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The Nature and Scope of Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church

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This article presents the results of the Nature and Scope of Child Sexual Abuse by Catholic Priests from 1950 to 2002. Ninety-seven percent of dioceses (representing 99% of diocesan priests) and 64% of religious communities (representing 83% of religious priests) responded to the request for data. Findings showed that 4,392 priests (4%) had allegations of abuse, 10,667 victims made allegations, and the Church paid (at the time surveys were completed) \$572.5 million for legal and treatment fees and as compensation to the victims (more than \$1.3 billion to date). The study also provided information on the circumstances of the abuse (e.g., types of sexual acts, location, duration), the offenders (e.g., year of ordination, age, ministry duties, other behavioral problems), the victims (e.g., age and gender, family situation), and the dioceses (e.g., differences in abuse rates by region and population size). Importance of these results for policy and practice is discussed.

Keywords: child sexual abuse; Catholic Church; prevalence, nature and scope

The topic of child sexual abuse by Catholic priests came to the forefront in 2002 largely as a result of the case of John Geoghan, a priest in the Boston Archdiocese who was accused of abusing more than 130 children during three decades. He was defrocked, convicted of one count of indecent child assault, sentenced to prison, and murdered by an inmate while incarcerated. Although his case was extreme, it was the catalyst for intense media attention (see “The *Boston Globe* Spotlight Investigation,” 2004), record reporting of past abuses by priests, and searches for explanations about how such a crisis could occur in the Catholic Church. Questions about the abuse crisis centered around two key issues: How could priests commit such acts, and how could an organization knowingly allow the abuse to occur? As Catholic communities, survivors’ groups, and the general public were seeking answers to these questions, so was the Church. They did not know the extent of the crisis or its causes, so the Church commissioned two studies to address these issues. The first, the study on the nature and scope of child sexual abuse by priests (John Jay College, 2004, 2006), is the basis of this special issue.

Prior to 2002, few researchers had empirically studied the problem of child sexual abuse by clergy. The studies that did exist offered a glimpse into the issue, but they were limited in nature because of small sample sizes or because they were based on information from a parish or diocese or on clinical samples. The Nature and Scope study is based on reports from the universe of records for all priests and deacons in the United States from 1950 to

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2002. This study was commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) pursuant to the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People, which the bishops adopted at their annual meeting in June 2002. The aim of the study was to provide a thorough analysis of the extent of the problem with a specific focus on the abusers, those they abused, in what situations the abuse occurred, types of abuse incidents, and financial impact on the Church.

Researchers at John Jay College collected information from 97% of Catholic dioceses (representing 99% of the Catholic population) and 64% of religious communities (representing 83% of religious priests) and released the report of the Nature and Scope study in February 2004 (John Jay College, 2004). In the 2 years that followed, the Church granted John Jay access to the database to conduct further analyses, and this supplementary report was released in 2006 (John Jay College, 2006). Although the original study was almost entirely descriptive, the aim of the supplementary research was to address key issues in more detail, including the estimation of the overall problem of abuse in the Church, patterns of abuse, duration of abusive behavior, priests with one allegation and those with multiple allegations, subgroups of priests with allegations of abuse, and the institutional response to the abuse problem. This article describes the methods of the Nature and Scope study, the primary results of the study, and the results of the supplementary analysis.

CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE BY PRIESTS

As with sexual abuse in the general population, the prevalence of sexual abuse of minors by priests is unclear. This is the largely the result of underreporting and/or the delay in reporting of offenses. However, some social scientists have attempted to estimate the prevalence of sexual misconduct within the Catholic Church and understand the etiology of abusive behavior. Most of these studies are based on small or clinical samples, however, and therefore have limited generalizability. For example, Andrews (1999) collected self-reports from four congregations of clergy and parishioners; Flynn (2000) collected self-reports from 25 women sexually abused by clergy; Mendola (1998) studied 277 Catholic priests and religious brothers referred for psychiatric evaluation; Goetz (1992) collected self-reports of 374 ordained pastors to find out how many had affairs with consenting adults; Irons and Laaser (1994) studied 25 sexually abusive priests who were in treatment to determine whether they had any particular sexual addictions; Ukeritis (2005) studied 74 clergy who had abused children and found that approximately 38% primarily abused children age 13 or younger, and 62% abused adolescents between the ages of 14 and 18; Fones, Levine, Althof, and Risen (1999) studied 19 clergy (17 of whom were Roman Catholic) and found that 39% of the sample had offended against adolescents and 52% characterized the nature of their sexual behavior as deliberate. In a larger clinical sample of 1,322 priests and brothers, Loftus and Camargo (1993) found that 27.8% reported having engaged in a sexual relationship with an adult woman, and 8.4% reported sexual misconduct with a minor. In another study, Sipe (1990) concluded that 2% of priests engage in pedophilic behavior, 4% are sexually preoccupied with adolescent boys or girls, and 20% to 40% of priests engage in sexual misconduct with adults.

Social scientists are not alone in trying to identify the prevalence rate of sexual abuse of minors by priests. Journalists have also been actively seeking information on this topic. Based on his coverage of the Gilbert Gauthé case in Louisiana from 1984 to 1992, Jason

Berry (1992) claimed that 400 priests and brothers had sexually abused children. During this time period, Berry estimated that the Catholic Church spent nearly \$400 million in legal, medical, and psychological expenses. In an investigative article using all public data, *The New York Times* journalist Laurie Goodstein (2003) postulated that by the end of 2002, more than 1,205 clerics had been named either publicly or privately by 4,268 victims. She found that 43% percent of those clerics abused children younger than age 12 and 80% of victims were boys. She stated that half of the priests who had been investigated had multiple victims, and 16% had five or more victims. She also reported that the abuse occurred most frequently during the 1970s and 1980s.

Although these studies helped to identify some aspects of the sexual abuse crisis in the Church, the lack of thorough information led to a surge of media interest in the topic. According to Jenkins (1995), the emphasis on sexual abuse committed by the clergy is a result of a shift in media coverage beginning during the 1980s. The media created an image of the "pedophile priest" (Jenkins, 1996) and portrayed this as a Catholic problem. Yet Jenkins offers evidence through the citation of liability insurance that shows the problem extended beyond the Catholic Church and to other religions and institutions as well.

