

Sexual Abuse of Youth in the Catholic Church: A 2019 Research Update

Karen J. Terry
John Jay College of Criminal Justice



Sexual Abuse by Adults in Youth-Serving Organizations

- Sexual abuse, and poor organizational responses to the abuse, occur when adults work closely with youth, particularly adolescents.
- Patterns of sexual abuse are now recognized in institutions where adults supervise and mentor children
 - Religious institutions
 - Schools and youth serving, or after-school, programs
 - Childcare facilities
 - Social organizations
 - Sports organizations

Child Sexual Abuse in Youth-Serving Organizations

- Micro-level explanations of abuse incidents
 - Characteristics of abusers
 - Situations where abuse occurs
- Macro-level explanations of abuse
 - “Culture” of abuse
 - Structural characteristics of the organization

Factors Associated with Child Sexual Abuse in Youth-Serving Organizations

Organizational culture: norms, values, leadership, power dynamics, trust of constituents

Organizational structure: policies, resources, mechanisms of accountability

Incident dynamics: situational factors, abuse precursors

Perpetrator & victim characteristics

Child Sexual Abuse in Youth-Serving Organizations

- Focus of this presentation:
 - Findings of the John Jay Studies on sexual abuse in the Catholic Church in the US
 - Updated data on what is now known about abuse in the Catholic Church
 - Recommendations from studies, commissions and reports about reducing and responding to sexual abuse of minors

Data Sources on CSA in the Catholic Church: Studies and Reports

- Child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church a global issue
- Major studies
 - John Jay Studies, 2004; 2011; CARA's annual summary of allegations of abuse, 2004 – 2017 (US)
 - MHG Study (Germany)
- Grand Jury Reports in PA (2018) and CO (2019)
- Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse, Final Report (Australia, 2017)

Data Sources on CSA in the Catholic Church: Commissions and Inquiries

- Canada – 1992 *From Pain to Hope*
- Ireland – 2009 five- volume Ryan Report; six additional inquiries from 1990 – 2010: Cloyne, Dublin, Ferns, Limerick, Raphoe, and Tuam
- UK – 2001 Nolan Report
- Belgium – 2010 Catholic Church Commission report
- Netherlands – 2011 Commission report
- Australia – 2013 *Betrayal of Hope*
- Poland – 2019 reports on abuse by Catholic Church and *Be Not Afraid* NGO

CSA in the Catholic Church: Global Similarities

- Studies, reports, commissions have varying methodologies and time frames
- Findings show similarities across
 - Scope of the problem
 - Distribution of events over time
 - Delay in disclosure
 - Gender and age of victims
 - Characteristics of abusers
 - Persistence of abuse
 - Lack of/delay in responding to abuse allegations

Nature and Scope: Background

- 2002
 - USCCB affirms the Charter for the Protection of Young People
 - National Review Board asks John Jay College to conduct a study:
 - Mandate: to understand
 - Characteristics and extent of abuse
 - Characteristics of abusers and victims
 - Financial impact of the Catholic Church

Nature and Scope: Methodology

- Dioceses completed paper surveys to record allegations of sexual abuse by clerics that took place between 1950 and 2002
 - Response rate = 97% of dioceses
- Religious Institutes of Men agreed to participate
 - Response rate = 63% of religious institutes
- All data was anonymized; no cleric, victim, diocese or religious institute could be identified
- Surveys were sent to an independent auditor and then to the researchers at John Jay College

Nature and Scope: Key Findings

Extent of Cleric Involvement in Abuse

- Number of cleric abusers: 4,392
 - Approximately 4% of priests in ministry between 1950 and 2002
- Percentage is consistent across all sizes of dioceses and in all regions of the US
- Range = 3% to 6% of clerics in a diocese
- Number of victims reported by dioceses in 2002: 10,667
- Diocesan priests = 4.6% , Religious priests = 2.7%
- Very few allegations were reported against deacons

