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The Relative Effects of a Scandal on Member Engagement in Rites of Integration and Rites of Passage: Evidence from a Child Abuse Scandal in the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia

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Abstract. Organizational research has documented that scandals lead to negative aggregate stakeholder reactions. There is little reason to believe, however, that the effects of a scandal are homogenous across different types of engagement. We therefore compare the effects of a scandal on member engagement in two types of rites at normative organizations: rites of integration and rites of passage. Rites of integration focus on the community, celebrate organizational values, and help strengthen organizational identification; they are thus enacted more by core members. Rites of passage focus on the individual, celebrate transition between social roles, and require only occasional engagement; they are thus enacted by core and peripheral members. Because of these differences, we hypothesize that a normative organization’s implication in a scandal affects rites of passage more negatively than rites of integration, but that this effect depends on scandal prevalence among neighboring organizations, organizational age, and organizational size. We test our hypotheses in the context of a child abuse scandal in the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Using yearly parish-level data from 1990 to 2010, we find that a parish’s implication in the scandal was associated with a larger decline in rites of passage (marriages, baptisms, and funerals) than in rites of integration (mass attendance). This difference was reversed with the increase in scandal prevalence. Furthermore, rites of integration were more resilient than rites of passage at older and larger parishes. To help rule in the plausibility of our organization-level theory, we present a simulation grounded in individual-level polling data from the context.

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Keywords: scandals • member engagement • organizational rites • organizational identification • religion

Introduction

Scandals, or the “disruptive publicity of transgression” (Adut 2005, p. 219), have direct and, at times, irreversible consequences for implicated actors. Organizational-level research has studied how scandals affect reactions of various stakeholders, including organizational members, in aggregate (Rhee and Haunschild 2006, Sullivan et al. 2007, Jonsson et al. 2009, Yenkey 2018). There is little reason to believe, however, that the effects of a scandal are homogenous across different types of member engagement; yet, there is no theory about such differences (Yenkey 2018). If scandals affect different types of member engagement in different ways, then research that focuses on aggregate reactions to scandals or examines isolated

responses risks producing a one-sided, or even distorted, picture (Trice and Beyer 1984, Yenkey 2018). We therefore pose the following research question: What is the effect of a scandal on different types of member engagement?

To answer this question, we draw on individual-level research that has highlighted the role of organizational identification for differing perceptual reactions to scandals (Ravasi and Schultz 2006, Grandey et al. 2015, Petriglieri 2015). We propose that these individual-level perceptual differences translate into different types of member engagement at the organizational level. Building on the taxonomy of Trice and Beyer (1984), we specifically examine how scandals affect member engagement

in rites of integration and rites of passage. Organizational rites are preplanned and bounded in time microlevel interactions that shape macro-level outcomes (Dacin et al. 2010). Rites of integration celebrate the organizational community, highlight the stability of organizational values and norms, help create a sense of belonging, and build identification with the organization (Trice and Beyer 1984, Islam and Zyphur 2009). They include communal retreats, professional association meetings, and organizational community-building events, such as picnics (Mechling and Wilson 1988) or dinners (Dacin et al. 2010). They are enacted more by core organizational members who highly identify with the organization.¹ Rites of passage, on the other hand, celebrate individuals and highlight their transition from one social role to the next, allowing for an occasional public demonstration of the transition (van Gennep 1960 [1909], Trice and Beyer 1984). These include initiations into a profession (Lortie 1968, Van Maanen 1973), celebrations of professional advancements (Rohlen 1973), or retirement ceremonies (Trice and Beyer 1984). Rites of passage are enacted by both highly identifying core members and less identifying peripheral members.

We theorize that an organization's implication in a scandal affects member engagement in the two types of rites differently. In our theorizing, we specifically focus on member engagement at normative organizations. This is because normative organizations rely on shared values and beliefs between members and the organization, and member engagement is closely linked to the mission of these organizations (Albert and Whetten 1985). Many, if not most, of the largest and oldest organizations in the world are normative organizations, including religious and educational organizations, political parties, professional associations, and labor unions, as well as organizations focused on civil rights, the environment, and other normative causes (Albert and Whetten 1985, Curtis et al. 2001). Although organizational scholars acknowledge the importance of member engagement with such organizations through a variety of different cultural forms, such as rituals, symbols, ceremonies, and stories (Dutton et al. 1994), to date there has not been a systematic examination of how scandals influence different types of member engagement at these organizations.

Building on individual-level theory of organizational identification we first highlight two pathways through which scandals affect members with different levels of identification: perceptions about a scandal and psychological costs of severing ties with a scandalized organization. We then theorize that when a normative organization becomes implicated in a scandal, engagement by highly identifying core members will be more resilient, whereas less identifying peripheral members will be more likely to halt engagement. Because rites of integration are primarily enacted by

core members and rites of passage are enacted by all members, we hypothesize that at an organizational level scandal will have a greater negative effect on rites of passage than rites of integration. We further propose that as a scandal spreads among neighboring organizations, even engagement in rites of integration may become more difficult to sustain. As a result, as the prevalence of a scandal among neighboring organizations increases, a normative organization's implication in a scandal will more negatively affect member engagement in rites of integration than in rites of passage. Finally, if organizational identification is a mechanism that drives these differences, then organizations that develop stronger identification with their core members, that is, older and larger organizations, should observe higher levels of resilience in rites of integration. Therefore, in the final set of hypotheses we propose that organizational age and size will more positively moderate the effect of a scandal on rites of integration versus rites of passage.

Our empirical context is a child sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Using longitudinal parish-level measures for the period 1990–2010, we test how the scandal affected engagement in rites of passage (marriages, baptisms, and funerals) versus rites of integration (mass attendance). The advantage of our parish-level panel data are the detailed engagement statistics that each Catholic parish collects on a yearly basis, which allowed us to systematically track how the scandal affected the two types of rites at individual parishes. In order to directly compare changes in engagement in the two different types of rites, which are by definition measured on different scales, we standardize the raw engagement numbers and use seemingly unrelated regressions and two-way fixed effect models to estimate the relative change in each type of rite. We find that in parishes that had employed priests accused of sexual misconduct, member engagement in rites of passage declined more than member engagement in rites of integration. We also document that as the prevalence of the scandal among neighboring parishes increased, the parish's implication in the scandal had a greater negative effect on rites of integration than on rites of passage. Finally, we observe that, compared with rites of passage, rites of integration were more resilient at older and larger parishes.

A limitation of our organization-level data, however, is that they cannot distinguish whether the observed changes in member engagement are due to withdrawal from rites of passage by peripheral members or withdrawal by both core and peripheral members. We address this limitation with two additional sets of analyses. First, we analyze individual-level historical local polling data from Philadelphia collected in 2005, during the scandal. These data indicate that Catholics who frequently attended Sunday mass (core members) had more favorable views of the Catholic Church after the

2005 scandal than Catholics who did not deeply engage with the Church (peripheral members). To the extent that such perceptual differences translate into behavioral tendencies, the evidence from the polling data suggests that peripheral members might be withdrawing from the Church at higher rates than core members. Second, we designed a simulation that helps rule in our theoretical explanation using assumptions drawn from the wealth of individual-level national research about engagement in the Catholic Church and members' views of the scandal. The polling data and simulation provide additional confidence in the plausibility of our main logic.

We make two main contributions to organizational research on scandals. Our first contribution is in highlighting the heterogeneity in types of member engagement and theorizing about the relative effects of a scandal on them. Scandals affect rites of integration less negatively than rites of passage, because of their more involved, bonding, and communal nature, and ultimately higher identification of core organizational members who enact rites of integration. The results of our analyses are consistent with this argument. To our knowledge, this is the first study on scandals to focus on the differences between types of engagement. Our second contribution is in documenting the differential role of scandal prevalence, organizational age, and size. We illustrate that member engagement in rites of integration declines more than in rites of passage as the scandal becomes more prevalent among neighboring organizations. This result indicates that if a scandal is prevalent, it may be disruptive even for rites of integration, the essence of a normative organization. Our findings that the relative resilience of rites of integration is more likely to be observed at older and larger normative organizations indicates that these types of organizations may be better equipped at preserving engagement by core members in light of a scandal. We conclude by outlining directions for future organizational research on scandals and other types of negative events and by highlighting practical implications of our study for crisis and reputation management experts.

Theoretical Foundations

A scandal is the disruptive publicity of a transgression that breaches group or societal norms (Adut 2005, Sims 2009, Piazza and Jourdan 2018). The literature on scandals, rooted largely in sociology, identifies two necessary elements of scandals. The first element is intentional misconduct or transgressions committed—or alleged to have been committed—by social actors (Molotch and Lester 1974, Turner 1974, Adut 2005). Scandals are therefore preceded by “disgraceful or discreditable” occurrences (Marcus and Goodman 1991, p. 284; Warren 2007). The second necessary element of a

scandal is publicity. When previously hidden transgressions become public, they are usually difficult to deny (Molotch and Lester 1974, Warren 2007, Adut 2008). Even if a transgression is known to some, only when information about it enters the public sphere does the social drama unfold (Sims 2009), and a true scandal is created (Adut 2005, Piazza and Jourdan 2024). In short, “No publicity, no scandal” (Adut 2008, p. 19).

Organizational literature has also focused on the topic of scandals, although, as Piazza and Jourdan (2018) noted, it has primarily theorized about related constructs, such as corporate social irresponsibility, wrongdoing, misconduct, crisis, and stigma (see Greve et al. (2010) and Palmer et al. (2016) for reviews). Some organizational scholars in this domain use constructs closely related to the empirical context of their studies: ecoharmful behavior (Flammer 2013), financial misconduct (Naumovska and Lavie 2021), financial fraud (Shi et al. 2017), and bribery (Jeong and Siegel 2018). Others focus on broader theoretical constructs, such as wrongdoing or misconduct. Oftentimes authors from the latter category use different constructs to refer to the same events. For instance, product recalls are referred to as negative events (Zavyalova et al. 2012) or crises (Pearson and Mitroff 1993); earnings restatements are referred to as violations (Bundy et al. 2021), financial misconduct (Zorn et al. 2017), or organizational misconduct (Lungeanu et al. 2018); industrial accidents are theorized as corporate social irresponsibility (Lange and Washburn 2012) or negative events (Hofmann and Stetzer 1998). The reverse is also true—frequently, different types of events are referred to by the same theoretical construct: product safety issues, financial restatements, and fraud are referred to as “organizational misconduct”; bankruptcy, industrial accidents, and product defects have been theorized under the umbrella of “stigma” or “event-stigma” (Sutton and Callahan 1987, Hudson 2008). Although there exist some differences in the definitions and operationalizations of these constructs, they have underlying similarities: They violate legal, ethical, or social norms and result in harm to organizational stakeholders (Pollock et al. 2016).

In building our hypotheses, we therefore draw from the rich research encompassing these different theoretical constructs, though we use the term scandal. We do this for two reasons. First, this term best theoretically aligns with our study's context: the clarity about Catholic priests' culpability, the central role of the media, and the engulfment of third parties, such as social control agents and church leadership. The second is precedence: academic research on child abuse in the Catholic Church has predominantly referred to it as scandal (Hungerman 2013; Piazza and Jourdan 2018, 2024) and public discourse around the abuse also used this term (e.g., “one of the biggest scandals of our times”; Daily Mirror 2003). Despite our choice in terminology, in the Discussion

section we highlight how our insights and findings can be carried over to research in the related domains.

Organizational research on scandals and related constructs can broadly be separated into two streams: studies that examined organizational-level consequences and those that focused on individual-level perceptual differences surrounding such events. We summarize key findings from each stream here.

Organizational Consequences of Scandals

Organizational-level studies have generally found that when organizations are involved in scandals or other types of negative events, they risk losing stakeholders' approval and support. Organizational scholars have examined reactions to scandals and other negative events by various organizational stakeholders, including investors (Paruchuri and Misangyi 2015), customers (Rhee and Haunschild 2006, Jonsson et al. 2009), network partners (Sullivan et al. 2007), and the media (Zavyalova et al. 2012, Clemente and Gabbioneta 2017). These studies systematically find that scandals lead to lower approval and support from various organizational stakeholders, resulting in negative organizational outcomes (Sutton and Callahan 1987, Suchman 1995, Morrison and Robinson 1997). For instance, a scandal at Skandia AB, a Swedish insurance company, led to customer penalties and loss of sales (Jonsson et al. 2009); the British parliamentary expenses scandal led to public outcry and fury, eventually leading to the exit of some implicated Members of Parliament (Graffin et al. 2013); and local child abuse scandals in the Catholic Church led to decreased membership (Piazza and Jourdan 2018).

