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## **“Church trailblazer Rev Pat Storey on Weight Watchers, caffeine and how she named her dog after former New York Mayor”: News representations of the first female Anglican Bishop in the UK and Ireland**

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### **ABSTRACT**

The first female bishop in the Anglican Church of the UK and Ireland was consecrated on November 30, 2013. For many within the Anglican Communion, the appointment of Reverend Pat Storey as Bishop of Meath and Kildare represented the opening of a long-awaited new chapter in the history of Anglicanism. It is also potentially an occasion of considerable interest for both Irish historians and discourse analysts. For, although questions of gender and language have been widely considered in recent years, relatively few studies address the intersections of gender, language and religion – and fewer still examine the nexus of gender, language, religion, and power in contemporary Ireland. In this paper, therefore, I analyze news representations of Bishop Storey’s consecration – drawing critically on both the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to critical discourse analysis (CDA) and Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA), as well as relevant religious studies literature – with a view to identifying both old and new discursive construals of one of contemporary Ireland’s powerful public female figures. In sum, I observe that news reporting of Bishop Storey is broadly positive, but displays residual gender bias, with repeated references to her marital and parental status, age, education, emotions and other personal behaviours depicting her chiefly as a woman, rather than as the right person for the position. This case study also illustrates my methodological argument that DHA and PDA can be complementary analytical frameworks for investigating underlying ideologies around religious, gender and other social identifications.

On November 30, 2013, Reverend Pat Storey was consecrated as the first female bishop in the Anglican Church of the UK and Ireland, thus drawing together gender, religion and power in a pivotal moment for Anglicanism. The interplay of these concerns is of particular interest in Ireland, given Mary Robinson’s historic appointment to the Irish presidency some 20 years earlier. Like both the Anglican Church and the Catholic Church (with which a majority of the Irish population still associates), Ireland’s political culture had long been dominated by traditionalism (Chubb, 1970; O’Carroll, 1991) – and, in light of this past, Robinson’s victory was widely hailed by Irish news media as a “turning point in the history of this country” representing a “symbolic revolution” of women, and her presidency as having successfully “blend[ed] continuity with change” (as cited in Bresnihan, 1999, pp. 254, 256). As president, Robinson also received consistently high satisfaction ratings in political polls and is generally regarded as having ushered in a new era of “inclusiveness

and empowerment” (Bresnihan, 1999, p. 257), particularly for previously marginalized groups. In recognition of this legacy, I will refer here to contemporary Ireland as “post Mary Robinson Ireland.”

Yet Robinson was not only Ireland’s first female president; she was also a “deeply spiritual” person (de Bréadún, 2012, para. 11), whose relationship with organized religion was pioneering and controversial. In this paper, therefore, I focus on how one of contemporary Ireland’s most powerful religious women is discursively construed in news representations. To this end, I draw critically on relevant religious studies and discourse analytic literature – in particular the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to Critical Discourse Analysis (Wodak, 2001a) and Positive Discourse Analysis (PDA) (Martin & Rose, [2003] 2007). In doing so, I also argue that PDA constitutes a valuable complement to DHA – not only because it provides a rationale for studying particular moments of social change, but also because it calls for greater transparency about the value judgments underpinning critical discourse analysis.

### **Powerful (religious) women & the media**

In recent years, discourse analysts have shown considerable interest in intersections of gender and language. Scholars have also lately examined both media and self-representations of successful women in traditionally male-dominated fields, such as business (Wagner & Wodak, 2006; Eikhof, Summers, & Carter, 2013), science (Chimba & Kitzinger, 2010; Cheryan, Plaut, Handron, & Hudson, 2013), politics (Mavin, Bryans, & Cunningham, 2010; Anderson, Diabah, & hMensa, 2011) and sport (Daniels, 2009). Among the key findings from this research are the following six observations: first, that public portrayals of powerful women remain routinely characterized by an overt and irrelevant focus on their age, physical appearance, and marital and parental status; second, that women are repeatedly addressed in familiar terms, thus blurring their public and private personas; third, that women are commonly sexualized and/or linked to stereotypically “feminine” qualities, such as kindness, warmth, compassion and gentleness; fourth, that media coverage of successful women is often non-serious; fifth, that women’s professional accomplishments are thereby backgrounded and/or trivialized; and, sixth, that female leaders are “still a rather exotic theme” (Jaworska & Larrivé, 2011, p. 2478), represented as atypical – even “trespassers” (Anderson, Diabah, & hMensa, 2011, p. 2516) – in male domains.

Media representations of religion have also become an important new avenue of scholarly inquiry since 9/11 (Badaracco, 2005). Here again, however, media coverage has repeatedly been found to be problematic, insofar as it commonly (i) represents religious identities reductively in relation to a limited range of stereotypical issues, (ii) stereotypes and “others” minority groups via Orientalist discourses, (iii) links religious and political affiliations in simplistic ways, and (iv) fetishizes religious violence while veiling religious altruism. Some studies have examined media depictions of religious women (see, for example, Lövheim, 2013; Stanovsky, 1999). Yet, relatively little scholarly attention has been paid to intersections of gender, language, power, identity and religion (cf. Goldman, 2000; Green & Searle-Chatterjee, 2008; Jule, 2005, 2006; Walsh, 2001). Even fewer

discourse analytic studies have interrogated public portrayals of powerful religious women (cf. Power, 2014a, 2014b, 2015). In this paper, therefore, I draw critically on two discourse analytic approaches to ascertain how mainstream media depict one of Ireland’s powerful public women.

