Sexual Abuse of Youth in the Catholic Church and Society: Prevalence, Context and Future Directions

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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
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
  – **Nature and Scope** – to understand what happened
    • 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
What more do we know in 2019?

New Data Sources

• USCCB data from CARA’s annual summary of the new allegations of abuse, 2004 – 2017
  — CARA: Center for Applied Research into the Apostolate
• PA Grand Jury Report
  — Report I of 40th Statewide Investigating Grand Jury
• Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Sexual Abuse, Final Report (Australia, 2017)
• Commission and Inquiry Reports from European countries (but without systematic data collection)
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
## What more do we know in 2019?

**Estimates of clerics involved in abuse**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catholic Church in USA</th>
<th>Catholic Church in Australia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>~4% of priests involved in sexual abuse of youth, 1950-2002</td>
<td>~7% of priests in service involved in sexual abuse of youth, 1950 – 2010</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><em>Source: JJC Nature &amp; Scope Report</em></td>
<td><em>Source: Royal Commission Survey</em></td>
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Catholic Church in Germany</th>
<th>Catholic Church in Poland</th>
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<tr>
<td><em>Source: MHG Study</em></td>
<td><em>Source: Polish Bishops Conference Report</em></td>
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Nature and Scope: Key Findings
Characteristics of clerics involved in abuse

• Two-thirds were diocesan priests
  – Most served as pastors or associate pastors
• Range in age from mid-20s (in seminary) to elderly priests
• Most were “generalists” rather than specialists, pedophilia diagnosis was infrequent (5%)
• Persistence: Often a lengthy duration of offending
  – 4.9 years for those with more than one allegation
• More than one half had a single known victim
Nature and Scope: Serial Abusers

- 3.5% of priests with allegations had 10 or more victims
- Responsible for approximately 26% of all victims
- Significant differences between the serial predators and other groups based upon
  - Persistence of abuse behavior, ex., 20 years
  - Diversity of gender and age of victims
  - Grooming tactics more pronounced and varied
  - Location of abuse – in home and retreats
  - Delay in disclosure of abuse – longer delay in disclosure
**Nature and Scope: Key Findings**

**Characteristics of victims**

Count of individual victims = 10,667
What more do we know in 2019?
Characteristics of victims – United States

Between 2004 and 2017 - 8,645 victims have made new reports of sexual abuse to dioceses
## What more do we know in 2019?

### Characteristics of victims – USA & Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>United States</th>
<th>Australia</th>
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| - US incidents 1950-2002  
  10% reported within one year  
  25% waited 30+ years  
  Average reporting delay;  
  = 21 years  
  31% of abuse cases occurred over a single year  
  33% of abuse cases occurred over 5+ years | - Australian incidents 1950-2010  
  5% reported within one year  
  59% waited 30+ years  
  Average reporting delays ranged from 20 to 30 years  
  53% of abuse claims occurred over a single year  
  13% of claims occurred over 5+ years |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PA Dioceses</th>
<th>Germany</th>
<th>Australia</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Abuse: Primarily explicit sexual abuse</td>
<td>Abuse: 80% were “hands-on” offenses</td>
<td>Abuse: Serious sexual abuse</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age: 57.1% age 13 or younger (of victims who were minors)</td>
<td>Age: 51.6% age 13 or younger 25.8% age 14 or older</td>
<td>Average Age: Males: 11.6 years Females: 10.5 yrs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location: Private home or official residence</td>
<td>Location: Private home or official residence</td>
<td>Location: In residential institutions and schools</td>
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Nature and Scope: Key Findings
Distribution of Abuse Incidents, 1950-2002

10,667 individual victims

Peak of Abuse:
1974 - 1982
What more do we know in 2019?

Distribution of Abuse, comparisons by decade

**US Abuse Incidence by Decade - JJC Known to Dioceses in 2002**

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>940</td>
<td>2535</td>
<td>3448</td>
<td>2193</td>
<td>520</td>
<td>87</td>
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**US Abuse Incidence by Decade, CARA Known to Dioceses, 2004 - 2017**

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1056</td>
<td>2237</td>
<td>2710</td>
<td>1520</td>
<td>346</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>118</td>
</tr>
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**PA Dioceses Incidence from Grand Jury Report**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Decade</th>
<th>1950s</th>
<th>1960s</th>
<th>1970s</th>
<th>1980s</th>
<th>1990s</th>
<th>2001-16</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>65</td>
<td>113</td>
<td>256</td>
<td>243</td>
<td>86</td>
<td>32</td>
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**Australia Royal Commission Incidence by Decade**

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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>201</td>
<td>638</td>
<td>1001</td>
<td>1245</td>
<td>831</td>
<td>263</td>
<td>112</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Nature and Scope: Key Findings

Reporting of abuse incidents, USA

Annual Count of Reports of Abuse, 1950 - 2017

Peak of reporting = 3,399 Reports in 2002

Peak of abuse: 1974 To 1982
What more do we know in 2019?
Disclosure of abuse incidents, comparisons

