2001

Sacred & profane: sacred & violent : towards understanding priestly sexual violence

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NOTE

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SACRED & PROFANE: SACRED & VIOLENT:
TOWARDS UNDERSTANDING PRIESTLY SEXUAL VIOLENCE

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

from

UNIVERSITY OF WOLLONGONG

by

Mary Medley (BA Hons)

Faculty of Arts

June 2001
All I did was listen. For I believe full surely that God's spirit is in us all
(Julian of Norwich C14).
SYNOPSIS

In the last two decades 'clerical sexual abuse' emerged as a specific category within the more general phenomenon of male sexual violence. The Australian Catholic Church formulated policies to address this coercive sexual activity by some of its clerical men. I employ a feminist approach to call into question these Church responses by examining the significance of gender to issues of male violence and by indicating the Church's disregard of either the systemic or gendered aspects of the problem. This thesis situates Catholic clerical sexual abuse into the religio-social context in which this highly particularised violence occurs.

Reading Durkheim's sacred/profane concept through a feminist lens I situate men who are priests in the Roman Catholic tradition into the social/sacred location in which they perpetrate sexual violence. This thesis thus reiterates crucial feminist perspectives on male sexual violence to insist that these acts of sexual abuse by priests constitute violence; that they are not indicative of individual psychopathology or sexual aberration; and that priesthood, as a specific social structure, supports this violence. Gender analysis of some of Catholicism's discourses and ritual practices reveals an implicit gender bias in the priest/priesthood distinction and allows critique of the Church's failure to examine priesthood as the structure to which its perpetrators belong. This thesis demonstrates that Durkheim's sacred/profane dichotomy provides a valuable theoretical tool to develop an understanding of the connection between religion, gender and violence that is most terribly enacted in priestly sexual violence.
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### iii
ABBREVIATIONS

ACBC  AUSTRALIAN CATHOLIC BISHOPS’ CONFERENCE
ACLRI  AUSTRALIAN CONFERENCE of LEADERS of RELIGIOUS INSTITUTES
AFTF  AUSTRALIAN FEMINIST THEOLOGY FOUNDATION
CASA  CENTRE AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT
OCW  ORDINATION OF CATHOLIC WOMEN
PCF  PONTIFICAL COUNCIL FOR THE FAMILY
SCDF  SACRED CONGREGATION FOR THE DOCTRINE OF THE FAITH
WATAC  WOMEN AND THE AUSTRALIAN CHURCH
WSRT  WOMEN SCHOLARS OF RELIGION AND THEOLOGY
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I thank those members of Friends of Susanna and Broken Rites whom I interviewed. The gatekeepers of both groups were unstinting with their time and the help they gave me in approaching their members with my requests. They also showed me concern and advocacy for their members' wellbeing in many ways. My first acknowledgment honours the women and men whose generous self-revelation of their experiences of suffering clerical sexual abuse led me to hear that underneath their pain lies an organisational Church that is deeply flawed by this violence embedded in its clerical core. Richard Sipe says that women and men like these are the Church's 'prophets'. That is, they tell people what they do not want to hear.

I have found the long research thesis process a difficult task and have relied on academic support to keep going. So at the same time as I say that I am indebted to the woman who supervised the project I am struck by the paucity of meaning that conveys. Lenore Lyons brought a marvellous degree of intellectual rigour to the project and challenged me to seek out questions when I bogged down in description. Along with her academic excellence Lenore brought incisive editing skill. Soon after she became primary supervisor of this project a transfer into another area of tertiary education meant that Lenore's generously given supervision was in her own time and without recognition. I cannot repay such a gift and sincerely hope that the personal time she regains after this task's conclusion will be richly rewarding for her.

Thanks are due to Rebecca Albury who read and commented on portions and a complete draft of this thesis. Mike Donaldson, as head of Sociology Program at Wollongong University, gave succinct advice at a time when it was most needed. Robyn Foster willingly gave skilled technical assistance and helped me with administrative requirements. Jane Anderson, Marie Porter, Emma Mayhew, Angela Pratt and Gillian Vogl are women also travelling the doctoral candidate path. Their supportive conversations and e-mails meant a great deal to me in the dark moments and always showed me that I was not alone in the
experience. For that I thank them and wish them well in their own progression towards completed theses.

