Is Sexual Abuse by Catholic Clergy Related to Homosexuality?

Rev. D. Paul Sullins

Abstract. Sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests has been a persistent and widespread problem in the Church. Although more than 80 percent of victims have been boys, prior studies have rejected the idea that the abuse is related to homosexuality among priests. Available data show, however, that the proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood is correlated almost perfectly with the percentage of male victims and with the overall incidence of abuse. Data also show that while the incidence of abuse is lower today than it was three decades ago, it has not declined as much as is commonly believed, and has recently begun to rise amid signs of episcopal complacency about procedures for the protection of children. *National Catholic Bioethics Quarterly* 18.4 (Winter 2018): 671–697.

In 2018, revelations of serious sexual misconduct by Catholic clergy catapulted the issue into headlines and renewed the attention and concern of both Catholics and non-Catholics worldwide. On August 14, 2018, a statewide grand jury in Pennsylvania released a report detailing decades of horrific sexual abuse of children by Catholic priests in the state, the ineffectiveness of bishops and dioceses in preventing the abuse, and ongoing legal efforts to keep it hidden.[1] In just six dioceses, over

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1. Pennsylvania Office of the Attorney General, *Report I of the 40th Statewide Investigating Grand Jury* (redacted), July 27, 2018, 1, https://www.attorneygeneral.gov/report.

one thousand children had been victimized by over three hundred priests since the 1940s. Six weeks later, the German bishops disclosed a strikingly similar history of misconduct, revealing that 3,677 children had been victimized by 1,670 clerics from 1946 to 2014.[2] These disclosures followed earlier reports of widespread sexual abuse of minors by both priests and bishops in Chile and the credible discovery that Theodore McCarrick, the former Cardinal Archbishop of Washington, DC, had sexually abused minors and seminarians for decades, covering it up with hush money from Church funds.[3]

To many Americans, 2018 seemed to be a replay of 2002, when previous revelations of child sexual abuse by clergy led to the establishment of strict policies and norms to increase the safety of children in Catholic settings, expressed in the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People. At that time, the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) commissioned the John Jay College of Criminal Justice to conduct a national review of the nature and scope of the sexual abuse of children by clergy. In 2004, the John Jay College report *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States, 1950–2002* revealed that, from 1950 to 2002, over ten thousand children, mostly boys, had been sexually abused by over four thousand Catholic priests.[4] In 2018, the release of the Pennsylvania grand jury report on sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests prompted surprise, dismay, and for some, frustration and anger. Sixteen years after costly steps were taken to resolve the problem, followed by reassuring reports that the abuse had been virtually eliminated, Catholics were faced again with detailed and graphic descriptions of deeply offensive priestly misbehavior that they thought had already been addressed.

In some respects the sense of déjà vu belied the nature of the evidence, since the bulk of the "new" revelations were actually restatements of the older ones. A large proportion of the incidents revealed by the Pennsylvania grand jury had already been reported in 2004. What was new in 2018 was not primarily the reports of abuse by priests, but the revelation of a possible pattern of resistance, minimization, enablement, and secrecy—a cover-up—on the part of bishops. The 2002 charter had not addressed or even acknowledged these issues, which seemed to confirm this suggestion. Indeed, to the extent that bishops may have concealed or enabled priestly misbehavior, the charter itself may have covered up episcopal misbehavior.

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2. Secretariat of the German Bishops' Conference, *Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests, Deacons and Male Members of Orders in the Domain of the German Bishops' Conference* (Bonn, Germany: Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, 2018), A.2, https://dbk.de/.

3. Joshua J. McElwee, "Francis Admits 'Serious Mistakes' in Handling of Chile Abuse Cases," *National Catholic Reporter*, April 11, 2018, https://www.ncronline.org/; and Julie Zauzmer and Chico Harlan, "Cardinal Theodore McCarrick, Facing Sexual Abuse Reports, Resigns from the College of Cardinals," *Washington Post*, July 28, 2018, https://www.washingtonpost.com/.

4. John Jay College of Criminal Justice, *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States, 1950–2002* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2004), 162, http://www.usccb.org/.

In 2011, John Jay College produced a second comprehensive report on sexual abuse by Catholic clergy, *The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950–2010*. Both the 2004 and 2011 reports offer thoughtful analysis of many questions regarding the abuse, emphasizing that it was situational and opportunistic in ways that were encouraged by features of Catholic institutional culture and parish life. Among the many valuable insights of the two John Jay College reports, two conclusions merit reconsideration in the light of subsequent revelations. First, the 2004 report reassuringly concluded that the abuse was a transient phenomenon that had peaked in the 1970s and had now largely passed.[5] Second, the 2011 report notably concluded that, despite the fact that 81 percent of the victims were male, the abuse had no relation to homosexuality among clergy.[6] This study takes a critical look at both conclusions, addressing the questions, "Is Catholic clergy sexual abuse extremely rare today compared to earlier decades?" and "Is that abuse related to homosexuality among priests?"

Data evidence to address these questions were taken from four sources: (1) the comprehensive census of sexual abuse allegations commissioned by the USCCB in 2002 and collected by John Jay College for the two reports already mentioned; (2) subsequent annual surveys of alleged sexual abuse collected by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) for the USCCB and published with the annual audit report on charter compliance; (3) the 2018 Pennsylvania grand jury report, whose narrative information was coded to a data file for analysis; and (4) a 2002 survey of Catholic priests conducted by the *Los Angeles Times*.

The data on victims that were included in the John Jay College reports were a part of a larger body of evidence collected on perpetrators, institutional settings, and psychological profiles.[7] All dioceses in the United States were required to submit their records. The data are therefore comprehensive, but the fact that the combined data de-identify both diocese and perpetrator limits their usefulness.[8] The file contains information on 10,667 cases of alleged victimization by 4,392 perpetrators from 1950 to 2002. The average number of victims per abuser was 2.5, ranging from 1 to 159.

5. Ibid., 5.

6. John Jay College of Criminal Justice, *The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950–2010* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2011), 74, 100, http://www.usccb.org/. To be consistent with the usage in the John Jay College reports and the survey data, the word "homosexual" is used instead of the more precise term "same-sex attracted" to designate men whose predominant or exclusive sexual attraction is to males. All men referred to as homosexual have reported that they have same-sex attractions or, in the language of the survey data, a homosexual orientation. They may or may not identify themselves, either openly or privately, as homosexual.

7. Karen J. Terry, "Stained Glass: The Nature and Scope of Child Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 35.5 (May 2008): 549–569, doi: 10.1177/0093854808314339.392.

8. The author thanks Margaret Leland Smith and Karen Terry of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice for making the electronic data file used in the John Jay College reports available for analysis (John Jay College data). The data provided are aggregated by victim, and the numbers may vary slightly from those in the John Jay College reports, which focus on offenders.

One hundred forty priests (3.3 percent of all abusers) abused ten or more victims each, accounting for 2,710 victims, or 25.4 percent of total victims.[9]

Audit reports on allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct have been collected annually by the USCCB since 2004.[10] As part of the audit of progress on the implementation of the charter, each annual report includes the results of a follow-up survey on new allegations collected by CARA. Through 2017, new allegations totaled 4,465; most new allegations reported past abuse.[11]

The 2018 grand jury report documents sexual abuse allegations against Catholic priests in six dioceses in Pennsylvania. The report includes a 570-page "Appendix of Offenders," providing detailed narrative descriptions of alleged abuse. The information in these accounts was systematically codified and recorded in an electronic data file.[12] Unlike the John Jay data and USCCB/CARA reports, the grand jury report also includes allegations of adult sexual misconduct, which make up 5 percent of the total allegations, as well as the identity of perpetrators and dioceses.

In 2002, the *Los Angeles Times* sent a mail survey to five thousand Catholic priests, receiving 1,854 responses (37 percent), with questions pertinent to the sexual abuse scandal in that year. Scandal-related publicity may have kept the response rate low, which was offset in part by the large stratified sample of eighty randomly selected dioceses. Validation against known characteristics of the priest population showed little bias, supporting the conclusion in the *LA Times* that "despite the negative publicity, response rates were acceptable in all dioceses and outstanding in some."[13] The survey's methodology, topline results, and main findings were published in 2003

9. Cynthia Calkins Mercado, Jennifer A. Tallon, and Karen J. Terry, "Persistent Sexual Abusers in the Catholic Church: An Examination of Characteristics and Offense Patterns," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 35.5 (May 2008): 634, doi: 10.1177/0093854808314389.

10. See USCCB Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, *2017 Annual Report on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People* (Washington, DC: USCCB, May 2018) and previous reports from 2004 through 2016. The reports are available at http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/2017-Report.pdf and http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/archives.cfm. Each report includes the findings from an annual survey of new allegations and costs conducted by the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA) at Georgetown University.

11. Because of the small number of cases and varying participation by religious institutes, the audit data examined in this study include only allegations reported by dioceses and eparchies.

12. This data file is the basis for cited statistics from the grand jury report or similar wording in this paper. The grand jury report data, with its codebook of definitions and other supporting material, are available upon request at http://www.ruthinstitute.org/clergy-sex-abuse-statistical-analysis. Counts from other sources, including the grand jury narrative report itself, may vary because of differing definitions or aggregations of victims. For example, this analysis only included multiple victims when multiple specific victimization allegations were reported; others may have also counted general references to "other victims" or "several victims."

13. Jill Darling Richardson, "Poll Analysis: Priests Say Catholic Church Facing Biggest Crisis of the Century," *Los Angeles Times*, October 10, 2002), https://www.latimes.com/.

and have been previously discussed at length in books on Catholic priests by Andrew Greeley and by Dean Hoge and Jacqueline Wenger.[14] In addition to age and year of ordination, two substantive questions from the survey regarding sexual orientation and the presence of homosexual seminary subcultures are used in this study.