The focus on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church also led various theological scholars to undertake the task of assessing the extent of the abuse crisis. Extrapolating from data presented by the St. Luke Institute, Plante (2003) estimated that 3,000 priests have committed sexually abusive acts against 24,000 victims in the past 50 years (though he noted that this figure may contain men from various religions). The Catholic League for Religious and Civil Rights (2004) conducted a literature review and estimated the figure for abusive clerics to range from 1.0% to 1.8%. At the behest of the Vatican, several scholars also attempted to place the issue of sexual abuse and the clergy into a proper perspective. In a critical review of the available literature, Kafka (2004) stated that the typical child sexual abuser in the Catholic Church is a diocesan priest who is an ephebophile (one who develops recurrent, intense, and sexually arousing fantasies about adolescents). Kafka noted that the literature indicates that clergy offenders differ significantly from offenders in the general population. However, much of the information for his study was derived from clinical samples. What did not yet exist was a thorough accounting of national data on child sexual abuse by Catholic clergy, which is what prompted the need for the Nature and Scope study undertaken by John Jay College.

METHOD

The John Jay Research Team gathered information about every allegation of sexual abuse of a minor by priests and deacons in the United States by gathering information from existing files at all Catholic dioceses, eparchies, and religious communities. The specific research questions posed by the USCCB mandated a careful and thorough accounting at the national level of the number of priests against whom allegations of child sexual abuse had been made as well as the number of overall allegations that had come to the attention of the Church during the past 50 years. Specifically, the researchers compiled information on the following:

- *Data pertaining to the offenses:* the number of alleged offenses per diocese and per offender, nature of the offenses, when the offenses were committed, in what locations the offenses occurred, and during which activities they occurred (e.g., vacation, camp, school).

- *Data pertaining to the abusers:* age of the priest at the time of the abuse, date of ordination, length of time ordained prior to first allegation of abuse, job description/duties at the time the abuse occurred, number of victims, actions taken against the priest (canon, criminal, and/or civil), whether the priest was abused as a child, whether he had any psychological or substance abuse problems, whether he received any treatment, and whether he was transferred to another ministerial assignment subsequent to abusing.
- *Data pertaining to the victims:* the age of the victims at the time of the abuse, their gender, their family situation (with whom they were living), their relationship to the abuser, grooming behavior that occurred before and/or during the abusive relationship, length of time between the abuse and reporting of the abuse, and to whom the abuse was reported.
- *Data pertaining to the financial impact to the dioceses and religious community:* the financial cost to the dioceses or religious communities as a result of the abuse crisis.

The study team had a unique opportunity to solicit this information from all 195 dioceses and eparchies¹ and 140 religious institutes, together comprising the population of Catholic priests in the United States. The study had the backing of the USCCB to ensure, to the greatest extent possible, cooperation from all levels of church hierarchy throughout the country.

STUDY APPROACH

Because of a tight time frame for the project, limited resources, and confidentiality issues, it was not possible for the research team to travel to dioceses to personally collect data. Given this framework, the research team made the decision to collect the data by constructing survey instruments and mailing them to each diocese, eparchy, and religious institute in the country. This population-based survey approach provided the optimum strategy for producing as complete a census as possible of the nature and scope of the problem of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests. In addition, the research team felt that such an approach would make a significant contribution to the literature on child sexual abuse in the general population. Although academic research on child sexual abuse is substantial, there has been, to date, no population-based research on the characteristics or patterns of behavior of sexual abuse in any single population. Also, the information that was previously available on child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church had been obtained from small samples, often clinical or focused on a specific subpopulation (e.g., one parish or diocese).

STUDY DESIGN

The questions posed by *The Charter* drove the construction of the survey instruments. The research team constructed three separate survey instruments to address the three specific targets: one for the dioceses/eparchies/religious communities (the Diocesan/Order Profile), one for all priests against whom allegations had been made (the Cleric Survey), and one for all of the abuse cases described in those allegations (the Victim Survey).

The Diocesan Profile. The Diocesan/Order Profile aimed to establish aggregate numbers for the particular diocese/eparchy or religious community—the number of priests against whom allegations had been made and the total number of individuals making allegations. The survey consisted of 10 questions; half of these provided demographic information about the diocese or order, and the other half provided a profile of the scope of the problem within that diocese or order. Dioceses and eparchies were asked to indicate the church region, the Catholic population,

and the number of parishes within their boundaries. Religious communities were asked for the total number of members in the community. The survey asked for a global number, based on the review of the church records, of the number of priests against whom allegations of abuse had been made and, of those, how many had been completely exonerated. It also requested the total number of individuals who made the allegations and asked specifically for the number of those allegations that had been shown to be false or that had been withdrawn. These unfounded or withdrawn allegations were not included in any further reporting.

The Cleric Survey. The Cleric Survey included 17 questions and 18 follow-up questions that were focused on all priests with allegations of sexually abusing a minor. The data were collected from personnel files and records, and a survey was completed for every priest in every diocese with an allegation of abuse. This survey had many aims. First, it provided information related to the history of the individual priest who was accused of abuse, including specifications of the seminary that he attended and the history of where he ministered in the Catholic Church (e.g., whether the priest had been transferred within or between dioceses). The relevant history also included information about whether he had been abused and whether he had a known substance abuse problem or other medical or psychological conditions. Second, the survey provided demographic information about the individuals who had made allegations against this particular priest, including the number of allegations and age and gender of the victim(s). Third, the survey provided information about the actions taken by the Church in response to the allegations of abuse against this particular priest. The survey requested information on the actions taken by the church in response to the allegations (e.g., whether the priest was reprimanded, removed from duty), whether the priest participated in and/or completed any type of treatment, whether there was a criminal complaint and/or civil litigation, and the years in which those interventions would have occurred. The responses to the questions in this survey thus provided information on the scope and nature of the problem, information about those against whom allegations were made, and information about the church's response to the alleged offenses.

The Victim Survey. The Victim Survey captured information about each allegation that was made against a particular priest. For every priest against whom allegations were made, a separate and unique third survey was completed for each one of the alleged victims. If, for example, a Cleric Survey indicated that a particular priest had five allegations made against him, then five Victim Surveys would be completed and accompany that cleric survey. Surveys were neither requested nor submitted for those allegations that had been shown to be false, that were withdrawn, or for which the priest had been exonerated. This survey included 36 questions, with 18 follow-up questions. Like the Cleric Survey, it was to be completed based on the information about the victim in the alleged abuser's file.

The Victim Survey was divided into two sections. The first section of the survey sought information on the person who brought an allegation against this particular priest and about the incident or incidents themselves. The survey did not request any identifying information about the alleged victims themselves but instead included information on the individual's gender; age at both the time of offense and time the offense was reported; method by which the allegation and follow-ups to the allegation were made; time frame and type of alleged incident(s); threats, gifts, or enticements used to coax or coerce the individual into participating in sexual conduct; and action(s) taken by the Catholic institution and/or civil authorities as a result of the incident(s).

The second part of the survey sought information on the financial impact of the incident or incidents of alleged abuse reported in the preceding section. These questions asked about monies paid for treatment of both the victim and the priest, legal fees associated with the incident(s), and overall compensation to the accuser.

