

# Is Catholic clergy sex abuse related to homosexual priests?

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## Executive Summary

This report compares previously unexamined measures of the share of homosexual Catholic priests and the incidence and victim gender of minor sex abuse by Catholic priests from 1950 to 2001 to see if these matters are related. New data from the 2018 Pennsylvania grand jury report are also examined.

### Key points:

1. Clergy sexual abuse is still a problem. Since peaking 35 years ago, it has declined much less than commonly thought. The decline is consistent with an overall drop in sexual assault in American society.
2. Since 2002 abuse has been rising amid signs of complacency by Church leaders, and today is comparable to the early 1970s.
3. The share of homosexual men in the priesthood rose from twice that of the general population in the 1950s to eight times the general population in the 1980s. This trend was strongly correlated with increasing child sex abuse.
4. A quarter of priests ordained in the late 1960s report the existence of a homosexual subculture in their seminary, rising to over half of priests ordained in the 1980s. This trend was also strongly correlated with increasing child sex abuse.
5. Four out of five victims over age 7 were boys; only one in five were girls. Ease of access to boys relative to girls accounts for about one fifth of this disparity. The number of homosexual priests accounts for the remaining four fifths.
6. Estimates from these findings predict that, had the proportion of homosexual priests remained at the 1950s level, at least 12,000 fewer children, mostly boys, would have suffered abuse.

## Abstract of the Argument

Sex abuse of minor children by Catholic priests has been a persistent and widespread problem in the Church in recent years. Although over 8 in 10 of victims have been boys, the idea that the abuse is related to homosexual men in the priesthood has not been widely accepted by Church leaders.

The influential report of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice on the causes and context of Catholic clergy sex abuse (hereafter “JJR2”, for John Jay Report 2) concluded that widespread American abuse was not related to the share of homosexual priests because the reported increase in “homosexual men in the seminaries in the 1980s ...does not correspond to an increase in the

number of boys who were abused.”<sup>1</sup> The authors reported that they came to this conclusion without collecting or examining any direct data on “the sexual identity of priests and how it changed over the years”,<sup>2</sup> instead relying on subjective clinical estimates and second-hand narrative reports of apparent homosexual activity in seminaries. This reliance is surprising since, as the authors were aware, such reports could not establish “whether the open expression of sexual identity in seminaries in [the 1980s meant] that more men were entering the seminary understanding themselves as homosexual [or were] more likely to *reveal* themselves as homosexual ... than in prior decades”.<sup>3</sup> Even if they had known, the percentage of homosexual men in a new ordination class may be very different than the percentage of homosexual men in the national presbyterate as a whole.

To test JJR2’s conclusion, I examined the available data on clergy sexual orientation to determine directly whether or not, in their words, “an increase in homosexual men in the priesthood will lead to an increase in the abuse of boys.”<sup>4</sup> The share of homosexual American priests over time was estimated from a 2002 nationwide survey by the Los Angeles Times newspaper that included questions about sexual orientation, age and year of ordination. Abuse was measured by reports from Catholic dioceses, the same data used in JJR2. I looked only at allegations of current abuse, and statistically adjusted the findings to eliminate differences due to the age of abuser and year of abuse.

My findings showed that the increase or decrease in the percent of male victims correlated almost perfectly (.98) with the increase or decrease of homosexual men in the priesthood. Among victims under age 8, the correlation was lower but still strong (.77). This indicates that 1) the abuse of boys is very strongly related to the share of homosexual men in the priesthood, but that 2) easier access to males among older victims (ages 8-17) was also an enabling factor.

The increase or decrease of overall abuse also correlated highly (.93) with the increase/decrease of homosexual priests; not surprisingly since such a high proportion of victims were male. This finding was robust; the unadjusted correlation, illustrated in the Figure 10 below, was still a strong .90. About half of this association was accounted for by the rise of subcultures or cliques of sexually active homosexual priests and faculty in Catholic seminaries, which was also measured by the LA Times survey. Prior to the 1950s the proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood was about the same as in the general population. By the 1980s homosexual men made up over 16% of the presbyterate, which is over 8 times that of the general population. That increased presence of homosexual priests has been accompanied by an increase of about 24 additional incidents of currently-reported abuse per year. Extrapolating to all reported abuse, we can estimate that if the concentration of homosexual men in the Catholic priesthood had remained at its relatively low level of the early 1950s, abuse would have been about 85% lower, sparing an estimated 12,594 children, mostly boys, from sexual victimization by Catholic priests

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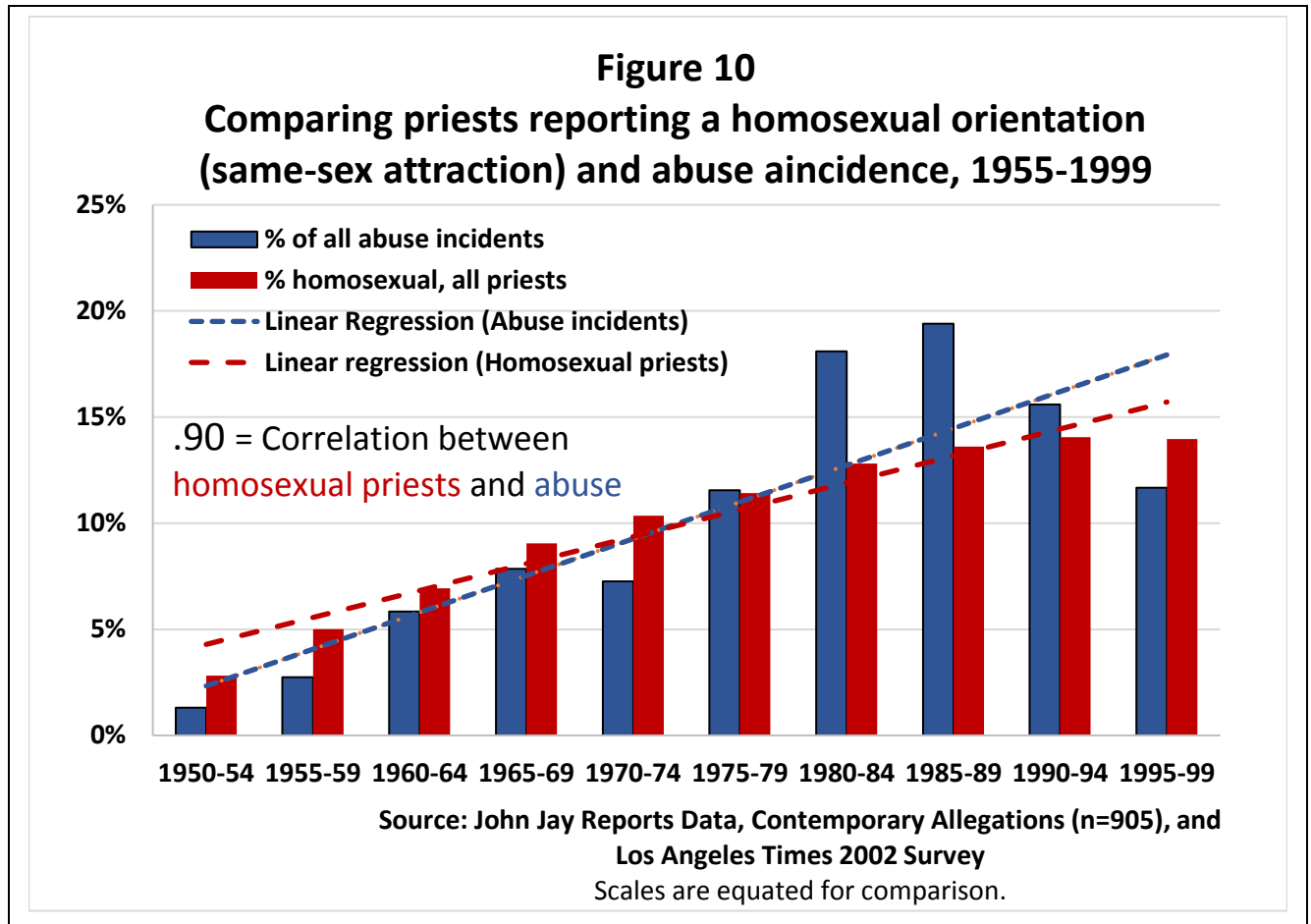
<sup>1</sup> John Jay College, “The Causes and Context of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests in the United States, 1950-2010,” Commissioned by the U.S. Catholic Bishops, May 2011, 100, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/The-Causes-and-Context-of-Sexual-Abuse-of-Minors-by-Catholic-Priests-in-the-United-States-1950-2010.pdf>.

<sup>2</sup> John Jay College, 100.

<sup>3</sup> John Jay College, 38.

<sup>4</sup> John Jay College, 102.

in the United States.



## Introduction

Ongoing revelations in 2018 of serious sexual misconduct by Catholic clergy catapulted the issue to the renewed attention and concern of both Catholics and non-Catholics worldwide. On August 12, 2018, a statewide grand jury in Pennsylvania released a report detailing decades of horrific child sex abuse by Catholic priests, the ineffectiveness of bishops and dioceses to prevent the abuse, and the ongoing legal efforts to keep it hidden. In just 6 of the 195 U.S. dioceses, over 1,000 children had been victimized by over 250 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 since 1946.<sup>5</sup> These disclosures followed earlier revelations of widespread sex abuse of minors by both priests and bishops in Chile, and the credible discovery that the prominent prelate Theodore McCarrick, former Cardinal Archbishop of Washington, D.C., had sexually abused minors and seminarians for decades, covering it up with hush money from Church funds.

To many Americans, 2018 seemed to be a replay of the year 2002, when a previous spate of clergy child sex abuse allegations led to the establishment of strict policies and norms to increase child safety in Catholic settings, expressed in the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young Adults (“Charter” or “Dallas Charter”). The Church commissioned a national review of the nature and scope of clergy child sex abuse, which revealed, in a 2004 report from the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (“John Jay College”),<sup>6</sup> that since 1950 over

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<sup>5</sup> 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” (Deutsche Bischofskonferenz, September 2018), [https://dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse\\_downloads/dossiers\\_2018/MHG-Study-eng-Endbericht-Zusammenfassung.pdf](https://dbk.de/fileadmin/redaktion/diverse_downloads/dossiers_2018/MHG-Study-eng-Endbericht-Zusammenfassung.pdf).

<sup>6</sup> John Jay College, “The Nature and Scope of the Problem of Sexual Abuse of Minors by Catholic Priests and Deacons in the U.S.,” Commissioned by the U.S. Catholic Bishops, February 27, 2004, <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/upload/The-Nature-and-Scope-of-Sexual-Abuse-of-Minors-by-Catholic-Priests-and-Deacons-in-the-United-States-1950-2002.pdf>.

10,000 children, mostly boys, had been sexually abused by over 4,000 Catholic priests. That similar misconduct was again in the headlines in 2018 prompted surprise, dismay and, for some, frustration and anger. Sixteen years after taking costly steps 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 ways, the sense of *déjà vu* belied the nature of the evidence, since the bulk of the “new” revelations were actually restatements of the older revelations. A large proportion of the incidents revealed by the Pennsylvania grand jury in 2018 had already been reported in 2004. What was new in 2018 was not primarily the revelation of abuse by priests, but 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 the suggestion of a cover-up: indeed, to the extent bishops may have covered up priestly misbehavior, the Charter itself may have covered up episcopal misbehavior. Did the Charter fail to address these issues at the direction of the bishops? Could the Charter review be tainted or restricted by the desire of the bishops not to address uncomfortable or embarrassing facts?

John Jay College eventually produced two comprehensive reports on Catholic clergy sex abuse. These reports offered thoughtful analysis of many questions regarding the abuse, emphasizing that the abuse was situational and opportunistic in ways that were encouraged by features of Catholic institutional culture and parish life. The present analysis confirms this important insight, while reconsidering two comparatively narrow questions of fact addressed in the John Jay reports. The first report, published as aforementioned in 2004 on the nature and

scope of the abuse,<sup>7</sup> reassuringly concluded that the abuse was a transient phenomenon peaking in the 1970s that now had largely passed. The second report, published in 2011 on the causes and context of the abuse,<sup>8</sup> notably concluded that, despite the fact that over three-fourths of the child victims were male, the abuse had no relation to clergy homosexuality.<sup>9</sup> This report takes a critical look at both of these conclusions, addressing the questions: Is Catholic clergy sex abuse extremely rare today compared to earlier decades, and is it related to homosexual<sup>10</sup> priests?

