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Historical institutional child abuse: Activist mobilisation and public inquiries

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Abstract

The abuse of children in institutional settings is an issue of ongoing social, public, and political concern internationally. While societal responses to historical abuse have been the subject of considerable scholarship in recent years, conceptualisation of the role of activism remains limited. This article aims to advance sociological and interdisciplinary perspectives on nonrecent institutional child abuse through a conceptualisation of activist mobilisation. The article begins by providing context for the emergence of institutional child abuse as a social issue. A brief overview of key themes and debates in the interdisciplinary literature is then offered, and a critical gap in current scholarship is identified in relation to activism. Drawing on illustrative examples of activist mobilisation, both in the form of survivor narratives and strategies aimed at influencing policy, the article sets out how a sociology of activism in the field of historical institutional child abuse might proceed. Through attention to the social dynamics of activism, and conceptualisation of collective action in this domain as a social movement, the article provides new insights for the field and an alternative to sociological theorisation of responses to historical institutional child abuse as simply constituting a public scandal or moral panic.

1 INTRODUCTION

From the child sexual abuse scandals in the Roman Catholic Church and major sporting organisations to revelations globally of systematic abuses of children in orphanages and other out-of-home residential "care" settings, the issue of historical institutional child abuse has been one of increasing social,

public, and political concern since the 1990s (Sköld, 2013). The activism of victims and survivors, along with widespread media coverage, high profile court cases, and major public inquiries, has drawn attention to what is now understood to be an insidious and longstanding social problem: the abuse of children in institutional settings (Daly, 2014a). There is now a rich interdisciplinary field of scholarship examining the emergence of concerns about historical/nonrecent institutional child abuse and the organisational and governmental responses that have followed, notably public inquiries, political apologies, and redress schemes. Yet surprisingly, given the major social, political, and cultural implications of societal attempts to "deal with the past," there has been only limited sociological engagement with the issues and questions that have emerged from this body of literature in recent years.

This article seeks to advance sociological perspectives on historical institutional child abuse through a conceptualisation of activist mobilisation. It begins by briefly outlining the sociohistorical context for the emergence of institutional child abuse as a social issue in the global North before exploring key themes and debates in the interdisciplinary literature. In so doing, we identify the need for a more systematic analysis of the role of activism in bringing the issue of nonrecent abuse to public attention, demanding action from governments and institutions, and influencing policy outcomes. A broad view on what constitutes activism is adopted, including identity-based strategies as well as strategies directed towards specific policy-oriented goals. Drawing on social movement theory and illustrative examples to conceptualise activist mobilisation, the article provides an alternative to recent sociological assessments of responses to nonrecent

institutional child abuse as simply constituting a public scandal or moral panic. The approach developed also contributes new insights to interdisciplinary scholarship on societal responses to child abuse that occurred "in the past."

2 INSTITUTIONAL ABUSE: RECOGNITION OF A SOCIAL PROBLEM

The abuse of children in institutional settings has a long history, as does societal recognition that settings in which children were "cared" for, such as orphanages, industrial and reformatory schools, and children's homes could be brutal places (Hacking, 1991; Swain, 2018; Daly, 2014a). The child rescue movement of the 19th century—generally acknowledged as the first wave of child protection—saw the establishment of legal sanctions against abuse and cruelty (Scott, 1995). Following a period of latency where concern about the abuse of children was not high on the political agenda, there was renewed attention to the issue in the 1960s and 1970s (Scott & Swain, 2002). This occurred largely in response to work undertaken in the United States by paediatricians, most famously Henry Kempe and colleagues, who identified undiagnosed fractures in children and went on to coin the term, "the battered child syndrome" (Kempe, Silverman, Steele, Droegemueller, & Silver, 1962).

