuance and understanding to the factors within the Catholic Church that allowed sexual abuse of children to perpetuate - to continue over many decades.

A qualitative approach allowed me to pay closer attention to the data and provides specific tools to examine process, context and meaning. In particular, a grounded theory analysis of narrative textual data helped me acknowledge that each person's "reality" is shaped by their past and present interactions with the world around them. It also allowed for the understanding of context, the impact of socialization, the use of language and the underlying motivations that prompt the accounts and letters in these papers (Daly, 2007, p.108). This is important to the study because it had potential implications on political and ecclesiastical policy, social behavior, and the ability to address this issue strategically when child sexual abuse continued to occur and perpetuate within the Catholic (and other) institutions.

Narrative analysis places importance on the lived experience (Daly, 2007). While this study was not a narrative analysis, I draw from its concepts to make sense of the actions of those throughout the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, right down to the family. I explored some of the patterns of repeated narratives, cognitive distortions, and the way each speaker shift language to communicate with different audiences. The substance of the narratives that were contained in the letters sent from parent to priest, from priest to bishop, from bishop to priest and from priest to priest may be the same narratives recounted over time that have reflected and led to a historical and current problem of the perpetuation of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. Narratives can contain information about "turning points" that are valuable to an understanding of lived experience (Daly, 2007, p. 116). In the case of examining the documents made public in the PA Grand Jury Report, clergy straddling the hierarchy of the Catholic Church made decisions during these critical moments. The patterns in the decisions they made and the

way they communicated this with others helped me connect the thematic dots to understand if there was a common purpose, mindset or motivation that led them to cover up or dismiss the tracks of the priests that sexually abused minors.

In reviewing the letters, I conducted a grounded theory analysis, looking at the narratives through the lens of patterns in the thoughts, beliefs and actions of the various actors represented in the Grand Jury Report, while also touching on linguistic phenomena and themes and topics that may influence the meaning conveyed. Once I coded these patterns that emerged between the various dyads of actors, I compared the different dyads and theorize why the cognitive and behavioral communications might vary between dyads.

The Grand Jury Report was investigating a phenomenon within an institution of the Catholic Church, in Pennsylvania, during the 1930s until 2016, in which a particular culture and religion influenced what information was communicated, how it was communicated and what information was considered important. The report also affected how the characters in this world interacted with each other. As many of the accounts in the Grand Jury Report reflect, Catholic families have often treated priests and clergy as an extension of the family, inviting them over to their homes, allowing their children to stay or travel with the priests. The respect given to priests, is reflected in the Catholic belief that priests are an intermediary for God himself, on earth. This encouraged them to value priests highly, to trust them as they would their own family members.

Understanding this context is vital for understanding the interactions between priests and parishioners in the Grand Jury Report.

**Data.**

The present inquiry draws from the “40th Statewide Investigating Grand Jury REPORT 1 Interim --Redacted,” or as it is colloquially known as the “Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report” or “Grand Jury Report” and the primary documents contained within it. The Grand Jury Report is a 1,356 page report, broken down by an introduction to the report; a summary of each diocese, the priests accused of CSA, the account and evidence of each priest’s history of abuse; a summary of the “The Church and Child Abuse, Past and Present”; Recommendations of the Grand Jury; and an appendix containing summaries of all the priests who have allegedly abused children, broken down by diocese.

This document contains information on the Dioceses of Allentown, Erie, Greenberg, Harrisburg, Pittsburgh and Scranton. This does not contain accounts of abuse within the Diocese of Philadelphia and Altoona-Johnstown, which were the subject of previous grand juries. The report is accessible to the public. Parts of the report are redacted due to it being “the only viable due process remedy ... to protect their constitutional rights to reputation,” according to Justice Debra Todd as the Pennsylvania Constitution enshrines a person’s “right to possess and protect his or her good reputation, placing it on the same footing as life and liberty” and grand jury report links their names to terrible crimes or cover-up efforts, but that they had not been afforded the chance to respond to allegations made against them or given the benefit of due process of law (CNA/EWTN News, 2019).

The Grand Jury Report also contains primary documents and quotations from primary documents, in which the original document is not included. During the process

of developing the report, the Grand Jury heard the testimony of dozens of witnesses concerning clergy sex abuse, they subpoenaed and reviewed about 500,000 pages of internal diocesan documents which contained credible allegations against over three hundred priests accused of predatory behavior. Over one thousand child victims were identifiable, from the church's own records, although the actual count may be much more, due to non-reported incidents.

It may be difficult and unnecessary to code all 1,300+ pages of the report given my aim of obtaining data about the processes of how church officials, priests and families responded to the sexual abuse. Sampling from the data helped limit and provide focus in the attempt to objectify communication patterns regarding priests as a subject matter of the study (Daly, 2007, p. 177). In more detail, I am sampling to develop conceptualizations of common narratives, achieve theoretical saturation to understand experiences as fully as possible and also limit the amount of work that does not yield data to further enrich the study.

I primarily focused on obtaining a sample of primary documents, including priests who had at least three primary documents of substance in the Grand Jury Report that were primarily to, from or about them. Priests who had fewer primary documents may have had an insufficient amount of data to code that would provide a variety of responses from these different viewpoints regarding the sexual abuse, thus decreasing the quantity and quality of work. The data that I include in this study was limited to those 12 priests, who had documents of quality and quantity, which included criteria of at least three primary documents to, from, or about them relating to an incident of child sexual abuse. I



omitted documents that contained irrelevant information to the abuse (including parish bulletins and scratch notes with irrelevant information) from the coding process.

### **Data analysis.**

To attempt to understand how the primary documents revealed patterns and processes through communicated beliefs, emotions and actions of the actors involved in dealing with the child sexual abuse, I began by isolating the primary documents into one document in order to begin coding the data. Following coding protocol for most qualitative analysis, this process occurred over three phases of coding: open, axial, and selective.

Open coding, the first phase of analysis, refers to a “line-by-line” breakdown of the primary source data (Daly, 2007). The goal of this phase is to identify the contextual and interpretive experiences provided in each letter or document. As I skimmed through the letters and documents, the first task was to develop a set of codes to the various phenomena represented in the narratives. These codes guided their exploration and were developed both deductively and inductively.

Deductive codes arose from my prior knowledge and experiences of the document and this topic. Deductive coding also relies on theoretical sensitivity, taking into account how different perspectives in regard to the research question affect the direction of the inquiry (Daly, 2007). Sensitizing concepts draw attention to important features of social interaction and provide guidelines for research in specific settings. As someone who conceptualizes and examines processes in clients through looking at interactions through the lens of thoughts, behaviors and feelings that affect a situation, this is a sensitizing

concept that affected how I approached the data, also realizing that I allowed for alternate conceptualizations of the data.

As I approached the letters and documents, I brought my knowledge of prior research that has been conducted within the field of topics as varied as child sexual abuse, pedophilia, cognitive processes, history of the Catholic Church and the nature of institutions. In my conceptualization of how I used the data, the document with only the primary source documents was open coded for the communicated thoughts and beliefs, emotions, and actions or behaviors in the documents or letters. For example, I identified all thoughts and beliefs that the writer held in the document such as “no unusual psychological problems but that Father Parrakow needs time to sort out his problems” and “[By exposing Father Long's misdoings,](victim) may reach the point where she will seek to embarrass all her 'enemies' by one rash step” (Office of the Attorney General, 2018).

Looking inductively at the data, emergent codes were developed “in process” while coding the data. I noticed these “unexpected” codes as I read through each letter and made connections among them, enabling me to be flexible and in tune with experiences represented in these narratives. I coded notable details and trends that occurred within the data that I did not originally consider coding that might not have tied directly to why the abuse was perpetuated but was nonetheless something to note in the data (Daly, 2007). For example, if I noticed that all the advocates for these children who were reportedly abused, were disproportionately women, given this finding was not something that points to how those in positions of responsibility handled the abuse, it would nevertheless be interesting and important to notice, to add to the holistic view of

the phenomenon. It was evident in observing new phenomena and deciding to create new codes that I was able to capture the experiences and understandings of the priests, bishops, law enforcement and victims, which made this a richer experience through the ability to be in tune with the text.

The process of identifying conceptually-similar codes, or categories, constitutes the next wave of grounded theory, axial coding. An important task of the axial coding phase is defining the characteristics of each category that distinguish it from others (Daly, 2007). After open coding the documents, I examined them to determine if any could be combined, redefined or split apart because of any distinguishing factors. There were also additional categories, which emerged as I read through the entire text.

After compiling the information within those categories, I began axial coding: looking for conceptual similarities and differences between the codes (Daly, 2007). I focused on identifying the descriptive categories of patterns and connections in the communications, identifying themes among and between the categories, followed by developing narratives about how these themes interrelate. I incorporated narrative analysis into this review and coding by identifying how the narrative was organized; why the writer was communicating in the particular way that they were; how the recipient or audience of the document/letter influenced the way information was conveyed; what was taken for granted by the writer and audience; how were these letters situated in a particular time, culture, politics or institution; and who had and was given power. Understanding this, I drew comparisons within groups and between groups to find any trends that emerge. For example, I found that both priests and law enforcement have all responded to families in a way that was dismissive to taking their concerns seriously after

their children report sexual abuse, but when the concerns reached the Vatican, the abuse was acknowledged. After finding those patterns, I examined the context surrounding the situations to see if I could understand the nuances within the data. Through the synthesis of the codes, axial coding guided me to combine codes into overarching abstract concepts, which was used to develop a new framework (Daly, 2007).

While I used axial coding to compare and contrast the various thoughts, beliefs, feelings and actions the writers of the letters have, the next wave of analysis, selective coding, further drew the analysis together to develop a core story of how each actor processed and coped with the situation they were dealing with (Daly, 2007). In explaining these relationships, I selected the most important categories and relationships between them to form a core story that was told by integrating the most salient and critical codes from analyses. The analysis of these patterns helped me in forming that theory by giving additional context about each situation. I received guidance in this next step from my committee about which codes emerged as the most significant to guide in the understanding of the internal processes of each actor that influenced the experiences of dealing with the consequences of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania.

A potential source of bias to interpreting the data was that in the Report, the Grand Jury attempted to contextualize the letters and shared their views on what happened in each situation, using their own judgments. The Grand Jury Report included the primary documents interwoven within Grand Jury's own narrative about how each priest listed had been involved in the abuse committed against children and the subsequent cover-up. While this report contained one of the most extensive releases of primary documents regarding the sexual abuse within the Catholic Church, it also

contained potentially biased interpretations of the letters. In addition, intertwined with the Grand Jury's interpretation are bits of quotes from other letters that the public did not have access to and some information that has been redacted from the report. Because I did not have access to all the primary documents the Grand Jury had access to, I was left with having to trust that the Grand Jury had fuller contextual knowledge of each situation. At the same time, biases and experiences shaped my perception of what I was noticing in the letters. With this perspective in mind, it was central to this study that I reflected on my own biases to limit my "personal reading" of the letters, rely on a diversity of research to inform my perceptions, brainstorm alternative interpretations of the patterns, and have my interpretation scrutinized by my peers and faculty I worked with.

To summarize, I used grounded theory and incorporated narrative analysis techniques to code the data, initially coding for the communicated feelings, beliefs and actions of those involved in dealing with the child sexual abuse within the primary documents. Then, I located emergent codes which helped account for the patterns I noticed that I did not anticipate finding in the data. I then used axial coding to make connections between and within the various categories within the hierarchy in order to distinguish each category and reinforce the internal integrity of the axis (Daly, 2007). Next, selective coding aided me in identifying patterns and processes between the categories just created. After all these steps, I received some understanding from the letters of the processes utilized by each group of people in reaction to the consequences of the incidents of child sexual abuse.

**Data quality.**

Data quality in qualitative studies cannot effectively be measured in the same way that quantitative data can, given the conceptual divergence of the two approaches (Krefting, 1991). In her article, “Rigor in Qualitative Research: The Assessment of Trustworthiness,” Krefting explains that instead of using internal and external validity, reliability and objectivity as a measure of trustworthiness of the qualitative data, I need to change the conceptualization of how to measure validity. This leads to Guba’s categories of understanding the credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of qualitative data to establish the data’s quality.

As mentioned before, the Grand Jury of Pennsylvania requested access to 500,000 pages of internal diocesan documents and spoke directly to the survivors of the sexual abuse in the Church” (Office of the Attorney General, 2018). I did not have access to the same documents, but I did have the ability to analyze the documents that were included in the Report. Most of the documents in this report were letters written between clergy, although there were a few that are written to clergy from parents and victims and from clergy to the outside world. The letters reported personal information about life events, perceptions and experiences of each person represented. I cannot judge how sincere these perceptions or experiences were to the writer, but it was a starting place to understand how the people at different levels of power perceived the child abuse and how they interacted with that perception. In the first 50 documents within the entire Grand Jury Report, most were between 1-3 pages in length and all except six were written by clergy. Thirty-one of these letters involved the local bishop, five letters were sent directly to or from the priest who was accused of abusing a child, two documents corresponded to the

Vatican, two letters involved communication with the police and three letters involved communication with lawyers. Examples of the letters that were contained in this sample included letters from head priests to bishops detailing what a suspected abuser priest was accused of doing; letters from priests running “treatment centers” for psychological disorders to bishops, warning them that they do not believe the priests they are sending back to their diocese can safely work in high schools; and a statement from a child who observed a priest speaking with sexual innuendo to another child in class. Examples of letters included in the Report are provided in Appendix A and B.

