

4.4 CHARACTERISTICS OF ACTS OF SEXUAL ABUSE BY CATHOLIC PRIESTS

Many efforts have been made to assess the abuse experiences of those who have been victims of child sexual abuse, from attempts to collect population data at the national level to small clinical studies done with a few survivors of sexual abuse. These studies generally tend to chronicle the types of behaviors engaged in by child sexual abusers, and primarily report percentages of the sample that experienced each form of abuse (e.g., intercourse, oral sex, fondling, pornography). A number of studies have compared male and female victims, although most of the male victim samples have been too small to allow for broad generalizations.

Looking at Table 4.4.1, it is clear that many of the allegations of abuse include more than one type of sexual act¹. Several points are significant:

- The categories are not mutually exclusive. In other words, the abusers could have committed multiple types of abuses.
- Very few priests have allegations of only the least severe of the abuses. Only 148 priests (2.9%) allegedly committed act of verbal abuse and/or pornography offenses without more severe offenses. Only 395 priests (9.0%) allegedly committed offenses involving touching over the clothes only without also committing a more severe offense.
- Touching under the victim's clothes is the most common act alleged. However, only 695 (15.8%) priests committed that as the only or the most serious of their alleged offenses. This means that when this abuse was alleged, it usually included a more serious offense as well.
- There are 69 incidents for which the most serious act alleged is sexual talk. These incidents represent seven-tenths of one percent, or .7% of the 9,630 surveys that reported details about the behavior that was alleged to have taken place. If sexual talk and the use of pornography are counted together, for cases where no further sexual abuse was alleged, there are 141 incidents, or 1.5% of the total.
- If talk and/or pornography use are considered together with either touching under the priest's or victim's clothing, and nothing more serious is alleged, the total number of such incidents is 1,196, or 12.4% of the total.
- If hugging and kissing, the removal of clothing, or masturbation is counted along with the acts outlined above, the total number of incidents jumps to 4,167, or 43% of the total.
- If incidents that include acts of oral sex or sexual penetration are counted alone, they total 3,280, or 34%.

Table 4.4.1 ALLEGED ACTS OF ABUSE, BY GENDER

Behavior Alleged	GENDER		Combined
	Males	Females	Totals
Verbal (sexual talk)	885	215	1,100
	11.5%	12%	11.6%
Shown Pornography	223	9	232
	2.9%	.5%	2.4%
Shown Porn videos	142	6	148
	1.8%	.3%	1.6%
Touch Over Cleric's Clothes	704	165	869
	9.1%	9.2%	9.2%
Touch Over Victim's Clothes	2,862	691	3,553
	37.2%	38.6%	37.4%
Touch Under Victim's Clothes	3,280	701	3,981
	42.6%	39.2%	42%
Cleric Disrobed	944	177	1,121
	12.3%	9.9%	11.8%
Victim Disrobed	1,112	303	1,415
	14.4%	16.9%	14.9%
Photos of Victim	169	32	201
	2.2%	1.8%	2.1%
Sexual Games	96	8	104
	1.2%	.4%	1.1%
Hugging & Kissing	324	175	499
	4.2%	9.8%	5.3%
Masturbation	663	71	734
	8.6%	4.0%	7.7%
Mutual Masturbation	1,049	29	1,078
	13.6%	1.6%	11.4%
Cleric Perform Oral Sex	1,186	274	1,460
	15.4%	15.9%	15.4%
Victim Performed Oral Sex	799	115	914
	10.4%	6.4%	9.6%
Manual Penetration	192	195	387
	2.5%	10.9%	4.1%
Penetration with Object	61	26	87
	.8%	1.5%	.9%
Penile Penetration	990	213	1,203
	12.9%	11.9%	12.7%
Group or Coerced Sex	48	4	52
	.6%	.2%	.5%
Unspecified Sex Act	942	204	1,146
	12.2%	11.4%	12.1%
Other	490	87	577
	6.4%	4.9%	6.1%

The category of "other" includes a wide array of behaviors, including voyeuristic and sadistic acts. Unspecified sex act refers to surveys that indicate sexual acts but do not identify particular acts.

This is a Multiple Response Table. The categories are not mutually exclusive.

The majority of allegations of sexual abuse were made against priests who were accused of having committed abusive acts more than one time. Only slightly more than one quarter (29%) of the allegations involve only a single instance of abuse.

Table 4.4.2 NUMBER OF TIMES ABUSED, PER VICTIM

No. of times abused	Count	Percent
Once	2,759	29%
More than once	1,734	18.3%
Numerous times	5,002	52.7%
Total	9,493	100%

Question 8 on the Victim Survey asked how many times the victim was abused. The choices were 'once,' 'more than once,' and 'numerous.'