The construction of child cruelty as a social problem, both in the late 19th century and through the "rediscovery" of abuse in the midlate 20th century, is not to suggest that at other historical moments, child abuse either did not exist or was not recognised (Scott, 1995). Worth noting too, is that terminology has changed over time. Older descriptors such as "cruelty," "mistreatment," and even "harsh discipline" gave way to the

term "child abuse," which now describes a variety of forms of neglect and maltreatment (Rollinson, 2006; Scott & Swain, 2002). The wider context for the emergence of concerns about violence against children was increasing attention throughout the 20th century to human rights abuses, gendered and sexual violence, and the rights of the child (Scully, 2011; Sköld & Swain, 2015; Wright, 2017).

Following the focus on physical abuse in the 1960s, there was evolving recognition that child maltreatment takes many forms. Feminist activism in the 1970s saw child sexual abuse emerge as a major issue, and by the 1980s, this had become a focus of concern worldwide. During the 1980s, *institutional abuse* was also identified as a distinct form of child maltreatment (Corby, Doig, & Roberts, 2001). Institutional abuse refers to a range of abuse types (physical, sexual, and psychological) that occur both in "closed" as well as in "open" institutional settings. Although initially used primarily to describe abuse in residential "care," its usage has recently expanded to also include abuse that takes place in "open" community settings, such as churches, schools, and sporting clubs (Daly, 2014b; Golding, 2018). The term historical (or nonrecent) institutional child abuse thus refers to abuse that occurred in the past in a range of nonfamilial contexts.

As Daly (2014b) has noted, the cultural diffusion of the concept of institutional abuse in the 1990s was critical to the recognition and construction of historical abuse as a social problem. It gave legitimacy to calls from victims and survivors that governments, churches, and other organisations "do something," both to redress the harms caused by abuse that occurred in the past and to better protect children in the future (Wright, 2018). Importantly too, the conceptualisation of historical or

nonrecent institutional abuse provided a new framework of understanding for adults who had experienced this as children, which in turn, was central to the mobilisation of activists and the development of advocacy in this area.

By the 1990s, former residents of children's institutions began to mobilise and demand justice, as did people abused as children in religious settings. These calls for justice for nonrecent institutional child abuse may be classified as falling broadly into two categories: one relating to the spectrum of abuse inflicted upon children in "closed" residential "care" and the other relating to the sexual abuse of children in "open" community settings. Sexual abuse scandals, particularly in the Roman Catholic Church, have dominated media coverage and been the focus of considerable activism. Nonrecent abuse of "looked after" children has also been the subject of sustained activism. Globally, historical institutional abuse in residential child "care" has received relatively less media attention than clergy abuse, arguably due to the power and status of the Catholic Church on the one hand, and the multiple and intersecting disadvantages, including social class, faced by institutionalised children on the other hand (Daly, 2018; Swain, 2018; Waller, Dreher, Hess, McCallum, & Skogerbø, 2019).

It is important to note that placement of children in residential institutional settings has both racialised and classed histories. Systematic removal of Indigenous children from their families in settler societies such as Australia and Canada formed a cornerstone of the colonial project to "assimilate" and "civilise" (Firpo & Jacobs, 2018). More broadly, approaches to child welfare in many countries saw the institutionalisation of poor and abused children as a solution to a range of social problems,

driven not only by the need to provide care and housing but by wider social imperatives aimed at the containment of marginal populations and the maintenance of social and moral order (Ferguson, 2007; Musgrove, 2013; Raftery & O'Sullivan, 1999; Sköld & Swain, 2015). Yet far from the images conveyed to wider publics, what is now known is that these institutions were often hostile, brutal, and abusive places (Swain, 2018).

This brief historical sketch raises several questions: How did nonrecent institutional abuse become a contemporary concern (Sköld, 2013); what have governments done in response to crises and scandals that have enveloped key social institutions; and how can the role of activism be best understood. We first address the issue of societal recognition and governmental responses, including through the mechanism of public inquiries. We then explore how historical institutional child abuse has been understood and theorised in interdisciplinary scholarship and in more limited ways in the sociological literature. Finally, we draw on conceptualisations of activist mobilisation and social movement theory to offer new insights into activism and advocacy in the domain of nonrecent institutional child abuse.