Taken together, these three surveys were able to provide a comprehensive assessment of the nature and scope of the problem of sexual abuse of minors by priests.

PILOT TESTING OF SURVEYS

During the development of the survey instruments, the research team consulted with many individuals associated with the Church, including members of the National Review Board, the Office of Child and Youth Protection, and numerous diocesan and religious priests who agreed to provide feedback to us on the content and wording of the survey instruments. Many meetings were held in which terminology categories of responses were refined. A formal pre-test was conducted in one diocese. For this pre-test, a high-ranking official within the diocese, at the direction of the presiding bishop, completed the draft survey instruments, using actual data from diocesan files, and provided detailed comments to the principal investigator about their content, readability, and accessibility. These comments and suggestions were used to refine the study instruments.

PROCEDURE

In April 2003, a package containing one copy of each of the three separate survey instruments was sent to all dioceses and eparchies in the United States. Prior to that mailing, a letter was sent to all dioceses and eparchies from Bishop Gregory, then-president of the USCCB, alerting bishops to the study, reminding them of the mandate to comply with the study as stated in *The Charter*, and requesting full compliance with it.

Unlike the dioceses and eparchies, whose participation was mandated by *The Charter*, the religious communities of men were invited to participate in the study. When their agreement was given in June 2003, the survey materials were sent to all religious institutes of men in the United States. These religious institutes then distributed the surveys to their provinces and autonomous monasteries or abbeys (the religious communities). The organization of religious communities is such that the files with the information being sought for the study were held in the provinces and autonomous communities of many religious orders, rather than at their central offices, so this second level of distribution by the religious institutes was required.

Reliability of data. With so many separate entities within the Catholic Church in the United States preparing to complete the surveys, a number of steps were taken to maximize the reliability and consistency of the data. First, the surveys were mailed to each diocese, eparchy, and religious community with a packet of information that included two forms of instruction—written instructions and a videotape with detailed instructions about how to fill out the surveys, how to handle the process of mailing the surveys once they were completed, and how to obtain additional guidance and information if needed during survey completion. Second, the research team provided anonymous telephone and e-mail support 5 days a week from 10 AM to 6 PM., adding an 800 number during the summer months. A number of research assistants were specially trained to answer the telephone and to keep a log of all

calls, each of which was reviewed by a member of the research team. Notes were kept on the caller questions, and written responses were regularly updated. Third, as the volume of calls grew during the summer and a pattern of questions was discerned, a Web site with answers to frequently asked questions was created. This Web site employed multiple levels of security to ensure that the public could not access the questions and answers. The identification name and password for the Web site were sent to each bishop or major superior so that he or his staff could access it. The telephone, e-mail, and Web site support was continued throughout the study period until February 2004, when the first report was released. Fourth, members of the John Jay College research team attended the biannual meeting of the USCCB in June 2003 to meet with the bishops and to answer any questions that they had about the study. Finally, the structure of the survey instruments assisted in ensuring reliability. The three surveys employed multiple measures of the same information, thus providing additional internal reliability checks for the results.

Survey responses. The data collection process lasted about 10 months. At first, many bishops and religious superiors had reservations about the study, and some explicitly opposed it. Through discussion, consultation, and the exchange of questions and responses, the research team was able to resolve the concerns of most of the bishops and major superiors, particularly their concerns about confidentiality. Because all states present unique legal issues, the team also worked with diocesan attorneys around the country to reduce their concerns and to ensure that the data collection process would not affect pending or potential law suits involving the Catholic Church.² Ultimately, 97% of all dioceses and eparchies responded (representing 99% of diocesan and eparchian priests), and 64% of all religious communities (representing 83% of religious priests) responded, an extraordinarily high response rate for any type of survey research, although perhaps not surprising given the mandate from *The Charter* and the significant efforts made by all parties to guarantee confidentiality and alleviate concerns. In general, the surveys were complete and showed careful attention to detail, as indicated by the many specific comments provided in the surveys. There was not, however, uniformity in terms of the amount of support, staff, and resources that were available around the country, so the responses did vary in terms of completeness and level of detail provided.

Data entry. All aspects of data coding, entry, and analysis were overseen by a full-time data analyst working directly with the study's principal investigator. Actual coding and data entry were completed by 16 research assistants. All research assistants were thoroughly trained by both the principal investigator and data analyst not only in the specific procedures for dealing with the survey data but also and most important, to equip them to understand the importance of the study's complex confidentiality provisions. All research assistants used a uniform codebook to ensure the greatest level of reliability possible. A log was maintained of all study materials received by John Jay College during the entire study period. Information from the surveys was recorded in files using both statistical and database software.

Confidentiality. Ensuring the confidentiality of individuals mentioned in the Church's files was an important element that influenced the design of the study and ultimately allowed dioceses and religious communities to participate fully in the study. The research team was concerned about the confidentiality of and risks to those individuals who reported sexual abuse, their friends and family members, priests and deacons against whom allegations had been made, Church employees, and the dioceses and religious institutes themselves.

The team took a number of steps to ensure confidentiality. The first decision was that no one on the research team would have direct contact with the files or records that were the property of the Church. The only persons who had any direct contact with the Catholic Church files used to complete the survey instruments were those persons designated by their bishop or major superior. Second, the team put into place complex procedures to ensure that no identifying information about any individual who made an allegation of abuse, any priest against whom an allegation had been made, nor any individual diocese, eparchy, or religious community would be included on any study materials that came to John Jay College.

In the Victim Surveys, information collected contained no personal identifying information about those who made allegations of abuse beyond age at the time of the alleged incident and gender for those persons who made allegations of abuse against priests. The information for the surveys was taken from existing files, so no new contact was initiated with any person who reported abuse by a priest or with any member of his or her family.

For the Cleric Survey, a challenge arose because one interest of the bishops was to determine whether individual priests had allegations of child sexual abuse in more than one diocese, eparchy, or religious community. To answer this question, the researchers needed to be able to give a unique identifying number to each priest, which would then allow the researchers to track information about him among multiple dioceses. To do this accurately, the researchers needed to collect, at a minimum, the initials and date of birth of each priest who had been the subject of an allegation.