### **Theoretical framework and method**

The Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) to critical discourse analysis (CDA) is well known both for analyzing the “referential, predicational and argumentative strategies (topoi)” used in texts (as noted by KhosraviNik, 2010, p. 57) and for situating that analysis in relation to the wider sociopolitical contexts within which specific texts are produced (Wodak, 2001a). Distinguished by a particular interest in *power*, *history* and *ideology* (Wodak, 2001b), DHA has typically dealt with “social power abuse, dominance, and inequality” (Van Dijk, 1995, p. 19). As such, it has repeatedly been critiqued (along with other forms of CDA) for three perceived shortcomings: first, for allowing ideological presuppositions to shape its linguistic analysis (Widdowson, 1998); second, for paying scant regard to questions of text selection (Haig, 2004); and, finally, for failing to proffer solutions to the discursive ills it diagnoses (Toolan, 1997).

In response to these critiques, Martin (2004) has argued that CDA’s characteristic “deconstruction” must be combined with “productive activity” (p.183), in order to deliver more fully on CDA’s transformative agenda. To this end, Martin (2007) has promoted “positive” discourse analysis, which he conceptualizes as “taking a stand, and positively valuing some aspect of social change” (pp.85-86). For example, positive discourse analytic studies have examined discursive promotions of reconciliation, the privileging of indigenous voices, discourses of peace and solidarity, environmental journalism, and racial literacy. The “positive” orientation of PDA can thus be seen to provide both an explicit rationale for text selection and, potentially, at least some of the information needed “to design better futures” (Martin, 2004, p. 184). Yet, PDA is not without its own critics. Wodak (2007, p. 3), for example, argues that PDA misconstrues the term “critical” as meaning “negative,” rather than “skeptical” and “self-reflexive.” Further, Agustin (2012) adds that PDA surrenders the critical perspective needed both to understand and to work towards social change.

From my perspective, however, PDA chiefly entails “put[ting] our values on the line” (Martin, 2004, p. 184): first, by positively valuing particular moments of social change; and, second, by selecting as the object of one’s research textual realizations and representations of those moments. In doing so, I would argue, PDA has the potential to refocus CDA on *problem-solving* (in the present study, for example, by examining textual representations of and responses to the overturning of gender inequality within an influential religious institution), rather than on its more typical project of *problem-identification* (such as by exposing and critiquing existing gender inequalities within religious institutions).

To my mind, PDA also implicitly requires analysts to justify – rather than merely to assert – the value judgments underpinning their critical analysis. As such, I propose that PDA does not misconstrue, but rather encourages more explicitly grounded and transparently self-reflexive, critique. Further, I posit that allowing PDA’s approach to data selection and researcher transparency to inform DHA enables one not only to avoid falling prey to the naïve self-congratulation for which earlier conceptualizations of PDA (such as Macgilchrist, 2007) have been critiqued (but cf. Macgilchrist, 2016 for a substantially more robust approach), but also to identify both positive societal and discursive developments, and areas in which it remains important to continue working for change.

PDA informs the present study by (i) guiding as my choice of research site the moment of social change represented by Pat Storey’s selection as Bishop of Meath and Kildare, and (ii) serving as a vehicle for transparent reflexivity on my part, that is obliging me to disclose the basis upon which I evaluate that moment of social change as “positive.” For many within the Anglican Communion – of which I am one – Storey’s appointment was cause for celebration, representing an important step towards the removal of the “stained glass ceiling” (Rois, Rixon, & Faseruk, 2013, p. 25) that has long prevented Anglican women from occupying positions of leadership and power within their denomination. As a national church within the Anglican Communion, the Church of Ireland approved the ordination of women as both priests and bishops in 1990; but, despite immediately ordaining women priests, it did not select a female bishop until Storey’s appointment in 2013. I view Bishop Storey’s consecration as “positive” because – by realizing the potential for gender equality in a previously male-dominated religious institution – it potentially enables countless women to engage more fully with their spiritual tradition; and what interests me particularly in this study is how this development is discursively constructed by the media. The data upon which this study is based comprises 176 news articles about Bishop Storey, published between January 2013 and September 2014. These articles were gathered from the news database Factiva, as well as through Google Custom Search, using the search terms “Bishop Storey” and “Pat Storey.” Most of the sampled articles come from major UK news sources, although excerpts from local parish publications and newsletters are also included. In one case, Storey was the author of the text in question; in 121 cases, she was the main focus of the article; and, in 54 texts, she was mentioned only briefly in relation to other issues – most notably either debates within the Church of England around the ordination of female bishops<sup>i</sup>, or the 2014 Women’s Executive Network’s Leadership Summit and Awards Gala for Ireland’s “most influential and powerful women” (Stack, 2014, p. para. 1).