3   SOCIETAL RESPONSES TO PAST ABUSE

Societal concern about the historical abuse of children in institutions has been generated primarily through two interconnected routes: the activism of victims and survivors and through media attention to the issue (Daly, 2014a; Sköld, 2016; Wright, 2017). Media coverage has often focused on people telling their stories, which itself may be understood as a form of activism (Whittier, 2009). Investigative journalists have also exposed patterns of systemic abuse. In countries in which public inquiries form

part of political and democratic processes, demands that governments establish inquiries to investigate historical abuse have been widespread (Sköld, 2013; Swain, Wright, & Sköld, 2018). In Australia, Indigenous people began calling for a national inquiry in the 1980s to examine past policies and practices of forced child removal (Buti, 2004), and this was followed by lobbying from other groups, including those who experienced institutional "care" as children (Musgrove, 2013) and those sexually abused by the clergy (Wright, 2018).

Public inquiries into nonrecent institutional child abuse have been conducted in at least 20 countries in the global North since the late 1990s, sometimes with multiple inquiries undertaken in particular nations, for example, in Australia, Canada, Ireland, Norway, and the United Kingdom (Wright, Swain, & Sköld, 2017). These inquiries have investigated various forms of historical institutional child abuse, with many examining the spectrum of abuse in closed out-of-home residential "care" settings. Others have focused on child sexual abuse in open settings, notably religious organisations. A small number of recent inquiries have looked at child sexual abuse in both closed and open settings. While inquiries may be sparked by media attention, inquiries themselves often generate considerable public interest. Media coverage of inquiries can, in turn, educate the public on issues related to abuse, institutional practices, and childhood history. Importantly, inquiries have led to legal and regulatory changes, as well as state apologies, and the establishment of redress schemes in many jurisdictions (Daly, 2014a; Sköld & Swain, 2015; Wright, 2017).

One outlier in the spread of public inquiries in the global North is the United States. In contrast to many other countries, there has been

little attention to nonrecent abuse of children in residential "care" settings. Rather, the focus has been on clerical sexual abuse, which has been investigated through the media, the courts, and through grand juries (Clites, 2019). There has also been recent attention to child sexual abuse in sporting organisations, for example, in USA Gymnastics (Novkov, 2019). In other parts of the global North, media attention and judicial processes have also been important, but what sets the United States apart from other countries in the Anglosphere and Western Europe is that it has not seen the proliferation of independent commissions of inquiry that have taken place elsewhere.

Official governmental inquiries take different forms, both within and across jurisdictions. These include quasi-judicial mechanisms like royal commissions as well as inquiry forms that operate within government, such as parliamentary inquiries, and independent commissions that function primarily as government appointed research committees (Andresen, 2019; Wright, 2017). While there is debate about how to classify inquiries, a broad and inclusive definition is useful, for despite differences in legislative basis or inquiry form, most share "the objective of investigating public scandals and issues of major social importance and advising governments on how to respond to those issues by developing recommendations or appropriate policy responses" (Wright, Sköld, & Swain, 2018, p. 163).

There is now a burgeoning interdisciplinary field of study that examines the subject of historical institutional child abuse, its emergence as a social issue, its investigation through the media, public inquiries, and the courts, and the range of institutional and political responses that have followed (e.g., Daly, 2014a; Gallen, 2016; Lynch, 2017; Ring, 2018;

Sköld, 2013; Sköld & Swain, 2015; Wilson & Golding, 2015; Wright, 2017). Across the fields of legal studies, social care, law, and policy, there has also been considerable attention to the impact of reports into nonrecent abuse and public inquiry findings on regulatory, legislative, and policy reform (e.g., Burns & MacCarthy, 2012; Mathews, 2017).

Some sociological analyses of historical abuse and public inquiries have foregrounded culture and underscore the symbolic significance of public inquiries as a mechanism that provides social recognition, among their many other functions (Lynch, 2017; Woods, 2016; Wright, 2017). In Lynch's (2017, p. 323) theorisation, inquiries can serve as moral rituals or "symbolic interventions in public memory which seek to offer forms of moral repair against the profanation of child abuse." An interesting parallel may be drawn here with Alexander's (2018) elaboration of the concept of societalization, which we explore below.

