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Socialization Processes and Clergy Offenders

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ABSTRACT

This article uses feminist theory to investigate how the socialization processes used to maintain the clergy community in the Roman Catholic Church contributes to a vulnerability in some clergy for sexually abusing children. This vulnerability is identified first in an examination of the literature on the impact of socialization processes on clergy offenders between the 1960s and 1980s. A comparison is then made with the implications of the apostolic exhortation, *Pastores Dabo Vobis*, which provides a theological basis to clergy formation. The article argues that the document works to ensure a continuity of socialization processes that not only have been shown to create a vulnerability for committing child sexual abuse but compound existing vulnerabilities. The article concludes that constraints produced by the preservation of a hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy retain a threat of violence against children and require recommended reforms.

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Senior clergy in the Roman Catholic Church tend to attribute the harm of child sexual abuse (CSA) solely to individual clergy offenders. The basis of their assessment is a belief that “sin is a personal act,” meaning it is the fault of an individual and not properly of the wider clergy community (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 1994, p. 457), that the individual cleric may be socialized by numerous and powerful factors that may result in personal tendencies and defects, but their influence does not limit his responsibility for a personal act of sin. In this system it is the clergy offender who must mend his ways, not the clergy community, which is considered beyond reproach. Thus, senior clergy, who serve as leaders and decision-makers, resist the idea that the socialization processes preserved by the clergy community contribute to CSA. They effectively deny there is an interplay between the social dimension of the clergy community and the individuated agency of clergy offenders. Senior clergy, therefore, need only concern themselves with the management of seemingly anomalous clergy.

This article, informed by feminist theory, shows that socialization processes are significant and argues that the ways in which clergy are required to navigate

social life create a vulnerability in some for offending against children. The vulnerability is the result of multiple stressors to which some clergy have been exposed. Their abusive acts can be seen to be, in part, an expression and effect of an oppressive arrangement between structural demands and the exercise of agency. For some clergy, socialization processes, worked out in the cultural beliefs, values, and practices of the clergy community produce a vulnerability that collides with personal deficits, leading them to sexually abuse children. However, the mutuality of this deficiency cannot be identified in all clergy because individual clergy have diverse capacities and abilities to handle the impact of that social hazard.

This article specifically focuses on how socialization processes create a clergy community that pressures some members to sexually offend first by drawing on an empirically substantiated psychological profile of clergy offenders. One implication of this profile is that clergy offenders do not make entirely autonomous choices to abuse children. Rather, their capacity to exercise agency in this matter is substantially influenced by a particular clerical masculinity in a patriarchal order as upheld and demanded by the clergy community. Second, and as an original contribution to the literature, examination is given to *Pastores Dabo Vobis* (PDV), a document written by Pope John Paul II (1992) meaning “I Shall Give You Shepherds” in Latin that was adopted by senior clergy to improve human and pastoral formation of seminarians and clergy and, in part, to address CSA (Laugesen, 2005). But, as this article argues, this endeavor is limited because the problem lies not just with the offender but also with the clergy community and the conceptions of expected behavior it places on members. An analysis of PDV shows how it works to maintain socialization processes and reinvigorate existing power relations.

Acknowledgement is given to the vast majority of research on clergy offenders having been undertaken in the United States. This article draws on this material liberally, a decision that is informed by the premise that these studies have general application to Western society, including Australia, the primary geographic focus of concern for the work.

Definitions and concept

First, some definitions. CSA is broadly defined as “any sexual activity involving a child where consent is not or cannot be given” (Dominguez, Nelke, & Perry, 2001, p. 202). “Child” is defined as “every human being below the age of eighteen years unless under the law applicable to the child, majority is attained earlier” (Unicef, 2005). “Clergy” is defined as those men ordained as priests and does not include deacons and religious brothers, although the following discussion may have relevance for these groups.

Reviewing radical feminist theory

Two major perspectives in feminist theory, radical and liberal, have relevance for examining the socialization processes of the clergy community that are implicated in CSA. Radical feminist theory contends that patriarchy oppresses and victimizes women and children. Male dominance is structured into the organization of family and society; men and boys are socialized to dominate women, and women and girls are required to be docile and sex objects (Ollenburger & Moore, 1992). Men are expected to be aggressive and are taught that sexual conquest is a sign of masculinity, whereas women are required to be nurturing and submissive (Gilgun, 1991, p. 93). These gender roles and sex stereotyped expectations operate to serve patriarchal ends. Radical feminist theory sees differences between males and females as representative of masculine and feminine socialized temperaments that are in opposition. Accordingly, the remedy to this pattern of socialization is identified in the production of alternative social structures (Hogan, 1994, p. 395).

