

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

Karen Terry & Margaret Smith
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

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

Catholic Church in USA

~4% of priests involved in sexual abuse of youth, 1950-2002

Source: JJC Nature & Scope Report

Catholic Church in Australia

~7% of priests in service involved in sexual abuse of youth, 1950 – 2010

Source: Royal Commission Survey

Catholic Church in Germany

~4.4% of priests involved in sexual abuse of youth, 1946-2014

Source: MHG Study

Catholic Church in Poland

362 priests involved in sexual abuse of youth, 1990 – 2014

Source: Polish Bishops Conference Report

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

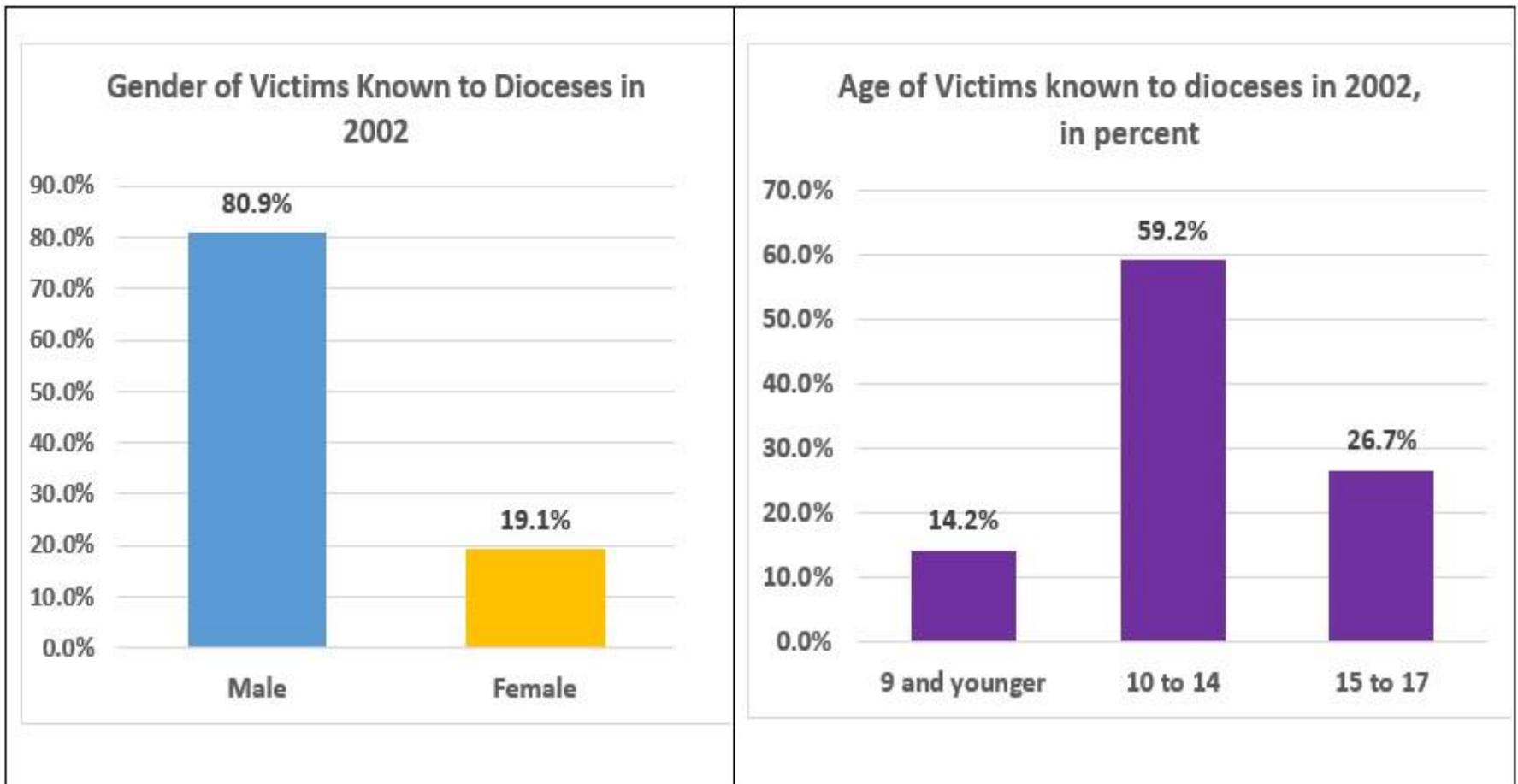
Nature and Scope: Serial Abusers