Scandals are rarely limited to a single individual or organization, however, and they can become prevalent among numerous actors (Adut 2005, Piazza and Jourdan 2018). A genuine scandal spreads from one social actor accused of committing a transgression to others who may be suspected of doing the same (Adut 2005). After information about a transgression becomes public and creates a scandal, stakeholders may suspect that other organizations are also culpable (Barnett and King 2008, Jonsson et al. 2009, Zavyalova et al. 2012). As the number of such allegations increases, a scandal attracts even more public attention toward a larger number of organizations. This results in multiple-actor scandals and intensified condemnation of those who may be implicated (Dewan and Jensen 2020).

Individuals and organizations who are proximate in some way to scandalized others face a higher risk of being affected by a scandal. This proximity may be related to organizational characteristics (Jonsson et al. 2009, Greve et al. 2010), category membership (Barnett and King 2008), or network position (Pontikes et al. 2010). Typically, this effect is negative and occurs due to "category confusion" (Fiske and Taylor 2008, p. 268), "categorical delegitimization" (Jonsson et al. 2009; Greve

et al. 2010, p. 89), "reputational spillover" (Barnett and King 2008, p. 1160), or "stigma by association" (Pontikes et al. 2010, p. 457). However, more recent studies have also pointed to a substitution effect spurred by scandals, suggesting that in light of peers' scandals an organization may benefit from positive spillovers. Such dynamics were observed in the context of the Catholic Church scandal, with parishioners leaving the Catholic Church for other religious denominations (Hungerman 2013, Piazza and Jourdan 2018) and in the context of more sophisticated investors increasing their shareholdings in nonscandalized firms (Naumovska and Lavie 2021). Regardless of the direction of the spillover, however, both sets of studies suggest that as a scandal becomes more prevalent among proximate peers, a focal organization is more likely to face consequences.

Individual Perceptions of Scandals

Complementing the work on the organizational consequences of scandals, individual-level studies have focused on differences in interpretations of and perceptual responses to scandals. A key insight of this research is that not all stakeholders interpret these events in the same way (Grandey et al. 2013, Petriglieri 2015). One of the main reasons for differing perceptions about scandals is stakeholders' levels of organizational identification (Hastorf and Cantril 1954, Petriglieri 2015, Zavyalova et al. 2016). Some stakeholders may highly identify with an organization, forming a perception of oneness (Ashforth and Mael 1989, Dutton et al. 1994) and experiencing organizational events as personal (Mael and Ashforth 1992). For example, when information about child abuse by Catholic priests in Boston became public, some parishioners experienced visceral feelings of "anger, betrayal, and shock," whereas others were numbed by "pain and disequilibrium" (Gutierrez et al. 2010, p. 682). Studying alumni perceptions of the Sandusky scandal at Penn State, Eury et al. (2018) documented that the connection between members and the organization could be so strong that even some former organizational members who developed legacy identification experienced emotional struggles when they learned about the scandal. Other stakeholders, however, may have lower levels of identification and experience the same organizational event differently. Such stakeholders are less likely to perceive an organizational scandal as self-referent, incurring lower cognitive and emotional costs. Overall, when an organization is involved in a scandal, stakeholders' perceptions of the scandal depend on the level of identification developed toward the organization (Ravasi and Schultz 2006, Grandey et al. 2015, Petriglieri 2015).

This review of the organizational-level and individual-level research on scandals and other negative events highlights two issues. First, individual-level studies have largely focused on "cognitive reactions," rather

than “material actions” in the form of future engagement with the scandalized organization (Yenkey 2016, p. 116). Echoing this point, Eury et al. (2018, p. 849) have emphasized the need to complement the work on scandals that focuses on “expressions of intentions about future behavior” to include “the linkages to explicit behavior.” Second, at the organization-level, studies have largely focused on how scandals and other negative events affect one type of stakeholder engagement. Yet, member engagement with an organization takes a variety of forms (Trice and Beyer 1984, Dutton et al. 1994). In this study, therefore, we draw on organizational-level research on the consequences of scandals and individual-level research on differing perceptual reactions to scandals to explore how scandals affect different types of member engagement at normative organizations.

Theoretical Development and Hypotheses

Organizational research has acknowledged a diversity of cultural forms through which members engage with organizations. For example, Dutton et al. (1994, p. 243) noted that “Organizations have a broad repertoire of cultural forms such as rituals, symbols, ceremonies, and stories that encode and reproduce shared organizational patterns of behavior and interpretation (Allaire and Firsirotu 1984). Rituals, ceremonies, and stories objectify and communicate the collective organizational identity to organizational members.” Rituals specifically, have been discussed as actions infused with symbolism (Kertzer 1988) and as planned social dramas that help build a sense of cohesiveness and satisfy the basic need for a social bond among members (Smith and Stewart 2011, p. 115). Rituals are thus essential practices without which no society could function (Islam and Zyphur 2009, p. 118). We focus on a specific type of a ritual: organizational rites.

Organizational Rites

Building on Van Gennep’s foundational work that coined the term “rites of passage” (Van Gennep 1960 [1909]), Trice and Beyer introduced the construct to management research and distinguished rites from other cultural forms. They define rites as “relatively elaborate, dramatic, planned sets of activities that consolidate various forms of cultural expressions into one event, which is carried out through social interactions, usually for the benefit of an audience” (Trice and Beyer 1984, p. 655). Rites are observed in an incredible range of organizational settings, including universities (Lortie 1968, Mechling and Wilson 1988, Beyer and Niño 2001, Dacin et al. 2010), political organizations (Kertzer 1988), and professions, such as police (Van Maanen 1973), air traffic controllers (Hallier and James 1999), coal mine workers (Vaught and Smith 1980), and the military (Bourne

1967). Rites are also seen in the secular symbolism of sporting events (Gusfield and Michalowicz 1984), and the parties, conventions, and routines experienced in work careers (Trice and Morand 1989) and run-of-the-mill businesses (Rohlen 1973, Deal and Kennedy 1982, Trice and Beyer 1984, Harris and Sutton 1986).² Trice and Beyer (1984) developed a taxonomy of organizational rites, which includes rites of integration and rites of passage, and highlighted their important differences. Taking their taxonomy as a starting point, we specifically focus on the distinction between rites of integration and rites of passage.

Both types of rites are enacted by individual members, but they have important organizational consequences. These microlevel interactions serve as “powerful devices” that help structure and support macro-level outcomes (Dacin et al. 2010, p. 1401). Both types of rites exemplify ways and settings in which members learn how “we do things around here” (Deal and Kennedy 1982, p. 60) and induce individuals to buy into the system (Fine 1984). Both provide for a socialization process that weaves the very substance of organizational culture and helps the organization exist (Dion 1996). As a result, both rites of integration and rites of passage provide the foundation for member engagement (Trice and Beyer 1984) and ensure the maintenance of social order within the organization (Dacin et al. 2010). Overall, rites of integration and rites of passage are important for normative organizations and their members, albeit in their own unique ways.

Rites of Integration. Rites of integration are community-focused standardized sets of behaviors in an organization that celebrate the stability of “shared affects, values, or attitudes” (Trice and Beyer 1984, Islam and Zyphur 2009, p. 132). They bind organizational members together and help produce feelings of solidarity, camaraderie, and *communitas* among organizational members (Deal and Kennedy 1982, Turner 2004, Kane and Park 2009, Mazmanian and Beckman 2018). They focus on the collective and help create a sense of communal unity in the organization (Islam and Zyphur 2009) and “manage anxieties” of organizational life (Trice and Beyer 1984, p. 655). Because of their permeation throughout social interactions among organizational members, rites of integration institutionalize members’ connections to one another. Moreover, they help enhance members’ emotional and ideological commitment to the organization (Islam and Zyphur 2009), establish a sense of belonging to the organization (Dion 1996), and build a stronger identification with it.

At the individual level, engagement in rites of integration develops the feeling of connectedness among members and helps build a shared understanding of common values, thus creating a sense of community and belonging (Whitehouse and Lanman 2014, Ashforth

and Schinoff 2016). Examples of rites of integration beyond the context of normative organizations include tailgate parties and group chants at sporting events (Drenten et al. 2009; Eury et al. 2018, p. 828), attendance of annual meetings of professional associations, or corporate parties and picnics (Trice and Beyer 1984). Rites of integration also help build bonds among organizational members and strengthen social ties within the community (Lim and Putnam 2010). For example, Deal and Kennedy (1982, p. 69) recounted how regular meetings used during the Navy's construction of the Polaris submarine "were 'like going to church'; they bonded everyone together." Rites of integration strengthen members' identification with the organization; they are, therefore, enacted primarily by members who are core to the organization and whose identities become more intertwined with it. At the organizational level, core members' participation in rites of integration builds the very essence of organizational culture.

Rites of Passage. Rites of passage, on the other hand, are individual-focused planned series of formal, elaborate, and dramatic activities performed around a single occasion or event that celebrates a member's transition from one social role to the next (Van Gennep 1960 [1909], Trice and Beyer 1984, Dion 1996). For individual members, they are rare occasions during which a member sheds an old identity and achieves a new identity through some form of an initiation process (Van Gennep 1960 [1909], Trice and Beyer 1984, Islam and Zyphur 2009). Rites of passage are enacted in many types of organizations, not only normative ones. For instance, university graduation ceremonies, initiations into fraternities and sororities, and corporate retirement ceremonies are examples of rites of passage (Trice and Beyer 1984). The conspicuous and individual-focused nature of the rites of passage allows for a visible process of transition.

Because rites of passage focus on celebrating individual members' transition, rather building communal bonds, they are enacted not only by more identifying core members, but also by those who are more peripheral and have lower levels of identification with the organization. At the organizational level, core and peripheral members' participation in rites of passage helps publicly highlight important aspects of organizational culture related to individual members' transition. We summarize the key differences between rites of integration and rites of passage and present examples of these rites in normative and utilitarian organizations in Table 1.

Hypotheses

In building our hypotheses, we focus on normative organizations. Setting this boundary condition has two benefits. First, much of the individual-level research on scandals and organizational identification has been conducted in the context of normative organizations,

where a relationship with an organization becomes self-defining for many members and is related to their engagement (Gutierrez et al. 2010, Grandey et al. 2013). Second, member engagement is critical for the survival of these organizations. Membership at normative organizations is based on the acceptance of "shared values, shared beliefs, and intensive socialization experience" (Cummings 1983, p. 533).³ The goals of normative organizations differ from those of utilitarian ones. Whereas utilitarian organizations serve to satisfy basic economic needs that result in material comfort (Graham and Organ 1993, Huang and Knight 2017), normative organizations strive to achieve a broader common goal and to serve "cultural," "educational," and "expressive" functions (Albert and Whetten 1985, p. 282; Curtis et al. 2001). Whereas member engagement with utilitarian organizations is largely based on a quid pro quo foundation, where organizational goals may, and often do, diverge from the goals of the individual members, engagement with normative organizations is based on the alignment between organizational and member goals, values, and beliefs (Cummings 1983, Albert and Whetten 1985). Albert and Whetten (1985), for instance, suggested that religious and educational organizations were examples of normative organizations. In addition, most voluntary organizations, including civil rights groups, political parties, and animal rights groups, are examples of normative organizations.⁴ Because identification is an important condition for meaningful member engagement at normative organizations, we bound our theorizing to these organizations.

Relative Effect of a Scandal on Rites of Integration and Rites of Passage.

We propose that when a normative organization becomes implicated in a scandal, engagement in rites of integration will be more resilient than engagement in rites of passage. The underlying mechanism is organizational identification, which affects members via two broad pathways: (1) organizational identification affects how members perceive the scandal, with more highly identifying members being more likely, at least initially, to ignore, deny, or justify the scandal, and (2) organizational identification affects how psychologically and emotionally difficult it is for members to sever ties with the organization, given that more highly identifying members are more cognitively embedded in the organization.⁵ These two broad psychological pathways translate into how the two types of organizational rites may be affected by a scandal. This occurs because rites of integration are enacted primarily by more identifying core members, who experience a scandal at their organization at a deeper and more personal level (Grandey et al. 2013) compared with less identifying peripheral members (Higgins and Bargh 1987, Fiske and Taylor 2008). Rites of integration may therefore be relatively more resilient for the

Table 1. Definitions and Examples of Rites of Integration and Rites of Passage

	Rites of integration	Rites of passage
Individual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Community-focused activities that celebrate commonly held values and norms, create and sustain a sense of community, and strengthen identification with an organization. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual-focused activities that celebrate a member’s transition from one social role to the next and help uphold one’s identity as a member of the organization.
Organizational	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Celebrate stability of organizational values and norms, help build a sense of organizational cohesiveness and “communitas” amongst members of an organization; enacted by core members. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conspicuously connect individual members to the organization; enacted by core and peripheral members.
Examples in normative organizations		
Universities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • University picnic day (Mechling and Wilson 1988) • UK college dining (Dacin et al. 2010) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduations • University students’ bonfire (Beyer and Niño 2001) • University professors’ initiation into the profession (Lortie 1968)
Communist Party	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Regular meeting attendance 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Member ascension ceremonies (Kertzer 1988)
Examples in utilitarian organizations		
Professions and occupations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Annual professional association meetings (Trice and Beyer 1984) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Initiation and induction of new recruits among police (Van Maanen 1973), air traffic controllers (Hallier and James 1999), coal mine workers (Vaught and Smith 1980), military (Bourne 1967)
Companies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Office Christmas party (Trice and Beyer 1984) • Company’s regular Friday lunch (Deal and Kennedy 1982) • Mary Kay annual conventions (Deal and Kennedy 1982) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Rites of advancement among managerial trainees in Japanese banks (Rohlen 1973) • Retirement ceremonies (Trice and Beyer 1984) • Going away parties (Harris and Sutton 1986)

reasons that correspond to the two psychological pathways. First, to maintain a positive identity, avoid moral contamination, and reduce the potential identity threat that a scandal may trigger (Harrison et al. 2009, Petriglieri 2015), core members may justify the transgression as a case of “one bad apple” (Trevino and Youngblood 1990) by attributing it to individual perpetrators or providing excuses for the transgression that led to the scandal (Shalvi et al. 2015) rather than making generalizations about the underlying problems within the entire organization. For some core members, who experience high levels of identity threat after a scandal (Grandey et al. 2013, 2015) and for whom rites of integration “tend to become moral ends in themselves—proxies for the identity itself,” attending to and making sense of the transgression can be painful (Ashforth and Lange 2016, p. 312). Therefore, instead, they may resort to willful ignorance (Ashforth and Lange 2016) and choose not to accept or ignore the evidence of misconduct that led to the scandal.

