

THE PRIESTS AND DEACONS ACCUSED OF SEXUAL ABUSE

3.1 INTRODUCTION TO THE PROBLEM OF CHILD SEXUAL ABUSE BY ADULT MEN

For many years, scholars and practitioners have attempted to describe and categorize adult men who engage in sexually abusive behavior with children under the age of 18. One clear finding is that child sexual abusers are a heterogeneous population of individuals. There are sexual offenders in all racial, ethnic, age, and socioeconomic categories. In describing child sexual abuse, researchers in this area have focused on the characteristics of the abusers themselves (e.g., static personal variables, such as sexual attraction preferences, and personality) and variables related to the context in which the abuse occurs (e.g., access to victims, isolation of the offender, and presence of substance abuse) as well as personal and situational characteristics of their victims in an effort to create typologies of abusers for assessment and treatment purposes.¹

One way of categorizing offenders, for example, is by the type of victim they choose. Some child sexual abusers are diagnosed as pedophiles, meaning that they exhibit recurrent, intense, sexually arousing fantasies, urges or behaviors related to sexual contact with a prepubescent child over a period of at least six months duration.² However, not all sexual abuse occurs with young children, and not all child sexual abusers fit this clinical diagnosis. Some researchers have identified a similar condition, ephebophilia, which refers to individuals who exhibit these same fantasies, urges or behaviors towards post-pubescent youths.³ While some offenders evidence a clear preference for particular types of victims with regard to age and gender, many do not. Individuals who molest children may be heterosexual, homosexual, or bisexual with regard to victim selection. Child sexual abusers who prefer female victims are more likely to be diagnosed as pedophiles than those who prefer male children while child sexual abusers who prefer male victims tend to target boys who are slightly older.⁴

A second way of categorizing offenders is based on the factors believed to produce the offending behavior. The most widely accepted classification of child molesters follows a dichotomous model consisting of fixated offenders and regressed offenders.⁵ A fixated offender is characterized as having a persistent, continual, and compulsive attraction to children. In contrast, regressed offenders are individuals who are primarily attracted to adults, but who are perceived to engage in sexual activity with children in response to particular stressors (e.g., marital problems and unemployment) or contextual variables (e.g., stress or loneliness).⁶ Subsequent research has demonstrated that while these two concepts are still important in terms of describing sexual abusing types, this classification alone is not sufficiently nuanced to describe the complexities of child sexual abusers.⁷ Instead, fixation can be understood to exist on a continuum, meaning that all offending behavior is likely to result from some varying degrees of a combination of stable personal characteristics (e.g., substance abuse) with contextual variables (e.g., depression).⁸ It is clear that multiple subtypes of offenders exist within

the population of sex offenders; however, there is no single classification system that has strong empirical support.

Empirical studies on child sexual abuse in the Catholic Church are limited. However, a number of descriptive studies have been reported which have examined small, often clinical samples of clergy. These studies suffer from a number of methodological weaknesses, such as small, non-representative samples, which limit their findings and make it impossible to draw any type of meaningful generalization about child sexual abuse in the Church. This literature, however, has focused attention on a number of important topics to be considered in studying the issues within the Church, including the difference between sexually offending and non-offending priests,⁹ the difference between sexually offending priests and sexual offenders in the general population,¹⁰ personality characteristics or backgrounds of sexually offending priests,¹¹ the link between child sexual abuse and substance abuse,¹² and the emotional or psychological development of abusive priests.¹³ The survey instrument completed for each priest against whom allegations of abuse had been made incorporated questions associated with these topics.

The following sections of the report present information about the priests and deacons alleged to have committed child sexual abuse.

¹ Robert A. Knight & Raymond A. Prentky, "Classifying Sexual Offenders: The Development and Corroboration of Taxonomic Models." in *Handbook of Sexual Assault: Issues, Theories, and Treatment of the Offender*, 3rd ed., ed. William L. Marshall (New York: Plenum Press, 1990), 23-52; and Barbara K. Schwartz, "Characteristics and Typologies of Sex Offenders." in *The Sex Offender: Corrections, Treatment and Legal Practice*, 2nd ed., ed. Barbara K. Schwartz and Henry R. Cellini (New Jersey: Civic Research Institute, Inc., 1995)

² American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-IV* (Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 1999).

³ Martin P. Kafka, "Sexual Molesters of Adolescents, Ephebophilia, and Catholic Clergy: A Review and Synthesis," in *Sexual Abuse in the Catholic Church: Scientific and Legal Perspectives*, ed. R. Karl Hanson, Friedemann Pfäfflin, and Manfred Lütz (Vatican: Libreria Editrice Vaticana, 2004).

⁴ American Psychiatric Association, *DSM-IV*.

⁵ A. Nicholas Groth, William F. Hobson, and Thomas G. Gary, "The Child Molester: Clinical Observations," in *Social Work and Child Sexual Abuse*, ed. Jon R. Conte and David A. Shore (New York: Haworth, 1982).

⁶ Groth, Hobson, and Gary; David Finkelhor, *Child Sexual Abuse: New Theory and Research*, (New York: The Free Press, 1984).

⁷ Lenore M. Simon, Bruce Sales, Alfred Kaszniak, and Marvin Kahn, "Characteristics of Child Molesters: Implications for the Fixated-Regressed Dichotomy," *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 7 (2, 1992): 211-225.

⁸ Simon, 211-225.

⁹ Robert J. Camargo, "Factor, Cluster, and Discriminant Analyses of Data on Sexually Active Clergy: The Molesters of Youth Identified," *American Journal of Forensic Psychology* 15 (2, 1997): 5-24.

¹⁰ Thomas W. Haywood et al., "Psychological Aspects of Sexual Functioning Among Cleric and Non-cleric Alleged Sex Offenders," *Child Abuse & Neglect* 20 (6, 1996): 527-536; and R. Langevin, S. Curnoe, and J. Bain, "A Study of Clerics Who Commit Sexual Offenses: Are They Different From Other Sex Offenders?" *Child Abuse & Neglect* 24 (4, 2000): 535-545.

¹¹ Calvin S.L. Fones et al., "The Sexual Struggles of 23 Clergymen: A Follow-up study." *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy* 25 (1999): 183-195; Richard Irons and Mark Laaser, "The Abduction of Fidelity: Sexual Exploitation by Clergy- Experience with Inpatient Assessment." *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 1 (2, 1994): 119-129; and Thomas G. Plante, "Catholic Priests Who Sexually Abuse Minors: Why Do We Hear So Much Yet Know So Little?" *Pastoral Psychology* 44 (5, 1996): 305-310.

¹² Mary F. Ruzicka, "Predictor Variables of Clergy Pedophiles," *Psychological Reports* 80 (1997): 589-590.

¹³ Eugene C. Kennedy, Victor J. Heckler, and Frank J. Kobler, "Clinical Assessment of a Profession: Roman Catholic Clergymen," *Journal of Clinical Psychology* 33 (1, 1977): 120-128; and Thomas P. Doyle, "Roman Catholic Clericalism, Religious Duress, and Clergy Sexual Abuse," *Pastoral Psychology* 51(3, 2003): 189-231.