The radical feminist theory of patriarchy is useful for understanding gender inequality in the Catholic Church and its implications for CSA. The clergy community is able to maintain patriarchy by demanding its members practice celibacy and requiring them to live in a state of perfect and perpetual continence (The Code of Canon Law, 1983, p. 47). This obligation prevents them from having normative family attachments while pressuring them to substitute members of the church as kin. In this context, clergy, called fathers, dominate the laity (meaning nonordained adults and children) as spiritual fathers of spiritual “children.” In the church-as-family, father as parish patriarch asserts control of fundamental, including sexual, aspects of “children’s” lives, the latter who are expected to obey.

Liberal feminist theory

Liberal feminist theory emphasizes the equality and common nature of all human persons and asserts the need for transformation of all social structures to bring about this ideal (Hogan, 1994, p. 395). The theory focuses on the uniqueness of the individual, which is reflected in the idea that there is diversity among and across masculinities and femininities. Of relevance to this article is the work of Cossins (2000), who examined the question as to why CSA is committed primarily by men and male adolescents. She concluded that such offending, rather than being a deviant masculine sexual practice, is related to normative masculine practices situated in structures of power. In society, sexuality is a key practice for establishing relations of power with other men and alleviating feelings of powerlessness (p. 87). Her contention is that when some men, in their relationship to other men, experience powerlessness, they are able to restore their sense of power by choosing to sexually abuse children. But this

choice is not legitimate: it reflects a problem with socialization processes and the related psychological development of the offender as a man (p. 91).

Keenan (2012) similarly argues that an exclusive focus on clergy offenders as “sexual deviants or moral degenerates or suffering from psychological dysfunction” prevents an examination of the contribution of socializing processes (p. xix). To understand these hazards, she uses the concept of hegemonic masculinities, produced by Connell (2005), as an adaptation of Gramsci’s definition of “hegemony,” that is, power is exercised over one group by another through cultural practices. He defines hegemonic masculinity “as the configuration of gender practice which ... guarantees (or is taken to guarantee) the dominant position of men and the subordination of women” (p. 77) and, according to Cossins (2000) and Keenan (2012), children as well.

Keenan (2012) identifies the hegemonic masculinity in the church as the “perfect celibate clerical masculinity” (p. 245). This masculinity sets clergy above and apart from other gendered identities, resulting in a complex engagement of power and powerlessness. The maleness of clergy is subsumed into an exceptionally powerful spiritual identity; they are considered *alter Christus* (Latin for “other Christs”), able to live and minister beyond human capability (Anderson, 2005, p. 13). Being a man in the normative sense is considered secondary, as is sex and sexual expression, which are viewed as peripheral and even irrelevant for their lives (Anderson, 2005, p. 73). Yet this ideal of powerful maleness can be identified as a source of powerlessness by some clergy, who, in seeking to overcome their social and sexual impotence, may resolve this paradox by sexually abusing children.

Radical and liberal feminist theories are not completely aligned. Cossins (2000) does not position patriarchy as primary, arguing that this gender essentialism should be avoided because it limits the notion of variability in masculinities and because gender is a social practice that indicates the capacity for social change (p. 124). But Keenan (2012) argues that discussions of gender and especially of hegemonic masculinity must keep in view the role of patriarchy, and it is this view that informs this article (p. 233). A perfect celibate clerical masculinity is expressed in spiritual fatherhood and, vice versa, is sustained by patriarchy. The binary serves to exaggerate male power by removing men who are clerics from the influence of other men, women and children and models of egalitarian families.

The socialization of clergy offenders

What is of interest to this article is that significant psychosocial studies that focused on the period between the 1960s and 1980s identified particular socialization processes that fostered the maldevelopment of clergy offenders (Finkelhor, 2003; John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004). Some literature positions clergy offenders among the general population of sex offenders

(Blanchard, 1991, p. 237; Langevin, Curnoe, & Bain, 2000, p. 543; Terry, 2008, p. 31), but there is also a substantial body of literature indicating that these men have a distinctive profile, as will be discussed. This profile, however, cannot be interpreted to mean that all clergy offenders display each feature, for these men are individuals with diverse backgrounds and motivations for their actions (Kelly, 2013, p. 311).

Early socialization processes

The root problem of clergy offenders is often traced in the psychosocial profile to the strict regulation of gender and sexuality in the home. In these patriarchal households, children were schooled by their parents to exercise rigorous sexual discipline, retain sexual innocence, and strive for sexual purity, all of which served to sustain severely restricted gender roles directed to ensuring the continuity of the male line. Such taboos prevented discussion of sexuality and promoted a special relationship with the mother and a negative father-son relationship, resulting in psychosocial foreclosure (D'Alton, Guilfoyle, & Randall, 2013, p. 698). Children were not permitted to envisage alternative gender identities or ask questions about, experiment with, or enjoy sexuality, as these were regarded as sins against the inviolable laws of the church and God. Similarly, in the school environment, nuns and brothers policed gender identities and sexuality. The example of gender differentiated roles set by these teachers and little or no sex education assisted in the preparation of boys who would become priests to adopt the perfect celibate clerical masculinity, but it also constrained their capacity to socialize normatively (Frawley-O'Dea, 2004, p. 129).