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year of Report</th>
<th>Total allegations</th>
<th>Began BEFORE 1985</th>
<th>Began AFTER 2000</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>1093</td>
<td>84.0%</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>2007</td>
<td>650</td>
<td>85.5%</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2010</td>
<td>500</td>
<td>79.0%</td>
<td>3.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2013</td>
<td>450</td>
<td>77.0%</td>
<td>4.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2016</td>
<td>878</td>
<td>88.6%</td>
<td>2.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2017</td>
<td>438</td>
<td>76.0%</td>
<td>5.5%</td>
</tr>
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**Australia**
- Average delay in disclosure of abuse: 23.9 years

**Germany**
- Two thirds of victims did not report at time of abuse, 20% waited 10+ years

**Pennsylvania Dioceses**
- 75% of reports were retrospective; average delay in disclosure of 20 years
What more do we know in 2019?

Conclusions

In summary:
• Incidence and reporting curves are stable
• Male adolescents are shown to be majority of victims
• Approximately half of the priests reported to abuse had a single known victim
• Small fraction of persistent offenders
  – Success in avoiding detection
  – Often, these men were valued by their community
• Most incidents of abuse were substantiated by the dioceses pre 2002, but now many cannot be substantiated; very small fraction are found to be false
• Results in studies that gathered data directly from victims as well as criminal justice sources are consistent with results of studies based on diocesan data alone.
Explaining the Data: Questions for the Causes and 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?
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:
Explaining the incidence peak in the 1970s

• Social and cultural changes in US society, as indicated by:
  – Resignations from the ministry
  – Increase in open sexual expression
  – Increase in births to single mothers
  – Increase in divorce
  – Increases in crime, drug use and disorder
Causes and Context:
Types of Abusers – Temporal Comparison
Causes and Context: Explaining the incidence decline in the 1980s

• Shifts in social attitudes in US society
  – Recognition of familial abuse, rights of women and children
  – Changes in criminal law statutes from rape to a wider framework for sexual abuse
  – Reaction to the social changes 1960 – 1970s
• Recognition of sexual abuse within the Church
  – Advocacy by former victims of abuse
  – Internal discussion initiated by the USCCB
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

  – Pattern of increase/decline incidence is consistent with the peak period of abuse through the 1970s.
Causes and Context: Seminary Education and Influences

- Expansion of seminaries post-war
- Diocesan priests who would later abuse were predominantly trained in major national seminaries
- Almost all major national seminaries graduated priests who would later abuse minors
- Priests who attended minor (high school) seminaries not at a significantly higher risk of abusing
- Evaluated the changes in seminary education over this period of time; significant developments in teachings of human formation (Sr. Katarina Schuth)
Causes and Context: Can abuse be predicted? Clinical Data

- 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)
  - 5% clinically diagnosed as pedophiles in two clinical samples
  - Abusive priests much more likely to be “generalists”
Causes and Context:
Clinical Data on Sexual Identity / Behavior

• Most priests who sexually abused minors also had participated in 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 (with respect to age and gender)
  • Most incidents of abuse occur before the 1980s – the period when homosexual behavior in seminary reportedly increased
  • Homosexual orientation alone is not a significant predictor of sexual abuse of minors
• “Confused” sexual identity critical in 1940s/1950s cohorts
Causes and Context: Responding to Abuse

- Types of responses changed over time; Pre-1985:
  - Only 840 cases reported to dioceses
  - Focus by leaders was on helping priests, not victims
  - Reliance on psychological and spiritual treatment
- By 1985, widespread discussions about sexual abuse of minors
  - Sexual abuse cases has been reported in half of the dioceses
  - Ad Hoc Committee on sexual abuse created
  - Resource paper and action plan by Fr. Doyle and victim advocates
Causes and Context:
Failure to Respond to Victims

• Creation of advocacy groups to support victims
• Despite intensive work by individuals, advocacy groups
  and some progressive Church leaders, few changes for
  a decade
• 1993, implementation of “The Five Principles”
The Five Principles

(1) Respond promptly to all allegations of abuse where there is reasonable belief that abuse has occurred;

(2) If such an allegation is supported by sufficient evidence, relieve the alleged offender promptly of his ministerial duties and refer him for appropriate medical evaluation and intervention;

(3) Comply with the obligations of civil law regarding reporting of the incident and cooperating with the investigation;

(4) Reach out to the victims and their families and communicate sincere commitment to their spiritual and emotional well-being; and

(5) Within the confines of respect for privacy of the individuals involved, deal as openly as possible with the members of the community.
Causes and Context:
Failures of the Five Principles: 1993 - 2002

- Focus on priests; lack of recognition of responsibility for harm to victims
- Many diocesan leaders failed to meet with victims directly
- Lack of follow up on reports of abuse
- Priests still returned to ministry after treatment without supervision
- Communication with civil authorities/the Vatican only in the most severe cases of repeated abuse
- Some leaders denied knowledge of abuse under oath in civil cases
Causes and Context:
Responses to Abuse: Post-2002

- Meaningful change happened, but slow and inconsistent
- Protection policies resulting from the *Charter*
  - Safe environment training
  - Audits
- 181 dioceses – approximately 92% - 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)
What is our focus in 2019?
Accountability of Leaders