Historical sociological studies exploring how societies deal with past atrocities and injustices have informed interdisciplinary scholarship on related issues involving children (Sköld, 2013). For example, Olick's (2007) "politics of regret" and Torpey's (2006) reparations politics have provided important conceptual frames for understanding why societies began to acknowledge past wrongdoing, embraced social acts of remembering, encouraged the acceptance of responsibility, and began issuing apologies (Tavuchis, 1991). Some of the most developed contributions to the field have arisen through scholarship in the fields of history (e.g., Sköld, 2013; Swain, 2016), criminology and legal studies (e.g., Daly, 2014a; Gallen, 2016; McAlinden, 2013; Ring, 2018), and social work (e.g., Corby et al., 2001; Kendrick & Hawthorn, 2015).

In light of the focus on abuse that occurred in the past, it is not surprising that historians have played a major role in understanding and analysing emergent concerns with this social issue. Oral and life history approaches, memory studies, and questions of the relationship between the past and the present have been important, alongside debate about the role of historians in a so-called "age of apology" (De Wilde, Vanobbergen, & Roets, 2018; Sköld, 2013; Swain, 2018). Importantly, as Sköld (2013) has noted, testimonies of victims and survivors have become politicised, and this has led to debate about how the "truth" about the past should be understood. Questions of truth have also arisen in sociology and criminology, where this issue has been framed largely as media-driven scandals and as a form of moral panic (Furedi, 2013; Greer & McLaughlin, 2013).

4   PUBLIC SCANDALS, SOCIAL CRISES, AND MORAL PANICS

In the United Kingdom, in the context of sexual abuse allegations against high profile politicians and media personalities, theorisation of media attention and public reactions has drawn on the concepts of "scandal" and "moral panic." Greer and McLaughlin (2015), for example, explore the scandal that arose in response to accusations that BBC personality, Jimmy Savile, had abused large numbers of children across a range of sites, including BBC studios and hospitals (Halliday, 2014). They examine the activation and development of the scandal, which in their analysis, led to the transformation of Savile from "national treasure" to "prolific sexual predator" through a process of "trial by media" (Greer & McLaughlin, 2013, p. 243).

Elsewhere, utilising the concept of moral panic, McLaughlin (2015) employs a social constructionist approach to question the effects of

advocacy research and the tactics used by some groups to establish legitimacy. He notes that in the United Kingdom by the 2010s "the issue of the historical abuse of children [was] high on the political, media and judicial agenda" (McLaughlin, 2015, p. 241). Within this mileu, advocacy group tactics, according to his analysis, have included "media manipulation," "the use of hyperbole," and "problem exaggeration," which he argues is damaging to social policy formation (McLaughlin, 2015, pp. 245, 249). While acknowledging that child abuse is "a very real problem," he suggests that exaggerated claims made by advocacy groups have considerable negative effects (McLaughlin, 2015, p. 242).

Similarly, in other literature emerging from Britain, Smith and Burnett (2018) call into question what they suggest is a naïve realist position adopted by police and activists. They also underscore the role of scandal in driving public policy, suggesting that abuse may not have been as endemic as now claimed. Following Furedi's (2013) contention that contemporary responses to child abuse constitutes a "moral crusade," Smith and Burnett (2018, p. 37) argue that "those who wage this crusade will not recognise it as such; they are likely blinded by the cognitive dissonance, which takes over in cases where emotions run high." In other words, they suggest that institutional child abuse scandals do not simply reflect social reality but may be more fruitfully understood as reflecting contemporary anxieties about childhood.