I am indebted to Margaret McGovern for suggesting I read feminist theology and to Kath McPhillips who introduced me into the circle of Women Scholars of Religion and Theology from whose scholarship I benefited greatly. Janet Morrissey gave me references to useful readings. My sustaining friends are the women of WATAC at state level and especially members of Wollongong WATAC whose creativity in being church is an ongoing source of joy. Jan Ryan, who is in the unenviable position of having both a husband and a friend (both of whom are old enough to know better) as doctoral students, is the loyalist of friends and I thank her for listening over the years.

Throughout my candidature I have drawn deeply on an inheritance of love given by many members of my family whose physical presence I no longer have. Gran (Margarita) Nolan, Gran (Lucy) Downes, Mum and Dad (Eileen and Vin Downes), The Boss (Frances Nolan), Bill Nolan (loving patriarch) and years of "mutual love and prayers" with my dear mentor and friend Charlie Mayne SJ.

I have depended through the years this thesis has taken on Bruce who is my dearest friend and husband and my greatest debt is to him. It is no small thing to be endlessly (and involuntarily) drawn into conversation about Catholicism and feminism often before sunrise and often well after sunset. His enduring support sustains me on a daily basis and his encouragement enriches me and becomes my greatest source of strength. During these years our children have known their mother as preoccupied and I'm sure often wondered why. So I give this thesis with my love to Stephen, Paul and Louise, Gabrielle and Christopher, and Matthew, and to their children, our delightful grandchildren, who I hope will experience a more inclusive and generous Church and a more present grandmother.
Thesis Certification

Certification

I, Mary L. Medley, declare that this thesis, submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy, in the Faculty of Arts, University of Wollongong, is wholly my own work unless otherwise referenced or acknowledged. The document has not been submitted for qualifications at any other academic institution.

Mary L Medley

29th June 20001
INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of a widely acknowledged crisis in contemporary Roman Catholicism. Increasing numbers of the men who comprise the religious ministry of the Roman Catholic Church are being shown to be sexually active in abusive ways against women, children and men. My contention throughout is that these acts are more than an individual's violence and therefore need to be understood within the tangible reality of the cultural and historical circumstances in which they occur. The reality of any religion is primarily recognised as a collective reality that is, "a source of personal and collective power, or disempowerment" (Erickson 1993, p. xi). Taking this collective approach leads me to share the opinion of Dorothy McRae-McMahon (1995, p. v) who says that she sees the church as "a Body, not a group of individuals expressing our devotion to God". From that viewpoint it seems critical, to me, that the specificities of Catholic clerical sexual abuse are seen as related to, and scrutinised within, the context of the Catholic Church. Dorothy McRae-McMahon then points to an important direction to take in order to do this when she says:

As we look at the subculture of violence and abuse that lies within our whole society and face that it also runs through the life of the church, we cannot avoid asking the essential questions about the source of this evil. Why is this violation there? ... Does it raise questions about our teachings and underlying assumptions about the right relationship between women and men? (McRae-McMahon 1995, p. vi).

The simple contradiction is that these sexually abusive men, because they are priests and religious Brothers, share Catholicism's ethos of clerical ministry and they are pledged to celibate nonsexually active lives. The aim of this thesis is to examine some of the systemic
aspects of that seeming paradox. It broadly uses the terms spelt out in Dorothy McRae-McMahon's honest, common-sense approach. To pose questions, however, about notions of a 'right' relationship between women and men underpinning Catholicism's teachings is to pose questions about gender relations. Taking that perspective brings the matter very quickly to a sociological view of Catholicism's interface with the concept of gender.