Second, even when core members do not perceive the scandal differently than peripheral members, their greater cognitive embeddedness makes their extrication from the organization more difficult. The identities of more identifying core members are closely connected to the values, beliefs, and principles of the organization, making it more difficult for them to withdraw from it

and remove that part of themselves (Graham and Organ 1993, Elsbach and Kramer 1996). For these reasons, identifying core members may continue to engage in rites of integration after their normative organization becomes implicated in a scandal. At the extreme, core members may even increase their engagement after a scandal in a circle-the-wagons reaction (Zavyalova et al. 2016). Of course, these two effects of identification are not mutually exclusive, and both may lead to a relatively muted effect of a scandal on rites of integration.

Rites of passage, on the other hand, are enacted not only by core members, but also by less identifying peripheral members who experience the scandal differently. Because peripheral members’ identities are tied to a lesser degree to the scandalized organization, they may be less motivated to justify the circumstances of the scandal (Zavyalova et al. 2016). Instead, they may be prone to painting the scandal with a broad brush and attributing its cause to the flaws of the entire organization. Indeed, our analysis of historical polling data (presented in the Analysis of Individual-Level Assumptions section) indicates that peripheral members appear less forgiving of the Catholic Church. Even if peripheral members require engagement in the rites of passage, it is emotionally and cognitively less burdensome for them to withdraw from the scandalized organization and

look for substitute nonscandalized organizations where they can engage in such rites. This argument is consistent with extant research in the Catholic Church setting, which has broadly found that the child abuse scandal drove down membership at national and county levels. For example, Hungerman (2013) documented a decrease in self-reported membership among Catholics but an increase among other denominations, particularly Baptist. Similarly, using decennial county-level data, Piazza and Jourdan (2018) documented a substitution effect through positive membership spillovers after the Catholic Church scandal to nonscandalized denominations. These studies used geographically aggregated data (e.g., at state, county, or ZIP code level) to conclude that some Catholics left the Church entirely. Those studies were limited to membership statistics, but we expect that such effect is more likely, at least initially, due to less identifying peripheral members withdrawing from the organization.

Overall, because of the differences in the interpretation of the scandal and because of the relative ease in severing ties with the scandalized organization, it is cognitively and emotionally less burdening for peripheral members to forgo engagement in rites of passage, compared with more identifying core members. If a university, for instance, becomes implicated in a scandal, its rite of passage, a graduation ceremony, should see a decline in engagement due to potential withdrawal by less identifying peripheral members; yet its rites of integration, such as regular attendance of sports games by die-hard fans, may be relatively more resistant to the scandal. In summary, we propose the following.

Hypothesis 1. *A normative organization's implication in a scandal will more negatively affect member engagement in rites of passage than rites of integration.*

Role of Scandal Prevalence at Neighboring Organizations. We further propose that the differential effect of a normative organization's implication in a scandal on member engagement in rites of passage and rites of integration depends on scandal prevalence at neighboring peer organizations. When members engage with a normative organization at physical locations, geographic proximity between the focal organization and neighboring organizations implicated in the scandal may alter how members interpret and react to scandals, because, generally, people are more likely to attend to and care about events that take place nearby and have contact with others who are closer to them geographically rather than those who are distant (McPherson et al. 2001). As a result, events that are geographically proximate affect knowledge diffusion and organizational outcomes more than distant events (Jaffe et al. 1993, Marquis et al. 2011). Learning that neighboring organizations are implicated

in a scandal may thus amplify the salience of the scandal and perceptions of its prevalence.

As the prevalence of a scandal at nearby organizations increases and more neighbors become implicated, the organization itself is more likely to be affected by the scandal (Devers et al. 2009, Pontikes et al. 2010) and some members' interpretations of and reactions to the scandal may change (Adut 2008). Publicity about a focal organization's implication in a scandal may be sufficient to trigger peripheral members' withdrawal, and revelations about neighboring organizations' implication in a scandal may not add new information that would further alter their reactions. In this sense, an organization's implication in a scandal and the implication in a scandal by neighboring peers may serve as substitutes for these members. As a result, an increase in the prevalence of a scandal among neighboring organizations may not lead to significant changes in engagement in rites of passage by peripheral members above and beyond reactions to the news about the organization's direct implication in the scandal.

For more identifying core members, the prevalence of a scandal at neighboring organizations raises the salience of the scandal and the related concerns of stigma transfer (Barlow et al. 2018, Roulet 2020), thus raising the corresponding identity threat and making it more challenging to willfully ignore the scandal or justify away the underlying transgressions (Petriglieri 2015). It also alters the extent to which these members perceive the scandal as being specific to a particular perpetrator and instead, would signal a systemic disregard for adherence to norms and values (Yenkey 2016). The prevalence of a scandal at neighboring organizations thus complements the news about a focal organization's implication in a scandal. This is why as the information about neighboring organizations' implication in a scandal gets revealed, it becomes cognitively and emotionally more difficult for core members to continue engaging in rites of integration at a scandalized organization within a tainted field (Gutierrez et al. 2010). The rising sense of betrayal (Harrison et al. 2009) associated with the increased salience of the scandal can ultimately break the bond between the organization and its highly identifying members. Past conceptual work has proposed that such withdrawal may occur when a transgression tears "the ideological fabric that ties the organization ... and those individuals who have chosen to value the organization's normative system" (Harrison et al. 2009, p. 228). These mechanisms can lead to highly identifying core members crossing the tolerance threshold and withdrawing from rites of integration, despite the fact that such detachment may be extremely painful (Harrison et al. 2009). However, for these members, undergoing individual-focused rites of passage at their own organization is still vital and self-defining, at least relative to their engagement in rites of integration. This is why

even when scandal prevalence at neighboring organizations increases, core members may still engage in rites of passage at their organization to hold on to their identities. As a result, we propose the following.

Hypothesis 2. *As the prevalence of a scandal among neighboring organizations increases, a normative organization's implication in a scandal will more negatively affect member engagement in rites of integration than in rites of passage.*

If organizational identification is the mechanism that drives the differences in how a scandal affects the two types of rites, then organizations that develop a stronger identification with their core members should have rites of integration that are more resilient to a scandal than rites of passage. We focus on two organizational characteristics that may be associated with stronger identification: organizational age and size.

Role of Organizational Age and Size. Individuals identify with organizations, in part, to fulfill their need for self-enhancement (Bartel et al. 2016) or positive self-evaluation. This can be achieved by defining oneself through an organization that is viewed by others as unique and prominent (Pratt 2000, Ashforth et al. 2008). Older organizations have longer and richer histories. This richness provides the depth that allows members to evangelize their organizations through commemorative practices (Ravasi et al. 2019), thus contributing to the construction of their unique and attractive identities. At the same time, larger organizations, due to the breadth of their reach, tend to be more prominent and frequently viewed as more prestigious (Pfarrer et al. 2010, Rindova et al. 2010). Prestige and external recognition affect the extent to which an organization is viewed as an attractive target for identification (Pratt 2000, Smidts et al. 2001). Organizations' age and size, therefore, contribute to the perceptions that older and larger organizations are more unique and prominent, which provides a stronger opportunity for self-enhancement (Dutton et al. 1994) and strengthens organizational identification by core members.

Stronger identification with older and larger organizations further strengthens the connection between more strongly identifying core members and the organization, raising their tolerance threshold and making it more challenging to sever ties in the aftermath of a scandal. As a result, we expect that following a scandal, rites of integration are even more resilient than rites of passage at older and larger organizations. We therefore propose a positive moderating effect of organizational age and size on scandal's effect on rites of integration versus rites of passage.

Hypothesis 3. *Organizational age more positively moderates the effect of a scandal on rites of integration versus rites of passage.*

Hypothesis 4. *Organizational size more positively moderates the effect of a scandal on rites of integration versus rites of passage.*

Context: Child Abuse Scandal in the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia

We test our hypotheses in the context of a child abuse scandal in the Catholic Church for three reasons. First, in the management literature, religious organizations have been conceived as the archetypical normative organization (see Albert and Whetten (1985, p. 275): "think of a normative organization as a church."). Second, member engagement in different rites is critical for, and systematically measured at, Catholic parishes (Brewster et al. 1998, Ellison et al. 2005, Ryan 2008). Third, there is precedence for using religious organizations to study broader topics related to management and organization theory (Miller 2002, Tracey 2012), including scandals (Gutierrez et al. 2010; Piazza and Jourdan 2018, 2024).

The Catholic Church was first involved in a major child abuse scandal in 2002, when the *Boston Globe* published its reporting on child abuse within the Archdiocese of Boston (Gutierrez et al. 2010). Investigations and reports of abuse quickly spread to other parts of the United States (Hungerman 2013) and around the world. The social implications of this scandal were particularly extreme not only because of the egregiousness of the underlying transgressions but also because of the sheer size and history of the organization. In 2002, the Catholic Church in the United States comprised about 64 million members, spread across 20,000 individual parishes, operating under 194 administrative units known as dioceses, which made it one of the largest organizations in the world (Conlin et al. 2002, p. 36). We focus specifically on the Archdiocese of Philadelphia as the setting for our study because in the early 2000s the archdiocese was subject to a grand jury investigation, which was "the gold standard of investigative work on the Catholic abuse crisis in the United States" (BishopAccountability.org, Inc. 2017).

The Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia covers the five southeastern Pennsylvania counties of Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Bucks, and Philadelphia, and in 2010 was comprised of roughly 1.16 million registered Catholics (representing nearly 30% of the entire local population). The scandal in Philadelphia largely began in February of 2002, when in light of public revelations of child abuse in the Archdiocese of Boston, the Archdiocese of Philadelphia announced that it had evidence that 35 priests had been involved in sexual abuse of minors during the previous five decades. The archdiocese declined to reveal the names of the priests (Rubinkam 2002). After a series of meetings with diocesan lawyers, on April 24, 2002, Philadelphia District Attorney Lynne M. Abraham announced that she would

convene a grand jury to fully investigate the extent of the alleged sexual abuse by archdiocese clergy (Hepp and Panaritis 2002). The result of the investigation, a 418-page report, was released to the public on September 21, 2005.

The report provided details of the crimes alleged against 63 priests affiliated with various parishes within the Archdiocese of Philadelphia at some point in their careers. According to the report, the occurrence of the alleged crimes was known to the archdiocese officials, who “did nothing” to investigate or stop the abuse (Grand Jury Report 2005, p. 21). Furthermore, officials “cycled” the abusive priests through different assignments “without any restrictions on contact with minors” (Grand Jury Report 2005, p. 5). The crimes detailed in the report included “rape, involuntary deviate sexual intercourse, statutory sexual assault, indecent assault, endangering welfare of children, corruption of minors” (Grand Jury Report 2005, section I, p. 6). It chronicled the stories of individual victims and documented vivid and gruesome details of the abuse of children and the devastating consequences for their lives. The grand jury report noted that “victims who report their abuse represent merely the tip of the iceberg, that abusive priests likely have preyed on many more victims who have not come forward” (Grand Jury Report 2005, p. 17), and that “it takes many years—often decades—before most victims of child sexual abuse are able to come forward” (Grand Jury Report 2005, p. 6). This was a true scandal.