Seminary formation

Many young men entered the seminary straight after completing their schooling, where their formation contributed to a vulnerability in the clergy community to offend (Keenan, 2012, p. 146). Their lives revolved around a strictly controlled pattern of community life, which shaped them in the gendered role of clergy. Discussion, suggestion, and exploration of sexuality were curtailed, as evidenced in the ban on "particular friendships" (Frawley-O'Dea, 2004, p. 130). This vague term conveyed a prohibition on any sexual element in friendship and served to socialize the men in a perfect celibate clerical masculinity. Conversely, the censure prevented consideration of alternative masculinities, such as those constructed by men considering an intimate heterosexual relationship or by gay, bisexual, or questioning males. Moreover, the hegemonic masculinity pressured a seminarian to deal with his gender identity and sexuality alone, which fostered moral duplicity. Any thought, word, or deed that was not consistent with their gendered role was considered shameful, and, if exposed, brought discredit. The only acceptable way of dealing with personal sin was to disclose it secretly in the confessional,

which stressed the seriousness of one's transgressions and ensured adherence to hegemonic expectations (Sipe, 1995, p. 141).

Socialization processes operate to sustain an established moral code, and, in the case of seminarians who became clergy offenders, their moral education has been identified as a factor in CSA insofar as it prevented human development and the cultivation of healthy relationships (Frawley-O'Dea, 2004, p. 131; Keenan, 2012, p. 135). They were instructed to uphold the norm of exaggerated male power, which was founded on the belief that these men were ontologically changed at ordination. Such existence transcended the profane "natural" category of being, empowering them to mediate between God and "man" (Jay, 1992, p. 125). The impersonal and abstract teaching led those who became offenders to suppose that their subsequent sexual behavior was a matter of sin against God and not as a matter of harm for children. The socialization process also contributed to psychosexual and psychosocial foreclosure. Beliefs about clerical superiority and separateness prevented them from socializing positively with other gendered subjects, including children, resulting in developmental conflict and suppressed emotions (D'Alton et al., 2013, p. 698; Haywood, Kravitz, Grossman, Wasyliv, & Hardy, 1996, p. 527).

Arrested psychosexual development

The empirical evidence indicates that the majority of victims of clergy offenders were adolescent males (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004, p. 6; Sipe, 1995, p. 27). A common explanation given to this phenomenon is that socializing processes required these men to forfeit normative psychosexual development in order to fit within the clergy community, which was undergirded by a theology of male power (Sipe, 1995, p. 18). Hence, intellectual assent and emotional affirmation were given to more highly ranked celibate men (priest, bishop, pope) who were revered and powerful and to sexually pure boys who were treasured as the future of the clergy community. Women and girls, in contrast, were shunned, with the exception of their biological mothers and Blessed Mother Mary, who were forbidden objects of sexual fantasy. Clergy thus remained "forever children" of their biological mothers and spiritual fathers and mother (Frawley-O'Dea, 2004, p. 130). So when clergy offended against adolescent males, they did so at essentially the same level of sexual immaturity as their victims. At the same time, they sustained hegemonic masculinity when they challenged the paradox of their own powerlessness in the gendered hierarchy of males.

Patriarchy and power

The socialization processes that enabled clergy offenders to identify as spiritual fathers provided them with extraordinary symbolic power that they could use to approach their victims. At the apex of this gendered order is a "father God"

who is said to resemble an omnipotent male celibate parent. Below “Him” is the Pope (from the Greek *pappas*, meaning father), followed by the bishops, regarded as *paterfamilias* (from the Latin, “father: head of the family”), and, then, the priest as “father.” In addition, these fathers were regarded as special, superior, and set apart from biological fathers (Anderson, 2005, p. 140). Thus, as anointed representatives of a father God, clergy offenders could gain entry as honored guests to the family home where they were given privileged access to children. In these places, they cultivated intimate relationships with unwitting parents of victims who were often proud that their sons (and sometimes their daughters) were selected out for attention.

Similarly, in the environs of the church building, clergy offenders had access to altar servers, who, up until the 1990s, were exclusively male children. These endorsed social connections were a factor in the location of abuse, with the victim’s home, the priest’s house, vacation housing, school, and car being the most common sites for offending behavior (John Jay College of Criminal Justice, 2004, p. 7). In these environments, the clergy offender used the structural weight of spiritual fatherhood to isolate victims and their “shared” behavior from parents, teachers, and parishioners. Moreover, this exercise of exaggerated male power in CSA is consistent with a broad set of ethnographic data. The data, drawn from a multitude of cultures, indicates that violence against children is not an endemic and universal problem across all cultures; it is more likely to occur in patriarchal and authoritarian households, communities, and institutions than in those that are egalitarian (Scheper-Hughes, 1998, p. 295). Thus, the church represents a typical environment of abuse.

