

**Causes and Context  
Study:  
Interim Report**

**November 2009**



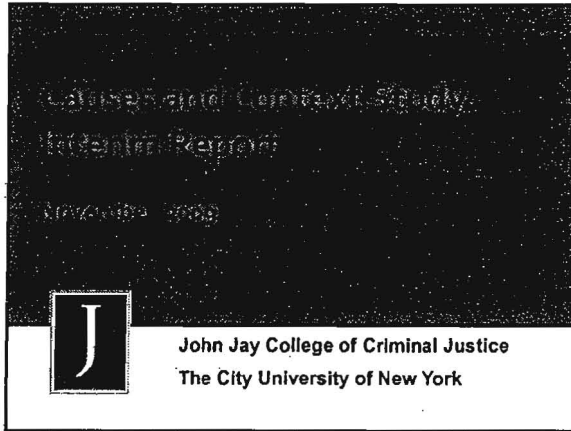
**John Jay College of Criminal  
Justice**

**The City University of New  
York**

[Portions that are hard to read

have been transcribed by

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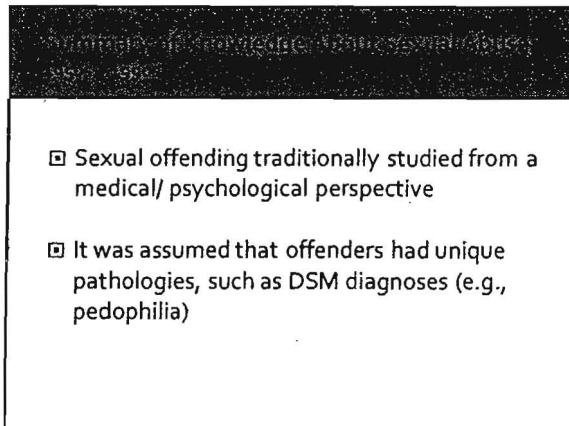


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Summary of Knowledge About Sexual Abuse  
1950s - 1990s



- Sexual offending traditionally studied from a medical/ psychological perspective
- It was assumed that offenders had unique pathologies, such as DSM diagnoses (e.g., pedophilia)

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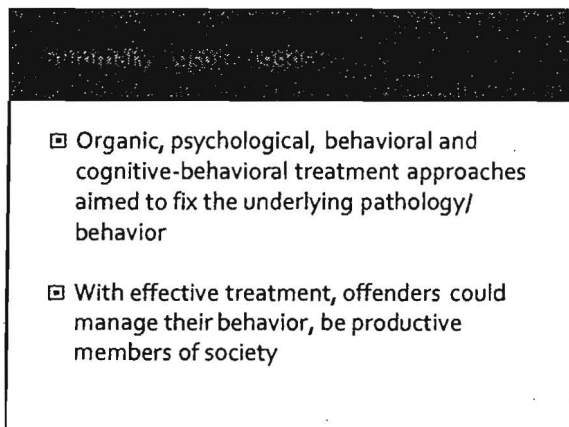


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Summary 1950s - 1990s



- Organic, psychological, behavioral and cognitive-behavioral treatment approaches aimed to fix the underlying pathology/ behavior
- With effective treatment, offenders could manage their behavior, be productive members of society

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## Summary of Knowledge About Sexual Abuse

### 1990s - Present

**Summary of Knowledge About Sexual Abuse**

- ☐ Studies began to show that sexual offending usually not necessarily based upon unique pathology
- ☐ "Sex offenders" usually do not specialize in:
  - Only sexual offending
  - Sexual offending against a particular type of victim
- ☐ Studies show that those vulnerable to abuse may initiate behavior if there are opportunities (e.g., mentoring/nurturing relationships with youths)

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## Framework of the Report

### Understanding the Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests

**Understanding the Sexual Abuse of Minors by Priests**

- ☐ Longitudinal variation: incidence of sexual abuse rose in the 1960s and fell sharply in the 1980s
  - The reports to dioceses after 2002 follow the pattern seen in the Nature & Scope study – no overall change in this pattern is expected
  - Pattern of change is consistent with other behavioral changes in society between 1960 and 1990
  - Vulnerability to deviant sexual behavior changes with cohort and seminary experience