Given this necessity, the following steps were taken to protect the confidentiality of each priest and his community:

- No survey, nor any study communication of any kind bearing a postmark, was sent directly to John Jay College from any Catholic Church group. An independent auditor, a certified public accountant at a nationally known accounting firm in Washington, D.C., was designated to receive all communications from Catholic Church representatives.
- Clear instructions were provided to respondents that all completed survey instruments were to be placed in blank envelopes that were then sealed. Those sealed blank envelopes were then placed in another envelope or box with a piece of diocesan or religious community stationary and sent to the auditor. When these packages were received by the auditor, the outer envelope and the letterhead were used to make a record of the sender, for purposes of response rate calculation only. A random code number was then assigned to each respondent unit of the Catholic Church. The codes were recorded on the blank envelopes, and the materials boxed and sent to John Jay College. From the time of receipt by John Jay College, the materials were only known by their code numbers. Only the completed surveys that had been placed in sealed envelopes and mailed were seen by the research team.
- All external envelopes, packaging, and records that linked the sender to the survey data were destroyed by the auditor.
- The study's principal investigator opened each one of the envelopes. She recorded the identifying information for each priest listed on the Cleric Survey—initials and birth date—and then removed that page from the survey. The identifying data were immediately encrypted, and each priest was assigned a unique numerical code. The pages with initials and dates of birth were segregated in a secure location, separate from the study office, until data collection was complete. These paper records and the digital record have been destroyed.
- To encrypt the identifying information completely, the research team hired a computer scientist to create a unique encryption program using an irreversible algorithm. After inputting the cleric's birth date in month/day/year format and his first and last initial, the program created a unique code that could not be decoded. Identical identifying information produced identical codes and, therefore, alerted the research team to allegations in multiple dioceses.

- The principal investigator carefully inspected all surveys for accidental disclosure of sensitive or identifying data. If there was any identifying information written on the survey itself, this information was immediately redacted before the surveys were given to the research assistants for coding.
- Although the formal procedures made it very unlikely that any accidental disclosure of sensitive data would occur, it is always possible that there would be a lapse and sensitive data about victims or abusers be transmitted. Accordingly, the study design included several levels of training in confidentiality protections for research assistants to reduce the possibility of accidental exposure.

The John Jay College Research Team sought and was granted approval to conduct the study by the College's Institutional Review Board, which oversees protection of human subjects in research. In addition, the team applied for a Certificate of Confidentiality, which can be granted by the United States Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) to protect against "compelled disclosure of identifying information about subjects of biomedical, behavioral, clinical, and other research." The certificate protects the researchers against involuntary disclosure about the identities of research participants and is understood to bar any legal demand for testimony in court. Such a certificate does not prevent any individual priest, victim, diocese, or religious community from voluntarily releasing data. After a number of meetings and discussions, DHHS declined to grant a Certificate of Confidentiality for the study. A major reason for denying the certificate was the determination that the research team had taken adequate measures to ensure that all identifying information would be removed and the surveys would be confidential, thereby precluding the need for a certificate. Also, the primary purpose of the certificate is to protect human subjects who have given their consent to participate in research related to confidential matters that may adversely affect them; this framework did not apply to the John Jay study because the priests were not voluntary research participants, and their consent had not been sought nor granted. Therefore, DHHS was uncertain as to whether it was legally possible to issue a certificate, which is primarily used as a vehicle to encourage human subjects to participate in a research project.

RESULTS

CORE FINDINGS

From 1950 to 2002, 4,392 priests had allegations of sexual abuse in the Catholic Church. This accounts for approximately 4% of all priests who were active in ministry throughout this time. The number of victims who made allegations of abuse in this time period is 10,667. This number accounts for individuals who made formal allegations with the dioceses. In addition, there are more than 3,000 potential victims who did not make a formal allegation of abuse to the Church; however, there is sufficient reason to believe they had also been abused (e.g., two siblings were abused, and only one reported the incident). The peak of the abuse cases occurred in the late 1970s. By early 2004, the Church had paid out more than \$572 million for victim compensation, treatment for the victim and priest, and attorney costs. The current estimate, after the large settlements of civil litigation in several jurisdictions, is more than \$1 billion.

The Catholic Church is divided into 14 regions (see Figure 1). Despite the media scrutiny on particular regions as having significant problems of abuse (e.g., the region with the Boston

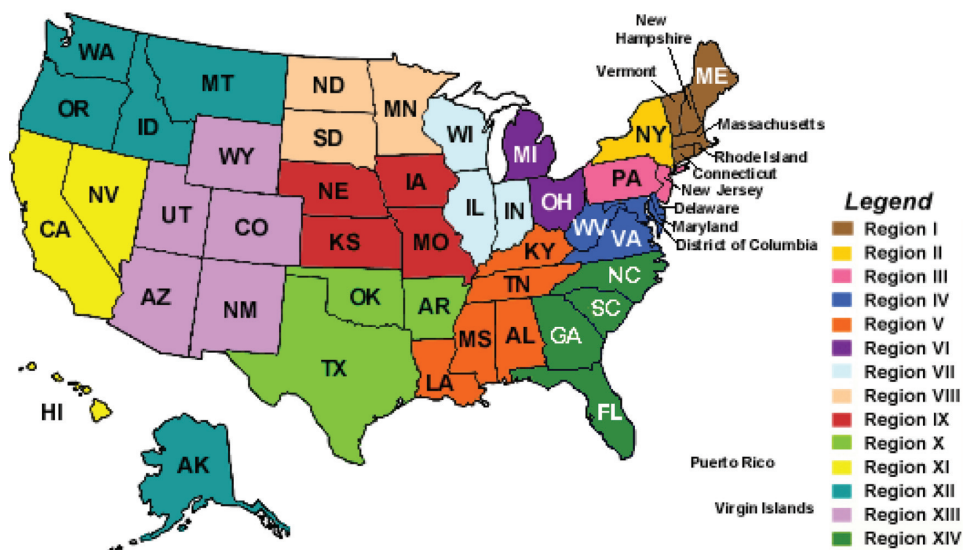


Figure 1: Regions of the Catholic Church

TABLE 1: Abuse Rate Per Region

<i>Region</i>	<i>% of Abuse</i>
1	5%
2	4%
3	5%
4	5%
5	5%
6	3%
7	4%
8	5%
9	3%
10	5%
11	4%
12	4%
13	6%
14	5%

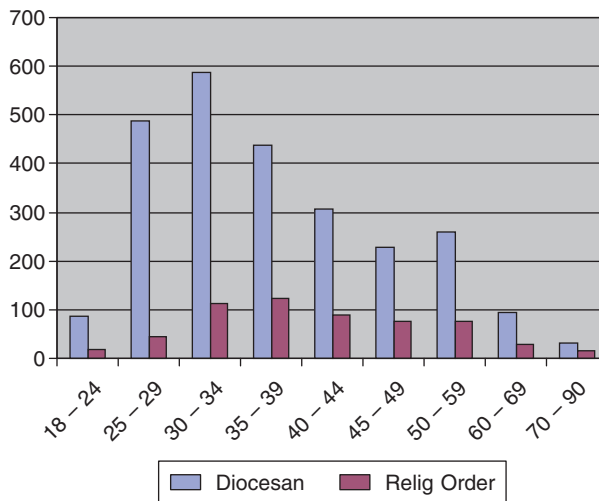
SOURCE: John Jay College (2004).

archdiocese), study results show that the abuse rates are stable among regions. Although the overall rate of abuse was 4% in the United States, it ranged from 3% to 6% across all regions (with a range of 0% to 24% among dioceses within regions; see Table 1). It was also consistent by size of diocese, again ranging from 3% to 6% when all dioceses are separated into 10 categories based on size (see Table 2). In other words, there was no significant difference between abuse rates in small, medium, and large dioceses.