There may have been several motives to keep secrets and information hidden beyond the view of the public so the quality of this data should not be determined based on what is hidden from the letters, but what is attempted to be conveyed. While I could not ensure the quality of the data, as it was the Grand Jury’s duty to collect, I could work to ensure the accuracy of its interpretation, while not limiting it to one perspective of interpretation.

To do this, I used Guba’s categories of credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of the qualitative data to establish the data’s quality (Krefting, 1991). Establishing data quality of qualitative data was crucial to the study and I did this while acknowledging that there were multiple realities of truth. This meant that the findings did not cover every angle of looking at this data that existed. Nevertheless, to establish my credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability of this data set, I relied on triangulation of the data, peer/advisor examination, and establishing a journal to exercise reflexivity.

Triangulation involves looking at the different data sources that contributes to our body of knowledge to obtain “mutual confirmation of data to ensure that all aspects of a phenomenon have been investigated” (Krefting, 1991, p. 177). This served to enhance the credibility, dependability and confirmability of the data. I did have multiple sources of data within the report, including accounts from various parties involved, including bishops, priests, victims, lawyers and police, to each other. When I looked at the data within the letters and observe the patterns, I had records of interactions between different sets of dyads. Having 68 documents in this set, I expected to have enough information on each dyad to be able to discover similarities that tie their stories together. This helped me determine with some degree of precision if there were, in fact, “core stories” reflected within the accounts that people of that particular dyad shared in those similar situations of dealing with child sexual abuse.

Being able to be reflexive is also important to my work with this data. As a therapist, whenever I meet with a client, I ought to examine what thoughts and feelings come up for me and how I am influencing the therapeutic process, so that I do not influence it in a way that may be intrusive, ineffective or harmful to the person I am serving. This does not always come easy to me, but it is something I continued to practice, especially as I worked with the data in this Grand Jury Report. The way I accomplished this was by including notes in the electronic versions of the texts of my reactions to the text.

Finally, I provided a “dense description” to allow the reader to judge for themselves whether they felt the similarities in the data were adequate to make the comparison and transfer the “core stories” that I sought to develop (Krefting, 1991).



Providing a dense description required me to elaborate on the background of those whom I wrote about (the priests, bishops, victims, and outside entities). I may not have had very much data about some of these people, especially because their identities were hidden. In addition, there may have been hundreds of actors in these narratives and it might not have been in the best interest of this thesis to elaborate on specific individuals within the report. Nevertheless, I provided descriptive summaries of what bound these groups of priests, bishops, victims, parents and outside entities together.

### **Reflexivity.**

As I shared previously, my background and biases certainly influenced the framework from which I coded, studied and analyzed the Grand Jury Report data. Before the Grand Jury Report was released and publicized, I had in mind that I would love to work with data from the Catholic Church regarding child sexual abuse within the church.

My background has a strong influence on this interest. I am a second-generation Indian-American and both my parents come from a strong Catholic lineage, from the state of Goa--a former Portuguese colony. I have several family members who joined the clergy, including a second cousin who is currently an archbishop in India. My Catholic background gives me somewhat of an insider's view into this data, given that I am familiar with the hierarchical structure, rituals, ceremonies and practices within the church, but also what it is like to have clergy that participate in family events. I have grown up in the Catholic Church my entire life, through the revelation of the abuse scandals, and observed how these crises were addressed (or not addressed) within the weekly service and the Archdiocese. My parents have invited priests to our home, and I

have maintained friendships with priests and seminarians, who I have built friendships with where debates about social issues were welcome.

The extent of my familiarity with the data was also limited. While many who have been affected by the abuse from priests in the report viewed and treated them as right next to God in reverence, growing up as an American millennial has put me in a generation that has generally brought priests down from the lofty pedestal, to the point where I am not afraid to treat them like respected peers and have a friendly debate. This bias prompted me to seek to understand how people affected by these abusive priests have been affected by the revelation of their once secretive behaviors, given their view of priests may be different than mine. It may be for this reason that I was not hesitant to do a study with data that uncovers a lot of dark secrets about incidents and practices within the Catholic Church that besmirched its name.

Growing up in a post-scandal revelation church, I grew up in an era where it was the norm in the Archdiocese of Washington to require all adults to complete background checks and fingerprinting before working with children. Even in the Archdiocese in the 1970's, the one case of child sexual abuse in my current parish was immediately reported to the police and the priest was arrested. I was not familiar with the culture of clergy successfully hiding child sexual abuse in my own life, but most Catholics are not either.

Seeing the need for healing in the Catholic Church was an influence in deciding to go to school for Couples and Family Therapy. I spent the past year-and-a-half as a Couple and Family Therapist Intern serving a socially, racially and economically diverse community. As a therapist, I was trained to help people in their healing process and help them navigate the different systemic issues in their lives. This often motivated me to look

for specific and practical implications in what I read and learn. Within this data set, the people involved in these cases are diverse in their own right, but many, if not all involved have a European-American background. As a minority who grew up in Montgomery County, MD--a relatively diverse location--I understand that there may be cultural blind spots I have in understanding Catholic culture in Pennsylvania, during the 1930's through the 1980's, influenced by various European cultures. On the other hand, as a minority, I have grown up alongside majority culture, having to straddle and understand multiple worlds.

As a therapist, I am a "mandated reporter" and trained to report any incident of child abuse to child protective services and/or the police. This seems not to be the training that the clergy or any other parties in these documents received. This legal requirement put me in the position to have to obey the law's moral standard blindly and reactively, instead of thinking more critically and proactively about what actually reduces child sexual abuse. In this study, these roles as a therapist, a Catholic, and a millennial made it important for me to be aware of and reflect on the influence of these roles.

## **Findings**

### **Emergent Themes**

Reading through all the letters and documentation presented in the Grand Jury Report, there were many expected themes that emerged and some surprising ones that were not reviewed in the literature. Some of the most expected themes in the literature were the use of religious language, the expression of priestly brotherhood, minimization, and deflecting responsibility. Some themes I did not expect to be as prevalent as they appeared were the themes of assuming responsibility, mercy, formality, and fear.

Most of the data gathered seemed to point towards trends that involved relationships between clergy members. This contrasts with the lack of data I was able to collect on the priests' interactions with victims, their families, and other external actors. Perhaps this reflects the lack of confrontation the families engaged in with clergy or a lack of documentation regarding those interactions. Regardless, I parsed out several emergent themes in the literature that point to processes revealing the underlying culture of the Catholic sex abuse in Pennsylvania.

### **Religious language.**

Religious language was unsurprisingly very common in the literature, as most of the authors and recipients of the letters considered themselves religious. Forty-seven percent of all the documents examined contained some sort of religious language, meaning they used a term or phrase that is more highly used in a religious population than in the general population--like "grace," "ministry" and "I will keep you in my prayers." In understanding those working in religious capacities, these were people that were raised in Catholic families, felt a "calling" by God to become a priest, and chose a profession that blurred the lines of their personal, professional and spiritual life. With this background, it was obvious that most of these writers expressed religious sentiments, spoke reflecting values important to Catholicism, referenced the Bible and theology, and used religious language as a form of cultural understanding between the author and recipient.

In coding for religious language, even short statements could express profound ideas. As an example, the Bishop Leroy Matthiesen of Amarillo stated, "Grace and peace!" in a letter to his fellow Bishop of Allentown. With this statement, Bishop

Matthiesen bestowed a blessing on the reader of “grace,” a term expressing God’s beneficence, and “peace,” a term recalling the Hebrew “shalom” of God’s intention of right-relationships. Something as simple as this greeting was not often initiated by a non-religious person or someone who did not have the cultural or religious knowledge to know the profoundness of this reminder and greeting.

On the other hand, religious language is a category broad enough that it can also feel dry and technical. In the case of Fr. Arthur Long, a fellow priest communicated to an inquiring Bishop about the fate of Fr. Long, responding, “In 1988 Father Long applied for laicization and was granted the dispensation.” This too was considered religious language given that laicization was not a word commonly used or understood by those outside of the Catholic clergy. As mentioned in the literature review, the term “laicization” refers to the severing of the legal bond between bishop and priest and removing a priest from his duties and responsibilities (Maida, 1992).

Still, this category of religious language is greater than technical terms and greetings but often communicated complex feelings, context and information. Regarding the abuse Fr. Long had admitted to, the parish priest wrote in a memo that,

In conversation, Father Long admitted to [victim] that he has had sexual relationships with four or five girls since he was stationed in Baltimore. Father long told [victim] “God wants us to express our love for each other in this [sexual] way.” When, in response, [victim] told him the Bible warns us that such conduct will be punished by God, Father Long said, “there is no hell.” Father Long admitted to [victim] that he had an affair with a woman.

This letter revealed Fr. Long's manipulative statements using religious language. Additionally, there were references to Catholic nuns, also called "sisters," and a religious retreat center, "Villa Sacred Heart," whose name referred to a Catholic "devotion to the Sacred Heart of Jesus." When the priest documented that Fr. Long stated, "God wants us to express our love for each other in this [sexual] way," he also exposed to the recipient that this was an errant "religious" statement that Fr. Long used to manipulate the young women and girls in his parish into fulfilling his sexual desires.

Thus, religious language reflected the richness of culture. Religious language was used to convey profound messages, to communicate legal technicalities and context and also to manipulate. This theme emerged as one of the contributing factors to an underlying process of "institutionalization," reflecting the institutional nature of the Catholic culture.

### **Formality.**

After analyzing these documents, I developed an axial code of "Formal Language" as I noticed the language used in the letters reflected a formality of language not typically used among colleagues. While "formality" is a subjective term, the qualities I looked for when coding for this were grammatically-correct sentence structures, using vocabulary above an eighth-grade level, using formal titles (such as "Mr." or "Father") before a name, and creative use of adjectives to describe situations. Thirty-six of the 68 documents were coded as using formal language. Throughout the documents, formality in the language used overlaid the entire process of communicating through written media about child sexual abuse. This was a code that was particularly prevalent when the author of the document was clergy, police, or lawyer--in some sort of official capacity. This

formality, whether or not it was intended, obscured information through the use of passive language, euphemisms and/or language that lacks detail regarding the abuse the priest actually committed. In the example of Father Robert Caparelli, a priest ordained in 1964, the letter from a parish priest who oversaw Caparelli to the Bishop of Scranton illustrates this:

Concerning the letter which is enclosed, as was sent to you by the parishioner, I have to say that it expresses the voice of many parishioners. I referred this matter to you at Thanksgiving-tide of last year, when I told you that I would try to solve this problem to relieve your Excellency of at least one of the many problems. This problem is too big for me. It has grown into something that is unbelievable.

This excerpt from Fr. Mark Mecca's letter represented the pattern of the use of formal language--using descriptive nouns and adjectives above an eighth-grade reading level, which has the effect of obscuring the serious actions the priest said he was unable to handle. Mecca opted to discuss the sexual abuse using vague terminology and passive language, terming it as "this problem" and "this matter" rather than mentioning the terms "sexual abuse" or describing the actions committed in more detail. This phenomenon similarly happened with others who were also operating in an official capacity. In his letter to Bishop McCormick of the Diocese of Scranton, a Catholic police officer describes his knowledge of the abuse of two boys in his community:

The reason I am writing this letter to you is in reference to an assistant in our parish, Reverend Robert Caparelli. It is a known fact that he has continued to the delinquency of 2 minor boys, ages 11 and 12, by

demoralizing them in a manner that is not natural for any human that has all his proper faculties. They are 2 brothers that were altar boys and the mother made them quit. The Father doesn't know about this incident and we must keep it a secret.

While his grammar was not perfect, the police officer attempted to use sophisticated language and mask the abuse with certain terms like “demoralizing them in a manner that is not natural” and that the priest had “continued to the delinquency” of these boys. He went at length to avoid any language that would explicitly reveal that this situation relates to sexual abuse, while insinuating it through his word choice, offering the Bishop the chance to follow up with him about particular details over the phone. In a way, the use of “talking around the problem” revealed a layer of both the institutionalization and intellectualization of hiding the sexual abuse. For one, all levels of the hierarchy had succumbed to this culture of avoiding to explicitly state that the priest's actions were sexual abuse or describe it with any detail. I was unable to determine the reason for the avoidance of explicitness, which may be due to a variety of reasons including legal liability, discomfort with addressing sexual sin, and/or addressing “shameful” issues among their “brothers.”