We leverage the characteristics of this context to examine how parishioner engagement in rites of integration and rites of passage was affected by the scandal. An important feature of the setting is that Catholic churchgoers are frequently categorized into core and peripheral members, based on the types of rites they engage in at their parish. A book-length treatment of the subject by Portmann (2009) distinguishes between devout Catholics versus cultural, lapsed, unorthodox, or occasional Catholics. As Portmann notes, one of the distinguishing factors between these two types of Catholics is differential engagement in Catholic rituals, pointing out that “One of the most suitable criteria for gauging whether or how lapsed a Catholic might be is the obligation of Catholics to attend Mass every Sunday” (Portmann 2009, p. 23). Regular Mass attendance reflects engagement in rites of integration. In contrast, Catholics “who come for special “occasions”—Christmas, maybe Easter, weddings and funerals, baptisms, Confirmations, First Communion, etc.” but have a “very low, or non-existent level of religious practice” (Ryan 2008, p. 615), have been termed “occasional Catholics” (Brewster et al. 1998, Ellison et al. 2005, Ryan 2008, Portmann 2009). These Catholics “cling to three central rituals: baptisms, weddings, and funerals” (Portmann 2009, p. 57), or rites of passage, but “regularly defy the ecclesiastical rule to attend mass every Sabbath” (Portmann 2009, p. 58).

However, both dedicated and occasional Catholics engage in rites of passage. In fact, forgoing organizational rites of passage is nearly synonymous with withdrawal from the organization. To “be Catholic” necessitates partaking in rites of passage, but engagement in rites of integration is less critical (indeed, in our sample, on average, a Sunday mass attendance comprises only 34% of parish members). These insights lead to a conclusion that there is significant and meaningful heterogeneity in the types of rites that dedicated versus occasional Catholics engage in and that this difference is consistent with the distinction between core and peripheral members’ engagement in rites of integration and rites of passage.

Another strength of this context is that Catholics’ engagement in rites of integration and rites of passage is systematically tracked by each parish; it serves, in effect, as a measure of parish performance. The yearly member engagement statistics for each parish allow us to estimate within-parish changes for member engagement in different rites. This context also allows us to more closely link those responsible for the scandal (individual priests at specific parishes) to those who responded to the scandal (parishioners at specific parishes). A final advantage of this setting and the data set we have compiled is that by using parish-year as a unit of analysis, we are able to estimate geographic proximity among individual parishes and therefore explore the role of scandal prevalence among neighboring parishes.

Using parish-level data, however, entails some limitations. We cannot directly assess levels of organizational identification among parishioners, the main mechanism behind our hypotheses, nor can we disentangle to what extent identification is developed with a particular parish versus with the Catholic Church. It is likely a combination of both, and we explore the implications of these differences in the Discussion. Another limitation of our data are that we cannot empirically distinguish between within-versus across-member changes in engagement because we do not have longitudinal individual-level data, and such data are unlikely to exist at scale. Our theory and existing research in the context are more consistent with across-member changes: Core and peripheral members react to the same scandal differently. In the section Analysis of Individual-Level Assumptions, therefore, we explicitly consider the assumptions underlying our theory using (1) an analysis of individual-level historical local polling data and (2) a straightforward simulation of member engagement decisions. These help with the interpretation of the main findings that we present in the next section and strengthen the internal validity of our logic.

Data and Methodology

Our main data are a parish-year panel of the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia spanning the 21-year

window from 1990 to 2010. All parish level data described here were collected and published each year as standard practice by the Archdiocese. We limited our analyses to the more common “territorial parishes,” which are defined by a geographic area, as opposed to the less frequent “personal parishes,” which may be based on language communities or other nongeographic criteria. This allowed us to perform the geographic analyses required to calculate prevalence of the scandal among neighboring parishes. The panel of these parishes changed slightly over the 21-year period, as some parishes closed and new ones opened, with 246 parishes open in 1990 and 237 in 2010. Once a parish closed, we removed it from the data set.

Estimation Approach

Our hypotheses concern the relative change of two dependent variables, rites of integration versus rites of passage, as well as moderators of that relative change. Therefore, our estimation strategy necessitates a parish-level prescandal versus postscandal design for two different dependent variables, including interaction terms. This consists of two components. First, to estimate the effects of a scandal on each measure of engagement, we adopt a standard two-way fixed effects difference-in-difference design (Roth et al. 2023):

$$Y_{i,t} = \alpha_i + \phi_t + \beta \text{Implication in scandal}_{i,t} + X_{i,t} + \varepsilon_{i,t},$$

where $Y_{i,t}$ is the standardized count of either engagement in rites of integration or engagement in rites of passage at parish i in year t , α_i is a parish fixed effect, ϕ_t is a year fixed effect, β is the estimate of interest on the treatment indicator $\text{Implication in scandal}_{i,t}$, $X_{i,t}$ is a vector of time varying control variables for each parish, and $\varepsilon_{i,t}$ is an error term. This results in one equation predicting rites of integration and a second predicting rites of passage.

Second, our hypotheses require a direct comparison of the coefficients from the two equations. To estimate the relative difference between these separate effects of the scandal (and interactions) on rites of integration and rites of passage, we employed seemingly unrelated regressions (SUR) (*sureg* command in Stata17). SUR allows the two equations with different dependent variables to be estimated at the same time, so that direct comparisons of coefficients can be conducted. For example, Kotha et al. (2018) used SUR to facilitate the empirical tests of the relative effect of managers’ experience on two separate dependent variables: upfront fixed-fee payment decreases and performance-based royalty rate increases. To test Hypothesis 1, we simultaneously estimated two linear regressions: one that regressed *Rites of integration* on *Implication in scandal* and one that regressed *Rites of passage* on *Implication in scandal*. Because we standardized both dependent variables (see below) and used SUR, we were able to directly compare

the two coefficients of *Implication in scandal* to test Hypothesis 1. To test Hypotheses 2–4, we followed a similar approach but interacted *Implication in scandal* with each moderator.

Dependent Variables

To understand which behaviors represent engagement in rites of integration and rites of passage, we turned to the related literature on religion. In the context of our study, participation in organizational rites is a component of what sociologists of religion call “religiosity,” which has been conceptualized as “the behavioral aspects of religion” (Myers 1996, p. 860). Religiosity encompasses frequency of church attendance and involvement in church activities (Myers 1996, Collett and Lizardo 2009, Mancini and Shields 2014). To assess Catholic churchgoers’ engagement in *Rites of passage* at a particular parish, we use the sum of three variables: the number of baptisms, marriages, and funerals at an individual parish each year. All three reflect members’ decision to engage and provide for a conspicuous and occasional association with a parish during transitions from one life stage to the next (Ryan 2008, p. 615). They do not necessarily reflect members’ consistent involvement with the parish (Ryan 2008), and as Portmann (2009, p. 163) notes, “Countless Americans insist on a Catholic baptism, wedding, and funeral but otherwise want little to do with the institutional Church.” To measure engagement in *Rites of integration*, we use average weekend attendance during October masses, an engagement statistic collected by each individual parish each year. No major Catholic holidays take place in October; thus, the average weekend mass attendance in this month provides the best estimate of members’ decision to engage in rites of integration at each parish. Mass attendance weaves together the essence of churchgoers’ lives and contributes to the maintenance of each parish. Because of ambiguity, we recoded as missing any activities that had a value of zero in our sample.

Finally, our theorizing about rites of integration and rites of passage is grounded in the idea that the two constructs, by definition, differ from one another. Yet, our hypotheses—which contrast the effects of a scandal on the two types of rites—directly compare the relative effects of a scandal on each construct. To conduct such a comparison, we standardized each dependent variable by subtracting the mean and dividing by the standard deviation. This standardization approach is similar to the one used in other research that seeks to compare dependent variables measured on completely different scales, such as measuring whether the effects of a certain type of career move are stronger for a person’s pay or stronger for their responsibilities (Bidwell and Mollick 2015) or whether changes in the amount of media coverage of firms differ across professional reporters and blogs (Drake et al. 2017). Although rites of integration

reflect the number of people who choose to attend a mass and rites of passage reflect the number of people who choose to hold a marriage, baptism, or funeral at a particular parish, both represent a member's choice to engage in organizational rites.

Independent Variable

To determine a focal parish's implication in the scandal, we matched names of publicly accused priests to specific Catholic parishes. The 2005 grand jury report provided data on the majority of new public accusations against priests. However, some priests in Philadelphia had been first publicly accused before the grand jury report was published and some after. We thus complemented the grand jury report data with a second data source: "The Database of Publicly Accused Priests," a comprehensive public archive of media reports about the scandal created by the nonprofit organization BishopAccountability.org, Inc. (2017). Other researchers have also used the materials compiled by this organization (Hungerman 2013; Botton and Perez-Truglia 2015; Piazza and Jourdan 2018, 2024).

In November 2013, there were 133 publicly accused clergy (e.g., priests, assistant pastors, parochial vicars) listed on the BishopAccountability.org website as associated with the Archdiocese of Philadelphia, including the subset identified in the 2005 grand jury report. For each priest, the website included links to the sources of the public allegations (e.g., news articles and the grand jury report), as well as information on priests' professional assignments. Using these data, we constructed a professional work history for each priest. Because these individuals had formal positions within the organizational hierarchy and were central and visible figures in their parishes, their behavior had the potential to create a true organizational scandal.

To be consistent with theoretical accounts of scandals—"scandals are occasioned by a communicative act ... as in a news story" (Adut 2005, p. 219)—we focused on public news about allegations rather than when abuse was alleged to have originally occurred. We therefore used the year of the first publication about a priest's alleged abuse to associate specific Catholic parishes where he had worked with the scandal in that year. We constructed a binary variable, *Implication in scandal*, equal to zero in all years before a parish was associated with an accused priest or if a parish was never associated and one in all years after it became associated with an accused priest. This represents a parish-level pre/postscandal variable. If the first news associating a parish with an accused priest was published in the first half of the year, this variable takes a value of one starting that year; if such news was published in the second half of the year, this variable takes a value of one starting the following year.

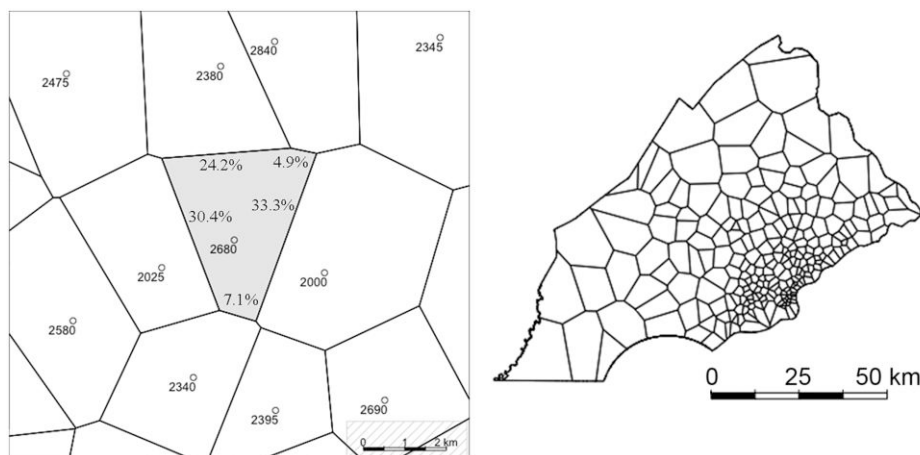
We emphasize that the *Implication in scandal* variable captures the release of information about a priest's abuse rather than the timing of the alleged abuse. Much news about priests' abuses was about events in the distant past, sometimes even after a priest had died. For example, a 2005 *Philadelphia Inquirer* article described one woman's reaction to new information about potential abuse, noting that she "couldn't stop crying when she learned Gausch [who had died in 1999] was among those accused in a blistering grand jury report of molesting children" (Graham and Pompilio 2005). As a result, certain types of endogeneity concerns about nonrandom assignment of priests to parishes are somewhat lessened, as the misconduct itself is temporally removed from the publicity of the misconduct that we measure (Piazza and Jourdan 2024). However, our setting is still at risk for endogeneity concerns stemming from nonrandom detection and publicity of past abuse. The systematic grand jury investigation lessens this concern by providing blanket scrutiny of the entire archdiocese, a feature we elaborate on when addressing endogeneity concerns in the Robustness Tests section.

Moderators

Scandal Prevalence Among Neighboring Organizations. To determine the role of scandal prevalence at neighboring organizations, we assessed the extent to which neighboring parishes were implicated in the scandal. We first created a measure of geographic proximity among Catholic parishes in our sample. To construct this measure, we followed the empirical approaches from spatial competition research (Kalnins 2003). This method focuses on neighboring boundaries rather than linear distances between institutions. It therefore better accounts for the variance in density between urban, suburban, and rural areas, which is a feature of our setting. This involved first dividing the total geographic area covered by the archdiocese into smaller territories covered by each Catholic parish. We used the latitude and longitude coordinates of each parish based on its street address to calculate a set of corresponding polygons. Each of these irregular polygons enclosed a single parish, where every point within the polygon was closest to that parish; these are known as Thiessen polygons. We based this mathematical construction on the assumption that, on average, individuals living within a focal area are most likely to engage with a specific parish from that area given that it is closest to their home. We illustrate the polygon construction and the resulting full map in Figure 1. Because the number of active Catholic parishes changed slightly over time, we created this map for each year of the sample based on the active parishes in that year.