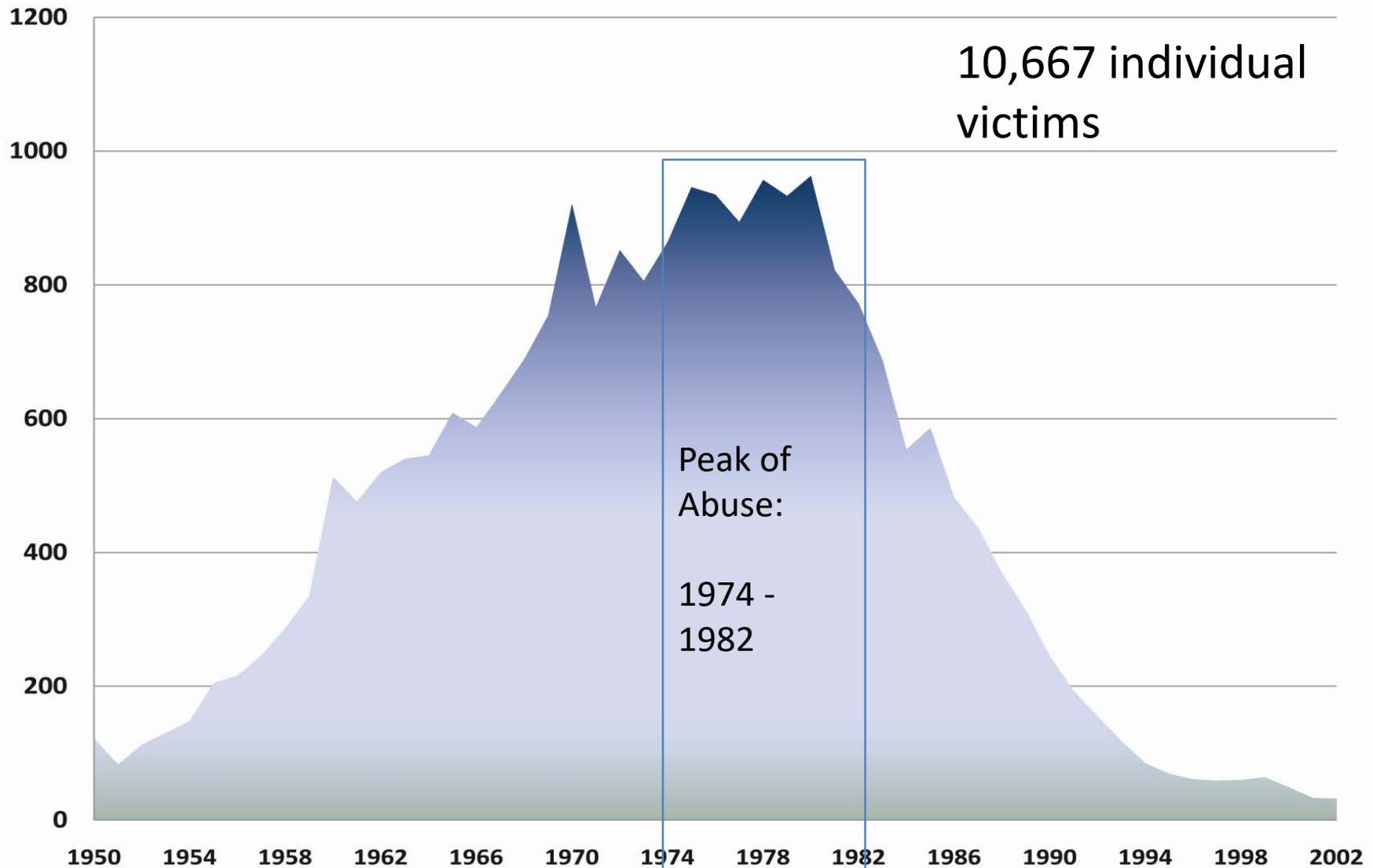
Nature and Scope: Key Findings

Characteristics of Clerics Involved in Abuse

- Two-thirds were diocesan priests
- Range in age from mid-20s (in seminary) to elderly priests
- Most were “generalists” rather than specialists
- Persistence: Often a lengthy duration of offending
- 55% of priests had one allegation of abuse
- 3.5% of priests with allegations had 10 or more victims
 - Responsible for approximately 26% of victims

Nature and Scope: Key Findings

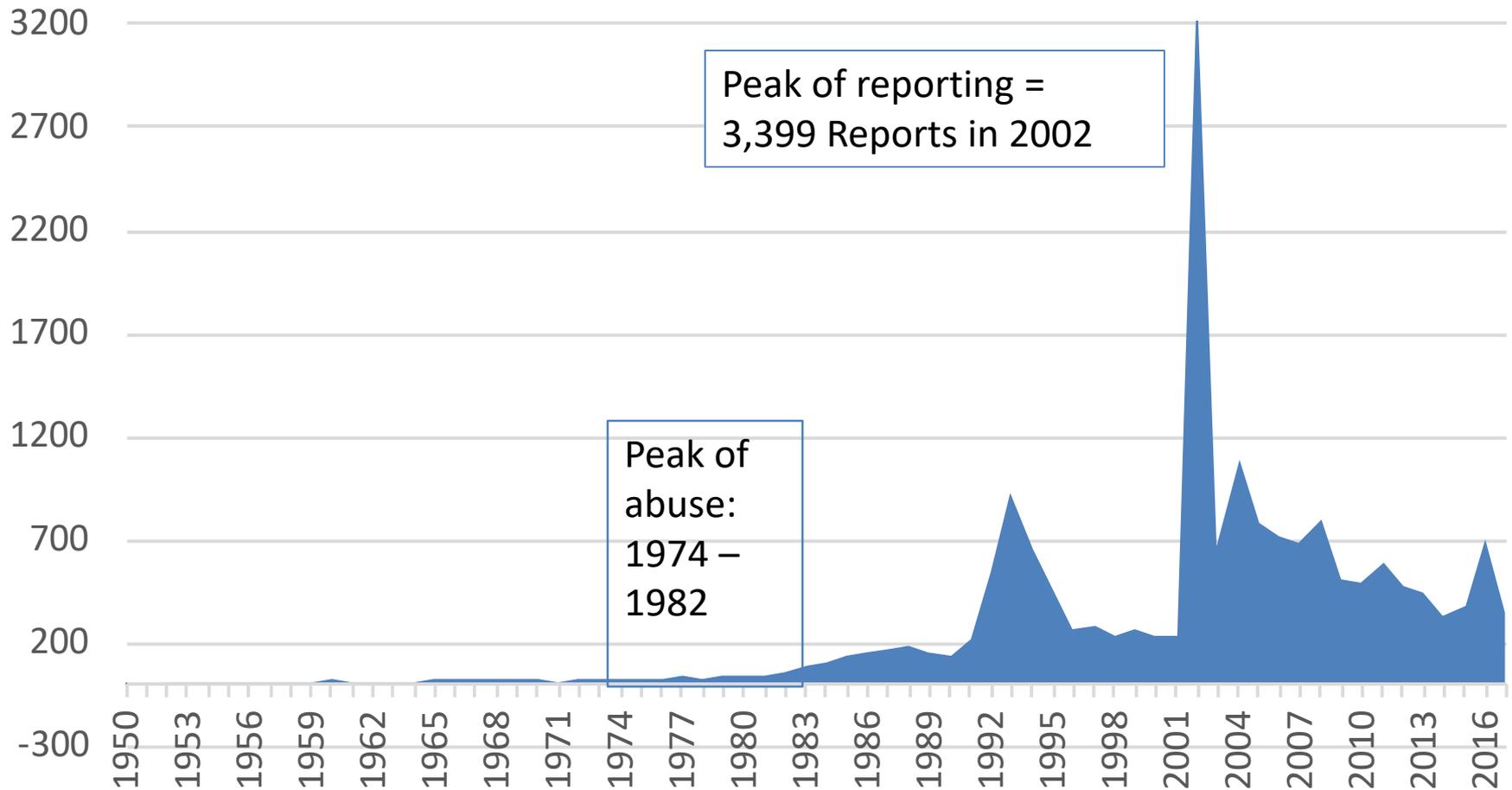
Distribution of Abuse Incidents, 1950-2002