This theme of “formality” emerges as another contributing factor to an underlying process of “institutionalization,” reflecting how the understanding of the priesthood and interactions within and toward it reflect the institutional nature of the Catholic culture.

### **Deflecting responsibility.**

Deflecting responsibility was not a surprising concept or unheard of in the literature, media, or common knowledge of the Catholic sex abuse. In coding for this, I



made the assumption that it was a shared goal for those who knew about the child sexual abuse that has occurred, to prevent it. The ways those in power had passed on the responsibility of ensuring the abusive priest did not have the opportunity to repeat it was quite horrifying to read about because in most cases, priests went on to abuse more victims after they had been caught. This was clearly illustrated in the Grand Jury Report.

One particular example of this phenomenon was illustrated in the case of Fr. Edmond Parrakow. Fr. Parrakow began his ministry in New York where he was accused of sexually abusing a child at the high school he worked at. After this incident, the Archdiocese of New York sent Fr. Parrakow to New Mexico to attend an in-patient recovery program. After this time, the Bishop of New York inquired if Fr. Parrakow could transfer to the Diocese of Greenberg for a few months, to which Monsignor Thomas Klinzing of the Diocese of Greenburg agreed to do. In his letter to Monsignor Klinzing, Bishop Connare of New York mentioned, “there were no unusual psychological problems but that Father Parrakow needs time to sort out his problems.” This statement revealed how the institution failed to protect. The Bishop of New York misled Monsignor Klinzing into not realizing that he was taking in a priest with a history of child sexual abuse, deflecting the responsibility of communicating this crucial piece of information to Msgr. Klinzing. Perhaps Bishop Connare believed that the “psychological treatment” would remove further inclinations to abuse children, but whatever his reason, the failure to communicate this information had serious repercussions on his future victims.

With Msgr. Klinzing unaware of the child sexual abuse in Fr. Parrakow’s recent past, he did not have information to accept responsibility in protecting future victims

from abuse. In a response to the Director of Foundation House, under Servants of the Paraclete, the in-patient treatment facility Fr. Parrakow attended, Msgr. Klinzing responds to the Director's request,

However, the Bishop does not feel he can comply with your suggestion that Father Parrakow be assigned in a parish setting that does not have a school. The Diocese of Greensburg is made up of many parishes with between 600 and 900 families and these parishes usually have a small parochial school attached. The Parish school usually has under 200 students. The Bishop feels that in asking Father Parrakow to accept an assignment, he would have to place him in such a parish.

Without Msgr. Klinzing realizing it, he put Fr. Parrakow in a horrid position of having access to hundreds of children, motivated partly by all the needs of the diocese. While he did communicate his intention not to comply with the director's suggestion, he failed to take responsibility to look more deeply at why the director requested that Parrakow be assigned to a parish without a school. Obviously, Msgr. Klinzing was put in a terrible position, lacking information to make a thoughtful decision on how he assigned Fr. Parrakow, if he even would. The deflection of responsibility was not always this difficult to perceive clearly.

In the case of Fr. Ernest Paone, there were many people along the way who deflected the responsibility to address their suspicions of abuse. In a letter between Fr. Zubik and Bishop Wuerl of Pittsburgh, decades after the initial accusations of abuse, Fr. Zubik shed light on past deflection of responsibility that happened before Fr. Paone became a priest,

There is a great deal of correspondence in his file during his seminary days in the early '60s which raised questions about his physical and emotional health. Each time reports were given to Bishop Dearden by the psychologists examining Father Paone, he was advanced to the next stage toward ordination. Father Paone was ordained a priest for the Diocese of Pittsburgh by Bishop Dearden on May 25, 1957.

While there were no documents from Bishop Dearden, from Fr. Zubik's account, it seemed like Dearden did not deflect responsibility but dismissed it altogether, given the psychological reports he received. It was unknown what was contained in those reports, so I could not make a clear assessment of what, if anything, was dismissed. However, concern for Paone was serious enough that he was seeing psychologists for "physical health" issues, rather than a primary care doctor. The use of unclear language in this letter makes one pause for concern about what information the author was hiding. The effect of using unclear language also contributed to the deflection of responsibility because there was a lack of a cohesive narrative to hold people accountable for their words and actions.

On the other hand, there were some people within the sphere of the sexual abuse crises that were explicit about their intentions. While Paone was reported to the police, the District Attorney of Beaver County became involved in the case and contacted Bishop Vincent Leonard of the Diocese of Pittsburgh to inform him, "I have, in order to prevent unfavorable publicity, halted all investigations into similar incidents with other young boys."

As the District Attorney demonstrated, clergymen were not the only actors who deflected responsibility in protecting children. It was unclear why the District Attorney

specifically wanted to prevent “unfavorable publicity” but the result was that because Fr. Paone was not prosecuted, he went on to abuse many other children. In addition, there was no response from the Bishop or mention of his response included in these letters, but by inference, it seems that the Diocese did not counter this action since there were no further attempts on record to take any legal action against him. This too was a deflection of responsibility by the Diocese to relieve Fr. Paone from being held accountable by the law.

Further, not only was the District Attorney and the Diocese of Pittsburgh deflecting responsibility in protecting the children of Pennsylvania by protecting Fr. Paone, but his fellow priests were as well. In the aforementioned statement from Fr. Zubik to Bishop Wuerl, Zubik wrote about another letter in Paone’s file from the pastor of Saint Monica Parish, in which Fr. Edmund Sheety wrote to Bishop Wright,

Twice since his appointment I have found it necessary to report him to the Chancery for conduct degrading to the priesthood, scandalous to the parishioners and disobedient to me. I have interceded to prevent his being arrested; once for molesting young boys of the parish; again for the illegal use of guns with even younger parishioners.

While Fr. Sheety seemed to experience frustration with Fr. Paone’s lack of obedience to him, he also did not seem to hold him appropriately accountable for his horrific actions, having “interceded” to protect him from legal authorities. It was difficult to understand all the factors that went into Sheety going to such lengths to protect his fellow priest. This was another example of an authority figure failing to take responsibility to protect the children in their care.

Fr. Sheety did not completely deflect this responsibility to protect children in his care. At times, he attempted to take the situation into his own hands and deal with Paone and his addiction and consequences internally. While this was not the best thing for these children, it seems the intention of those in authority were to assume responsibility.

Nevertheless, deflecting responsibility appeared repeatedly throughout the text and was one of the contributing factors to an underlying process of “institutionalization,” reflecting the institutional nature of the Catholic culture through the structure of the hierarchy and how the culture was shaped, along with the themes of religious and formal language.

#### **Expression of priestly brotherhood.**

The expression of “priestly brotherhood” was another theme that was not a surprising emergence from the text. When looking at how culture of the priesthood was revealed through the text, I not only looked at the language used but also how it was used and how decisions were made and expressed because of the culture. While coding for “expression of priestly brotherhood,” documents concerning eight out of the 12 priests included this code. This was a subjective code, based on if I found the clerical writer of the letter to express collegiality or care towards the clergy recipient, and perhaps as a result, feel more forgiving towards the priest who committed the abuse and more willing to aid the priest in rehabilitation. Based on the excerpts, these men--even if they had rarely interacted--seemed to express something deeper than collegiality, possibly reflecting that they had made the life decision to enter the brotherhood of priests and thus, had become family. The qualities of care for each other, protectiveness, and forgiveness stood out as the qualities that characterize this code.

This code also reflected Catholic values of the priesthood, a “holy order,” being a sacrament, not a job. A sacrament in Catholicism, is an impartation of God’s grace towards those who receive it, for a particular purpose. The priesthood is a calling, a vocation that has been divinely appointed, so those who are initiated into it only leave when they have carefully considered the consequences for leaving this divine appointment. Another value reflected in the text was being part of a legacy and brotherhood, dating back to the time of Jesus, where brothers protected and looked out for each other. Of all the letters examined, none of them had noted an occurrence of clergy calling law enforcement on the abusive priest, although they were mandated to.

This sense of brotherhood and protection was reflected in the case of Fr. Michael Lawrence, as the Bishop of Allentown wrote to the Archbishop of Oregon City in 2014, he explained, “Having prayed over the matter, and having studied the brief of his advocate in the current assessment of the psychologist, I have concluded that it is best that the Reverend Michael Lawrence remain under this supervised way of life.” In this communication, while the Bishop decided to limit the priest’s duties, he did this with care. He seemed to have come to the decision to limit Fr. Lawrence’s interaction with others by placing him in a permanent residence, allowing him to live a life dedicated to “prayer and penance.” This provided him with protection from abusing others, from exposure to the public, from further accusations of abuse, and an internal support system to help his process of recovery. In a non-religious workplace, the abuser might have been dismissed or his character attacked, after admission of wrongdoing. Similarly, this expression of care and sympathy for priests was clearly expressed in the case of Fr. Thomas Skotek in a letter to the priest from the Bishop of Scranton when he empathized,

This is a very difficult time in your life, and I realize how upset you are. I too share your grief. How I wish it were not necessary to take this step. With the help of God, who never abandons us and who is always near when need Him, this too will pass away, and all will be able to pick up and go on living. Please be assured that I am most willing to do whatever I can to help.

The Bishop expressed empathy, consolation, hope for the future and willingness to “do whatever I can to help.” This was again, not typically something the average colleague might have expressed but something that reveals a deeper bond between these two people tied together by a common culture, profession, faith and calling. This bond seemed to influence the decisions the Bishop made in dealing with the situation of abuse—rather than turning the priest over to law enforcement, he sympathized and attempted to mitigate the negative repercussions the priest might have faced.

This sentiment is repeated in many other situations where priests had abused and their bishops communicated that, “I assure you we are delighted to be able to help in any way we can. I am sure your presence among us will 'be a real blessing.” in the case of Fr. Parrakow and in the case of Fr. Lawrence, “Both the vicar general and the chancellor have expressed real concern for me in this matter and conveyed to me your compassion as well. For this I am truly grateful.”

This theme of “brotherhood” emerged primarily as a contributing factor to an underlying process of “spiritualization,” reflecting deference to the institution of the priesthood and neglect for the physical needs of both the priests and the victims, but also

to “institutionalization,” which displayed the conflation of personal, professional and spiritual sentiments through the correspondence.

### **Minimization.**

When clergy experienced a bond and compassion for their fellow brothers, this often led them to distancing themselves from victims experiencing abuse at the hands of priests. While this may not be the only reason why clergy minimized the experiences of the victim in these letters, the ways they seemed to do so were through the use of euphemisms, masking language, and focusing on the needs of the priest, rather than the experience of the victim and their family. Throughout the primary documents in the Grand Jury Report, various terms had the effect of minimizing victims’ experiences. The sexual abuse that occurred had been described as: “this problem,” “acting too freely,” “something of a sticky situation,” “some very indecent behavior,” “an unfortunate incident,” “making physical contact,” “he touched [victim] twice on the genitals,” “this matter,” “homo-sexual acts,” “conduct degrading to the priesthood,” “misbehavior,” and finally, “past problems.” These descriptions of the sexual abuse often focused on the situation, or what the priest did, but only rarely documented empathy for the painful, humiliating and dark experiences and repercussions on the victims and their families.

In contrast, when the victims were given a voice by the authors of the letters, it was often in a way that diminishes their experience. In regard to the abuse caused by Fr. Lawrence in a letter to the Bishop, the parish priest characterizes the victim as “complain[ing] bitterly that someone as evil as Mike was now being honored by the church. There was no way to convince him that the renewal of the faculties was hardly an honor.” This description of “complaining” and inability “to convince [victim]” revealed



the alliances in the letter--of the author to the reader--in protecting the priest who had abused this victim. While this distance from the victim was clear and demonstrated a lack of empathy for the victim's experience, it also drew in the previous discussion about the "brotherhood" of priests.

Similarly, in a situation where a victim spoke to a Bishop about his abuse and the Bishop felt compelled to address the issue, the Bishop told the overseeing priest that "While this is not a new concern, I am prompted to express it anew at this time because an individual came forward recently and reported that he had had some difficulties with Father Graff in the past." It was clear that the victim placed some amount of trust in the Bishop to address the issue of Fr. Graff still being in active ministry even with his history of abuse. However, the Bishop described the abuse more tamely as "difficulties" -- sanitizing the horrors this victim had been through.

When victims' experiences were diminished and clergy lacked empathy for their experience and the repercussions on their lives, they may have expressed sentiments like Fr. David McAndrew, who stated,

I have no doubt that [victim] is telling the truth. I do not think she could bear to live with the thought that she falsely accused a priest or religious. She is a bit naïve and has suffered spiritual injury because of the experience she described to me. However, I do not feel she needs professional counseling. The process of healing has begun. She has ample opportunity to receive spiritual direction within the parish setting.

