

A Country Changed: The Dramatic Shift of Irish Social Values

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Abstract:

This thesis intends to investigate the reasons why the Republic of Ireland has undergone drastic social value shifts in the past few decades. A traditionally conservative, Catholic country, Ireland has paved the way to the legalization of contraception, divorce, same-sex marriage, and abortion; it has also seen a shift in how many people vote for the main center-right parties. Using the case study of abortion, the reasons why this shift has been occurring is analyzed. Through an investigation of economic modernization theory, a generational cohort effect, increased globalization, the rise of global feminism, and the decrease in the belief in the Catholic Church, this paper looks at how and why abortion was legalized in the Republic of Ireland, and the consequences of these answers for the larger topic of the overall shift in social values. Through an analysis of the relationships between the cultural phenomena, at each given point in the journey to safe and legal abortions, and data collected from the European Values Study, this paper concludes that a generational cohort effect does not explain the shift in social values given the speed that Ireland changed its public opinion. It also concludes that economic modernization had little to do with the shift. Instead, the shift in social values is credited, in a small way, to the effects of globalization on Ireland and, in more prominent ways, the rise of global feminism and the decline of belief in the Catholic Church.

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Introduction:

With the Proclamation of the Irish Republic back in 1916, the foundations of what is now The Republic of Ireland were established. The language in the Proclamation based much of the Irish identity and right to land within the island's tie to God. Ireland has maintained its tie to Catholicism and God for almost a hundred years. This Catholic-centered country has had bans and extremely limiting laws on divorce, abortion, contraception, and many other social issues dating back to its independence. Ireland is not as inherently conservative as it once was, and is now experiencing the liberal changes that many countries across the world have been experiencing for many decades (Hug 2001: 23). Within the last 30 years, Ireland's stance on social issues has shifted in a completely new direction. With the legalization of divorce, gay marriage, and abortion, a once-conservative country now has changed its values. As Constitutional changes in Ireland must be voted through a referendum of the people, one might ask: why is the public opinion in Ireland leaning more towards the left? What is causing the people of Ireland to take such a different stance on social issues than they have historically? In this modern world, globalization has led to an interconnectedness between countries and people across the globe. Given this, major political shifts in any country are important for the world at large to consider.

With specific reference to the case study of abortion, this paper intends to investigate the way the public opinion has shifted and why. There are many reasons a country's views can begin to shift. Perhaps the most encompassing explanation is when there is a new generation rising to voting age. Each generation is born into a time period which creates a piece of their identity,

ultimately shifting their generation's focus towards or away from different political stances. The change in opinion across generations is known as the Cohort Effect. While the Cohort Effect plays a significant role in the story of abortion in Ireland, the movement occurred too quickly over a short period of time for this to be the sole explanation. Most of the abortion reforms in Ireland occurred in the span of under a decade and when a movement occurs that quickly, there's a bigger force at play.

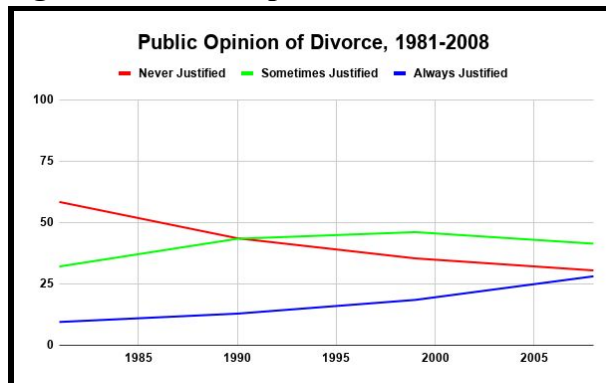
A Shift of Social Values

The public opinion in Ireland is shifting on a variety of different social values. The country has seen a liberal shift in stances on gay marriage, divorce, abortion, and political parties. The people of Ireland were polled on "Do you justify..." the topics of divorce, homosexuality, and abortion by the European Social Survey. In 1981, less than 10% of people stated that they always justify each of the social values. By 2008, the amount of people who believed that these social values were never justified had dropped dramatically in each case: a 32% drop in complete opposition to gay rights, a 28% drop in complete opposition to divorce, and a 26% drop in complete opposition to abortion. While the shift in the amount of people who "always justify" these social values did not grow exponentially for all of the values, there is a clear shift in the amount of people who justify divorce, homosexuality, and abortion in at least some instances. Figures 1-3 display the shift in each of these values.

In addition to public opinion on social values, it is important to consider the Irish political system and party elections. The Irish two-party system is unique in the fact that it does not rest

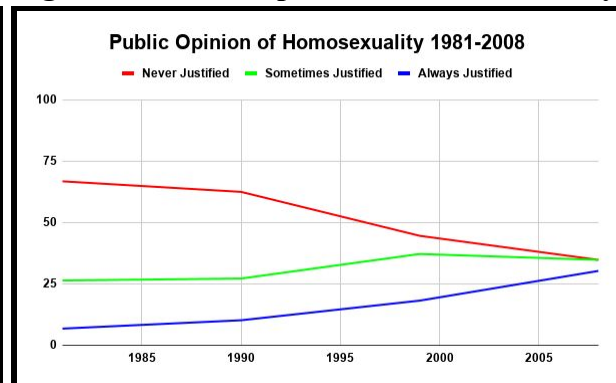
on the same Left-Right divide which many Western nations do. There have always been two main parties in Irish politics, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael, but it has rarely been political ideologies which severely separate these parties (Jahn 2010: 758). These two parties tend to align as center-right parties. Historically, the strength of the Leftist parties in Ireland could be described as “extremely weak by western European standards” (Gallagher 1985: 2). In 1981, Fianna Fail and Fine Gael held 83.1% of the vote in Ireland but by 2008, other parties and independents in Ireland had garnered enough support. At this point, only 66% of Ireland would vote for the two center-right parties, with 34% voting for other parties such as the Labour Party, Sinn Fein, among others. Figure 4 demonstrates this important change in the Irish voter.

Figure 1. Shift in Opinion on Divorce



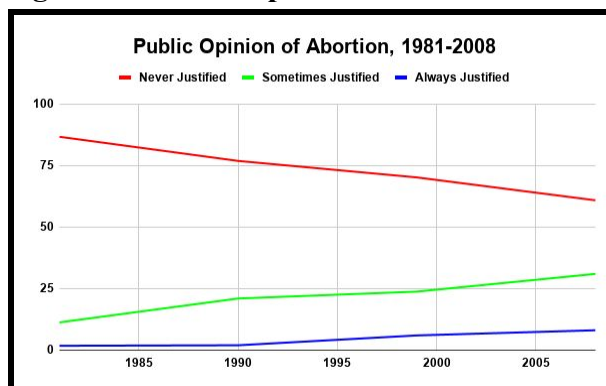
Source: European Values Study

Figure 2. Shift in Opinion on Homosexuality



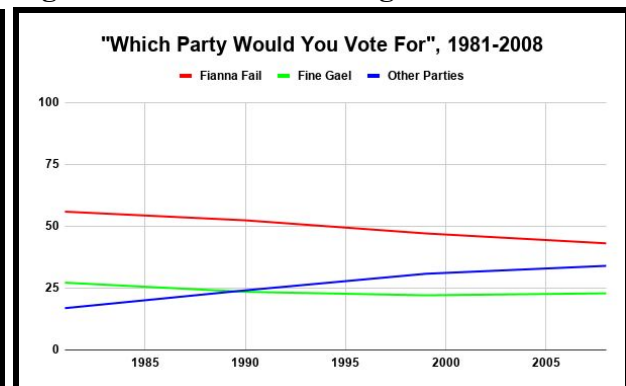
Source: European Values Study

Figure 3. Shift in Opinion on Abortion



Source: European Values Study

Figure 4. Shift in Voter Alignment to Parties



Source: European Values Study

While each of these issues holds significant value to the question of Ireland's shift towards more liberal social values, this paper will focus on the case study of abortion. Abortion maintained the lowest amount of support by 2008; 31% of the population believed that abortion was sometimes justified, while only 8.1% of the population believed abortion was always justified. While these numbers are lower than those of the divorce and homosexuality shifts, by 2018, abortion in Ireland was legalized.

The Explanations

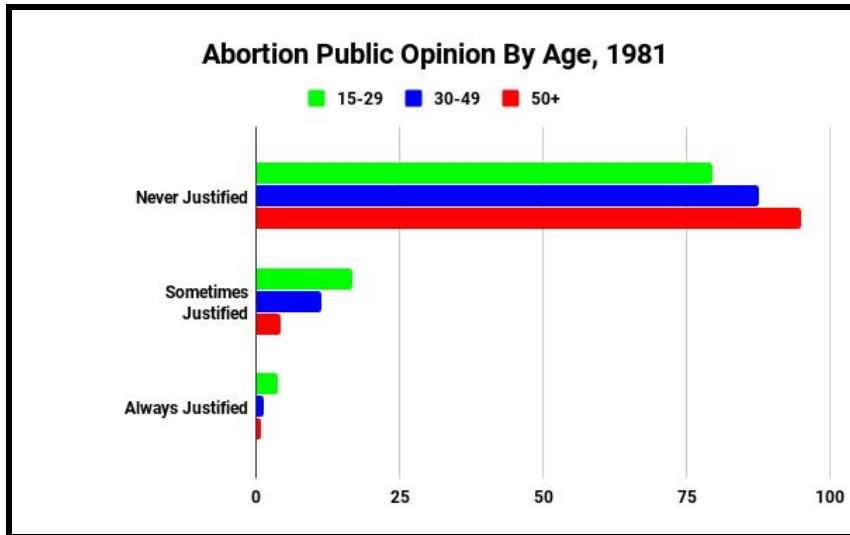
There are a variety of reasons one could argue that the leftward shift is occurring in the social values of the people in the Republic of Ireland. Social values shift when there are large occurrences and shifts in the cultural makeup of a society. In respect to Ireland, the possible explanations of their shift in social values are the cohort effect, modernization theory, the influence of globalization, the rise of global feminism, and the decline of belief in the Catholic Church. Some of these possible explanations play a large role in the social values shift, while others play little to no role.