Nature and Scope: Key Findings

Reporting of Abuse Incidents

Annual Count of Reports of Abuse, 1950 - 2017



What more do we know in 2019?

Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report

Summary Statistics

- From the REPORT:
 - 1000+ victims, 301 accused priests, incidents 1931 – 2016
- From Paul Sullins' published article:
 - 924 incidents (921 in his data file), 263 accused priests, no victim count provided
- John Jay College analysis:
 - 921 incidents reported by 795 victims, between 1931 and 2016
 - 261 accused individuals, of whom 234 were ordained Catholic priests

Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report

Accused Priests by Decade of Ordination

Ordination decade

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1939 or earlier	15	6.4	6.7	6.7
	1940s	24	10.3	10.7	17.4
	1950s	46	19.7	20.5	37.9
	1960s	52	22.2	23.2	61.2
	1970s	61	26.1	27.2	88.4
	1980s	15	6.4	6.7	95.1
	1990s	7	3.0	3.1	98.2
	2000 or later	4	1.7	1.8	100.0
	Total	224	95.7	100.0	
Missing	9999	10	4.3		
Total		234	100.0		

Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report

Summary Statistics – Victims 1

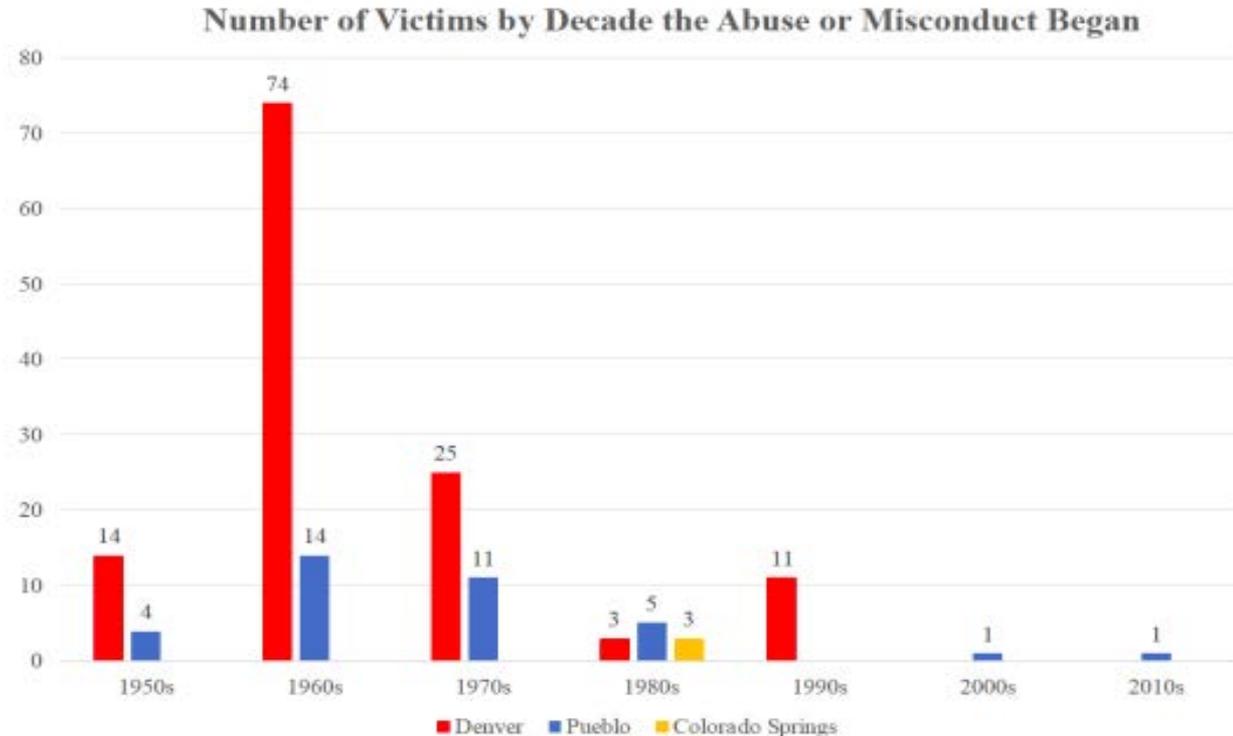
- Age of victims at first instance of abuse (nearly a quarter of whom were 18 – 31 years old)