This corpus comprised several duplicate (or near-duplicate) versions of articles, such as texts produced for different editions of the same publication, released at different times on the same day, thus reducing the number of clearly distinguishable articles from 121 to 106. Coincidentally, 53 of these were published before Storey’s consecration, and 53 afterwards. Several of these articles draw heavily on two Church of Ireland (COI) press releases, issued on 20 September 2013 and 30 November 2013 – respectively, the dates of Bishop Storey’s appointment and consecration. Such reliance on a single news source points to the significance of the press release genre in shaping mainstream news. It also goes some way

towards explaining the repetition of specific forms of words across my corpus, as well as the repeated mention of Bishop Storey’s gender, marital status and age, as I will outline below. However, my analysis suggests that the COI press releases take seriously Bishop Storey’s suitability for the position and are not implicated in the stereotypically gendered and trivializing representations of her by other news sources.

I begin my analysis by considering the following three questions, which are characteristic of DHA inquiries, to identify key elements of the articles in my corpus that focus on Bishop Storey:

- i. How is Bishop Storey named and referred to linguistically? [i.e., *referential strategies*]
- ii. What traits, characteristics, qualities and features are attributed to her? [i.e., *predicational strategies*]
- iii. By means of what arguments and argumentation schemes do specific persons or social groups try to justify and legitimize the exclusion, discrimination, suppression and exploitation – or, conversely, the recognition and promotion – of others? [i.e., *argumentational strategies*] (adapted from Wodak, 2001a, p. 72).

I will not discuss in detail either *perspectivization* or *intensification/mitigation* (which are the fourth and fifth questions typically addressed by DHA) because – as KhosraviNik (2010) rightly points out – these are both elements that influence the other three levels of analysis.

Following my initial analysis of “the immediate, language or text internal co-text” of my corpus articles, I will discuss the specific “context[s] of situation” (Wodak, 2001a, p. 67) in which depictions of Bishop Storey were produced, before exploring “the intertextual and interdiscursive relationship” between the various articles in my corpus, and situating them within a “broader sociopolitical and historical context” (Wodak, 2001a, p. 67).

### **Text internal co-text**

#### **Referential strategies**

Prior to her consecration, Storey’s official title was “The Reverend Patricia Storey.” “The Reverend” is the usual appellation for priests in the Church of Ireland (COI) and, as indicated in Table 1 below, slightly more than half (57%) of the 147 references to Storey published before her consecration use either this title, or a relaxed variation of it (e.g., [*the*] *Rev[erend]* [*Pat*][*ricia*] *Storey*).

**Table 1: References to Bishop Storey**

Title	Pre-consecration (53 articles)	%	Post-consecration (53 articles)	%	Total (106 articles)	% of total
Official titles ( <i>[the] Rev[erend] [Pat][ricia] Storey; the Most Rev[erend] [Bishop] Pat[ricia] Storey</i> )	84	57	52	28	136	42
“Bishop” ( <i>Bishop[-elect][the Revd Pat] Storey, Bishop Pat [Storey], the Bishop</i> )	4	3	72	40	76	23
First name ( <i>Pat [Storey]</i> )	37	25	39	22	76	23
Marital/ parental status ( <i>Mrs Storey, Mum Pat</i> )	18	12	12	7	30	9
Surname only ( <i>Storey</i> )	4	3	2	1	6	2
Inaccurate honorific ( <i>Dr. Storey, Right Rev. Pat Storey</i> )	0	0	4	2	4	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>147</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>181</b>	<b>100</b>	<b>328</b>	<b>100</b>

After Storey’s consecration, however, her official title changed to “The Most Reverend Patricia Storey.” This is a highly prestigious designation, used elsewhere only in reference to the Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin, owing to the traditional precedence of the united Dioceses of Meath and Kildare over other dioceses within the COI (O’Brian, 2014). Yet, variations of this new title (e.g., *the Most Rev [erend] [Bishop] Pat [ricia] Storey*) are used only 17 times in my corpus: once in an article published before Storey’s consecration, and 16 times in 14 of the 53 articles published afterwards. These latter instances represent just 9% of the 181 total references to the newly appointed bishop, with a mere 5% of all of 328 references in my corpus using this title. Owing to the idiosyncratic title reserved for the Bishop of Meath and Kildare, it is possible that these numbers represent a low level of familiarity with church protocol on the part of the surveyed news outlets. Omission of the definite article from the title “the Reverend” in 19% of the articles in my corpus – together with use of the common title “Mrs.” in 11% of corpus articles (either in lieu of or in conjunction with an ecclesiastical title) – similarly indicates unfamiliarity with, if not disregard for, church traditions and culture.