Sexual orientation was measured using a modified Kinsey scale, with only five instead of seven response categories. The question reads, "Some people think of themselves as heterosexual in orientation, while others think of themselves as homosexual in orientation and still others feel their sexual orientation lies somewhere in between. How about you?" Possible responses (with percentage of responding priests making each choice) were "heterosexual orientation" (69.5 percent); "somewhere in between, but more on the heterosexual side" (8.9 percent); "completely in the middle" (4.9 percent); "somewhere in between, but more on the homosexual side" (7.3 percent); and "homosexual orientation" (9.4 percent).[15] Priests giving the latter two responses are classified as homosexual for this analysis; 16.7 percent of responding priests reported a predominant or exclusive homosexual orientation.

The survey also asked, "Thinking now about the seminary or seminaries you attended, was there a homosexual subculture there at the time, or not? How certain are you?" The survey defined *subculture* as "a definite group of persons that have its own friendships, gatherings and vocabulary." Possible responses (with percentage of respondents) were (1) "Yes, definitely" (13.2 percent); (2) "I think so but I'm not positive" (15.0 percent); (3) "I don't think so" (38.6 percent); (4) "No, definitely not" (33.3 percent). The first two responses were combined to indicate an affirmative answer. Overall, 28.2 percent of the responding priests gave an affirmative answer, including 53.5 percent of priests ordained in the past twenty years. A similar question in a concurrent survey by Hoge and Wenger received an affirmative response from 47 percent of younger priests (thirty-five years of age and under).[16]

The average age at ordination of Catholic priests has risen significantly since the mid-twentieth century.[17] In the *LA Times* survey, age at ordination rose by over a decade, from 25.6 years in 1941–1945 to 36.4 years in 1996–2000. To isolate any effect of homosexual priests or subcultures, it is important to adjust for the aging priest population by controlling for the age at and year of ordination. Otherwise,

14. Los Angeles Times, *Poll #471: Catholic Priests in the United States*, USLAT2002-471, June 27–October 11, 2002, dataset (Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research, 2003), https://ropercenter.cornell.edu/. For a summary of the poll results, see Los Angeles Times, *Study #471: Survey of Roman Catholic Priests, June–October 2002* at http://www.latimesinteractive.com/pdfarchive/stat_sheets/la-timespoll471ss.pdf. See also Andrew M. Greeley, *Priests: A Calling in Crisis* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2004); and Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood: Changes from Vatican II to the Turn of the New Century* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2003).

15. These percentages exclude the 4.5 percent of priests who did not answer the question.

16. Hoge and Wenger, *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood*, 102, fig. 6.4.

17. Mary Gautier, Paul Perl, and Stephen Fichter, *Same Call, Different Men: The Evolution of the Priesthood since Vatican II* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2012).

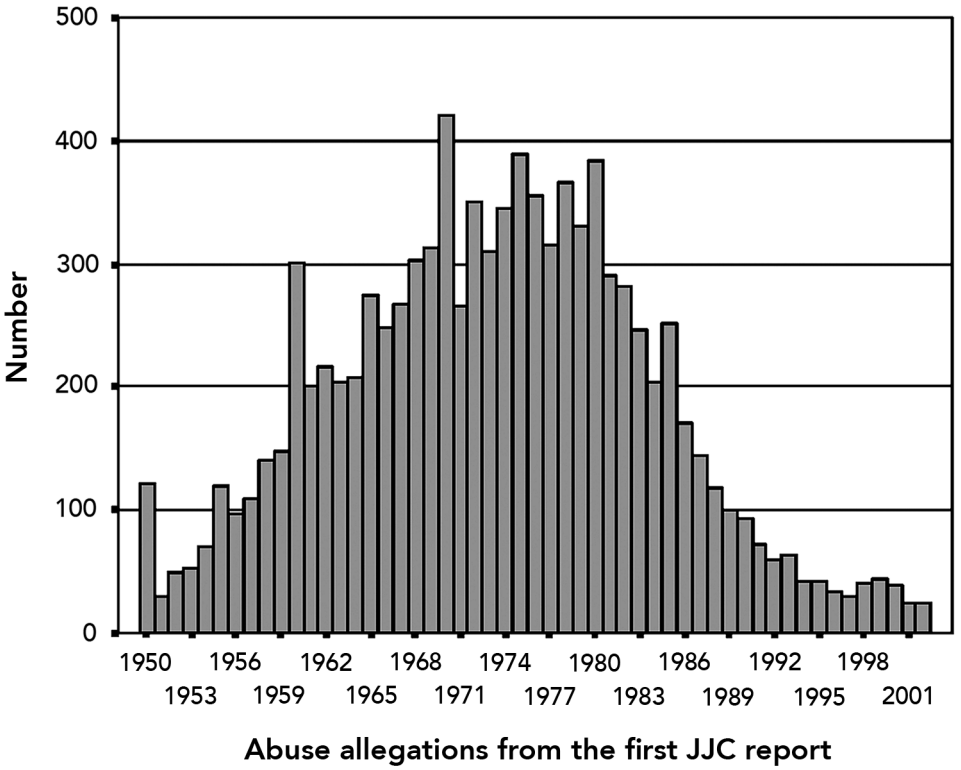

Figure 1. Alleged incidents of abuse by date of first instance. Reproduced, with minor changes, from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, *The Nature and Scope of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the United States, 1950–2002* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2004), 29.

if older priests are less or more likely to abuse minors than are younger priests, a change in the frequency of abuse may be attributed to sexual orientation or other factors when, in fact, it simply reflects an aging priest population.

Is Sexual Abuse Extremely Rare Today?

Is sexual abuse in the Church a crisis that has passed, or is the prospect of current and future abuse of children a reasonable cause for concern? The media often present the specter of pedophilic and pederastic Catholic priests as a persistent and unique threat to Catholic children. Many parents today express concern for their children's safety in Catholic schools or at parish activities. Defenders of the Church often respond that almost all reported abuse happened long ago, and consequently the threat of molestation today is comparatively very small: "That is the Church of the past," Bishop Edward Malesic of the diocese of Greensburg, Pennsylvania, recently stated. "We've become the safest place for children."[18] The true frequency of sexual abuse lies somewhere between these contrasting depictions. On the positive side, by any measure, abuse is much lower today than in the mid-1970s. On the negative side,

18. Deb Erdley, "'We've Become the Safest Place for Children,' Greensburg Bishop Says," *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, August 9, 2018, https://triblive.com/.

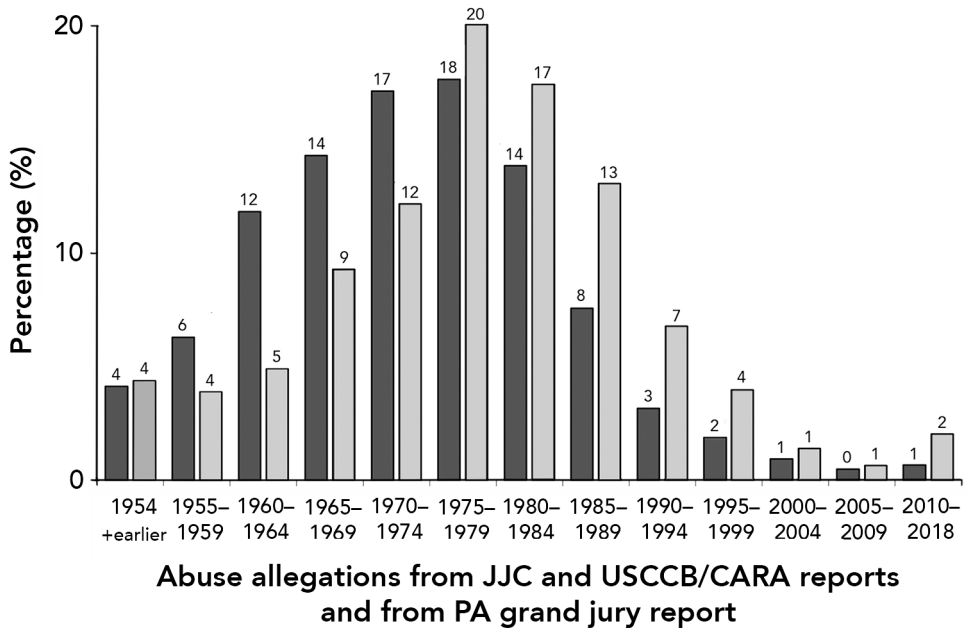

Figure 2. Abuse allegations by five-year period from 1950 to 2018, from the John Jay College and USCCB/CARA reports (*dark gray bars*) and from the 2018 PA grand jury report (*light gray bars*), as a percentage of all incidents reported in either source through 2018. The JJC and USCCB/CARA reports together cover 1950–2017, and the 2018 grand jury report covers 1934–2018. For a helpful explanation of the distribution of incidents in the JJC and USCCB/CARA reports, see John Jay College, *Causes and Context*, 7–10.

it has not dropped as much as may have first appeared, and it is higher today than it was fifteen years ago.

Against the media depictions are posed relative frequencies from the John Jay College data that suggest that gross sexual abuse was largely a transient phenomenon (figure 1): "The annual number of incidents of sexual abuse by priests during the study period increased steadily to a peak in the late 1970s and early 1980s and then declined sharply after 1985."[19] By the mid-1990s, abuse had dropped by over three-fourths from its peak, and by 2002, reported incidents of clergy sexual abuse were lower than at any time since the 1950s. Similar distributions of allegations are seen in the USCCB/CARA audit data and the grand jury report (figure 2). In the audit data, just 228 (4.2 percent) of 5,409 incidents reported since 2002 involved abuse that occurred since 2000. In the grand jury report, only twenty-three incidents (2.9 percent) involved abuse since 2002, when the USCCB instituted the charter.