Victim's age in four groups

		Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1-7 years old	30	3.8	4.5	4.5
	8-10 years old	73	9.2	10.9	15.4
	11-14 years old	211	26.5	31.4	46.8
	15-17 years old	190	23.9	28.3	75.1
	Adult	167	21.0	24.9	100.0
	Total	671	84.4	100.0	
Missing	9999	124	15.6		
Total		795	100.0		

Colorado Grand Jury Report: Distribution of Events

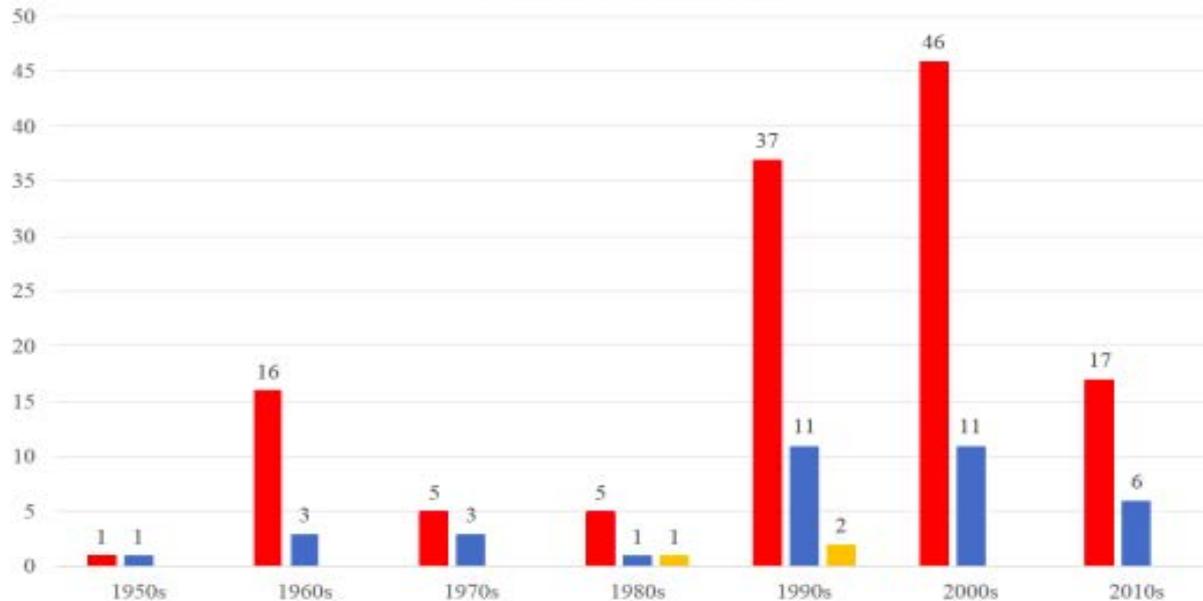
APPENDIX 4



Colorado Grand Jury Report: Dates Abuse was Reported

APPENDIX 5

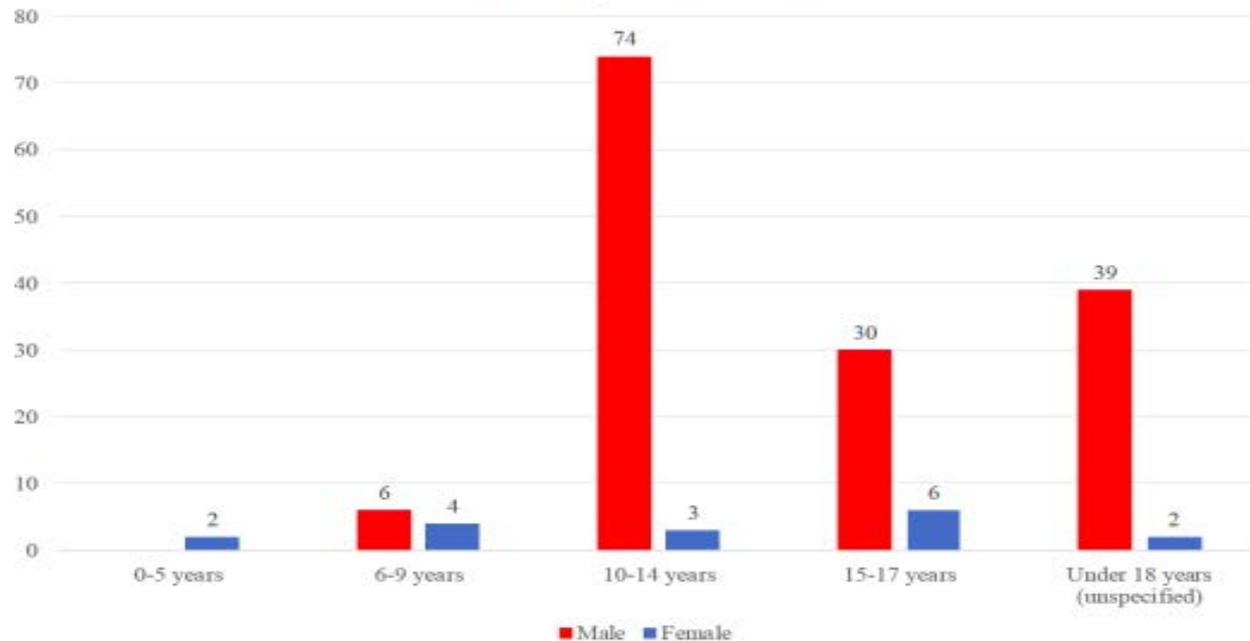
Decade Abuse or Misconduct was Reported to Diocese



Colorado Grand Jury Report: Victim Age and Gender

APPENDIX 8

Victim Age and Gender



Nature and Scope v. PA Grand Jury Report:

Characteristics of clerics involved in abuse

Nature & Scope, 1950 - 2004

PA Grand Jury Data, 1950 - 2016

Two-thirds were pastors or associate pastors

Almost three-quarters were parish priests.