The illegality of abortion became a part of the Irish constitution with the 8th amendment in 1983. As seen in Figure 5, just two years before this amendment, 86.7% of the country believed abortion was never justified.

One of the most understandable causes of this is the emergence of a new generation into the political realm. In order to see this, one must look at the shift of public opinion on abortion by age in Ireland. The public opinion of abortion can be grouped into 3 main age categories:

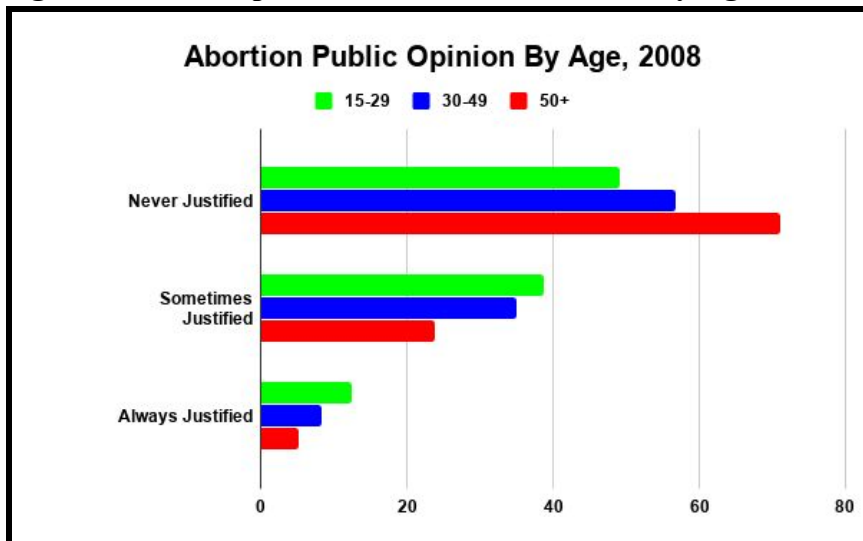
15-29, 30-49, and 50+. In 1981, over 75% of the population in all 3 age categories believed abortion was never justified. Figure 5 below shows that the age group of 15-29 believed more that abortion was sometimes justified or always justified than the age groups of 30-49 and 50+.

Figure 5. Public Opinion of Abortion in Ireland by Age, 1981



Source: European Values Study

Figure 6. Public Opinion of Abortion in Ireland by Age, 2008



Source: European Values Study

As time went on, the opinions on abortion liberalized. By 1990, 13.7% of people over 50 years old believed that abortion was sometimes justified, that number was at 24.8% for 30-49 year olds and 26.7% for 15-29 year olds. What is important to note is that no one group seems to move away from the collective opinion. Between 1981 and 1990, the opinions on abortion changed in similar patterns across age groups. As expected, younger voters were more liberal but not to any extreme. What's important to note is that by 2008, the public opinion on abortion had grown across all age groups.

Given the data presented in Figures 5 and 6, Ireland's public opinion was not shifting solely due to a new generation. The shift was occurring far too quickly and across age demographics for the 20 year period for it just to be a cohort effect shift. Something else was occurring to create these changes in public opinion. Which of the other explanations fit into the story of Ireland's opinions on abortion better?

One of the most important theoretical arguments to understand, when considering the alterations of social values within a society, is modernization and post-materialism. Human beings' natural first priority is survival. Inglehart argued that when societies get richer their values shift. When economic and physical safety are taken care of, there can be a "greater emphasis on free choice, environmental protection, gender equality and tolerance of gays" (Inglehart 2016, 2). Because the immediate needs are taken care of, a shift can occur towards the social issues, ones that do not immediately threaten the lives of citizens of a country. These social issues may include environmental activism, gay rights, abortion rights, gender equality, and issues of race. It is possible to see the validity in the argument that as Ireland gained

economic freedoms it had not before been privileged to, the people of Ireland began to put emphasis on social values.

Maslow argues that there is a general order of the needs that people try to fulfill; that a person cannot recognize nor pursue the next higher need until the previous ones have been conquered (Gawel 1997: 1). On a larger scale than the personal, if a country gains economic prosperity, their people's immediate needs are met, opening the country up to development far higher. This is when a country may develop to care about the social values and marginalized people and issues, such as abortion rights. Below, Table 1 displays the hierarchy of needs.

Table 1. Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs

<u>Level</u>	<u>Type of Need</u>	<u>Examples</u>
1	Physiological	Thirst, hunger, sex
2	Safety	Security, stability, protection
3	Love and Belongingness	To escape loneliness, love and be loved, and gain a sense of belonging
4	Esteem	Self-respect, the respect of others
5	Self-actualization	To fulfill one's potentials

Source: Herzberg's Theory of Motivation and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs Herzberg's Theory of Motivation and Maslow's Hierarchy of Needs, Joseph E. Gawel

The hierarchy of needs is important to understanding modernization theory because it explains the way human beings prioritize different needs. When human beings are collected together in a group, such as a country, these needs become much more complex. A country is in control of far more than a person is and the collective views of a country can change the course of many people for years to come. With Maslow's hierarchy of needs, we are able to see the way

that each need stacks upon the last. In the case of a country, such as Ireland, as these different needs are fulfilled, the citizens are able to move forward and focus on different political and social values.

In order to achieve this kind of social value shift, there must be a drastic economic shift in a given country. In the case of Ireland, the country was historically never particularly wealthy. Having suffered from the Great Famine in the 1840s, food security is an issue that Ireland had to take seriously for many years. The people of Ireland had lost their most important food source and England, their colonizer at the time, was doing nothing to assist the people during the crisis. In a time with anxieties and starvation as high as the Famine, the Irish people became reliant on their church and more conservative in order to survive. As the country did not gain wealth for many decades to come, there was a need to secure food and ensure survival.

In the 1990s, this all changed. At this time, Ireland had successfully gained high levels of foreign investment which brought in a variety of high-tech and pharmaceutical companies, boosting Ireland's economy (Kirby and Carmody 2009: 4). This economic boost became known as The Celtic Tiger. The Celtic Tiger was a period where "economic growth rates and export growth rates soared, the state relieved its debt problems, and the country became a showpiece of globalization" (O'Hearn 2000: 73). With the money from the economic boom, the country began to change. In other words, The Celtic Tiger "exacerbated the experiences of accelerated modernism" (Keohane and Kuhling 2003: 123). Modern Ireland was born during the Celtic Tiger.

The Celtic Tiger allowed for gains across the board in Ireland. With new companies meant more jobs and a lack of unemployment allowed for the economy to boom more and more.

Though this is true, the Celtic Tiger occurred simultaneously with the shift in social values in Ireland. It was not the cause of this shift. As this essay will show, the belief that abortion should be sometimes or always justified began to grow in the early 1980s, alongside the drop in belief of the Catholic Church. While the Celtic Tiger is a clear indicator of the possibility that social values in Ireland shifted because of an ability to focus on issues other than merely survival, the shift in the people's opinions had been occurring for almost 10 years before the Celtic Tiger had begun. The shift of social values in Ireland had little to nothing to do with a newfound economic liberation.

While the Republic began as a post-colonial, Catholic, conservative country, there have been changes in its alliances, membership, and belief systems that have rocked the way that Ireland has historically been thought of. Given the historical influence of the United States and the United Kingdom on the rest of the world, the decisions those two governments make have a great impact on international issues. Pressures internationally, such as the decisions of the Supreme Court in the United States and the British Parliament in cases of social values created pressures on countries which were not modernizing at the same rate as the outside world. At the beginning of these great changes in Ireland, the United States had legalized divorce and abortion multiple decades ago and had been making great strides in the equality for same-sex marriage. With countries around the world having progressed in these ways, Ireland faced scrutiny for why it was not progressing in the same liberal ways.

More than just pressure from other countries, Ireland has restraints on it that it did not previously have because it joined the European Union and a variety of other international organizations. With membership contingencies and the conditions of different charters, Ireland is

not only held up by its own constitution and laws, but by those of countries and people across the globe. The modernization of many Western nations also led to the establishment of international organizations, which in turn affected Ireland. These international organizations acted as a social pressure on the Irish to keep up with the rest of the Western world. Being a part of these organizations meant that Ireland was putting itself under the scrutiny of the rest of the world to keep up with the standards of the organizations. Joining international organizations such as the European Union brought the social value questions of the rest of the world to the center stage of the Irish public's attention. Without maintaining these standards, Ireland's legitimacy would be called into question across the globe. With outside pressures, the country was forced to look inward at the values it had always held. The rest of the Western world was changing at a rate faster than Ireland was. These international pressures offered the beginning of Ireland's introspection, though there were other factors that created the change in a more drastic and large sense.