To conclude that the sharp decline in reported incidents signals an equivalent drop in current abuse, however, would be highly misleading. A large majority of cases are not reported until long after their occurence. Ninety-one percent of the incidents in the John Jay College data and 79 percent of those in the grand jury report are retrospective, reporting events that happened in the past, usually by a factor of

19. John Jay College, *Causes and Context*, 8.

decades.[20] In the John Jay College data, the retrospective allegations pertain to events that happened an average of 24.3 years ago, with more recent allegations looking back even farther.[21] In the grand jury report, which contains sixteen years of more recent allegations than do the John Jay College reports, the retrospective allegations look back an average of 28.7 years from when the reported events occurred. When the large majority of abuse allegations do not surface for close to three decades, we cannot know how much abuse is happening now until thirty years or more from now, by which time the reports of a decline may not be borne out.

To get a sense of how serious this bias might be, allegations of current abuse can be compared with allegations of past abuse in the John Jay College data (figure 3). As the above analysis predicts, the retrospective allegations are clearly skewed to the right, rapidly diminishing to almost nothing, compared with the current allegations, which show a more moderate decline. As an artifact of the measure used, the retrospective reports understate current abuse relative to the period three decades earlier. This also makes the peak of the abuse appear to occur somewhat earlier than do the current allegations.

The distribution of retrospective allegations indicates a 190 percent drop in abuse (from 19 to 1 percent) from the late 1970s through the 2000s, whereas the distribution of current allegations shows a 75 percent decline (from 16 to 4 percent) from the late 1980s through the late 2000s. Which of these two distributions is more plausible? For the retrospective allegations, the distribution by the year allegations were made is very different from the distribution by the year alleged abuses occurred, raising questions about the sensitivity of allegations to factors that do not contribute to abuse, such as publicity, legislative and financial incentives, and the process of therapeutic discovery.[22] For current allegations, which by definition report abuse occurring in the same year as the allegation, these concerns do not apply, since the distribution of abuse and allegation are one and the same.

Does the distribution of retrospective allegations or the distribution of current allegations more closely resemble the true distribution of abuse? *Causes and Context* observes that the rise in sexual abuse in the Church during the 1960s and 1970s was consistent with a general rise in other types of crime and abuse in American society.[23] This suggests that the drop in clergy sexual abuse since the 1980s would also be consistent with a general decline in similar crime. There is no national decline in crime corresponding to the dramatic drop suggested by the retrospective allegations; however, there is strong evidence of a more moderate national decline in child sexual abuse that is similar, in both time and scope, to the negative trend shown by the current allegations. David Finkelhor and Lisa Jones at the University of New Hampshire's Crimes against Children Research Center report, "The fourth National Incidence

20. See also Margaret Leland Smith, Andres F. Rengifo, and Brenda K. Vollman, "Trajectories of Abuse and Disclosure: Child Sexual Abuse by Catholic Priests," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 35.5 (May 2008): 578, doi: 10.1177/0093854808314340.

21. Ibid., 577–578.

22. Ibid., 571, 580.

23. John Jay College, *Causes and Context*, 3.

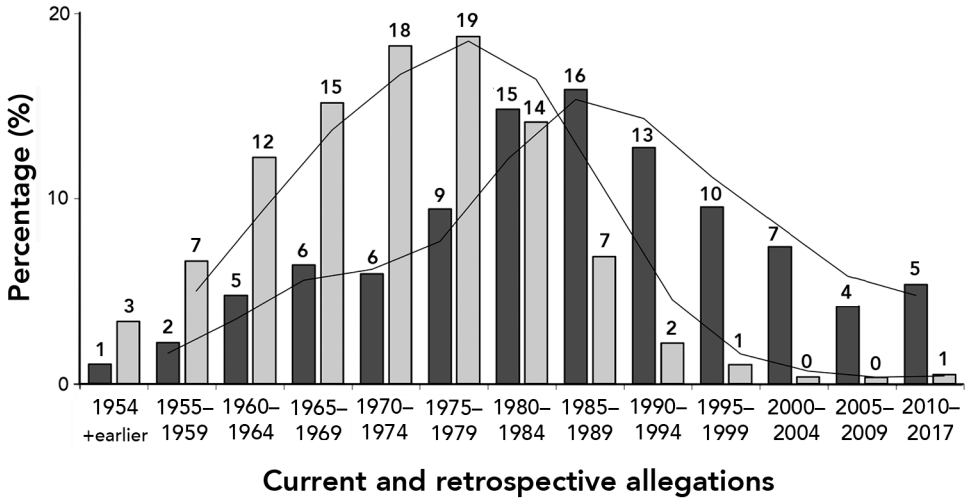

Figure 3. Allegations of current abuse (current allegations, *dark gray bars*) and past abuse (retrospective allegations, *light gray bars*), by five-year period and 2010–2017, as a percentage of all current or all retrospective allegations through 2017. Lines represent moving averages for current and retrospective data. Data are from the JJC and USCCB/CARA reports.

Study of Child Abuse and Neglect found a 45 percent decline in sexual abuse and a 26 percent decline in physical abuse between 1993 and 2005. Similarly, data from child protection authorities show a 53 percent decline in sexual abuse and 45 percent decline in physical abuse over a similar period (1992–2006). Police reports of rape (about 50 percent of which involve minors) declined 27 percent during 1993–2006. And the National Crime Victimization Survey [NCVS] found a 67 percent decrease in sexual assaults to juveniles aged 12–17 years between 1993 and 2004."[24] Indeed, *Nature and Scope* reported data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System showing a 51 percent decline in the national child sexual abuse rate from 1992 to 2001.[25] From 1990–1994 to 2005–2009, current allegations of clergy sexual abuse dropped by 69 percent, consistent with the general decline in sexual abuse over the period and closely tracking the decline reported in the NCVS. Between the two types of allegation, then, it appears that the distribution of current allegations is more

24. David Finkelhor and Lisa Jones, "Trends in Child Maltreatment," letter, *Lancet* 379.9831 (June 2, 2012): 2048–2049, doi:10.1016/S0140-6736(12)60888-5, citing Andrea J. Sedlak et al., *Fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect* (*NIS-4*): *A Report to Congress* (Washington, DC: US Department of Health and Human Services, 2010); David Finkelhor and Lisa Jones, "Updated Trends in Child Maltreatment, 2006," Crimes against Children Research Center, 2008, https://cyber.harvard.edu/; "Crime in the U.S. 2007," Federal Bureau of Investigation, accessed November 26, 2018, https://ucr.fbi.gov/; and David Finkelhor and Lisa Jones, "Why Have Child Maltreatment and Child Victimization Declined?," *Journal of Social Sciences* 62.4 (December 2006): 685–716, doi:10.1111/j.1540-4560.2006.00483.x. See also David Finkelhor and Lisa M. Jones, *Have Sexual Abuse and Physical Abuse Declined since the 1990s?* (Durham, NH: Crimes against Children Research Center, 2012).

25. John Jay College, *Nature and Scope*, 154.

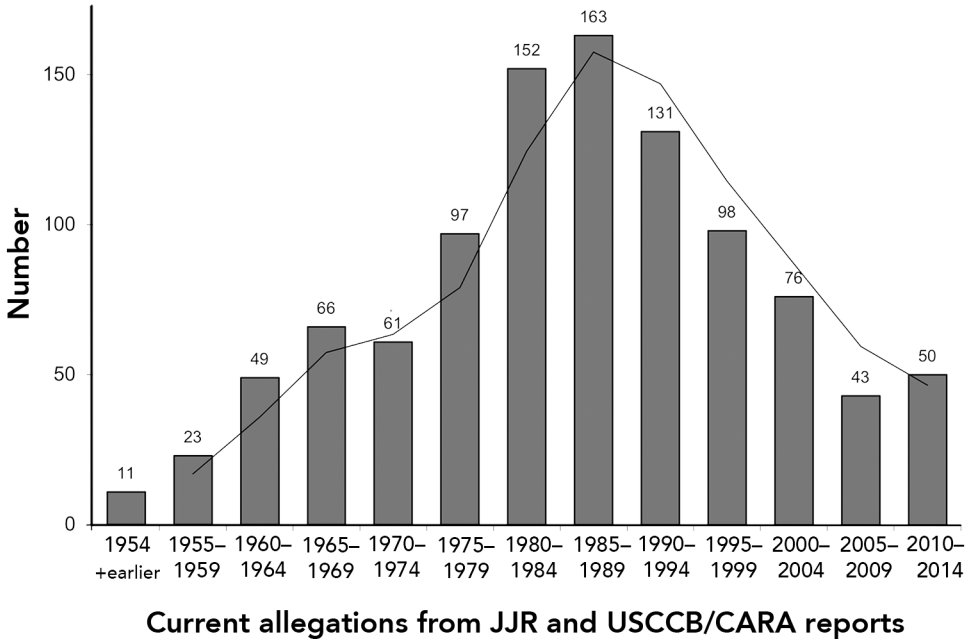

Figure 4. Allegations of current abuse by five-year period, from the early 1950s to 2014. Lines represent the moving average. Data are from the JJC and USCCB/CARA reports.

consistent with known trends in similar crime. Therefore, the distribution of current allegations is also more likely to reflect the actual distribution of clergy sexual abuse than does the distribution of retrospective allegations.

In addition to a more moderate decline from a slightly later peak, the distribution of current allegations also differs from that of the retrospective allegations in indicating a possible recent increase in abuse incidents (figure 4). Since this would be of significant concern, it is worth looking closer to see if it also appears in other measures. Figure 5 shows the comparable trend in current allegations from the grand jury report. Unlike the John Jay College data, which combine two separate reporting efforts, the grand jury data reflect a single source of information through 2018. Although with more volatility than the John Jay College data because it contains fewer cases, the grand jury report supports the suggestion of a recent increase in incidents of sexual abuse. There was only one reported incident of current abuse in the five years after 2004, but from 2010 to 2014, there were eight incidents involving five unique perpetrators.