After constructing Thiessen polygons, we used each parish's polygonal territory to determine what percentage of its perimeter was shared with other parishes that

Figure 1. Calculations of Scandal Prevalence in Neighboring Organizations



Notes. To construct the map on the left, we used individual parish locations, represented by the small circles and corresponding identification numbers. The irregular polygon surrounding each parish is that parish’s calculated area. Parishes are not located at the centroid of their polygons; instead, each parish is the closest parish to any point within its polygon. In this example, the gray-shaded parish has five neighboring parishes. The percentage of its total perimeter is listed next to each shared edge with these five neighbors. In this example, none of the neighbors were associated with accused priests prior to 2005, the *Scandal prevalence* variable for the focal parish was therefore zero for those years. The upper-right neighbor was first associated with an accused priest in 2005, resulting in a *Scandal prevalence* value of 4.9% in 2005 for the focal parish. The following year, three additional neighboring parishes were first associated with accused priests, resulting in a *Scandal prevalence* value of 75.7% ($30.4 + 7.1 + 33.3 + 4.9$) for the focal parish from 2006 onward. The fifth neighbor was never associated with an accused priest. In the full map on the right, the outer boundary is the unified border of the five southeastern Pennsylvanian counties that compose the Archdiocese of Philadelphia: Chester, Delaware, Montgomery, Bucks, and Philadelphia County.

were implicated in the scandal in a given year. The greater the percentage of a shared boundary between two parishes, the greater the potential influence of one neighboring parish on the other. The *Scandal prevalence* variable is calculated for each parish-year based on the implication of its neighbors in the scandal. This means that its value ranges from 0% (none of the parish’s shared boundary was with implicated neighbors) to 100% (all of its boundary was shared with neighbors implicated in the scandal), with any value in between determined by the specific geographic configuration of that parish and its neighbors. The note to Figure 1 elaborates on this shared boundary calculation.

Organizational Age. To measure organizational age, we created a binary variable that was equal to one for older parishes and zero for younger parishes. We used a binary variable, rather than a count variable, to focus on the difference between more historic, older parishes, with likely stronger levels of member identification, rather than focusing on the difference that stems from a parish getting one year older, which is less likely to translate to meaningfully higher member identification levels. This variable was calculated by categorizing all parishes in the sample by the median parish founding year, such that parishes founded before 1920 were considered old and parishes founded in or after 1920 were considered young. In the Robustness Tests section, we

report results with alternative specifications of *Organizational age*.

Organizational Size. We measured organizational size as the number of registered members of each parish in each year that was reported in conjunction with the other yearly parish-level statistics.

Control Variables

Parish and year fixed effects were our most important control variables. We supplemented them with several additional time-variant controls. First, because we are interested in changes in member engagement contingent on membership, we controlled for parish membership, the *Organizational size* variable described previously, in all analyses. Given the parish and year fixed effects, any other control variables needed to be time-variant ideally at the level of the small geographic territories covered by each parish. *Local population* counts satisfied this criterion. We used census-tract-level population measurements to account for rough population changes in each parish’s immediate area. Census tracts are granular enough to provide variance across most parish locations: in the 2010 Census there were 998 census tracts within the five Philadelphia counties, with an average population of 4,017 people.⁶ We reverse-geo-coded each parish’s latitude and longitude to determine its census tract and assigned it the appropriate values.⁷

Additionally, we were able to collect time-series demographic data at the county-level. The first county-level variable, *Religious adherents*, was the percentage of residents in a county that adhered to any religion in 1990, 2000, and 2010, interpolated for each year in our sample. We obtained these data from the Association of Religion Data Archives. The second county-level variable, *Income per capita*, was the yearly estimate of per capita personal income in each county. We collected it from the U.S. Bureau of Economic Analysis. Finally, to control for the racial composition of the county, we included a variable *White population*, again for 1990, 2000, and 2010. We used this to interpolate the percentage of white residents in the county for each year in our sample. We gathered these data from the U.S. Census provided by the National Historical Geographic Information System (Manson et al. 2019). We present summary statistics with unstandardized dependent variables and correlations with standardized dependent variables in Table 2.

Results

Main Results

We present the results of our main analyses in Table 3. Consistent with Hypothesis 1, Model 1 indicates that the coefficient on *Implication in scandal* is more than twice as negative for *Rites of passage* (-0.0803 ; $p = 0.0000$) as for *Rites of integration* (-0.0362 ; $p = 0.0199$). These effects are equivalent to a decrease of member engagement in 6.8 rites of passage and 37.1 rites of integration.⁸ For an average parish in the sample this represents a 5.3% (6.8/128.1) decrease in rites of passage and a 2.7% (37.1/

1366.7) decrease in rites of integration. To formally test the null hypothesis for Hypothesis 1 (that the coefficient for *Rites of passage* is equal to or less negative than for *Rites of integration*), we conducted a one-sided chi-squared test comparing the two coefficients on *Implication in scandal* from Model 1 (*test* postestimation command for *sureg* in Stata17). As reported in Table 3, this test indicates that *Implication in scandal* has a stronger negative effect on *Rites of passage* than on *Rites of integration* ($\chi^2 = 5.3470$; $p = 0.0104$), thus rejecting the null and providing support for Hypothesis 1.

Models 2 and 3 from Table 3 estimate the effects of *Scandal prevalence*. Because this variable represents percentage of a shared boundary and ranges from zero to one, the coefficients in these models can be interpreted as the change in the dependent variable given a change from having no boundary shared with parishes implicated in the scandal to having the entire boundary shared with parishes implicated in the scandal. Model 2 adds the direct effect of *Scandal prevalence* at neighboring parishes, and Model 3 introduces the interaction between *Scandal prevalence* and *Implication in scandal*. Consistent with Hypothesis 2, the coefficient of the interaction term of *Implication in scandal* \times *Scandal prevalence* is less negative for rites of passage (-0.0803 ; $p = 0.0437$) than for rites of integration (-0.1881 ; $p = 0.0000$). The relative negative effect is more than twice as large for rites of integration than rites of passage. To formally test the null hypothesis for Hypothesis 2, that the coefficient on the interaction term in the *Rites of integration* regression is equal to or less negative than the coefficient in the *Rites*

Table 2. Summary Statistics (Top) and Correlations (Bottom)

Variable	Observations	Mean	Standard deviation	Minimum	Maximum
<i>Rites of passage</i>	5,175	128.11	85.21	2.00	738.00
<i>Rites of integration</i>	5,175	1,366.74	1,023.53	45.00	8,828.00
<i>Implication in scandal</i>	5,175	0.25	0.43	0.00	1.00
<i>Scandal prevalence</i>	5,175	0.25	0.32	0.00	1.00
<i>Organizational age (founded pre-1920)</i>	5,175	0.50	0.50	0.00	1.00
<i>Organizational size (# members), '00s</i>	5,175	46.77	32.45	1.40	189.75
<i>Local population, '00s</i>	5,175	43.05	14.73	9.88	94.52
<i>Religious adherents (county), %</i>	5,175	0.67	0.09	0.51	0.78
<i>Income per capita (county), '000s</i>	5,175	35.70	12.35	18.05	63.53
<i>White population (county), %</i>	5,175	0.71	0.20	0.41	0.95

Variable	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)	(6)	(7)	(8)	(9)
(1) <i>Rites of passage (standardized)</i>	1								
(2) <i>Rites of integration (standardized)</i>	0.83**	1							
(3) <i>Implication in scandal</i>	-0.05**	-0.04**	1						
(4) <i>Scandal prevalence</i>	-0.13**	-0.12**	0.58**	1					
(5) <i>Organizational age (founded pre-1920)</i>	-0.06*	-0.17*	0.01	-0.03*	1				
(6) <i>Organizational size (# members), '00s</i>	0.86**	0.86**	0.06**	0.01	-0.16*	1			
(7) <i>Local population, '00s</i>	0.11**	0.05**	0.01	0.07**	-0.12*	0.15**	1		
(8) <i>Religious adherents (county), %</i>	0.13**	0.23**	-0.10**	-0.13**	-0.18*	0.19**	-0.10**	1	
(9) <i>Income per capita (county), '000s</i>	-0.09**	0.04**	0.40**	0.54**	-0.11*	0.10**	-0.02	0.48**	1
(10) <i>White population (county), %</i>	0.14**	0.27**	-0.10**	-0.13**	-0.18*	0.21**	-0.09**	0.91**	0.50**

[†] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$.

Table 3. Results of Seemingly Unrelated Regressions Predicting Member Engagement in Rites of Passage and Rites of Integration

Variable	Model 1			Model 2		Model 3		Chi-squared test (H2)
	Rites of passage	Rites of integration	Chi-squared test (H1)	Rites of passage	Rites of integration	Rites of passage	Rites of integration	
<i>Implication in scandal</i>	−0.0803*** 0.0000	−0.0362* 0.0199	5.3470* 0.0104	−0.0743*** 0.0000	−0.0268 [†] 0.0851	−0.0350 0.1624	0.0652** 0.0082	
<i>Implication in scandal</i> × <i>Scandal prevalence</i>						−0.0803* 0.0437	−0.1881*** 0.0000	4.9733* 0.0129
<i>Implication in scandal</i> × <i>Organizational age</i>								
<i>Implication in scandal</i> × <i>Organizational size</i>								
<i>Scandal prevalence</i>				−0.1192*** 0.0001	−0.1866*** 0.0000	−0.0848* 0.0144	−0.1060** 0.0019	
<i>Organizational size</i>	0.0195*** 0.0000	0.0213*** 0.0000		0.0194*** 0.0000	0.0210*** 0.0000	0.0193*** 0.0000	0.0210*** 0.0000	
<i>Local population</i>	0.0031* 0.0188	−0.0005 0.6899		0.0030* 0.0233	−0.0007 0.5939	0.0031* 0.0215	−0.0006 0.6446	
<i>Religious adherents</i>	−3.0698*** 0.0000	−1.7718*** 0.0000		−3.0632*** 0.0000	−1.7615*** 0.0000	−3.1170*** 0.0000	−1.8875*** 0.0000	
<i>Income per capita</i>	0.0126*** 0.0000	0.0048* 0.0382		0.0126*** 0.0000	0.0047* 0.0424	0.0125*** 0.0000	0.0046* 0.0446	
<i>White population</i>	2.6528*** 0.0002	2.9489*** 0.0000		2.4827*** 0.0004	2.6826*** 0.0001	2.5956*** 0.0002	2.9470*** 0.0000	
Constant	0.7656** 0.0075	−0.5427 [†] 0.0550		0.8610** 0.0027	−0.3932 0.1643	0.8382** 0.0035	−0.4466 0.1137	
Parish fixed effects	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	
R ²	0.9258	0.9277		0.9261	0.9282	0.9261	0.9286	
N	5,175	5,175		5,175	5,175	5,175	5,175	

Variable	Model 4		Chi-squared test (H3)	Model 5		Chi-squared test (H4)	Model 6	
	Rites of passage	Rites of integration		Rites of passage	Rites of integration		Rites of passage	Rites of integration
<i>Implication in scandal</i>	−0.1361*** 0.0000	−0.1248*** 0.0000		0.2617*** 0.0000	0.2592*** 0.0000		0.2769*** 0.0000	0.2795*** 0.0000
<i>Implication in scandal</i> × <i>Scandal prevalence</i>							−0.0875* 0.0218	−0.1951*** 0.0000
<i>Implication in scandal</i> × <i>Organizational age</i>	0.1094*** 0.0000	0.1736*** 0.0000	6.7142** 0.0048				0.0445* 0.0245	0.1205*** 0.0000
<i>Implication in scandal</i> × <i>Organizational size</i>				−0.0066** 0.0000	−0.0057*** 0.0000	5.4458** 0.0098	−0.0064*** 0.0000	−0.0053*** 0.0000
<i>Scandal prevalence</i>							−0.0331 0.3200	−0.0625 [†] 0.0581
<i>Organizational size</i>	0.0194*** 0.0000	0.0211*** 0.0000		0.0215*** 0.0000	0.0230*** 0.0000		0.0213*** 0.0000	0.0225*** 0.0000
<i>Local population</i>	0.0030* 0.0266	−0.0008 0.5336		0.0020 0.1207	−0.0015 0.2341		0.0019 0.1334	−0.0017 0.1830
<i>Religious adherents</i>	−2.9885*** 0.0000	−1.6427*** 0.0000		−2.1811*** 0.0000	−1.0044*** 0.0003		−2.2245*** 0.0000	−1.0918*** 0.0001
<i>Income per capita</i>	0.0122*** 0.0000	0.0041 [†] 0.0765		0.0098*** 0.0000	0.0023 0.2973		0.0096*** 0.0000	0.0019 0.4043
<i>White population</i>	2.6295*** 0.0002	2.9119*** 0.0000		2.1557** 0.0014	2.5196*** 0.0002		2.1806** 0.0013	2.5901*** 0.0001
Constant	0.7296* 0.0107	−0.5997* 0.0328		0.4953 [†] 0.0712	−0.7761** 0.0046		0.5190 [†] 0.0595	−0.7374** 0.0069
Parish fixed effects	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes		Yes	Yes
R ²	0.9262	0.9287		0.9320	0.9323		0.9322	0.9334
N	5,175	5,175		5,175	5,175		5,175	5,175

Note. *p* values reported below coefficients.
[†]*p* < 0.10; **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001.

of passage regression, we ran a one-sided chi-squared test comparing the two interaction coefficients from Model 3. As reported in Table 3, the result of this test indicates that the interaction term has a more negative effect on rites of integration than on rites of passage ($\chi^2 = 4.9733$; $p = 0.0129$). This provides support for Hypothesis 2.