Issues of social values have risen to priority in Ireland in recent years. Part of this rise has been assisted by the rise of global feminism and the way that feminism permeated into the Irish political system. The Irish women's movement was heavily impacted by the movements towards gender equality globally. From 1975 to 1985, the United Nations sparked the creation of a number of women's organizations and networks, as it was the "United Nations Decade For Women" (Reilly 2007: 114). The creation of these networks and organizations opened up the ability for women globally to access more information and act on their rights. This marked an important step forward, as there began an international campaign for women's human rights in

the 1990s (Reilly 2007: 114). Ireland was significantly shaped by these movements, as different movements began to spark up.

More than just movements for women's rights, by 1990, Ireland had elected its first female president, Mary Robinson (Smyth 1992: 61). The importance of Robinson's election is undeniable, as a woman in Ireland had never held this office, of one of the highest powers in the country. She won with 52.8% of the vote, showing that more than half the country of Ireland was ready for the steps towards gender equality in public office (Smyth 1992: 68). Robinson's election blew through the preconceived notions about gender roles in politics and, even more so, about the role of women in politics. Robinson is a self-declared feminist, which made her election "conceptually impossible" because she is a "woman who refuses to behave like a man" (Smyth 1992: 72). With this election, Robinson demonstrated to the people of Ireland that a woman held the capabilities to become President without changing aspects of her femininity. This marked an important moment for what female empowerment and female equality in Ireland looked like.

The changes of women's role in the Irish political system did not end with Mary Robinson. The President of Ireland following Robinson became the second female president, Mary McAleese. McAleese spent much of her presidency moving Ireland toward social change, as she said in 2003 that the country was "gradually moving away from the homogeneity and old certainties which have traditionally been the hallmarks of Irish life" (Kline 2004: 186). McAleese stood at the center of a variety of fights for social justice, including her organization of campaigns for homosexual law reform, divorce law reform, and engaged in moves to end the ban on abortion (Galligan 2012: 8). As fights for the liberalization of these issues had been going

on for years within the country, McAleese represented a clear shift in the public's opinion. They supported, and voted in, a woman who held liberal ideologies for the future of their nation's laws.

These two women, Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese, set the tone for where the country was headed in their social values. Their elections came in the aftermath of the United Nations Decade For Women and a series of other important strides for women's equality internationally. This international growth in the women's movements impacted the entirety of Ireland, however, not just the presidential elections.

Individually, different facets of the feminist movements gained momentum. With women across the world advocating for universal education, equal opportunities, and access to proper healthcare, the world turned its head towards women's human rights. The attention to this subject created pressures on countries where women's human rights were not being advocated for as much as they could have been. The people of Ireland were just one country affected by the rise of global feminism. The rise of global feminism was a contributing factor but could not have caused the shift of social values in Ireland on its own.

With Ireland's long history of the influence and education of the Catholic Church, the people of Ireland hold the morality of the Catholic Church on a pedestal. In Ireland, law and morality overlap because the "state has chosen to base its socio-moral laws on the idea of order and perfectibility" (Hug 2001: 23). With this overlap, any kind of shift from the Church would be critical to the future of laws in the Republic. Due to a series of scandals within the Catholic Church, the people of Ireland began to question the Church's ability to pass judgments and act as a guiding compass on social and moral values. The loss of public faith and trust in the Catholic

Church has led to the secularization of Ireland. This secularization is the leading cause of the public's shift in social values in Ireland.

Given that Catholicism played a key role in Irish social and political life, it is understandable that this, in part, stems from an educational basis in Catholicism. When the United Kingdom was trying to introduce education to the Irish, they were met at a standstill as to how to properly introduce it. They soon realized they would only be successful in introducing education if they handed the control of education over to the Catholic Church (O'Donoghue 2009: 795). As the Church was given the task of "civilizing the Irish body through schools", the Irish education system became a place of discipline, shame, guilt, and modesty (O'Donoghue 2009: 795). Schools and education provide the basis of people's knowledge systems and reinforce values. Since the Irish school systems were based in Catholicism, the people of Ireland were reinforced in the values of the Church - not just at mass, but in the classroom.

By the time Ireland was independent, the Irish school system would "distort" history in order to demonize Britain as a former colonizer (O'Donoghue 2009: 796). In doing so, the Church educated the people of Ireland to believe that the Catholic, Republican agenda was the proper belief system in Ireland. This established the importance of the "relationship between social change and education in Ireland" (O'Donoghue 2009: 797). Because of the relationship between the Church and education in Ireland, the Irish school system played a fundamental role in the development of Irish social values.

By the 1950s, Irish Catholic education existed "to assist and supplement the work of parents in the rearing of their children" and the duty of training to fear and love God "becomes the first purpose of the primary school" (Coolahan et al 2017: 23). As time went on, it was

suggested that the curriculum at these schools be broadened. Over the decades, this change has been occurring. Irish schools have become less focused on God and Catholicism, though that remains a backdrop for many schools, given that 96% of Irish primary schools have religious patrons and 91% of these schools are under the patronage of Catholic Church (Coolahan et al 2017: 128). Catholicism remains a large part of the Irish school system today, although many people who do not identify as Catholic attend these schools. While the institution remains strong, the actual amount of Catholic school children in Irish Catholic schools has dropped in the last few decades. Many suggest that this remains the fact due to the high accreditation of Irish Catholic schools, not the continuation of a desire for the doctrine of Catholicism in young children, given the recent drop of belief in the Catholic Church in Ireland.

Though all the possible explanations hold validity, it is the combination of the rise of global feminism and the decline of the Catholic Church's presence in Ireland that led to the shift of social values for the public. Through the case study of abortion in the Republic of Ireland, this essay intends to show the way that the rise of global feminism and the decline of the Catholic Church led to this value shift.

The History of Abortion in Ireland

Abortion has been illegal in Ireland since before it gained independence from England in the 20th Century. Abortion was illegal as of the 1861 Offences Against the Person Act and even after independence, the law stuck (Barry 1988: 58). With no room for interpretation, the law made abortion completely illegal - even in cases of severe medical complications or rape (Barry

1988: 58). Abortion is a political issue which is heavily influenced by cultural and religious values and Ireland has always had firm conservative, Catholic values.

These values date back to one of the most significant events in Irish history: The Great Famine. It is commonly “suggested that the agricultural depression may indeed have played a part in the great social changes occurring in the west from the 1870s” (O Grada 1973: 76). As people across Ireland starved, the British offered no support to their colony. With a lack of support from their governing body, the Irish people turned to God for support. As many men barely had the money or food to support themselves, they most certainly did not have the means to support a wife and so the norm became to propose to women later in life. Even more than a wife to support was the concept of a child; a child out of wedlock was one of the most significant threats to one’s survival. When Ireland was forced to think about survival and the vast majority began to turn to god, the famine led to a higher increase in Catholicism in the country. With this Catholicism came the legitimacy and reinforcement of conservative notions to the country.

As the British had made abortion illegal in 1861 and conservative notions rose throughout the country, the people of Ireland grew attached to an idea that abortion is an immoral act. These beliefs did not change when Ireland gained independence from the British in 1922. The leaders of the 1916 Rising were strategic in the way they legitimized the Irish Republic. Calling forth “Irishmen and Irishwomen: in the name of God and of the dead generations from which she receives her old tradition of nationhood”, the Proclamation of the Irish Republic plays on a commitment to both God and Mother Ireland, creating a narrative that the two concepts are bound, by enshrining them together in this historic document (Altholz 2000: 105-8). In establishing the country in this way, a culture of rooting the Irish political system in

the values of the Church began. As the new Republic of Ireland stood to begin changing its laws and political structure from that of the British, abortion would not be one thing to change. Since “Catholicism and nationalism were inseparably linked in the consciousness of the people”, when the Church deems abortion a cardinal sin, the Republic of Ireland believed it immoral and kept it an illegal act (Newsinger 1978: 610).

The Beginning of the Shift

The debate on abortion had a variety of factors moving it forward, such as “contradictory referenda, weary legislators, determined women, and...some difficult cases” (Hug 2001: 24). In order for a shift to occur in an issue such as abortion, in the first place, there must be a clear emergence of sides, and a power struggle between the two. Given that the Irish people had not changed the Offenses Against the Persons Act upon independence, it is clear that abortion was not a hugely contested topic for many years in Ireland. Before 1980, contraceptives were illegal in the Republic of Ireland; they had been banned in 1935 through a law that stated contraceptives would be linked to prostitution (Hug 2001: 26). Although many women’s movements had been pushing for many years for the legalization of contraception, they were met with a large amount of pushback (Barry 1988: 57). To legalize contraception would mean to draw a line between Irish law and the teachings of the Catholic Church. Finally, a new law was passed surrounding contraception and it did allow the use, but only if you were married and had a medical prescription (Barry 1988: 57). The use was limited but it did officially draw the line between Church and state. With any break, there comes two sides.