## Data and Methods

The present report draws on four primary data sources:

1) A comprehensive census of sex abuse allegations involving minors against Catholic clergy since 1950 collected in 2002 by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice (“JJR Data”). As already noted, this data collection was commissioned by the United States Conference of Catholic Bishops (USCCB) as part of an effort to increase child safety in Catholic settings, which was expressed in the 2002 Charter for the Protection of Children and Young Adults (“Charter” or “Dallas Charter”). The present study examines the data on victims, which was a part of a larger body of evidence collected also on perpetrators, institutional settings and psychological profiles, which became the basis of two comprehensive reports published by the research team at John Jay College in 2004 and 2011, on the scope<sup>11</sup> (“JJR1, i.e. “John Jay Report

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<sup>7</sup> John Jay College.

<sup>8</sup> John Jay College, “Causes and Context.”

<sup>9</sup> John Jay College, 74, 100.

<sup>10</sup> In this report, in order to be consistent with the usage of the John Jay Reports and the survey data, I use the word “homosexual”, rather than 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 in this study 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.

<sup>11</sup> John Jay College, “Nature and Scope.”

1”) and causes<sup>12</sup> (“JJR2”) of the sex abuse of minors by Catholic clergy in the United States. All dioceses in the United States were required to submit their records. The data are therefore very comprehensive, but the fact that the combined data de-identifies both diocese and perpetrator limits their usefulness. The file contains information on 10,667 cases of alleged victimization by 4,262 perpetrators from 1950 to 2002.<sup>13</sup> The average number of victims was 2.5, ranging from 1 to 159. One hundred forty priests (3.3% of all abusers) abused ten or more victims each, together accounting for 2,710 victims, or 25.4% of total victims.<sup>14</sup>

2) Audit reports on allegations of sex abuse or misconduct collected annually by the USCCB since 2004.<sup>15</sup> 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 the Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA). Through 2017 new allegations totaled 4,465 (“Audit reports”); most new allegations reported past abuse. The present study makes use of the published reports and charts; I did not have access to the actual data.

3) The aforementioned report of a statewide grand jury in Pennsylvania on sex abuse allegations against Catholic priests in 6 dioceses in Pennsylvania (“GJR Data”). The 1,233-page report included a roster of 564 pages detailing 924 incidents of reported abuse by 263 priests from 1924 to 2016. As with the JJR Data, an incident may include multiple victims or multiple instances of abuse of a single victim. The average number of victims per perpetrator was 3.5,

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<sup>12</sup> John Jay College, “Causes and Context.”

<sup>13</sup> I am grateful to Dr. Margaret Leland Smith and Dr. Karen Terry of the John Jay College of Criminal Justice for their kind provision of this data file and technical assistance in using it. Needless to say, they are not responsible for the interpretation of the data in this report or any errors therein, which are my own. The file used in this report is aggregated by victim, and the numbers may vary slightly from those in JJR1 or JJR2 which report on offenders.

<sup>14</sup> 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, no. 5 (May 2008): 629–42, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0093854808314389>.

<sup>15</sup> Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “Annual Report on the Implementation of the Charter for the Protection of Children and Young People” (United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, May 2017), Annual reports since 2004 are archived at <http://www.usccb.org/issues-and-action/child-and-youth-protection/archives.cfm>.



ranging from 1 to 27. Sixteen priests (6.1% of total perpetrators) abused ten or more victims each, together accounting for 275 victims, or 30% of total victims. Unlike the JJR Data and Audit reports, the GJR Data also included allegations of adult sexual misconduct, which comprised eight percent of total allegations, as well as the identity of perpetrators and dioceses.

4) A 2002 survey of Catholic priests by the *Los Angeles Times* newspaper (“LA Times Data”). Prompted by the then-current scandal of abuse revelations, the LA Times asked a stratified random sample of 1854 Catholic priests a comprehensive set of questions about pertinent issues. The survey’s methodology, topline results and main findings were published in 2003 by the LA Times,<sup>16</sup> and have been previously discussed at length in books on Catholic priests by Andrew Greeley and Dean Hoge.<sup>17</sup> In addition to using the distribution of age and year of ordination to control for age when examining trends in abuse, the present study makes use of two substantive questions from the survey: sexual orientation and the presence of seminary homosexual subcultures.

Sexual orientation was measured using a modified Kinsey scale, with only five instead of Kinsey’s original 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 were: “Heterosexual orientation”; “Somewhere in between, but more on the heterosexual side”; “Completely in the middle”; “Somewhere in between, but more on the homosexual side”; and “Homosexual orientation”. Priests responding with the latter two

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<sup>16</sup> Larry Stammer, “Most Priests Say Bishops Mishandled Abuse Issue,” *Los Angeles Times*, October 20, 2002; Los Angeles Times Polls, “Catholic Priests in the United States [Machine-Readable Data File]. USLAT2002-471,” June 2002, Cornell University, Ithaca, NY: Roper Center for Public Opinion Research.

<sup>17</sup> Andrew M. Greeley, *Priests: A Calling in Crisis* (University of Chicago Press, 2004); Dean R. Hoge and Jacqueline E. Wenger, *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood: Changes from Vatican II to the Turn of the New Century* (Liturgical Press, 2003).

responses are classified as homosexual for this analysis; 15.2% of responding priests reported a homosexual orientation.<sup>18</sup>

The LA Times survey also asked, “In the seminary you attended, was there a homosexual subculture at the time?” Possible responses were “Definitely”, “Probably”, “Probably not”, and “Definitely not”. The first two responses were combined to indicate an affirmative answer (“Yes”). A quarter (26.6%) of the priests overall responded yes, rising to 53% of priests more recently ordained (in the past 20 years). A concurrent survey by Dean Hoge of The Catholic University of America yielded 55% “Yes” among more recently ordained priests to the identical question.<sup>19</sup>

The present analysis also uses the distribution of age and year of ordination to control for age when examining trends in abuse. The average age at ordination of Catholic priests, and thus average age overall, has risen significantly over the 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the LA Times Data, age at ordination rose by almost a decade over the period of this study, from 25.6 in 1941-1945 to 36.4 in 1996-2000. It is important to adjust for rising age over the period in order to isolate any effect of homosexual priests or subcultures. Without such an adjustment, if older priests were less (or more) likely to abuse minors, it may appear that abuse had dropped (or risen) due to homosexual priests or other trends when in fact the change simply reflected an aging priest population.

### Is Catholic clergy sex abuse extremely rare today?

Is Catholic clergy sex abuse a crisis that has passed, or is the prospect of current and future abuse of children a reasonable cause for concern? The popular media often presents the specter of pedophile and pederast Catholic priests as a persistent and unique threat to Catholic

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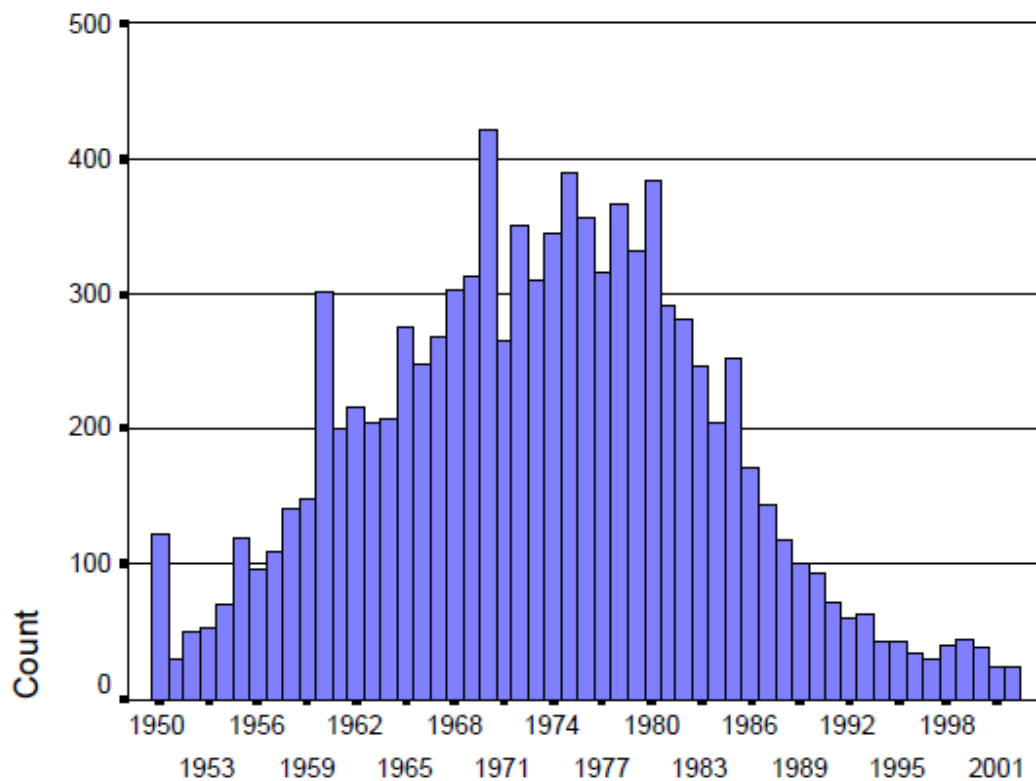
<sup>18</sup> Survey-based measures of sexual orientation typically understate the true proportion of non-heterosexual persons due to stigma or concealment. However, on the LA Times survey non-response to the sexual orientation question was only 5%, much less than on most similar surveys, suggesting concealment was low.

<sup>19</sup> Hoge and Wenger, *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood*, 101–2.

children. Many parents today express concern for their children’s safety in Catholic schools or parish activities. Catholic defenders 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,” one Pennsylvania bishop recently assured. “We’ve become the safest place for children...”<sup>20</sup> The truth about the current possibility of priest sex abuse lies somewhere

**Figure 1**

*Figure 2.3.2* DISTRIBUTION OF ALLEGED INCIDENTS OF ABUSE, BY DATE OF FIRST INSTANCE



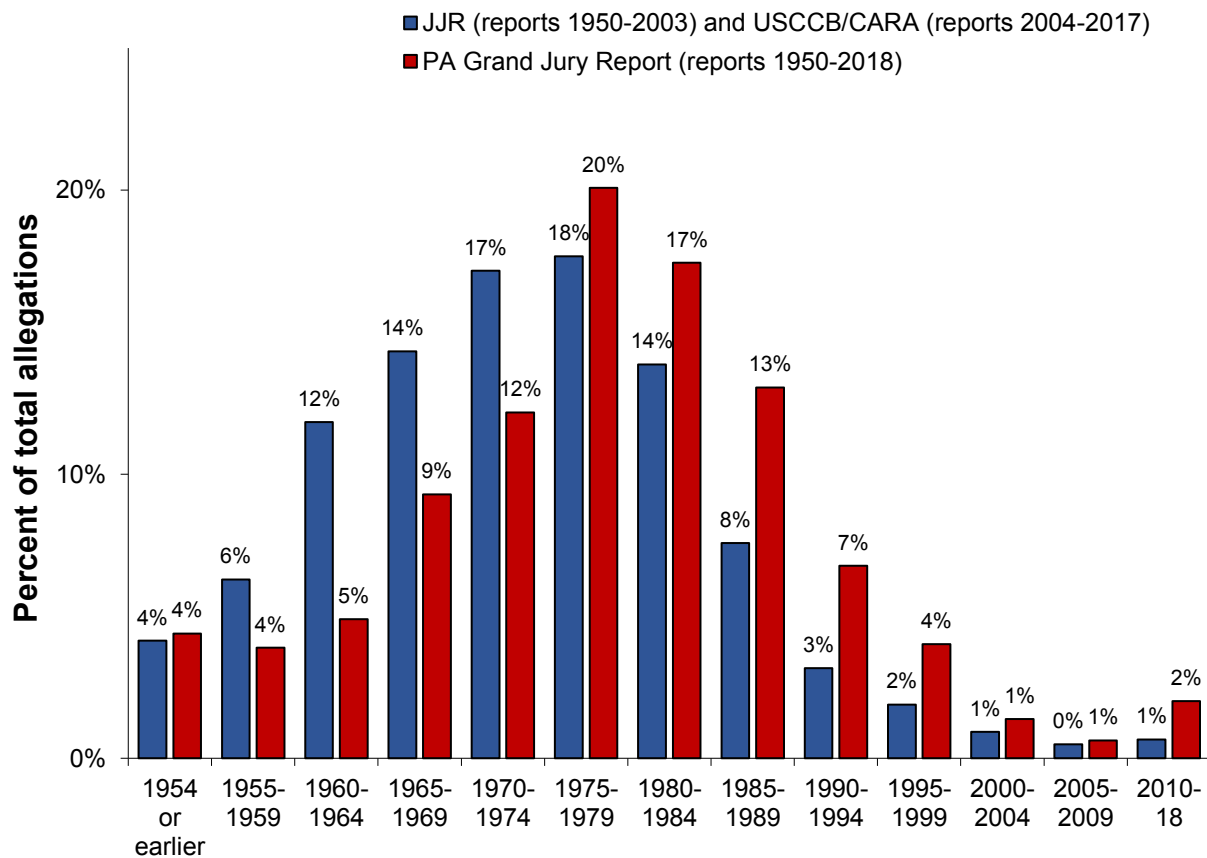
Source: JJR1, p. 28.