This thesis demonstrates that while gender is critically relevant to the clerical sexual abuse issue it also remains overlooked as a contributory factor in the Church's official responses. In fact I show that the same gendered views that are embedded in Church teachings about women can be detected in those policy documents developed in response to the abuse issue. In these documents the material actuality of sexual abuse as form of male violence is disregarded in favour of views that present abused persons as 'victims' and perpetrators as suffering psychological disorder and/or a moral lapse from celibacy (sin). Both these views are located with the individual and thereby the collective structure to which these men belong is neglected. However, in spite of that primary focus on the individual either contrarily, or conveniently, the physicality of the perpetrating individual is also overlooked. Sexual abuse involves embodied acts, whether or not such act/s include activity between the genitalia of the perpetrator and abused. However, in Church teaching, the body of the priest is ostensibly presented as abstracted from embodiment and sacralised to the extent that it is impossible for the Church to deal with priests' sexual activities in ways other than it presently does. That is, by regarding these sexual activities as psychological illness or moral failure.
This study of clerical sexual abuse, with its focus on Catholicism and gender and by centring the social aspects of systemic priesthood, differs markedly from existing works on clerical sexual abuse. These important gender and systemic aspects are worthy of examination because, although the thesis follows what are now accepted as well-utilised feminist methods, it leads to a new perspective by highlighting the specificities of clerical male violence and by distinguishing it from other forms of male violence. Sexually abusive men bear no external, identifiable, differentiating marks. They occupy and fit into their particular social landscapes such as families, workplaces and churches. Feminist research covers a broad canvas in its work of revealing the gender protection that these social structures afford to abusive men. While Catholic clerical men may be marked apart (by their clerical dress and unmarried lifestyles) from secular society and Protestant clerics, clerics who are abusive are not differentiated within their own organisations. Maurice Hamington (1995, p. 40), however, identifies Catholicism's absolute clerical particularity when he states, "the most obvious, singularly significant characteristic of the hierarchical Catholic Church is that it is exclusively male".

A sociological examination of Catholicism, as an institutional belief system with a masculine organisational process around those beliefs, is central to this work. Clerical sexual abuse is an individual material act occurring within a collectively constructed discursive context. Australian priest Paul Collins (1997, p. 102) argues that clerical sexual

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abuse is widespread and "its causes are pervasive and deeply embedded in the institutional church". Retrieving some of these structural and pervasive factors is the sociological task undertaken here. Much of the existing writing on clerical sexual abuse is psychologically based and focused on the behaviour of perpetrators as individuals and/or the detrimental outcomes for abused persons as individuals at the expense of systemic analysis (cf Rossetti 1990a, 1990b; Briggs 1995; Parkinson 1997). Relying on this 'deviant individual' approach allows the Church to exempt itself from undertaking a self-examination of the dominant ideologies of Catholicism. Further, the existing body of literature is mainly centred on the emotive issue of child sexual abuse (cf Rossetti 1990a, 1990b; Berry 1992; Jenkins 1996; Gill 1997) thus overlooking the numbers of women (and some men) who are sexually exploited by clerics. This thesis then is about Catholic clerical sexual abuse and it specifically examines the discourses and practices enveloping the men who are the perpetrators in this study: namely Catholic priests and Catholic priesthood.

Secular feminist studies of male violence uncover important connections between the sexual and physical abuses of women and children and the systemic protection provided to men through the structures of patriarchy. The sociological works of feminist theologians likewise illustrate how the abuses of women and children are tied to patriarchal religious structures. Drawing on this body of work assists me to develop a counter discourse to the prevailing male voice resonating through the Church's responses. Rita Nakashima-Brock, as one example, says that:

Religious ideas evolve to reflect patriarchal social structures. Male dominance is supported by male deities, a male clerical class, and ideologies of female
subordination, including women's physical weakness and uncleanness, and emotional and moral inferiority (Brock 1992, p. 5).

Elizabeth Johnson makes plain that all women are located on the margins of the church especially those concerned with the also marginalised 'liberation theology' within which feminist theology is contextualised. Johnson importantly connects the circularity of structural and individual sexism within the church. She says:

From the margins feminist liberation theology sees clearly that society and the church are pervaded by sexism with its twin faces of patriarchy and androcentrism. This social sin ... interlocks with other forms of oppression to shape a violent and dehumanized world (Johnson 1994, p. 22).