Model 4 in Table 3 introduces the interaction between *Implication in scandal* and *Organizational age*. Note that parish fixed effects prevent inclusion of an *Organizational age* main effect dummy variable. Consistent with Hypothesis 3, the coefficient of the interaction term of *Implication in scandal* \times *Organizational age* is more positive for rites of integration (0.1736; $p = 0.0000$) than for rites of passage (0.1094; $p = 0.0000$). A one-sided chi-squared test comparing the two interaction coefficients from Model 4 indicates that the interaction term has a more positive effect on *Rites of integration* than on *Rites of passage* ($\chi^2 = 6.7142$; $p = 0.0048$). This points to a more resilient nature of rites of integration at older parishes and provides support for Hypothesis 3.

Model 5 introduces the interaction between *Implication in scandal* and *Organizational size*. The coefficient of the interaction term of *Implication in scandal* \times *Organizational size* is more negative for rites of passage (-0.0066 ; $p = 0.0000$) than for rites of integration (-0.0057 ; $p = 0.0000$). We hypothesized that the interaction term will have a more positive effect on the rites of integration than the rites of passage and instead we find that it is less negative. A one-sided chi-squared test comparing the two interaction coefficients from Model 5 indicates that

the interaction term has a less negative effect on *Rites of integration* than on *Rites of passage* ($\chi^2 = 5.4458$; $p = 0.0098$). Although this result is in line with our arguments about a more resilient nature of rites of integration at larger organizations, it does not provide support for Hypothesis 4 in its strict sense. We present the results of a full model in Table 3, Model 6.

To better understand the interactions that test Hypotheses 2–4, we followed recent recommendations on interpretation of interactions and estimated marginal effects at various levels of each moderator (Wowak et al. 2022). We present the results of these estimations in Table 4. This table further illustrates that, relative to rites of passage, rites of integration lose their resilience as scandal prevalence increases, but that they are more resilient at older and larger organizations.

Robustness Tests

Endogeneity. As we discussed previously, our main treatment variable is the public revelation of priests' abusive behavior, rather than the occurrence of misconduct or assignment of an abusive priest to a parish, both of which often occurred many years, even decades earlier than the public revelations. Nonetheless, as recent research indicates, in some settings the revelation itself may not be random (Stroube 2021, Mohliver and Ody-Brasier 2023, Piazza and Jourdan 2024). To address this concern, we exploited a quasi-experimental aspect of our data. Specifically, we exploited the exogenous shock of the 2005 grand jury report. We note two relevant

Table 4. Marginal Effects of Scandal Prevalence (H2), Organizational Age (H3), and Organizational Size (H4) on Rites of Passage and Rites of Integration at Scandalized Organizations

Estimation point		Rites of passage	Rites of integration
<i>Scandal prevalence</i>			
0	(min)	-0.0054	0.0752***
		0.7700	0.0000
0.2473	(mean)	-0.0263	0.0490**
		0.1710	0.0090
0.5722	(mean + 1 standard deviation)	-0.0539	0.0146
		0.0330	0.5560
1	(max)	-0.0901*	-0.0307
		0.0150	0.3990
<i>Organizational age</i>			
0	(young)	-0.1161***	-0.1156***
		0.0000	0.0000
1	(old)	-0.0067	0.0580***
		0.6730	0.0000
<i>Organizational size</i>			
14.3146	(mean - 1 standard deviation)	-0.5024***	-0.5530***
		0.0000	0.0000
46.7680	(mean)	0.1969***	0.1950***
		0.0000	0.0000
79.2214	(mean + 1 standard deviation)	0.8961***	0.9429***
		0.0000	0.0000

Note. p values reported below coefficients.

[†] $p < 0.10$; * $p < 0.05$; ** $p < 0.01$; *** $p < 0.001$.

aspects of the report. First, it documented many previously unreported allegations, and the exact content of the report was not known until the day of its release, because “under [Pennsylvania] law, a grand jury investigation is secret” (Hepp and Panaritis 2002). Second, it reported allegations of historical abuse, noting that “much of the abuse goes back several decades” (Grand Jury Report 2005, p. 2, section I). The examination of our sample further indicated that most of the parishes that were ever implicated (77%) became implicated during 2004–2006 (see Figure A.1 in the Online Appendix).

We therefore limited our sample to those parishes that by 2003 still had not had any public allegations about employing accused priests. We further limited the sample to 2003–2007, the period right before and right after the grand jury report that reflected a flood of new public accusations. This left us with 197 parishes, 63 of which did not get implicated in a scandal by 2007 and 134 that did get implicated at some point between 2004 and 2007. Mean comparison tests (*ttest* command in Stata17) of the characteristics of these two groups of parishes showed some differences: parishes that were implicated in a scandal during that time period had, on average, more rites of passage, more rites of integration, and higher scandal pervasiveness than parishes that remained unimplicated (see Table A.1 in the Online Appendix).

We reran all the models on this subsample of parishes that had not been implicated by 2003, limiting the sample period to 2003–2007, leaving us with 984 parish-years. Our results were consistent with those reported for Hypotheses 1 and 4 (see Table A.2 in the Online Appendix). For Hypotheses 2 and 3, the coefficients were consistent with the main tests of these hypotheses, but one-sided chi-squared tests indicated that the differences between the coefficients were not significant. This could be due to the reduction in sample size by more than 80% (from 5,175 to 984). Overall, although we cannot fully rule out endogeneity concerns, the additional analyses during the years right before and right after the grand jury report illustrate patterns consistent with our main results.

Pretreatment Trends. To test whether the prescandal trends in organizational rites were similar between scandalized and nonscandalized parishes, we conducted tests of the parallel trends assumptions. To do this, we again limited the full sample to parishes that were not treated by 2003. To more cleanly assess pretreatment trends, we assigned years 2004, 2005, and 2006 as the treatment period (we dropped the handful of parishes that were treated in subsequent years). This procedure resulted in a control group of parishes that were never treated and a treatment group that was treated in 2004, 2005, or 2006. We then compared the pretreatment trends for these two groups of parishes using the Stata17 *xtdidregress* and the *ptrends* postestimation command.

The results of the tests indicated that the pretreatment trends for both rites of integration ($F(1, 214) = 0.01$; $p = 0.9111$) and rites of passage ($F(1, 214) = 1.64$; $p = 0.2011$) were not significantly different between the treatment and control groups of parishes. This provides evidence that our results do not stem from statistically significant pretreatment differences between scandalized and nonscandalized parishes.

Staggered Treatment. One advantage of our main empirical approach is that it allows for direct comparison between coefficients across seemingly unrelated regressions, a necessity of our hypotheses. However, it does not address the recently identified concerns around staggered treatments—that is inference issues that can arise from data where not all units are treated at the same time (Roth et al. 2023). Our data do feature parishes that are treated at different points in time; however, we believe concerns about staggered treatment are likely less significant in our sample because treatment timing is highly concentrated: most of the parishes that were ever implicated (77%) became implicated during the three years around the grand jury report (see Figure A.1 in the Online Appendix). Nevertheless, we implemented recent techniques that allow for heterogeneous treatment effects across treatment cohorts and time. We should note that at the time of writing, we are unaware of staggered treatment difference-in-differences models that incorporate a SUR framework nor staggered treatment models with the ability to test interaction effects. Hence, in this section, we apply these new methods only to Hypothesis 1.

First, to check how using SUR influenced our results, we ran two independent ordinary least squares (OLS) regressions predicting the effects of a scandal on rites of passage and then rites of integration. In Table 5 we present our main SUR hypothesis test (reported in Model 1 of Table 3) and include the results of the two additional independent OLS regressions in Models 2 and 3 of Table 5. The independent OLS regression results are almost identical to those from the SUR model. Because of this similarity, we proceeded to run two independent regressions that use the latest staggered treatment difference-in-differences approach. We independently estimated dynamic average treatment effects on the treated (ATET) for each of our two outcome variables using the Stata18 *xthdidregress* command with regression adjustment estimator and not-yet-treated parishes as the control group, as described in Callaway and Sant’Anna (2021). The overall ATET for each model is reported in Table 5, Models 4 and 5; in line with Hypothesis 1, the ATET for rites of passage was -0.0812 ($p = 0.015$) and the ATET for rites of integration was -0.0685 ($p = 0.052$), similar to the SUR results. Figure A.2 in the Online Appendix visually illustrates these effects for each dependent variable. Based on these results, we

Table 5. Heterogenous Treatment DID Model of Member Engagement in Rites of Passage and Rites of Integration

Variable	Seemingly unrelated regressions (from Table 3)		Independent fixed effects OLS regressions		Heterogeneous difference in differences (overall ATET estimate) ^a	
	Model 1		Model 2	Model 3	Model 4	Model 5
	Rites of passage	Rites of integration	Rites of passage	Rites of integration	Rites of passage	Rites of integration
<i>Implication in scandal</i>	−0.0803*** 0.0000	−0.0362* 0.0199	−0.0803*** 0.0000	−0.0362* 0.0237	−0.0812* 0.015	−0.0685† 0.052
Controls	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included	Included
Parish fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Year fixed effects	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
N	5,175	5,175	5,175	5,175	5,007	5,007

Note. *p* values reported below coefficients.

^aControl group are not-yet-treated parishes; “always treated” parishes are not used in the overall ATET estimate.

†*p* < 0.10; **p* < 0.05; ***p* < 0.01; ****p* < 0.001.

compared differences in the ATETs for each of the two variables across time (column 2 in Table A.3 in the Online Appendix). Based on the rolling average and the sum of these differences, we see that the treatment effects of the scandal were generally more negative for rites of passage than rites of integration. Although these are not formal tests, they are consistent with our Hypothesis 1.

Multicollinearity. Given the high correlation between *White population* and *Religious adherents* variables, we tested whether multicollinearity presents a concern and estimated variance inflation factors (VIFs) for direct effect models with each dependent variable separately (after *reg* command in Stata17). The results indicated that mean VIFs were below 3 and individual VIFs were below the acceptable threshold of 10. Nonetheless, we reran all our analyses excluding the *White population* control and then excluding the *Religious adherents* control. In both cases, the results remained consistent with those reported in Table 3.

Alternative Measures. We conducted three sets of analyses with an alternative measure of *Rites of passage*, two alternative measures of *Scandal prevalence*, and multiple alternative measures of *Organizational age*. First, we tested for the sensitivity of our measure of *Rites of passage*. Specifically, unlike baptisms and funerals, marriages may be more likely to be conducted outside of a member’s parish. We therefore reran all the analyses without marriages as a component of this dependent variable. Our results continued to show support for Hypotheses 1–3 and lack of support for Hypothesis 4. Second, because member engagement may be affected not only due to scandal prevalence among neighboring parishes, but also due to other types of scandal prevalence we reran all the analyses by measuring *Scandal prevalence* as (a) the number of scandalized parishes in

the entire archdiocese and (b) percentage of scandalized parishes in the entire archdiocese. In both cases our results remained consistent with those reported in Table 3. Finally, we considered alternative operationalizations of *Organizational age* to test Hypothesis 3. This included (a) alternative binary cutoffs for older versus younger parishes at 1900 and 1940 and (b) a continuous measure of age on a full sample and a sample excluding the oldest parishes established prior to 1800. All the results from these specifications were in line with our main results, with the exception of the continuous age measure in the full sample, where the result was directionally consistent but not statistically significant.

Analysis of Individual-Level Assumptions

Our hypotheses and empirical analyses were focused on organizational-level effects of scandals. Yet, our arguments related to the role of organizational identification and the distinction between core and peripheral members draw on individual-level theory. The limitation of our data are that we cannot observe individual members’ behaviors and we cannot test whether our results are due to peripheral members withdrawing from rites of passage or both core and peripheral members withdrawing from rites of passage. Systematic individual-level data of changes in engagement in rites of integration and rites of passage in this context do not exist. We therefore address this limitation in the following two subsections. First, we present individual-level survey evidence from our specific context of the Archdiocese of Philadelphia. This evidence points to a correlation between members’ engagement in rites of integration and their perceptions of the scandal and supports the notion that dedicated and occasional Catholics perceived the scandal differently. Second, to help confirm the internal validity of our logic, we present a simulation where we take into account individual members’ decisions to engage in rites of integration and rites of passage before and after a scandal.