A more sophisticated analysis of crisis, which, critically, does not dismiss or underplay the existence and pervasiveness of institutional abuse, can be found in Alexander's (2018) theory of societalization. According to this formulation, problems become crises "only when they move outside their own spheres and appear to endanger society at large" (Alexander,

2018, pp. 1049–1050). Interestingly, in contrast to analyses from scholars in the United Kingdom, Alexander's work emerges from a national context (the United States) that has largely avoided the types of public inquiries seen across much of the global North.

While not focused on public inquiries, Alexander's (2018) analysis includes consideration of church abuse scandals. His framework offers an alternative conceptualisation of crisis and a way of understanding activists' challenges to abusive authority and institutional wrongdoing as a reorganisation of the civil sphere, one in which the media plays a vital role. Crucially, it avoids the pitfalls of a moral panic approach, which minimises accounts of abuse and runs the risk of further marginalising already marginalised groups. According to Alexander (2018, p. 1050), civil spheres are aspirational at the same time that they are compromised and thus "their utopian promises continually trigger radical criticism, social movement struggles, social crises, and institutional reform."

5   IDENTITY AND ACTIVIST MOBILISATION

The activism of victims and survivors is widely acknowledged as central to increasing public awareness of institutional child abuse and governmental and organisational responses to this issue (Brennan, 2015; Daly, 2014b; Golding, 2018; Sköld, 2013; Swain, 2016). Indeed, individual activists, self-advocacy groups, and organisations that campaign on behalf of their constituencies have called for action from governments and religious organisations for decades, both in relation to the issue of child abuse broadly (Davis, 2005; Nelson, 1984; Whittier, 2009) and, particularly since the 1990s, in relation to institutional abuse (Sköld & Swain, 2015).

Activism in the field of nonrecent institutional child abuse takes a

variety of forms and involves a range of social actors. It is not a unitary movement. It encompasses shared goals in some areas, for example, in relation to the broad aim of seeking justice. Yet there are also competing interests. As such, there are both alliances and tensions. Our focus here is primarily on the social action of adults who were abused as children in institutional settings. However, we acknowledge the heterogeneity of experiences that this encompasses and, importantly, that activism also often involves alliances and partnerships where individuals and organisations advocate on behalf of others.

An important form of activism has been people telling their stories (e.g., Foster & Kennedy, 2010; Penglase, 2005; Sheedy, 2005; Waks, 2016). As Daly (2014b, p. 7) has noted, cultural platforms such as "books, television series, films, and oral history projects … advanced political campaigns and social movement activism and educated the general public about the history of policy wrongs against children and political minority groups." Media attention has often focused on personal narratives and such acts of public disclosure reflect a key strand of activism (Whittier, 2009). People have also recounted their experiences in courts of law, in public inquiries, and through other mechanisms such as official redress schemes.

Across much of the literature on historical institutional child abuse—both in relation to clergy abuse and abuse in residential out-of-home "care" contexts—there is widespread recognition that victim and survivor advocacy has been central to raising public awareness, garnering recognition, and putting pressure on governments to "do something" (see Sköld & Swain, 2015). Yet beyond acknowledgement of the centrality of survivor activism, to date there has been only limited theorisation in the interdisciplinary literature of the work of activists, the contexts in which

advocacy groups began to form, and the social dynamics involved in these forms of collective action.

Beyond the British literature on public scandals and moral panics, there has been little analysis in the sociological literature of activism in this field and exploration of whether the sphere of activity related to calls to address non-recent institutional child abuse constitutes a social movement. While not specifically focused on historical institutional abuse, Whittier's (2012) important work on the politics of "coming out" for survivors of child sexual abuse in the United States is a notable exception. Her analysis provides key insights that can be applied to survivor activism and mobilisation in the domain of nonrecent institutional abuse.

As Whittier (2012) notes, identity construction through "coming out" has been an important component of social movement activism since the early 1970s. Building on earlier protest movements that foregrounded pride in marginalised identities, public disclosures of child sexual abuse, for example, involved the elevation of a visible group identity to provide impetus for collective action. Importantly, such strategies were aimed at social change through the mobilisation of both identity and therapeutic discourses (Whittier, 2012; see also Wright, 2018). Rejecting the notion that the focus on identity reflects a retreat from politics, Whittier (2012) argues that the politicisation of identity through strategies of visibility have the express aim of fostering social and cultural change. In addition to the insights that can be gleaned about activist mobilisation through a focus on identity, contributions from the broader sociological literature on social movements and interest group strategies are also highly relevant.