Child sexual abusers who plan their abusive acts indulge in what is termed "grooming" behavior. Grooming is a pre-meditated behavior intended to manipulate the potential victim into complying with the sexual abuse. Some methods by which child sexual abusers approach and initiate sexual activity with their victims include verbal and/or physical intimidation, seduction, emotional blackmail, and the use of enticements such as candy, money, or other gifts. The tactics used by offenders depend somewhat on the potential victim's response to the tactic. If an offender encounters little to no resistance from the potential victim, he will continue to use the same tactic repeatedly. If, however, some resistance is encountered, the offender may either change the tactic and/or become more forceful in his endeavor. Table 4.4.3 shows the number of priests who allegedly threatened those who accused them of abuse, and Table 4.4.4 shows the type of threat that was used. Both tables display the information by gender.

Table 4.4.3 THREATS BY VICTIM'S GENDER

Victim Threatened?	Male	Female	Total
Yes	527	208	835
	14%	16.8%	14.6%
No	3,853	1,033	4,886
	86%	83.2%	84.5%
Gender Totals	4,480	1,241	100%

Approximately half of the incident-level surveys (5,761) included information on the use of threats. Table 4.4.3 is therefore based on only 50% of the reported incidents. If the number of incidents that involved a threat to the victim is expressed as a percentage of all reported incidents, 7.8% of all alleged victims were threatened in some way.

Table 4.4.4 TYPE OF THREATS BY VICTIM'S GENDER

Type of Threat	GENDER		
	Male	Female	Totals
Physical Threat with Weapon	30	13	43
	3.6%	5.0%	4.0%
Physical Threat without Weapon	74	21	95
	8.9%	8.1%	8.7%
Verbal (Harm to Victim)	179	65	244
	21.6%	25%	22.4%
Verbal (Harm to Cleric)	34	8	42
	4.1%	3.1%	3.9%
Threatened Family	26	12	38
	3.1%	4.6%	3.5%
Threatened Exposure	65	24	89
	7.9%	9.2%	8.2%
Spiritual Manipulation	173	55	228
	20.9%	21.2%	21%
Other	128	40	168
	15.5%	15.4%	15.4%
All of the Above	128	22	141
	14.4%	8.5%	13%
Gender Totals	828	260	1088
	100.0%	100.0%	100.0%

The use of gifts and other enticements to participate in sexual behavior is a common method of grooming potential victims. Tables 4.4.6 and 4.4.7 show the extent of and types of gifts and enticements made to alleged victims of sexual abuse by Catholic priests and deacons. Gifts and enticements were recorded separately, and surveys showed that in 837 alleged incidents, a gift had been given. Accused priests used enticements in 1,834 incidents, or 17% of the total number of reported incidents.

Table 4.4.5 GIFTS TO VICTIMS

Gifts Given to Victim?	Count	Percent
Yes	837	18.2%
No	3,769	81.8%
Total	4,606	100%

Table 4.4.6 ENTICEMENTS OFFERED BY PRIEST

Type of Enticement	Count	Percent of Incidents
Allowed to Stay Up	130	7.1%
Allowed to Drive	148	8.1%
Access to Pornography	151	8.2%
Special Church Activities	89	4.9%
Alcohol/Drugs	712	38.8%
Taken to Sports/Rec. Events	427	23.3%
Stay Overnight with Cleric	559	30.5%
Sports-Related	22	1.2%
Travel	67	3.7%
Food	33	1.8%
Toys, Other Gifts	7	.4%
Money	377	20.6%
Other	281	15.3%

This is a Multiple Response Table. The categories are not mutually exclusive, as a priest may have employed more than one form of enticement. Percentages are of the 1,834 incidents involving enticements.

If the number of incidents that involved gifts is added to the number of incidents that involved enticements, the results is 2,231 incidents, or 20.9% of all reported incidents of abuse.

Some sex offenders in the general population use alcohol or drugs as a disinhibitor, or as a way to reduce their inhibitions and allow them to offend with reduced feelings of guilt and shame. Some sex offenders also offer drugs and/or alcohol to their victims to entice them to participate in sexual behavior. Tables 4.4.8 and 4.4.9 display drug/alcohol use by alleged offenders and victims respectively.

Table 4.4.7 DRUG/ALCOHOL USE BY PRIEST

Priest Used Drugs/Alcohol	Count	Percent
Yes	988	21.6%%
No	3,596	78.4%
Total	4,584	100%

Question 31 on the Victim Survey asked whether the victim was under the influence of alcohol or drugs at the time of the alleged incident, and Question 32 asked about the accused priest or deacon. The study does not have detailed information about the source or type of intoxicant used.

Table 4.4.8 DRUG/ALCOHOL USE BY VICTIM

Victim Used Drugs/Alcohol	Count	Percent
Yes	854	15.1%
No	4,789	84.9%
Total	5,643	100.0%

The percentages in Tables 4.4.7 and 4.4.8 are based on the total number of surveys that included answers to the Questions 31 and 32.

¹ A very substantial number of surveys recorded sexual acts without giving any further information about them.