The USCCB/CARA audits (figure 6) support the John Jay College and grand jury findings. If abuse incidents were continuously declining, each more recent period should show a lower proportion of reported abuse. Instead, we see that abuse declined through the 2000s but has rebounded to a much higher level in the current decade.

All three of these data sources point to a similar trend: abuse dropped through the 1990s, hit a low point for several years following the 2002 sexual abuse scandal and the implementation of the charter, and subsequently began to rise again. Is

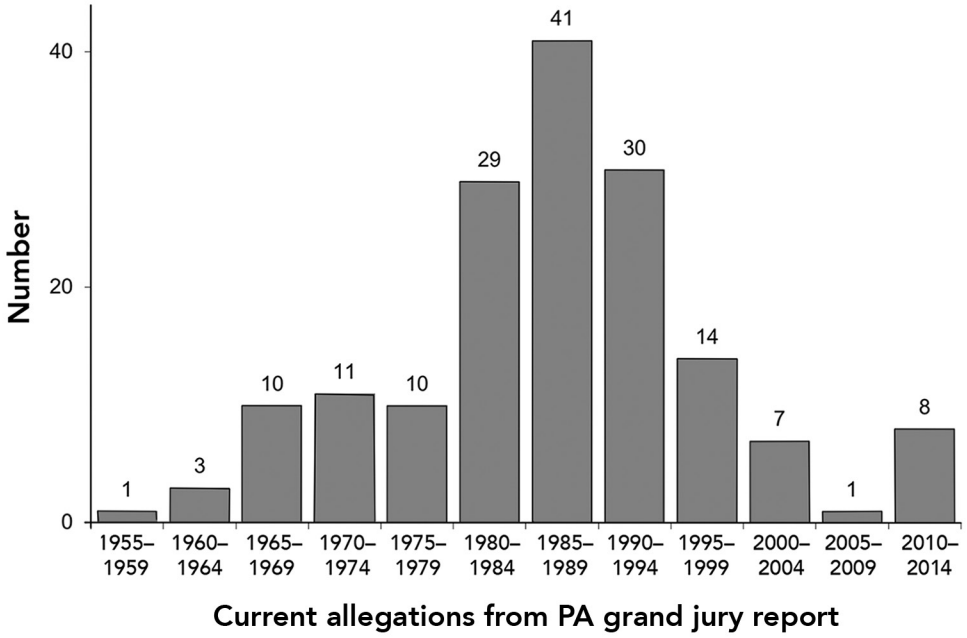

Figure 5. Alleged incidents of current abuse by five-year period, from 1955 to 2014. Data are from the 2018 PA Grand Jury report.

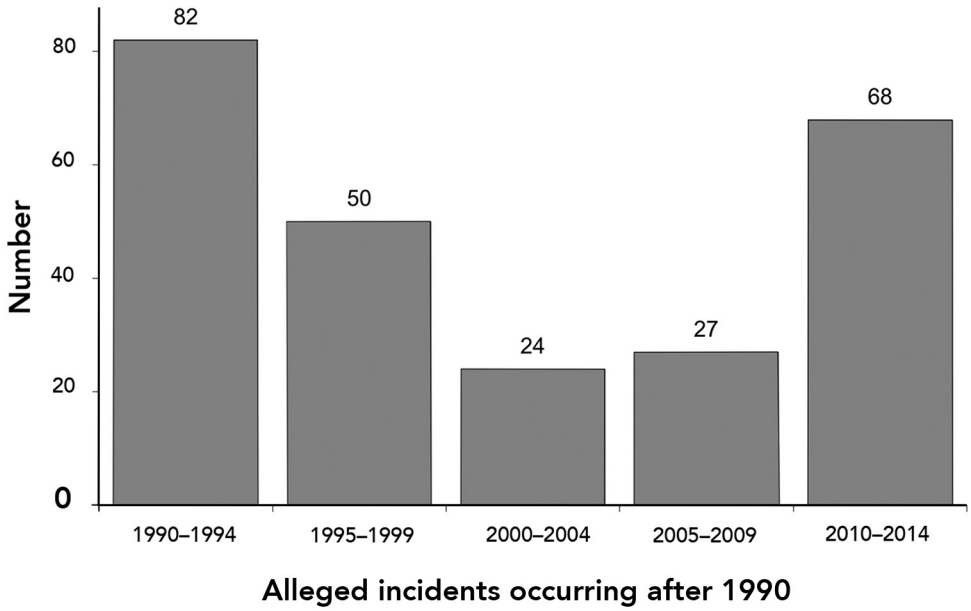

Figure 6. Number of alleged incidents of abuse occurring after 1990, in five-year periods, as reported after 2010. Data are from the annual USCCB/CARA reports from 2010 through 2017.

it possible that the vigilance and resolve of Church leaders to ensure child safety immediately after the 2002 scandal has begun to wane?

The latest (2017) USCCB/CARA audit reports some troubling trends that suggest that laxity about child protection may be rising. The section "Tone at the Top:

General Complacency" describes a variety of resource shortages, lack of cooperation, and lack of preparedness by dioceses in keeping records and maintaining vigilance regarding the requirements and recommendations of the charter. The authors note that some dioceses "reported a high percentage of children as untrained"; instances where "background checks were not completed in a timely manner and … auditors found poor recordkeeping," which could result in unscreened individuals interacting with children"; as well as "isolated incidences where some clergy, employees, and volunteers were not trained or background checked, but have contact with children."[26] Some dioceses do not report all allegations of sexual abuse they have received even though they are required to do so by the charter. Forty-nine dioceses (25 percent) have not required refresher safe-environment training even though it has been sixteen years since the program was implemented.[27] Tellingly, the auditors note, the "tone at the top" is too often one of complacency, and they complain that "the auditors continue to make repeat suggestions, as issues have not been addressed from prior years." The chairman of the National Review Board advised that such "worrisome signs" suggest "cracks in the wall that taken collectively can lead to a resurgence of the abuse of minors unless addressed."[28] The recent rise in abuse incidents may reflect this complacency about charter implementation.

Child sexual abuse by Catholic priests does not appear to be a transient problem that has largely disappeared. Judging by the most consistent measure, abuse is about one-third as common today as it was in the late 1980s—which corresponds with a national drop in child sexual abuse—but current allegations of abuse have been growing for the past ten to fifteen years amid denial and complacency by Church leaders. There are almost as many allegations of abuse today as in the early 1970s.

Is Abuse Related to Homosexual Priests?

The most striking feature of sexual misbehavior by Catholic clergy is not that it is more frequent than in similar institutions or communities—by most comparisons, it is substantially less common—but that the large majority of victims are male. Nationwide, girls are four times more likely to be victims of sexual abuse than boys,[29] but in US Catholic parishes and schools over the past seventy years, the victims of sexual assault by Catholic priests have been overwhelmingly male.

In both the John Jay College data and the grand jury report, boys and girls were victimized in about equal numbers only for the tiny proportion of abuse involving

26. USCCB Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, *Report on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People: 2017 Annual Report—Findings and Recommendations* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2018), vii, 14. Annual reports since 2004 are archived at http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/archives.cfm.

27. USCCB Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, *2016 Annual Report*, 17.

28. USCCB Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, *2017 Annual Report*, vii, 14, 16.

29. Sedlak et al., *NIS–4*, 10. See also "Child Abuse Statistics," National Center for Victims of Crime, accessed January 17, 2018, https://victimsofcrime.org/.

children under age 8 (5.8 and 5 percent, respectively).[30] Of the remaining 95 percent of abuse that took place with minors aged eight to seventeen years, the overwhelming majority of incidents (83 percent in the grand jury report and 82 percent in the John Jay College data) consisted of male-on-male abuse. An analysis of comparable sexual abuse of minors in German educational institutions likewise reports that up to 90 percent of the victims of Catholic priests were male, but only 46 to 49 percent of the victims of male perpetrators in Protestant or non-religious settings were male.[31] This striking difference seems to suggest that Catholic abusers strongly prefer males as sexual objects or, put another way, that child sexual abuse among Catholic clergy is largely perpetrated by homosexual, not heterosexual, priests.

Causes and Context rejects this idea primarily because—as the authors understand it—an increase in the number of homosexual priests was not associated with the rise in the number of reported incidents of male-on-male abuse. The authors take this position because, in their words, "if it was the case that there were more homosexual men in the seminaries in the 1980s, this increase does not correspond to an increase in the number of boys who were abused."[32] However, this conclusion is based on weak evidence. Indeed, as the authors acknowledge, they chose not to examine any data on "the sexual identity of priests and how it changed over the years," but relied instead on clinical estimates and public reports of increased homosexual activity in Catholic seminaries.[33]

Reports of homosexual activity in seminaries during the 1980s is a weak indicator of the proportion of homosexual men in the Catholic priesthood for two reasons. First, as the authors of *Causes and Context* concede, they could not know "whether the open expression of sexual identity in seminaries in [the 1980s] supports the thesis that more men were entering the seminary understanding themselves as homosexual—rather than being more likely to *reveal* themselves as homosexual—than in prior decades."[34] This point is not neutral, however, but weighs against the validity of their indicator. It is well known that persons in many settings began to "come out" about their homosexuality during the 1980s as social stigma against homosexual persons began to wane. Just as this did not signify an actual increase in persons with homosexual attractions but rather greater public disclosure of this personal characteristic, so it is implausible to infer—as the logic of *Causes and Context* requires—that the proportion of seminarians or priests "coming out" as having homosexual attractions during that time necessarily corresponded to an equivalent increase in priests with homosexual attractions.