- 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

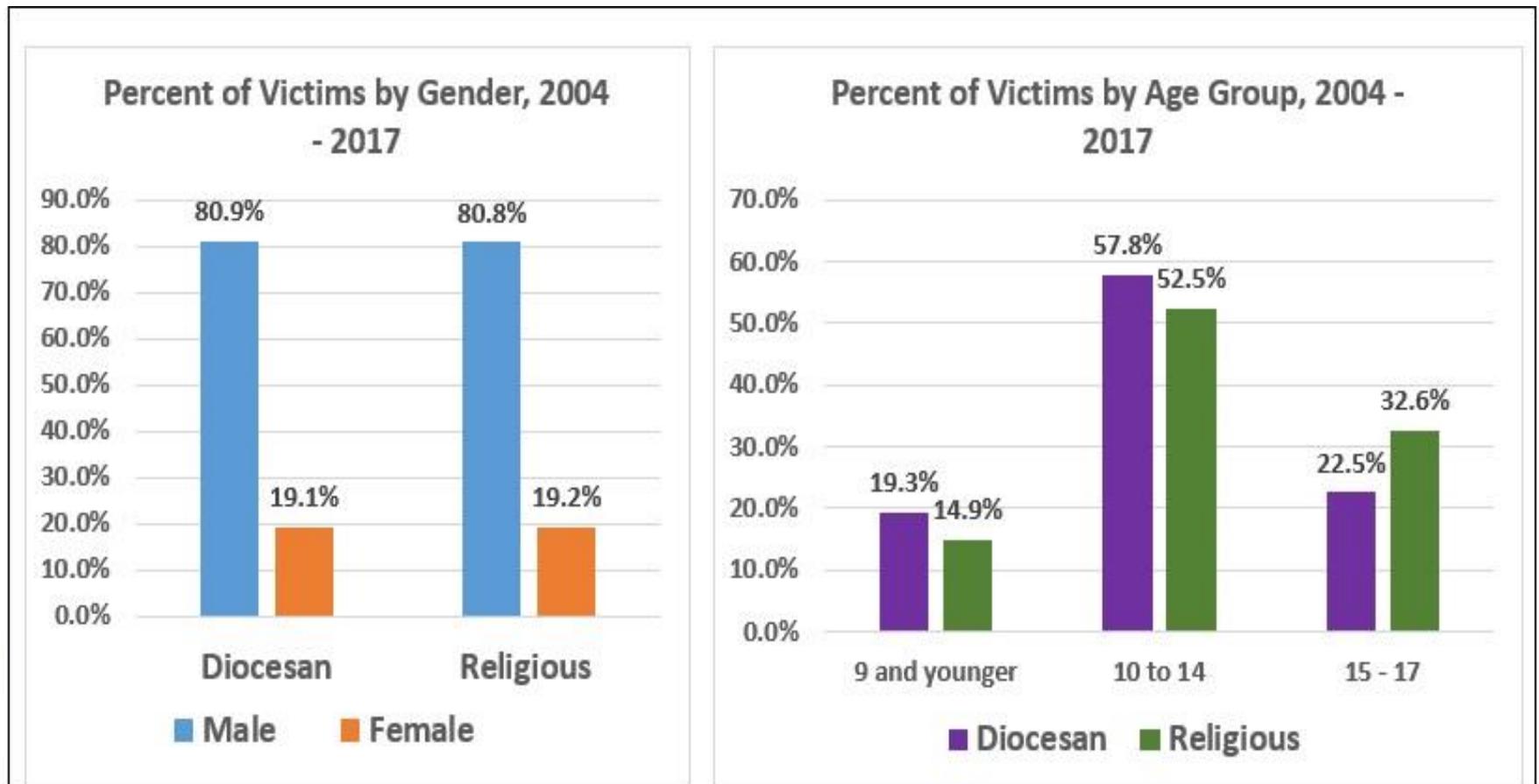
Count of individual victims = 10,667



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

United States

- 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

Australia

- 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

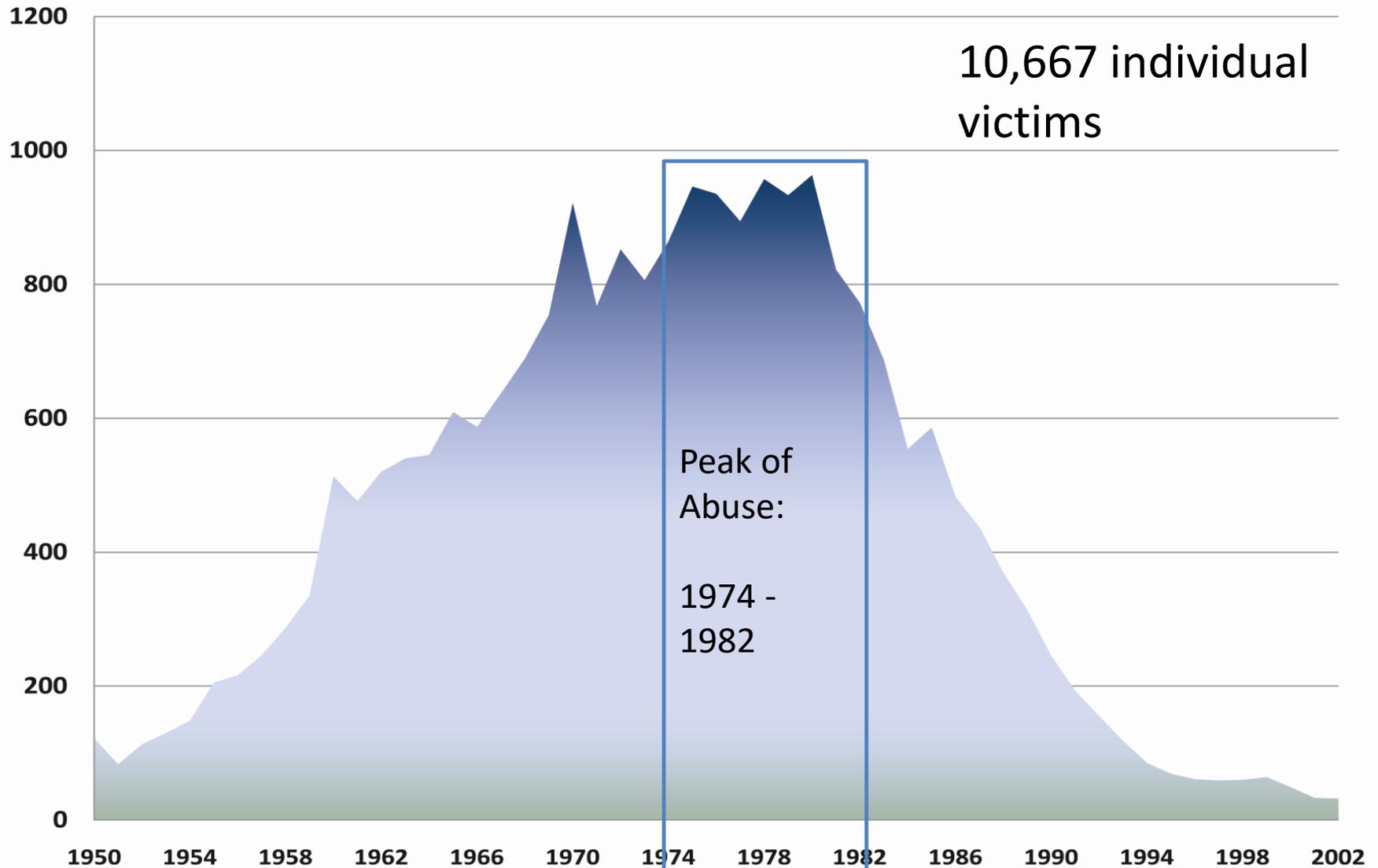
What more do we know in 2019?