TABLE 2: Abuse Rate Per Size

<i>Population (000s)</i>	<i>% of Abuse</i>
5–45	4%
45–66	4%
66–88.5	6%
88.5–122	3%
122–170	5%
170–239	4%
239–350.7	4%
350.7–475	4%
475–778.7	5%
788.7–4,500	4%

SOURCE: John Jay College (2004).

**Figure 2: Age of Priests at Time of Abuse**

SOURCE: John Jay College (2004).

PRIESTS—ALLEGATIONS AND CHARACTERISTICS

The majority of priests with allegations of abuse were diocesan priests (69%) followed by religious priests (22%). The most common functions of priests with allegations were associate pastor (42%) and pastor (25%). The ages of abusive priests ranged from 18 to 90, with the largest number (40%) abusing when they were between the ages of 30 and 39 (see Figure 2).

The surveys requested information on priests related to their own victimization, substance abuse history, and any other problems noted by the dioceses. Because information was derived from the personnel files of priests and not medical or psychological records, it is likely that this information is incomplete, and caution should be taken with these numbers. However, personnel files indicate that 274 of the abusive priests were themselves victimized,

TABLE 3: Number of Formal Allegations Against Priests and Number of Potential Allegations of Abuse Against Priests

<i>No. of Allegations</i>	<i>Priests With Formal Allegations</i>		<i>Priests With Formal Allegations Plus Potential Victims</i>	
	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>	<i>No.</i>	<i>%</i>
1	2,411	55.7	2,154	50.0
2-3	1,160	26.9	1,138	26.4
4-9	600	13.9	767	17.8
10+	149	3.5	252	5.8

with 40 experiencing physical abuse, 178 sexual abuse, 20 physical and sexual abuse, 32 emotional abuse, and 4 an undisclosed type of abuse. Records also indicate that 753 priests with allegations of abuse have alcohol or substance abuse problems (89% of those priests abused alcohol). Dioceses noted that 1,400 priests also had "other problems," including that they were involved in a sexual relationship (376), had mental health problems (214) or personality problems (765), or had other problems, such as criminal charges pending against them (559).

The majority of priests (55.7%) had one formal allegation of abuse, with 26.9% having 2 or 3 allegations, 13.9% having 4 to 9 allegations, and 3.5% having 10 or more allegations. If we include the "potential" victims, or those who did not register a formal allegation of abuse, the percentages are as follows: 50% had 1 allegation, 26.4% had 2 or 3 allegations, 17.8% had 4 to 9 allegations, and 5.8% had 10 or more allegations (see Table 3). Of those with formal allegations, the 3.5%, or 149 priests, with 10 or more allegations of abuse were responsible for abusing 2,960 victims, or 26% of the total number of victims who made allegations of abuse. Also of interest are those priests with only 1 allegation of abuse. Those with only 1 allegation were more likely than those with more allegations to have a female victim and have a victim in the 15- to 17-year-old age range. There is no clear reason why this group of men stopped their abusive behavior; reporting often occurred many years after the abuse took place, and it appears that they were better able to "self-correct." Compared to those with more allegations, they had fewer personality and psychological problems, the nature of their acts were less likely to include penetration, and they were more likely to admit their abusive behavior.

Priests were accused of committing more than 20 types of sexually abusive acts, the most common of which were touching under the victim's clothes (57.3%), touching over the victim's clothes (56.8%), victim disrobed (27.5%), cleric performing oral sex (27.3%), and penile penetration or attempted penile penetration (25.1%; see Table 4). In addition to the 20 types of offenses listed, priests committed several other acts, often involving paraphilic behavior (e.g., sadomasochistic acts, urination, etc.). The majority of priests committed multiple types of abusive acts, and few priests committed only the most minor acts. For example, 56.8% of cases involve touching over the victim's clothes; however, 3% involve *only* touching over the victim's clothes.

The abuse was most likely to occur in a private place, usually in a dwelling or work location of the priest. The most common place for the abuse to occur is in the residence of the priest (41%), though it also occurred in high frequency in the church (16%), the victim's home (12%), in a vacation house (10%), in school (10%), and in a car (10%).

In the general sex offender research literature, some individuals who sexually abuse children exhibit paraphilic behaviors. Paraphilias are disorders indicated by recurrent,

TABLE 4: Most Common Types of Sexually Abusive Acts (Not Mutually Exclusive)

<i>Type of Abusive Act</i>	<i>% of Cases</i>
Touching under victim's clothes	57.25
Touching over victim's clothes	56.80
Victim disrobed	27.46
Cleric performed oral sex	27.30
Penile penetration or attempt	25.07
Unspecified sexual abuse	22.71
Priest disrobed	21.54
Verbal abuse	19.43
Victim performed oral sex	18.38
Mutual masturbation	18.19
Touching under priest's clothes	17.33
Touching over priest's clothes	15.26
Masturbation	14.59

intense, sexually arousing fantasies about nonliving objects, nonconsenting persons, or violence (American Psychiatric Association, 1994, pp. 522-523). Two types of paraphilias are pedophilia and ephebophilia (although ephebophilia is not currently listed in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*). Pedophiles are individuals who experience recurrent, intense, sexually arousing fantasies about prepubescent children. Ephebophiles develop recurrent, intense, sexually arousing fantasies about adolescents.

To determine whether there were any identifiable pathologies among abusers, researchers created four subgroups based on the types of acts committed. These subgroups of abusers included high-rate abusers (those with 10 or more or 20 or more victims), those who exhibited pedophilic behavior (they had 2 or more reported victims, but none older than the age of 10 at the time the incident began), those who exhibited ephebophilic behavior (they had 2 or more reported male victims, but all were at least age 13 when the abuse began), and those who committed "unusual acts" (acts that were primarily paraphilic in nature, such as sadomasochistic activities).

The aim of creating these subgroups was to see whether they differed from the whole group of priests with allegations of abuse. If they exhibited identifiable pathologies, it may be possible to identify them prior to the time they begin abusing. In comparing the subgroups with the overall group of clerics with allegations of abuse, surprisingly few differences were discovered except in the group of high-rate abusers.