Alcohol as disinhibitor

The offenses of clergy have been frequently connected to alcohol consumption. Many clergy were (and still are) housed in presbyteries where they lived alone or with one other priest. These isolating conditions, which worked to sustain the perfect celibate clerical masculinity, prompted feelings of loneliness and sexual desire that were previously unknown in the seminary. Some clergy assuaged their irritations with the self-prescribed “celibacy vaccine” (a clerical euphemism for alcohol). These clerics often desired relationships, but the clergy community only gave license to “Punch,” not to “Judy” (euphemisms for alcohol and women) (Anderson, 2005, p. 106). Some, however, resolved their powerlessness by abusing children, with alcohol propelling their offending. Statistics indicate that one-third of offenders used alcohol excessively, with some also plying their victims with alcohol and drugs (Langevin, Curnoe, & Bain, 2000, p. 535; Loftus & Carmargo, 1993, p. 287; Sipe, 1995, p. 149).

Clerical celibacy

One practice that distinguishes clergy offenders from the general population of sex offenders is mandatory celibacy (The Code of Canon Law, 1983, p. 47). There has been little empirical research on whether this enforced law is a risk factor in CSA, leaving researchers and commentators scope for making various claims. Those who come under the auspices of the church tend to refute a connection, whereas those who have independence are skeptical and often argue celibacy cannot be disassociated from such violence.

In the former camp, the John Jay Report College of Criminal Justice (2004, p. 24) asserts that there is no link between celibacy and CSA. The researchers noted that there was a pattern to complaints that indicated a concentration of allegations concerning abuse in the 1960s and 1970s, with a decline from the mid-1980s. They argued that since celibacy remains a constant across these decades, it cannot explain reported differences and thus is not a causal factor. Songy (2003, p. 123) deflects focus on CSA from the general practice of the clergy community by arguing that it is the fault of individual clergy, contending that the celibate requirement may be attractive to some who seek to avoid difficulties relating to sexual dysfunction, fears of intimacy, or homosexual orientation.

Independent researchers and commentators take issue with the conclusion made by previously mentioned non-independent researchers who distance celibacy from CSA. Roberts (2011) reports on three key criticisms leveled at the John Jay Report. Questions persist about the reliability of the basic data that informed the study because it draws principally from reports given by bishops and is further said to exclude “credibly accused priests.” Criticism is leveled at the report’s conclusion that clergy behavior was influenced by the sexual revolution of 1960s and 1970s. Moses (2011) argues that this is a “weak link in the study because it’s speculation.” A third criticism is that there is a lack of investigation given to the culture of the clergy community and its contribution to CSA. Parkinson (2013) also has a problem with the report’s conclusion, arguing that there is a range of factors relating to a stated reduction in complaints since the 1980s that may camouflage what is actual reality. These include empirical evidence that child victims delay reporting their abuse until adulthood, which suggests that those who were abused in the late 1980s may not reveal the crime for another two decades and that it is the media that generates the reporting of CSA with a consequence in an inconsistent pattern of disclosure. As for Songy’s argument, it relies on the assumption that a cleric’s difficulties must have existed prior to his entry into the clergy community; it does not acknowledge that socialization processes, including those relating to celibacy, may lead to the sexual offending of children.

Other independent researchers and commentators also contend that celibacy may contribute to CSA. Sipe (1995) asserts that celibacy is a cornerstone of a

powerful clergy system that “develops, fosters and protects” genetic, psychosexual, social, and moral deficits in some clergy, resulting in CSA (pp. 4–23). Robinson (2007) asserts that celibacy can contribute to the “unhealthy psychological state (e.g., depression), the unhealthy ideas (e.g., misogyny or homophobia), and the unhealthy environment (e.g., an unwanted and unassimilated celibacy) out of which abuse arises” (p. 18). Keenan (2012) argues that CSA is part of a bigger problem of celibate sexuality. While church governance relies on the tight control and regulation of this practice, evidence indicates that up to 50% of clergy are reported to be sexually active at any one time, leading her to conclude that celibacy is both unhealthy and unachievable (p. 31). These researchers determine that the demand for celibacy often leads to unsuccessful socialization or an imperfect celibate clerical masculinity with one consequence being the creation of a vulnerability in some clergy for abusive behavior.

The institutional response to CSA

Allegations of CSA were made public early in the reign of Pope John Paul II (1978–2005), but he retained a silence on the matter for two decades (Robinson, 2011, p. 98). During that period, the Pope endeavored to restrain a rapidly liberalizing church after the Second Vatican Council (1962–1965), which had attempted to undertake internal reform and renew connections with the modern world. As part of the restoration project, the Pope communicated his ideas for the formation of clergy in PDV (1992). Despite increasing revelations of clergy offenders, no discussion was given in the document on CSA. Instead, focus was given to the challenging social conditions in which the clergy community must prevail; it was to overcome the negative elements of rationalism, individualism, hedonism, consumerism, materialism, and the distorting of human sexuality and freedom (n. 7).