The contraception debate brought about large changes in the Irish liberal movements. Women's movements such as the Irish Women's Liberation Movement sparked up, and arising from the debates developed places of assistance such as the Dublin family planning clinic (Hug 2001: 27). From the outrage at the newly developing liberal agenda, a "myriad (of) right-wing, fundamentalist-style Catholic organizations" rose up in Ireland (Barry 1988: 57). Though it had not been a topic previously intensely debated, once it was put at the front and center of the Irish people's attention, the contraception question created two opposing arguments that became a focal point of Irish politics at the time.

One of these right-wing Catholic organizations that arose was the Pro-Life Amendment Campaign, which encompassed a variety of organizations that banded together to ensure more mobilization (Barry 1988: 58). Mobilization of the issue is what garners support and therefore the PLAC was making moves to push for their cause. With the creation of the PLAC and the Eighth Amendment campaign, a movement had to come about to oppose the pro-life movement. Feminists and progressive forces banded together to form the Anti-Amendment Campaign (AAC) in order to keep the issue of abortion out of the Constitution (Barry 1988: 58). As the two sides gained media coverage in the time leading up to the referendum, people across the country began taking sides on the issues, including lawyers and doctors (Barry 1988: 58). Each campaign brought the people of Ireland closer to an informed opinion on the topic of abortion, which allowed for the proper climate to hold a referendum in order to figure out the fate of abortion.

Given that the Offenses Against the Person Act left no room for exceptions in abortion, the first change that came to the abortion laws in Ireland was to create the exception. In 1983, there was a referendum in Ireland which introduced the Eighth Amendment to the Irish

Constitution which was passed in a two-to-one landslide (Quinn 2017: 5). The Eighth Amendment states that the pregnant and the unborn have an equal right to life and therefore abortions are legal only in the circumstances where the mother's life was at risk.

The Eighth Amendment referendum came about mainly as a preemptive strike. Two major changes to abortion laws came from strong powers internationally, the United States and the United Kingdom, which added pressure on the international stage. Given that only a few years before this instance the United States Supreme Court had passed *Roe v. Wade*, the pro-life campaigners feared that the Irish Supreme Court would pass a similar law (Quinn 2017: 6). In 1967, Britain passed the Abortion Act that made abortion legal if two doctors agree that the pregnancy is a risk to the woman's physical health, mental health, or there was a risk to the well-being of any of the existing children in her family, or if the unborn was substantially at risk to be born with a physical or mental abnormality or handicap (Bristow 2013: 4). Given that the United States legalized abortion for a woman's choice and Britain passed a liberal abortion law which allowed an abortion for a variety of reasons, it's easier to see why the Irish pro-life campaigners saw the possibility that similar sentiments might rise in Ireland as well.

"Without a strong pro-life clause in (the) Constitution, too much was being left up to chance" and so the pro-life campaigners pushed for a referendum because in order to overturn the decision, the pro-choice campaigners would have to hold a referendum, and win, in order to change it in any way (Quinn 2017: 6). A clever tactic on the side of the pro-lifers, the Eighth Amendment gave in a little bit, in order to appease those worried about medical conditions. The wording of the Eighth, however, was left ambiguous and hard to decipher, making it hard, for even women with life-threatening reasons, to get an abortion.

In order to get a referendum in Ireland, the proposal for the bill must be presented by the Dail and the bill must pass through the Dail and the Seanad (Citizens Information). From there, a commission of people educates the public from a neutral point of view and the bill is then sent to the people via referendum to vote (Citizens Information). What is unique about this process is that the people cannot call for a referendum, the government has to push one through. During the years leading up to the referendum, the main parties in Ireland never took the stance that a woman had the right to choose and therefore, the government put the referendum to the people hoping that it would pass (Barry 1988: 58). When the Eighth Amendment passed, it had the support of roughly 66% of the public and the support of the Dail and the Seanad.

The Implications of the Eighth Amendment

The wording of the Eighth Amendment made it so that the government of Ireland had decided to treat a woman's life as equal to that of what is not yet born. While the Amendment was supposed to enshrine that women could only get an abortion if they had severe life-threatening complications with their pregnancy, by *equating* the lives there is fundamentally no way those two concepts could live side by side. With the new parameters being set in the Constitution, there were more places where the PLAC and the Catholic right-wing organizations started trying to regulate. There were many agencies that assisted women with unplanned pregnancies. Conservative organizations began to attack these agencies, under the accusation that they were in breach of the Eighth Amendment (Barry 1988: 60). With one step forward in the

direction they wanted, the conservatives began reaching to have all the pieces on the board that they could control.

The President of the High Court granted an injunction against pregnancy counseling agencies because the right to life is more important than the right to information (Barry 1988: 60). The situation surrounding fetal and women's rights in Ireland became more and more restrictive. These restrictions showed the way that the PLAC's campaign was winning over the legal battles in Ireland. The legalization of contraception was the first step forward in family planning in Ireland and it created the issue of abortion. As the Amendment passed, the pro-life campaign continued to reach for control. Because of the pro-life side reaching for this control, the pro-choice campaigners began to fight back.

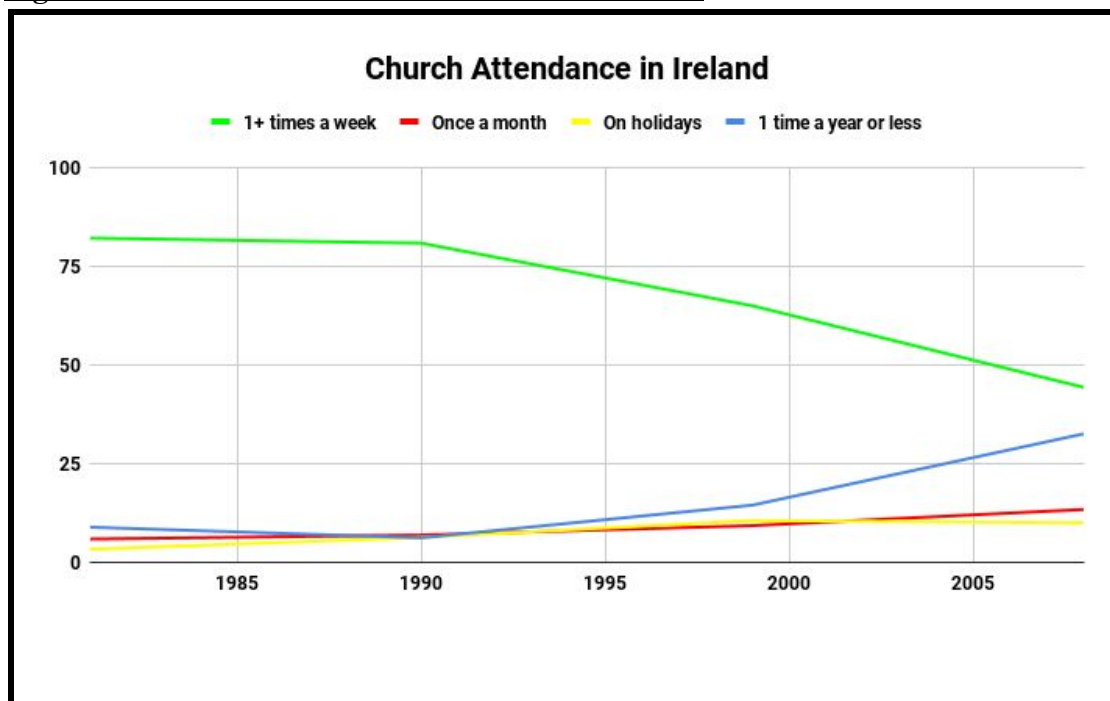
As the pro-choice campaigners began to fight back, they chose an issue that had already begun to be liberalized back in 1980. In 1985, the Health (Family Planning) Act legalized contraception sales of condoms and spermicides to anyone over the age of 18 years old (The Irish Constitution). Given that the Republic of Ireland had 5 years previously passed such a restrictive bill on contraception, the Health (Family Planning) Act was a large success for the liberal side of the fight in Ireland. This was the first major win for the liberal side and because it was only the first, liberalism was viewed as the weaker side of the debate. Although it was viewed as weaker, "the Catholic Church was also forced to refine its position in respect of church and state" (Girvin 2008: 86). As the world began to develop a sense of modernization, the Church could not be seen having such a heavy impact on the decisions of the government of Ireland. There needed to be a distinction between a country with many Catholic people in it and a country whose government was being influenced by the Catholic ethos. In attempting to show

this separation between Catholicism and the government of Ireland, the first seeds were sown of the separation of church and state. This created an important step towards the liberalization by the government of the social values which were looked down upon by the church.

The Drop of Belief in the Catholic Church

The Catholic Church held a stake in the conservative nature of the laws in Ireland for so long. Given their ties to the Republic since 1916 and the foundations of the state, coupled with the ability to back their stances with God, the Church held a moral position unquestionable by the everyday man. While the belief in God and identification as Roman Catholic has not declined in Ireland, the amount of Irish citizens attending church has been declining over the years. (Kenny 2009: 63). This attendance shift can be seen in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7. Church Attendance in Ireland Over Time



Source: European Values Study

The attendance of weekly churchgoers in Ireland dropped from 82.2% to 65% from 1981 to 1999. In under 20 years, the number dropped by almost 20%. By 2008, this number had dropped by almost half from the original to a low 44.3% of the public. A drop this drastic, in as short of a time as under 30 years, occurs when a large catalyst causes great questioning of an institution. The important thing to note, however, is that the drop in attendance was not simply to a more moderate form of attendance. While the amount of people attending church once a month or on holidays spiked a small amount, it is the amount of people who attend church once a year or less that spiked dramatically. Starting at an 8.8% in 1981, the amount of people who attended church once a year or less actually dropped in 1990 to a 6.1%, only to rise to 14.4% in 1999 and spike all the way up to 32.5% by 2008. The drop in attendance was not due to families becoming too busy or a general mellowing of Catholicism in the country. Between 1981 and 2008, Ireland went from having 82.2% of the country in attendance at church at least once a week, if not more, to having 32.5% of the country going to church once a year, if not less or not at all. This shift came from a shift in the belief in the Catholic Church as a moral and just institution.