55.7% had one allegation of abuse

46.8% had one allegation of abuse

Duration of behavior of abuse:

Less than one year for 46%

Persistence: For those with more than one allegation, the average duration of abusive behavior was 4.9 years

Duration of behavior of abuse:

Less than one year for 59.2%

Persistence: For those with more than one allegation, the behavior continued for a substantial number of years.

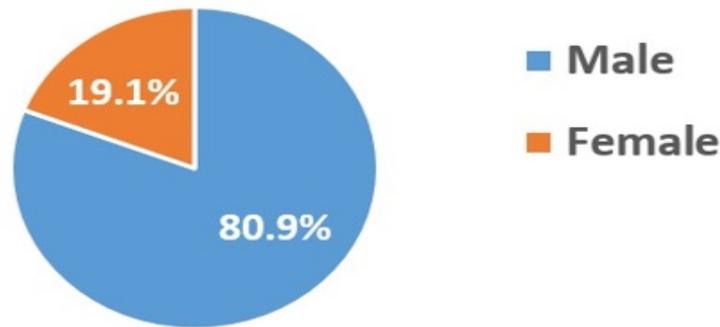
Most were “generalists” rather than specialists, pedophilia diagnosis was uncommon (5%)

Many priests with adolescent victims subsequently were reported for sexual abuse of adults.

Nature and Scope v CARA and PA:

Characteristics of victims – Age and gender

Victims of Abuse by Gender - JJC, 2004



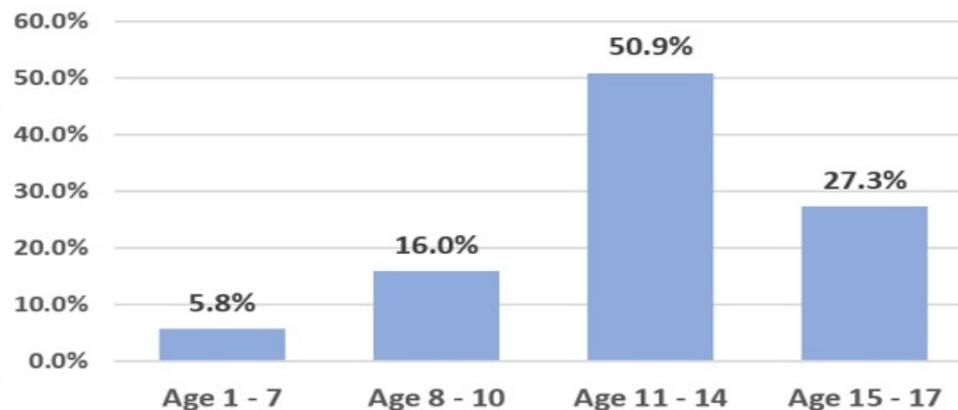
CARA Report – 2018

Male Victims – 83%
Female Victims – 17%

PA Grand Jury Report – 2018

Male Victims – 81.25%
Female Victims – 18.75%

Victim Age at Time of Abuse, JJC 2004



CARA Report – 2018

Age 1 – 9: 21.1%
Age 10 – 14: 57.2%
Age 15 – 17: 21.7%

PA Grand Jury Report – 2018

Age 1 – 7: 6%
Age 8 -- 10 : 14.9%
Age 11 – 14: 43.3%
Age 15 – 17: 36.9%

What more do we know in 2019?

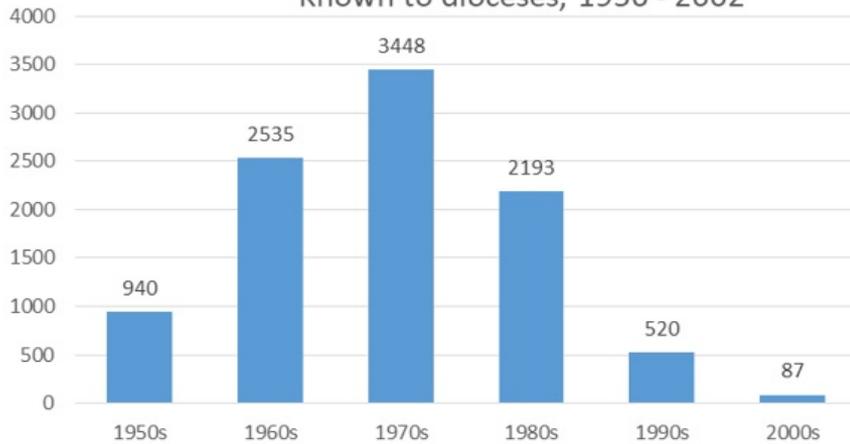
Scope of the Problem

- US
 - Approximately 5% of priests 1950-2017 (John Jay and CARA data)
 - Of those, 69% diocesan priests, 22% religious priests
- Germany
 - 4.4% clerics 1946-2014 (5.1% diocesan, 2.1% religious)
- Australia
 - 7% of Catholic Church personnel 1950 – 2010 (Royal Commission)
 - Of those, 34% diocesan priests, 10% religious priests
- Poland
 - 362 priests had allegations 1990-2014 (approximately 5%)