PDV effectively worked to secure the clergy community, thus contesting not only social changes but also those within the church. For example, the Second Vatican Council declared women to be equals of men and that all sex-based discriminations are contrary to God’s intent, implying that women as well as married men should be ordained (Abbott, 1967, pp. 227–228, 500). In effect, PDV resisted measures that could stem CSA: it inhibited, at least, a dialectic between church and society about CSA while internally to the church it prevented women and men as parents from participating in leadership and decision-making roles and curtailed their attempts to voice concerns about clergy offenders and senior clergy who sought to protect them.

In 2006, PDV became fully incorporated into formation programs for clergy throughout the world (Coleman, 2011, p. 205). This highly influential document was coupled with a range of reforms that enabled the clergy community to both limit the prevalence of clergy offenders and deflect scrutiny from its socialization patterns. For example, senior clergy established processes to attend allegations,

remove offenders from public ministry or the priesthood, provide pastoral care for victims and their families, create and implement abuse-prevention programs and awareness education, and introduce screening and psychological testing for seminarians (Keenan, 2012, p. 48; Terry, Schuth, & Smith, 2011, pp. 76–77). Hence, emphasis was placed on ridding the clergy community and church of potential or actual clergy offenders but not on socialization processes that produce a propensity for abusive behavior in some members.

Thus, the question remains as to what has fundamentally changed. Can it be said that, at a root level, socialization processes previously implicated in CSA have been done away with? To date, there is a dearth of independent research that investigates whether the clergy community have taken on-board the findings of research on clergy offenders relating to socialization processes. In lieu of this deficit, this article hereafter investigates PDV as a foundational document for producing the clergy community for its implications for CSA.

Pastores dabo vobis and socialization processes

PDV introduced, for the first time in church history, a section on human formation, alongside those of the spiritual, intellectual, and pastoral. The document recognized changes in the concrete circumstances of priestly vocations, arguing that “priestly formation would be deprived of its necessary foundation if it lacked a suitable human formation” (n. 43). However, these changes were, accordingly, to be subject to an immutable, unchanging, and eternal clerical system: “the spirit which must inspire and sustain [the priesthood] remains the same” (n. 42). In effect, the document provided and promoted an abstract basis for socializing men as clergy, the latter a gendered identity that is set apart from normative social existence informed by history and culture. Clergy were to take up their position in the perpetually gendered order of the church.

By situating change within a fixed system, PDV determines that a range of human qualities should be cultivated by a cleric, including the capacity to relate to others with an “affective maturity” (n. 43). This affectivity would be instrumentalized through an education for sexuality, “true” friendship, and an authentic depth of obedience to moral obligations (Plante, 2011). In short, PDV implies that programs and not changes to socialization processes would suffice to prevent difficulties in the clergy community, including those relating to CSA. Subsequently, there was an intensification of human formation in the seminary, which has further informed every official document and response to the crisis of CSA (Coleman, 2011, p. 205). Nonetheless, Keenan (2012), citing various commentators, indicates that the intention of introducing such formation has not measured up to reality, with these new subjects being laid over existing formation programs administered by staff whose sensibilities and abilities were formed in a different era. The implication is

that seminaries have maintained education to orthodoxy rather than providing training for the whole human person. What is further suggested is that previously identified factors that have contributed to a vulnerability in some clergy for sexually abusing children remains. PDV as a foundational document for clergy formation is apparently determined to sustain the fundamentals of enduring socialization processes through the current crisis and avoid changing existing social patterns that produce a propensity for abusive behavior in some members.

Pastores dabo vobis and celibacy

PDV is evidently not concerned with revising socialization processes when it makes an unequal connection between a fixed system and change. This is made particularly obvious in the emphasis it gives to celibacy. The document contends that this obligation is a “precious gift given by God” that exists beyond “a legal norm or as a totally external condition for admission to ordination” (n. 50), the latter which implies temporality. The eternal character of this “gift” is further signified in an idealized representation of Jesus Christ, who, accordingly, lived this hegemonic masculinity perfectly. Clergy, as “other Christs,” are to recognize that celibacy enables them to make themselves fully available for pastoral ministry (n. 50). This disposition, furthermore, requires an affective maturity, enabling clergy to love and be loved. But the document puts a caveat on sexual love, explaining that this can only be properly expressed in marriage; consequently, it has no place in the clergy community (Anderson, 2005, p. 73). Clergy are not allowed to marry (heterosexually) because such expression belongs exclusively to the lesser state of marriage, but they are to love and be loved, providing they “renounce anything that is a threat to [their celibacy]” (n. 44). This conditional argument, moreover, is aligned with “nuptial meaning,” which is said to be sustained not by history and culture but by an ahistorical and acultural spiritual realm. Thus, “affective maturity should bring [about] a lively and personal love for Jesus Christ ... which overflows into a dedication to everyone” (n. 44). PDV effectively spiritualizes celibacy to sustain the perfect celibate clerical masculinity, structured in patriarchy, thus maintaining the exaggerated power of the clergy community.