It has been reported that Storey “prefers to be addressed by her Christian name, Pat” (O’Toole, 2014, para. 5) – and, as again indicated in Table 1 above, this latter designation is used on its own 44 times in my corpus, plus a further 32 times in combination with her surname, for a total of 76 references (23% of total references). At first glance, these numbers suggest that news reporting may have been responsive to Storey’s preferred self-designation. Yet, more than one third (17) of the 44 mentions of “Pat” involve the reported speech of her professional associates and friends – including nine by the Archbishop of Dublin on the occasion of her appointment, and five in a sermon by The Reverend Nigel Parker which directly addressed Storey during her consecration ceremony.<sup>ii</sup> Two further mentions of “Pat” are drawn from direct quotations of Storey’s own reported self-talk. As such, these familiar designations appear to demonstrate the warm collegial relations Storey enjoys with her colleagues and her own sense of herself, rather than any particular sensitivity on the part of news media to her preferred self-representation. In one reported account of herself, for example, Storey claims, “I don’t have many frills and I’m a person who is quite normal and I do ordinary things and don’t have airs and graces – and I’d like to keep it that way”(O’Toole, 2014, p. para. 40).

Lastly, again as indicated in Table 1 above, approximately 9% of news representations blur Storey’s public and private personas by identifying her in, at times highly familiar, terms denoting her marital and parental status (*Mrs Storey, Mum Pat*); a further 1% use inappropriate honorifics (*Dr. Storey, Right Rev. Pat Storey*), suggesting in the first instance a lack of gravitas, and in the second a lack of attention to detail (and again either ignorance of or disregard for church conventions) in the news reporting of Storey’s historic promotion to the episcopacy.

### **Predicational strategies**

In the articles surveyed here, Bishop Storey is assigned numerous attributes and behaviors which can be categorized loosely as (i) personal characteristics, (ii) religious characteristics, (iii) education, (iv) employment, (v) emotional and other behaviour, (vi) geographical location, and (vii) history-making accomplishment.

In relation to *personal characteristics*, all but three of the articles in my corpus make explicit mention of Storey’s gender, 82% portray her as married, 78% depict her as a mother, and 55% mention her age. This personal information was included in both of the COI press releases, but did not receive there the same prominence as in most news reports. For example, the COI’s first press release (announcing Storey’s appointment as Bishop) mentioned her gender, age, and marital and family status in its second to last paragraph, alongside details of her birthplace, education, previous ecclesiastical appointments, and committee work. The COI’s second press release gave greater prominence to the historicity of Storey’s consecration as the first female Bishop in the UK and Ireland; but it referred to her husband and children only in passing, reporting their attendance at Storey’s “Service of Ordination and Consecration” alongside “many close friends and family members” and a slew of church and state dignitaries (Church of Ireland, 2013, para. 1).



By contrast, more than 80% of article headlines in my corpus explicitly referenced Storey's gender. In most cases, these headlines flagged as newsworthy Storey's position as the first female bishop in the UK and Ireland. However, seven headlines – all of which were published by tabloid (*Sunday Mail*, *The Sun*, *Daily Star*) or tabloid-style compact (*Belfast Telegraph*) newspapers – invoked either (i) stereotypically gendered and non-serious categories (e.g., "Mum Pat first bish," 2013) or (ii) anomalous and irrelevant personal predicates, such as "The woman who will be bishop: Church trailblazer Rev Storey on Weight Watchers, caffeine, and how she named her dog after former New York mayor Rudy Giuliani" (Bradley, 2013).

In the body of numerous news articles, Storey is also repeatedly depicted as owning various stereotypically female traits, most notably perhaps concern over her weight, as illustrated in the following excerpt:

The conversation gets off to a slightly surreal start when Pat Storey, the bishop-elect of Meath and Kildare, stirs her soup pensively in the cafe where we meet. She thinks it might contain quite a lot of cheese and therefore be calorific, but she needs something to set her up for that afternoon's diocesan meeting.

Dressed in a pink, floral shirt with her clerical collar peeping out, she goes on to talk about her daughter's wedding two years ago. Mid-flow, she suddenly announces: "You know, Una, I was determined not to be the fat person in the photos. I thought, it's bad enough that I'm 51, but I'm not going to be 51 and fat. So I lost three stone" (Bradley, 2013, para. 1-5).

A small number of articles also frame Storey in relation to other non-serious matters: foregrounding her "bubbly personality" (The International Anglican Women's Network, 2014, para. 4) and desire to "bring the craic back into religion" (O'Toole, 2014), narrating how she named her dog after former New York mayor, Rudi Giuliani (Freeman, 2014), and featuring a photograph of her with a female friend, trying on robes for her upcoming consecration ceremony (Lodge, 2013). Given that Storey prefers to be addressed by her given name, rather than by her ecclesiastical title (as noted above), it may be that she contributed to these "human interest" stories in order to construct a down-to-earth and approachable public persona. In publishing such stories, however, news reporting of Storey's appointment and consecration arguably resembles public portrayals of other powerful women, by giving undue prominence to personal and familial characteristics.