<sup>20</sup> Deb Erdley, “Bishop Malesic: ‘We’ve Become the Safest Place for Children,’” *Pittsburgh Tribune-Review*, August 9, 2018, <https://triblive.com/local/westmoreland/13956848-74/weve-become-the-safest-place-for-children-that-i-know-of-greensburg>.

between these contrasting ominous and rosy depictions. On the positive side, by any measure abuse is much lower today than in the mid-1970s. On the negative side, it has not dropped as much as may first appear, and is higher today than it was in 2000.

Against the media depictions are posed incident rates from JJR1 that suggest that the gross sex abuse of minors by priests was largely a transient phenomenon. The JJR data, presented in Figure 1,<sup>21</sup> showed that “the annual number of incidents of sexual abuse by priests

**Figure 2**  
**JJR plus CARA compared to GJR allegations, 1950-2017**



Source: John Jay College Reports, USCCB Audit Reports (CARA), and Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report 2018.

<sup>21</sup> John Jay College, “Nature and Scope,” 28-29 (Figures 2.3.1 and 2.3.2).

during the study period increased steadily to a peak in the late 1970s and early 1980s and then declined sharply after 1985.<sup>22</sup> By the mid-1990s abuse had dropped by over three- fourths from its peak, and by 2002, when the JJR data collection ended, reported incidents of clergy sex abuse were lower than at any time since the 1950s. The distribution of allegations in the Audit Reports and the GJR Data, shown in Figure 2, confirm this pattern. In the Audit Reports, just 228 (4.2%) of 5409 incidents reported since 2002 involved abuse that occurred since 2000. In the GJR data, only 23 incidents (2.9% of the total) involved abuse since 2002, when the U.S. bishops instituted the Charter.

To conclude that the sharp decline in reported incidents from these sources signals an equivalent drop in current abuse, however, would be highly misleading. A large majority of cases are not reported until well after the fact. Ninety-one percent of the incidents in the JJR data and 79% in the GJR data are retrospective, reporting events that happened in the past, usually by a factor of decades. In the JJR data, the retrospective reports describe events that happened an average of 24.3 years ago, with more recent reports looking back even farther. In the GJR data, which contains sixteen years of more recent reports than JJR, the retrospective reports look back an average of 28.7 years. When the large majority of abuse reports do not surface for close to three decades, at any point in time the present will look relatively abuse free compared to several decades earlier. By these retrospective measures, we cannot know how much abuse is happening now until 30 years from now, or more, by which time the reports of a decline may not be borne out.

To get a sense of how serious this bias might be, in Figure 3 I compare the allegations that report current abuse with those that report retrospective abuse in the JJR data. As the above analysis predicts, the retrospective allegations are clearly cut off on the right side, rapidly

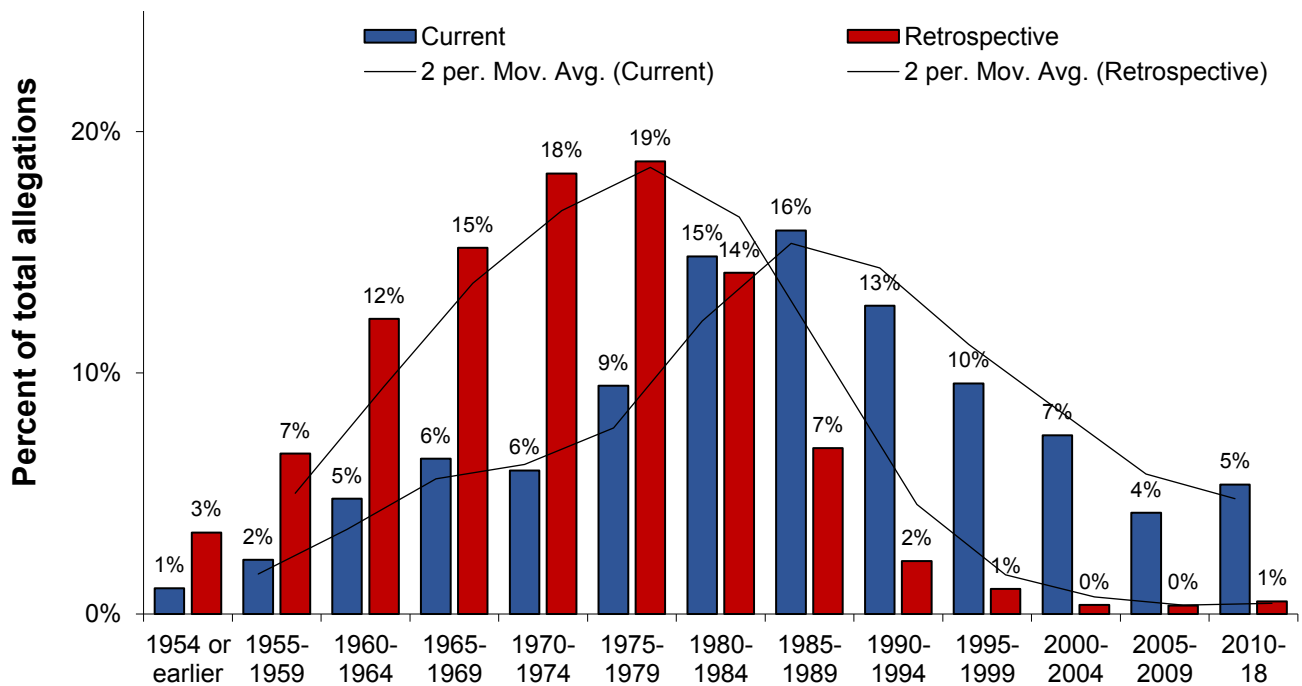
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<sup>22</sup> John Jay College, "Causes and Context," 8.

diminishing to almost nothing, compared to 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, and make the peak of the abuse appear to occur somewhat earlier, than do the current allegations.

The retrospective distribution shown in Figure 3 (the red bars) proposes that there has been a 190% drop in abuse incidence (from 19% to 1%) from the late 1970s through the 2000s, whereas the current allegations (the blue bars) track a 75% decline (from 16% to 4%) from the

**Figure 3**  
**Comparing retrospective and current abuse allegations by year of alleged abuse, in percent**



Source: John Jay Reports for 1950-2002 allegations and annual USCCB Audit Reports (CARA) for 2004-2017 allegations.

late 1980s through the late 2000s. Which of these two distributions is more plausible? For the retrospective allegations the distribution when the allegations were made by year is very different than the distribution of when the alleged abuse occurred by year, raising questions about the sensitivity of allegations to factors not associated with abuse itself, such as publicity, legislative or financial incentives or the process of therapeutic discovery.<sup>23</sup> 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. Are the current allegations plausibly related to abuse trends?

JJR2 advised that the rise in clergy minor sex abuse in the 1960s and 1970s was consistent with a general rise in other types of crime and abuse<sup>24</sup> in American society. This suggests that the drop in clergy minor sex abuse since the 1980s would also be consistent with a general decline in similar crime. There is no corresponding decline in crime comparable to the dramatic drop to almost nothing suggested by the retrospective allegations, however there is multiple evidence of a more moderate general decline in child sex abuse that is similar, in both time and scope, to the decline trend shown by the current allegations. As reported by Finkelhor and Jones at the University of New Hampshire's Crimes Against Children Research Center: "The fourth National Incidence Study of Child Abuse and Neglect found a 45% decline in sexual abuse and a 26% decline in physical abuse between 1993 and 2005. Similarly, data from child protection authorities show a 53% decline in sexual abuse and 45% decline in physical abuse over a similar period (1992–2006). Police reports of rape (about 50% of which involve minors) declined 27% during 1993–2006. And the National Crime Victimization Survey [NCVS] found

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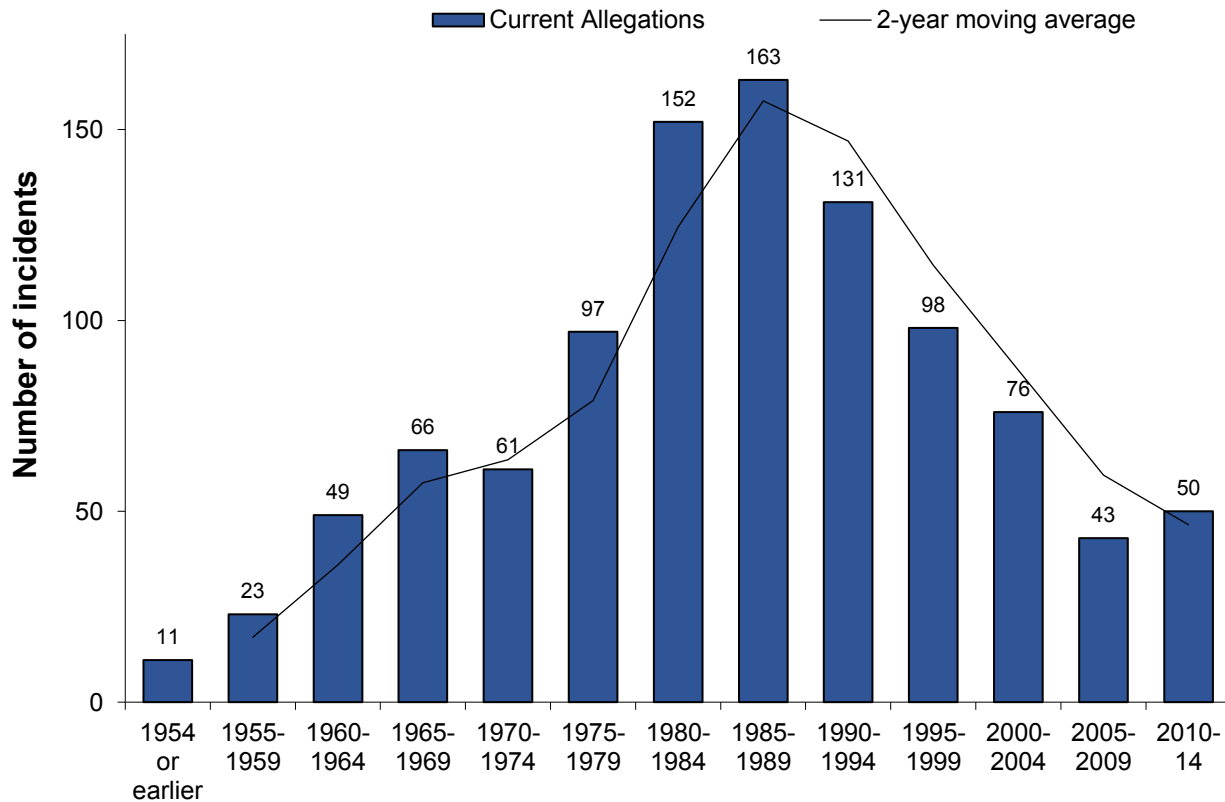
<sup>23</sup> Margaret Leland Smith, Andres F. Rengifo, and Brenda K. Vollman, "Trajectories of Abuse and Disclosure: Child Sexual Abuse by Catholic Priests," *Criminal Justice and Behavior* 35, no. 5 (2008): 570–582.

<sup>24</sup> John Jay College, "Causes and Context," 3.

a 67% decrease in sexual assaults to juveniles aged 12–17 years between 1993 and 2004.”<sup>25</sup>

Indeed, JJR1 reported data from the National Child Abuse and Neglect Data System showing a 51% decline in the national child sexual abuse rate from 1992 to 2001.<sup>26</sup> From the 1990-94 period to the 2005-09 period, current allegations of clergy sex abuse dropped by 69%, consistent with the general decline in sex abuse over the period, and closely tracking the decline in the NCVS. Of the two possible types of allegations, then, it appears that the trend in current

**Figure 4**  
**Alleged incidents of current abuse by year:**  
**JJR/USCCB Data**



Source: John Jay Reports for 1950-2002 allegations and annual USCCB Audit Reports (CARA) for 2004-2017 allegations.