The spiritual and structural emphasis that PDV places on celibacy has direct implications for CSA. The document puts the onus of responsibility on each and every cleric to ensure its practice, while giving no consideration as to how clerics are to deal with the paradox of socialization that this instruction produces. Seminarians, for example, may well be supported in their practice in a highly regulated environment, where the majority of the teaching faculty are clergy and where laypeople are largely excluded from their classes and seminary living spaces (Plante, 2011, p. 211). However, once ordained, and often living alone or with one other priest, they must find ways to manage loneliness and other

difficulties of celibate life. Some support may come from confreres and parishioners, but these measures are generally not available in modern society, which they also inhabit (Anderson, 2005, p. 85). Clergy exist in a distinctly sexually aware and sexually active world, where sexual explicitness is commonplace, contraceptives are available, women assert rights, as do gays and lesbians, and androgyny prevails. Each of these elements of contemporary society challenge strict gender differentiation needed for maintaining the perfect celibate clerical masculinity and patriarchy (Sipe, 1990, p. 17). The Internet also provides a source of temptation, making available both adult and child pornography, a sexual outlet for clergy that is well documented (Sipe, 1990, p. 195). Robinson (2011) asserts that when celibacy becomes “unwanted, unaccepted, and unassimilated,” it is “both unhealthy and dangerous... . It then contributes to unhealthy psychology (e.g., depression), ideas (e.g., misogyny), and living environment (e.g., loneliness)” (p. 93). When abstract ideals fail, socialization processes can be inverted; if supervision from the community and hierarchy is not effective and loneliness and isolation loom large, the proclivity for harmful sexual behaviors remains significant (Towards Understanding, 1999, pp. 13–14).

A lucuna in pastores dabo vobis

When PDV puts the onus on individual clergy to uphold the perfect celibate clerical masculinity it overlooks the part played by the clergy community in socializing its members. This community is excused from considering how the hegemonic masculinity and the patriarchal order have pressured some clergy to offend. For instance, PDV asserts, “For the future priest the answer can only mean total self giving” (n. 65), implying that the public persona and private identity of a cleric is one and the same. However, and as has been discussed, the totalizing of a cleric’s gender identity signals a red flag for CSA. The requirement for a cleric to sacrifice his personal identity or self to fit with the restrictive demands of the clergy community has been shown to limit development and well-being, leading some to offend. The essentializing of the hegemonic masculinity also encourages a cleric to have an elevated view of himself (Coleman, 2011, p. 216), indicating an ongoing preference for clergy to identify with the “clerical club” and not with the broader membership of the church and society. It is this belief in clerical superiority that, as has been demonstrated, has contributed to CSA.

A question of obedience

PDV does not take into account the ramifications of the demand it makes for obedience. A seminarian or cleric is socialized into deferring to those senior to him, allowing for little or no latitude for exercising individual consciousness. Seminarians, for example, are likely to find it difficult to introduce new insights

about gender and sexuality to their moral evaluations in a clergy community that is dedicated to giving primacy to doctrines that retain the fixity of gender relations in patriarchy. Resistance to a mode of explanation (for example, about the gendered position of men and women in the church) or a particular sexual practice (for example, celibacy) is likely to be seen as a form of dissidence and consequently disregarded or discredited. Indeed, gender diversity was rejected by Pope Benedict XVI (2012), who stated, “This duality [of male and female] is an essential aspect of what being human is all about, as ordained by God.” The emphasis on conformity can limit the development of conceptual resources and independent judgement needed for recognizing and avoiding problems that have in a previous era allowed CSA to occur. The clergy community insists on orthodoxy to the detriment of an individual member thinking for himself and taking responsibility for his own actions, a consequence of which can be immaturity, which has previously signaled a vulnerability related to offending

The demand made by PDV for obedience can also produce conditions for deception. When a cleric feels disempowered by the clergy community he can choose questionable or illicit avenues to neutralize his powerlessness. Thus, a cleric may choose to dominate those who are subordinate to him, including children, to regain a hegemonic sense of masculinity. Furthermore, the clergy community fosters this option. In order to sustain a robust in-group, it cultivates values of loyalty and devotion along with related ideas of confidentiality and secrecy. But these values can also be used by the clergy offender to control and manipulate others. Confidentiality assumes the privacy and privilege of communication, while secrecy operates to avoid scandal, each of which in an exaggerated system of male power limits the sharing of information between the clergy in-group and out-groups (Sipe, 1995, p. 27). The clergy community does not socially identify with the out-group in which children are situated, and where their interests, for example, of protection, are more likely to be promoted. The separation and isolation of clergy can therefore produce a social pattern of a potential clergy offender wrestling with the contradictions of power and powerlessness while believing that he is not subject to the laws that outsiders are compelled to uphold.