Overall, all priests with allegations began their abusive behavior, on average, after 11 years in ministry. Those who exhibited pedophilic behavior began abusing after 16 years, ephebophilic behavior after 8 years, and unusual acts after 9 years. However, those with more than 10 allegations of abuse began abusing after approximately 4 years, and those with 20 or more allegations began abusing, on average, within their first year in ministry. Table 5 shows the differences between these groups. There were also few significant differences between pedophiles, ephebophiles, and those who committed unusual acts from the general population of abusive clerics on any other factors, such as the duration of their abusive careers, substance or alcohol abuse, and so forth. They were slightly more likely to use enticements to groom the children. This information is expanded on in Tallon and Terry (2008 [this issue]).

TABLE 5: Comparison of Priest Subgroups

	<i>All Priests</i>	<i>Pedophiles</i>	<i>Ephebophiles</i>	<i>Unusual Acts</i>	<i>10-Plus Victims</i>	<i>20-Plus Victims</i>
Age at first event (years)	39	43	36	37	31	28
Age at ordination (years)	28	27	28	28	27.6	27.2
No. of years between ordination and first known abusive act	11	16	8	9	4	>1
No. of priests per group	4,392	96	474	143	149	39

Researchers gathered information on grooming behavior of priests, specifically whether they threatened the children or gave them gifts and enticements. Overall, 7.8% of the victims were given gifts by the priests, and 17% of the victims were given other types of enticements. The most common enticements were alcohol and drugs, sports and recreational benefits, money, or permission to stay overnight at the priests' residence. There was more evidence of grooming behavior in those clerics with longer duration of offending, though it should be noted that there was a greater opportunity for more grooming because there were more abusive incidents. The priests used enticements and socializing with family more often than threatening the victim, as threats occurred with 7.8% of victims. When the priests did use threats against the victims, they were most often of a psychological nature (e.g., fear, spiritual manipulation) than a physical nature.

The duration of abusive behavior, or persistence of offending of the abusive priests, is also of interest. Researchers calculated duration of abuse by using the first date of the first incident of abuse, or the first date the priest committed an act of abuse, and the last date of the most recent incident, or the last time a priest abused a child, taking into account all reports involving a single priest. These figures do not necessarily represent continuous abusive activity. In other words, if a priest abused a child in 1970 to 1971, and another from 1974 to 1975, duration is calculated as 5 years, even though he may not have abused a child from 1971 to 1974.

The data include duration information for 3,745 priests with allegations of abuse. Thirty-one percent of the priests for whom duration data exists abused children for a period of less than 1 year. These priests who abused for less than 1 year had between one and nine victims.

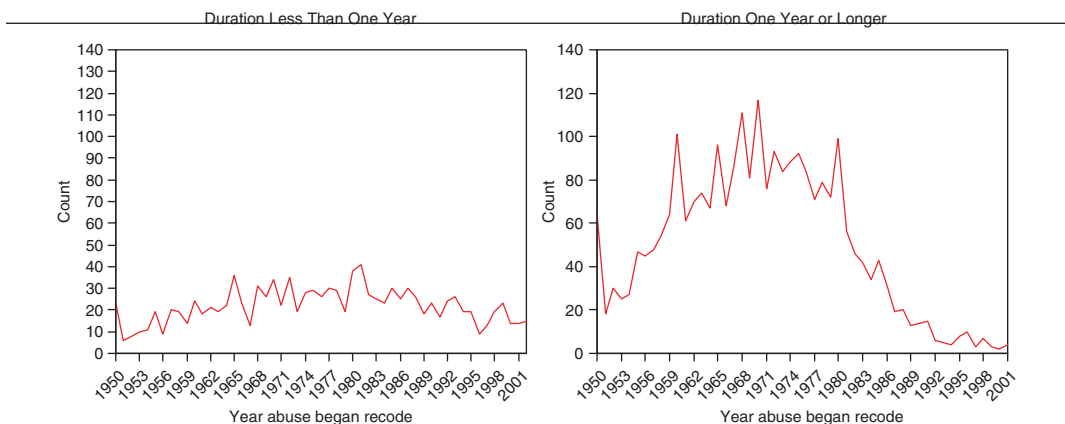
Of the 69% of priests who abused children for more than a year, the average duration of abusive behavior increased with the number of victims (see Table 6). Those with 1 allegation of abuse had a mean duration of 1.58 years with a range of 1 to 21 years; those with 2 or 3 allegations had a mean duration of 7.20 years, with a range of 1 to 40 years; those with 4 to 9 victims had a mean duration of 11.90 years, with a range of 1 to 41 years; those with 10 to 19 allegations had a mean duration of 18.10 years, with a range of 5 to 41 years; and those with 20 or more allegations had a mean duration of 22.03 years, with a range of 1 to 35 years. It is important to note that some priests who only had 1 victim abused for a long period of time—up to 21 years—and that a single allegation of abuse does not mean that the abuse consisted of a single incident.

The pattern shown by priests with a short period of offending is not the same as the pattern of priests with a longer period of abusive behavior. The number of priests who abused for less than 1 year was reasonably stable during a 50-year period. There were a small number of priests who abused children for less than 1 year, and that number was consistent throughout this time period. On the other hand, the distribution of priests who abused for

TABLE 6: Duration of Abusive Behavior by Priests

<i>Number of Victims</i>	<i>Mean Length of Abuse (years)</i>	<i>Range of Years</i>
1	3.02	1–13
2–3	7.33	1–41
4–9	11.74	1–40
10–19	17.99	5–41
20+	22.47	1–35
All priests	5.07	0–41

SOURCE: John Jay College (2006).

**Figure 3: Abuse Distribution for Offenders Whose Duration Was Less Than 1 Year and More Than 1 Year**
SOURCE: John Jay College (2006).

more than a year fits the same distribution shape as the overall group of clerics with allegations of abuse, peaking in the 1970s (see Figure 3). That means that whatever factors may be associated with the sexual abuse crisis that led to a peak in offenses in the 1970s may not affect the priests who abused for less than 1 year in the same way. This is something that needs to be explored in the second study commissioned by the USCCB, to help understand the causes and context of the abuse crisis.

Researchers also identified 143 priests as having allegations of abuse in multiple dioceses. Of those, nine priests had allegations of abuse in three dioceses, and one priest had allegations of abuse in four dioceses. No assessment was completed of transfer within dioceses (between parishes).

Church response to the abuse varied, and one major difficulty in evaluating the response was the length of time from abusive incident to the time of reporting. Because of the statute of limitations, few cases went through the criminal justice system. By the end of 2002, the police had been contacted about 640 priests with allegations of abuse, constituting 14% of all abusers. Of those, 226 priests were criminally charged, 138 were convicted, and 100 of those served time in prison. Thus, 3% of all priests against whom allegations were made were convicted and about 2% received prison sentences.