30. John Jay College, *Nature and Scope*, 53–54; and PA grand jury data.

31. Nina Spröber et al., "Child Sexual Abuse in Religiously Affiliated and Secular Institutions: A Retrospective Descriptive Analysis of Data Provided by Victims in a Government-Sponsored Reappraisal Program in Germany," *BMC Public Health* 14 (2014), 282; and German Bishops' Conference, "Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests."

32. John Jay College, *Causes and Context*, 100, 102.

33. Ibid., 100.

34. Ibid., 38, original emphasis.

Second, the analysis in *Causes and Context* confuses the homosexuality of ordinands and seminarians with that of all priests, but the two measures are not at all the same. Since an ordination class adds only a few hundred men, at most, to a population of tens of thousands of priests, to draw conclusions about the characteristics of all priests from the small fraction of newly ordained priests can be highly misleading and therefore inappropriate as a measure. In 1980, for example, there were 58,398 priests, of whom 593, or roughly 1 percent, were ordained that year.[35] Even if the ordination class had been 100 percent homosexual—which in the analysis in *Causes and Context* would represent a huge influx of homosexual priests—it would increase the proportion of homosexual men in the American priesthood by only 1 percent. Even if it were measured very precisely, the sexual identity of this subgroup can tell us nothing about the characteristics of the remaining 99 percent of priests.

The hypothesis proposed in *Causes and Context* can be examined using the available data on the proportion of Catholic priests who report a homosexual orientation. From the *LA Times* data, we can estimate the proportion of priests ordained in or prior to any given year who reported a homosexual orientation (figure 7). The light gray bars show the percentage of homosexual men among all men ordained during each five-year period; the dark gray bars show the percentage of homosexual men among all men ordained prior to and including that period. In 1950, only 2 percent of Catholic priests reported being homosexual, a proportion on par with the general male population, about 1–2 percent of whom generally report experiencing homosexual attraction. But in the decade after World War II, homosexual men began to enter the priesthood in greater numbers, leading to a higher proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood than in the general male population. As figure 7 shows, from 1965 to 1994, an average of at least one in five newly ordained priests reported a homosexual orientation, which drove the overall proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood up to 16 percent, or one in six priests, by the late 1990s. At this point, the proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood was about ten times greater than in the general male population.[36]

It is possible, of course, that homosexual activity in seminaries had an independent effect on the abuse of boys apart from the overall proportion of homosexual priests.[37] The knowledge or tolerance of such activity, for example, may have encouraged potential abusers to be more active. As homosexual men became more open about their sexuality in the 1980s, the increasing proportion of homosexual men in the Catholic priesthood was reportedly accompanied by the formation—in dioceses and particularly in seminaries—of distinct "homosexual subcultures." The phrase was coined by Donald Cozzens, a prominent seminary rector, in a 2000 book to describe an exclusive subculture or clique of homosexual men "who interact continually with each

35. "Frequently Requested Church Statistics," Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate, accessed November 14, 2018, http://cara.georgetown.edu/.

36. Gary J. Gates, "How Many People Are Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender?," Williams Institute, April 2011, https://williamsinstitute.law.ucla.edu/.

37. The material in this paragraph is adapted from D. Paul Sullins, *Keeping the Vow: The Untold Story of Married Catholic Priests* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 2015), 191–92.

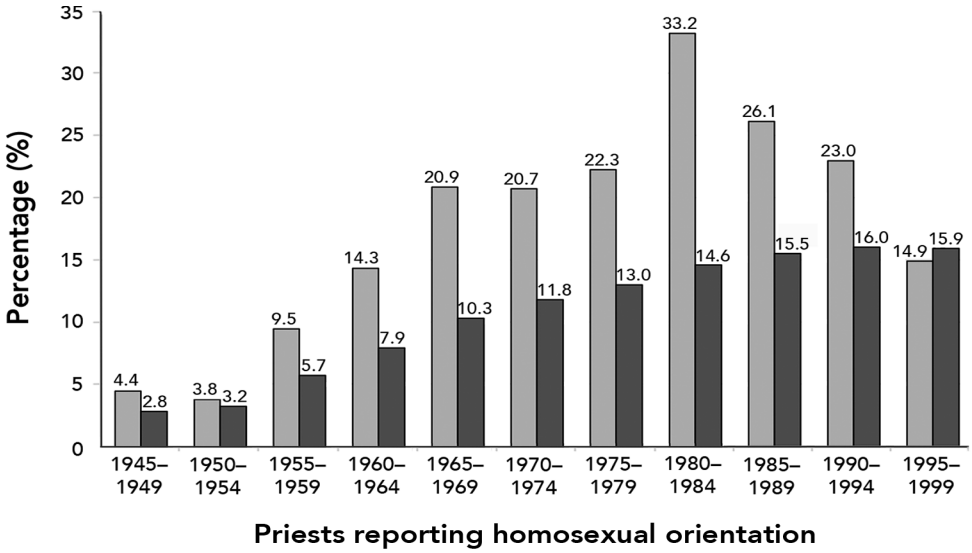

Figure 7. Priests reporting homosexual orientation, by year of ordination, as a percentage of all Catholic priests ordained in the five-year period (*light gray bars*) or of all Catholic priests ordained in or before that period (*dark gray bars*), from 1945 to 1999. Data are from the 2002 *LA Times* poll (n = 1,852).

other and seldom with outsiders, and who develop shared experiences, understandings and meanings."[38] According to Cozzens, such cliques had become so pervasive, including among seminary faculty, that they dominated the social and communal life of seminaries. Cozzens's concerns echoed those of psychoanalyst Richard Sipe, who argued that a shift away from highly regulated seminary life beginning in the early 1970s led, in the closely confined all-male environment of Catholic seminaries, to the development of homosocial organizations in some seminaries that encouraged "relationships with sexual objects" in widespread homoerotic behavior.[39] The sociologists Dean Hoge and Jacqueline Wenger, reporting on surveys, interviews, and focus groups with Catholic priests in 2003, confirmed that "many priests recognize the existence of homosexual subcultures" in their seminary and diocese and that such groups were sexually active with one another. Summarizing their findings, they reported that "most problems with homosexual subcultures occur in the seminary. Some priests expressed concerns about promiscuity, a predatory attitude toward young seminarians, and an unwillingness to address these issues on the part of the seminary faculty."[40]

The *LA Times* survey data reported on the growth of homosexual subcultures in seminaries from 1940 to 1999 (figure 8, *next page*). The trend shows that, while homosexual subcultures grew rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s, they have been

38. Donald B. Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood: A Reflection on the Priest's Crisis of Soul* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2000), 109.

39. A. W. Richard Sipe, *A Secret World: Sexuality and the Search for Celibacy* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 110.

40. Hoge and Wenger, *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood*, 110.

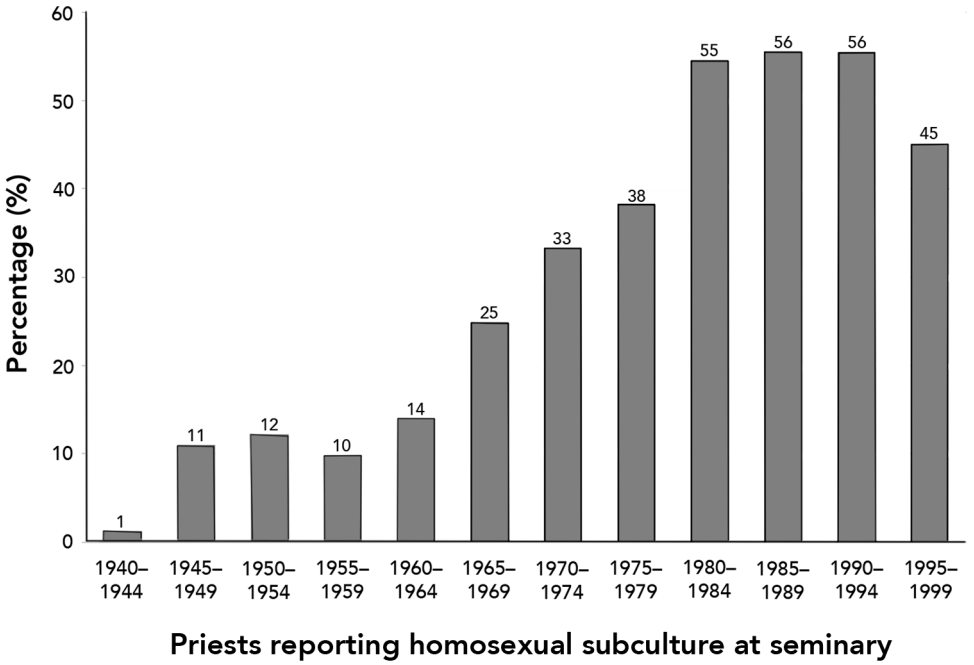

Figure 8. Priests reporting the presence of a homosexual subculture at their seminary, by year of ordination, as a percentage of priests ordained in each five-year period, 1940 to 1999. Data are from the 2002 *LA Times* poll (n =1,852).

present in seminary life at least since World War II. As figure 8 shows, over half of priests ordained in the 1980s and early 1990s reported the presence of a homosexual subculture in their seminary, but since 1945, at least 10 percent of priests ordained in each five-year period reported the existence of one in their seminary.