<sup>25</sup> David Finkelhor and Lisa M. Jones, “Have Sexual Abuse and Physical Abuse Declined Since the 1990s?,” 2012; David Finkelhor and Lisa Jones, “Trends in Child Maltreatment,” *The Lancet* 379, no. 9831 (2012): 2048–2049.

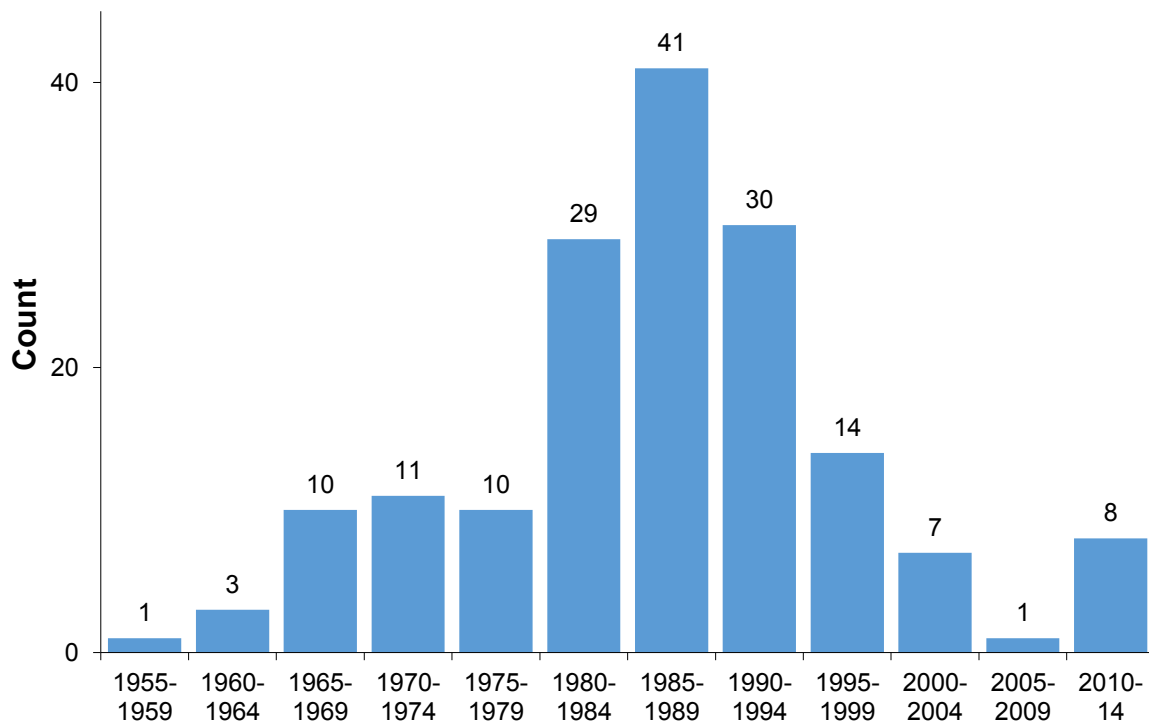
<sup>26</sup> John Jay College, “Nature and Scope,” 154–57.



allegations is much more consistent with known trends in similar crime, and thus with probable changes in the actual incidence of clergy sex abuse.

The distribution of current allegations, shown in Figure 4, differs from that of the retrospective allegations in two important ways. First, as noted, instead of a rapid plummet by a factor of 19—an artifact of the reporting lag in retrospective reports—the current allegations present a steady decline in abuse incidents by 74% from their peak in the late 1980s (163 incidents) through the late 2000s (43 incidents). Second, we can see a possible increase in abuse

**Figure 5**  
**Alleged incidents of current abuse by year: GJR Data**

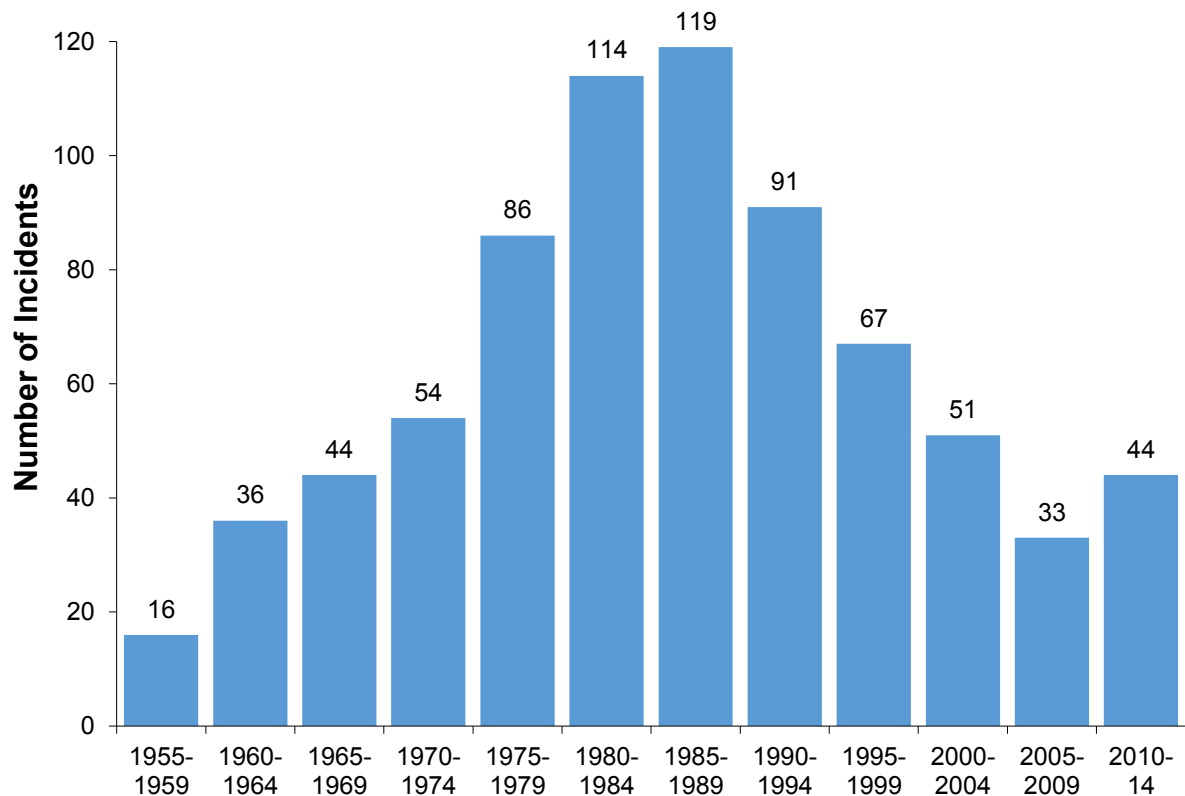


Source: Pennsylvania Grand Jury Report 2018.

incidents since 2010.<sup>27</sup> Since a recent increase in abuse would be of significant concern, it is worth looking closer to see if it also shows up in other measures.

Figure 5 reports the comparable trend in current allegations from the GJR Data. Unlike the JJR/USCCB data, which combines two separate reporting efforts, the GJR data reflect a single source of information through 2018. Although with more volatility than the JJR/USCCB data due to the smaller number of cases, the GJR allegations confirm the suggestion of a recent increase in sex abuse incidents. In this body of allegations, there was only one reported incident of current abuse in the five years after 2004, but from 2010-2014 there were 8 incidents

**Figure 6**  
**Publicly reported incidents of current abuse by year:**  
**SACCADAS Data**



Source: SACCADAS Database of public Catholic clergy sex abuse reports, at VictimSpeakDB.org. Shown are reported allegations of abuse that occurred since the immediate past year in the United States.

committed by 5 unique perpetrators.

Figure 6 presents yet more evidence from public records such as media accounts and court documents, which have been compiled into a comprehensive database by the journalist G. R. Pafumi at the website VictimSpeakDB.org. These largely comprise a subset of the JJR Data, since over 40% of the perpetrators known to dioceses have not been publicly reported.<sup>28</sup>

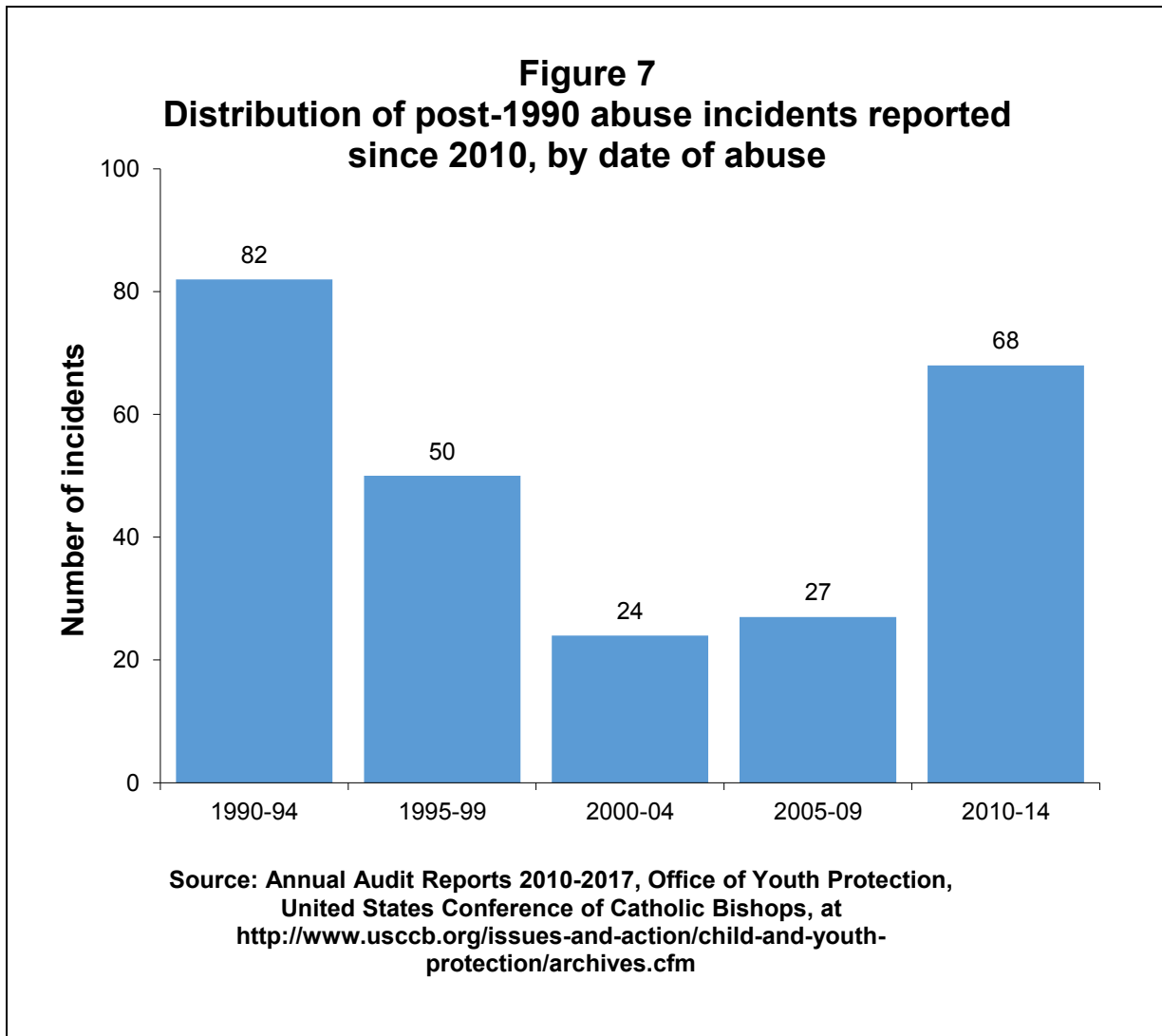
Nonetheless, the trend in incidence is very similar to that shown in the JJR and GJR data. Figure 6 shows public reports of abuse since the immediate past year. As in Figure 4, in Figure 6 the incidence of abuse peaked in the 1980s, then declined by about three quarters (72.2%) through the 2005-2009 period before rising again in the most recent period.