Pastores dabo vobis and parents

PDV contends that clerical celibacy is a signal of “a singular sharing in God’s fatherhood” and enables the care of all “children of the Church” (n. 29, 6). However, these interrelated claims, in the light of the previous analysis, raise questions about their relevance and meaning for the protection of actual children. Spiritual fatherhood has not been shown to respond to the sexual abuse of children with the same instinctive fierceness and passion of many parents (Robinson, 2011, p. 94). The clergy community have commonly favored

offending clergy fathers over victimized children, the latter whose allegations were not believed or suppressed in order to protect the reputation of the clergy community. Thus, in maintaining the prerogative of spiritual paternity for clergy, PDV limits how actual parents and victims of CSA can call the fathers to account. More specifically, the document serves to thwart critique of its preferred socialization processes, prevents the formal examination of gendered and sexual policies and clerical personnel, averts evaluation of clerical performance and behavior, and prohibits implementation of policies of dismissal that would work to limit such threats of violence against children. PDV ensures that the clergy community can continue to limit or resist engagement with parents and child victims, which, as Merz (2011) argues, has a consequence in inertia, irresponsibility, and defensiveness (p. 86).

The self-protective mechanisms of the clergy community may also have ramifications for specific gendered groups of parents, particularly those who do not conform to patriarchal expectations, such as parents who are unmarried or divorced, parents who have remarried without a church annulment of their first marriage, and parents who are in same-sex relationships. Such categorical groups are considered to have deviated from church expectations and tarnished its reputation. The transgressions of these parents tend to attract disapproval, often resulting in their being socially isolated or ostracized from their community. In the event that the children of these parents were to be abused, their marginality is likely to produce additional difficulties in registering their concerns with senior clergy and launching effective action against clergy offenders. There remain significant obstacles for people viewed as “deviant” to challenge the hegemony of the clergy community who, effectively, are not answerable to subordinates, especially those who are deemed to have questionable moral reputations.

Overseas born priests

PDV recognizes there is a threat to existing socialization processes in a significant shortage of clergy, particularly in Western countries. For example, in Australia, there has been a steep decline in numbers since the 1950s, and, today, there are no longer sufficient local candidates to service the church (Wilkinson, 2011, p. 25). The document, however, considers the answer to the problem lies not in reform but in “complete trust in the unbroken fulfilment of God’s promise” that there will “never be a complete lack of sacred ministers” (n. 1). PDV, therefore, encourages bishops in industrialized countries to obtain candidates from large numbers of vocations in non-industrialized countries. Today, in Australia, estimates are that overseas clergy constitute 20–22 percent of the overall priesthood, and for seminarians, probably less than two-thirds are locally sourced (Wilkinson, 2011, p. 14). The introduction of overseas born clergy to Australia has increased cultural diversification among the clergy, but

such heterogeneity is not the goal of the clergy community; rather, its aim is to maintain the perfect celibate clerical masculinity and patriarchy in the church.

The determination to maintain existing socialization processes by introducing priests from non-industrial countries is likely to compound an already existing vulnerability in the clergy community associated with the sexual abuse of children. Many of these clergy come from countries that maintain a culture of secrecy, stigma, and silence around CSA (Trumars, Dahl, Eriksson, Gustafsson, & Kristina, 2014). A child may be perceived as an insignificant minor with fewer rights than the adult perpetrator, and when the latter is a prominent member of the community, it presents a major challenge for effective prevention, reporting, care, and management (World Health Organization, 2004). In these countries, legal frameworks for pursuing sex offenders are weak, policies and aid agencies to protect and care for children are lacking, and CSA does not have a public profile. Keenan (2012) notes that most information about the abusive behaviors of clergy offenders come from industrialized countries, not from non-industrial ones (p. 60). Much is unknown about sexual abuse of children by clergy in these countries, but a report published by Child Rights International Network (2014) indicates that in every country where there is a significant Catholic population, serious allegations against clergy have been recorded but seldom prosecuted. The organization also argues that behind these offenses there is a repeated social pattern of Catholic clergy misusing their position and having regular sexual contact with children.

Plante (2011), who in speaking out of an American context, and which has implications for other industrialized countries, indicates a concern that cultural attitudes toward sexual offending might be introduced by clergy coming from non-industrialized countries:

Since many of these men were ... not evaluated or screened from a psychological, psychiatric, or behavioral perspective in their home countries, an increasing number of priests have no psychological, psychiatric, or behavioral screening at all. Second, criminal background checks, credit histories, and other typical and generally easy-to-accomplish background evaluations ... are not possible in ... the [non-industrial] world where so many international priests come from. Third, even when psychological screening evaluations are conducted, differences in language and culture make conducting these evaluations extremely challenging and sometimes impossible... . [As well,] few qualified psychologists are available who can conduct culturally competent evaluations of men from a wide range of cultures and languages. Finally, many of the intimate questions asked during the clinical interview (e.g., sexual history) are culturally inappropriate and often offensive to ask of men from particular countries and cultures (Plante, 2011, p. 199).