Statistical Association of Abuse with Homosexual Priests and Subcultures

The consideration of the homosexual priest hypothesis in *Causes and Context* infers a temporal trend, examining whether an increase in the proportion of homosexual priests accompanied or preceded a rise in abuse incidence. Comparing the incidence of current allegations with the percentage of homosexual priests by five-year period from 1950 to 1999 (figure 9), we see that both trends started small in the 1950s and rose through the late 1980s, before the proportion of homosexual priests leveled off and abuse incidence began to drop. It is easy to see that the regression lines summarizing both trends are very similar. The correlation between the variables is .90, indicating an extremely strong positive association. A comparison of abuse incidents and homosexual subcultures shows a similar correlation (figure 10). For these two trends, the regression lines are almost indistinguishable; at a correlation of .96, there is an almost perfect association between the variables. The strikingly strong correlations provide strong and direct evidence, by the logic set forth in *Causes and Context*, that both the proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood and the prevalence of homosexual subcultures in seminaries are strongly associated with the sexual abuse of children by priests.

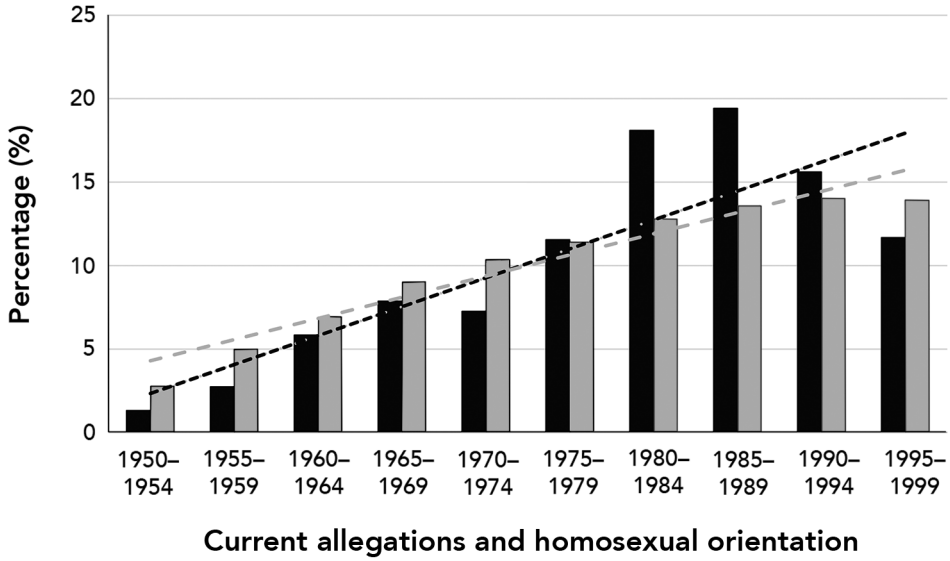

Figure 9. Correlation between incidence of abuse (*black bars*) and priests reporting a homosexual orientation (*gray bars*), in five-year periods from 1950 to 1999. Incidents of abuse are from the JJC dataset, using current allegations only (n = 905). Data on homosexual orientation are from the 2002 *LA Times* survey (n = 1,852). Trend scales are equated for comparison only. Staggered lines indicate linear regressions for abuse incidents (*black*) and homosexual orientation (*light gray*). The correlation is .90.

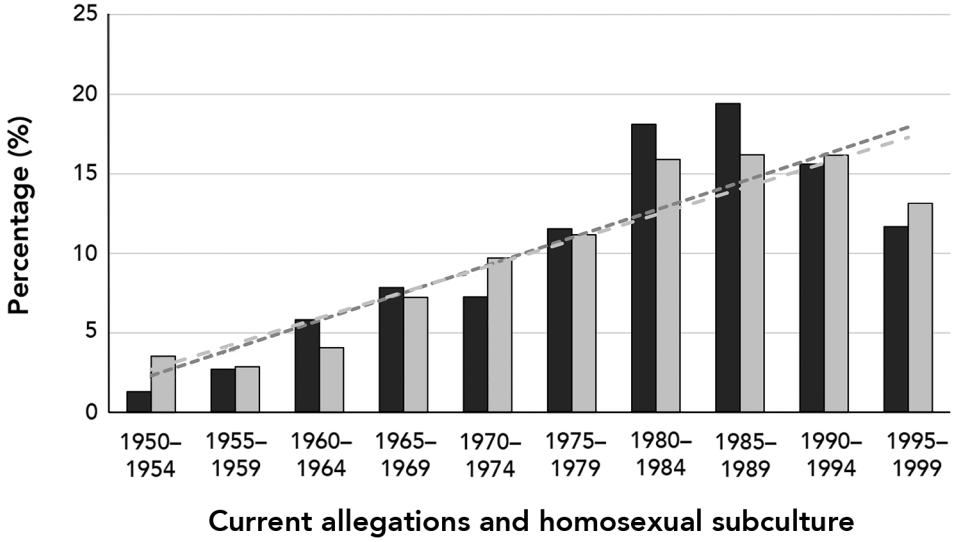

Figure 10. Correlation between incidence of abuse (*black bars*), as a percentage of all and priests reporting the presence of a homosexual subculture at their seminary (*light gray bars*) in the five-year periods from 1950 to 1999. Data on incidence of abuse are from the John Jay College reports (n = 905); data on seminary subcultures are from the 2002 *LA Times* survey (n = 1,852). Trend scales are equated for comparison only. Staggered lines indicate linear regressions for abuse incidents (*dark gray*) and seminary subcultures (*light gray*). The correlation is .96.

Table 1. Standardized Regression Coefficients for the Association of Abuse with Homosexual Priests and Priests reporting Seminary Subcultures, by Year (n = 51), 1950–2001

	Percentage of male victims		Percentage of multiple-offender victims who were male		Percentage of male victims under 8 years of age		Abuse incidence, male victims only		Total abuse incidence	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Predictors:										
Percentage of homosexual priests	.96***	.86***	.74***	.56*	.77**	.83**	.97***	.48*	.91***	.47*
Percentage of priests reporting homosexual subculture at seminary	—	.12	—	.20	—	-.06	—	.55**	—	.49**
Mean age at ordination†	-.96***	-.96**	-.83***	-.83***	-.35*	-.61**	-.39**	-.39**	-.19	-.19
Highest VIF‡	1.8	5.5	1.8	5.5	1.9	5.6	1.8	5.5	1.8	5.5
Model fit (multiple *R*)	.79	.79	.65	.66	.59	.59	.77	.81	.80	.84
R-squared	.63	.63	.43	.42	.34	.35	.60	.66	.65	.70

SOURCE: John Jay College data.

NOTES: Model 1 looks at the effect on each outcome of homosexuality alone; model 2 looks at the combined effect of homosexuality and subcultures. Outcomes reference current allegations only. Standardized coefficients are shown. †To reduce multicollinearity, age at ordination was cubed. ‡VIF indicates variance inflation factor. *p < .05; ** p < .01; ***p < .001.

These comparisons do not address the hypothesis definitively, however, for several reasons. First, *Causes and Context* hypothesizes that, if homosexuality among priests were a causal factor or an effect modifier of the abuse, a greater proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood would lead to more abuse of boys rather than girls, not necessarily to more abuse overall.[41] Second, the charts collapse the year-to-year variation into five-year categories, which may make the association between homosexual priests and abuse appear stronger than it is. Third, the association is between chronological trends in both variables, not the direct association between them. Removing the imposition of a time trend may reveal a much weaker association. Fourth, the bivariate association between the two variables in each figure does not take into account other factors that may have influenced the rise in abuse and that may diminish or eliminate the apparent effect of the rise in homosexual priests. Perhaps most importantly, it does not tell us which of these two strong associations—homosexual priests or subcultures—predicts the greater amount of change in abuse or whether only one of them without the other would predict a higher incidence of abuse.

These concerns can be addressed, to the extent that is possible with available evidence, through a multivariate regression analysis (table 1). The percentage of homosexual priests and the presence of seminary homosexual subcultures are the predictor variables for five outcomes in any given year: the percentage of all victims who were male, the percentage of victims of multiple offenders who were male, the percentage of victims under the age of eight years who were male, the incidence of the abuse of boys only, and the incidence of all abuse. The analysis examines the effect on each outcome of homosexuality alone (model 1) and the combined effect of homosexuality and subcultures (model 2). Both models are adjusted for average ordination age.[42] The table shows standardized regression coefficients which, like correlation coefficients, range from -1 to +1, with +1 indicating a perfect positive association, -1 indicating a perfect negative association, and 0 indicating no association.

On table 1, the first set of columns presents models predicting the percentage of victims who were male. This outcome directly addresses the hypothesis in *Causes and Context* that an increase in the proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood would be associated with an increase in male-on-male abuse. In model 1, the adjusted correlation of the percentage of homosexual priests with the proportion of male victims, at .96, is not only strong, it is an almost perfect association. When seminary homosexual subculture is added to the model (model 2), it has no additional effect—that is, the change that is attributable to it could have occurred by chance—whereas male victimization, at .87 correlation, is still strongly determined by clergy homosexual concentration. These findings provide very strong support for the conclusion that the high proportion of male victims in Catholic clergy sexual abuse was due to the high proportion of homosexual men among the clergy.

41. John Jay College, *Causes and Context*, 100, 102.

42. Since both age at ordination and abuse incidence are highly correlated with year of ordination, the cube of ordination age, which is nonlinear, was included to reduce multicollinearity. This transformation slightly reduced the predicted associations of the remaining variables (homosexual priests and seminary subcultures) with the model outcome.

Table 2. Percentage of Male Victims of Single and Multiple Offenders

Category of Offender	Victims of These Offenders as Percentage of Total Victims	Percentage of Those Victims Who Were Male
Single offenders (1 victim)	23.3	67.8
Multiple offenders with 2–9 victims	51.4	82.0
Multiple offenders with 10–19 victims	12.5	88.5
Multiple offenders with 20+ victims	12.7	93.1

Source: John Jay College data.

Opportunity or Orientation?