Clerical sexual abuse is a prime exemplar of male violence and Rosemary Radford Ruether (1989, p. 31) argues such oppression in the church is "rooted in and is the logical conclusion of basic patriarchal assumptions about women's subordinate status". Numerically, clerical perpetrators are, as in any society, overwhelmingly men and those they offend against are overwhelmingly women and children (Parkinson 1997, p. 29). Much of the Church's response to women's and children's disclosures of these human violations has, to date, been to employ tactics that charge complainants with secrecy. While some of those previously silenced voices are to some extent recovered here this is not the primary purpose of this study. The gendered reasons for silencing those voices that are at the heart of this work.
My own interest in this issue stems, as do a great range of women's investigations of social issues, from making the personal political. In the small rural community where I grew up over fifty years ago the parish priest was a serial sexual predator against many children in that parish and he was also involved in an ongoing sexual relationship with a married woman. However, only a decade ago I learned of the treatment meted out by the bishop in the capital city when he was notified of that priest's sexual practices. He silenced the woman complainant (my late mother) and without investigation of her allegations he moved the priest to another district that same day. (Apparently he was aware that the priest was a repeat offender). The time at which I heard about those formal patriarchal acts coincided with my mature-age undergraduate studies of feminist theory. That study provided me with the theoretical tools to leave aside personal anger and develop a framework to understand how clerical sexual violence is more than individual aberration. Alongside of this was a concurrent burgeoning interest in feminist theology and membership of religious, feminist activist groups that kept my interest alive. Women and the Australian Church (WATAČ), Australian Feminist Theology Foundation (AFTF), and Women Scholars of Religion and Theology (WSRT) and Women-Church are all variously concerned with the politics of questions about women's relationship/s with church. Their scholarship encouraged me to see this as a systemic and political issue. Finally, the thesis would not have taken shape without the human contribution of those abused persons I interviewed for this study. The insights of those women and men into their own experience and their questions about the contradictions of abuse in the Church in general, are foundational to the formation of this thesis. Material from those interviews crucially informed the directions of the research.
Terms and Definitions

All sexually abusive acts are acts of sexual violence (Easteal 1998, p. 227). For this reason the often used term 'sexual misconduct', although used by the Church and other writers, is rejected throughout this thesis. Clerical sexual abuse and clerical sexual violence are the terms I use. In the context of clerical sexual abuse all sexualising of a pastoral relationship is treated as an actively violent deed and not a simple and passive failure of virtue on the part of the perpetrator. Sexualisation of a ministerial relationship traverses boundaries of sexual, emotional and religious identities, trust is betrayed and injustice is perpetrated (Fortune 1994, p. 17).

Part of the injustice perpetrated by clerical sexual abuse is the devaluing of women and children. This thesis argues that such human devaluation is deeply pervasive in the Church. It is not only a consequence of clerical sexual abuse but it is also seeded in the causes of clerical sexual abuse and in the Church's official responses to complainants. I consider instances where women and children appear to have lesser human value than clerical men or are subjected to abusive treatment to be instances of misogyny. The term misogyny, then is used throughout to refer to those discourses and practices in which women's physical, rational and spiritual inferiority is assumed; where women are (mis)represented by their absence; and where there is a presumed understanding of female only in relation to a normative male order. It does not expressly rely on a literal, stated hatred of women.
Writers frequently use 'institutional church' and 'organisational church' as interchangeable terms. However, this thesis follows Gary Bouma's (1998) argument that, particularly in relation to religion, definitions of institution and organisation ought to be distinguished. He says that:

The concept, social institution, is used in social theory ... to refer to something larger than the corporation, something trans-organisational yet socially constructed, something which shapes social interaction and is in some way susceptible to being shaped (Bouma 1998, p. 233).

Organisations, by contrast, are structures of social relationship, social actors arranged in positions and roles; usually, but not always, deliberately arranged and designed to achieve some means and ends. Organisations are distinct from institutions by being arrangements of roles and positions (Bouma 1998, p. 235).

Taking Bouma's definitions I view Catholicism then as an institution whose norms and values regulate aspects of society and the Catholic Church as an organisation which arranges those norms and values for its own particular purpose. Separation of these definitions is particularly significant for later discussions in this thesis, which demonstrate how the institutional discursive devaluing of women is reflected in the organisational practices against women and children. For this reason I use the term 'organisational church' to emphasise its organisational basis.