This moral position came greatly into question when sex scandals involving Catholic priests began to pop up across the globe. As can be seen by the pro-life campaign's reaction to *Roe v. Wade*, what occurred in the United States had a vast impact on the people of Ireland.

One of the first internationally recognized cases of sexual abuse by a member of the Catholic Church was in Louisiana, USA. A priest by the name of Gilbert Gauthe was arrested in 1983 for sexual abuse of children within the Church (Depalma 2002). As he struck a plea deal, Gauthe admitted to the sexual abuse of 37 boys, although it is estimated that he had over 150 victims, and was sentenced to 20 years in prison (Depalma 2002). After 10 years served, Gauthe

was released and was soon arrested once again, this time for the assault of a 3-year old boy (Depalma 2002). The important thing about the Gauthé case is that it marked one of the first large-scale-rape confessions within the Catholic Church. Unfortunately, the uncovering of this case was not a singular event. As time went on, more people had the courage to come forward with their stories about their histories with sexual assault and molestation within the Catholic Church. This case in the United States proved to be a catalyst for change.

Television and movies contributed a large amount to the exposure of incidents within the Catholic Church in Ireland. The BBC launched a show titled *Childwatch* which aired in Ireland and investigated the issue of sexual abuse of children (Kenny 2009: 63). The first step is always beginning the conversation and the show served as the first step in bringing to light the issues of the abuse against children occurring regionally. By 1994, Irish citizens had become so concerned about the lack of an institutional form of intervention against an institutional abuse that the coalition government collapsed (Kenny 2009: 64). With a government that was not acting on issues that impacted the safety and future of the children of the country, the people could not rest. This unrest would only continue to grow.

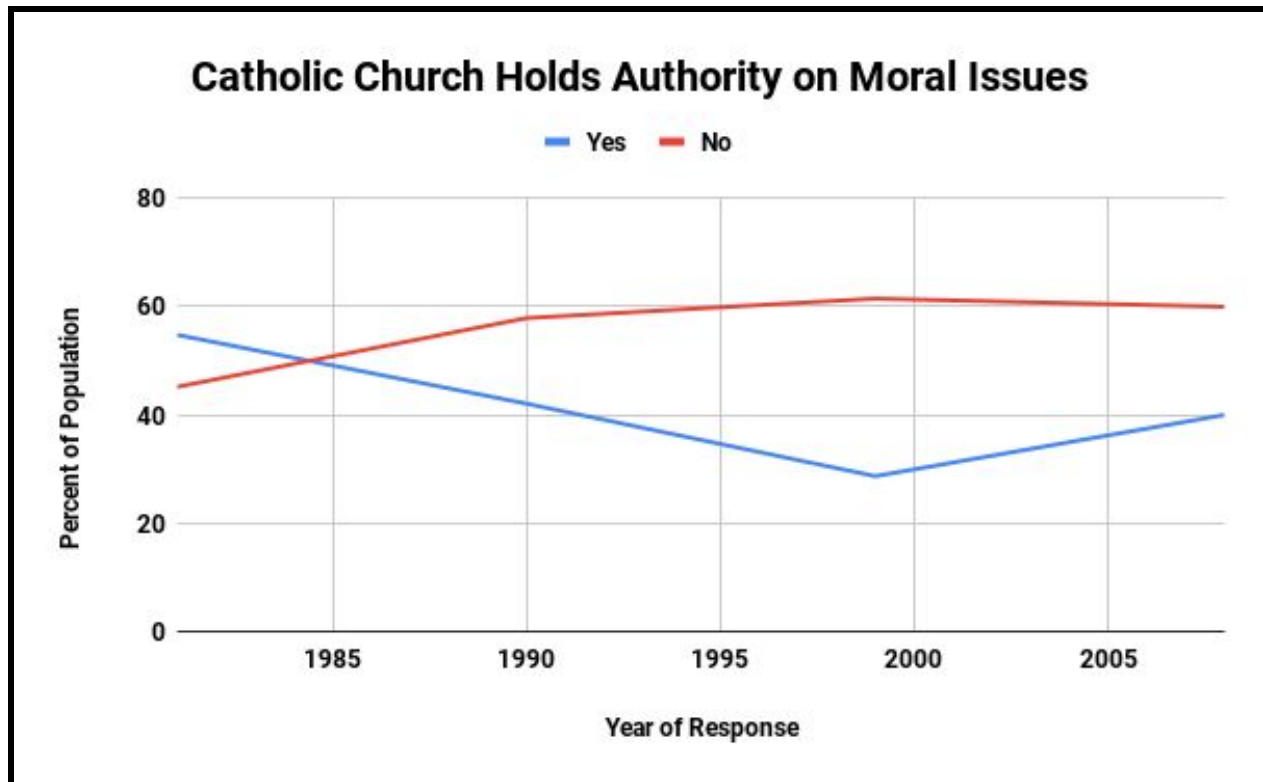
Father Brendon Smyth was a serial child abuser within Ireland, Northern Ireland, and the United States. Preying on children as young as 8 years old, he was finally arrested when a family came forward after he had assaulted 4 of their children (BBC 2010). As his case was complicated because of extradition issues, it was reported on widely and the people of Ireland knew the case well. Ulster Television released a special documentary program on Smyth in October 1995 (Kenny 2009: 65). Because of the wide reception of the documentary and the knowledge of the case itself, Smyth became “the personification of sexual abuse within the Catholic Church”

(Kenny 2009: 65). With the success and public outcry after the Ulster Television program, more were released.

In 1996, *Dear Daughter*, a documentary about growing up at an orphanage in Dublin and the abuses that occurred there was released; in 1999, *States of Fear*, a documentary highlighting sexual abuses of children was released; the trial of Nora Wall, a ten-year old girl who had been raped at a Catholic day care became publicized in 1999 (Kenny 2009: 65-68). With the surmounting cases and reports of abuse by the Catholic Church against children, the Irish public began to see the institutional flaws within the system. Stories continued to be released and the Irish public continued to be met with images and narratives about the Church they had held so much faith in for so long.

As these stories were released and the Irish public became more aware of the issues within the Catholic Church, the people began to question whether or not the held moral authority any longer. People in Ireland no longer believed that the Church had the right to comment on any moral issues. Figure 8 displays this below.

Figure 8. Irish Response to “Does the Catholic Church hold authority on moral issues?”



Source: European Values Study

In 1981, 54.8% of the population believed that the Catholic Church *did* hold that moral authority, with 45.2% responding that the Church did not hold such authority. The cases of child abuse began to break in the mid-1980s and by the 1990s were widely publicized. It is then that the shift in the responses can be seen. By 1990, the data flips and only 42.1% of the respondents believed in this moral authority while 57.9% believed the Church did not hold this authority. This is a dramatic shift in only a 9 year period. The drop in 1999 is drastically noticeable, but it is important to note that the survey in 1999 allowed for the respondents to vote “Don’t Know” or “No Answer”, which was not an option in 1981, 1990, or 2008. 7.9% of the respondents answered Don’t Know, while 2% answered No Answer. While the shift from 1999 to 2008 can

look as if the amount of people who believe the Catholic Church holds moral authority is growing, it can be tied to the way they had more options for answers in 1999. By 2008, there was a 60/40 majority in Ireland that the Catholic Church did not hold the authority to make moral judgments. It became clear that the majority in Ireland did not believe that social values were a topic that the Church was able to take stances on any longer.

As belief in an institution declines, so does the trust in stances they took that you once took as fact and backed. Thousands of parents across the globe, including in Ireland, had trusted the Church to keep their children safe as they served as altar boys or sang in choirs. As this trust breaks, a natural questioning of the legitimacy of the Church arrives. If the man who preaches to you every week about sin has now been arrested for molestation of a child, is he right about everything else? Is he right about abortion? The two seem a far jump at first, but one hole can sink a ship. As Catholics began to question their church's moral standing, abortion was only one moral and social issue that began to see a shift in public opinion.

The Case of Attorneys vs. X (X Case) 1992

One of the biggest catalysts for change is always the outrage at an injustice to the innocent. These extreme cases are helpful because they highlight the hypocrisy or injustice in laws and institutions that even the person most in-support must see the issues. One of the biggest cases of this in Ireland started with the rape of a 14 year old girl. This girl, referred to as "X", was impregnated by her rapist in December 1991 and discovered the pregnancy in January 1992 (The Journal 2012). Given that under EU law Irish citizens are allowed to seek services in other

EU states, X and her family traveled to the UK in order to obtain an abortion but were stopped due to an injunction obtained by the Attorney General (The Journal 2012). The 1983 referendum states that the life of the unborn is equal to that of the pregnant and in this case, X was not fatally ill due to her pregnancy. Even when X outrightly expressed to both her family and the court that her situation had put her into a suicidal mindset, the judge banned her from leaving the country for 9 months. Many pro-choice activists throughout the country saw this as a blatant statement that the mental health and potential suicide of a child was not important enough for the court's to deem a valid reason for an abortion. Demonstrations both for and against the rulings of the court raged throughout the country at the time.