6   ACTIVIST MOBILISATION STRATEGIES

Considerable work addressing the mobilisation of interest and advocacy groups has made use of Grant's (1978) classification of *insider* and *outsider* strategies deployed through both direct or indirect lobbying (Richardson, 2003). Insider strategies involve close consultation and direct interaction with bureaucrats and policy makers, for example, via membership of advisory boards, consultation with government bodies, and through personal contacts. By contrast, outsider lobbying involves galvanising public opinion and putting pressure on politicians through activities such as protests, petitions, and press conferences (Kollman, 1998). As a broad framework, the insider–outsider distinction is useful for understanding strategic choices of historical abuse survivor activist groups. A weakness, however, in the broader literature is a tendency to categorise interest groups as possessing either insider or outsider status rather than utilising a mix of strategies (Binderkrantz, 2005).

It is clear that activists in the historical abuse domain employ action repertoires that include both direct (insider) contacts with bureaucrats and politicians and more indirect (outsider) activities as a means to influence policy reform and social change. For example, the self-advocacy group, Care Leavers Australasia Network (CLAN), has bipartisan support and patronage from current and former members of the Australian parliament. CLAN is noted for coordinating nationwide protests at key sites such as state parliament houses, government department offices, and major religious organisations (CLAN, 2018). In October 2011, in an event that attracted national media attention, members of CLAN carried a coffin through the streets of Melbourne to highlight the issue of care leavers dying without receiving compensation for the abuse they suffered as

children (Zwartz, 2011).[1]

The choice of activist strategies is influenced by political goals. For agenda setting, the media is often a preferred target (Binderkrantz, Christiansen, & Pedersen, 2015). Activist groups may thus draw on so-called outsider strategies, for example, by sharing personal stories with the media that are likely to resonate with the public and engender support. Christie's (1986) concept of the "ideal victim" is useful here. He suggests that the ascription of legitimate victim status reflects societal norms and values about who is weak, what constitutes wrongdoing, and who is deserving of sympathy. As Ericsson (2015, p. 126) notes with regard to historical abuse: "A child fulfills the most important criteria for being an ideal victim. But the persons seeking recognition of their childhood sufferings are no longer children." In some instances, this disjunction renders the deservingness of legitimate victim status problematic.

As Daly (2018) argues, not all child victims and adults reclaiming their childhood rights are afforded equal status. The classed and racialised histories of institutional "care" meant that "looked after" children were ascribed low social status (Ferguson, 2007). In addition, they suffered multiple deprivations, including limited education, and many care leavers experience continuing effects of trauma and class disadvange in adulthood, which destablise the notion of the "ideal victim." The capacity to both access the media and articulately present personal stories places some individuals and groups at an advantage. Even for those able to successfully garner media attention, such as CLAN, this action does not necessarily translate into policy outcomes.

One example of this is that despite intense lobbying to include all forms of abuse in the recent Australian Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse and the national redress scheme that followed, the limited focus on sexual abuse excluded care leavers who suffered other forms of abuse (Golding, 2018). Daly (2018) argues that care leavers who are entitled to redress will also be disadvantaged in comparison to noncare leavers because group differences and social disadvantage are not adequately considered. Citing data from an earlier redress scheme, she notes that payments to care leavers were lower than those made to noncare leavers, despite indications of severe abuse in closed residential "care" settings.

With regard to action directed at influencing policy decisions, key insider strategies include lobbying politicians and engaging with bureaucrats (Binderkrantz et al., 2015). One way of interpreting the actions of activist and advocacy groups in this area is to understand the securing of insider access as a consequence of an exchange of resources with critical gatekeepers, that is, policy makers and bureaucrats. This model helps explain the leverage of activists and advocates in terms of their possession of *insider resources* relevant to decision making processes (Binderkrantz et al., 2015). For instance, possessing knowledge of the needs of their constituents means that activist and advocacy groups are well positioned to participate in consultation processes, for example, in relation to policy formulation on redress.