• Focus has shifted to accountability of church leaders who took actions to prevent disclosure of abuse, and the consequent responsibility for failure of supervision

• Examples of failure of leadership:
  – McCarrick - Resigned 2018, laicized 2019 for abuse of a boy in 1970s, Allegations of abuse of adult seminarians while a bishop in NJ
  – 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
Commissions and Ad Hoc Committees

- Canada - 1992 *From Pain to Hope*
- UK - Nolan Report 2001
- Belgium - Commission investigated abuse over a 70-year period
- Netherlands – 2011 Commission report
- Australia – 2013 *Betrayal of Hope*
Commission Findings

• Children at high risk of abuse in the Catholic Church
  – Complex hierarchy and structure
  – Complex internal processes for responding to allegations
  – Inherent system of culture and power, teachings and beliefs
• Leaders covered up abuse and transferred priests with allegations
• Failure to initiate canon law proceedings
• High levels of secrecy by leaders of the Church
• Protection of the Church’s reputation and assets
• Little attention to the harm caused to victims
Commission Findings

• Palmer identified five factors that inhibit the organizational response to abuse victims
  – Motivated blindness
  – Cognitive dissonance
  – People likely to support those with whom they interact
  – “In-group” bias
  – The more power the perpetrator has, the less effective the institutional response to victims

Summary of Commission Recommendations

- Respond quickly and fully to allegations of abuse
- Ensure consistent implementation of safeguarding policies
- Improve formation
- Increase transparency of diocesan action
- Develop a restorative process for those who were abused
Implementation of Abuse Prevention Policies

• Catholic Church implemented abuse prevention policies based upon recommendations of Committees, Reports and Commissions
• Policies focus on micro-level (individual) factors
  – Background checks
  – Psychological screening
  – Education and training
  – Situational Crime Prevention (SCP)
Implementation of Abuse Prevention Policies: Situational Context

• Opportunities for abuse to occur
  – Abuse occurred in private
  – High isolation; low levels of supervision
  – Abused those to whom they had access

• SCP policies focus on preventing opportunities
  – Cannot screen out all potential offenders
  – Reduce the vulnerability of potential targets
  – Increase guardianship/reduce opportunities for abuse
Implementation of Abuse Prevention Policies: Cultural Context

- Catholic Church an “institutionalized organization”
- Macro-level changes challenging
  - Requires a change in culture
  - Variability in buy-in
  - Oversight externally imposed (e.g., courts, insurance companies, audits)
- Change in institutional culture slow
  - Commitment to reform by organizational leaders
- Catholic Church faces similar challenges to other institutions
Youth-Serving Organizations: Changing the Culture

- Prevention of abuse a critical factor in all youth serving organizations over the past decade
- Palmer: “no comprehensive large-scale studies on the frequency of CSA across the full range of organizations delivering services to children and young people”
- Recognition of problematic behavior as a result of high-profile cases or court cases
- Similar problems and responses to the Catholic Church
  - Cannot compare statistics between organizations
Abuse in the Boy Scouts of America (BSA)

- 2,440 IV files from 1965-1991 released as a result of civil suits
- Characteristics of abuse/ abusers similar to the Catholic Church
  - Mostly male victims
  - Abuse occurred in the home of the abuser, on retreats, or during other activities planned by the abuser
  - Abusers used emotional manipulation
  - Approximately half of abusers had one victim, 3.5% 10 or more
Organizational Response by the BSA

• Similar to the Catholic Church
  – “Institutionalized organization”
  – Protection of the organization’s reputation
  – Focus on the offenders instead of the victims
  – Some offenders treated and reinstated
  – Information not shared with victims, families of victims
  – Lack of transparency and trust
CSA in Sports

• Team and individual organized sports
• Awareness about abuse as a result of high profile incidents (e.g., Larry Nassar)
• Perpetrators: Often leaders in their sport (power) who have one-on-one mentorship (opportunity)
• Victims: Fear of reporting (retaliation)
• Organizations: Priority is athletic performance, protection of reputation
Responses to Abuse in Sport

• US Olympic Committee implemented SafeSport
• Initiative to recognize, reduce and respond to misconduct in sport
• Requires all 47 NGBs to create athlete safety programs that include
  – Definitions of prohibited conduct
  – Criminal Background Checks
  – Education and Training
  – Reporting
  – Enforcement
SafeSport: Success and Challenges

• Successes:
  – Beginning to see a shift in culture; “SafeSport” now common language, integrated into the sport
  – Increased awareness and reporting of boundary violating and abusive behaviors

• Challenges:
  – Desire to win outweighs safety risks
  – Parents (guardians) place athletes in harmful situations
  – Lack of enforcement on local level
  – Abuse still significantly underreported
  – Implementation by sport varies
Conclusions

• Understanding of CSA changed over time
• Victim harm not well understood at the peak of the abuse crisis
• CSA historically viewed as an individual rather than institutional problem
• Organizational cultures provide opportunities for abuse
• Organizational cultures are difficult to change
Conclusions

• 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!

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