Figure 7 focuses more closely on the recent trend in abuse incidence as evidence in the USCCB Audit Reports. The figure shows the distribution of abuse by incident date for all the allegations made since 2010 which reported abuse that occurred after 1990. If abuse incidents were continuously declining, each more recent period should show a lower proportion of reported abuse. Instead, consistent with the other evidence shown, we see that abuse declined through to a low level in the decade of the 2000s but has rebounded to a much higher level in the current decade.

All four of these data sources present a similar trend: the incidence of minor sex abuse by Catholic clergy peaked in the 1980s, dropped by about 75% through the 1990s to a low point in the first decade of the 2000s, and has subsequently begun to rise again. Although most of the decline in incidence preceded 2002, the lowest point follows the adoption of the Charter in that year, implementing strict preventive safeguards in Catholic parishes and institutions. Is it

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<sup>28</sup> GR Pafumi, "Survivor Accounts of Catholic Clergy Abuse, Denial, Accountability and Silence: The SACCADAS Database," November 13, 2018, VictimSpeakDB.org, reports that as of June 30, 2017, the USCCB reported knowledge from diocesan reports of 6,271 clergy perpetrators (bishops, priests, deacons and seminarians) while bishopaccountability.org, which maintains a database of public records (including diocesan websites and disclosure lists), found public reports of only 3,883 clergy perpetrators, or 58% of the USCCB total.



possible that the vigilance and resolve of Church leaders to ensure child safety in the immediate wake of the 2002 scandal has begun to wane?

The latest (2017) USCCB audit on the implementation of the Charter reports some troubling trends that confirm this suggestion. Under the heading of “Compacency”, the Stonebridge auditing firm, which was contracted to perform the audit, described a variety of resource shortages, lack of co-operation and lack of preparedness by dioceses in keeping records and maintaining vigilance regarding the requirements and/or recommendations of the Charter.

They noted that some dioceses “reported a high percentage of children as untrained”, instances of “background checks not being completed in a timely manner and/or poor recordkeeping of the background check database, which can lead to individuals going unscreened”, as well as “isolated incidences where some clergy, employees, and volunteers were not trained or background checked, but have contact with children.”<sup>29</sup> Although required by the Charter, some dioceses do not report all allegations of sex abuse they have received. Thirty-two dioceses (18%) do not require refresher safe environment training even though it has been 16 years since implementation of the program. Tellingly, the auditors note that the “tone at the top” is too often “complacency”, and complain that “[t]he auditors continue to make repeat suggestions, as issues have not been addressed from prior years.”<sup>30</sup> The recent rise in abuse incidents may reflect this growing complacency about Charter implementation.

In sum, child sex abuse by Catholic priests does not appear to be a transient problem that has largely disappeared. Judging by the most consistent measure, it is today about a third as common as it was in the late 1980s—in line with a drop in child sex abuse generally—but allegations of currently occurring abuse have been growing for the past 10 to 15 years amid denial and complacency by Church leaders. The incidence of clergy sex abuse today is comparable to what it was in the early 1970s.

### Is Catholic clergy sex 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—rather, by most comparisons, it’s substantially less common. What is notable is that the large majority of victims are male. In

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<sup>29</sup> Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, “USCCB Audit Report,” 14 Children are trained to recognize and report attempted sexual touching by adults.

<sup>30</sup> Secretariat of Child and Youth Protection, United States Conference of Catholic Bishops, 15.

most settings the victims of male sexual assault are generally female, but in U.S. Catholic parishes and schools over the past 70 years, the victims of sexual assault by male Catholic priests have been overwhelmingly male.

In both the JJR and GJR data, males and females were victimized in about equal numbers only for the tiny proportion of abuse that was with prepubescent children under age 8 (5.0% of total abuse in GJR, 5.9% in JJR). Of the remaining 95% of abuse that took place with minors aged 8-17, the overwhelming majority of incidents (83% in GJR, 82% in JJR) consisted of male-on-male abuse. Reports of comparable minor sex abuse in Germany likewise report that the victims of Catholic priests were up to 90% male, but the victims of male perpetrators in Protestant or non-religious settings were only about half (46-49%) male.<sup>31</sup> This striking difference seems to suggest, on its face, that Catholic abusers strongly prefer males as sexual objects, or put another way, child sex abuse among Catholic clergy is largely perpetrated by homosexual, not heterosexual, priests.

JJR2 rejected this idea primarily because—as the authors understood it—the rise in incidents of male-on-male abuse was not associated with an increase in homosexual priests. In their words, the hypothesis that “an increase in homosexual men in the priesthood will lead to an increase in the abuse of boys”<sup>32</sup> was not true because the increase in “homosexual men in the seminaries in the 1980s ...does not correspond to an increase in the number of boys who were abused.”<sup>33</sup> The thesis of this argument—that more men with homosexual attractions would lead to more male-on-male abuse—is plausible, but the evidence the authors cited to refute it is not.

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<sup>31</sup> 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, no. 1 (2014): 282, Table 5; 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.”

<sup>32</sup> John Jay College, “Causes and Context,” 102.

<sup>33</sup> John Jay College, 100.

Indeed, as they acknowledged, they chose not to examine any data on “the sexual identity of priests and how it changed over the years”,<sup>34</sup> but relied instead on public reports of increased homosexual activity in Catholic seminaries.

Reports of seminary homosexual activity in the 1980s is an implausible indicator of the concentration of homosexual men in the Catholic priesthood for two reasons. First, as the JJR2 authors 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.”<sup>35</sup> 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 the wave of persons “coming out” did not signify an actual increase in persons with homosexual attractions, but rather simply increased public disclosure of this personal characteristic by persons who had hitherto remained more hidden, so it is implausible to infer—as JJR2’s logic 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.

Second, JJR2’s analysis 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 an already existing 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

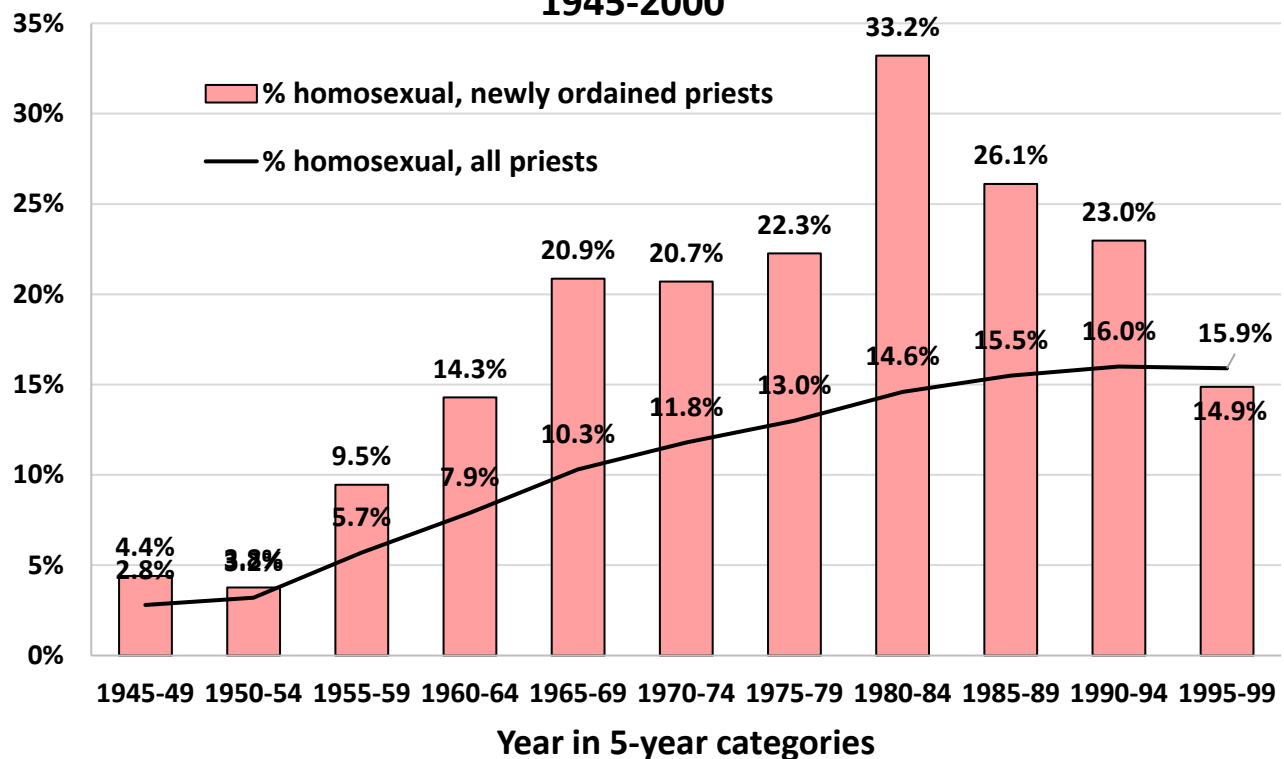
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<sup>34</sup> John Jay College, 100.

<sup>35</sup> John Jay College, 38.

1980, for example, there were 58,398 priests, of which 593, or roughly 1%, were newly ordained that year.<sup>36</sup> Even if the ordination class had been 100% homosexual—which in JJR2’s analysis would represent a huge influx of homosexual priests—it would increase the homosexual concentration of the entire American priesthood by only 1%. Even if it were measured very precisely, the homosexuality of the 1% of newly ordained priests can tell us nothing about the homosexuality of the remaining 99% of already ordained priests.<sup>37</sup>

**Figure 8**  
**Growth of homosexual men in the Catholic priesthood, 1945-2000**



Source: Los Angeles Times 2002 Survey of Catholic Priests (n = 1852).

<sup>36</sup> Center for Applied Research in the Apostolate (CARA), “Frequently Requested Church Statistics,” accessed October 21, 2018, <https://cara.georgetown.edu/frequently-requested-church-statistics/>.

<sup>37</sup> Of course, the share of homosexual ordinands may have an independent effect on the incidence of abuse in the year of ordination, or may be associated with factors that have such an effect, for example a sexually permissive clerical culture or, as we shall see below, the presence of a seminary homosexual subculture. In any event, only a small proportion of abuse (less than 10%, per the GJR data) was perpetrated by recently-ordained priests (within 3 years of ordination).



In this section I examine the hypothesis proposed by the JJR2 authors, using the available data on the proportion of Catholic priests who report a homosexual orientation. From the 2002 LA Times Data we can estimate the proportion of priests ordained in or prior to any given year who reported a homosexual orientation. The results are shown in Figure 8. The pink bars show the percent homosexual of men ordained during each 5-year period; the red bars show the percent homosexual of all men ordained prior to (and including) that period. In 1950 only 2 percent of Catholic priests were homosexual, a proportion on par with the general population, about 1-2% of whom experience homosexual attraction. But in the decade after World War II homosexual men began to enter the priesthood in percentages well above their proportion in the population, and the Catholic priesthood increasingly reflected a concentration of homosexual men. From 1965 to 1995 an average of at least 1 in 5 priests ordained annually reported a homosexual orientation, a concentration which drove the overall proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood up to 16%, or one in six priests, by the late 1990s. At this concentration, the proportion of Catholic priests who were homosexual was about ten times that of the general male population.<sup>38</sup>

It is possible, of course, that seminary homosexual activity had its own independent effect on the abuse of boys apart from the overall share of homosexual priests. The knowledge or tolerance of such activity, for example, may have encouraged potential abusers to be more active, apart from or in addition to an effect of the share of homosexual men in the Catholic clergy.<sup>39</sup> As homosexual men became more open about the sexuality in the 1980s, the increasing

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<sup>38</sup> Similar surveys of the U.S. population, most notably the National Opinion Research Center's General Social Survey, put the proportion of self-identified homosexual men at between one and two percent.