The observations made by Plante suggest that the socialization processes as experienced by overseas clergy in their country of origin may prevent adequate screening for clergy offenders. What is also implied is that there is a similitude of hegemonic ideas about gender between those of non-industrial countries and

those of the clergy community. As Cossins (2000) indicates and has argued, it is the maintenance of a hegemonic masculinity and the power/powerlessness dynamic that contributes to a threat of CSA. Hence, the synonymy of beliefs, values, and practices may result in overseas born clergy being less malleable to the influence of the social contexts in which they currently serve, signalling a threat to CSA.

The implications of introducing overseas clergy are made more complex when considering that they commonly minister to or attract parishioners who have also migrated from non-industrialized countries (Anderson, 2004). The church in Australia has been shaped by high immigration flows in recent decades, with these populations tending to come from Vietnam, India, Sri Lanka, Philippines, South Korea, China, Indonesia, the Middle East, South America and, more recently, African countries (Wilkinson, 2011, p. 4). Members of these groups tend to have been socialized into restricted gender differentiated roles and sex stereotyped expectations that are consonant with the expectations of those clergy who supervise them. These constraints, moreover, tend to have a consequence in the stigma and persistent cultural attitudes attached to CSA, which prevents speaking about this crime (Trumars et al., 2014). Therefore, the likely result of robust relationships between overseas born priests and migrant parishioners from non-industrialized countries is an under-reporting of crime to external agents whose concern is directed primarily to protecting children, not the Catholic community.

Conclusion

This article has shown how socialization processes in the clergy community and church have contributed to the sexual abuse of children. Analysis of the psychosocial profiles of clergy offenders indicates that such processes prevented offenders, during their childhood and seminary years, from reinterpreting and modifying gender differentiated roles and sex stereotypes, which, potentially, could have fostered their development and contributed to healthy relationships. As ordained clergy, the requirement for upholding the perfect celibate clerical masculinity, secured in a theology of exaggerated male power, had a consequence in immaturity, which was compounded by a toxic mix of loneliness, alcohol, and sexual desire. These offenders, thereafter, attended the paradox of their powerfulness and powerlessness by taking advantage of their status as spiritual fathers to access and sexually abuse children.

In recent years, senior clergy have attempted to introduce measures to prevent clergy from sexually abusing children, but these revisions have not fundamentally altered socialization processes, suggesting an ongoing vulnerability in the clergy community. This is made evident in an analysis of PDV, which, as a foundational document for producing the clergy community, maintains the perfect celibate clerical masculinity by spiritualizing sexuality, demanding

conformity, requiring obedience, and inhibiting the incorporation of new knowledge about gender and sexuality. PDV further defends the exaggeration of male power by maintaining a spiritual fatherhood and patriarchy and imposing its supervisory consequences. Conversely, PDV implies a disregard for the need to be directly accountable to victims and their parents and excludes alternative gender constructions, particularly those that are egalitarian in character and which are predisposed to preventing CSA.

Senior clergy, in taking direction from PDV to obtain overseas clergy, have likely compounded an existing vulnerability for sexual offending in the clergy community. They have introduced beliefs and attitudes from non-industrial countries that cultivate a culture of secrecy, stigma, and silence around CSA and which are not conducive to prevention, reporting, care, and management of such violence. This risk may be heightened in parishes headed by overseas born priests and constituted in migrant populations from non-industrial countries. The combined preference for maintaining a robust local community and its potential consequence in not reporting this crime is likely to work against the protection of children.

In conclusion, socialization processes that operate to maintain the perfect celibate clerical masculinity and patriarchy have ongoing implications for endeavors to protect children from violence. These processes limit the cultivation of healthy gender identities in the clergy community, restrict gender equality in the church, and have severely negative implications for children. Thus, concrete measures must be taken to ensure that power is more evenly distributed across church membership. This requires a rescinding of PDV, which works to maintain a hegemonic masculinity and patriarchy that prevents reform of the clergy community.

Reforms needed for ensuring the protection of children include making celibacy optional and opening the clergy community to parents, regardless of their current status in the church. The broadening of the base of leadership and decision-making roles would foster greater recourse for those who have vested interests in protecting children from sexual abuse. These reforms should also incorporate a wider range of masculinities and femininities in the clergy community to encourage healthy gender identities and gender equality, which would further work to prevent CSA. These changes have their overall aim in creating a more egalitarian clergy community and church, which is necessary for producing a safe environment for children and which surely is the end-goal for healthy religion and society.

Ethical standards

In conducting this research, the author has honored the ethical principles and guidance as maintained by the American Anthropological Association.

Notes on contributor

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