While Fr. McAndrew believed all that this victim had stated Fr. Arthur Long had done to her, he shared his opinion not about what he believed she needed in order to heal from the

abuse, but what he was willing to offer her to minimize cost to the church. If he stopped to empathize, he may have realized that she could have experienced traumatic, violating events in a church setting, and that she may have been uncomfortable receiving spiritual direction from those who were amicable with the priests, these factors could be barriers to healing.

This theme emerged as one of the contributing factors to an underlying process of “spiritualization,” revealing the pattern of lack of attention to the physical needs of priests and victims.

### **Mercy.**

Mercy is a core Catholic concept, reflecting the nature of God, of withholding of wrath or judgment, although it may be warranted. Mercy was not a theme explicitly coded for but as the data emerged, was reflected in several other codes. After examining the data, several child codes such as “attempting to hide information about abuse,” “superior sends abuser priest to therapy” (under assuming responsibility), “responsibilities of abuser priest limited” (under assuming responsibility), “priest moved to another parish,” and “superior allows priest to retire/move/resign” (both under deflecting responsibility, reflected this disposition of mercy.

Catholic theology codifies mercy in canon law, stating,

There is no one, however wicked and guilty, who may not confidently hope for forgiveness, provided his repentance is honest. Christ who died for all men desires that in his Church the gates of forgiveness should always be open to anyone who turns away from sin (Catholic Church, 982).

Everyone and everything can be forgiven, reflected in the sacraments of baptism and reconciliation, uniting Catholics to Christ as the ultimate giver of mercy. While the laity have been informed about this principle, the concept of radical forgiveness is assuredly studied, discussed and practiced by the clergy, as the intermediaries of Christ to his people. Radical forgiveness is an integral part of Catholic culture, spirituality and practice. In practice, while mercy may not be interpreted as the dismissal of clergy, it does involve a willingness to start afresh, which was what many of the overseeing priests did in handling the priests who abused, through sending them to therapy, reassigning them, and allowing them to retire.

Catholic theology points to God being both a God of mercy and justice, without sacrificing one for the other. Catholics have struggled with maintaining this balance and at times, have prioritized one over the other in some very public ways, that have led to destructive outcomes. The prime example of this is the Catholic Church's unwillingness to recompense all victims, while they absolved the priests who committed the abuse, in Ireland, Boston, and various other dioceses across the U.S. Many times, these two values of mercy and justice have been employed to publicly serve the needs of the people as Catholic clergy became activists for workers' rights, protecting refugees, and fighting for peace. At other times, especially when disconnected from the realities of the lives affected, it dismissed the needs of the people it served, prioritizing some needs over others. When some needs are prioritized over others--when priests place greater value on mercy and forgiving their fellow priests at the expense of bringing justice to the victims abused by the priests-- this detached spiritualization prevents the manifestation of a

complete Catholic spirituality and holistic handling of the situation. This was also reflected in the Grand Jury Report.

A prime example of this was the case of Fr. Thomas Skotek in a letter to the priest from the Bishop of Scranton, previously referenced in the section “Expression of priestly brotherhood.” In this letter, Bishop Timlin expressed deep empathy, sympathy, and willingness to assist, indicating his mercy on Fr. Skotek, as one of his subordinates. Within this letter, the codes of “attempting to hide information about abuse (action),” “superior sends abuser priest to therapy,” “responsibilities of abuser priest limited,” “priest moved to another parish,” and “superior allows priest to retire/move/resign” are evident. Bishop Timlin lavished mercy on this priest for his horrid acts, while evidently ignoring the need for justice for the victim(s) of the abuse.

This theme of “mercy” emerged as a contributing factor to an underlying process of “spiritualization,” reflecting important Catholic values and neglecting the physical needs of both the priests and the victims.

### **Assuming responsibility.**

Throughout the literature and what I have read on the news, I had not associated the actors in the Pennsylvania Catholic sexual abuse crisis or any other situation of Catholic clerical sexual abuse with assuming responsibility outside of attempting to reform how the church internally handles reports of sexual abuse. However, as I read these letters, it became apparent that the ways these clergymen assumed responsibility were often tentative and cautious of taking immediate action. These ways of assuming responsibility were also often mixed with deflecting responsibility, possibly because of experiencing fear, which was expressed in the documents. When coding for assuming

responsibility, I developed the following codes as part of the emergent process: “the speaker requests/increases communication,” “the speaker requests/receives opinion of another in guiding the abuser priest,” “the superior sends abuser priest to therapy,” “responsibilities of abuser priest limited,” “the speaker acknowledges the abuse” and, “the speaker urges action to be taken in addressing abuse.”

The most common ways the writer of each document assumed responsibility was by requesting increased communication from the recipient of the letter, providing the recipient with information that helped in managing the abuser priest, and the writer either requesting or receiving the information of another in guiding the abuser priest. I decided to consider these actions under “assuming responsibility” because it seemed that some clergy had heard about the abuse and then ignored it. Requesting information, support or guidance or providing it to someone who had the power to bring justice to the situation required effort and accepting at least the responsibility to provide or inquire and initiate a deeper look into the situation in order to possibly take steps towards reconciliation and healing. For example, in the example of Fr. Caparelli, his colleague and the priest who recommended him for the priesthood stated the following regarding an inquiry about potential abuse at the hands of Caparelli,

In other words, all that this gentleman writes is true.. but there is so much that is missing, and all very, very serious. Msgr. Mussari and I were in to talk to you, of different problems of course. (This he does not know of) I wanted to go over some of the things with Your Excellency. One of the topics would be that which I mentioned to your Excellency in the presence of Msgr. Timlin.

For Fr. Mecca to be willing to share this information with the Bishop showed the initiative to communicate with actors who had the ability to bring change and healing to this situation, even though those efforts might have been thwarted or failed to protect future victims and bring justice to those already hurt.

Assuming responsibility, however ineffectual that responsibility might have proven in bringing justice, was the parent code that appeared the most times in these documents--a total of 47 times, followed by deflecting responsibility, which appeared 36 times as a parent code. As mentioned earlier, these codes often appeared together in the same document or even the same sentence. In the same letter to the Bishop, Fr. Mecca expressed difficulty with dealing with the sexual abuse effectively but also diverted responsibility to the Bishop because he had no idea how to handle it,

I referred this matter to you at Thanksgiving-tide of last year, when I told you that I would try to solve this problem, to relieve your Excellency of at least one of the many problems. This problem is too big for me. It has grown into something that is unbelievable.

The feeling this excerpt communicated was a sense of overwhelm and feeling unprepared to address this tragedy of Fr. Caparelli abusing several male children with parents, the police and other clergy aware of the situation. Fr. Mecca assumed responsibility by communicating with his Bishop that he needed assistance in dealing with the situation but seemed to stop there and pass this on to the Bishop who unfortunately dealt with the priest by reassigning him to another parish.

This, however, was not always the case. In some letters, clergy assumed responsibility in a swift way, even if it did not address every need for justice and

reconciliation. Fr. Richard Zula was discovered to have been involved in a situation where he had provided alcohol and marijuana to teenagers and had oral sex, attempted anal sex, and used whips as part of the sexual abuse. In a meeting with Fr. Richard Zula, Father Ted Rutkowski, Secretary for Clergy and Pastoral Life, and Father Robert Guay's, handwritten notes from this meeting state,

- No public celebration of Mass
- No return to parish once out
- No communication with Douglas or family
- No communication with others involved
- Resignation from parish

These statements were straightforward and implied that there was immediate action being taken to address Fr. Zula's conduct, by people who had the power to implement these actions. Immediately, the Grand Jury's Report revealed that Fr. Zula was indeed removed from the parish and sent to "Institute of Living" in Hartford, Connecticut, a residential psychiatric facility, although it was unknown how they responded to the victim.

While "assuming responsibility" was one of the most prevalent codes in the document, the story was much more complex and the application of authority figures assuming responsibility was inconsistent. Often, assuming responsibility meant merely communicating with a direct supervisor about the abuse, but not actually using one's authority to prevent the continuation of abuse or bring healing to the victims. In the story of Zula, Fr. Ted Rutkowski who contributed to sending him to the psychiatric facility was also involved in bringing him back as a priest in another parish, where he continued to

abuse minors, and he was arrested later that year after his victim brought the issue directly to the Pennsylvania State Police.

This theme of “assuming responsibility” contributed to an underlying process of “spiritualization,” reflecting deference to the institution of the priesthood and inadequate provisions for the physical needs of both the priests and the victims. It also supported the process of “intellectualization,” or employing defense mechanisms to deal with the emotional stress and fear experienced.

### **Fear.**

Throughout the previous themes expressed in the Grand Jury Report, emotions came through obvious and sometimes subtle ways. Throughout the Grand Jury Report, the most obvious emotion that came through was fear. While emotions such as “anxious,” “threatened,” “overwhelmed,” “worried,” and “helpless” were also displayed, those emotions all pointed to a primary emotion of fear. Thus, while coding for emotions, I distinguished between the various secondary emotions and left them under a parent code of fear. There were a couple major themes concerning fear which stood out. The most repeated examples of fear were worry for the wellbeing of the priest who had abused, worry that the priest would continue to abuse, and masking language or euphemisms that hid explicit evidence of the reality of the abuse or the extent of it.

When thinking of a fear or threat, the principle that came to mind was “fight, flight or freeze,” the evolutionary self-protective responses. These helped frame how those who supported these priests responded. When corresponding about the different abuse cases, the men in the priesthood vouched for and protected their “brothers” who had been accused of abusing children in their care. At the same time, they revealed these



very relatable feelings of fear and worry for the wellbeing of these people they cared about and believed could recover from this pattern of abuse, without having to turn them over to law enforcement. Father David McAndrew of St. Joseph Church in Danville showed a level of transparency in revealing his internal worry as he expressed,

My real fear is that [victim] may reach the point where she will seek to embarrass all her “enemies” by one rash step. By exposing Father Long’s misdoings she would proceed in hurting him, the Sisters, and (especially) her parents whom she considers hypocrites...I do not like to play amateur psychiatrist, but these are my fears.

McAndrew clearly sympathized with Fr. Long and experiences fear for him in being hurt by the victim and her anger towards the harm he has done to her. His fear focused on her action of the victim “exposing” Fr. Long--hurting his reputation, his career, and causing scandal. It revealed the empathy he was able to show for his fellow brother and those who support him, while seemingly unable to empathize with the victim, who he was afraid would act in anger--an emotion he was afraid would promote harm. McAndrew “froze” in the face of this threat--waiting to see what move the victim would make while he expressed his concerns with Monsignor Hugh Overbaugh.

The worry about a priest continuing to abuse his victims was another common fear in the Grand Jury Report. Fear was clearly present with people who had experienced hurt and the consequences of sexual abuse by priests and were motivated to stop it. In a letter from a victim of Fr. Moslener, the victim attempted to tap into the emotions of the Bishop of Greenberg, in expressing his fear for future victims,

We know that Mr. Moslener was “moved” from parish to parish prior to his “unemployment” as a priest. It leaves me to question just how many children the Catholic faith is willing to use as human sacrifice. Mr. Moslener now resides in Pittsburgh enjoying his golden years unscathed. His name doesn’t appear on any sex offender registry. His victims continue to struggle to this day. I plan to check on his employment status to make sure he isn’t having any private “lunches” with young boys. [...] I will be checking back on the church website hoping not to see Mr. Moslener in any photos. Please pay particular attention to the photo including a young child. It disgusts me the most. I wonder who that little boy is and if he is okay. I would pray for him but sadly don’t really know if a God exists.

From the perspective of a victim who had grown up and realized the horrific abuse he went through, his empathy led him to the desire to protect those who may have had the potential to be sexually abused by Moslener. His fear seemed to be a “fight” reaction--wanting to initiate contact with the bishop, do his own investigation, expose Fr. Moslener in writing and pursue action. It also seemed that his fear was mixed with anger--anger at injustice that Moslener “got away” with abusing children, with the knowledge of adults who could have protected them. His fear was a substantiated fear that Moslener still had that same freedom to cause irreparable psychological, physical, sexual and spiritual harm to children as he wished.

It was not only victims that were afraid of the priest continuing to abuse. The clergy overseeing and interacting with these priests, at times, expressed this fear as well. In a letter written in 2006 by Bishop Kevin Rhodes of Harrisburg to Cardinal William Levada, in recounting the sexual abuse history of Fr. William Presley, he candidly expressed,

As long as Father William F. Presley remains in the clerical state, I harbor fear for the People of God within the Diocese of Harrisburg. I fear that his possession of the clerical state will allow him a means of continuing his pattern of carefully insinuating himself into the lives of others as a prelude to violence and sexual misconduct.

In 2006, Fr. Presley, who had been first noted to abuse children as early as 1971, was still in the priesthood. This fact seemed to cause Rhodes, the Bishop overseeing his jurisdiction, to fear Presley's influence over others, and presumably, fear the implications of keeping him in the priesthood, given the Boston sex abuse crisis that flooded headlines four years before. But in this excerpt, Rhodes expressed fear specifically for Presley's potential to harm others in his influence as a priest and trusted authority.