<sup>39</sup> The material in this paragraph is adapted from D. Paul Sullins, *Keeping the Vow: The Untold Story of Married Catholic Priests* (Oxford ; New York, NY: Oxford University Press, 2015), 195–96.

concentration 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 other and seldom with outsiders, and who develop shared experiences, understandings and meanings.”<sup>40</sup> According to Cozzens, such cliques had become so pervasive, including among seminary faculty, that they had come to dominate the social and communal life of seminaries. Cozzens’ concerns echoed those of psychoanalyst A.W. Richard Sipe, who argued that a shift away from the structure of highly regulated seminary life beginning in the early 1970s led, in the closely confined all-male environment of the Catholic seminary, to the development of homosocial organizations in some seminaries that encouraged “relationships with sexual objects” in widespread homoerotic behavior.<sup>41</sup> 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, not celibate.<sup>42</sup> Summarizing their findings, they reported: “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.”<sup>43</sup> Figure 9 shows the growth of seminary homosexual subcultures from 1940 to 1999 as reported in the LA Times Data. The trend shows that, while homosexual subcultures grew rapidly during the 1960s and 1970s, they have been present in seminary life at least since World War II. Over

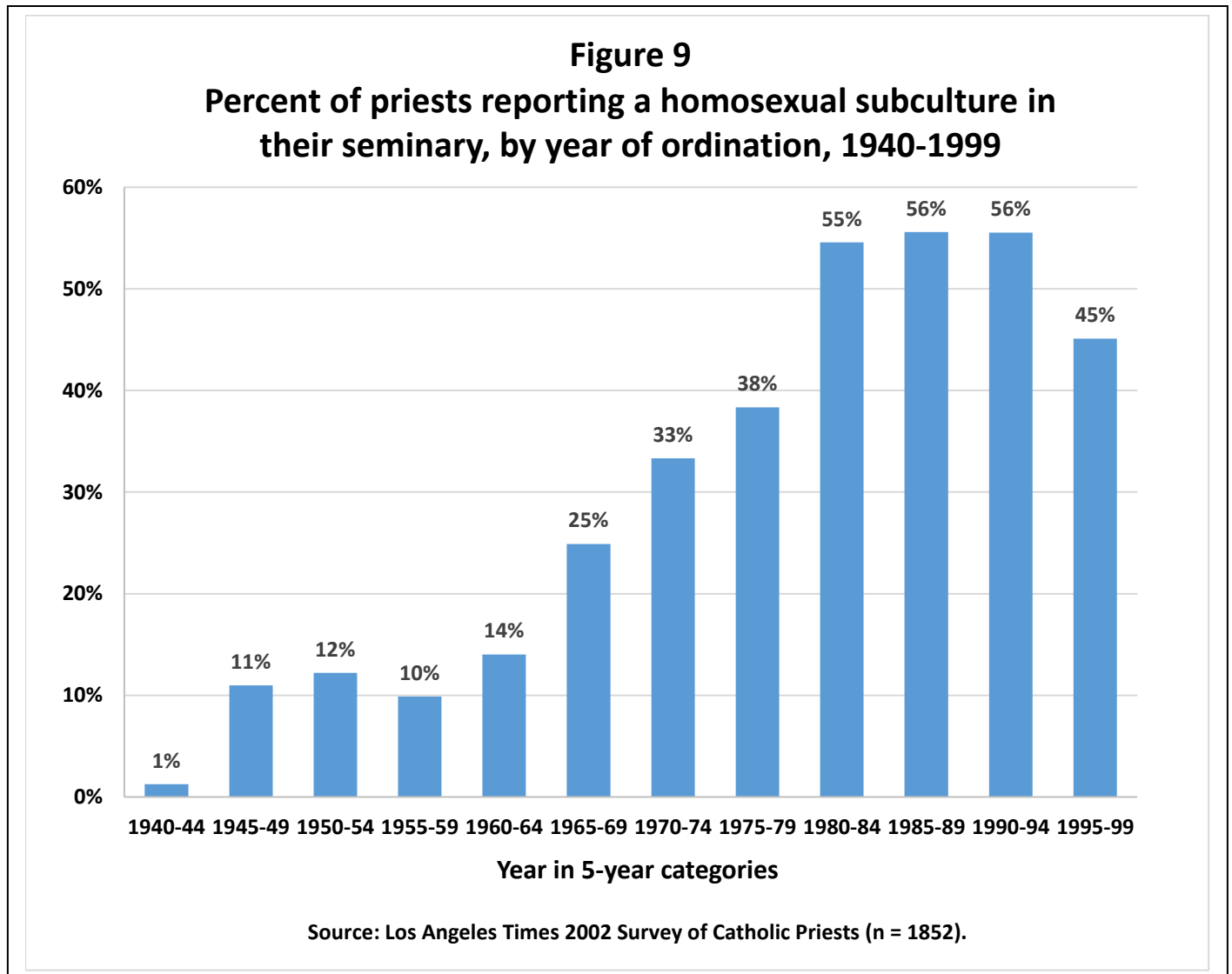
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<sup>40</sup> Donald B. Cozzens, *The Changing Face of the Priesthood: A Reflection on the Priest’s Crisis of Soul* (Liturgical Press, 2000), 109.

<sup>41</sup> A. W. Richard Sipe, *A Secret World: Sexuality And The Search For Celibacy* (Routledge, 1990), 110.

<sup>42</sup> Hoge and Wenger, *Evolving Visions of the Priesthood*, 110.

<sup>43</sup> Hoge and Wenger, 110.

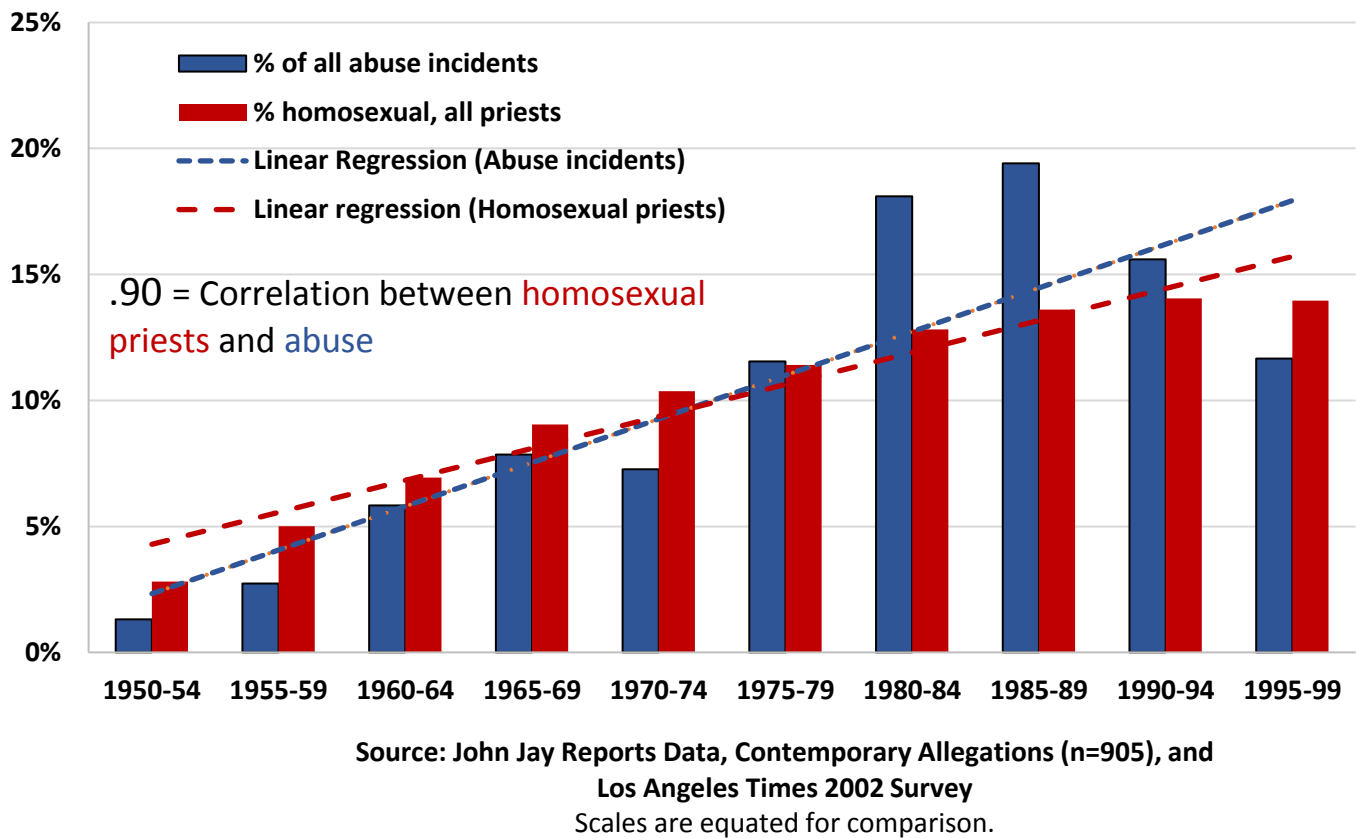


half of priests ordained in the 1980s and early 1990s reported the presence of a homosexual subculture in their seminary, but since 1945 at least ten percent of priests ordained in each 5-year period reported the existence of one in their seminary.

### Statistical association of abuse with homosexual priests and subcultures

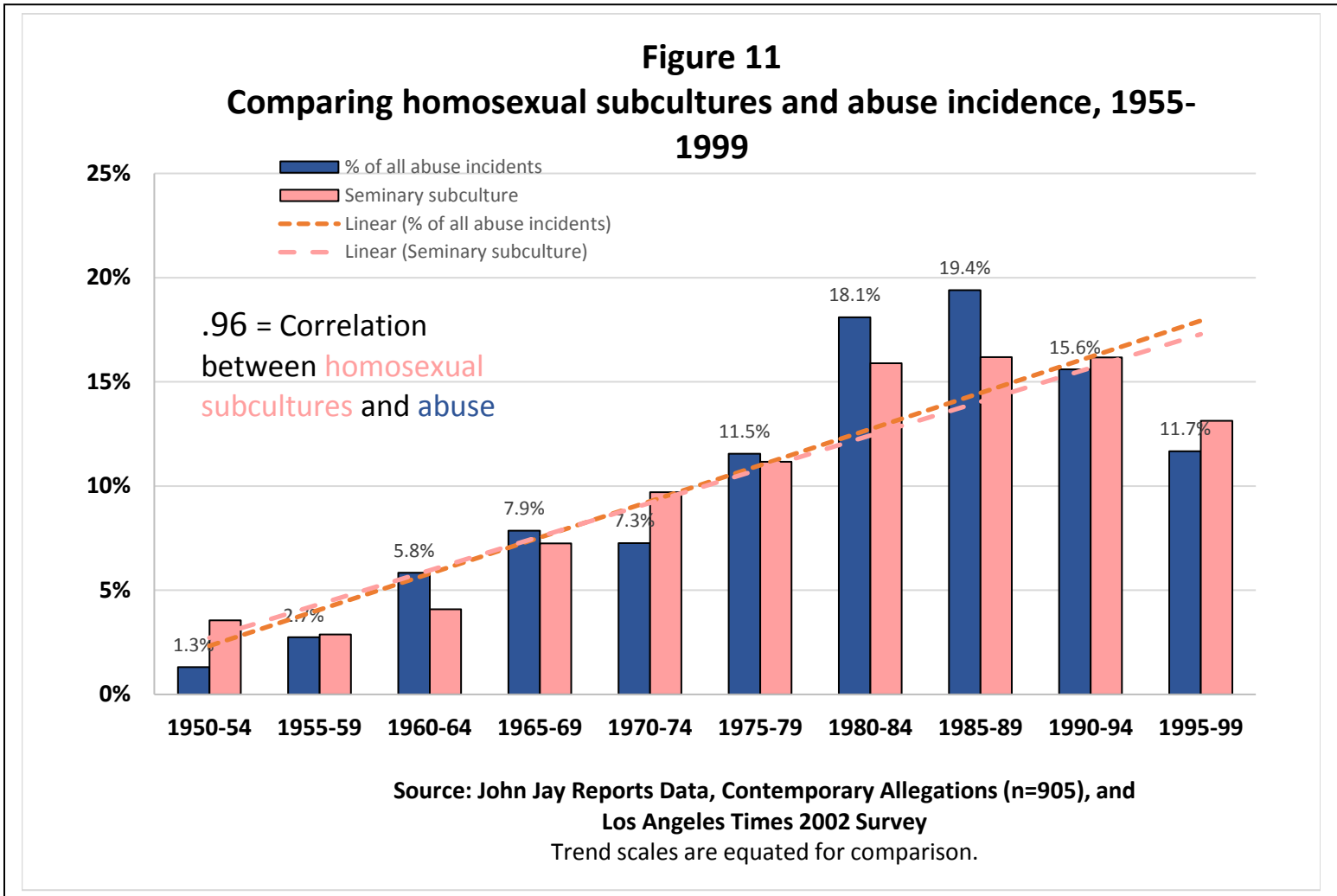
JJR2's consideration of the homosexual priest hypothesis infers a temporal trend, examining whether a rise in homosexual priests accompanied or preceded a rise in abuse incidence over time. Figures 9 and 10 present the data to examine the question on that reasoning. Figure 10 overlays the incidence of alleged current abuse with the percent of

**Figure 10**  
**Comparing priests reporting a homosexual orientation (same-sex attraction) and abuse incidence, 1955-1999**



homosexual priests by 5-year period from 1950-1999. Both trends started small in the 1950s and rose through the late 1980s, before the percent 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 them is .90, indicating an extremely strong positive association. Figure 11 shows a similar comparison of abuse incidence with homosexual subcultures. For these two trends the regression lines are almost indistinguishable; at a correlation of .96, there is almost a perfect association between them. The strikingly strong correlations shown in Figures 9 and 10 provide strong and direct evidence, by the logic set forth in JJR2, that the abuse of children by Catholic priests is strongly associated both with the

proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood and with the prevalence of homosexual



subcultures in Catholic seminaries.