Nature of Victimization– PA, Germany & Australia

PA Dioceses	Germany	Australia
Abuse: Primarily explicit sexual abuse	Abuse: 80% were “hands-on” offenses	Abuse: Serious sexual abuse
Age: 57.1% age 13 or younger (of victims who were minors)	Age: 51.6% age 13 or younger 25.8% age 14 or older	Average Age: Males: 11.6 years Females: 10.5 yrs
Location: Private home or official residence	Location: Private home or official residence	Location: In residential institutions and schools

Nature and Scope: Key Findings

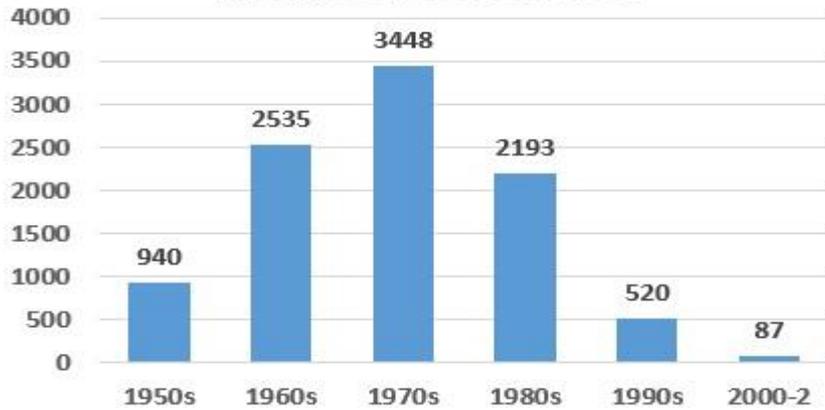
Distribution of Abuse Incidents, 1950-2002



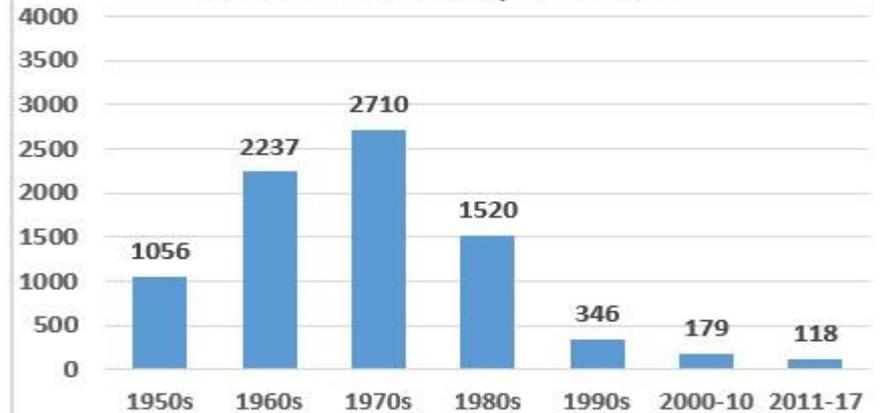
What more do we know in 2019?