The second and third sets of columns on table 1 restrict the analysis to victims of multiple offenders and victims of pedophiles, respectively. *Nature and Scope* classified the large majority of multiple offenders (72.3 percent) as "generalists" who opportunistically abused a wider range of victims by age, context, and perhaps type of abuse.[43] This implies that these mostly generalist multiple offenders were less focused on male victims. In fact, multiple offenders abused a higher proportion of male victims than did single offenders, and the proportion increased with the number of victims (table 2). Opportunity may have worked in complicated ways, of course, but if the multiple offenders were better at making use of opportunities by priming and grooming victims and by other means described in *Causes and Context*, they appear to have used their skills to obtain access to more, not fewer, boys.

The third set of columns on table 1 restricts the analysis to victims under eight years of age, isolating the small group of abusers whom *Causes and Context* classified as classic, or fixated, pedophiles, whose primary attraction is to younger children regardless of gender.[44] Priests did not have differential access to male and female victims in this age group. None of the victims were old enough to be altar servers or to have any other gender-specific function in the Church. Supporting this point, the grand jury investigation reported that, for victims in this age group, abuse occurred most frequently in the victim's residence (23 percent), followed by his or her school (17 percent); none of the abuse occurred on Church grounds outside the perpetrator's residence.

As model 1 of both the second and third columns shows, when not controlling for subculture, homosexuality is correlated at .74 and .77 with the proportion of male victims of multiple offenders and of pedophiles, respectively. Both associations are weaker than the one seen with the overall proportion of male victims. This observation is consistent with the thesis that multiple abusers and pedophiles were more

43. John Jay College, *Causes and Context*, 55.

44. Ibid., 3. Some abusers of older children also may have exhibited pedophilia, but abusers of children this young certainly all did so.

open to abusing either sex. However, the association between homosexuality and male victims in these models is still very strong.

Opportunity and sexual orientation are not mutually exclusive risk factors for abuse. Both may be operative in any instance or pattern of the abuse of boys. The weaker association between homosexuality and the abuse of male victims when differential access to males may have been reduced (as with multiple offenders) or non-existent (as with pedophiles) strongly suggests that access was a factor, albeit a minor one. Greater access to males was associated with a larger proportion of male victims, but even when there was no difference in access, the proportion of homosexual priests was positively associated with male victims. As a rough estimate, the ratio of the difference of the second and third column correlations from the overall correlation (.19–.22) with the overall correlation itself (.98) suggests that easier access to males may account for up to a fifth of male preference among all victims, with the other four-fifths accounted for by clergy sexual orientation. In sum, opportunity appears to have played a role in the abuse of males rather than females, but not enough of a role to dismiss the effect of homosexual priests, which also played an independent and much larger role.

Contrary to the insistence in *Causes and Context* that the abuse of males was purely situational and opportunistic, the evidence presented in the John Jay College reports supports the hypothesis that "priests would have been seeking out males to abuse" rather than only "the victims to whom they had access."[45] Although, as the authors point out, homosexual activity in seminaries during the early 1980s did not correspond to the height of the abuse, which occurred (according to the retrospective allegations) in the mid-1970s, it *did* correspond to the height of the preference for male victims. The proportion of male victims was at its highest between 1975 and 1984—precisely when, according to reports, homosexual activity was peaking in Catholic seminaries (figure 11, *next page*).

Causes and Context argues further that the "substantial increase in the percentage of female victims in the late 1990s and 2000s, when priests had more access to them in the church,"[46] also shows that priests abused more males earlier only because they had easier access to them. This argument, however, neglects a sea change in the age of victims that took place in the 1980s and 1990s, which is reported elsewhere in the John Jay College reports. *Nature and Scope* reports that the percentage of older male victims, but not female victims, rose dramatically from the 1980s to the 1990s, as the proportion of male victims declined (figure 12, *next page*).[47] As the overall proportion of male victims declined in the 1990s, the percentage of male victims between the ages of fifteen and seventeen years rose dramatically. In the 1980s, 36 percent of male victims were in this age group, but the proportion rose to 55 percent by the early 2000s. This is consistent with a decrease in access to younger males as more girls became altar servers, but it also suggests that the abusers of boys responded to the presence of fewer younger boys primarily by turning to older boys, not to female victims. A closer look at the abuse victimization by sex during the 1980s and 1990s

45. John Jay College, *Causes and Context*, 100.

46. Ibid.

47. John Jay College, *Nature and Scope*, 54, tables 3.5.5 and 3.5.6.

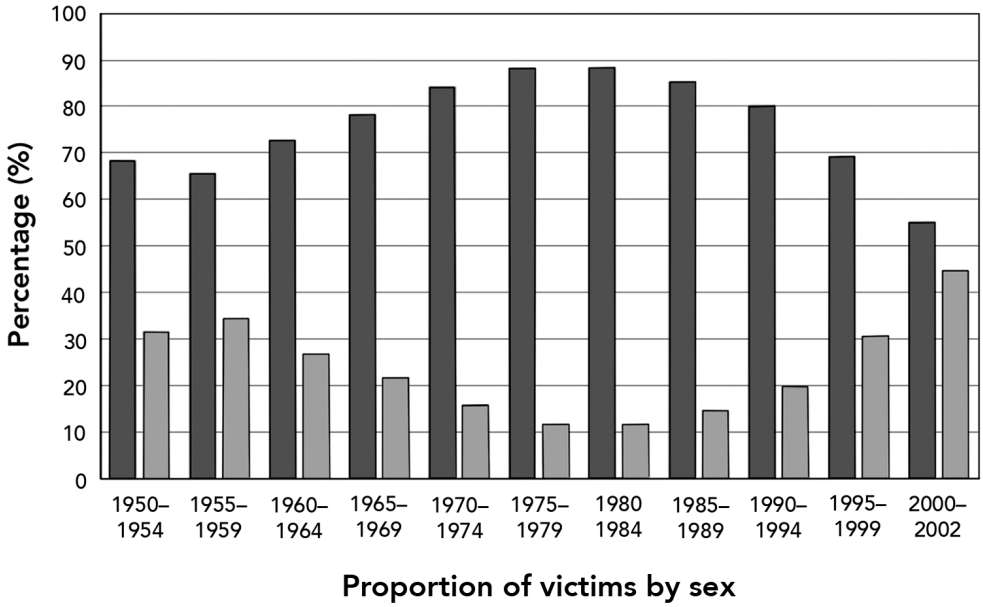

Figure 11. Victims of abuse by sex, by year of alleged abuse, in five-year periods from 1950 to 2001. *Dark gray bars,* male victims as a percentage of all victims in each period; *light gray bars*, female victims as a percentage of all victims in that period. Reproduced from John Jay College of Criminal Justice, *The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950–2010* (Washington, DC: USCCB, 2011),104, with minor formatting changes and added labels.

Figure 12. Percentage of victims aged 15–17 years, in ten-year periods from 1950 to 2002. *Dark gray*, male victims as a percentage of all victims in the designated period; *medium gray*, male victims 15–17 years of age as a percentage of all male victims in that period; *light gray*, female victims 15–17 years of age as a percentage of all female victims in that period. Data are from the John Jay College reports and data.

Table 3. Decline in the Number of Victims from the 1980s to the 1990s, by Sex

	1980s	1990s	Decline
Male	1,900	444	1,456 (77%)
Female	279	162	117 (42%)

Source: John Jay College data.

supports this suggestion (table 3). If the abusers were generalists whose access to male victims was reduced relative to female victims in the 1990s, we would expect to see a decrease in the abuse of boys to be offset by an increase in the abuse of girls. Instead, abuse of girls dropped at the same time as the abuse of boys. Moreover, the number of male victims dropped by a much greater extent (77 percent) than did the number of female victims (42 percent), indicating that these trends were responding to different social and institutional factors. This is consistent with the hypothesis that male and female victims were targeted by distinct categories of abusers. Together, these data present a picture of men who, when younger boys were replaced by younger girls, preferred older boys rather than younger girls as victims. While the John Jay College data suggest that this scenario is possible, even plausible, further study focusing on offender characteristics is necessary to determine how likely and to what extent it may have occurred.

Homosexual Priests and Incidence of Abuse

The fourth and fifth sets of columns on table 1 turn from the gender of victims to the incidence of abuse, predicting the number of male victims and of all victims, respectively. As with the percentage of male victims, both the number of male victims and the incidence of overall abuse were strongly associated with the percentage of priests who were homosexual at the time of the abuse (model 1). Unlike the preference for male victims, the frequency of abuse was also strongly predicted by the presence of homosexual subcultures in seminaries. When subcultures were included in model 2, the effect of homosexuality was substantially reduced. This indicates that a large part of the effect that was attributed to homosexual orientation in model 1 can be explained by the concurrent influence of homosocial seminary subcultures. Without the influence of the subcultures, an increase in the proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood would have led to a smaller increase in the sexual abuse of minors. Since these subcultures could not have existed without homosexual men in seminaries, this finding strongly suggests that the abuse was perpetrated disproportionately by priests who were themselves of homosexual orientation.

These findings are supported by the clinical findings presented in *Causes and Context*. The authors reported that "only in-seminary (not pre-seminary) same-sex sexual behavior was significantly related to post-ordination sexual behavior" (consistent with column 5, model 2) and "only in-seminary (not pre-seminary) same-sex sexual behavior was significantly related to the increased likelihood of a male child

victim" (consistent with column 4, model 2).[48] They also reported that "pre-seminary and in-seminary sexual behavior were significantly related to each other, such that priests who had pre-seminary same-sex experiences also often had in-seminary same-sex experiences and vice versa."[49] Taken together, this evidence suggests that seminarians, either homosexual or heterosexual, who had not been sexually active (either at all or had ceased) prior to seminary were socialized or enticed into same-sex sexual behavior while in seminary, and that those who had same-sex experiences prior to seminary were likely to continue such behavior in seminary. Not surprisingly, those who began or continued same-sex activity in seminary were more likely to continue in such activity after seminary than those who abstained from it, regardless of sexual activity prior to seminary. They were also more likely to engage in the sexual abuse of minors, although this involved only a small proportion of these men.