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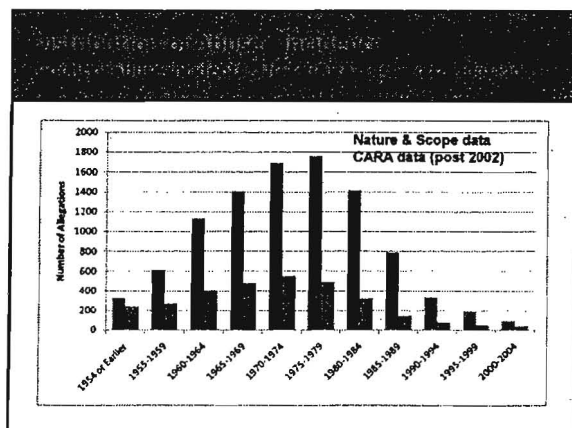
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## Distribution of Abuse: Incidence

### Count of abuse incidents JJC and CARA [illegible years]



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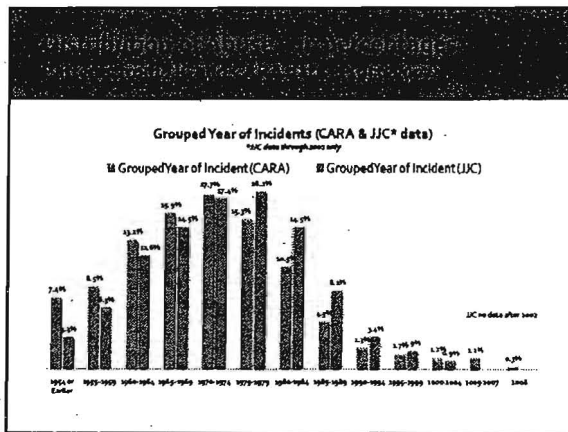
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Distribution of Abuse - in percentages  
Patterns from JJC and CARA data [illegible years]




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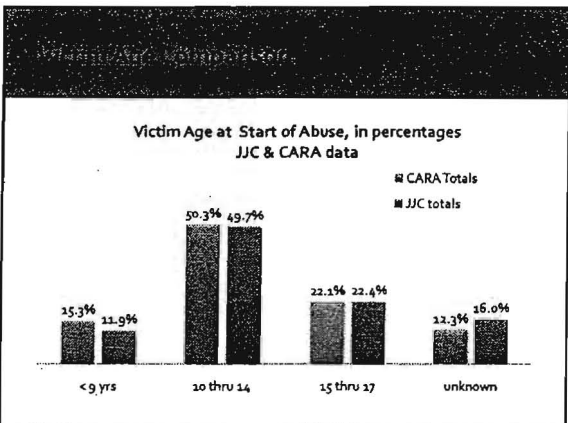
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Victim/Age Comparison




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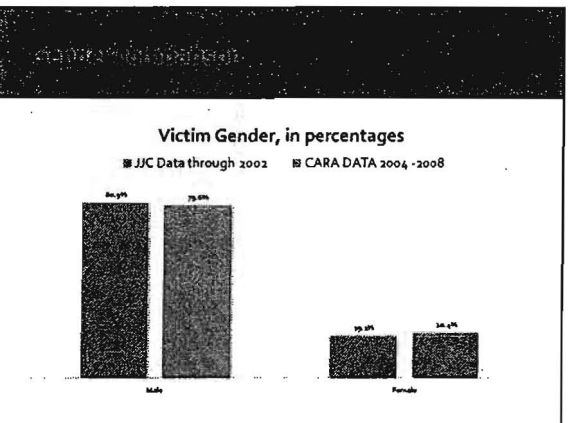
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Gender Comparison




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## Historical Context of Abuse

**Historical Context of Abuse**

- ▣ This is an historical, or retrospective, study
- ▣ The incidence of abuse of youth in the Catholic Church between 1950 and 2002 is consistent with the pattern of social change in the USA
- ▣ The study of the rate of change in incidence shows that it is consistent with that of other behavioral indicators, then overall social forces (ideas, attitudes, trends, media images, etc) shaped the events in the Church
- ▣ The study data from surveys and archival sources illustrates how those social forces were represented in seminaries, parishes, treatment facilities and in the lives of individual priests

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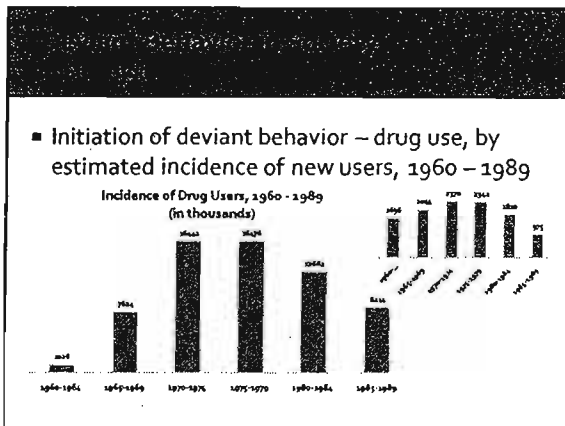
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## Deviant Behavior in Society