Fear took many different forms and one particular form that was apparent in reading these formal, written letters was "masking language and euphemisms" when discussing sexual abuse. In the literature review, I discussed shame in regard to culture and the importance of saving face in preserving the dignity of these priests. Using masking language allowed for the writer to hide information that they did not want to get into the hands of someone who might have been a threat. It also allowed them to hide information that caused discomfort to express or share information with the reader so that

it did not cause them more discomfort or shame. Throughout the text, there were plenty of examples where this was expressed. Clergy, parents and even victims had described the sexual abuse as, “demoralizing them,” “the problem,” “drastic change in behavior,” “demonstrated on the boy,” and “misbehavior.” These terms had the effect of blurring what actually happened and minimizing the behavior of the priest.

In one particular example involving Fr. Lawrence, Fr. Loeper documented information, from the father of the boys that had been abused, in an internal memo by describing Lawrence’s behavior as, “Father Lawrence always associates with families who have boys and that he is always making physical contact with the altar boys.” While the memo went on to detail the account, this particular phrasing attributed to the victim’s parent revealed language that masked and minimized the true weight of the abuse.

Many of the elements of speech that clergy seemed to employ in these papers lent themselves to a minimization of the true weight of reality. The emotion of fear was also revealed in the use of passive language--an attempt to try to release those discussed of responsibility-- in grasping at control in the situation. This was demonstrated in the letter from Bishop Donald Trautman of Erie to the priest who had abused, Fr. Thomas Smith,

The limitations placed on your ministry, as mutually understood, are to be observed with absolute Fidelity. This assignment will continue as long as it is mutually agreeable and productive, as evaluated by yourself, myself and the pastor, Very Reverend Richard D Lynch, BF.

Nowhere in Bishop Trautman's letter did it mention the cause of imposing the limitations on Fr. Smith. This led to the thought that fear of being explicit, for whatever reason, influenced the language used in this letter.

This theme of "fear" contributed to an underlying process of "intellectualization," or employing defense mechanisms to deal with the emotional stress and fear experienced, as evidenced by the examples above.

Putting this all together, religious language, expression of priestly brotherhood, minimization, deflecting and assuming responsibility, fear and formal language were the codes that appeared repeatedly throughout the text. Some of these codes seemed to emerge from the culture of the Catholic Church, which made the way in which the speakers reacted to and handled abuse unique to it. "Catholic values" had shaped the framework in a way that contributed to the perpetuation of unchecked sexual abuse in this institution.

### **Uncovering a Framework of Abuse**

All these themes, derived from the communication between the various actors involved, pointed to a particular framework of the beliefs, feelings, values and behaviors that contributed to the Pennsylvania Catholic Sex Abuse during the 1930s to the 2010s. The themes of religiosity, religious brotherhood, minimization, deflecting and accepting responsibility, forgiveness, fear and formality were patterns that connected and interacted with each other in ways that were unique to the Pennsylvanian Catholic sexual abuse crisis but also in ways that were reminiscent of non-religious sexual abuse patterns. In my assessment of these themes, although they did not fit as neatly into boxes as I demonstrated, they could be conceptualized into three cultural processes that aided the

speakers, particularly clergy, in coping with the difficult reality, fear, and dissonance they experienced with these situations of child sexual abuse. The cultural tendencies of spiritualization, intellectualization and institutionalization, shaped the framework of how those in power addressed the abuse. The codes from the Grand Jury Report seem to support these three themes forming the framework for the particular abuse occurring in this setting.

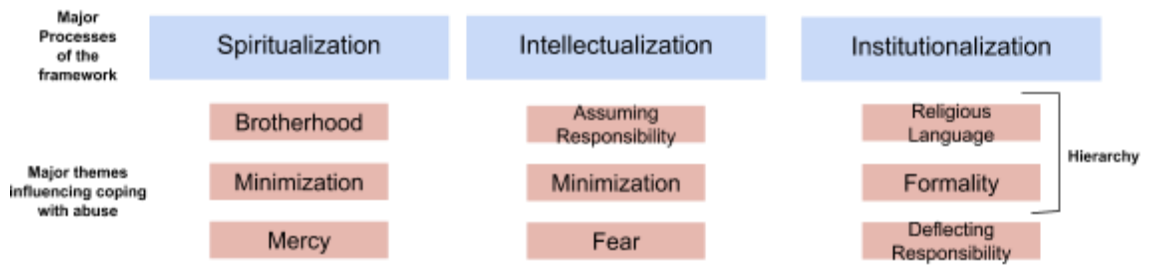


Figure 2. Cultural Framework of the PA Catholic Sex Abuse Handling

### **Spiritualization.**

At its core, the Catholic Church was meant to be a spiritual institution, guiding believers in the journey of spiritual growth to be closer to God. Spiritualization is simply the act of seeing a particular action through the lens of the divine and religion. In this way, it is also a cultural experience--filled with the values of the culture in how it reflects its belief of the nature of God.

Spiritualization is not inherently a positive or negative action. However, the danger in spiritualizing is when one only takes into consideration spiritual matters and not physical needs. This means that when those with responsibility in the situation primarily consider the spiritual needs of those involved, rather than the physical needs (to receive therapy, not to have contact with children, to provide reparations), then their spirituality is lacking.

Examples of spiritualization in the Grand Jury Report were scattered throughout the document--from praying for priests to recover, to offering radical forgiveness to the priests for their heinous acts, to the subtle but substantial impact the belief that the divine appointment of the priesthood had on the situation in allowing priests who have abused to retain their authority.

Spiritualization influenced how clergy reacted to and handled the child sexual abuse in the Grand Jury Report. Catholic theology and practice have helped believers understand one's relationship with God and the purposes one was created for. This in turn shaped the values and culture of its leaders and followers. Outside of the church walls, adherents who carried those values and framework shaped the world around them through that understanding. The top codes that stood out as fitting this process of spiritualization were "expression of priestly brotherhood," "assuming responsibility" (particularly the child code of "superior sends abuser priest to therapy"), deflecting responsibility (particularly the child codes of "priest moved to another parish" and "priest receives responsibilities/permissions that dismiss his previous abuse") and "minimization." These codes interacted throughout the text and came together to reflect an empathetic brotherhood, minimization, mercy. They also reflected an inadequate response to the priest and/or victim's physical needs or reflect an embodying of spiritual values, while neglecting justice.

This interaction was demonstrated in the 1995 correspondence from Bishop Nicholas Dattilo of the Diocese of Harrisburg to Father Paul Helwig about Fr. Arthur Long, a Jesuit priest who had abused many high school aged girls,

In 1988 Father Long applied for laicization and was granted the dispensation; however, he refused to sign the necessary papers and eventually was reassigned by the Society's Superior. When Father Glynn, the present Superior, became aware of Father Long's history, he removed him from ministry and refused to give him an assignment. He went to Guesthouse for 5 months and St. Luke Institute for 6 months more.

In this excerpt, the themes of brotherhood, minimization and mercy all appeared in the text. In 1988, the mandated reporter law was in effect and required all who came into contact with children, as part of their profession, to report when they had reason to believe, on the basis of their training and experience, that a child was being abused (Brown III & Gallagher, 2014). While Long was actually supervised under his religious order, the Maryland Province Society of Jesus, he was assigned to ministry in the Diocese of Harrisburg. There are no records of either of these two entities reporting child abuse against Fr. Long, only sending him to therapy. This act of sending the priest to therapy reflected Long's superiors' efforts to rehabilitate him and protect him and others. In this sense, they do assume some responsibility, yet it is not enough. The mention of him being ushered back into the priesthood because he refused to sign the necessary documents was a stupefying moment of deflecting responsibility. The letter continues,

When he came out in 1991-92 Cardinal Keeler granted him permission to work in the Archdiocese of Baltimore. Shortly after his assignment reports were again received of inappropriate behavior on his part. He said he was going on vacation and never returned to his assignment or community.



Long was allowed back into ministry after abusing dozens of girls and receiving less than a year of therapy. Along the way, those overseeing Fr. Long failed to consider that his actions of abuse were an addiction and he could not or would not stop victimizing these high school girls. While it was not stated explicitly, Long's superior's actions indicated mercy and brotherhood, protecting him on some level from legal involvement. In addition, while they attempted to take steps to rehabilitate him, this did not account for Long's need to be removed from any contact with teenage girls to protect himself and them. This process of spiritualization explains that those overseeing Long failed to consider his needs of isolation from young women and the women's needs of therapy and other forms of reparations.

### **Intellectualization.**

The emotional life of the writers was something that had shown a glimpse into how they navigated the consequences of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. It was clear that throughout the letters, the most prominent emotion being displayed was fear, appearing in 25 of all the documents reviewed. Many of the different themes and codes were associated with fear. In particular, themes of worry of the priest's well-being and fear of others knowing about the abuse were the most prominent among the "fear" codes. In the Grand Jury Report, fear often accompanied minimization— half of the documents expressing minimization, also expressed the emotion of fear. In addition, the code of fear appeared in about half of the documents with the code of assuming responsibility or the code of deflecting responsibility. When the code of "masking language and euphemisms" was present in the correspondence, fear was expressed in almost every one, while documents with the code of "attempting to hide information about abuse" express fear half of the time. These codes all led to a pattern of "intellectualization."

The term intellectualization reflects a desire to protect oneself from internal and/or unconscious conflict one is experiencing due to its symptoms of emotional stress. Intellectualization was a defense mechanism employed to guard against this distress, where thinking was used to avoid feeling. This psychological phenomenon seemed to be tied to the fear and stress the clergy had experienced--activating emotional fight, flight and freeze reactions --to avoid emotions of fear, sadness, and distrust that bring discomfort. Given an understanding of the cultural values and the daunting responsibilities bishops had in dealing with how to address child sexual abuse with no formal framework, it is understandable that taking responsibility to care for those affected by the sex abuse crises could have been an overwhelming and discomforting task, activating these stress responses. Thus, the way the writers exhibited this stress was through intellectualizing, by minimizing the seriousness of the abuse and through “assuming responsibility” by gathering or providing information (but not necessarily taking effective action).

As mentioned earlier, intellectualization removed the person bearing responsibility from dealing emotionally with the stressful event, to reduce anxiety. With this understanding, the intertwining of these different coping mechanisms through various examples in the Grand Jury Report became clear. In the case of Fr. Caparelli, Bishop Timlin of Scranton personally wrote to Judge Harold Thomson in 1993, regarding the sentencing of Fr. Caparelli,

I write now to assure you that I am willing to make arrangements for Father Caparelli to be transferred from Lycoming County Prison to a

health care institution approved by you if, indeed, you think this would be feasible and advisable.

Such an arrangement would be a great financial savings for the State Government and it would mean that Father Caparelli would be able to continue his therapy. He would also be able to receive the medical care he very much needs, and he definitely would not be a threat to anyone while he is under the supervision of the authorities in the health care institution.

Although it was indeterminate from the text if the author had an unspoken fear, it was clear what Bishop Timlin was requesting. As someone who had a vested interest in Fr. Caparelli as a subordinate and a brother, Bishop Timlin seemed to intellectualize in two ways. First, he minimized the seriousness of the crime by asking for a reduced sentence compared to others who had committed the same crimes might have received. He requested Fr. Caparelli to be transferred from the prison to a religious psychological rehabilitation facility. Second, he “assumed responsibility” of the situation by rationalizing to the judge why Fr. Caparelli should have been in a less restrictive setting, receiving therapy. Bishop Timlin’s request seemed kind and generous to Fr. Caparelli, keeping his well-being in mind. It also left room for mismanagement, seeing as many of the priests in this report had been sent to the St. Luke Institute or Servants of the Paraclete, and had escaped the oversight of those responsible for their care.

Four years earlier, a similar minimization and rationalization occurred with this letter from Bishop Timlin to Cardinal Luigi Dadaglio, regarding Fr. Thomas Skotek’s actions of impregnating a minor and facilitating her abortion,

It has come to my attention that a priest of this diocese has been rendered irregular as a result of having assisted in the procurement of a completed abortion. Conscious as I am of the severity of the crime he admits to, I nevertheless judge him worthy of consideration for a dispensation from this irregularity.

Upon learning of this priest's action, I removed him from the parish where he had been ministering as pastor and sent him for psychological evaluation. The evaluation concluded that while this priest acted in a most irresponsible fashion, they did not find evidence of any emotional or psychological dysfunctions indicating that he would actively seek any future sexual liaisons or again commit the crime for which he is guilty.