One example of this is the Northern Ireland Panel of Experts on Redress, which was established in 2015. It comprised care leaver survivors, activist groups, academics, practitioners, legal professionals, and other

experts (Lundy, 2016). Based on a model of collaborative participation, survivors played a central role in developing redress guidelines aimed at policy making (Lundy, 2016). The panel published four research reports and developed recommendations for a redress framework. It influenced political discourse in Northern Ireland, as documented in Hansard, Political Party Manifestos, and in press releases (Lundy, n.d.) and recommendations made by the panel were cited in the final report of Northern Ireland's Historical Institutional Abuse Inquiry (Hart, Lane, & Doherty, 2017). The panel also informed the work of the United Nations in relation to transitional justice processes aimed at redressing historical child abuse (Lundy, n.d.).

This "bottom up" participatory approach to transitional justice is evident in Scotland too. In 2009, the Scottish Human Rights Commission (SHRC) was engaged to develop a human rights framework for the design and delivery of the "Acknowledgement and Accountability Forum" for historical institutional child abuse. The framework employed what the Commission refer to as the "PANEL" model: "participation of people in decisions which affect their human rights; accountability of duty bearers; non-discrimination and equality; empowerment; legality" (SHRC, 2010, p. 5). In 2010, the SHRC developed a framework for justice and remedies for historical abuse of children in care, which drew extensively on consultations with survivors of abuse and advocacy groups.

Similarly, in Australia, individual activists and advocacy groups have participated in policy making processes aimed at justice responses. Recent examples include working groups for the National Apology and the National Redress Scheme, which, in their conceptualisation at least,

attempted to model a survivor led process. Both the apology and the redress scheme were key recommendations of the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse (RCIRCSA, 2017). It also recommended an advisory council be formed to advise government on the establishment and operation of a redress scheme (RCIRCSA, 2015). In December 2016, an Independent Advisory Council on Redress was announced, which included representatives from survivor support and advocacy groups and other experts, and in July 2018, the National Redress Scheme for Institutional Child Sexual Abuse Act was enacted (Australia, 2019). While the effectiveness of these participatory processes requires further examination, they do signal the extent to which governments recognise the importance of consultation.

A key strategy adopted to influence policy and public discourse is building a reputation for expertise. Browne (1990, p. 502) argues that developing "a recognisable identity" with associated expertise is a strategy that can be harnessed for political purposes. This raises important questions about activist resources in the form of autonomy over knowledge. Across public inquiries into historical institutional child abuse internationally, it is clear that lived experience is highly valued (Swain, Wright, & Sköld, 2018). Individual activists and groups have become experts through experience, education, and research. Theoretical approaches that recognise this type of expertise are important because they ask fundamental questions about political arena access; for example, to what extent can privileged access to policy making arenas be explained as a result of activist resources in the form of specialised knowledge?

Another noteworthy area of activism and advocacy relates to the

field of academic research. Australian care leaver academics, Jacqueline Wilson and Frank Golding, underscore the importance of participation of individuals and groups in research that affects them, for example, in the area of access to child welfare records (Golding, 2010; Wilson & Golding, 2015, 2016). Following inquiry recommendations for more research, a number of collaborative projects in Australia have now been undertaken, which have brought together archivists, historians, and care leavers with the purpose of producing reflective narratives about the lived experience of "care," destabilising objective truths, and rewriting histories of childhood (Wilson & Golding, 2015). In Northern Ireland, sociologist Patricia Lundy (2016) has worked closely with care leavers on issues relating to redress, representing the sorts of collaboration that Wilson and Golding advocate. As these examples illustrate, activism in this field extends beyond telling one's story, as important as this has been, and also involves a range of other contributions, including in the areas of policy and research.