The *religious* attributes assigned to Storey present a more balanced picture, however. In 13 articles, for example, the direct reported speech of The Most Reverend Dr. Richard Clarke, Anglican Primate of Ireland and Archbishop of Armagh, depicts Storey not only as "a person of great warmth" (as might stereotypically be expected of a woman) but also of "[great] intelligence and spiritual depth" (see, for example, "The Revd Patricia Storey appointed Bp of Meath and Kildare," 2013, para. 2). Similarly, in 10 articles, direct reported speech attributed to The Right Reverend Michael Jackson, Archbishop of Dublin, portrays Storey as having both "a warm personality and a breadth of spiritual gifts to share generously in the church and in the community" (Costello, 2013, para. 10). Although

subtle, mentions of spirituality such as these can carry considerable weight in (particularly evangelical) Christian circles, where spiritual “giftedness” often functions as a kind of trump card enabling women not only to overcome “gender as a factor of primary relevance” (Baron, 2004, p. 253), but also thereby to secure greater power and privilege than might otherwise be theirs. Indeed, Storey herself reportedly draws on this same predicational strategy when questioned about her gender:

My gender is not an issue for me, it may be more important to others but I am certainly not going to focus on it. *I believe I have been called by God and I have placed myself in His hands* and I welcome the opportunity I have been given. (Deeney, 2013, para. 4, emphasis added)

As noted above, much of the news reporting of Bishop Storey’s appointment includes information about her *education* and previous *employment*. Not surprisingly, for example, 77 articles noted her immediately previous role as rector at St. Augustine’s Church, in Derry; 43 articles documented her undergraduate studies at Trinity College, Dublin; and 37 mentioned her training at the Church of Ireland Theological College. Notably, however, seven articles also reported on her employment with Weight Watchers, prior to entering the clergy, the current salience of which is worth questioning.

In relation to *emotional and other behaviour*, 21 articles quoted the first COI press release, which reported Storey claiming to be “both excited and daunted by this new adventure in our lives” (Sarmiento, 2013, para. 3); just three articles listed her hobbies as swimming, walking her dog, dining out with friends, and creative writing. In this respect, Storey is more often depicted as emotional and lacking in confidence (“excited and daunted”) than as physically active, sociable or creative.

By contrast, 97 (that is, more than 90%) of the articles in my corpus linked Storey to one or more *geographical locations*, including her “hometown” of Killinchy (Freeman, 2014, para. 19), her native Belfast and County Down, Dublin (where she completed her undergraduate studies), Shankill and Bray (where she lived when her children were young), Ballymena (where she served a curacy), Glenavy (where she worked as a team vicar), Londonderry, Northern Ireland (where she was rector at St. Augustine’s Church), and Meath and Kildare, in Ireland. Strikingly, then, geographical location was the most common predicate assigned to Storey across my corpus, depicting her as thoroughly Irish – and particularly as rooted in Northern Ireland, while still connected to Dublin, in which ecclesiastical province are located the Dioceses of Meath and Kildare.

A similarly high number of articles (91, representing 86% of my corpus) identified the *historical significance* of Storey’s appointment – although Storey herself was reportedly “uncomfortable with some of the headlines because [she felt] like the whole thing should remain God focused” (“Soon to be bishop, Pat Storey, on her new role,” 2013, para. 10).

**Argumentational strategies**

Even more strikingly, perhaps, 97% of the articles surveyed in this study convey a positive (or at least neutral, accepting) stance towards Storey's episcopal appointment. For example, Dr. Richard Clarke is repeatedly quoted as saying "I am certain that her ministry in the Dioceses of Meath and Kildare and the wider Church will be a blessing to many" (see, for example, Gledhill, 2013, para. 3). In relation to this corpus, therefore, the DHA's focus on "arguments and argumentation schemes used to justify and legitimize the exclusion, discrimination, suppression and exploitation of others" (Wodak, 2001a, p. 72) is arguably less relevant than an exploration of arguments used to recognize and promote others. For example, Bishop of Derry and Raphoe, the Right Reverend Ken Good, is quoted as claiming that "The news that Rev Pat Storey is to be the next Bishop of Meath and Kildare was met with widespread delight" ("Rev Pat Storey takes up new role as first female CoI bishop," 2013, para. 10), not only because "[h]er influence and impact on life in the wider community has been very positive and much appreciated" (para. 12), but also because she is "gifted" and her ministry both "effective" and "fruitful" ("Britain gets its first woman bishop," 2013, para. 9). The explicit rationale behind these positive reactions centres on Storey's fit for the job. Yet, most of the articles surveyed here provide no such rationale – instead taking for granted the value of female bishops, even while reporting on their novelty. Indeed, in at least one case, Storey was portrayed as a "history maker" without any mention being made of her gender, or any explanation being provided of her historical significance ("Bishop Pat Storey is history maker," 2013).