Treatment for abusive priests was a more common response. Nearly 40% of the priests with allegations of abuse received treatment, and some received multiple types of treatment. Records show that 1,627 priests received some type of treatment and that there were 3,041

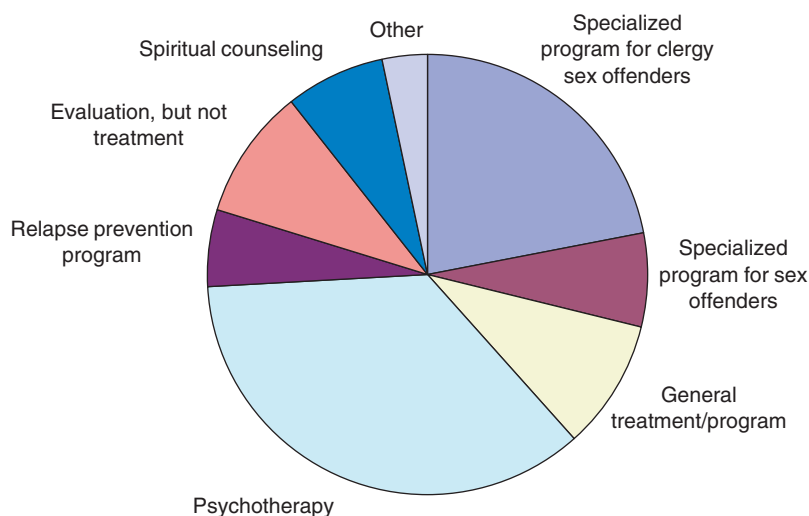


Figure 4: Types of Treatment Received by Priests With Allegations of Sexual Abuse
 SOURCE: John Jay College (2004).

instances of treatment. Priests with more than one allegation of abuse were more likely to participate in treatment, despite the severity of the offense(s) committed. Types of treatment varied, and the most common forms were psychotherapy, specialized treatment for clergy sex offenders, general treatment, specialized program for sex offenders, evaluation without treatment, relapse prevention, and spiritual counseling (see Figure 4).

VICTIMS

The most common age and gender of victims abused by priests were boys between the ages of 11 and 14, with more than 40% of all victims fitting this classification (see Figure 5). The majority of victims, 51%, were between the ages of 11 and 14; 27% were 15 to 17, 16% were 8 to 10, and 6% were younger than age 7. Most victims were male (81%), and the mean age of male victims was older than the mean age of female victims. All categories of abusers (those with 1 victim, 2 to 3 victims, 4 to 9 victims, and 10 or more victims) have more male than female victims. However, priests with fewer allegations have a higher percentage of female victims than those with more allegations. In fact, 33% of the victims of priests with one allegation of abuse are female compared to 19% of victims of all priests. In addition, priests with 1 victim were most likely to abuse someone who was 15 to 17 years of age. Alternatively, priests with multiple victims were most likely to abuse minors who were 11 to 14 years of age. The more victims the offenders had, the younger the victims were, on average, and the higher the percentage of male victims (see Table 7).

DISTRIBUTION OF CASES AND REPORTING OF ALLEGATIONS

One aim of the study was to chart the distribution of cases of abuse from 1950 to 2002 and to better understand reporting patterns of the abuse cases. The study showed that the number of cases of sexual abuse peaked in the 1970s (see Figure 6). This is true in absolute numbers

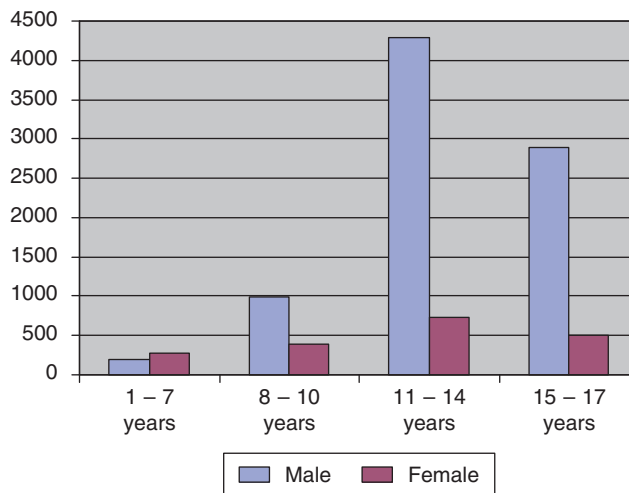


Figure 5: Age and Gender of Priest Abuse Victims

SOURCE: John Jay College (2006).

TABLE 7: Percentage of Priests With Victims in Different Age Categories, Based on Number of Allegations of Priest

Victim Age	Priests With 1 Allegation (%)	Priests With 2–9 Allegations (%)	Priests With 10+ Allegations (%)
1–7	2.8	3.2	7.5
8–10	10.6	13.3	20.0
11–14	39.4	43.2	37.6
15–17	44.5	35.1	23.1
Unknown	2.8	5.2	11.8

as well as with the rate of abuse per 1,000 priests. Approximately 10% of priests ordained from 1970 to 1975 had allegations of abuse, with a significant decline thereafter (see Figure 7).

Not surprisingly, there was a significant delay in the reporting of the abuse in most cases. One third of all cases known by 2003 were reported in 2002, and 44% of the allegations of abuse were reported between 2000 and 2002 (see Table 8). Prior to 1990, fewer than 17% of the total abuse cases known by 2003 had been reported. Only 810 cases of child sexual abuse had been reported prior to 1985; 85% of those cases had been reported in the year when the abuse occurred, 10% reported 2 years later, 2.5% reported 5 years later, and 2.5% reported 10 years later. This is in stark contrast to what was known by 2003, at which time 10% of cases were reported in the year when the abuse occurred, 25% were reported within 10 years, 50% had been reported within 20 years, and 75% had been reported within 30 years.

The pattern of reporting evident by 2003 had stabilized by 1993. Even though only one third of the cases were known by 1993, the shape of the distribution then was not significantly different than it was by 2003. This stable shape is as a result of the slowing of the overall problem; although the majority of incidents were not yet known, the pattern of events was diminishing.