Catholic male religious have two categories: 'priests', who are ordained to Holy Orders with the authority to administer sacraments, and vowed 'Brothers' who are members of men's
Religious Orders without the powers of priesthood. Both groups of men are required to uphold celibate practice. Sexual offences, against people in this study, were committed by both categories of men. However, the differences between the institutional and organisational aspects of the two categories of men place a detailed study of both systems outside the range of this thesis. Section Three deals with priesthood and some of the rituals of Roman Catholicism only performed by ordained priests and for that reason attention is only given to priests and priesthood in this thesis. See Gill (1997) as one example of recent discussion of Catholic Brothers and the sexual abuse of boys.

Christology is the term given to the branch of theology related to Christ. Its understanding in the Roman Catholic Church, is that Jesus Christ has two natures, human (Jesus) and divine (Christ) "concurring into one hypostasis" (Johnson 1994, p. 35). I draw on this concept because it is crucially related to priesthood. From Chapter Four onwards I use the anthropological work of Roy Rappaport (1999) to show that by considering 'divinity' as a discursive assertion it is possible to bring theological concepts into sociology. Church teaching genders the Christological discourse and as a consequence of this distortion the "human man Jesus is used to tie the knot between maleness and divinity very tightly" (Johnson 1994, p. 35). The Catholic Church, however, constructs only Jesus' maleness as

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2 Some cited works use the term 'institutional' church where I would use 'organisational' church (cf Collins 1997, p. 103) given on page 4 of this Introduction. I do not alter other authors' word use.

3 Rappaport (1999) is relied on throughout this thesis because of his extensive focus on ritual as religion's central component. Rappaport uses an anthropological method to demonstrate 'how' theology (faith in search of reason) may be drawn into social theory without the requirement of a 'faith' aspect for either writer or reader. Works such as Milbank (1990) Theology & Social Theory: Beyond Secular Belief, for example, give
endowed with divinity (his characteristics of age, ethnicity or social class are not regarded as divine). Attributes of a divine nature are also ascribed to particular functions of its all-male priesthood and this makes possible a gender discussion of priesthood as a highly particularised form of masculinity.

The terms 'women' and 'religious' are variously coupled throughout. The distinction includes as 'religious women' all women who claim religion as an aspect of identity and 'women religious' as being those women who are committed to dedicated lives by vow or religious profession and who are commonly referred to as nuns. Finally, the convention of presenting the terms 'Catholic' and 'Catholic Church' in upper case 'C' is followed and these are to be taken as referring to Roman Catholicism rather than catholic in the sense of universal and church as a general term. Likewise 'The Church' is used here to mean Roman Catholic Church unless otherwise specified.

**Organisation of the Thesis**

The thesis has three sections in which the religious manifestation of gender provides the over-arching theme. It does not propose a theory of gender so much as it views the implications of gender-related religious discourses and practices in clerical sexual abuse.

comprehensive analyses of the relationship between theology and social theory and question the present enterprise of the sociology of religion. These perspectives, however, are less pertinent to this thesis topic.
Part One (Chapters One to Four) begins by following the trajectory of media publicity that brought clerical sexual abuse to public attention and the Church's policy responses to that public gaze. Media reporting and the Church's responses highlight the fact that clerical sexual abuse is a very gendered occurrence yet in both of these gender remains unremarked. I explore the significance of that absence and argue the need for gender analysis. This is taken up by drawing on the theoretical concept of 'separate spheres'. The perspectives of public/private utilised by feminist social theory are followed by Durkheim's (1971 [1915]) postulation of a sacred/profane division premised on and sustained by ritual. The latter is retained and drawn on to inform the remainder of the thesis. Part Two (Chapter Five) gives an account of the methodology used for the empirical component of the thesis. Part Three (Chapters Six and Seven) connects back to the chapters in Part One by examining the ordaining of men alone into priesthood, with particular reference to the embodiment aspects, and some rituals that are central to Catholic populations but whose enactment is reserved exclusively to the ordained. The examination in these two chapters particularises sexual abuse by priests as a systemic flaw created by Catholicism's gendered divisions between the sacred/profane.