Two articles in my corpus do very clearly oppose Storey's appointment, however. The first, published by Reform Ireland (an evangelical reform movement within the Anglican Communion), critiques the appointment of a woman to the episcopacy on the grounds that doing so "has not only brought more disharmony and disorder into God's church, but ... has also sidelined Christ in his own church" ("Appointment of the new Bishop of Meath," 2013, para. 5) and "discriminated against those who hold to a biblical position" (para. 6). The second article – published on the Thinking Anglicans blog – reposts the Reform Ireland argument verbatim in a new online forum ("Reform Ireland criticises appointment of new Bishop of Meath and Kildare," 2013).

A third article, published in the *Irish Times* – and thus directed towards a mainstream, rather than a church, audience – reports on Reform Ireland's critique of Storey's appointment (McGarry, 2013). Here, overt and explicit opposition gives way to an indirect or implicitly negative stance, conveyed through the overall focus of the article, as well as the author's strategic use of reported speech. For example, McGarry reports in some detail a stage in the episcopal electoral process not generally reported by other media – namely, that Bishop Storey was not in fact the first choice for the role (her appointment followed Archdeacon Stevenson's selection, and decision not to accept the role following media reports about his alleged marital infidelity). Second, both the headline and the concluding paragraph of McGarry's article – that is, two of the most prominent parts of the news article genre – animate (in the Goffmanian sense, 1981) Reform Ireland's objection to Storey's appointment. Lastly, McGarry does not give voice (directly or indirectly) to any of Storey's supporters; but he does directly quote Reform Ireland five times, listing (perceived)

negative implications of Storey’s appointment, such as the following: “[Storey’s appointment] will not only prevent those who believe in God’s agenda for man and woman being able to serve in Meath diocese, but also impair fellowship throughout the Church of Ireland” (para. 10).

Unlike the Right Reverend Ken Good’s meritocratic rationale for supporting Bishop Storey’s appointment (mentioned above), the Reform Ireland argument is theological, rather than practical, in nature. That is, it draws on particular biblical and ecclesiastical understandings of God and the church to legitimize the exclusion of women from positions of power, irrespective of their aptitude for those positions. It is important to note, however – and this is one area in which I believe Positive Discourse Analysis and the Discourse Historical Approach can work fruitfully together – that counterarguments in favour of female bishops, which draw equally on biblical interpretation and ecclesiastical tradition, can also be made. Indeed, leading sociologist of religion José Casanova (1994) observes that religious discourses need not serve oppressive ends, but can function as “immanent normative critiques of specific forms of institutionalization of modernity” (p. 221).

No such counterarguments (i.e., detailing theologically-motivated support for women’s ordination) are made in my corpus, however – perhaps because of the inadmissibility of theological arguments in modern, secularized media. Indeed, the legitimacy of religious arguments in public debates within modern, multicultural democracies has come under considerable scrutiny in the last two decades, with former Chairman of the Commission on the Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain, Bikhu Parekh (2000) observing that a more complex “multicultural public realm” (p.203) would be needed for “public discourse on culture [to be] conducted in both religious and secular idioms” (p.147). In my view, adopting the two-fold discourse analytic approach that I am advocating here – that is, drawing simultaneously on PDA and DHA – helps both to identify and to question the exclusion from secular media of life-giving religious discourses about gender equality (and other important social issues).

### **Intertextual analysis**

I turn now to a more focused consideration of the context in which my corpus was produced, reaching beyond its textual boundaries, with a view, first, to situating my textual analysis in relation to “the intertextual and interdiscursive relationships between utterances, texts, genres and discourses” (Wodak, 2001a, p. 67). Perhaps the most striking characteristic of the articles surveyed, in this respect, is their substantial similarity. As mentioned above, numerous texts appear to have drawn heavily on the same two source documents – that is, two Church of Ireland (COI) press releases – insofar as they feature parallel sentence and paragraph structure, as well as identical phraseology and reported speech. For example, 23 articles quote Storey as claiming to be “excited and daunted” at her appointment (originally reported in the first COI press release), while 16 articles animate (either wholly or in part) the following commendation of Storey, drawn from the sermon by the Reverend Nigel Parker on the occasion of her consecration (and reported in the second COI press release):

It has been our privilege over the years to see you respond to our Father's love with love, trust and obedience. You have given yourself whole-heartedly to Him and His Church ... teaching the Scriptures and pastoring with that disarming directness, which is your hallmark – a directness, which speaks the truth in love, with a ready laugh and delightful sense of humour (Church of Ireland, 2013, para. 3).

That both of these excerpts originated in COI press releases points to the complex interplay between *self*- and *other*-representations. As Jenkins ([1996] 2004) observes,

It is not enough to assert an identity. That identity must also be validated (or not) by those with whom we have dealings. *Identity is never unilateral*. [...] Although people have (some) control over the signals about themselves which they send to others, we are all at a disadvantage in that we cannot ensure either their 'correct' reception or interpretation, or know with certainty how they are received or interpreted. (pp. 19-20, emphasis original)

On the occasion of Bishop Storey's appointment and consecration, at least, the Church of Ireland's self-presentation appears to have been widely taken up by mainstream media.