Through a series of appeals, Supreme Court and High Court judgments, X was permitted to travel to England to receive an abortion (The Journal 2012). The Irish participation in the EU meant they had agreed to the terms of the charter and that charter states the free movement of people to obtain services. Whether the Irish government liked it or not, abortion was a service that was legal and could be provided by other EU member states. Because of the decision in this case, the government put forward a referendum to the people which included two amendments to the Constitution (Enright et al. 2015: 5). The amendments state the following:

“This subsection shall not limit freedom to travel between the State and another state.

This subsection shall not limit freedom to obtain or make available, in the State, subject to such conditions as may be laid down by law, information relating to services lawfully available in another state.”

The amendments passed as the 13th and 14th amendments to the Irish Constitution (Enright et al. 2015: 5). These amendments ensured that it was, in fact, legal for Irish citizens to leave the country in order to obtain an abortion, as long as that abortion was legal within the country they went to.

The people of Ireland no longer trusted their priests, the people who were supposed to be their moral compasses. Feminists movements were sparking up all over the country to fight for equality and had gotten few of the legal and policy changes they were campaigning for. On top of all this, their government had attempted to force a 14 year old girl to give birth to the child of her rapist. The X case was one of the first large-scale outrage cases in Ireland that surrounded abortion. It was only the first stone unturned, however, in the cases that led to the change in Ireland.

The Growth of the Pro-Choice Movement

With the 13th and 14th amendments having been passed, the fight for access to services and information about female health kept growing. Days after the amendments passed, some politicians banded together in order to create a bill that would ensure these rights were protected in their entirety (Koegler 1996: 1136). What became of these meetings is known as the Abortion Information Act of 1995. The act granted the right to have access to information about abortion services women were able to obtain abroad (Koegler 1996: 1137). This right, however, was not intended to promote abortion. It was specifically an act to allow the education of women on this subject.

By 1995, the President of Ireland was a woman and one of the primary functions of the president is to refer legislation to the Supreme Court for a check for Constitutionality. Mary Robinson sent the act to be considered by the Supreme Court and in an 80-page opinion, upheld it (Koegler 1996: 1139). The Abortion Information Act, coupled with the 13th and 14th Amendments, represented a true shift in the Irish government. Though a woman could not get an abortion in Ireland, the government actively acknowledged and did not stop Irish citizens from getting the procedure in other countries. From a country that criminalized abortions to one that essentially turns a blind eye to the pursuit of abortion, Ireland underwent a massive change in the opinion of its government. This change is reflected in the people as well, given that the people voted some of these changes in via referendum, campaigned for change across the country and protested in the streets over time about the injustice that a woman was not in control of her own body. The movement was far from reaching its goal, however, and by 1997, another case had sprung which outraged the public and pushed for change.

In December 1997, a 13 year old girl, known as “C”, had been raped and became pregnant while in foster care (O’Doherty 2013). What made the case unique was the fact that C was a ward of the state and therefore could not get *parental* consent to have an abortion. She was a ward of the state because she had been taken from her parents, given that the environment she was in was seen as part of the reason she was raped in the first place (O’Doherty 2013). The High Court deemed that C should be granted the right to travel to get an abortion because word had gotten out that C was suicidal and therefore, there was a risk to the life of the pregnant (O’Doherty 2013). The unique aspect of this case is that C’s parents fought the state that their daughter should not be allowed to have an abortion but a psychiatrist from the State Health

Board, a member of the government, was the force pushing for C's abortion (O'Doherty 2013). The C case struck a chord with the people of Ireland because of the conditions around the abortion; C was a child, she was raped, and there were allegations of her assault being tied to her parents being unfit to raise her. If the public is asked about the issue of abortion broadly, it can be difficult to sway their opinion because of preconceived notions. The assault and misfortunes of a young girl, however, can often pull at sympathies in people's hearts. After the case, a poll was taken on the public's opinion of abortion; the results came to be that only 18% of voters in Ireland now believed that abortion was never acceptable. The C case was a large marker in the reason why public opinion was shifting in this direction.

Given that the Courts had ruled in multiple instances in favor of allowing a girl or woman to travel in order to get an abortion because they were suicidal, the government put a bill up to referendum. The bill asked the public to decide whether or not suicide should count as a valid risk to the life of a mother when considering the potential abortion of a fetus. The amendment, had it passed, would have enshrined in the constitution that suicide was not a valid risk to life. In a groundbreaking result, the amendment failed with 50.42% of the population voting no (RTE 2002). This meant that just over half of the population of Ireland believed a woman whose life would be so impacted by giving birth that she would rather take her own life was of more value than that of the unborn. The referendum also showed the vast difference in opinion between the urban and rural parts of Ireland, given that so many city constituencies voted no (RTE 2002). Now that the people of Ireland had officially shown a stand *against* adding more constitutional laws surrounding abortion and disregarding the mental health of a mother, the pro-choice movement was finally taking a bit of control back over legislation regarding abortion.

The Impact of Europe

As noted in the X case, EU membership had an impact on the abortion debate in Ireland. Not only did membership mean that Ireland could not restrict its citizens from going abroad to get abortions, it also had an impact on the accessibility of information about abortion within the Republic. The impact of membership to European conventions and organizations, however, to the ongoing abortion debate in Ireland did not end back in the 1990s. Ireland is also a part of the Council of Europe, which was founded in 1949.

The Council of Europe includes the European Court of Human Rights. In 2010, the ECHR took the case of *A, B, and C v. Ireland*; the case consisted of 3 individuals who each argued that Ireland had failed to implement its existing abortion laws (Center for Reproductive Rights 2012: 1). One of the biggest implications of being a part of the international community and a part of multi-state organizations is that member states must abide by the rules of those organizations. In accordance with the Council of Europe, Ireland is held to the standard of human rights, as defined by the ECHR.

Each individual had a different story behind their application but their overarching goal was the same: to prove Ireland was not providing the abortion services outlined in the laws and Constitution. The first individual, known as “A”, sought for an abortion under the reasoning that she was impoverished with four children already in foster care and therefore could not provide a stable or safe life for the child she would potentially bring into the world; she had not meant to get pregnant, thinking her partner was infertile (Center for Reproductive Rights 2012: 1). The

second individual, known as “B”, unintentionally became pregnant, even after using emergency contraception; not knowing about the legality of traveling for her abortion, B delayed seeking medical care for post-abortion symptoms she began to experience (Center for Reproductive Rights 2012: 1-2). The third applicant, known as “C”, unintentionally became pregnant while in remission from cancer; when she found out that she was pregnant, she could not find a doctor who was willing to share proper information on her condition or the effects her cancer tests would/had had on the fetus (Center for Reproductive Rights 2012: 2). The consistency between all three of the women was that all of them were unaware of both the legality of their circumstances and did not know how to find, or were not helped in finding, information on their options of abortion.

Given that all three had reported their complaints as worries about the health and well-being of either themselves or the fetus, their arguments would have allowed them to receive abortions in the Republic of Ireland, if the state deemed these conditions of health and well-being appropriate. Regardless, under the 13th and 14th amendments, the women were entitled to travel for their abortions to other parts of the EU. The ECHR determined that most of the different complaints of each applicant were not in violation of the articles of the Council, however, Ireland was in violation of providing C with an abortion, given that she had a life-threatening condition (Center for Reproductive Rights 2012: 3). She was awarded 15,000 euros. The Court stated that Ireland must establish an implementation or regulation body which provides safe, accessible, and effective abortions to women who are legally entitled to abortion within the country (Center for Reproductive Rights 2012: 3). For the second time in history, a European body had forced the hand of the Irish to liberalize their laws on abortion. This fact was an example of the way that

Ireland was being changed from the outside, on top of the activism and public opinion changes occurring within the country.

International organizations have a large impact on the way that the member states act and change. More than 40% of “the decisions that promoted gender equality in Britain originated either from the European Commission or the ECJ” from 1979 to 1997 (Hawkesworth 2012: 178). Participation in international organizations means a compromise of values as the world becomes increasingly globalized. The pressures from the outside world create a heavy burden on member states to keep up with the modernization and liberalization of the rest of the world. While this example is about the United Kingdom, it shows the vast reach of international organizations and the way they impact a nation’s policies and decision making. Ireland was changed by the decisions of the ECHR in the case of *A, B, and C vs. Ireland*. This decision shows the need Ireland had to keep up to date with the international organizations it is a part of. This decision, however, was not the last factor in the fight for legal abortion in Ireland.