A broad range of sociological issues is canvassed to search out the discursive processes and social practices whereby the sexually abusive behaviour of some men, who are celibate for religious motives, is not viewed as a systemic problem by the hierarchy of the Roman

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4 The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life first published [1915]. From this point on only the later (1971) edition used for this thesis is cited.
Catholic Church. Throughout this thesis the gendered nature of Catholicism persists in order to ask thematic questions. What are the processes that have allowed this practice to happen? What processes have informed the organisational Church's ability to comprehend and respond to the issue? What feminist perspectives reveal misogyny as a social process, of which clerical sexual abuse is a concrete manifestation violently expressed, in a history of devaluation of women?

Chapter Outlines

Because clerical sexual abuse has aroused public controversy in Australia since the late 1980s, in Chapter One I make my point of entry a consideration of whether an explanation of that abuse lies with the concept of moral panic. Stanley Cohen's (1980) influential theory of moral panic is "chiefly concerned with contemporary social phenomena" and the explication of the sudden newsworthiness of the characteristics of these events (Morgan 1997, p. 17). The sequence begins with a sudden high media exposure of specific behaviours (in identifiable groups) that are generally deemed to be deviant behaviours followed by the "reaction to deviance both by the public as a whole and by agents of social control" (Cohen 1980, p. 16). The prime ingredient in the Church's crisis is popularly perceived as sexual behaviour and sexuality which, "is a fertile source of moral panic" (Weeks 1985, p. 44). I apply Cohen's theory to three particular examples of Australian clerical sexual abuse. In each case, however, I show that there is not a neat fit between the example I use and the familiar sequence of moral panic; perceived deviance and the reactions to it. However, as part of that examination I found that some specific Australian
Broadcasting Commission (ABC) television programs, screened between 1992 and 1996, shifted their emphasis from 'victim' to 'perpetrator'. As a consequence of this media action, I contend the Church could no longer procrastinate about issuing formal responses. Thus the media was an instrumental actor in the publication of response documents.

In Chapter Two I examine three official documents of the organisational Australian Catholic Church to analyse the approaches on which the Church bases its responses. The first is a policy document, *Towards Healing: Principles and Procedures In Responding To Complaints Of Sexual Abuse Against Personnel Of The Catholic Church In Australia* (1996). The second is guidelines for a code of professional practices, *Integrity in Ministry: A Document of Principles and Standards for Catholic Clergy & Religious in Australia* (1999). In 1996 the Australian Catholic Bishops detailed a nine-point plan of action as part of its response to clerical sexual abuse. Point seven in that plan was the undertaking of a study of factors specific to the Catholic Church, which might lead to sexual abuse by priests and religious (*Eureka Street* 1996, p. 15). The publication *Towards Understanding: A study of factors specific to the Catholic Church which might lead to sexual abuse by priests and religious [Draft] (1999)* is the outcome of that step. In this chapter I begin to critique the absence from these Church responses, of factors that I consider are specific to sexual abuse.

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5 These two publications are available without cost on request or from bookshops.
6 The National Committee For Professional Standards (A Committee of the Australian Catholic Bishops & the Australian Leaders of Religious Institutes) readily made this Draft document available to me on request. It is described to me as "a document for discussion and further research and analysis. The document is presented in this context of a discussion document and not as a definitive statement of conclusions. In providing a copy of this document you are asked to respect its status". Any reference to the document in this thesis includes the
by Catholic priests. Most attention is given to the policy document *Towards Healing* (1996) because it is the one that directly impacts on the ways in which the Church responds to complainants.