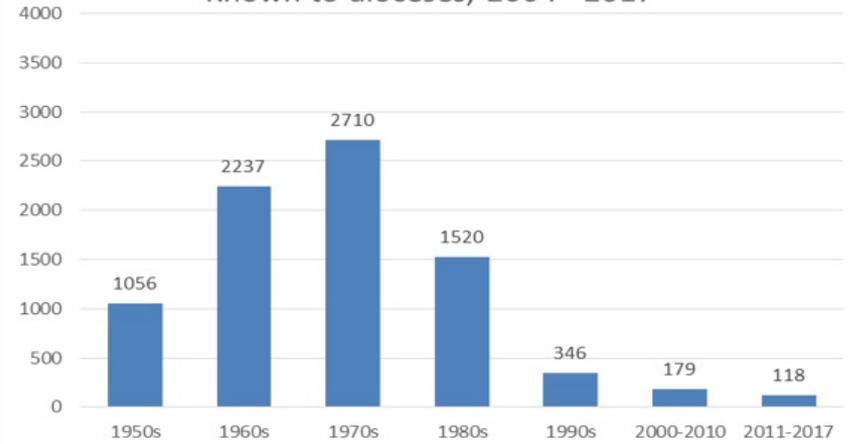
What more do we know in 2019?

Distribution of Abuse Incidents

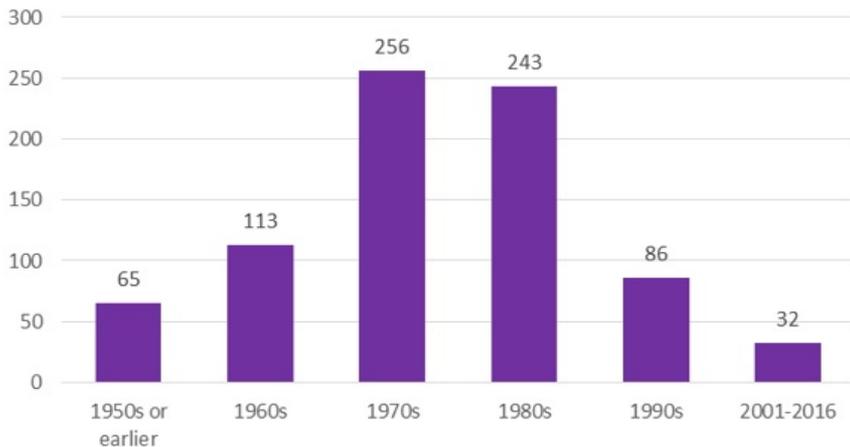
US Abuse Incidents by decade, **Nature & Scope**
Known to dioceses, 1950 - 2002



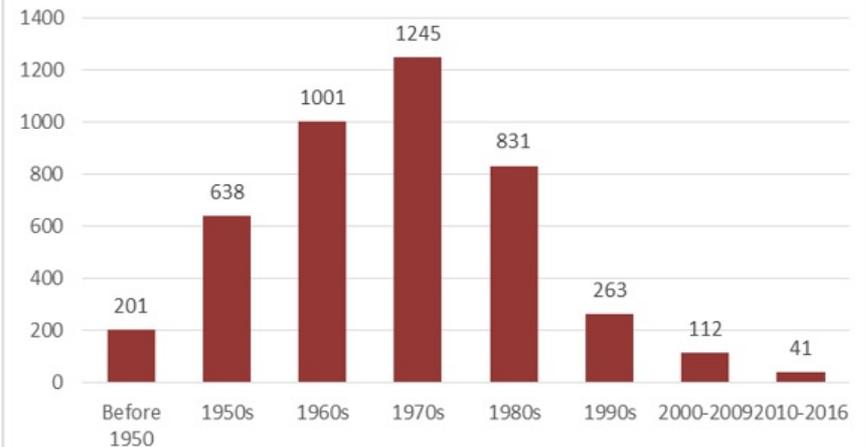
US Abuse Incidents by decade, **CARA**
Known to dioceses, 2004 - 2017



PA Dioceses Incidence from Grand Jury Report



Australia Commission - Incidence by decade



What more do we know in 2019?

Disclosure of Abuse Incidents

Data from CARA's Annual Surveys of Allegations and Costs [Chapter 3 of the USCCB Annual Reports]			
Year of Report	Total allegations	Began BEFORE 1985	Began AFTER 2000
2004	1093	84.0%	1.7%
2007	650	85.5%	2.3%
2010	500	79.0%	3.4%
2013	450	77.0%	4.9%
2016	878	88.6%	2.4%
2017	438	76.0%	5.5%

<p>Australia</p> <p>Average delay in disclosure of abuse: 23.9 years</p>
<p>Germany</p> <p>Two thirds of victims did not report at time of abuse, 20% waited 10+ years</p>
<p>Pennsylvania Dioceses</p> <p>75% of reports were retrospective; average delay in disclosure of 20 years</p>

What more do we know in 2019?

Conclusions

- Incidence and reporting curves are stable in the US
- Characteristics of abusers and victim demographics are stable (age and gender)
- Small fraction of persistent offenders
 - Success in avoiding detection
 - Often, these men were valued by their community
- Results in reports that gathered data directly from victims and criminal justice sources are consistent with results of studies based on diocesan data alone.