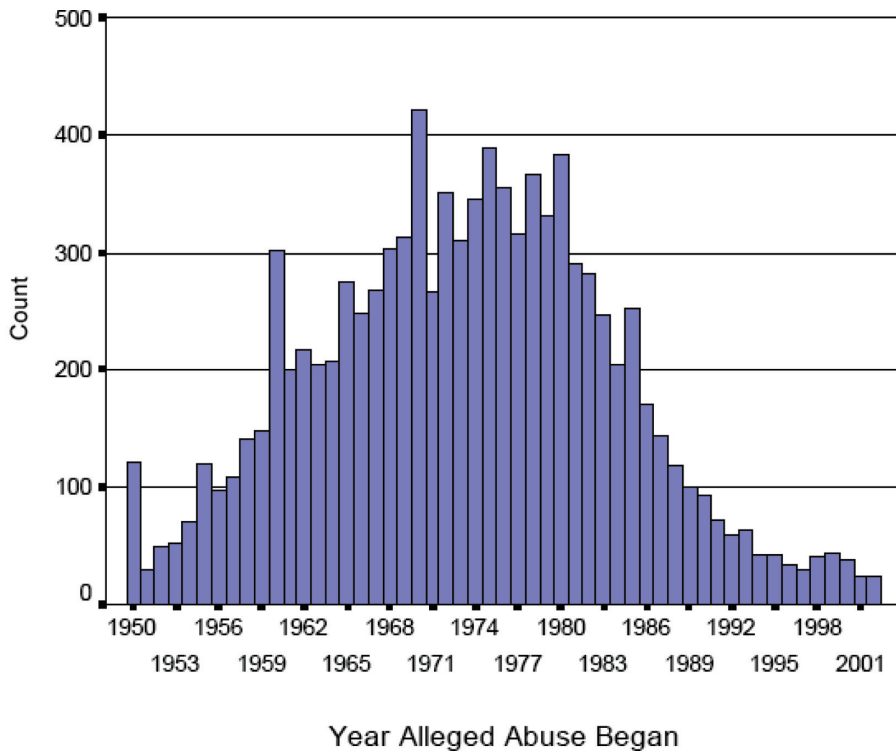


Figure 6: Year When Abuse Incidents Began
SOURCE: John Jay College (2004).

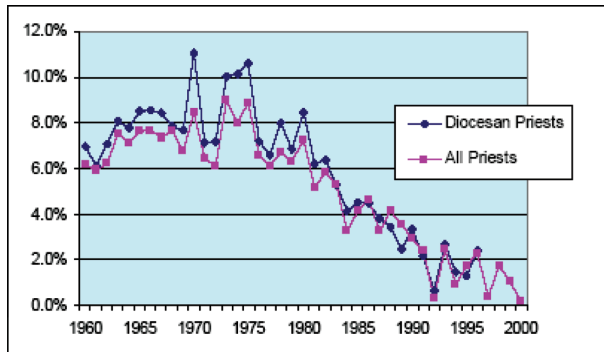


Figure 7: Percentage of Priests With Allegations of Abuse by Year of Ordination
SOURCE: John Jay College (2004).

TABLE 8: Year That Abuse Incidents Were Reported

<i>Decade Abuse Was Reported</i>	<i>Number of Reports</i>	<i>%</i>
1950s	53	0.5
1960s	190	1.8
1970s	266	2.6
1980s	1,146	11.2
1990s	4,022	39.4
2000–2002	4,533	44.4

SOURCE: John Jay College (2006).

To see whether the delays in disclosure could be used to predict the distribution of later cases, researchers developed a series of estimation models. All models showed that the distribution of cases was stable. Thus, even though there will surely be more victims who come forward to report incidents of abuse, the pattern of abuse, with a peak in the 1970s and early 1980s, is stable in respect to shape of the distribution.

DISCUSSION

The study of the nature and scope of child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church provides a wealth of information on both the crisis in the Church and the problem of sexual abuse of children generally. Most priests had a single known victim, and for those with multiple victims, specialization by age was not common. Many priests committed a variety of sexually abusive acts, most commonly in their own residence. There is little information that relates to identifiable pathologies of the offenders (e.g., clear indications of pedophilia), and there is much information that indicates an opportunistic selection effect. Although the majority of victims were male, it is this group of children to whom the priests had the most (and most unrestricted) access. In addition, the average priest with an allegation of abuse waits 11 years before the first known abuse occurs. Analysis of the duration of abusive behavior showed great variation in combinations of length in years and number of victims; some abused many victims for a short period of time, whereas others abused few victims for a long period of time. That said, generally, the more victims abused by a priest, then the longer his abusive career.

The Nature and Scope study is significant to the general literature on sexual abuse of children for several reasons. First, it provides information on an entire population of abusers in a 50-year period. To date, it is the most extensive database on a population of child sexual abusers and allows for analysis of criminal careers, specialization and generalization, pathologies, and demographic information on those who sexually abuse children. Second, this database provides information on trends of reporting child sexual abuse. It shows the trends of reporting among males and females, abused at different ages in different circumstances, during half a century. Third, it provides information on the circumstances in which abuse occurred. This allows for an assessment of both the organizational structure of the Church as well as the situational component of sexually abusive behavior. Fourth, it provides information on the actions that were (or were not) taken to control sexual abuse by individuals within the organization. Such information can lead to better prevention policies in the future.

There are, of course, limitations to this study. First, the researchers had to rely on self-reported information from dioceses. Second, many different individuals completed the surveys, which could lead to a lack of uniformity in information provided. Although it is impossible to create an infallible operational definition with criteria so specific that everyone supplying the information would do so in exactly the same way, the research team made every effort to control for variation in responses with explicit instructions and staff available to answer questions. Finally, and most important, sexual abuse is significantly underreported, and this study relies on the information that has been reported. Despite these limitations, the researchers made every effort to ensure reliability and validity with the responses.

Research is ongoing regarding the second study mandated by *The Charter*, which aims to understand the causes and context of the sexual abuse crisis. The Causes and Context study, also being conducted by researchers at John Jay College, has several goals, including to understand the historical nature of child sexual abuse and put the abuse crisis in the church in a larger societal context; to study priestly formation, particularly in regard to seminary education of priests and how that has developed in the last half-century; to study the role of Church leadership throughout this crisis; to better understand the pathologies of the individual priests with allegations, through an analysis of the treatment records for abusive priests; to thoroughly study the impact of victimization on the Church, priests, victims, and the Catholic community; and to study the situational effect of the abuse. The Causes and Context study, in combination with the Nature and Scope study, should provide a comprehensive analysis of the problem of child sexual abuse by Catholic priests in the United States, thus leading to better policies for the protection of children within the organization and in society generally.

NOTES

1. The official count of dioceses and eparchies in the United States is 195, but when missions are included, the number is 202.

2. For instance, California law prohibits the disclosure of any identifying information related to sexual behavior. As a result, complicated procedures were implemented whereby identifying information (which was used only to allow us to track priests who had been moved from one diocese to another) was encrypted prior to arriving at the study headquarters so that California respondents were not providing any identifying information

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