In Chapter Three I examine feminism’s insistence that coercive sexual activity is ‘violence’ and that male violence is supported structurally. I turn to feminist theorists’ use of the implications of the public/private division in social life as a framework to examine patriarchal (structural) influences that provide systemic support for abusive men. While the secular public/private distinction upholds the notion that women are not equal to men, Catholicism also uses ‘separate spheres’ as its means of support for gendered divisions. Here complementarity endorses the idea that women are equal to, but different from, men and it is in the socially-constructed Church discourses of this distortion that clerical violence is embedded. Dominant male theologies argue that the concept of women as equal to but subordinate to men is divinely sanctioned. These discourses thus divest women, and their dependents, children, of bodily rights and seemingly sanction sexual violence against them. An examination of the small body of literature dealing specifically with Catholic clerical sexual violence highlights the glaring absence of structure in mainstream analyses. I critique the predominant use of psychological approaches to, and the gendered nature of, these works on which the Church’s responses rely. However, the public/private distinction term "Draft" and (as requested) I have not made the document itself (or any portion of it) available to any other person. My sincere hope is that it is widely disseminated and generates broad discussion.

7 Chapters Six and Seven deal at length with these ‘absent factors’.
has limited application in this situation and that leads me to draw on the sacred/profane
dichotomy as an analytic tool.

I continue using the concept of separate spheres in Chapter Four by turning to Durkheim's
(1971) sacred/profane dichotomy on which he bases his sociology of religion. Durkheim
theorises the sacred/profane to show that it is in fact the discursive pre-condition for
religion with ritual as its sustaining practice. While on the one hand Durkheim's theory
could be dismissed for its gender blindness, on the other it is valuable because, as Victoria
Erickson's work (1993, p. 190) shows, "implicit in his sociology of religion is a theory of
gender". Durkheim argues that the sacred is not a unitary category. The sacred holds an
internal contradiction allowing the moral and the immoral to coexist without internal
conflict. In Catholicism that contrariety manifests as a distorted Christology that "functions
as a sacred justification for male dominance and female subordination" (Johnson 1994, p.
151). This sacred distinction is foundationally detrimental to all women while at the same
time being advantageous to all priested men and it affords protection to abusive priests
because they remain within the sacred. However, Durkheim's gendered account omits two
aspects of religion: women and God. Feminist writers on religion do not resile from
accounting for these aspects and in so doing provide a more inclusive account of
Catholicism with particular reference to the legitimation of abuse. Feminist theology
explains misogyny and its expression as violence in the realm of the sacred through
attention to those theological perspectives "on the role of Christian theology in
undergirding an abusive culture" (Carlson-Brown & Bohn 1989, p. xii). There is, however,
little feminist writing that deals specifically with sexual violence by priests or clerics. Using this body of literature to re-read Durkheim from a feminist perspective facilitates my attempt to relocate clerical sexual abuse outside the Church's presentation of passive individual acts of moral failure.

Chapter Five accounts for the empirical aspect of this project and is set out in two sections. The first section provides a summary of the sample by outlining details of the sample and data collection. The study may be categorised into what (Stake 1994, p. 237 emphasis original) names as an "intrinsic case study". That is, this study provides a means of gaining a greater understanding of the grounded and concrete particularities of Catholic clerical sexual abuse, as shown in Part One, and the discourses of the structural arena within which these flourish, as demonstrated in Part Three. In the second section I discuss the application of that data in light of the body of literature debating the interpretations of feminist tradition of social research, as these are applicable to this study. Central to this is a discussion of what I call 'intimate listening' as a qualitative data collection technique.

The data (transcripts) from the interviews are personal accounts of what Dorothy McRae-McMahon (1995, p. v) calls "the agony of their experience" alongside of graphic pictures and discourses of priests' sexual practices that are widely marked apart from the espoused ideals of priesthood. In listening intimately to the experiences and questions raised by the interviewees two things became apparent to me. Firstly, that to continue to recount
individual experiences of abuse is to continue to locate clerical sexual abuse with the
abused and not the perpetrator. Secondly, that part of the "repeated failure of the church to
face this issue" (McRae-McMahon 1995, p. v) lies in its broad generalisations that conflate
priests and religious. For these reasons, rather than providing respondent's accounts of
individual clerics' abusive behaviour towards them and the Church's treatment of them as
complainants, my emphasis is on abusers rather than abused and priests as distinguished
from other religious or church workers. This project's value as a case study lies in its
illustration of the connection between an 'intrinsic' (interest) in the priest and the
'instrumental' (understanding) of priesthood suggested by Stake's (1994) method.