1960-1990




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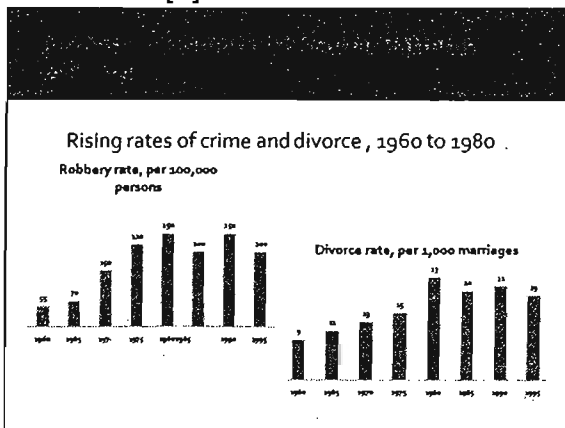
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## Increase in Disruption of Social Patterns 1960-1995[?]




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### Vulnerability or Susceptibility [Illegible] Sexual Abuse

**[Illegible]**

- ☐ Some factors that have been found to increase vulnerability include:
  - Childhood experience of abuse, neglect or rejection
  - Low self-esteem
  - Poor relationship skills
  - Desire for affection – "intimacy deficits"
- ☐ Sex (in thoughts or actions) becomes a way to feel better (address intimacy deficits)

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### Vulnerability or Susceptibility

**[Illegible]**

- ☐ May be shown in sexual thoughts or fantasies, use of sexual images and materials, masturbation, or sexual abuse of others
- ☐ Priests have no sanctioned sexual relationships, so require careful preparation for a chaste celibate life

The Origins of Sexual Offending by W. L. Marshall & L.E. Marshall, in *Trauma, Violence and Abuse*, 2000

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### Sexual Abuse and Priests

**[Illegible]**

- ☐ Priest abusers similar to general population of abusers:
  - Few "specialists" - Most do not show behavior consistent with pathologies
  - Most do not abuse many youths
  - Most have other problems in addition to the abusive behavior

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### Sexual Abuse and Priests

Archival data from 1970s and current retrospective survey data show issues of sexuality to be a significant concern to priests

- ▣ Archival data from 1970s and current retrospective survey data show issues of sexuality to be a significant concern to priests
- ▣ Priests treated after incidents of sexual abuse had multiple risk factors in their developmental histories
- ▣ Situational factors play a role in who abuses

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### Sexual Abuse and Priests

Kennedy data from 1970s shows that:

- ▣ 9% of priests were evaluated to be "maldeveloped" – having histories of difficulty with relationships and current psychological problems.
- ▣ Maldeveloped priests had difficulty with both sexuality and sexual identity.

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### Sexual Abuse and Priests

Kennedy data also shows that:

- ▣ Two out of three of the priests were seen as "emotionally underdeveloped" – implied deficiencies in developing and sustaining positive emotional relationships
- ▣ C & C survey data confirms Dean Hoge's extensive research results: morale and appreciation of seminary preparation is weakest among priests ordained in the 1970s

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## Modeling Vulnerability Individual and Situational Factors

**Modeling Vulnerability**  
**Individual and Situational Factors**

- ☐ Cognitive-Behavioral Model explains how vulnerable individuals develop sexually abusive behaviors
- ☐ Kennedy study identifies developmental issues, cognitive-behavioral deficits and personality disorders in 1970s priests
- ☐ Clinical data provides detailed narratives about the intersections of all three categories of individual "risk factors" and the situational factors specific to the parish or diocesan role and function.