Distribution of Abuse, comparisons by decade

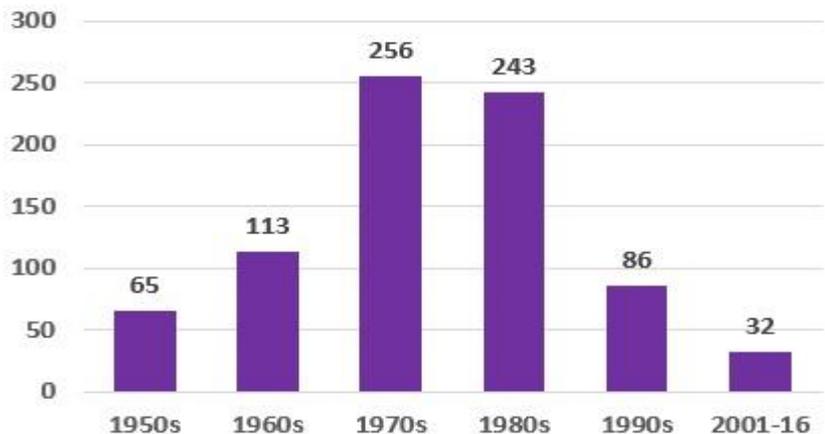
US Abuse Incidence by Decade - JJC
Known to Dioceses in 2002



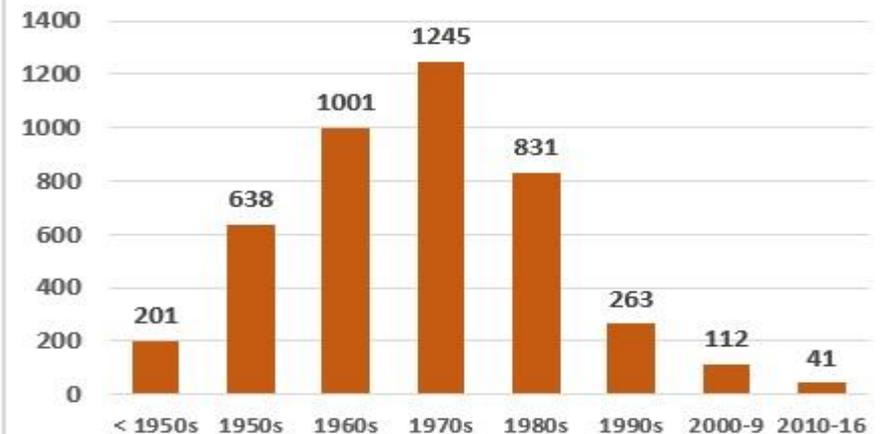
US Abuse Incidence by Decade, CARA
Known to Dioceses, 2004 - 2017