This letter to the Cardinal begins with incomplete information. Bishop Timlin informed the cardinal of an abortion, but not the fact that Skotek preyed on a minor struggling with her faith, impregnated her, hid this from others, and then secured an abortion for her. No words were used to humanize the child that was abused, essentially minimizing the abuse she endured. Bishop Timlin continued in justifying his actions--removing Skotek from ministry and sending him to a religious psychological rehabilitation facility, where his evaluation seemed to clear his name from the potential to abuse again.

Timlin continues,

I am firmly, convinced of the priest's sincere repentance and his ability to successfully wage the struggle against any future sexual temptations. I also do not believe, judging from the intense sorrow and sincere

contrition, that he ever again would assist in the procurement of an abortion for anyone.

Although I cannot absolutely give assurance that this priest's criminal action will never become public, I do not foresee that such would likely be the case.

This priest is currently residing in a parish quite far from the town where the crime was committed. He is awaiting a response to this request for a dispensation.

It is my sincere hope that a favorable response to this request will be forthcoming. I believe that such a response will be to the spiritual benefit of the priest involved, as well as to the benefit of the people of this diocese who need the gifts he shares in priestly ministry.

Timlin continued to rationalize and plead his case for why Skotek should receive a “dispensation,” exempting him from being bound by the obligations of canon law, due to this unusual circumstance. He completed his letter without mention of the child sexually abused, he based his judgment of the situation on his assessment of the sorrow Skotek experienced, he explained why he believed information about the abuse would not become public, and he rationalized that this dispensation was needed to enable Skotek to continue his ministry. While there was no mention of the emotion Timlin was experiencing, he seemed concerned for Skotek’s future and wellbeing--possibly revealing an underlying fear for his brother. However, Timlin seemed to be focused on problem solving his way into getting Skotek back into ministry. He showed little regard for the

injustice Skotek had created or any sort of empathy or regard for the girl who was abused.

In many examples of the handling of the abuse, the correspondents responded through approaches of problem-solving the issue or rationalizing priests' actions, which resulted in minimizing the experiences of the victims, hiding information about the abuse, and moving priests to other parishes or allowing them to retire.

### **Institutionalization.**

Just as the essence of the Catholic Church is spiritual, it is also definitively an institution. This part of the Church's nature had shaped the response of individual bishops and priests to the abuse but also, more broadly, its systemic patterns. What seemed to shape the conversation around the influence of the institution on those represented in the Grand Jury Report was the religious language and formality, and deflection of responsibility within the Catholic Church.

The culture of the Catholic Church has developed over millennia and continues to shift over time. During the decade of most of the accounts of the abuse in the 1960's, Pope John Paul II initiated the Second Vatican Council, shifting the culture of the Catholic Church to focus more on its accessibility to the laity and response to cultural issues of the time. Yet, the Church also remained the same. Parish priests continued to be educated in the doctrine of the faith, live in community together and create a shared culture, bearing the likeness of a family. They also continued to develop identities in which one needed integrate the personal, professional and spiritual.

This all provided a basis for this institutionalized culture, which bore the marks of balancing the professional and spiritual. Throughout the Grand Jury's primary

documents, religious language was a major common factor, as the worldviews these priests held were influenced by their faith and religion. One prime example of this was a letter from Bishop Timlin to Fr. Thomas Skotek discussing his resignation after he had sexually abused a girl,

This is a very difficult time in your life, and I realize how upset you are. I too share your grief. How I wish it were not necessary to take this step. With the help of God, who never abandons us and who is always near when need Him, this too will pass away, and all will be able to pick up and go on living. Please be assured that I am most willing to do whatever I can to help.

The language used in this letter was personal, pastoral, and also contained a level of formality not usually used among colleagues. It did not cast blame or condemnation on the priest, offering forgiveness and recalling the nature of God. It reflected both the personal feelings of the Bishop and spiritual values of mercy and compassion. The empathy that this Bishop expressed for this priest under his purview was evident, reflecting this priestly brotherhood.

The religious language and formality in the letters reflected the hierarchy of the Catholic Church, another vital part of the structure that helped explain the process of institutionalization and how it contributed to the handling of the Pennsylvania sexual abuse crisis. Throughout the Report, those in positions of responsibility often deflected responsibility to another in addressing the abuse or dismissed the responsibility altogether. The hierarchical structure reflected in this letter to Fr. Skotek seemed to reflect who got cared for because unfortunately this empathy was not expressed to all

those hurt by the priest's actions. There were no details about the victim of the abuse--not her name, her age, the extent of the abuse or any indication of empathy for this girl. She was the last priority, if one at all. The responsibility to care for her needs was not reflected in any of the documents provided in the Grand Jury Report but in the letters available, she seemed to have been forgotten.

Hierarchy and deflecting responsibility also intersected in many cases, including that of Fr. Thomas Smith. According to the Grand Jury Report, Fr. Smith was recorded as having abused at least 15 boys from 1984 to 1987. In 1990, Bishop Donald Trautman of the diocese of Erie described his interactions with Fr. Smith regarding the abuse:

I found him to be a person of candor and sincerity. I commended him for the progress he has made during the past two and one-half years in controlling his addiction [...] In reference to the future, I told him that I would prefer that he would wait another year and one-half which would mark the end of his Aftercare program before he applied for a new assignment.

This communication reflected this familiar pattern of showing mercy to the priest, inadequately addressing the pain of the victims, if at all, and deflecting the responsibility of taking appropriate actions. The actions Bishop Trautman did take in supervising Smith was to delegate this responsibility to Father Glenn Whitman, instead of removing Smith from the priesthood permanently, after his repeated actions of abuse against children, in multiple settings, after having attended psychological therapy multiple times. This did not reflect sound judgment but severe rationalization and misunderstanding of the "addiction."



In addition to the deflection of responsibility and culture reflected in the religious language used, formality and formal language were part of this “high-church” culture. Priests received extensive education and training, focusing on religion and theology, and were trained in this formal, reverent style of worship. This aspect of the culture was infused in the correspondence between clergy. Formality tied together and influenced so many aspects of culture, including the strength of the hierarchy, the religious practices and also the cautious word choice clergy used to speak about the abuse. Formality often invited pretenses of superiority into the interactions, which influenced the responses of the recipients. The letter from Bishop Timlin to Fr. Skotek was encased in formal language, crafted to reflect the professional nature of this relationship as well as the personal and spiritual. It reflected the fact that priests had many roles including being spiritual authority figures, colleagues and also brothers. When formality was introduced into the writing, there was a sense of hierarchy created between the writer and recipient of the letter, and often, emotions were obscured. This letter reflected the authority the bishop had in the situation to make a decision about the fate of Fr. Smith, although a poor choice. In communicating this information to Fr. Whitman, Trautman asserted his ability to make a guiding decision for this priest in not allowing him to face the legal system, choosing Whitman to oversee him, and creating a pathway for him to reenter the priesthood about a year and a half later. This formality lent itself to allowing bishops to be unquestioned in their poor decision-making. In several letters, as members who were not clergymen wrote to priests and bishops, there was a level of deference that had allowed the bishops to be released from the obligation to pursue legal action against the priests.

As a result of the extent of this institutionalization, hundreds (if not thousands) of children were sexually abused by priests listed in the Grand Jury Report, without appropriate action taken towards the priest. Some of these priests are still living and working within their communities, without having experienced any legal consequences. This legacy of institutionalization had caused damaging repercussions continuing decades later as the laity continued to lose hope in the Church's ability to protect and serve them with integrity.

### **Relationships between themes.**

Throughout the original documents included in the Grand Jury Report and in the quotations and samples included in this thesis, it became more apparent that these codes of religious language, expressions of priestly brotherhood, minimization, fear, formal language, deflecting responsibility and assuming responsibility interact and overlap with each other, reflecting these abstract processes of spiritualization, intellectualization and institutionalization. After reading these primary documents multiple times, looking closely at each one, it became clear that these themes and processes came together to form the framework Church leadership shared in mishandling the sexual abuse cases reflected in the Grand Jury documents.

These processes of spiritualization, intellectualization and institutionalization reinforced each other in a framework that shaped the correspondences and the reactions of those responsible for the abuse. The tendency to protect the institution and those higher up in the hierarchy over the people served, especially the vulnerable, was repeated over and over in these documents. This tendency was often accompanied by a lack of attention and empathy for the victims, and a lack of paying attention to the physical needs

of the priests (to be restricted from having contact with children) and victims (to receive reparations for the abuse), tying together the rationalization, intellectualization, and spiritualization that those responsible for bringing justice internalized.

## Discussion

### Summary of findings

At the onset of my research regarding the narratives contained in Pennsylvania's Grand Jury Report about child sexual abuse I sought to understand the following:

- What types of clerical conduct evidenced in letters to clergy contributed to perpetuate child sexual abuse?
- How did clergy perpetuate child sexual abuse through the beliefs, behaviors, and thoughts displayed in the letters?
- How did the cultural context of Church institutional norms, language, and laws perpetuate CSA?
- How did the hierarchical system respond to the perpetuation of the abuse?

The dataset of correspondence provided information to seek out answers to all those questions.

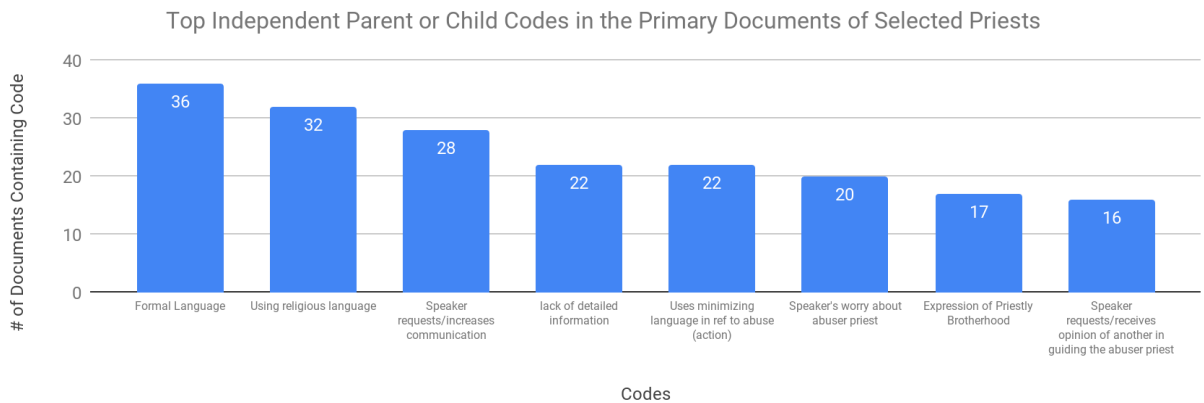


Figure 3. Chart of Top Independent Parent or Child Codes in the Primary Documents of Selected Priests

In answering the first of my questions, clerical conduct refers to actions taken by them. When looking at the top codes, we see that clergy used formal and religious language that provided incomplete and/or minimizing information about the priests' conduct, and they often deferred to someone else's judgment to guide the actions taken after an allegation of abuse. Not included in this list but of significance, were those in authority repeatedly limiting the responsibilities of the priest, sending him to therapy for brief periods of time, and moving him to another parish. The actions of those responsible for the priests seemed to be inadequate and inappropriate responses to the various occurrences of abuse – the response of simply moving an abusing priest to another priest opened the door for even more abuses.

The second question relates to the first but expands its scope, examining not only the behaviors but the beliefs and feelings that came across in the correspondence, and the interaction between them. The feelings that I was able to identify were primarily fear and trust. These two feelings, while seemingly contrary, often worked with each other to perpetuate the abuse. Within the data, those corresponding most often felt fear in the form of worry about the abusive priests and through using euphemisms and masking language. This fear seemed to justify moving the abusive priests out of their assigned roles, whether to therapy or to a new assignment. In addition, one safe space for these priests were their fellow priests. The feeling of trust expressed among them was displayed through protecting one another from people and institutions outside of this "brotherhood," expressing great empathy towards the priests who had abused and problem-solving to minimize the negative impact on the priests.

I combined the various categories of thoughts, feelings, behaviors and styles of expression repeated within the set of documents to create three sets of processes in the framework of abuse. The codes of “expression of priestly brotherhood,” “minimization,” and “assuming responsibility” led to the understanding that the writers of these documents, who were primarily clergy, empathized and cared deeply for the spiritual well-being of their fellow priests. They generously offered forgiveness to the abuser priests and protected the institution of the priesthood, with limited empathy expressed for the physical needs of the priests and victims. With this understanding, those codes were integrated into the process of “spiritualization.”

The codes “assuming responsibility” (particularly the child codes of “speaker requests/receives opinion of another in guiding the abuser priest” and “speaker requests/receives an increase of information”) and “fear” led to the understanding that an underlying motive for those responsible in dealing with the child sexual abuse with these priests was to avoid the fear and discomfort it caused. They avoided these feelings by taking certain actions such as: moving priests to different parishes, moving priests to religious psychological therapy centers to receive treatment, and convincing themselves that they could solve the “problem” of the addiction through their own efforts. These codes were combined to create a process of “intellectualization.”