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## Seminary Framing the Questions

**Seminary**  
**Framing the Questions**

- ☐ 1940s - 1950s seminary environment – closed and without any specific support for "Human Formation"
- ☐ 1960s through 1970s – environment more open, impact of Vatican II and priest resignations

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## Seminary

**Seminary**

- ☐ 1980s through 1990s - development of programs for "Human Formation", more nuanced screening of candidates
- ☐ Number of 1980s graduates with a initial reported incident of sexual offending falls to between 20 and 10 per year from the year 1970 count of 164
- ☐ Majority of offenders ordained before 1970

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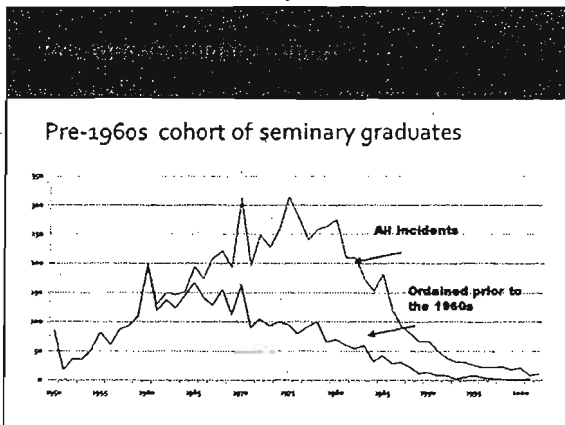
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### Pre-1960s Seminary Cohort



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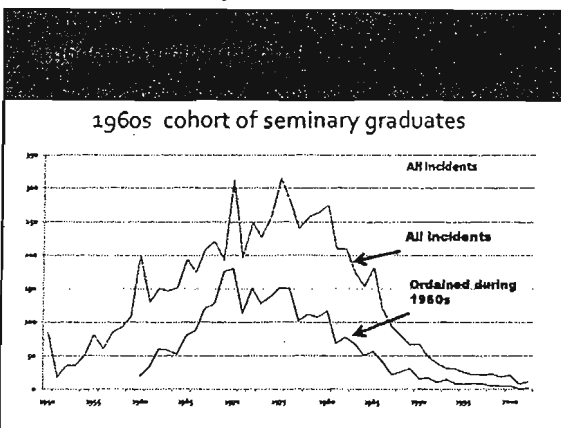
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### 1960s Seminary Cohort



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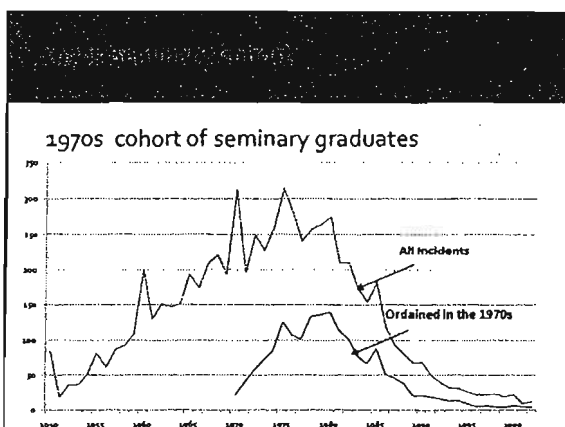
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### 1970s Seminary Cohort



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### Seminary Influences Findings

- Major expansion of new seminaries in 1940s and 1950s was not matched by curriculum development
- Factors recognized as risk factors for sexual abuse present in American clergy as they entered seminaries

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### Seminary Findings [illegible]

- Majority of abusers ordained prior to recognized increase in homosexuality in seminaries in 1970s
- The majority of clergy abusers were trained in mainstream national seminaries
- No evidence of minor seminary attendance as a risk factor for later abuse

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### Seminary Findings [illegible]

- Curriculum of "Human Formation" added in 1980s is recognized by priests as valuable; consistent with declining incidence of sexual abuse
- Explicit preparation in "Human Formation" distinguished the clergy offenders from those not accused in the Identity and Behavior Survey data.

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### Clinical Goals and Methods

**Learning Objectives**

- ☐ Understand the intersection of individual risk factors with parish relationships and situational contexts for priests who sexually abused minors
- ☐ Collecting data from three treatment centers

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### Clinical Methods

**Learning Objectives**

- ☐ Four groups of priests to be compared:
  - Priests who were accused of child sexual abuse
  - Priests who have abused others through their professional roles (other sexual misconduct)
  - Priests with diagnosed mental health problems
  - Candidates being evaluated for seminary or missionary work (i.e., those who were not referred for treatment for any type of difficulty)

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### History of Treatment

**Learning Objectives**

- ☐ Few acceptable methods of assessing and treating sex offenders prior to the 1970s
- ☐ Treatment goals based on the assumption that child sexual abusers were motivated by psychological problems or pathologies; usually addressed individual behaviors (e.g., deviant sexual interests)