Perceptual Differences During the Scandal Between Dedicated and Occasional Catholics in Philadelphia

To understand whether and how perceptions of the scandal varied across core and peripheral church members in Philadelphia, we turned to individual-level survey data. In 2005, The Institute for Public Affairs at Temple University and the *Philadelphia Inquirer* newspaper conducted a public opinion poll about the scandal as it was unfolding in Philadelphia (Hagen 2005, O’Reilly 2005).⁹ The lead investigator of the poll shared the response data with us after tabulating it along two dimensions: respondents’ religious affiliation (Catholic or non-Catholic) and frequency of church attendance. The poll verified that the majority of residents in the Philadelphia area were aware of the scandal: Only 14% were not following the news about it (Hagen 2005). This confirms that the transgressions were highly publicized and occupied the public consciousness, a condition necessary for a scandal.

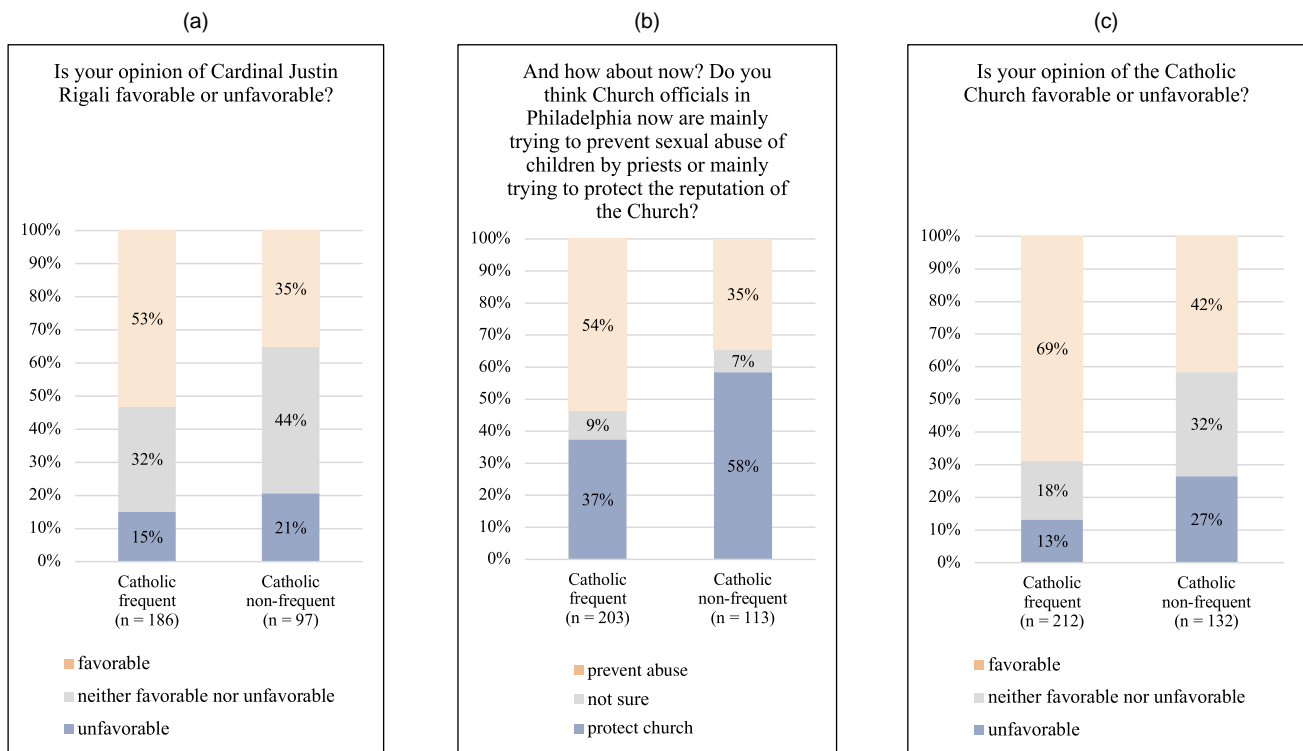
Our main interest is in whether core and peripheral organizational members viewed the scandal differently. For our analyses, we focused only on Catholic respondents and classified them as frequent church attendees

versus nonfrequent church attendees, which we interpret as highly identifying core members versus less identifying peripheral members, respectively. Figure 2 compares perceptual differences between these two groups. The overall conclusion is that as the scandal was unfolding in Philadelphia, these two types of Catholics varied in their interpretations of the scandal: those core members who were frequently engaged in the main rite of integration, mass attendance, held a higher opinion of church leadership and a more positive view of church motives, compared with nonfrequently engaged peripheral members. Moreover, peripheral members were more than twice as likely as core members to hold an unfavorable opinion of the Church after the scandal.

Simulations Based on Individual- and Organizational-Level Assumptions

We next present straightforward simulations of the engagement choices of individual organizational members. Before describing our approach, we note two prefatory points. First, by their nature, these simulations cannot be used for theory testing; however, they can help to rule in some theoretical explanations and establish the internal validity of our arguments (Davis et al. 2007).

Figure 2. Variance in Individual-Level Perceptions of the Scandal as a Function of Engagement in Rites of Integration (Frequent vs. Nonfrequent Sunday Mass Attendance)



Notes. Data from IPA/*Philadelphia Inquirer* Public Opinion Poll. Those Catholic respondents who said they attended church at least once per week or once or twice per month were classified as frequent church attendees and those Catholic respondents who said they only attended church a few times per year or less were classified as nonfrequent church attendees. The question in Figure 2(b) was a follow-up to respondents’ opinion of the Church’s motivation in the past.

That is, they can shed light on whether there exist data generating processes that would lead to the outcomes we observe in the actual data. Second, although we believe the assumptions described here are reasonable and well grounded in published research from the context, they do partly reflect our own judgements, and other researchers may desire to use different assumptions. Therefore, the code to run these simulations is provided in the Online Appendix.

Simulation Design. The simulation contains two main units of analysis—the individual and the organization—and two time periods—prescandal and postscandal. Our main focus is on whether an individual member chooses to engage in a rite of passage and a rite of integration in the period before a scandal and the period after a scandal. The behavior of organizational members is deterministic, meaning that it follows directly from our assumptions about the values of various input parameters that we outline here. These assumptions are grounded in the abundance of individual-level polling data that focus on engagement in Catholicism and in the data from our sample.

Our second unit of analysis is the organization. Organizational outcomes represent the collective choices of individual organizational members: the total number of rites of integration and the total number of rites of passage at the organization. Mirroring the focus of our main empirical analyses, the outcome variable of interest is the relative drop, after a scandal, in member engagement in rites of passage compared with rites of integration. For simplicity, we calculate this outcome as a ratio that is above one when the drop in rites of passage is greater than the drop in rites of integration (the main argument of the paper). Here we describe the main assumptions of the model and report the results.

Organization-Level Assumptions. Each organization is comprised of organizational members and these members can be either highly identifying core members or less identifying peripheral members. The composition of member types is random across organizations, ranging from organizations where each member has a 1% likelihood of being a core member (and thus 99% likelihood of being a peripheral member) to organizations where each member has a 99% likelihood of being a core member (and thus a 1% likelihood of being a peripheral member). This is our main explanatory variable. In reality, polling data indicate that around 20%–40% of Catholics meet the definition of core members, as defined by weekly Mass attendance (CARA 2007, p. 32). In our data, at an average parish, regular mass attendance constitutes 29.22% (1,367/4,677) of parish members. Therefore, some of the simulated compositions of member types (e.g., organizations with 20%–40% core

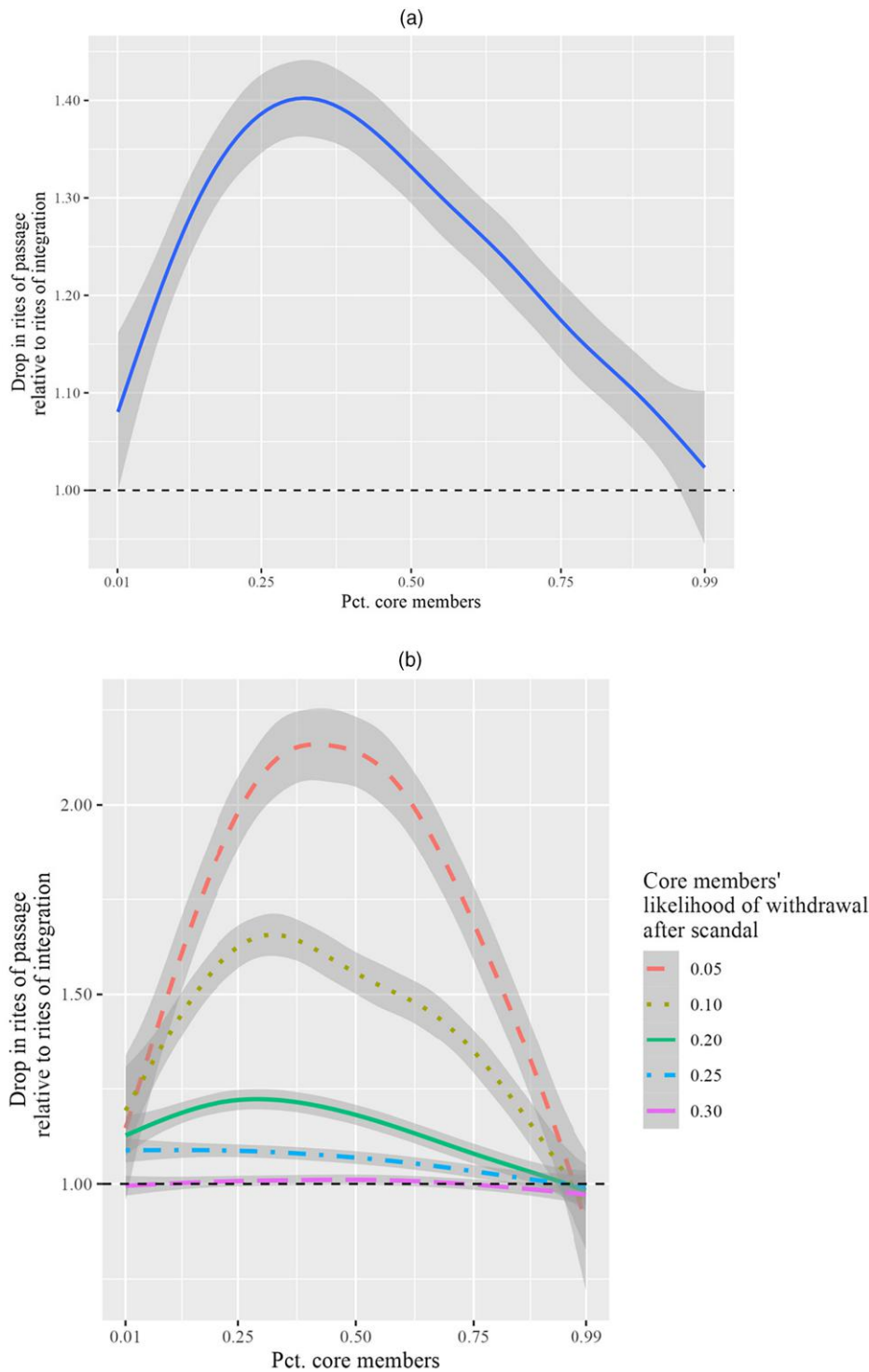
members) are much more likely to reflect reality than others (e.g., <20% or >40% core members).

Individual-Level Assumptions. Our assumptions about individual-level behavior are drawn from prior research in the Catholic Church context. We make the following assumptions about prescandal member behavior: (1) by definition, core members always engage in rites of integration, whereas each peripheral member has an 11.5% likelihood of engaging in a rite of integration (i.e., on average, they attend Mass once every other month, 6 of 52 weeks a year); (2) based on polling data about the importance of rites of passage to each type of member (CARA 2008, p. 31), a core member has a 98% likelihood and a peripheral member has an 81.5% likelihood of engaging in a rite of passage; and (3) after a scandal, the likelihood of a peripheral member engagement decreases by 30%, whereas the likelihood of a core member engagement decreases by 15% (Pew 2019). This twice-as-negative reaction by peripheral members is consistent with the unfavorable opinion of the Church we observed in the polling data among Philadelphia Catholics reviewed in the previous section.

Results. We first simulate engagement choices of individuals in 5,000 organizations and present the results of these simulations in Figure 3(a). Values on the y axis greater than one indicate that a scandal had a more negative impact on rites of passage than rites of integration (Hypothesis 1). The main finding is that there is no percentage of core members (within the 1%–99% range) that would result in rites of integration being more negatively affected than rites of passage (i.e., dropping below the threshold of one). The maximum effect is observed in organizations with around 30% core members.