Finally, the codes of “religious language,” “deflection of responsibility,” and “formal language” led me to the understanding that there was a symbiotic relationship between the institutional nature and culture of the Catholic Church--both contributed to the other--in empowering bishops, in particular, to make decisions that were not in the best interests of the laity. These codes were combined to create a process of

“institutionalization.” These themes clearly do not fit neatly into these processes but overlap and interact with each other with complexity in a way that I would like to explore further in the future. But in order to focus the data, I limited the complexity by choosing the top codes that appeared in the text.

These findings led to the notion that while these processes did not dictate how clergy who bore responsibility for the abusive priests had conducted themselves in every single case, these processes of spiritualization, intellectualization and institutionalization were part of the underlying cultural context of Church institutional norms, language and laws that offered ways to actively and passively respond to these allegations of child sexual abuse. This framework was part of allowing the Church to perpetuate child sexual abuse within the institution.

The last question I explored was, “How did the hierarchical system respond to the perpetuation of the abuse?” This question was essentially answered by the answer of the former. However, in order to comprehend the answer, understanding the culture was crucial to put this in context. The Catholic Church, one of the most powerful institutions in the world, with billions of followers, remains a powerful local force in many communities of the United States. Bishops had wide latitude and power to make some grossly uninformed decisions. Busy dioceses were unable to keep up with the administration of overseeing these abusive priests, who fell out of the oversight of their superiors, and continued to abuse more children. In addition, there was not a culture of reporting abuse. In 1963, Pennsylvania passed its first mandatory law requiring “physicians and other medical personnel to report any case of child injury which they

believed to have been caused by physical abuse” (Brown III & Gallagher, 2015), but had no such requirement for clergy then.

While clergy did not report most of these cases to legal authorities, when the abuse was reported, the letters reveal that in most cases, the police did not pursue further action but left it to the Bishop to deal with internally, as in the case of Fr. Caparelli and Fr. Paone. In these areas of Pennsylvania, it appears that the Catholic Church was a more influential institution than the local law enforcement and many people, including the parents of the children abused, placed trust in the Church to address the serial abuse, which it failed to live up to. This is to be expected since child protection laws had started to be enacted in 1963 and there was no standard to handling abuse (Brown III & Gallagher, 2015). Understanding this context gives a deeper understanding of the pressure (or lack of) put on the clerical officials in responding to the abuse. Amidst this pressure and child sexual abuse accusations, the church hierarchy worked to maintain autonomy, reflected in keeping this information highly protected from outsiders. Pastors responsible for parish priests who had abused often deferred to their bishops in addressing the actions of the priest and in many anecdotes throughout the text, it seems that Bishops lacked the knowledge to adequately and appropriately address the priest, or simply chose not to for various reasons. The hierarchical system still does not have methodical policies to address cases of abuse. The various dioceses continue to operate as independent entities, creating their own specialized policies so that one state might have a different set of procedures than another when an allegation of child sexual abuse is brought up.

## **Limitations**

This thesis did not provide a full accounting of the reality of what happened individually or collectively in the entirety of sexual abuse in Pennsylvania during the 1930s-2010. However, it may clarify the patterns that were contained in the letters and communications of the Grand Jury Report over the course of this time. There were several limitations relating to the documents I had access to, my personal limitations, and the methods I used to obtain the information.

My personal limitations are many, as I recalled in the Reflexivity section. My personal experience, knowledge of the context and culture, location, and other things have limited me to entering into a fuller knowledge of the experience of all those mentioned in the Grand Jury Report.

In reference to the Grand Jury Report, the primary documents that the Grand Jury had selected to include in its collection of correspondence were a limiting factor. There were 271 members of the clergy in Pennsylvania noted to have been accused of sexual abuse. In the Grand Jury Report, only a fraction of these priests was chosen to receive a mention in the report and only 12 of these priests had more than three primary documents of substance to, from or about them relating to an incident of child sexual abuse. This last part was a limitation I created to be able to use data of better quality, allowing me to track multiple interactions and relationships. This lack of data was a key reason why I was not able to answer the latter two of my research questions.

My thesis was limited to discussing Pennsylvanian Catholic clerical sex abuse because my access to the correspondence collected by dioceses was limited to one set of dioceses in this jurisdiction. Obtaining data regarding sexual abuse in the Catholic



Church were extremely rare to come across or gain access to. While I am grateful for access to this information, I hope that other dioceses will give access to a third party to review their handling of child abuse and take similar steps to make their data public.

Limitations of obtaining data were that these were historical documents. In many qualitative studies, researchers are able to interact or observe their subjects directly. Using historical, archival data limited my ability to thoroughly understand the data from those involved in these situations, because of lack of access to those involved, the bias of the Grand Jury Report contextual information, and from reading through my own contextual lens.

Research limitations included a lack of access to research regarding child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church due to inaccessibility and lack of data around child sexual abuse, including ephebophilia, the Catholic Church and priests involved in child sexual abuse.

## **Applications**

### **Response to the Framework.**

After developing this framework and reflecting on the human tendency to avoid discomfort, rationalize behavior, become overwhelmed with distressing information and make uninformed decisions, it gave me the sense that with any institution, abuse can be easy to hide with a structure and individuals unprepared or unwilling to deal with it appropriately. Examining these processes of spiritualization, intellectualization and institutionalization, built up from these themes and tendencies, allowed me to brainstorm what counters to this behavior could be for the Church and similar institutions.

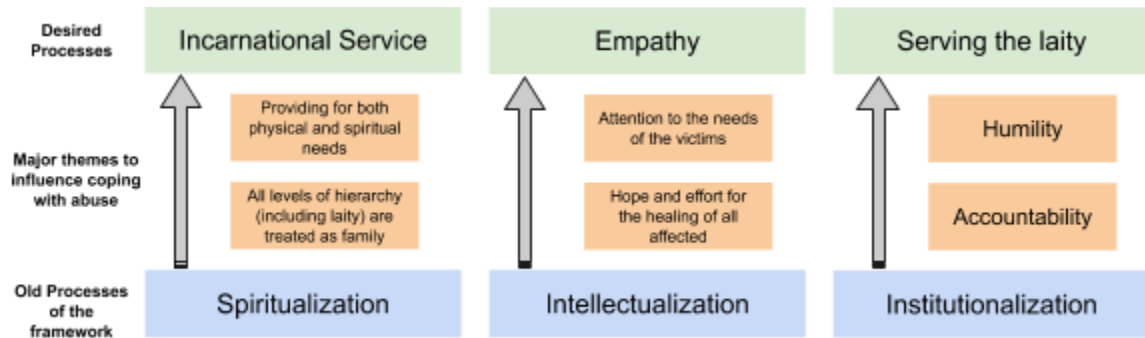


Figure 4. Potential Cultural Framework for PA Catholic Sex Abuse Handling

### **Incarnation.**

The tendency to spiritualize allows for the ability to cognitively split the needs of the spirit and the needs of the mind and body, favoring the intangible mercy over the more visible justice. If clergy were able to cognitively integrate them all and look at each person’s needs--the priest’s and the victim’s-- in the situation holistically, I hypothesize that this would assist in the dismantling of this framework of abuse. The model to implement this among the religious is not far at all. Throughout the ministry of Jesus, many of his recorded actions were done with a healing of both a physical and spiritual component: healing the bleeding woman (Luke 8:43–48), the feedings of the multitudes (Matthew 14:13-21, Matthew 15:32-39), and raising Lazarus from the dead (John 11:1–44) are just a few examples. Jesus, being the model for all priests in their ministries, is something that is a natural for priests to connect with. The religious term for the deity of Jesus becoming human, embodying the physical experience on Earth, is “incarnation.”

Incarnation is defined as “the embodiment of a [...] spirit in some earthly form” (Merriam-Webster, n.d.). I will use the term “incarnational service” to refer to addressing physical, psychosocial and spiritual needs, together. In moving forward, as many within the clerical hierarchy have been made aware of, it is important to consider the priest’s

physical, communal, psychological and spiritual needs, as well as those of the victim, allowing clergy to integrate their mercy with justice for all involved.

There are many applications, which extend beyond the scope of this paper. However, one example might be: when a priest is accused of sexually abusing a child, the most important thing a superior can do to protect both the priest and the victim is to ensure that this priest does not have access to children immediately after gaining this knowledge. This may require taking a series of actions including clergy being required to report allegations to law enforcement, bishops ensuring that the priest is restricted from accessing children when not in the hands of law enforcement and providing evidence-based psychological therapy to these priests, alongside spiritual counseling.

This requires dioceses to be proactive about how they communicate, educate, and train seminarians and priests on preventing abuse, to expediently make information about clerical abuse public, to provide reparations for victims of abuse, including access to psychotherapy not tied to the Church, and to ensure there are structural protections to prevent abuse in the first place, ensuring an effort towards addressing issues of justice.

Dioceses cannot care just for the priests but have a responsibility to address the needs of the victims. Within the process of “spiritualization” was the theme of brotherhood, reflecting the sacredness of the ministry of the priesthood and the bond those within it have with each other. The priesthood will continue to retain a sense of solidarity and family; however, I believe in order to dismantle the toxicity within this particular masculine framework, the laity must be integrated into the “family” of the brotherhood so that those personal relationships keep them in tune with the needs, physical and spiritual, of the people. Those in the upper echelons of clergy within the

time period of the abuse, may not have been as accessible as they currently are. With post-Vatican II changes and the era of social media, priests, bishops and even the pope have become increasingly more in touch with the laity. However, even with social media, it is difficult for the laity to enter true community, into personal relationships with bishops, cardinals, and the pope. This change requires intentionality and awareness on the part of priests, bishops and the pope.

In addition, while women have entered religious life, there is still a separation between religious men and women. While there is still a debate within the Catholic Church regarding this, I believe this masculine culture that can be toxic at times, could benefit from a greater integration of women within the hierarchy, particularly as deacons --especially since there is more consensus about it being in line with church teaching for women to enter into this particular role. While the priesthood will continue to be a calling, not a job, dismantling the toxicity within the framework will help provide sound judgment in crisis.

Churches are often a safe space for families to connect with God and others and it is in the dioceses' best interest to ensure that they regain the trust of their parishioners through incarnational service, serving the body and the spirit, with integrity.

### **Empathy.**

The tendency to intellectualize was motivated by fear and the drive for self-preservation. As priests and bishops feared the consequences of uncovering child sexual abuse, their responses were often to rationalize, minimize and problem-solve their way to protecting themselves and the reputation of their institution, leading them to institutional sin. In their correspondence regarding the victims, empathy was severely lacking. While

it was not clear if they did in fact feel empathy for the victims, it was uncommon to find it reflected in the documents, in the accounts of those in positions of authority.

Empathy is integral to incarnational service. Churches that thrive often do have clergy that express care for their parishioners needs, wants and lives. With empathy present in clergy interactions with the laity, especially the empathy of those holding power in the church, I believe this will also help to dismantle the framework that led to decades of abuse.

In countering the themes that enveloped clergy in this process of intellectualization of gathering information, minimization and fear, I propose the church integrate “paying attention to the needs of the victims” and “hope and putting forth effort for the healing of all those affected” in their framework of how to cultivate values that prevent a culture of abuse. When clergy rationalized their refusal to call law enforcement or lack of action to provide for the victims, both of these things were neglected. Paying attention to the needs of victims directly responds to the minimization that granted clergy permission to neglect physical, spiritual and psychological needs. Having hope and putting forth effort towards the healing of all directly responds to fear and gathering information, respectively. Having hope is not easy when the institutions being entrusted do not always put the priest’s welfare as a priority. However, as Catholics pray for “God’s kingdom on earth,” they also trust that when they follow just laws, “God’s will” will be done, to the benefit of humankind.

Implementing empathy may be difficult, however the Church has a structure already in place to facilitate this. Seminary is a place of growth for those seeking to be priests to learn, grow and practice their skills. It is also a time of interacting with church

attendees in a different role, as a seminarian. Bishops have the power to guide their dioceses in ways that encourage behavior and practice of current and future priests and should use this to create a new cultural framework of accountability and service.

### **Serving the laity.**

The tendency to institutionalize allows for the lack of accountability, deflection of responsibility, pride, and emotional distancing from the people served. At the same time, the Church is inherently an institution; to take this nature away from it would be unrealistic, destructive, and disorganizing. The question then becomes, how does one retain the institution but dismantle the framework which promoted the perpetuation of the abuse? Throughout this thesis, I have repeated that the job of the Church is to humbly serve. The Catholic Church must serve its parishioners, the vulnerable in the community, and those seeking spiritual guidance and physical aid with humility. When the priests and bishops in these documents lost sight of that mission, their self-serving acts led to loss of faith in the Church, mental, spiritual and physical illness, and broken relationships. Priests are not meant to enter into the profession for personal gain--they take vows of poverty, chastity and obedience, known as the evangelical counsels. Thus, they need to be held accountable to realize this incarnational service to the laity and communities they serve.