Explaining the Data: Questions for the Causes & Context Study

- What explained the peak of abuse behavior in the 1970s?
- Why was the harm of sexual abuse not understood?
- Are there risk factors that might identify potential offenders?
- How has seminary education changed over this time period?
- What role did the Church leadership play in addressing the abuse crisis, and when?
- What role did opportunity and situation play in the abusive behavior?

Causes and Context: Methodology

Collected / analyzed multiple sources of data:

- **Longitudinal analyses** of data sets of various types of behavior (for example, crime, divorce, pre-marital sex) (Archival analysis);
- Analysis of **seminary education**, history and the development of a human formation curriculum, as well as information from seminary leaders (seminary analysis);
- Surveys of and interviews with inactive **priests with allegations of abuse**, and a comparison sample of priests in active parish ministry who had not been accused (identity and behavior survey);

Causes and Context: Methodology

- Archival data from the 1971 Loyola University study of the **psychology of American Catholic priests** (baseline study of priests at the peak of the abuse crisis);
- Surveys of survivors, victim assistance coordinators and clinical files about the **onset, persistence and desistance** of abuse behavior (victim and situational analysis);
- Analyses of **clinical data** from files at three treatment centers
- Surveys of **bishops, priests and other diocesan leaders** about the policies that were put in place after 1985; meetings with **victim advocates** who played a role in responses to the abuse crisis (leadership analysis)

Causes and Context:

Changes in Abuse Patterns Over Time

- Identified an ordination cohort effect - differences in the patterns of abuse for men ordained each decade:
 - Time from ordination to first incident of abuse
 - 1940s – 17 years
 - 1950s – 12 years
 - 1960s – 8 years
 - 1970s – 5 years
 - 1980s – 3 years
 - **PA data** 1930s & 1940s – 20+ years
 - **1950s – 15.71 years**
 - **1960s – 10.4 years**
 - **1970s – 9 years**
 - **1980s – 7 years**
- Pattern of increase/decline incidence is consistent with the peak period of abuse through the 1970s and early 1980s.

Causes and Context:

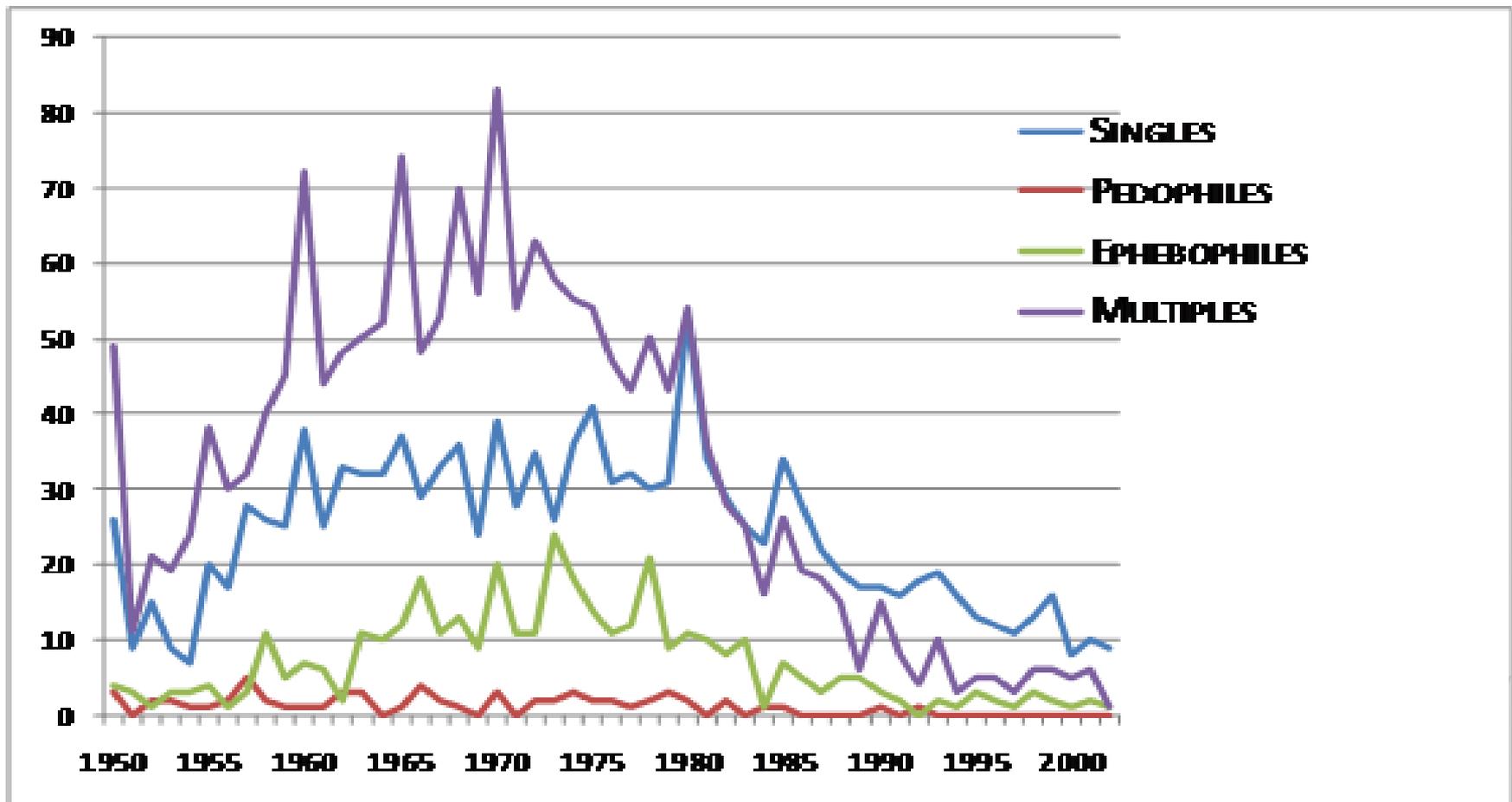
Psychological Explanations (Clinical Files)