PA Dioceses Incidence
from Grand Jury Report



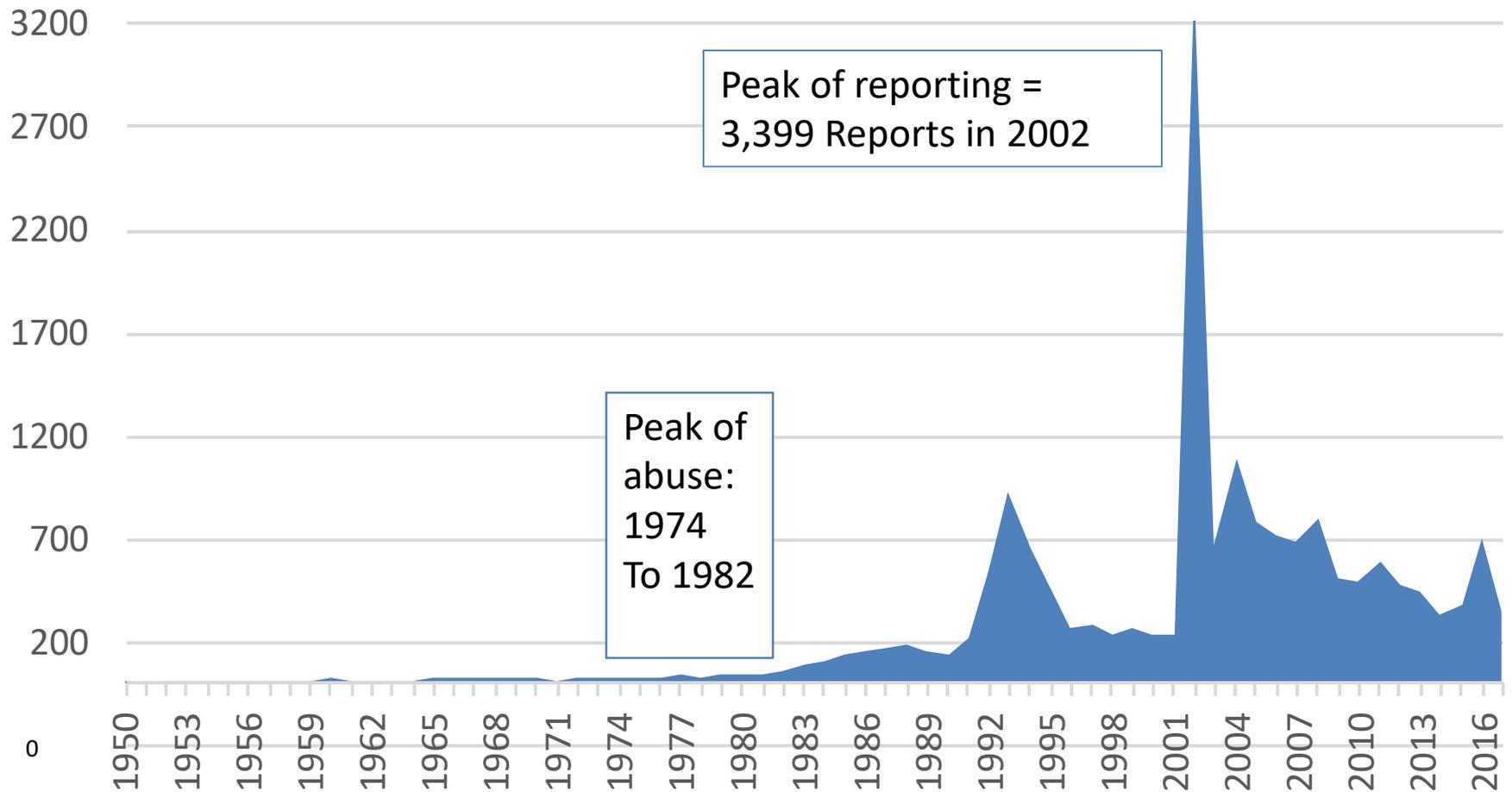
Australia Royal Commission
Incidence by Decade



Nature and Scope: Key Findings

Reporting of abuse incidents, USA

Annual Count of Reports of Abuse, 1950 - 2017



What more do we know in 2019?

Disclosure of abuse incidents, comparisons

Data from CARA's Annual Surveys of Allegations and Costs [Chapter 3 of the USCCB Annual Reports]				Australia Average delay in disclosure of abuse: 23.9 years
Year of Report	Total allegations	Began BEFORE 1985	Began AFTER 2000	Germany Two thirds of victims did not report at time of abuse, 20% waited 10+ years
2004	1093	84.0%	1.7%	Pennsylvania Dioceses 75% of reports were retrospective; average delay in disclosure of 20 years
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%	

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?