Causes and Context argued that clinical findings such as these do not support the idea of an association between abuse and homosexual priests, because it is "possible that, although the victims of priests were most often male, thus defining the acts as homosexual, the priest did not at any time recognize his identity as homosexual."[50] But studies of clinical samples of priests who abuse children have found that, in fact, a very high proportion do self-identify as homosexual. Miriam Ukeritis and Christine Dodgson, in a study of seventy-four priests in treatment for child sexual abuse, reported that 36 percent of those with victims under fourteen years of age (pedophiles) and 57 percent of those with victims between fourteen and seventeen years of age (ephebophiles) identified themselves as homosexual. An additional 23 percent of the ephebophiles considered themselves bisexual; only 20 percent identified as heterosexual.[51] Likewise, Gerard McGlone and colleagues found that 32 percent of pedophiles and 46 percent of ephebophiles in a sample of 150 abuser priests in treatment self-identified as homosexual.[52] Marie Keenan reported that six of the nine participants (67 percent) in her qualitative study of priests who

48. *Causes and Context* denies that these results are related to homosexual priests, because same-sex sexual activity is not always related to homosexual identity. This is true, but the two are very closely related, to the point that it is specious to deny the association. On the General Social Survey, which has presented a recurring representative sample of the US population since 1972, 99.3 percent of men who described themselves as "straight or heterosexual" had only female partners in the past year, and 93 percent of men who described themselves as "gay or homosexual" had only male sexual partners in the past year. (An additional 3 percent had both male and female partners.) The General Social Survey data are publicly available without restriction, courtesy of the National Opinion Research Center and the University of California, Berkeley, at http://sda.berkeley.edu/archive.htm.

49. John Jay College, *Causes and Context*, 63.

50. Ibid., 36.

51. Miriam Ukeritis and Christine Dodgson, "Clergy Who Violate Boundaries," *Seminary Journal* 13.3 (Winter 2007): 16.

52. G. J. McGlone, D. J. Viglione, and B. Geary, "Data from One Treatment Centre in USA: N=150 Who Have Sexually Offended," paper presented at the Twenty-First Annual Research and Treatment Conference, Association for the Treatment of Sexual Abusers, Montreal, Canada, October 2002.

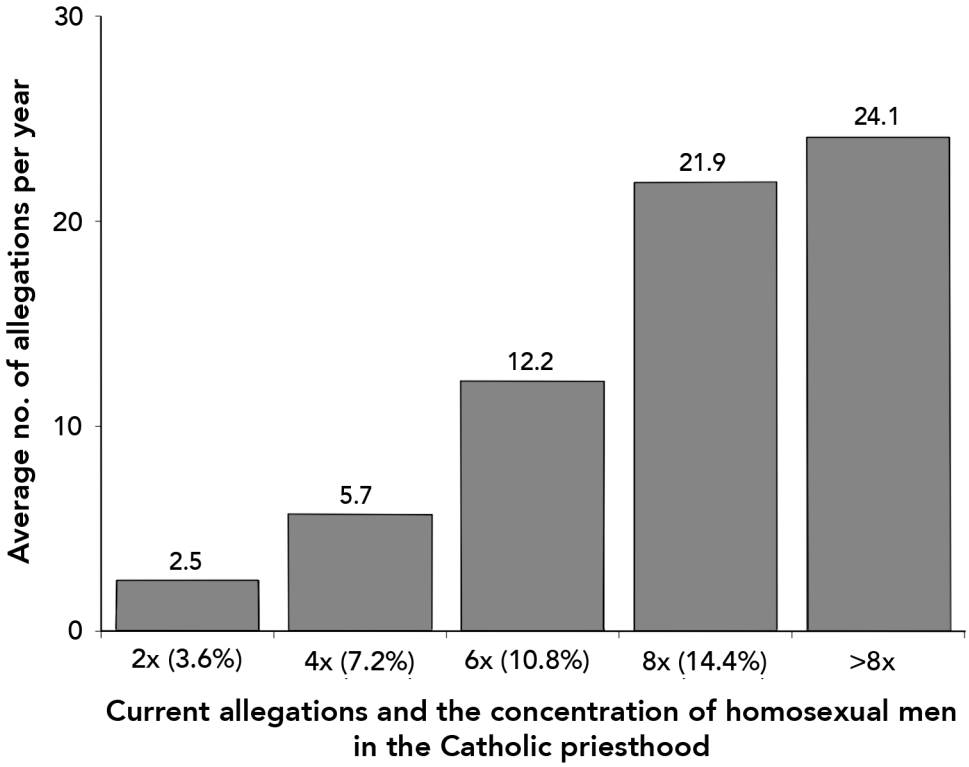

Figure 13. Predicted current allegations of abuse per year at increasing proportions of homosexual men in the Catholic priesthood. Proportions are expressed as multiples of the concentration of homosexual men in the general population (1.8 percent). Predictions are computed from the statistical model shown in column 5, model 2, of table 1. Data are from John Jay College.

sexually abused children in Ireland identified as homosexual, exploring through their own narratives how the fact that "they were defined as deviant" contributed to their propensity to abuse children.[53] The share of men identifying as homosexual in these clinical samples is many times higher than the rate of homosexual men in the general population (about 1.8 percent by the most generous measure) and well above the 16 percent share of homosexual men in the priest population at its height (see figure 7). None of this research is acknowledged in *Causes and Context*.

Figure 13 illustrates the strong effect of homosexuality among priests on the sexual abuse of children, showing the average number of predicted annual current abuse allegations at increasing proportions of homosexual priests. The trend shows evidence of both concentration and saturation effects. To capture the effect of concentration, the proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood is expressed as a multiple of the proportion of homosexual men in the overall US population, which as noted

53. Marie Keenan, *Child Sexual Abuse and the Catholic Church: Gender, Power, and Organizational Culture* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 173; see also Marie Keenan, "'Them and Us': The Clergy Child Sexual Offender as 'Other,'" in *Responding to the Ryan Report*, ed. Tony Flannery (Dublin: Columba Press, 2009).

above is about 1.8 percent. As the graph shows, a higher concentration of homosexual priests resulted in increased abuse, but the effect was not linear. In years when the proportion of homosexual priests was 3.6 to 7.2 percent, for example, compared with years in which it was under 3.6 percent, average annual current abuse allegations more than tripled, from just over two (2.2) to just under seven (6.9).[54] Except for the change from four to six times the population concentration, each increase of twice the population homosexual concentration at least doubled the incidence of abuse up to the level of eight times the population concentration, at which point the frequency of abuse hit an effective maximum of twenty-two to twenty-five current incidents per year. Whether this maximum reflects a saturation of opportunity or the confluence of other limiting factors is a matter for further study. From the incidence numbers shown in figure 13 and the fact the average number of current abuse incidents per year from 1950 to 2002 was 17.4,[55] we can estimate that, had the proportion of homosexual priests remained at the low level of the early 1950s (3.2 percent; see figure 7), aggregate abuse would have been reduced by an estimated 87 percent from its actual level in 1950–2001.[56] In terms of all reported abuse prior to 2001 (14,817 incidents), if homosexual men had not become concentrated in the priesthood above twice the population level, an estimated 12,950 children, most of them boys, would have been spared sexual victimization by Catholic priests.

Two Pressing Questions

Almost two decades after revelations of widespread sexual abuse in the American Catholic Church, two pressing questions remain: Has the crisis passed, or are there grounds for concern about current and future abuse of children by Catholic priests? And, since the large majority of victims were male, is past abuse related to the presence or activity of homosexual men in the Catholic priesthood?

Regarding the extent of current abuse, the data examined in this study show that while abuse today is much lower than it was three decades ago, it has not declined as much as is commonly believed, and the decline is not necessarily connected with measures taken by the Church. Most of the decline in abuse since the 1990s in Catholic settings is consistent with a similar general decline in the sexual abuse of children in America. Although abuse allegations dropped to almost nothing immediately after 2002, they are growing today amid signs of complacency about the ongoing implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People.

On the question of clergy homosexuality, the data show that the proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood was correlated with overall abuse and with the

54. On column 5 of table 1, model 1 predicts the following annual frequencies at the concentrations shown in figure 13: two, 2.5; four, 5.7; three, 12.2; four, 21.8; and over eight, 25.2. The close similarity of predicted and actual values (shown in figure 13) validates the accuracy of the model and illustrates the strong effect of homosexual priests on child sexual abuse.

55. John Jay College data.

56. From figure 10, yearly abuse was 2.2 incidents when the percentage of priests who were homosexual was less than 3.6. Dividing 2.2 by 17.4, the actual average incidents per year, produces 12.6 percent, or a reduction by 87.4 percent from actual to predicted abuse.

proportion of male victims. The association of these trends was extremely strong, with a correlation greater than 0.9. The rise of homosexual subcultures in seminaries accounted for about half of the incidence of abuse but none of the preference for male victims, suggesting that the abuse of male victims was perpetrated by homosexual abusers who were encouraged by the presence or activity of the subcultures to abuse more than they otherwise might have. After accounting for the influence of seminary subcultures, an increase in the proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood by a factor of two relative to their proportion in the general population approximately doubled the incidence of abuse.

Solutions to the ongoing problem of sexual abuse in the Church are elusive and difficult. Recent experience calls into question whether either the current understanding of the nature of the abuse or the response to it is accurate or sufficient. As the Church and its leaders search for better strategies to address this recurrent problem, it may be good to begin by acknowledging the recent increase in abuse amid growing complacency and the very strong probability that the past surge and incidence of abuse are products, at least in part, of the past surge and concentration of homosexual men in the Catholic priesthood.