These comparisons do not address the hypothesis definitively, however, for several reasons. First, JJR2 hypothesized that, if homosexual priests were a cause or factor in the abuse, increased homosexual men in the priesthood would lead to increased abuse of boys rather than girls, not necessarily to increased abuse overall. Second, the data shown Figures 9 and 10 collapse the year to year variation into 5-year categories, which may make the association between homosexual priests and abuse appear stronger than it is. Third, Figures 9 and 10 show

the association between chronological trends in both variables, not the direct association between the variables. Removing the imposition of a time trend on the variables may reveal a much lower association between them. Fourth and finally, 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, 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 and subcultures—was more important for abuse incidence, and whether only one of them without the other would have resulted in higher abuse incidence.

**Table 1. Standardized regression coefficients for the association of abuse with homosexual priests and seminary subcultures, by year: JJR Data (n=51)**

Predictors \ Outcome	Percent male victims		Percent male victims (multiple offenders)		Percent male victims (under age 8)		Male victims only		Abuse incidence	
	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2	Model 1	Model 2
Homosexual priests (%)	.98***	.87***	.81***	.63*	.77***	.66*	.96***	.44 <sup>1</sup>	.93***	.46*
Seminary subculture (%)		.12		.20		.20		.62**		.49**
Mean age at ordination by year of abuse	-.97***	-.97**	-.86**	-.86***	-.57**	-.61**	-.40**	-.41**	-.20	-.20
Highest VIF	1.8	5.5	2.0	5.7	1.7	6.4	1.8	6.4	2.0	3.8
Model fit ( Multiple R)	.79	.80	.58	.65	.58	.58	.75	.80	.80	.83
R-square	.63	.63	.34	.42	.34	.34	.57	.64	.65	.70

\* $P < 0.05$ ; \*\* $P < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $P < 0.001$ . <sup>1</sup> $P < 0.06$ ; Shown are standardized coefficients. To reduce multicollinearity age at ordination was polynomially transformed. Outcomes reference current allegations only.

The analyses presented in Table 1 address all of these concerns, to the extent that can be done with the available evidence. The table presents multivariate regression models predicting the incidence of abuse not only from the percent of homosexual priests but also the presence of a seminary homosexual subculture. Table 1 presents the same two models for each of four

outcomes: the percent of all victims who were male; the percent of victims under age 8 who were male; the incidence of the abuse of boys only; and the incidence of all abuse. This last outcome is the same as was examined in Figures 9 and 10. For each outcome, Model 1 shows the effect of the percent of homosexual priests and Model 2 the combined effect of homosexual priests and seminary homosexual subcultures, after adjusting in both models for the ordination age by year trend.<sup>44</sup> 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.

The first panel in Table 1 presents models predicting the percent of victims who were male. This outcome directly addresses JJR2's hypothesis regarding the association of more male victims, rather than female victims, with increasing homosexual priests. In Model 1, the adjusted correlation of male victims with the concentration of homosexual priests, at .98, is almost perfect, and is the strongest association in the table. Model 2 shows that the current activity of homosexual seminary subcultures does not encourage more male victims, which 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 sex abuse was due to the high proportion of homosexual men among the clergy.

### Opportunity or orientation?

The second and third panels restrict the analysis respectively to victims of multiple offenders and of pedophiles. JJR1 classified the large majority (72.3%) of multiple offenders as “generalist” offenders, who opportunistically abused a wider range of victims, by age, context and perhaps type of abuse. The implication has been that these mostly “generalist” multiple

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<sup>44</sup> Since both age of ordination and abuse incidence are highly correlated with year, it was necessary to include the interaction instead of each variable separately in order to reduce multicollinearity.

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 higher numbers of victims. See 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, grooming and the other ways described by JJR2, they appear to have used their skills to obtain access to more boys, not fewer.

**Table 2. Percent of Male Victims by Victims per Offender: JJR Data**

<b>Victims per Offender</b>	<b>Percent Male</b>	<b>Percent of Total Victims</b>
<b>One</b>	<b>67.8</b>	<b>23.3</b>
<b>2-9</b>	<b>82.0</b>	<b>51.4</b>
<b>10-19</b>	<b>88.5</b>	<b>12.5</b>
<b>20 or more</b>	<b>93.1</b>	<b>12.7</b>

The third panel restricts the analysis further, examining only victims under age 8, isolating the small group of abusers which JJR2 classified as classic or fixated pedophiles, whose primary attraction is to younger children regardless of gender.<sup>45</sup> For this group of victims there is no possibility of differential access to males. None of the victims in this group were old enough to be altar servers or to have any other gender-specific function in the Church. Confirming this point, in the GJR data, which includes information on context, the most frequent venue for abuse in this victim age group was the victim's residence (23%), followed by their school (17%); none of the abuse in this age group occurred on Church grounds outside of the perpetrator's residence.

<sup>45</sup> John Jay College, "Causes and Context," 123.



As Model 1 of both the second and third panels show, the preference for males conditional on homosexual priests, at .81 for all multiple abusers and at .77 for those who abused younger victims, was weaker than it was overall, at .98, consistent with the thesis that multiple abusers and pedophiles were more open to abusing either sex. However, though they were less selective of males than were single-victim abusers or the abusers of older victims, they were hardly indifferent to the sex of their victims or unaffected by the proportion of homosexual priests. Correlations of .81 and .77 would still have to be characterized as strong.

The question of opportunity or homosexuality is not necessarily an either/or proposition: both may be operative in any instance or pattern of the abuse of boys. The reduced correlations of homosexual men in the priesthood with the preference for male victims when differential access to males may (or may not) have been reduced (as with multiple offenders) or was non-existent (as with pedophiles, or victims under age 8) than when there may have been such differential access strongly suggests that differential access to males was a factor, but a minor factor, in the disproportionate abuse of males by Catholic priests. When the abusers could obtain males more easily, they tended to do so, but even when they couldn't, they still strongly preferred male victims, conditional on higher proportions of homosexual men in the priesthood. As a rough estimate, the ratio of the difference of the second and third panel correlations from the overall correlation (.17-.21) 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. 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 JJR2's insistence that the abuse of males was purely situational and

opportunistic, further evidence that “priests would have been seeking out males to abuse” rather than only “the victims to whom they had access”<sup>46</sup> is present in the JJR reports themselves.

Although, as they point out, the early-1980s homosexual activity in seminaries did not correspond to the height of the abuse,<sup>47</sup> which occurred (by the retrospective reports) in the mid-1970s, it *did* correspond with the height of the preference for male victims. Figure 12 reproduces Figure 5.2 from JJR2,<sup>48</sup> showing the time trend for the proportion of male and female victims.

Figure 12

**Figure 5.2 Nature and Scope: Gender of Victims of Sexual Abuse, in Five-Year Intervals**



Source: JJR2, p. 104

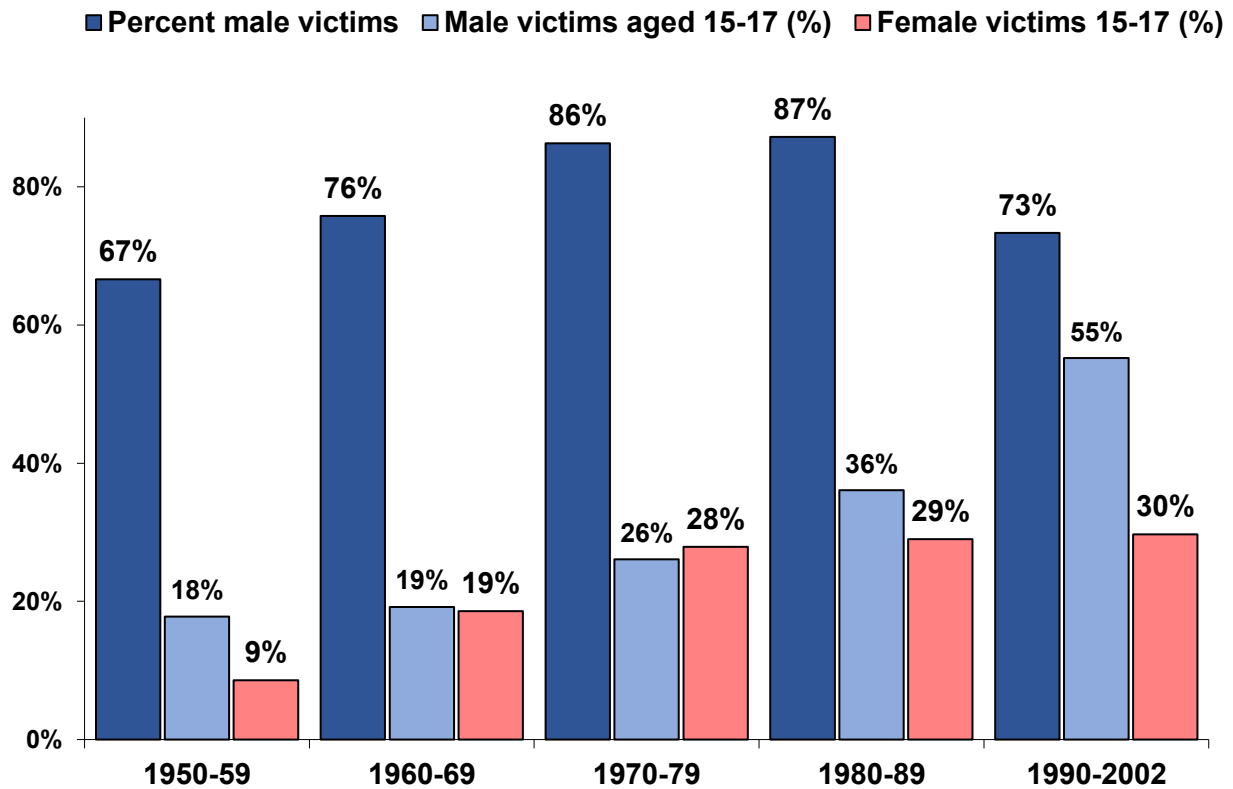
<sup>46</sup> John Jay College, 100.

<sup>47</sup> John Jay College, 100.

<sup>48</sup> John Jay College, 104.

The preference for male victims was at its highest from 1975 through 1984—precisely when, according to reports, lurid homosexual activity was peaking in Catholic seminaries. JJR2 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”<sup>49</sup> also demonstrates that priests abused more males earlier only because they had easier access to them. This argument, however,

**Figure 13**  
**Age of male victims rises as proportion drops in the 1990s**



Source: John Jay College Reports and JJR Data

neglects a sea change in the age of victims that took place in the 1980s and 1990s which is

<sup>49</sup> John Jay College, 100.