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### Treatment

- ▣ By 1980s, recognized that sexual offending is the result of a complex matrix of social, psychological and developmental problems; multi-modal cognitive behavioral treatments (CBT) began to develop
- ▣ Relapse prevention components added in 1980s/1990s
- ▣ Clergy abusers treated with a variety of approaches (e.g., behavioral, CBT, spiritual, psychodynamic); little consistency in treatment approaches and standards

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### Efficacy of Treatment

- ▣ Efficacy of sex offender treatment debatable
- ▣ Most studies show that cognitive behavioral treatment (CBT) reduces recidivism by a small but significant amount

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### Efficacy [Illegible]

- ▣ Meta-analysis by Hanson et al. (2002), assessing findings from 43 studies of recidivism:
  - Sex offense recidivism: treatment group - 12.3%, comparison group - 16.8% (9.9% to 17.4% respectively, for CBT)
  - General recidivism: treatment group - 27.9%, comparison group 39.2% (32% to 51% respectively, for CBT)
  - Treatment prior to 1980s little effect on recidivism

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### Context of Victimization

Need to understand the community context of the abuse and the circumstances in which it took place

- How was the abuse initiated and able to persist?
- Research focus on "context" and historical explanation - *not* on impact of victimization

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### Context

Surveys of identified adult survivors of abuse by priests and of adult Catholic active in parish life in 1970s – 1980s

- Memories of abuse / knowledge of abuse
- Disclosure and response

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### Initiation and persistence of abuse

Goal is to understand:

- The personal life situation of the victims (family relationships, other social relationships, encounters with clergy abuser)
- Situational contexts of initiation
  - Creation of opportunities to abuse
  - Grooming behavior and / or enticements

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### Recognition and disclosure of abuse

- When encounters were recognized as abusive
- Circumstances of disclosure
  - To whom
  - How long after
  - Response from adults
  - Response from parish or diocese

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### Leadership Response to Reports of Abuse

- Diocesan focus: responding to needs of priests
- Reliance on recommendations of the treatment providers, particularly in 1980s

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### Leadership

- Lack of response to victims, no clear indication of understanding of harm
- Confusion about / difficulty with available options (suspension, laicization, reinstatement)

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### Leadership [illegible]

[illegible]

- ☐ 1980s failure to comprehend the harm to victims of sexual abuse reflects the lack of overall understanding of victimization at the time
- ☐ Diocesan responses to abusive priests changed substantially over 50 year period (less likely to be returned to active ministry, more likely to be put on administrative leave)

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### Diocesan Policies about Sexual Abuse of Minors

[illegible]

- ☐ By 1993-1994, 157 (83%) dioceses had articulated policies for responding to a report of sexual abuse of a minor by a priest
- ☐ Policies largely incorporated the "Five Principles" adopted between 1989 and 1992

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### Diocesan Policies

[illegible]

- ☐ Comprehensive policies, but limited implementation
  - Response to victim, family of victim and parish
  - Protection of the rights of the accused
  - Education of priest in diocese about sexual abuse and its identification and prevention
  - Creation of an advisory body
  - Acquisition of increased insurance for victim needs

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### Summary of Interim Findings

- ☐ Data from multiple sources shows the period of 1960s – 1980 to be singular in increase in deviant behavior
- ☐ Influence of contextual effects on priests who abuse is shown change in age at initial event of and in patterns of incidence
- ☐ Vulnerable men, little guidance in human formation, strong social influences

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### Interim Findings

- ☐ Majority of clergy abusers did not "specialize" in abuse of particular types of victims
- ☐ Generalization indicates influence of social factors/education rather than unique pathologies except in extreme cases (e.g., pedophiles)

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### Interim Findings

- ☐ Diocesan leadership responded to acts of abuse, but with a focus on the priests and not the victims
- ☐ Often relied on responses from experts outside the Catholic Church; internal policies were not consistently applied

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### Next Steps in the Research Process

- Consolidating Nature & Scope and Causes & Context data
- Analyzing the constellation of risk factors present in those priests who abused (surveys, clinical and seminary data)

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### Next Steps

- Understanding the context of victimization – the risk of inappropriate intimacy that can arise in counseling/nurturing relationships between adults and minors in organizations
- Continuing the exploration of changes in seminary education and diocesan response to abuse

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### Contact Information

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  - Margaret Smith – [msmith@jjay.cuny.edu](mailto:msmith@jjay.cuny.edu)
- Please do not hesitate to contact us directly*

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