The Case of Savita Halappanavar

Within the debate of Irish abortion, the case to cause the greatest outcry, perhaps, was Savita Halappanavar. Savita went to the hospital in Galway complaining of severe back pain but, upon examination, was found to be pregnant and currently miscarrying (Holland 2018). 17-weeks into her pregnancy, she asked for her pregnancy to be terminated because of the extreme pain of the miscarriage but was denied due to the detection of a heartbeat in the fetus (Holland 2018). Although Irish women maintain the right to abort if their life is in danger, severe

pain and suffering is not considered a valid explanation for abortion. Her condition worsened over a few days, but the fetus maintained a heartbeat so the doctors continued to deny an abortion. Upon delivering the miscarried fetus, Savita went into a coma and died of septic shock (Holland 2018). While the doctors may have chosen not to abort because there was no threat to Savita's life, there clearly was. She died of multiple organ failure and cardiac arrest due to her sepsis.

What was unique about this case was that Savita had not intended to abort her child. In experiencing excruciating pain, she requested multiple times to be alleviated of it through the medical procedure that would terminate her pregnancy, the condition which was causing her so much pain. People in Ireland were shocked at the doctor's lack of willingness to act in the benefit of a patient and truly felt as if this situation could happen to them (Holland 2018). When people begin to identify with a cause, this is when true change begins. While many women suffered from issues of this type in Ireland, Savita's death gained international coverage.

Because of the wide reception of the news of the circumstances of her death, women's rights groups use of her death to further their platforms, and her husband's demand for justice, the Irish government was forced to evaluate the effects of her death on the law which ended up in the drafting of a new bill (Berer 2013: 9). There was no medical procedure or length of time the doctors could wait that would have made Savita's pregnancy viable, given that her cervix was fully dilated (Berer 2013: 11). This means that the doctors refused a procedure that would relieve their patient of pain and remove the threat on her life in order to protect the heartbeat of a fetus that had no viable way to be born. People were outraged at the fact that medical professionals

would act so immorally, in order to prevent the termination of a fetus. Savita became the face of a movement, a woman who had died unjustly because of the inaction of Irish doctors.

Unlike the X case, the C case, or the A, B, and C case, Savita died. Her story didn't become widely publicized and she didn't have lawyers fighting for her until *after* her death. The severity of the case and the consequences of the inaction of the doctors touched something within the Irish public. Ireland saw nationwide protests in the wake of her death (Arie 2012). The protests of the people of Ireland did not end in the street.

Savita's death sparked the formation of organizations across the country. ROSA was formed in order to promote the protection of women and their rights, and to promote progress in reproductive rights, various forms of oppression, and austerity (ROSA). The Abortion Rights Campaign was formed to promote stigma-free, safe access to abortion, to educate policy makers on the subject, to challenge anti-choice rhetoric in the information provided to women seeking counseling, among other measures in the pursuit of women's equal rights to abortion (ARC). The ARC and ROSA were only two organizations of many which popped up in the wake of Savita's death. The government of Ireland had no choice but to respond to these protests.

The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act

The public outcry and mobilization of movements across the country called for quick action on the part of the government. A year after Savita's death, in 2013, the Republic passed a law known as the Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act. While the act did not liberalize abortion anymore than it already was, it provided the first framework which sets out the times

when it is lawful for a woman to get an abortion within Ireland (Murray 2016: 668). This is what the ECHR had requested back in 2010 after the *A, B, and C v. Ireland* case but it was only in the wake of a young woman's preventable death that the government finally pushed for change. While the risk of a pregnant woman committing suicide had been an issue that Ireland had been considering for some time, the death of a woman due to Irish medical professionals inaction acted as the push to enact the ECHR ruling (Murray 2016: 669).

The problem in the Irish fight for reproductive rights goes back to 1983 when the PLAC decided to campaign for abortion to be a part of the constitution. All modern abortion laws and campaigns occur within the guidelines of those already established because of the legal history of abortion regulation in Ireland (Murray 2016: 690). The Protection of Life During Pregnancy Act did not provide a revolutionary change for abortion Ireland, but instead represented the formalized regulations of the laws already set in place. These regulations needed to be formalized because the laws had previously been so vague that women had been fighting for their ability to obtain an abortion, though whether they could have one was at the whim of the courts before them. The 2013 act changed this. The campaign for abortion rights in Ireland had come a long way in 30 years, but it had not yet achieved its goal.

Why *These Cases Now*?

Cases such as these had been occurring for many years, so why did these specific ones rise to public knowledge and have such a lasting impact? Ireland's social values had been shifting because of the rise of global feminism but one of the social values that was being

influenced the most was abortion rights. Given its direct tie to the feminist movement, abortion was a centerpiece to the campaign. The influence of important and powerful women was key to the success of the feminist movement pushing forward the rights to get an abortion. President Robinson represented an important voice for the issue of abortion in Ireland. In her official biography, Robinson is quoted to say that she believes abortion should be legal in Ireland in certain circumstances, as it would be preferable to Irish women having to travel overseas in order to receive the procedure (The Irish Times 1998). While she only stated her belief of abortion in limited circumstances, Robinson's support for abortion marked a fundamental moment for the abortion campaign, as she marked the infusion of the title of "woman" as something "new and altogether positive" that it was now "possible for (women) to take pride" in (Smyth 1992: 73). The President of Ireland is the face of the country to the rest of the world, responsible for the reception of international guests and many other key responsibilities. With a woman in this role, the face of Ireland globally had taken a change. With this face being that of a woman who believes in some level of change to existing abortion laws in Ireland, the campaign took a step forward.

The first large scale controversial case, the X case, in Ireland about abortion was in 1992, as previously stated. As abortion had been a heated debate in Ireland for decades, it is a question as to why this case and why in this time? By 1990, Banúlacht had been established, an organization geared towards furthering women's education and highlighting women's role in the development of the nation (Reilly 2007: 120). Banúlacht is just one of the many different products of global feminism on Irish society. By the time of the X case, the international standards for women's rights had been raised and Ireland had now elected its first female

president and there was no more excusing or pushing aside issues of grave concern, such as the rape and potential abortion of a 14 year old girl. The X case was the first case that became headline news since global feminism had permeated into Irish society. For this reason, the pro-choice campaign finally had a platform and a figurehead to help the Irish people see their case.

The “C” case represented a similar step for the pro-choice movement. In 1997, the case of the 13-year old girl who had been raped came to the public’s attention one month after the second female president of Ireland had been elected, with this president having been even more vocal than her predecessor on her views of social values. Having just experienced a similar case 5 years earlier, and now under their second female president, the people of Ireland’s eyes had been opened to the grave issue of abortion in the country. Since 1995, the Irish women’s human rights movement had made moves to make even more connections internationally (Reilly 2007: 121). These international connections became a large factor in the fight for abortion rights in Ireland.

As the fight for women’s human rights continued to grow, international organizations took more notice of the importance of these rights being violated. When Ireland joined the European Union and other organizations, it agreed to the scrutiny of these bodies in determining such things as the violation of its people's human rights. In the case of *A, B, and C v. Ireland*, the ECHR established that Ireland was in violation of giving *C* an abortion; in other words, the rise of global feminism led to the establishment of stricter women’s human right laws globally, creating a benchmark for how women should be treated and the rights they are to enjoy. This

benchmark affected Ireland's ability to deny abortions and therefore called into question the authority of Ireland in denying women abortions across the country.

The case of Savita Halappanavar showed the current status of global feminism in Ireland and the way that it can mobilize people around an issue. While the people of Ireland had been beginning to shift their opinions on the issue of abortion, the laws were not in place, and not enough people had yet been convinced. In order to mobilize people around feminist issues today, there are a variety of different new media tools. Given that "a good deal of women's online mobilization seeks to address issues of structural inequalities and cultural restraints", the women of Ireland were able to take the death of Savita Halappanavar and turn her into a representation of the cultural restraints Ireland allowed doctors to have in order to not give abortions to women who needed them (Hawkesworth 2012: 293). Savita gave the women's movement a story to broadcast globally and finally engage in an instantaneous global discourse about the maltreatment of women in Ireland who needed medical assistance with abortions.

Each of the high-profile abortion cases in the Republic of Ireland represented an important moment for feminists to shine a light on the inequalities and injustices occurring in Ireland. Each case provided a moment where the Irish public began to question, is there a chance that, even if on occasion and only in certain cases, abortion should be legal? These cases cracked open the minds of the Irish people with their complexities and rare qualities. They would not have been able to do so without the noise feminists had been making for the previous 15 or more years. Through the rise of global feminism, Ireland began to view issues of social values in a different light. With the election of two female presidents, both of whom believed abortion should be legal, at least in some cases, feminism had made its way into the most important parts

of Irish society. The cases changed public opinion and raised awareness for the important circumstances some women have which require them to have an abortion, but it is the rise of global feminism which allowed for these cases to take center stage and which primed the public's mind about social value issues in the years previous.