We next relaxed the third individual-level assumption (the likelihood that peripheral members decrease their engagement after a scandal at twice the rate of core members) and simulated five additional scenarios. Each organization in this simulation was randomly assigned core members that had different sensitivity to scandal, ranging from very low likelihood of reaction to scandal (5% likelihood of withdrawal) to an identical reaction as peripheral members (30% likelihood of withdrawal), with three additional values in between. We ran this 25,000 times (5,000 for each case) and present the results in Figure 3(b). These simulation results highlight that parity in the drop in rites of passage and rites of integration would only be reached if an organization were either comprised entirely of a single member type (0% or 100% of core or peripheral members) or if core and peripheral members reacted to the scandal in exactly the same way (observed by the flattening of the lines as core members become more like peripheral in their reactions). Neither of those assumptions are consistent with the wealth of existing research from this context nor with our specific

Figure 3. (Color online) Simulation Results of Relative Drop in Organizational Rites as a Function of Membership Composition and Likelihood of Withdrawal



data. Overall, the results of the simulation provide further illustration of the hypothesized mechanisms.

Discussion

In this study, we explored how a normative organization's implication in a scandal affected member engagement

in rites of integration and rites of passage, and how the prevalence of the scandal in neighboring organizations, organizational age, and organizational size moderated this effect. We tested these relationships in the context of a sexual abuse scandal in the Catholic Archdiocese of Philadelphia. Our analyses illustrate that if a parish had ever

employed a priest accused of sexual misconduct, it experienced a larger decrease in rites of passage than in rites of integration. We also found that scandal prevalence among neighboring parishes made rites of integration more vulnerable, whereas organizational age and size contributed to the relative resilience of these rites.

Contributions

With this paper, we make two main theoretical contributions to research on organizational consequences of scandals and negative events. First, we highlight that assessing how a scandal or a negative event affects only one type of member engagement may result in one-sided and inaccurate conclusions regarding the overall impact of a scandal (Yenkey 2018). To obtain a more comprehensive picture, scandals scholars need to incorporate the rich literature on organizational rites that considers various ways through which members of the same stakeholder group engage with an organization. Our study takes a first step in connecting the aftermath of a scandal to organizational-level engagement outcomes in rites of integration and rites of passage.

Second, we document the conditions under which rites of integration are more or less resilient compared with rites of passage. Specifically, we find that prevalence of the scandal among neighboring organizations, or more specifically neighboring units of a larger organization, plays a critical role. Implicated organizations that are surrounded by other guilty peers experience intraorganizational spillovers and a larger decrease in rites of integration compared with rites of passage. This result points to the nuanced nature of negative spillovers (Barnett and King 2008, Jonsson et al. 2009) and highlights, in line with developing research, that they do not only occur interorganizationally, but also intraorganizationally, across different units within the same organization (Marino et al. 2024). It also illustrates that the contaminating nature of scandals has different effects on different types of member engagement. We find that scandal prevalence does not play as significant of a role for member engagement in rites of passage; yet, it overwhelms engagement in rites of integration. In a sense, when a scandal at a normative organization is also prevalent among other organizations, it creates “experiential commensurability” (Snow and Benford 1992, pp. 140–141), encroaching into core members’ lives and leading to withdrawal by even highly identifying organizational members. In addition, we illustrate the moderating effects of organizational age and size. These findings generally support our theorizing that organizations with more strongly identifying members (larger and older organizations) have more resilient rites of integration compared with rites of passage.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Whereas in this study we focused on normative organizations, utilitarian organizations also feature different types of engagement that correspond to different levels of identification. We expect that in utilitarian organizations, members who engage in activities above and beyond their specific duties, such as corporate citizenship behaviors, fundraising for a cause relevant to them, or advocating for the importance of issues of diversity, equity, and inclusion in their organization, develop a deeper connection with the organization and may exhibit higher resilience in times of adversity. Thus, our study provides guidance as to what types of engagement at utilitarian organizations are most likely to be negatively affected by a scandal. Researchers interested in exploring these ideas in utilitarian organizations, however, need to be aware that there may be profound variance in how organizational members relate to the organization without significant changes in engagement at the organizational level. For example, when studying executives at BP who had deidentified with the organization after its 2010 oil spill in the Gulf of Mexico, Petriglieri (2015, p. 540) noted that “These executives remained warm bodies in the organization but had psychologically checked out.” Presumably, many continued to do their jobs because of the financial benefits the employment provided (e.g., the impending retirement benefits noted by one informant), even if the nature of their relationship with the organization had changed. Deliberately “hybrid” organizations that combine aspects of normative and utilitarian organizations (Albert and Whetten 1985, p. 270) likely represent a middle ground in this respect.

Using our paper as a starting point, future studies could delve into the connection between organizational structure and organizational identification during a scandal. Because of the hierarchical structure of the Catholic Church and due to the organizational-level data that we used for this study, we were unable to assess whether members’ identification was developed at the level of the parish or the Catholic Church more broadly; a combination of both is a possibility. We believe this represents a potentially fruitful area for future individual-level research, given that many organizations are structured similarly to the Church: Member engagement occurs at what are essentially local chapters of national or international parent organizations. For example, scouting, unions, fraternal orders (e.g., Freemasonry, the Order of the Eastern Star) all have structures where engagement in organizational rites occurs at a local chapter within the larger organization. We invite future studies to examine how the relative strength of identification with an organization’s particular unit versus with a broader organization affects their reactions to a scandal and how these reactions are informed by the level at which the misconduct took place.

A follow-up to this study could be an examination of how scandals affect a broader spectrum of the types of rites. Whereas in this study, because of the specifics of the context and data availability, we focused on rites of integration and rites of passage, the typology of Trice and Beyer (1984) also includes rites of degradation, rites of enhancement, rites of renewal, and rites of conflict reduction. Investigating which members enact these varying types of rites and which rites are more resilient in light of scandals can be a promising path toward understanding why some organizations survive scandals and others fail to do so.

Another extension to this study could be to examine whether our results are due to individual members maintaining the status quo, helping the organization, or justifying the scandal, as all three scenarios may potentially explain the higher resistance of the rites of integration expected in Hypothesis 1. Therefore, exploring the relative effects of exit, voice, and loyalty (Hirschman 1970) at different levels of scandal prevalence as well as organizational age and size may help tease out these mechanisms. When examining exit specifically, researchers can investigate if withdrawing members seek the foregone engagement at other organizations. That is, if a scandalized organization or a specific scandalized unit within an organization is no longer an attractive option, some members may shift their support to the closest neighboring organization or neighboring organizational unit. It is possible, therefore, that such dynamics may benefit other organizations or their units untainted by the scandal (Piazza and Jourdan 2018, Naumovska and Lavie 2021). We expect that such positive spillovers are more prevalent among peripheral members, who engage with the organization primarily through rites of passage. It is likely more difficult for core members to make such a change in their rites of integration. Examining these dynamics in a context where individual-level behavioral data are available may provide the answers.

Finally, whereas we focused exclusively on organizational consequences of a scandal, a related question is what causes the spread of abusive practices (Aven 2015, Mohliver 2019) and how to prevent them. In our context, knowledge about the prevalence of abuse before the public scandal was highly concentrated in the hands of a few individuals (Grand Jury Report 2005). The abuse of power in the Catholic Church has led more identifying core members to create organizations such as the Voice of the Faithful (votf.org) and the Survivors Network of those Abused by Priests (snapnetwork.org), which help address the problem more directly and seek to change the way the Church is run (Ewick and Steinberg 2019). We encourage organizational researchers to study how the distribution of power within an organization affects the spread of wrongdoing and how scandals may become the impetus for organizational change. Different

engagement patterns may be predictive of different abilities to spot misconduct and implement change.

Practical Implications

Our study has direct implications for managers involved in crisis and reputation management, both at normative and utilitarian organizations. First, our findings highlight the potential effectiveness of rites of integration for weathering scandals. The importance of creating meaning, not simply transactions, through engagement with organizations is clearest in the case of normative organizations. However, even utilitarian organizations may benefit from efforts to replicate the types of member engagement found in normative organizations. Recent media reports illustrate that companies that are traditionally considered utilitarian are hiring divinity-school trained ritual consultants to help design activities to provide more meaning in the workplace. For instance, “Evan Sharp, the co-founder of Pinterest, hired Sacred Design Lab to categorize all major religious practices and think of ways to apply them to the office” (Bowles 2020). Other companies build in various types of organizational rites to create communities of loyal members around their brands’ purpose and values, such as Harley Davidson and its membership-based chapters around the world (Bussgang and Bacon 2020). Our work points to the potential effectiveness of these efforts and suggests that promoting engagement in rites of integration premised on value congruence may result in less negative organizational consequences, at least at low levels of scandal prevalence.

Second, our study highlights the importance for crisis and reputation managers to distinguish early on whether their organization is involved in a negative event or in a truly prevalent scandal. As past work suggests, organizations implicated in negative events—for example, product recalls or minor technical failures—may benefit from the prevalence of similar occurrences across the industry and experience safety in numbers (Zavyalova et al. 2012). As a result, public attention is diffused among multiple organizations and the negative effects on any one implicated organization are more diluted than would be the case if only one organization in the industry was implicated. Yet, when a true scandal unfolds, the news about the violations by multiple organizations can lead to a heightened focus (Pontikes et al. 2010, Dewan and Jensen 2020), shining a stronger spotlight on each and every organization’s conduct. For example, the #MeToo movement resulted in more, not less, attention to specific instances of abuse or harassment. As we document, these types of public revelations may result in lower engagement in rites of integration. Such dynamics can lead to devastating consequences for organizations. Managers who recognize the differences between these two scenarios early on will be better

equipped at leading their organizations through such challenging times.

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Endnotes

¹ Rites of integration differ from socialization. Whereas the latter refers to those activities that help induct a new member into the organization, the former refers to the activities that help build and strengthen the emotional bond with and cognitive embeddedness within an organization.

² Interestingly, there is commonality in the form that rites take across different organizations. Even the marriages, baptisms, and funerals we study are not strictly limited to religious organizations. Kertzer (1988, pp. 114–116), for example, highlighted a “battle over rites of passage,” describing how “the [Soviet] government has mounted a series of campaigns to wean people from church-sponsored rites by offering them rites of passage sponsored by the state itself,” noting that after the fall of fascism in Italy “the church bitterly fought the Communists’ attempts to establish an alternative system of rites of passage.” In the Discussion section we consider how some modern for-profit firms attempt to fulfil the demand for rites.

³ Stakeholders of normative organizations are organizational “members” in the literal sense, because such organizations have membership rolls, membership criteria, membership dues, and so on.

⁴ The study of “voluntary organizations” represents a significant body of research in the social sciences. For example, in their study of membership in voluntary associations, Curtis et al. (2001, p. 788) identified the following 16 types of “voluntary organizations and activities”: (1) social welfare services for elderly, handicapped, or deprived people; (2) churches or religious organizations; (3) education, arts, music, or cultural activities; (4) trade unions; (5) political parties or groups; (6) local community action (concerning poverty, employment, housing, and racial equality); (7) human rights or Third World development; (8) conservation, environment, or ecology; (9) professional associations; (10) youth work (scouts, guides, youth clubs, etc.); (11) sports or recreation; (12) women’s groups; (13) the peace movement; (14) animal rights; (15) voluntary organizations concerned with health; and (16) “other group[s].”

⁵ Although we are unable to empirically measure these two psychological pathways using our organization-level data, later in the

paper we present polling data that are consistent with the first pathway, and the organization-level moderators (age and size), which are more consistent with the second pathway.

⁶ To create a time series for these census tracts, we used the standardized population estimates from the 1990, 2000, and 2010 Censuses provided by the National Historical Geographic Information System (Manson et al. 2019) and then linearly interpolated values for each year in our sample.

⁷ *Local population* is measured at a more granular level (census tract) than *Organizational size* (parish level): With 998 census tracts and around 300 parishes, the geographic territory of a parish may be larger than that of a census tract and, as indicated in Table 2, parish membership can be larger than the population living in a single census tract.

⁸ Because the units of the standardized dependent variables are the standard deviations of each variable, the size of the effect can be calculated by multiplying the coefficients by their respective standard deviations from Table 2 (85.21 for rites of passage and 1,023.53 for rites of integration).

⁹ A team of researchers collected data about people’s perceptions of the scandal via a random-digit phone survey of 1,500 individuals in the Philadelphia metropolitan area (1,135 people living in the five Pennsylvania counties of the archdiocese, and the rest living in the four neighboring New Jersey counties). The data were collected from October 24 to November 6, 2005, following the release of the 2005 grand jury report and at the height of the scandal. The survey included a range of questions about respondents’ knowledge, perceptions, and opinions of various aspects of the scandal (Hagen 2005).

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