### **Situational analysis**

The DHA next considers the "context of situation" (Wodak, 2001a, p. 67) in which specific texts are produced, including *mode*, *field* and *tenor* (Halliday, 1994). In this study, *mode* concerns the variety of text types in my corpus, including blog posts, press releases, newsletters, and news reports published by religious individuals and communities, as well as by mainstream, local and religious newspapers. That Bishop Storey's appointment and consecration were depicted in such diverse text types indicates both the social significance of these events and a potentially wide-ranging residual interest in institutional religion in the UK, notwithstanding the general decline in British Christianity in recent decades.

In this study, *field* refers chiefly to Bishop Storey's appointment and consecration: first, as the Church of Ireland's response to a failed episcopal election ("Belfast woman is first female bishop installed by Anglican church," 2013, para. 13); second, as a matter of spiritual discernment; and third, as an historic event, reversing centuries of women's exclusion from the Anglican halls of ecclesiastical power. The articles in my corpus focus overwhelmingly on the third of these elements, paying scant attention to the ecclesiastical processes underpinning Storey's appointment, and all but entirely sidelining supernatural considerations (cf. Storey's own claim to have been called by God, cited in Deeney, 2013, para. 4, and mentioned above). In short, the reorientation of traditional gender roles within the Church of Ireland – rather than either the internal workings of that church or the spiritual life for which that church arguably exists – is widely portrayed as the most salient dimension of Pat Storey's accession to the episcopacy.

*Tenor*, in this study, signifies the multifarious relationships between (i) the various parties to Storey's appointment and consecration (including the Church of Ireland's Electoral

Committee and House of Bishops), (ii) the various news outlets reporting on these events (including broadsheet and tabloid newspapers), and between those parties just listed at (i) and (ii) above. A comprehensive discussion of these highly complex relationships falls outside the scope of the present paper, but the following three observations highlight some of the more important dimensions of situation in this study.

First, Pat Storey was not elected Bishop of Meath and Kildare in the usual manner within the Church of Ireland; rather, she was appointed by the House of Bishops, “after the Episcopal Electoral College had failed to elect a successor” to Dr. Richard Clarke, who had been “appointed Archbishop of Armagh and Primate of All Ireland” (“Belfast woman is first female bishop installed by Anglican church,” 2013, para. 12). Thus, unlike in the Roman Catholic Church (which is the largest church in Ireland), radical support for female bishops is clearly found at the highest levels of the Irish Anglican Communion.

Second, the majority of articles in my corpus were produced by for-profit news outlets, whose coverage of Bishop Storey’s appointment and consecration is at least partially geared towards generating sales. On the one hand, the fact that most of these articles project a broadly favourable stance towards Bishop Storey is suggestive of a widespread social norm in post Mary Robinson Ireland around celebrating women in power. On the other hand, the fact that Storey is repeatedly trivialized by non-serious, gender-stereotypical depictions is evidence both that profit can still be sought from demeaning powerful women, and that a readership still exists for such depictions.

Lastly, as mentioned above, my corpus displays a heavy reliance on the Church of Ireland’s (COI) press releases about Bishop Storey’s appointment and consecration. Further research of the type recommended by Catenaccio et al. (2011) – that is, combining detailed linguistic analysis of texts with rich ethnographic observation of news production processes – is needed to ascertain both the reasons for this reliance and the extent to which it resembles, or differs, from news outlets’ reliance on press releases from other sources. However, the very close resemblance to the COI press releases of several texts in my corpus suggests a measure of the “churnalism” critiqued by Davies (2008, p. 102), which he attributes to both commercial and political pressures, as well as a widespread lack of specialist knowledge on the part of journalists. Nevertheless, what is evident here is that (on this occasion, at least) the COI’s self-construal met with considerable news buy-in – perhaps because the moment of social change represented by Storey’s appointment brings the COI into convergent alignment with contemporary social norms in post Mary Robinson Ireland.

### **Socio-political analysis**

The final level of context considered by the DHA is “the broader sociopolitical and historical contexts, which the discursive practices are embedded in and related to” (Wodak, 2001a, p. 67). In this case, for example, it is important to recognize that most Christian denominations prohibited women’s ordination before the nineteenth century, as does the Roman Catholic Church still. Anglican women were first ordained as priests nearly forty years ago. Yet, decisions around the ordination of women are made at the national church

level, and numerous national Anglican churches – most notably in Africa and South East Asia – are yet to extend ordination to women in any capacity, whether as deacons (who assist priests, either permanently or temporarily in preparation for their own ordination as priests), as priests, or as bishops (Rois et al., 2013). One might argue, therefore, that Pat Storey’s appointment as the first female Anglican bishop in Ireland is just as groundbreaking a moment, for the Anglican Communion, as was Mary Robinson’s appointment as the first female President, for Ireland – perhaps even more so. Not unsurprisingly, then, as my analysis above indicates, news reporting of this event highlights its historicity above most other considerations.