Chapters Six and Seven stem directly from listening to participant's taped interviews and
their transcripts. Thinking through issues that participants raised I recognise that it is
important to distinguish priest from priesthood. Hence I broadly describe these two
chapters as 'who priests are' and 'what priests do'. This needs some disclaimer. This study is
concerned with what I argue are the underlying systemic factors that contribute to or
perhaps even foster the sexual violence of some priests. As such there is no claim for this
section as an objective study of priesthood as either a functionary system or an ecclesial
system. Thus it does not account for the enormity of good done by great numbers of priests.
The language of economics, often used in relation to religion as an exchange system (cf
Turner B. 1991), is not applicable here. My continuing contention is that sexual violence
must be viewed in its own arena; that is not as sex but as violence. Hence there is no credit
of good deeds to offset the debit of violent deeds. I agree with Paul Collins that clerical sexual abuse,

indicates that at the heart of the hierarchical and clerical lifestyle there is a pervasive dysfunction that is slowly becoming more obvious. The issue is not one of individual priests, but of an increasingly dysfunctional institution that serves neither the needs of those within it nor the needs of the ministry (Collins 1997, p. 103).

In Chapter Six I examine what I regard as a major disjuncture in the priesting of men that apparently segregates the first requirement for ordination (a sexed male body) from the sexed instrumentality of that body. Hence I speak about mandatory celibacy as inducing a 'disembodied masculinity' which gives further evidence of Durkheim's sacred/profane split. In Durkheim's terms ordination may be read as the establishment of a negative cult. The Roman Catholic Church does not ordain women to its priesthood. The Church's main argument for its non-ordination of women is that they cannot give iconic representation of Christ. This stems from the distortion of Christology that wrongly constructs Christ as ultimately male. Therefore I raise the question of the non-ordination of women in the Catholic Church, not to present pro-ordination arguments, but to have a clearer view of embodiment and ordination by seeking the meaning of the non-ordination of women's bodies. Sacred/profane and disembodied/embodied splits, I show, are preserved by acts of male violence.

In Chapter Seven I focus on ritual as the most pertinent factor to understand the systemic aspects of priesthood. Taking this perspective is a direct result of reflecting on interviewees'
comments about their experiences that link ritual and sexual abuse. Rituals as the "sequences of formal acts and utterances" (Rappaport 1999, p. 27) of liturgical orders are a unique facet of priesthood and thus these commonly held practices are a source for understanding the gendered nature of priesthood. The individual priest by being ordained into a priesthood that is collectively sacred is thereby likewise identified as sacred. Again the sacred/profane division is reflected in the distinction of ritual into ordinary (profane) and extraordinary (sacred) gendered temporal periods. Thus ritual's ability to separate and distinguish is a useful tool to examine gender characteristics. Three specific rituals; the Washing of the Hands within the Roman Mass, Eucharist, and Confession; all the exclusive preserve of the ordained, are examined for their gender dichotomies. These hold explicit and implicit instances of priestly power to engage in coercive sexual acts and to separate the priest from those acts. In the last section dealing with the confessional ritual I demonstrate priests' ability to move between discursive positions, in relation to themselves as confessor (and abuser) and the penitent, by bringing in examples from the interviews.

In my conclusion I argue that this thesis, as an intrinsic case study, provides a relevant account of the social context of clerical sexual abuse. Its sociological perspectives give insight into the gender significance of the structure that ordains men alone into priesthood and thereby the thesis develops a context to examine a highly sacralised masculinity. This is a broader view than those current works that are limited to consideration of an individual priest as perpetrator. I attribute the analyses of feminist theorists, most notably Victoria Erickson's work on Durkheim's sacred/profane theory, with being a valuable and insightful
work from which I gained a clearer understanding of the importance of gender to this issue. If the Church is to advance beyond seeing clerical sexual abuse as a crisis in need of 'healing' then my contention is that it will be through study of the gender aspects that it will be able to move 'towards understanding'. Numerous theologians and writers within the Church have already broken this ground and Church hierarchy now needs to 'listen intimately' to these women and men.