7   FUTURE DIRECTIONS

As an interdisciplinary field in the social sciences, social movement theories provide critical perspectives in relation to the mobilisation of individuals and groups, the nature of group action, and their socioeconomic, cultural, and political consequences. Drawing on this body of literature offers the opportunity to explore important questions about the role of activism and advocacy in generating public and political concern and in shaping the responses from governments and institutions that have followed. Some valuable contributions to future research would include examination of the resources, strategies, and tactics that activists have mobilised in pursuit of their objectives, the coalitions and

alliances that have or have not developed between activist groups, and the forms of external support that individuals and groups have generated.

What is clear is that individuals and groups have framed their grievances in ways that resonate with key audiences, such as the media, political elites, and the general public. How groups "frame" debates and policy positions is central to engendering support and shaping policy outcomes in their favour. Analysing these dynamics would be highly instructive. A fruitful avenue for research would be to consider collective action frames (Snow & Benford, 1988). Here, the focus is not simply on individual groups but the ways in which there is coherence and consensus across a broader social movement. This perspective prompts consideration of the ways in which social movements "assign meaning to and interpret, relevant events and conditions in ways that are intended to mobilize potential adherents and constituents, to garner bystander support, and to demobilize antagonists" (Snow & Benford, 1988, p. 198). Particularly relevant to historical institutional child abuse is what Gamson (2013) refers to as "injustice frames." This provides a useful conceptual lens for understanding how survivor activists have been able to draw on wider social and cultural discourses of injustice and child rights to articulate experiences of victimisation.

Finally, it is important to reiterate that activism in the field of nonrecent institutional child abuse encompasses a broad range of individuals and groups pursuing different approaches to justice. Yet there have also been important coalitions. To understand these dynamics, literature on the formation and composition of interest group alliances is instructive. It suggests that there are benefits from coalitions that allow groups to share resources and exchange policy relevant information

(Nelson & Yackee, 2012). Importantly, "coalitions can signal to policy-makers where the bulk of support lies" (Mahoney, 2007, p. 368). The question of coalition lobbying is an important one for historical abuse survivor activists. Given their willingness to participate in justice forums such as public inquiries, there are clearly shared interests and some agreement on desired policy outcomes. However, little is currently known about the extent to which activist groups have coalesced to lobby governments on issues such as the establishment of public inquiries or the introduction of schemes of monetary redress.

Interest group scholars have long considered the circumstances under which groups choose to employ particular lobbying strategies to influence policy reform. However, there has not been systematic analysis of this in the context of activism related to nonrecent institutional abuse of children. Future lines of research might address this by asking which types of lobbying strategies have worked most effectively, under which circumstances, and for which survivor advocacy groups. Analysis of the use of social media as an effective tool for activist mobilisation in this domain would be another valuable contribution.

8   CONCLUSION

Sociological theories and concepts have much to contribute to current understandings of the emergence of historical institutional child abuse as a social problem and the societal responses that have followed, including public inquiries, political apologies, and redress schemes. In this article, we have provided an overview of some of the key themes and tensions within existing scholarship. An important area, which we argue requires further research and theorisation, is activist mobilisation and interest group

strategies. This article points to the value, both for sociology and the wider interdisciplinary field of scholarship on nonrecent institutional child abuse, of engaging with theoretical perspectives that shed light on these social processes.

Aside from the potential benefits outlined in this article, focusing on survivor activism also provides an important counterpoint and a much-needed corrective to accounts that frame societal attention to historical institutional child abuse as a "moral panic" or as a series of "media driven scandals." These approaches are problematic for they minimise the significant harms that have been caused by the abusive exercise of power and the failure of institutions to protect children. In doing so, they risk compounding the suffering of already marginalised groups through assessments of activism as a kind of moral crusade, one aimed at claims making in an era where victimhood, it is argued, has been reified. In light of this, alternative theorisations are clearly warranted.

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[1] The term "care leaver" is widely used to refer to people who were in orphanages, children's homes, and foster care as children.

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