Furthermore, Bishop Storey’s appointment has been cause for celebration for many within the Anglican Communion. First, because it signifies official ecclesiastical recognition of women’s equality in terms of their entitlement and capacity to undertake leadership positions within the Anglican Church – resonating not only with secular gender politics, but also with the radical gender equality depicted in parts of the New Testament (see, for example, Galatians 3:28: “There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus”). Second, Storey appears not to be “a token appointment,” but rather “the right person for the post” (O’Brian, 2014, para. 17), based on her spiritual giftedness and pastoral effectiveness. From my point of view, this moment of social change is a positive development deserving of critical discourse analytic attention. The ways in which “good news stories” about religion are reported in a country such as Ireland – well known for its religio-political conflict – is a question of considerable interest, particularly in light of international media preoccupations with religious “violence, chauvinism, and imperialism” (Bramadat, 2005, p. 59). My findings in this study are that, although broadly positive, news reporting of Storey’s appointment retains trivializing gender stereotypes which potentially undermine her spiritual authority – and, thus, might signify that news reporting is not yet fully ready to report on religious “good news.”

Moreover, as Elizabeth van Acker (2003) has observed in relation to female politicians, women leaders remain a novelty and are often put on a media pedestal at the start of their careers, only to be harshly disparaged by that same media should they take even minor missteps. A longitudinal study of media representations of Bishop Storey – along with her counterpart in the Church of England, Reverend Libby Lane, who was initially depicted in news media as both a “bridge builder” with an “incisive mind” (Burnell, 2014) and a “Manchester United-supporting, saxophone-playing mum-of-two” (Hughes & Ferguson, 2014) – would be instructive as to the extent to which news reporting is, in fact, able to move beyond gender-stereotypical portrayals of female leaders.

Thus, important work remains to be done: to secure gender equality within religious communities more broadly; to push past gender-stereotypical media representations of powerful women; and to garner serious media attention for the often obscured but “formidable efforts of millions of tireless religious individuals and communities devoted to justice, non-violence, and benevolence” (Bramadat, 2005, p. 59). For, as noted UK sociologist of religion, Grace Davie (2006) observes, religion is still widely regarded “as a

‘problem,’” giving rise to widespread popular, media and scholarly emphases on “reactive forms of religion, notably fundamentalism” to the neglect of “the myriad forms of religion in the modern world that are an integral part of everyday life for millions of people and which show no sign of diminishing” (p.139).

### **Conclusion**

As noted above, the appointment of Pat Storey as Bishop of the united Dioceses of Meath and Kildare – which some consider a stepping-stone to the role of Archbishop, of either Armagh or Dublin, or even Primate of the Church of Ireland (O'Brian, 2014) – marks the opening of an important chapter in Irish history, replacing centuries of discrimination with a more radical (and, I believe, more authentic) understanding of New Testament gender politics.

In this paper, I have argued for reorienting Positive Discourse Analysis away from positively evaluating discourses per se, towards positively evaluating moments of liberating social change and critically analyzing the discursive realizations and representations of such moments. I have also argued that using this revised conceptualization of Positive Discourse Analysis to refocus the Discourse Historical Approach (DHA) – that is, by motivating text selection and calling for greater reflexivity and transparency on the part of analysts concerning the value judgments underpinning their critique – is a fruitful way of celebrating such social change, while continuing to work towards discourses in the service of a better world. Indeed, I maintain that this refocusing is a critical step towards realizing the DHA’s promised (but less often delivered) commitment to “prognostic critique” (Wodak, 2001a, p. 65).

By adopting and modeling this two-fold approach in the present study, I have identified considerable endorsement of women in (ecclesiastical) power in Ireland, while noting residual gender biases in their depiction – most notably (but by no means exclusively) among tabloid newspapers. I have also documented considerable media up-take of the Church of Ireland’s self-representation on the occasion of Bishop Storey’s appointment, while noting the exclusion from mainstream news reports of life-giving theological and spiritual arguments in support of her appointment, combined with the inclusion of conservative oppositional voices. Lastly, I have observed an initial media enthusiasm for Bishop Storey’s appointment, while noting the possibility that an analysis of later news reporting may reveal her fall from (mediatized) grace.

I proffer this case study as an initial corrective to commentaries that rehearse – and thus reinforce the preponderance of – “bad news stories” about religion. Further research is needed, however: to explore the extent to which press releases issued by religious institutions are taken up in mainstream news reporting; to compare media coverage of male and female religious leaders; to examine longitudinally how female religious leaders are reported in news media; and to evaluate the ways in which religious themes, arguments and voices are depicted in (or excluded from) reporting by different news agencies.



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## Notes

<sup>i</sup> After 20 years of women serving as priests in the Church of England, General Synod approved the appointment of female bishops on July 14, 2014. Rev. Libby Lane was selected as (suffragan) Bishop of Stockport on December 17, 2014 and consecrated on January 26, 2015.

<sup>ii</sup> Guest-speaker at Bishop Storey's consecration, the Reverend Parker is reportedly her "close friend" ("First-ever woman bishop in Ireland or Britain ordained by Church of Ireland," 2013) and the incumbent of "St Comgall's parish in Bangor, County Down" ("Irish Anglicans install Rev Pat Storey as bishop," 2013).

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