I believe humility and accountability aid in unbalancing the framework of institutionalization as clergy cultivate values of desiring to listen to the people, while being held to a standard of accountability crafted by those the clerical sexual abuse crisis has affected. Pope Francis has begun this process in his discussions with victims but has

not brought this to completion satisfactory to the standards of victims' groups of clerical sexual abuse.

### **Comparisons with other institutional abuse cases.**

While the Catholic Church might be the most powerful hierarchical institution in the world to have experienced cover-ups of longstanding sexual abuse, there are various other hierarchical institutions that have experienced this, including the United States military and the Boy Scouts. The factors that make these examples similar to the experience of the Catholic Church are: the hierarchy with a clear leadership structure; the paralysis from leaders in taking appropriate action toward the abuse; a dominant male culture with a sense of "brotherhood;" and a sense of formality, structure and rules.

In the case of the U.S. military, a recent article came out in the New York Times (Philipps, 2019) that sexual assaults on women in the military surged to a 50 percent increase in the last two years with the most vulnerable, the "youngest and lowest-ranking women" most at risk for assault. This echoes back a similarity between the Catholic sexual abuse cases where children and teenagers were targeted, who most likely "wouldn't tell."

The similarities do not end there: victims of military assaults have eroding trust that their institution will protect them. The survey conducted with members of the military found that while there was an increase in assaults, members were less likely than the year before to report them. This was not an unreasonable judgement: of the latest information, only about 300 cases had been prosecuted out of the 6,000 unrestricted reports of sexual assault in the military (Philipps, 2019).

The Marines issued a statement stating, “Sexual assault erodes the trust and cohesion within the Marine Corps team, degrades our lethality and readiness, and is incompatible with our core values of honor, courage and commitment” (Philipps, 2019). While this may be true, it also seems like there might be underlying processes of institutionalization, a mentality of “brotherhood,” and intellectualization that reflect an alternate set of values that govern behavior in the military.

Similarly, the Boy Scouts of America have had patterns of child sexual abuse rampant in their institution that echo the processes in the Catholic Church in Pennsylvania. The national institution kept a set of “perversion files” from 1944 to 2016 that listed the names of 7,819 “perpetrators” and had records of 12,254 victims in that period (Barron, 2019). These files were kept internally, not revealed to the public until a portion of the documents were made available to the public. The Boy Scouts claim that every account of suspected abuse was reported to law enforcement agencies, however it was unclear if these cases were reported within a timeframe in which the accused could have been prosecuted. Victims and their lawyers have responded that the Boy Scout files, which were located at the national office in Texas, allowed scouts to be put at risk of future abuse because the allegations were hidden (Barron, 2019). The Boy Scouts have a similar hierarchical structure, gender composition, bureaucracy as the hierarchy of the priesthood, and similar values. While more research should be done, the exposed child sexual abuse seems to operate on similar processes of intellectualization, bureaucracy, and hierarchy.



### **Contributions to theory**

This research indicated that there was an underlying framework of processes, created by values and tendencies within the Catholic culture of Pennsylvania during the 1930s-2010s, that had driven the various priests, bishops and to some extent the various supporting actors in creating and perpetuating this culture of abuse. Existing research on the Catholic child sex abuse crises within the U.S. had contributed reasons for the abuse, on a national level, with similar themes, but none specific to the Pennsylvanian crisis. I had not come across literature that linked communication and language to a set of processes that would obscure the culture of sexual abuse in the Church. In particular, this research on Pennsylvania's Catholic sex abuse attempted to combine codes within the letters into overarching abstract concepts (themes and processes), which were used to develop a new framework in understanding the nature of the abuse. This process revealed underlying values, which were conceptualized into abstract processes of spiritualization, institutionalization and intellectualization. These processes became part of the broader conceptual framework which operated to keep the systemic abuse hidden for decades. This contribution to knowledge of Catholic sexual abuse was only a small chip at the boulder of understanding the entirety of it. The Catholic Church as an institution remains protective of data and records for various reasons, explained in the literature review. As a result, this has limited access to data and created obstacles for further research that could contribute to the understanding of the nature of the Catholic Church and institutions, the various cultural frameworks for the perpetuation of abuse in Catholic Church, and how the Church and institutions could heal from loss of trust.

In addition, the framework created here does not solely apply to the Catholic Church of Pennsylvania. This framework mirrors how other institutions have responded to child sexual abuse; thus this research contributes to the conceptual understanding of how pedophilia may be addressed in other institutional settings, as well.

### **Clinical implications**

The documents provided in the Grand Jury Report include letters that were written within the decade. Since then, while the Catholic Church has been much more proactive (and reactive) in addressing the abuse and individual dioceses have instituted policies to protect children in their care, this framework is not completely dismantled. The abuse that has occurred has not been completely uncovered, acknowledged and all those affected have not been provided reparations in Pennsylvania.

As a student and practitioner of Couple and Family Therapy, these findings provide rich knowledge, giving insight into the ecological model of the Catholic Church, including the hierarchy, victims, as well as the families not directly affected by the abuse. The Catholic Church is an institution that has affected the lives of individuals, families and couples--and not just survivors of the abuse, but also the priests, were also casualties of the culture they were immersed in. The effects of this culture created devastating and lasting damage for people involved and affected by the abuse but also bystanders who lost faith in the integrity of their Church.

Institutions like the Catholic Church impart values to their leaders and followers, creating internal working models that may have problematic consequences for one's self worth and one's respect for others. As a therapist, it is my job to understand those frameworks and what is undermining the client's ability to thrive. This study has

provided greater insight into how those values could be reflective of greater internal processes that shape worldviews.

This framework also gives insight into working with individuals, couples and families, who may have experienced trauma and abuse, especially at the hands of institutions, providing a framework to process the origins of cognitive distortions and false and harmful beliefs that were formed in the context of their community. This framework is also applicable in working with clergy to develop insight into their own contexts and how they influence their parish in internalizing a distorted spirituality, in order to prevent the perpetuation of these beliefs and actions that contribute to the culture of abuse. It may be a natural fit as a training for clinicians who already work with clergy, as a train the trainer model.

With a broader scope, this framework could also be shared with groups of people—through parish trainings, seminars with seminarians, and workshops within the community targeted at people who are involved in various types of institutions. Impact could be made in developing customized frameworks and conducting systemic interventions within these communities to understand what causes harmful beliefs to perpetuate abuse in the particular community and develop strategies to respond.

In applying this framework to other institutions where abuse has occurred, it is important to be careful since not all cultures operate this way. Catholicism is dynamic and is embedded in many different cultures with their own set of values that interact with the religion. At the same time, it has clear leadership from the pope, a single doctrine, a common set of sacraments and largely, a shared understanding of the nature of God. Thus, with sexual abuse that occurs in other time periods, in other locations, it may be

prudent not to assume this model of systemic abuse fits these situations, however, it may be wise to use the framework as a starting place to create an understanding of how clergy especially, may be equipped to cope and react to the abuse by reviewing if the underlying values and processes ring true in those situations.

This study's findings may have implications for masculine-dominant spaces and "institutions" known for a culture of sexual abuse and assault, and how to potentially understand these cultures, giving people knowledge to dismantle them. Two cultures that may have a framework similar to the one created in this study are fraternities and the military. Both of these institutions often have similar elements to the Catholic Church--a brotherhood, hierarchy, a sense of formality and rules, and a loyalty to the "institution" of the fraternity. They also differ. These institutions clearly different populations, have different levels of commitment, do not always interact with the same populations and have a different set of values than the priesthood.

### **Conclusions**

In this study I conducted a grounded theory approach to analyze 68 primary documents containing narrative textual data delineating the clerical sexual abuse of 12 priests, who had documents of quality and quantity, available in Pennsylvania's Grand Jury Report. The study sought to explore themes that reflected the actions taken, the cognitive processes and cognitive coping strategies of the parties involved. Major findings included themes of religious language used, formality, deflecting responsibility, expression of priestly brotherhood, minimization, mercy, assuming responsibility and fear, primarily between various members of the clergy. These themes within the letters were integrated into a framework of key processes of spiritualization, institutionalization

and intellectualization to gain new insight into the nature of child abuse in the Church. Implications for this research concern political and ecclesiastical policy, clerical social behavior within the Catholic Church and other institutions, and more nuanced systemic conceptualization of individual, family, and couple therapy when dealing with institutional abuse. Limitations of this study included the use of historical, archival data, limiting access to those involved in the study, the limited collection of correspondence that was specific to a set of Pennsylvanian dioceses, a limited number of documents available per priest and the lack of public data and knowledge about Catholic sexual abuse crises. Further qualitative and quantitative studies in relation to understanding the underlying frameworks of rampant sexual abuse crises in institutional contexts, would be valuable to advance research and application in the elimination of systemic abuse.

Appendix A: Sample Letters from Grand Jury Report

Memorandum Re: Fr. Skatch & Huber  
On Friday, March 15, 2002.  
I telephoned Fr. Skatch and  
told him about [redacted] letter  
and telephone call. He offered  
to send [redacted] the \$4000.00 she  
was requesting.  
I explained to [redacted] that  
we were not able to give her the  
money, but I called Fr. Skatch and  
he offered to do so. [redacted] was  
elated, very happy, could not  
stop thanking me. This settles  
the matter - for now!  
T. J. T.

Timlin's Note - "This settles the matter - for now!"

See Case VI

The Bishop's Delegate received the following e-mail which was forwarded from [REDACTED] by Father John Chesney pastor of St. Joseph in New Kensington on April 3, 2013:

I am contacting you concerning some offensive photos discovered on your parish website. My siblings and I grew up in the 70's attending St. Joseph's School. We all received the sacraments of reconciliation, communion, confirmation and marriage at St. Joseph's Parish. My brothers were regular altar servers for many years. Our parents were extremely active within the community and made very generous financial as well as social contributions to the school/parish.

During our years at St. Josephs, a former "priest", Robert Moslener, befriended our family. He embedded himself deeply into our lives often attending family gatherings and events. He portrayed himself as not only a religious man but a teacher, mentor, and friend to especially the youth of the parish. As a young child, I had a strong uneasiness about Mr. Moslener made stronger by the fact that he most often only liked to associate with male youth and seemed disinterested in female youth. Unfortunately, my age prevented me from fully understanding the harm he was inflicting upon our family. Due to the access of social media, technological advances, and decades of strong suspicion, I can now after 35 years piece together and attest to the irreversible damage Mr. Moslener has caused.

My siblings and I suffered horrible abuses at the hands of not only Mr. Moslener but Sister Victor and Sister Marie Corday both now deceased. My siblings and I all suffered physical and mental assaults at the hands of these three monsters. For some reason, I was stronger or perhaps more intuitive for my age and therefore somewhat spared from the more horrible assaults. I made it my childhood "mission" to explore why I just simply did not like Mr. Moslener. I watched his every move and am positive to this day he knew I was keeping a close eye on him at school, church, and in our family home.

At that time, Father Higgins was also a priest in the parish. It is unclear if he knew. I plan to ask him what he knew. I hope nothing but am realistic in that the truth probably won't be told to anyone. We know that Mr. Moslener was "moved" from parish to parish prior to his "unemployment" as a priest. It leaves me to question just how many children the Catholic faith is willing to use as human sacrifice. Mr. Moslener now resides in Pittsburgh enjoying his golden years unscathed. His name doesn't appear on any sex offender registry. His victims continue to struggle to this day. I plan to check on his employment status to make sure he isn't having any private "lunches" with young boys. Needless to say, my beliefs about Catholicism are in question, my wedding day somewhat less special, and my childhood and that of my siblings a huge lie.

I will be checking back on the church website hoping not to see Mr. Moslener in any photos. Please pay particular attention to the photo including a young child. It disgusts me the most. I wonder who that little boy is and if he is okay. I would pray for him but sadly don't really know if a God exists.

The parish web site was immediately accessed by the Diocese and the offending pictures were immediately taken down. The site was made active again and there was no further contact with [REDACTED].

DG0001855

Victims Five's Letter

## Appendix B: Table of Priests

<b>Priest First Name</b>	<b>Last Name</b>	<b>Diocese</b>	<b>Ordination</b>	<b>Birth</b>
Edward	Graff	Allentown	1955	unknown
Michael	Lawrence	Allentown	1973	1947
Thomas	Smith	Erie	1967	unknown
William	Presley	Erie	1956	unknown
Edmond	Parrakow	Greensburg	1968	1940
Robert	Moslener	Greensburg	1976	unknown
Arthur	Long	Harrisburg	1955	unknown
Joseph	Pease	Harrisburg	1961	unknown
Ernest	Paone	Pittsburgh	1957	unknown
Richard	Zula	Pittsburgh	1966	unknown
Robert	Caparelli	Scranton	1964	unknown
Thomas	Skotek	Scranton	1963	unknown



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