- Can we identify potential abusers?
- Priests treated for sexual abuse of a minor:
 - Not significantly more likely than non-abusers to have diagnosable psychological disorders
 - More likely to have been a victim of sexual abuse (significant in one clinical sample)
 - Exhibited intimacy deficits, often emotional congruence with adolescents, and often other problems (e.g., stress, obesity, alcohol, gambling)
 - Abusive priests much more likely to be “generalists”

Causes and Context:

Pedophiles v Others

- 5% clinically diagnosed as pedophiles in two clinical samples



Causes and Context:

Psychological Testing Data

- MCMI: No significant differences were found on any of the scales, which measure personality disorder traits
- WAIS: No Significant differences in WAIS (IQ) scores were found between the three main treatment groups
- MMPI: No significant differences. The only clinically elevated MMPI subscale that significantly differentiated clergy who abused minors from clergy who had inappropriate relationships with adults was Over-Controlled Hostility

Causes and Context:

Sexual Identity/ Behavior

- Most priests who sexually abused minors also had sexual relationships with adults (80%)
- Homosexuality and sexual abuse of minors
 - Sexual experience – heterosexual or homosexual – before ordination predicts sexual behavior after ordination, but with adults – not minors
 - Sexual behavior was most often varied (in regard to age and gender)
 - Most incidents of abuse occur before the 1980s – when homosexual behavior in seminary reportedly increased
 - This finding is consistent with academic research – homosexual orientation alone is not a significant predictor of sexual abuse of minors
- “Confused” sexual identity critical in 1940s/1950s cohorts (US)
- German study, “...neither homosexuality nor celibacy are the *ipso facto* causes of the sexual abuse of minors”

Causes and Context:

Responding to Abuse

- Types of responses changed over time
 - Pre-1985, only 840 cases of abuse had been reported to the dioceses
 - Most abusive priests returned to dioceses after treatment, brief administrative leave
- Starting in 1985, widespread discussions about sexual abuse of minors
 - Internal: Creation of Ad-Hoc committee
 - External: Emergence of advocacy groups to support victims (SNAP – founded 1988, first conference 1991)
- 1993, implementation of “The Five Principles”
 - Failure to implement principles consistently across dioceses
 - Continued lack of care and attention to victims

Causes and Context:

Responses to Abuse: Post-2002

- Protection policies resulting from the *Charter*
 - Safe environment training
 - Audits
- Many dioceses have now released the names of all credibly accused priests
- Criminal and canonical investigations of leaders (e.g., Cardinal Pell, Cardinal McCarrick)
- Civil investigations into abuse (e.g., PA Grand Jury report)

Responding to Abuse: 2019

Accountability of Leaders

- Meaningful change has happened, but it was slow and inconsistent
- Protection policies resulting from the *Charter*
 - Safe environment training
 - Audits
- Many dioceses have now released the names of all credibly accused priests
- Focus has shifted to accountability of church leaders who took actions to prevent disclosure of abuse
- Actions taken against Church leaders for failure of responsibilities
 - Example: Cardinal Wuerl's resignation accepted after PA report released
- 13 states and DC currently conducting investigations into abuse and cover up

Recommendations and Policies: The Need for Institutional Change

Commission, Inquiry and Study Findings and Recommendations

- Children at high risk of abuse in the Catholic Church
 - Complex hierarchy and structure
 - Many opportunities for abuse to occur
 - Complex internal processes for responding to allegations
 - Inherent system of culture and power, teachings and beliefs
- Church leaders had inadequate responses to abuse allegations
 - Protection of the Church's reputation and assets
 - Leaders covered up abuse and transferred priests with allegations
 - Little attention to the harm caused to victims
- Lacked appropriate education and training to prevent abuse and respond to abuse allegations
 - Improve formation
 - Develop a restorative process for those who were abused

Implementation of Abuse Prevention Policies

- Catholic Church has implemented abuse prevention policies based upon recommendations of Committees, Reports and Commissions
- Focus on micro-level (individual) factors
 - Background checks
 - Psychological screening
 - Education and training
- Macro-level challenges
 - Requires a change in culture
 - Variability in buy-in
 - Oversight externally imposed (e.g., courts, insurance companies, audits)

Conclusions

- Distribution of abuse incidents in the Catholic Church in the US is stable
 - Large numbers of abuse allegations still being reported, but fit the same distribution
- Focus historically has been on abusers and the Church instead of the well-being of victims
- The organizational structure and culture of the Church provides opportunities for abuse
- Church has implemented child protection policies; largely micro/individual level policies
 - Macro-level changes (e.g., cultural shift) are difficult to change
- For change to happen, welfare of children must be top priority
- Child protection policies must be more than procedures; must fully embrace ethos of protection
- Accountability and transparency critical for change

Thank you!

Contact info:

kterry@jjay.cuny.edu