The Campaign for Repeal the 8th

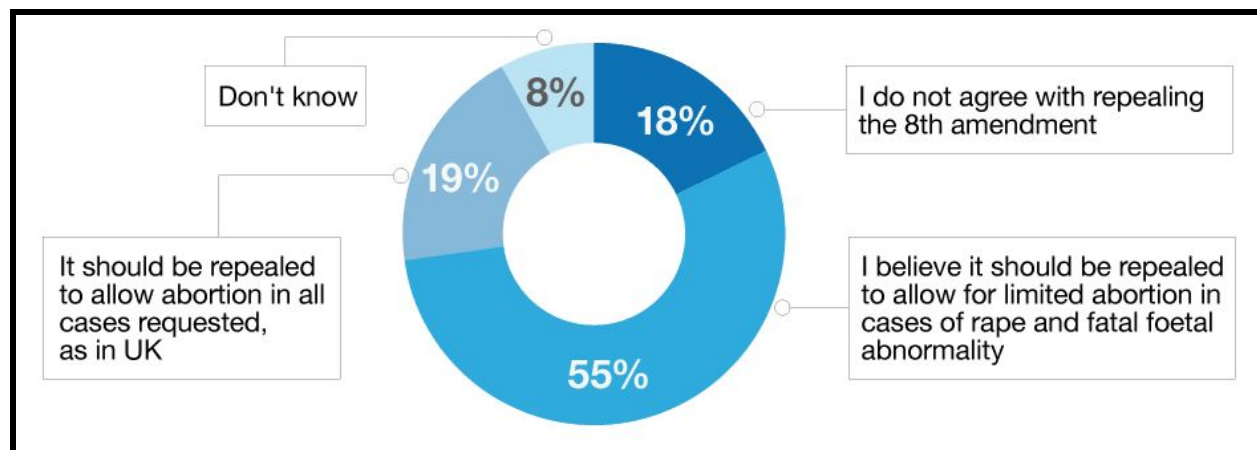
The final step in the fight for abortion rights in Ireland was the campaign to repeal the 8th Amendment. Organizing civil movements for social issues such as this establishes “strategic bonds of solidarity with others who share values and identities” (Hawkesworth 2012: 168). The women of Ireland bonded these shared values and identities to create a movement toward the rights they had been fighting so long for. Organizations like ROSA and the ARC began to band together and an umbrella campaign to repeal the 8th Amendment. “Together For Yes” is made up of over 70 organizations, groups, and communities that all banded together in order to prove the overwhelming support for a woman's right to choose in Ireland (TFY 2018). In the wake of an international feminist movement rising, Ireland was only one country vastly impacted by the changes occurring across the globe.

As the movement to #RepealThe8th began to grow, reporters and government officials alike wanted to know the opinions of the people, and how they were changing. In 2016, The Irish Times polled citizens on a variety of issues, one of the questions was:

“The Eighth Amendment to the constitution gives equal rights to the mother and the unborn child. Repealing the 8th amendment would change the law so that termination could be made legal.”

Their answers can be seen in Figure 9 below.

Figure 9. Irish Times Survey Respondents to Repealing the Eighth Amendment



Source: The Irish Times

As can be seen, regardless of reason or in what circumstances, 74% of the respondents believed that the 8th amendment should be repealed in Ireland. This was a large achievement for the Repeal campaign. In order to get a full understanding of the demographic, respondents were looked at in terms of their age, political party, region, and gender in comparison with their answer.

The issue crossed political alignments and age gaps. While 53% of 18-24 year olds believed it should be repealed to allow for limited abortions, 52% of people 65 years or older believed it as well. People under the age of 49 ranged from 21-27% belief in abortion in all cases, while older ranged from 9-14%. Similar numbers were seen across party lines from Fianna Fail, Fine Gael, the Labour Party, Sinn Fein, and independents. With this growth of the acceptance of abortion, the movement kept pushing for change.

Pushing for change has been working for women's movements across the world. The #MeToo movement consisted of millions of women coming out with their stories of sexual harassment and assault (Holborow 2018: 40). With the election of Donald Trump, the United States began an annual Women's March tradition, which then spread to countries across the globe, in solidarity for women's rights. This solidarity for women's rights did not end with the #MeToo movement, but propelled expansive campaigns across the world for equality. In the time before Together For Yes began pushing harder for Repeal the 8th, the international community saw a number of these feminists movements rise up. This surge in the community gave Repeal the Eighth a backboard to bounce off of and reach a larger audience. Repealing the 8th Amendment, however, would legalize abortion, taking away the equal right to life of the unborn. This meant that the campaign would have to get the support for abortion without medical limitations. To get support for abortion in all cases would mean a hard battle for the Repeal campaigners.

In March 2018, campaigners for Repeal the Eighth demanded that the Irish government hold a referendum (The Journal 2018). As the campaign had gained international status, the government was forced to consider this as an option. The government drafted legislation and alerted the public of what these new abortion laws would look like (The Journal 2018). It was released that the new legislation would legalize abortion if a medical professional acknowledged the pregnancy was less than 12 weeks along (The Journal 2018). This legislation would be a drastically different path to getting an abortion than the women of the Republic of Ireland had been used to so far. With knowledge of the potential change, however, comes the ability to fight for and against the issue itself. Now that the people had the information about what the

legislation would mean for the future of abortions in Ireland, the proper formation of campaigns was able to begin.

For months, the two sides campaigned for the outcome they wished to see in the referendum. Posters flooded lampposts and city walls, debates were held on television, and rallies occurred across the country. After years of the fight for equality of women in Ireland and months of campaigning, the day to cast one's vote came. 66.4% of the voters voted to repeal, a two-to-one vote (Henley 2018). On that day, it became legal to receive an abortion in Ireland. The support was widespread across the country. With only one county voting a majority "No" (that majority was also only 1.9% over), the counties of Ireland showed up to cast their vote in favor of a woman's right to choose (Henley 2018). It was important to see the "Yes"s were not stacked in a particular region, but throughout the country the Repeal the Eighth campaign was supported by the people. The Eighth Amendment to the Irish Constitution was repealed on May 25, 2018 and by 2019, Irish women were entitled to an abortion within their home country, as long as her pregnancy was within 12 weeks of conception.

Conclusion

As seen in Figures 1-4, the social value shift in Ireland occurred across a variety of different topics and issues. The case study of abortion, in this essay, serves as an appropriate way to investigate this shift. From the British Offenses Against the Persons Act to the repeal of the 8th Amendment, the Republic of Ireland has undergone immense changes in its stance on

abortion. The shift, however, occurred mainly within a 35 year period. In this 35 year period, there were a number of catalysts that affected the future of the abortion debate in Ireland.

The biggest change in sentiment, perhaps, can be accredited to the decline in the belief in the Catholic Church as an institution. The people began to question the Catholic Church's moral authority because of the dozens of scandals that started in the 1980s. When the Church's authority was questioned, the government's stance on moral issues such as abortion were also called into question because of the Church's heavy influence on the government. With these questions in the head of the people, they were more open to the stories of those suffering under the hands of the government and the Catholic Church.

With doubt in the old Catholic ways, the people of Ireland were able to put faith in other things and explore new waves of issues. As the rise of global feminism occurred simultaneously with the drop of belief in the Catholic Church, the Republic of Ireland was opened up to the possibility of a shift in social values. Mary Robinson and Mary McAleese paved the way for women to rise up to positions of power in Irish politics but this was only one way in which women took power throughout Ireland. Advocating for rights and protesting the injustices that were occurring to a variety of women across the country led to important change. Abortion rights have been an issue that has been fought for for many years, and yet, it was only in these instances and cases listed throughout the essay that created real lasting change throughout Ireland.

With stories that pulled at the heartstrings of citizens everywhere, such as the X Case, C Case, *A, B, and C v. Ireland*, and the death of Savita Halappanavar, the people of Ireland began to see validity in why a woman would need and/or want an abortion. Seeing the lives that were

directly impacted by the unclear, and in some cases unsafe, laws surrounding abortion showed the public that change was necessary. The change was seen as possible given the newfound ability for change in Ireland, given the drop of belief in the Catholic Church and the rise of global feminism. Though cases such as these had occurred in the past, the social climate in Ireland had not been primed until there was this combination. With these stories of these women in mind, protesters and political activists promoted the concept of repealing the 8th amendment to the Irish Constitution. Hearing these outcries, the Irish government listened to its people and proposed a referendum which resulted in the repeal of the 8th. The women of Ireland are now entitled to safe and accessible abortions in their own country.

Each of these factors was important to the liberation of Irish women's right to choose. The right to choose an abortion is just one of the many different social values that the public opinion surrounding the issue changed drastically. Ireland's role in international organizations opened the country up to scrutiny from the global stage. Keeping up with human rights policies and different traveling laws complicated the traditional Irish values because Ireland was no longer simply *Irish* but was now *European*, as a part of the European Union. To be European meant to adhere to these European values and to be under the scrutiny of organizations such as the EU. Scrutiny of this kind leads to the assessment of domestic laws, both from the EU and from Ireland itself. The human rights outlined in the EU Charter and the Irish Constitution became a new grounds for interpretation. The meaning of human rights in relation to homosexuality, abortion, divorce, and many other social values was changing.

This evolving meaning of human rights in these circumstances was able to find ground because of the drop of the belief in the Catholic Church. As many other countries had been

evolving in this way for sometime, the prominence of the Catholic Church in Ireland had acted as a counter-cultural force for so long that now, with the lack of moral authority of the Church, Ireland finally had paved its way to the progression of social values. In addition to this, global feminism was on the rise and permeated different countries in particular ways. For Ireland, it opened up conversations that had been traditionally closed off by the Church and considered scandalous or improper. Between the international pressures of globalization, the rise of global feminism, and the decline of belief in the Catholic Church, Ireland had paved its way toward a new conversation nationally. The people of Ireland were influenced by these factors and saw the validity in exploring the different sides of each social issue. With all these factors, the political atmosphere of the Republic of Ireland shifted its social values towards a more liberal view on topics such as homosexuality and same-sex marriage, divorce, and many other topics, such as abortion rights.

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