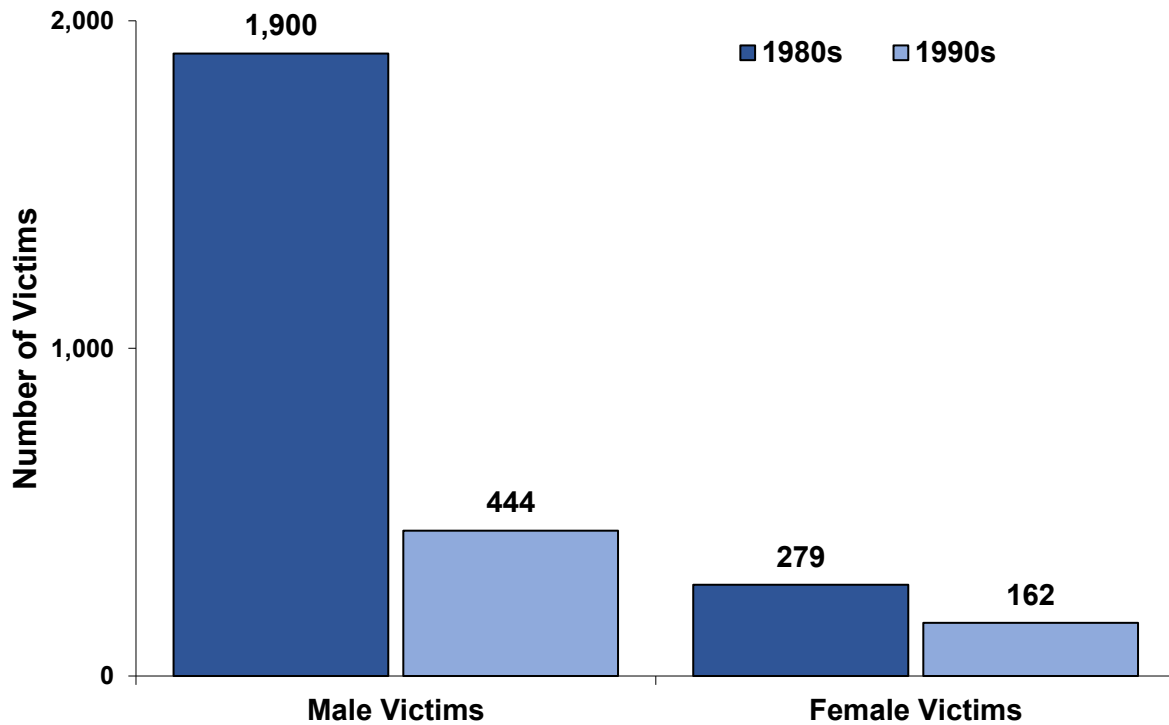
reported elsewhere in the John Jay reports.<sup>50</sup> JJR1 reported that the percent of older male victims, but not female victims, rose dramatically from the 1980s to the 1990s, as the proportion of male victims declined.<sup>51</sup> Figure 13 presents the numbers, adapted from JJR1 and JJR2. As the overall proportion of male victims declined in the 1990s, the percent of male victims over age 15 rose dramatically. In the 1980s a little more than a third (36%) of male victims were over age 15, but by the 1990s, over half (55%) were this old. This is consistent with an effect of decreased 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 1980s to 1990s decline in abuse victimization by sex, shown in Figure 14, supports this suggestion. If the abusers were generalists whose access to male victims was reduced and access to female victims was increased 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%) than did the number of female victims (43%), indicating that these trends were responding to different social and institutional factors consistent with being related to distinct categories of abusers. Put together, the data presented in Figures 12 and 13 present a picture of men who, when younger boys are replaced by younger girls, prefer older boys rather than younger girls as victims. While the JJR 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.

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<sup>50</sup> John Jay College, "Nature and Scope," 54.

<sup>51</sup> John Jay College, 54. See Tables 3.5.5 and 3.5.6.

**Figure 14**  
**Decline of abuse 1980s-1990s by sex of victim**



Source: John Jay College Reports and JJR Data

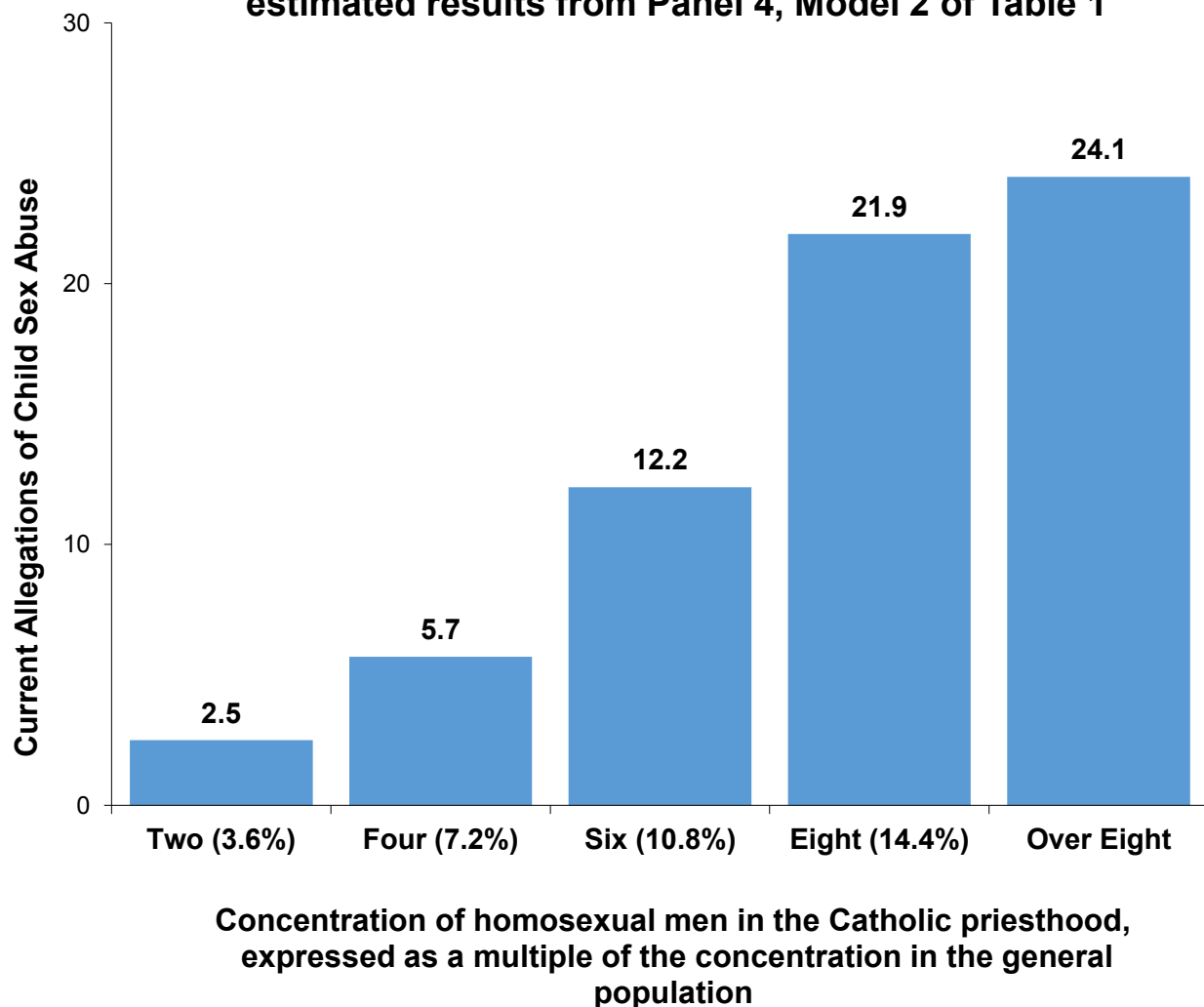
**Male victims dropped by 1,456 (77%), while female victims dropped by 117 (42%).**

### Homosexual priests and abuse incidence

The fourth and fifth panels of Table 1 turn from victim gender preference to the incidence of abuse, respectively predicting the number of male victims and of all victims. As with the percentage of male victims, the number of male victims and the incidence of overall abuse were both strongly associated with the percentage of priests who were homosexual at the time of the abuse (see Model 1 of each panel). An increasing proportion of homosexual priests not only led to the more likely abuse of males as opposed to females, but also led to more overall abuse.

Unlike the preference for male victims, the incidence of abuse was strongly affected by the presence of seminary homosexual subcultures in the year of abuse. When subcultures were included in Model 2, the effect of homosexual concentration was substantially reduced. A large part of the effect of homosexual orientation on the incidence of abuse, this indicates, can be

**Figure 15**  
**Effect of homosexual concentration on abuse, showing**  
**estimated results from Panel 4, Model 2 of Table 1**



Except for "Over Eight", categories report the range of concentration from the next lower category; i.e. "Six" reports four t

explained by the concurrent influence of homosocial seminary subcultures. Without the influence of the subcultures, a concentration of homosexual men in the priesthood would not have led to as large an increase in minor sex abuse as proved to be the case. Since without a concentration of homosexual men in seminaries the subcultures could not have existed, this finding confirms that the abuse was perpetrated disproportionately by priests who were themselves of homosexual orientation.

These findings are confirmed by the clinical findings presented in JJR2. The authors reported that “only in-seminary (not pre-seminary) same-sex sexual behavior was significantly related to post-ordination sexual behavior” (consistent with Model 2, Panel 4) 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 Model 2, Panel 5).<sup>52</sup> 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.”<sup>53</sup> 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 been same-sex sexually active prior to seminary were likely to continue or increase such behavior in seminary. Not surprisingly, those who did begin or continue same-sex sexual activity in seminary were more likely to continue in such activity after seminary than

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<sup>52</sup> JJR2 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 presents a recurring representative sample of the U.S. population since 1972, 99.3% of men who described themselves as “straight or heterosexual” had only female partners in the past year, and 93% of men who described themselves as “gay or homosexual” had only male sex partners the in past year (an additional 3% had both male and female partners). [Tabulation by the author. 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>.]

<sup>53</sup> John Jay College, “Causes and Context,” 62.

those who abstained from it, regardless of whether they had been sexually active prior to seminary, and were also more likely to engage in minor sex abuse, though this involved only a small proportion of these men.

Figure 15 shows the effect of increased proportions of homosexual priests on the incidence of child sex abuse, illustrating results from Model 2 in the fourth panel of Table 1. To show the level of concentration, the proportion of homosexual men in the priesthood is expressed as a multiple of the proportion of homosexual men in the overall U.S. population, which is about 1.8% by the most generous measure. A higher concentration of homosexual priests results in increased abuse, but the effect is not linear. Each increase of twice the population homosexual concentration approximately doubled the incidence of abuse up to eight, after which additional concentration did not significantly raise abuse further. Since the average number of incidents per year in the JJR Data was 17.4, we can estimate that, had the proportion of homosexual priests remained at its low level in the early 1950s (3.2%; see Figure 8), aggregate abuse would have been reduced by an estimated 85% from its actual level from 1950-2001.<sup>54</sup> In terms of all reported abuse prior to 2001, a total of at least 14,817 incidents, this represents an estimated 12,594 children, most of them boys, who would have been saved from sexual victimization by Catholic priests.

## Conclusion

In this report I have addressed two questions pertaining to the sexual abuse of minors by Catholic clergy in the United States: is it a crisis that has passed, or are there grounds for concern about current or future abuse of children by Catholic priests? And, since the large majority of

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<sup>54</sup> From Figure 11, predicted yearly abuse is 2.5 incidents when clergy percent homosexual is under 3.6. Dividing 2.5 by 17.4, the actual average incidents per year, produces 14.6 percent, or a reduction by 85.4 percent from actual to predicted abuse.



victims are male, is the abuse related to the presence or activity of homosexual men in the Catholic priesthood?

On the question of current abuse extent, the data show that while abuse today is much lower than it was three decades ago, it has not declined as much as is commonly thought, and the decline is not necessarily connected with measures taken by the episcopacy. Most of the decline of abuse since the 1990s in Catholic settings is consistent with—not less than, but not greater than—a similar general decline in child sex abuse in America since that time. Although immediately after 2002 abuse allegations dropped to almost nothing, today they are growing amid signs of complacency about ongoing Charter implementation.

On the question of clergy homosexuality, the data show that more homosexual men in the priesthood was correlated with more overall abuse and more boys abused compared to girls. The association of these trends was extremely strong, at above .9 correlation. The rise of seminary homosexual subcultures 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 to abuse more than they otherwise may have done by the presence or activity of the subcultures. After accounting for the influence of seminary subcultures, an increase of the concentration of homosexual men by a factor of two relative to that of the general population approximately doubled the incidence of abuse.

Solutions to the ongoing problem of Catholic priest sex abuse are elusive and difficult. Recent experience calls into question whether the current understanding of the nature of the abuse and how to reduce it is accurate or sufficient. This analysis suggests that, as the Church and its leaders search for better interventions and strategies to address this recurrent problem, a good place to begin might be by acknowledging the recent increase of abuse amid growing

complacency, and the very strong probability that the past surge and present incidence of abuse is a product, at least in part, of the past surge and present concentration of homosexual men in the Catholic priesthood.

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