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)

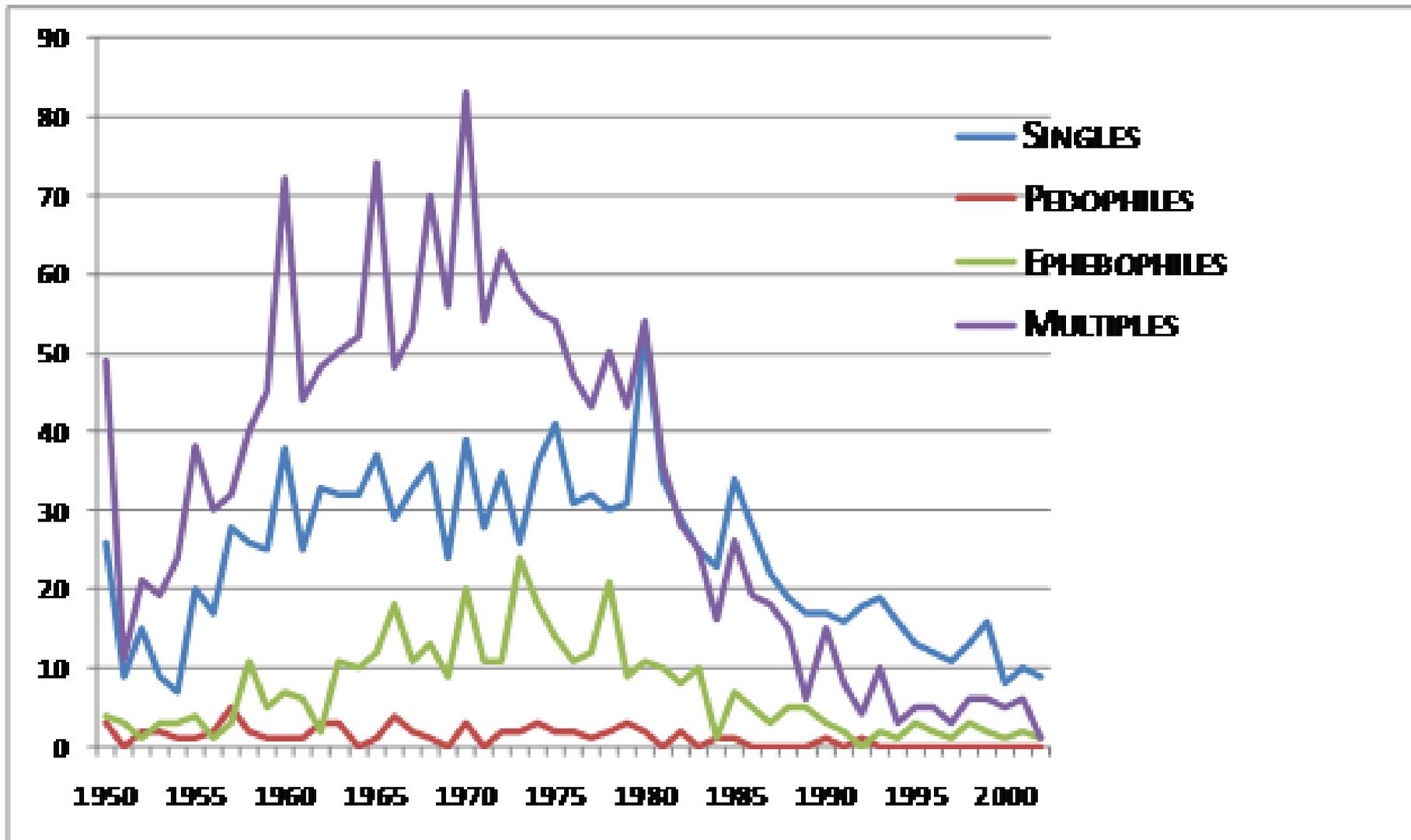
Causes and Context:

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
 - SNAP – founded 1988, first conference 1991
- 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*
- Ireland – 2009 five- volume Ryan Report; six additional inquiries from 1990 – 2010: Cloyne, Dublin, Ferns, Limerick, Raphoe, and Tuam
- 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

Palmer, D., Feldman, V. and McKibben, G. (2016). *Final Report: The Role of Organizational Culture in Child Sexual Abuse in Institutional Contexts*. Commonwealth of Australia: Royal Commission.

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!

Contact info:

kterry@jjay.cuny.edu

msmith@jjay.cuny.edu

